

# Daniel

## 1

**Summary:** *Daniel 1 introduces the book's central characters against the backdrop of Judah's subjugation to Babylon. In the third year of Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem and carries off temple vessels and selected young men of royal and noble lineage. Among them are Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah — four Judeans who are given Babylonian names (Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) as part of a systematic cultural assimilation program. Daniel resolves not to defile himself with the king's food and wine, and after a ten-day trial of vegetables and water, the four are found healthier than those who ate from the royal table. God grants them exceptional learning, and Daniel receives the gift of interpreting visions and dreams.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The entire chapter is written in Hebrew, establishing the setting before the language shifts to Aramaic at 2:4b. The renaming of the four Judeans is an act of imperial identity erasure — each Hebrew name contains a reference to Israel's God (El or Yah), while the Babylonian replacements invoke Babylonian deities (Bel, Aku, Marduk). Daniel's name means 'God is my judge'; Belteshazzar likely derives from Bel-shar-usur, 'Bel, protect his life.' Hananiah ('the LORD is gracious') becomes Shadrach (possibly 'command of Aku'); Mishael ('who is what God is?') becomes Meshach (possibly 'who is what Aku is?'); Azariah ('the LORD has helped') becomes Abednego ('servant of Nego/Nabu'). The food test is not about dietary preference but covenant identity — the king's table likely involved food offered to idols and meat prepared in violation of Levitical regulations. Daniel's refusal is the first act of faithful resistance in a book structured around such acts.*

**Translation Friction:** *The dating in verse 1 ('the third year of Jehoiakim') presents a well-known chronological difficulty — Jeremiah 25:1 places Nebuchadnezzar's first year in Jehoiakim's fourth year, and 2 Kings 24:1 describes the siege differently. We rendered the date as given in the Hebrew without harmonization, noting the issue. The phrase 'the land of Shinar' (v. 2) is an archaic designation for Babylonia used in Genesis 10:10 and 11:2, deliberately linking Babylon's origin to the primeval period. The verb ga'al ('defile,' v. 8) is distinct from the homonym meaning 'redeem' — context makes the meaning clear but we noted the distinction.*

*Connections: The deportation of temple vessels connects to 2 Chronicles 36:5-7 and is reversed in Ezra 1:7-11 when Cyrus restores them. The phrase 'land of Shinar' reaches back to Genesis 11:2 (the Tower of Babel), casting Babylon as the perennial rival of God's purposes. Daniel's gift of dream interpretation echoes Joseph's identical gift in Genesis 40-41, establishing Daniel as a second Joseph — a faithful exile who rises to power in a foreign court through divine wisdom. The ten-day food test anticipates the pattern of divine testing seen throughout the book.*

<sup>1</sup>In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against Jerusalem and laid siege to it. <sup>2</sup>The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels from the house of God. He brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. <sup>3</sup>The king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites — from the royal family and from the nobility — <sup>4</sup>young men without any physical defect, good-looking, proficient in all wisdom, knowledgeable and discerning, and with the ability to serve in the king's palace — and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. <sup>5</sup>The king assigned them a daily portion from the king's own food and from the wine he drank, to be trained for three years, after which they would enter the king's service. <sup>6</sup>Among them, from the tribe of Judah, were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. <sup>7</sup>The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel he gave the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego. <sup>8</sup>Daniel resolved in his heart not to defile himself with the king's food or with the wine he drank, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself. <sup>9</sup>God granted Daniel favor and compassion before the chief official. <sup>10</sup>The chief official said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who assigned your food and drink. Why should he see your faces looking worse than the other young men your age? You would put my head in danger with the king." <sup>11</sup>Then Daniel spoke to the steward whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. <sup>12</sup>"Please test your servants for ten days: let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. <sup>13</sup>Then compare our appearance with the appearance of the young men who eat the king's food, and deal with your servants according to what you see." <sup>14</sup>He agreed to this and tested them for ten days. <sup>15</sup>At the end of ten days, their appearance was healthier and they looked better nourished than all the young men who ate the king's food. <sup>16</sup>So the steward removed their portion of royal food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables instead. <sup>17</sup>As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and insight in every branch of literature and wisdom. And Daniel had understanding in all kinds of visions and dreams. <sup>18</sup>When the appointed time set by the king had passed, the chief official brought them before Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>19</sup>The king spoke with them, and among all the candidates none were found equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they entered the king's service. <sup>20</sup>In every matter of wisdom and discernment that the king tested them on, he found them ten times superior to all the magicians and enchanters in his entire kingdom. <sup>21</sup>And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

#### TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. This chapter is written in Hebrew. The language shifts to Aramaic at 2:4b and remains Aramaic through 7:28 before returning to Hebrew.
1. The dating 'third year of Jehoiakim' presents a chronological tension with Jeremiah 25:1, which places Nebuchadnezzar's first year in Jehoiakim's fourth year. The discrepancy may reflect different calendar systems (Babylonian accession-year reckoning versus Judean non-accession-year reckoning) or a distinct earlier campaign. We render as the Hebrew reads without harmonizing.
1. The verb *tsur* ('lay siege, press upon') is rendered 'laid siege to it' rather than the KJV's simple 'besieged it' to capture the military action more concretely.
2. The text uses *Adonai* ('Lord') here rather than *YHWH*, emphasizing divine sovereignty — God himself handed Judah's king over to the Babylonian. This is theological narration, not merely historical report.
2. The phrase 'land of Shinar' (*erets Shin'ar*) is a deliberately archaic name for Babylonia, used in Genesis 10:10 and 11:2 (the Tower of Babel narrative). The narrator is connecting Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon to the primeval city that defied God.
2. The placement of *YHWH*'s temple vessels in a pagan god's treasury is an act of theological humiliation — the conqueror's god appears to have triumphed over the conquered's god. Yet the narrator frames this as God's own act of giving, subverting the apparent triumph.
3. The term *rav sarisav* ('chief of his eunuchs/officials') is rendered 'chief of his court officials.' The Hebrew *saris* can mean either 'eunuch' (castrated male) or simply 'court official.' In this context both meanings may apply — Babylonian court attendants were often eunuchs, but the term also functioned as a title for high-ranking administrators.

3. The word *partemim* ('nobles, aristocrats') is a Persian loanword found only here and in Esther 1:3 and 6:9, suggesting a late or cosmopolitan vocabulary. Rendered as 'nobility' to capture the social rank.
4. The Hebrew *yeladim* literally means 'children' or 'youths,' but the context of court service and advanced education indicates adolescents or young men, not small children.
4. The phrase *sefer u-leshon Kasdim* ('literature and language of the Chaldeans') encompasses the entire Babylonian intellectual tradition — cuneiform writing, astronomy, divination, mathematics, and court protocol. This was a deliberate program to assimilate conquered elites into Babylonian culture.
4. The term *mada* ('knowledge, science') is rendered 'discerning' rather than the KJV's 'understanding science' — the modern word 'science' carries empirical connotations absent from the Hebrew.
5. The word *pat-bag* ('portion of food, delicacy') is an Old Persian loanword (*patibaga*) meaning the king's choice food. This is not ordinary rations but food from the royal table — it would have been offered to Babylonian gods before being served, making it ritually unclean for observant Judeans.
5. The phrase 'stand before the king' (*ya'amdu lifnei ha-melekh*) is an idiom for entering official court service, not merely standing in his physical presence.
6. All four Hebrew names contain references to the God of Israel: Daniel ('God is my judge,' from El), Hananiah ('the LORD is gracious,' from Yah), Mishael ('who is what God is?,' from El), and Azariah ('the LORD has helped,' from Yah). Their very names are theological confessions that will stand in tension with the Babylonian names they are about to receive.
7. The renaming is an act of cultural and theological displacement. Each Hebrew name that honored Israel's God is replaced with a name invoking Babylonian deities: *Belteshazzar* likely derives from *Bel-shar-usur* ('Bel, protect his life'), invoking the chief Babylonian god. *Shadrach* may relate to *Shudur-Aku* ('command of Aku,' the moon god). *Meshach* may be a deliberate distortion of *Mishael*, possibly meaning 'who is what Aku is?' — replacing El (God) with *Aku*. *Abednego* means 'servant of Nego' (a form of *Nabu*, the god of wisdom).
7. The verb *sam* ('set, placed') for the act of naming suggests imposition — these names were assigned, not chosen. In the ancient world, the power to name conferred authority over the named.
8. The idiom *sam al libbo* ('set upon his heart') means to make a firm decision from deep conviction — rendered 'resolved in his heart' to convey both deliberateness and depth.
8. The verb *yitga'al* ('defile himself') comes from the root *ga'al* meaning 'to stain, pollute, defile.' This is a different root from the *go'el* ('redeemer') of Ruth, though they share the same consonants. The defilement concerns ritual purity — the royal food was likely consecrated to Babylonian gods and prepared without regard for Levitical dietary laws.
8. Daniel's approach is diplomatic, not defiant. He 'asked' (*vayevaqqesh*) rather than refused outright, demonstrating the pattern of faithful wisdom that characterizes him throughout the book.
9. The phrase *le-chesed u-le-rachamim* ('to loyal love and compassion') describes what God produced in the official's heart toward Daniel. The verb *natan* ('gave') with God as subject echoes verse 2 — the same God who 'gave' Judah into Babylon's hand now 'gives' Daniel favor within Babylon's court. The theological irony is deliberate.
10. The phrase *zo'afim* ('looking troubled, haggard') describes a visibly unhealthy appearance — the official fears the king will notice malnourishment and hold him responsible.
10. The idiom *chiavtem et roshi* ('you would make my head guilty/liable') is a vivid expression meaning to endanger one's life — rendered 'put my head in danger' to preserve the bodily imagery. In a Babylonian court, failure could literally cost one's head.
11. The word *ha-meltsar* is debated — the KJV treats it as a proper name ('Melzar'), but most scholars take it as a title meaning 'guardian, steward, warden.' The definite article *ha-* ('the') supports reading it as a title rather than a name. We render 'the steward.' Daniel bypasses the chief official's refusal by approaching a subordinate — a shrewd diplomatic move.
12. The word *zero'im* ('seeds, vegetables, plants grown from seed') is rendered 'vegetables' rather than the KJV's archaic 'pulse' (a term for legumes). The Hebrew is broader than legumes — it encompasses any plant food grown from seed.
12. The ten-day test is Daniel's proposal, not God's command — it demonstrates Daniel's strategic thinking. Ten days is long enough to show results but short enough to minimize risk for the steward.
13. The word *mar'eh* ('appearance, look') appears twice — Daniel proposes an empirical, visible comparison. The test is designed to be objectively verifiable, removing any need for the steward to take Daniel's word on faith.
14. The verb *shama* ('heard, listened') in this context means 'agreed, consented' — the steward yielded to Daniel's proposal. The brevity of the verse conveys the simplicity of the arrangement once the steward was willing.
15. The phrase *beri'ei basar* ('fat of flesh, healthy in body') indicates robust physical health, not obesity. We rendered 'better nourished' to convey health rather than the KJV's 'fatter in flesh,' which carries negative connotations in modern English.

15. The result is presented as observable fact — the narrator makes no explicit mention of divine intervention here, though the reader understands God is behind the outcome.
16. The participle *nosei* ('carrying away, removing') indicates an ongoing practice — this was not a one-time adjustment but a permanent change to their diet throughout the three-year training period.
17. The narrator explicitly credits God as the source of their intellectual gifts — *mada ve-haskel* ('knowledge and insight') are divine endowments, not merely natural talent or hard study.
17. Daniel alone receives the additional gift of understanding *chazon va-chalomot* ('visions and dreams'). This specific gifting sets up Daniel's role throughout the book as interpreter of divine revelation, paralleling Joseph in Genesis 40-41.
18. The phrase *le-miqtsat ha-yamim* ('at the end of the days') refers to the conclusion of the three-year training period specified in verse 5, not the ten-day food test. The chief official presents them for the king's personal evaluation.
19. The narrator uses the four Hebrew names — not their Babylonian names — emphasizing that their true identity before God remains unchanged despite the imperial renaming. This is a subtle but consistent narrative choice throughout Daniel.
19. The phrase *va-ya'amdu lifnei ha-melekh* ('they stood before the king') echoes verse 5 — the goal of the training program has been achieved, but on their terms rather than Babylon's.
20. The phrase *eser yadot* ('ten hands') is an idiom meaning 'ten times over' — a superlative expressing overwhelming superiority, not a precise mathematical ratio.
20. The *chartummim* ('magicians') and *ashshafim* ('enchanters, conjurers') represent the professional scholarly-religious class of Babylon — experts in divination, omen reading, and incantation. Daniel and his friends surpass even these specialists in their own domain.
21. This closing note spans the entire Neo-Babylonian period — from Nebuchadnezzar (605 BC) to the first year of Cyrus's rule over Babylon (539 BC), approximately sixty-six years. Daniel outlasted the empire that captured him. The mention of Cyrus anticipates the restoration prophecies of Isaiah 44-45 and the historical fulfillment in Ezra 1.
21. The verb *vayehi* ('he continued, he was') does not mean Daniel died in Cyrus's first year — chapter 10:1 places him in Cyrus's third year. The verse marks the end of the Babylonian era, not the end of Daniel's life.

## 2

**Summary:** *Daniel 2 recounts Nebuchadnezzar's disturbing dream of a colossal statue made of four metals — gold, silver, bronze, and iron mixed with clay — shattered by a stone cut without human hands. When the king demands that his wise men both tell him the dream and interpret it (on pain of death), they fail. Daniel, after receiving the mystery through a night vision, reveals both the dream and its meaning: four successive kingdoms will rise, but God will establish an eternal kingdom that will crush all others. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges Daniel's God as 'God of gods and Lord of kings' and elevates Daniel to rule over Babylon's province.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *This chapter contains the most significant language transition in the Hebrew Bible. Verses 1-4a are in Hebrew; at 2:4b, when the Chaldeans begin speaking to the king, the text switches to Aramaic — the lingua franca of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian empires — and remains in Aramaic through 7:28. This linguistic shift signals that the content concerns the nations, not Israel alone. The statue vision establishes the apocalyptic framework of four world empires followed by God's eternal kingdom, a schema that shapes all subsequent Jewish and Christian apocalyptic thought. The 'stone cut without hands' (even *garut di-la bi-yadin*) becomes one of the most widely interpreted symbols in biblical prophecy — both Jewish and Christian traditions see it as the kingdom of God breaking into human history without human agency.*

**Translation Friction:** *The Aramaic of Daniel 2:4b-49 is Imperial Aramaic, closely related to the Aramaic of Ezra. Transliterations follow standard Aramaic conventions rather than Hebrew. The identity of the four kingdoms has been debated for millennia — the traditional reading sees Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome; other scholars see Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece. We render the text without imposing either identification, letting the imagery stand. The phrase *even garut di-la bi-yadin* ('a stone cut not by hands,' v. 34) is theologically loaded — 'not by hands' means without human agency, signaling divine origin. The Aramaic word *raz* ('mystery,' vv. 18-19, 27-30, 47) is a Persian loanword central to the chapter's theology of revealed knowledge.*

*Connections: The four-kingdom schema recurs in Daniel 7 (four beasts), Daniel 8 (ram and goat), and Daniel 10-11 (kings of north and south). The stone that becomes a mountain filling the earth echoes the cosmic mountain traditions of Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-3. Nebuchadnezzar's confession in verse 47 anticipates his fuller confession in chapter 4. Daniel's night vision and thanksgiving prayer (vv. 19-23) parallel the wisdom tradition of Proverbs 2:6 and Job 12:22. The pattern of faithful exile receiving divine wisdom and rising to political power parallels Joseph before Pharaoh (Genesis 41).*

<sup>1</sup>In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams that troubled his spirit, and sleep escaped him. <sup>2</sup>The king gave orders to summon the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and Chaldeans to explain his dreams to him. When they came and stood before the king, <sup>3</sup>the king said to them, "I have had a dream, and my spirit is troubled trying to understand it." <sup>4</sup>The Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will provide the interpretation." <sup>5</sup>The king replied to the Chaldeans, "My decision is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb, and your houses will be turned into rubble heaps. <sup>6</sup>But if you reveal the dream and its interpretation, you will receive gifts, rewards, and great honor from me. So tell me the dream and its interpretation." <sup>7</sup>They answered a second time, "Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will provide the interpretation." <sup>8</sup>The king responded, "I know with certainty that you are trying to buy time, because you see that my decision is final. <sup>9</sup>If you do not tell me the dream, there is only one sentence for you. You have agreed among yourselves to present false and deceptive words before me, hoping circumstances will change. So tell me the dream, and then I will know that you can show me its interpretation." <sup>10</sup>The Chaldeans answered the king, "There is no one on earth who can fulfill what the king demands. No king, however great or powerful, has ever asked such a thing of any magician, enchanter, or Chaldean. <sup>11</sup>What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not among mortals." <sup>12</sup>Because of this, the king became enraged and furious, and ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon. <sup>13</sup>The decree was issued and the wise men were about to be killed. They searched for Daniel and his companions to put them to death as well. <sup>14</sup>Then Daniel responded with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, who had gone out to execute the wise men of Babylon. <sup>15</sup>He asked Arioch, the king's officer, "Why is this decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch explained the situation to Daniel. <sup>16</sup>Daniel then went in and asked the king to grant him time, and he would reveal the interpretation to the king. <sup>17</sup>Then Daniel went to his house and informed his companions Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah about the matter, <sup>18</sup>urging them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions would not be destroyed along with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. <sup>19</sup>Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision during the night, and Daniel blessed the God of heaven. <sup>20</sup>Daniel declared: "Let the name of God be blessed from age to age, for wisdom and power belong to him. <sup>21</sup>He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and raises up kings. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. <sup>22</sup>He reveals what is deep and hidden; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him. <sup>23</sup>To you, God of my ancestors, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and strength, and now you have made known to me what we asked of you — you have revealed to us the king's matter." <sup>24</sup>Therefore Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, "Do not execute the wise men of Babylon. Bring me before the king, and I will reveal the interpretation to him." <sup>25</sup>Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king and said, "I have found a man among the Judean exiles who can make the interpretation known to the king." <sup>26</sup>The king asked Daniel, who was called Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream I saw and its interpretation?" <sup>27</sup>Daniel answered the king, "The mystery that the king demands — no wise man, enchanter, magician, or diviner can reveal it to the king. <sup>28</sup>But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the latter days. This is your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay on your bed: <sup>29</sup>As for you, O king — while you were on your bed, thoughts came to you about what would happen in the future, and the Revealer of mysteries has shown you what will take place. <sup>30</sup>As for me, this mystery was not revealed to me because I possess more wisdom than any other living person, but so that the interpretation may be made known to the king and you may understand the thoughts of your own heart. <sup>31</sup>You, O king, were looking, and there before you stood a great statue. That statue was immense and extraordinarily brilliant,

standing before you, and its appearance was terrifying. <sup>32</sup>The head of that statue was of pure gold, its chest and arms were of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, <sup>33</sup>its legs of iron, and its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. <sup>34</sup>You watched as a stone was cut out — not by human hands — and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay, shattering them. <sup>35</sup>Then the iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold were all crushed together and became like chaff on a summer threshing floor. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the entire earth. <sup>36</sup>This was the dream, and now we will tell the king its interpretation. <sup>37</sup>You, O king, are king of kings. The God of heaven has given you the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the glory. <sup>38</sup>Wherever people dwell — along with the wild animals and birds of the sky — he has placed them under your authority and made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold. <sup>39</sup>After you, another kingdom will arise, inferior to yours, and then a third kingdom, of bronze, which will rule over the entire earth. <sup>40</sup>A fourth kingdom will be as strong as iron, for just as iron shatters and crushes everything, so it will shatter and crush all the others. <sup>41</sup>As you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron — it will be a divided kingdom, though it will have some of the strength of iron in it, since you saw iron mixed with common clay. <sup>42</sup>Just as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. <sup>43</sup>As you saw the iron mixed with common clay, so they will mix with one another through human alliances, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not bond with clay. <sup>44</sup>In the days of those kings, the God of heaven will establish a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will its sovereignty be left to another people. It will shatter and bring to an end all those kingdoms, but it itself will stand forever. <sup>45</sup>Just as you saw that a stone was cut from the mountain without human hands, and it crushed the iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold — the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future. The dream is certain and its interpretation is trustworthy." <sup>46</sup>Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and paid homage to Daniel. He ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. <sup>47</sup>The king said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings, and a Revealer of mysteries, since you were able to reveal this mystery." <sup>48</sup>Then the king promoted Daniel to a high position, gave him many lavish gifts, and made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon. <sup>49</sup>At Daniel's request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the king's court.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. This verse is still in Hebrew; the language shift to Aramaic occurs at verse 4b.
1. The dating 'second year' raises a difficulty — if Daniel's three-year training (1:5) has concluded, this should be at least the third year. Solutions include counting from a different starting point or the training ending early. We render as the text reads.
1. The verb *tipa'em* ('was agitated, was disturbed') from the root *pa'am* conveys a deep, restless disturbance — not mild concern but a shaking of the spirit. The plural *chalomot* ('dreams') may indicate recurring nightmares.
2. Four classes of Babylonian scholars are listed: *chartummim* (magicians/scribes), *ashshafim* (enchanters/conjurers), *mekhashshefim* (sorcerers/practitioners of magic), and *Kasdīm* (Chaldeans). The Chaldeans here are not an ethnic group but a professional class of scholar-priests specializing in divination and astral observation.
2. The verb *lehaggid* ('to declare, tell') indicates the king wants more than interpretation — he wants the dream itself disclosed, as becomes clear in verse 5.
3. The verb *tipa'em* ('is agitated') recurs from verse 1, reinforcing the intensity of the king's distress. The phrase *lada'at et ha-chalom* ('to know the dream') is ambiguous — it could mean 'to understand what the dream means' or 'to recall the dream.' This ambiguity sets up the tension of the next verses.
4. CRITICAL LANGUAGE TRANSITION: The word *aramit* ('in Aramaic') signals the shift from Hebrew to Aramaic. From this point through 7:28, the biblical text itself is written in Aramaic. The Chaldeans speak in the lingua franca of the empire, and the narrator adopts this language for the remainder of the section dealing with international empires.
4. The greeting *malka le-almin cheyi* ('O king, live forever') is standard Babylonian court protocol. The phrase appears throughout Daniel's Aramaic sections as a formulaic address to royalty.
4. The Chaldeans' offer is reasonable — they will interpret if the king tells the dream. They assume the normal procedure of dream interpretation.
5. The Aramaic phrase *milta minni azda* is debated — it may mean 'the matter has gone from me' (i.e., he forgot the dream) or 'my decree is issued' (i.e., his decision is final). The latter reading, 'my decision is firm,' fits the context better: the king is establishing the terms, not confessing forgetfulness.

5. The punishment *hadamin tit'avdun* ('you will be made into pieces/limbs') refers to dismemberment — a documented Babylonian judicial punishment. The additional penalty of having houses turned into *nevali* ('dungheaps, ruins') represents total social obliteration.
6. The Aramaic *mattan* ('gifts'), *nevizbah* ('rewards, bonuses' — a Persian loanword), and *yeqar saggi* ('great honor') represent the full range of royal compensation. The king offers both material and social rewards as incentive alongside the threat of punishment — the carrot follows the stick.
7. The Chaldeans repeat their reasonable request — interpretation requires knowing the dream. Their insistence highlights the impossibility of the king's demand and sets the stage for Daniel's supernatural revelation. The word *tinyanut* ('a second time') emphasizes their persistence.
8. The phrase *iddana antun zavnin* ('you are buying time') uses the commercial metaphor of 'purchasing' a delay. The king suspects them of stalling, hoping he will either forget his demand or relent.
8. The phrase *azda minni milta* again — here confirming the interpretation 'my decree stands firm' rather than 'the dream has left me.'
9. The Aramaic *chada-hi datkhen* ('one is your sentence/law') means there is a single, non-negotiable verdict awaiting them — death by dismemberment as stated in verse 5.
9. The phrase *millah kidvah u-shechitah* ('words of falsehood and corruption') reveals the king's deeper motive: he suspects his advisors of routinely inventing interpretations. By demanding the dream itself, he creates a verifiable test of their genuine access to supernatural knowledge.
9. The phrase *ad di iddana yishtaneh* ('until the time changes') — the king believes they are stalling until political circumstances shift in their favor.
10. The Aramaic *al-yabeshta* ('upon the dry land/earth') is rendered 'on earth.' The Chaldeans' protest is both a defense and an inadvertent theological statement — they are correct that no human can do this; only God can.
10. Their argument from precedent ('no king has ever asked this') reveals the unprecedented nature of Nebuchadnezzar's demand and sets up the contrast with Daniel's God, who does what no earthly power can.
11. The Aramaic *yaqqirah* ('rare, precious, difficult') describes the impossibility of the demand. The Chaldeans' theological confession — that only gods (*elahin*) whose dwelling is not 'with flesh' (*im bisra*) could know this — is profoundly ironic. They unwittingly describe exactly what Daniel's God will do: the God of heaven, though transcendent, will reveal the mystery to a mortal.
11. The phrase *im bisra la ithohi* ('is not with flesh') reflects a Babylonian theological framework of distant, unapproachable deities — a framework Daniel's experience will overturn.
12. The paired terms *benas u-qetsaf saggi* ('angry and greatly furious') intensify each other — this is white-hot royal rage. The decree to destroy 'all' (*kol*) the wise men is sweeping — it would include Daniel and his friends, who are now counted among Babylon's scholars. This sets the narrative crisis in motion.
13. The participle *mitqattelin* ('being killed') may indicate that executions had already begun, or that the process was underway. We render 'were about to be killed' to convey the imminent danger.
13. Daniel and his *chavrohī* ('companions, associates') are caught up in the decree though they were never consulted — they are counted among the wise men of Babylon by virtue of their training and appointment in chapter 1.
14. The phrase *hativ eta u-te'em* ('returned counsel and discretion') emphasizes Daniel's composure — even facing execution, he responds with wisdom rather than panic. The same quality of diplomatic wisdom seen in his food negotiations in chapter 1.
14. Arioch bears the title *rav-tabbachayya* ('chief of the executioners/butchers'). The term *tabbachayya* literally means 'slaughterers,' reflecting the grim function of this office.
15. The Aramaic *mehachtsefah* ('harsh, severe, urgent') from the root *chatsaf* suggests both haste and harshness. Daniel's question is strategic — by asking 'why,' he opens a conversation that leads to opportunity rather than confrontation.
15. Arioch's willingness to explain rather than simply execute may reflect Daniel's reputation already established in chapter 1, or the favor God granted Daniel in 1:9 extending to this situation.
16. Daniel's boldness is remarkable — he gains direct audience with the king and makes a promise the Chaldeans could not make. He asks only for time (*zeman*), not for the dream to be told to him. This implicitly claims he can do what the professionals declared impossible.
17. The narrator again uses the Hebrew names rather than the Babylonian ones, maintaining the theological identity of these men. Daniel's first instinct is to gather his community of faith — he does not attempt to face this alone.
18. The Aramaic *rachamim* ('mercies, compassion') — Daniel seeks not information alone but divine compassion. The title *Elah shemayya* ('God of heaven') is the characteristic designation for Israel's God in the Aramaic sections of Daniel and Ezra, emphasizing God's sovereignty over all earthly kingdoms.
18. The word *raz* ('mystery, secret') is a Persian loanword (from Old Iranian *rāza*) that becomes the key theological term of this chapter. A *raz* is not merely unknown information — it is a divine secret that can only be revealed by God himself.
19. The verb *geli* ('was revealed, uncovered') is passive — the mystery is unveiled by God's initiative, not discovered through Daniel's effort. The *chezva di-leilya* ('vision of the night') distinguishes this from an ordinary dream; it is a deliberate divine communication.

19. Daniel's immediate response is worship — barekh ('blessed'). Before going to the king, before saving his own life, he turns to praise. This establishes the prayer of verses 20-23.
20. Daniel's prayer-poem in verses 20-23 is structured as a hymn of praise, distinct from the surrounding narrative. We preserve the poetic quality by rendering in elevated but modern English.
20. The phrase min-alma ve-ad alma is rendered 'from age to age' rather than the KJV's 'for ever and ever' to reflect the Aramaic sense of vast temporal expanse rather than abstract eternity.
21. The verbs are all participial — mehashneh, meh'addeh, mehaqqem — describing God's ongoing, habitual activity. This is not a one-time act but God's continuous governance of history.
21. The phrase meh'addeh malkin u-mehaqqem malkin ('removing kings and establishing kings') is the theological thesis of the entire book of Daniel — God is sovereign over political power. Every empire in Daniel's visions rises and falls by divine permission.
22. The pairing ammiqqata u-mesattrata ('the deep things and the hidden things') describes knowledge beyond human access — God penetrates depths and unveils concealment.
22. The final phrase nehora immeh shre ('light dwells with him') is a theological statement about God's nature: light — representing knowledge, truth, and revelation — has its home in God. This contrasts with the chashokha ('darkness') that conceals mysteries from human sight.
23. Daniel shifts from third person praise (vv. 20-22) to direct second-person address — the hymn becomes personal prayer. The phrase Elah abahatiy ('God of my ancestors') connects Daniel to the covenant tradition of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob even while standing in Babylon.
23. The shift from singular 'me' (li, 'to me') to plural 'us' (lana, 'to us') is significant — Daniel received the revelation individually but credits the communal prayer of his companions. The wisdom was given to him; the petition was made by them all.
24. Daniel's first words to Arioch are not about himself but about saving the wise men — 'Do not execute the wise men of Babylon.' His intervention saves the very class of scholars who could not help the king. This parallels Joseph saving Egypt's people despite being a prisoner himself.
24. The verb al-tehobed ('do not destroy') is an imperative — Daniel speaks with authority despite being a junior member of the court, emboldened by divine revelation.
25. The phrase be-hitbehalah ('in haste, urgently') shows Arioch's eagerness — he too is under threat if the executions proceed and later prove unnecessary.
25. Arioch claims credit — 'I have found' (hashkachat) — when in fact Daniel came to him. This small detail of court politics is characteristically realistic in Daniel's narrative style.
25. The phrase benei galuta di Yehud ('sons of the exile of Judah') identifies Daniel by his status as a deportee, emphasizing the irony: the answer comes not from Babylon's elite scholars but from a conquered exile.
26. The narrator inserts the Babylonian name Belteshazzar as a parenthetical — this is how the king would know him. But the text always leads with 'Daniel,' the Hebrew name, asserting the character's true identity.
26. The king's question ha-itakh kahel ('are you able') echoes the Chaldeans' declaration of impossibility in verse 10. The king is testing whether Daniel's claim exceeds what his own experts have declared cannot be done.
27. Daniel begins not by exalting himself but by affirming what the Chaldeans said: human wisdom cannot solve this. He lists four categories of professional scholars — chakkimin, ashfin, chartummin, gazrin — to emphasize that every class of human expertise fails before this mystery.
27. The term gazrin ('diviners, those who cut' — from the root gazar, 'to cut, determine') refers to specialists in cutting-divination, possibly hepatoscopy (reading animal livers). This is the only time they appear in the list.
28. The phrase itay Elah bishmayya ('there is a God in heaven') directly answers the Chaldeans' claim in verse 11 that 'the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh' cannot help. Daniel's God is in heaven yet communicates with humans — transcendent yet accessible.
28. The phrase be-acharit yomayya ('in the latter days,' 'at the end of days') is eschatological language — the dream concerns the ultimate trajectory of history, not merely the near future. This phrase connects to the prophetic tradition of Isaiah 2:2 and Micah 4:1.
28. Daniel deflects personal credit throughout — 'there is a God in heaven who reveals,' not 'I will reveal.'
29. Daniel calls God galeh razayya ('the Revealer of mysteries') — a title rather than a name, emphasizing God's unique role as the one who unveils what is hidden. No human guild or professional class shares this function.
29. The phrase mah di leheve acharei denah ('what will be after this') distinguishes from the eschatological 'latter days' of verse 28 — the dream addresses the sweep of future history, from Nebuchadnezzar's own time to the ultimate end.
30. Daniel explicitly disclaims personal superiority — la be-chokhma di itay bi ('not by wisdom that is in me'). The revelation came through him, not from him. This humility distinguishes Daniel from the professional wise men who trade on their own expertise.
30. The purpose clause 'that you may understand the thoughts of your heart' suggests Nebuchadnezzar's dream reflects his own deep anxieties about the future of his empire — God is answering the king's unspoken questions.

31. The Aramaic tselem ('image, statue') is the same word used in Genesis 1:26-27 (Hebrew tselem) for the image of God. This massive human-form statue stands as a counterfeit — human empire attempting to project divine-scale grandeur.
31. The description builds through three qualities: saggi ('great'), rav ('immense'), and ziyveh yattir ('its brilliance exceeding') — the statue overwhelms by sheer scale and radiance. Yet its appearance (reveh) is dechil ('terrifying'), not beautiful.
32. The four metals descend in value but increase in strength — gold is most precious but softest, iron is least valuable but hardest. This creates a paradox: the kingdoms grow stronger militarily but deteriorate in intrinsic worth.
32. The Aramaic dehav tav ('good gold, fine gold') emphasizes the quality of the gold head — the Babylonian kingdom at its zenith.
33. The division into two materials — iron and chasaf ('baked clay, pottery') — at the feet signals inherent instability. A statue resting on a mixture of the hardest metal and the most brittle ceramic is structurally doomed. The feet are the point of catastrophic failure in verse 34.
34. The Aramaic even ('stone') that is hitgezeret ('cut out') uses a passive verb with divine agency implied — God is the unnamed cutter. The phrase di-la vi-yadayin ('not by hands') emphatically excludes human involvement in this kingdom's origin.
34. The verb haddeqet ('crushed, shattered') indicates complete pulverization, not merely breaking into large pieces. The stone targets the weakest point — the composite feet.
35. The materials are listed in reverse order — iron, clay, bronze, silver, gold — from bottom to top, indicating total simultaneous collapse. The phrase ke-ur min-idderei qayit ('like chaff from summer threshing floors') is a vivid agricultural metaphor: summer chaff is the lightest, most insubstantial waste.
35. The phrase kol-atar la-hishtekach lehon ('no place was found for them') means complete annihilation — not just defeat but erasure from the landscape of history.
35. The transformation of the stone into a tur rav ('great mountain') that melet kol-ar'a ('filled the whole earth') signals a kingdom that is not merely one among many but all-encompassing.
36. The plural ne'mar ('we will tell') may be a royal or editorial 'we,' or it may include Daniel's companions who prayed for the revelation. Daniel has already proven his authority by recounting the dream without being told — the interpretation now follows with full credibility.
37. The title melekh malkaiya ('king of kings') is standard ancient Near Eastern imperial titlature. But Daniel immediately qualifies it — Nebuchadnezzar holds this authority because the God of heaven gave it. The four gifts — malkuta ('kingdom'), chisna ('strength/dominion'), toqfa ('power'), and yeqara ('glory') — are all divine grants, not self-generated accomplishments.
38. The language of dominion over humans, beasts, and birds echoes the creation mandate of Genesis 1:28 and God's covenant with Noah in Genesis 9:2. Nebuchadnezzar is cast as a kind of Adam figure — given comprehensive authority over the created order. But unlike Adam's, this authority is delegated and temporary.
38. The identification 'you are the head of gold' (anteh hu re'sha di dahava) makes Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon the first and most glorious kingdom. Gold is the most precious metal — subsequent kingdoms will be lesser in this quality.
39. The second kingdom (silver) is described only as ara'a minnakh ('inferior to you') — less glorious than Babylon, though historically more extensive. The text does not name these kingdoms, and scholarly debate continues about their identification.
39. The third kingdom (bronze) is said to tishlat be-khol-ar'a ('rule over the whole earth') — the most expansive claim made of any kingdom in the sequence. The descending metal value but increasing geographic scope creates a paradox of deteriorating quality with expanding reach.
40. The fourth kingdom is defined entirely by destructive force — the verbs mehaddeq ('shatters'), chashel ('breaks'), tadiq ('crushes'), and tero'a ('smashes') all describe violent domination. Iron is chosen not for beauty or value but for its capacity to destroy.
40. The repetition of iron imagery emphasizes relentless military power. This is the kingdom with the least inherent value (iron versus gold, silver, bronze) but the greatest destructive capability.
41. The Aramaic peligah ('divided') indicates internal fracture — this kingdom lacks the unity of the previous three. The mixture of iron and chasaf tina ('clay of mud/common clay') represents an attempted fusion that cannot hold.
41. The phrase min-nitsbeta di farzela ('from the firmness of iron') indicates residual strength — the fourth kingdom retains iron's power in some measure but is fatally compromised by the clay admixture.
42. The contrast between taqqifah ('strong') and tevirah ('brittle, broken, fragile') within a single kingdom captures the internal contradiction. The toes — ten of them, possibly representing subdivisions — embody this unstable mixture.
43. The phrase bi-zra' anasha ('by the seed of men,' 'through human intermarriage/alliances') likely refers to political marriages intended to forge alliances between rival factions — a common ancient diplomatic strategy. Despite these efforts at unity, the kingdom remains fundamentally incompatible with itself.
43. The verb davqin ('adhere, cling, bond') echoes the Genesis 2:24 usage of the same root for marital bonding — the political unions will fail where true covenant bonds would succeed.

44. The phrase Elah shemayya yeqim malku ('the God of heaven will establish a kingdom') uses the same verb (qum, 'establish, raise up') used for the rising of human kingdoms in verse 39, but with God as the explicit agent.
44. Three negations define this kingdom: la titchabbal ('will not be destroyed'), la tishteviq ('will not be left/abandoned to another'), and the implicit contrast with every preceding kingdom that did fall. The permanence is absolute.
44. The Aramaic le-almayya ('for the ages, forever') uses the plural of olam, intensifying the duration beyond even the singular form.
45. Here the stone's origin is specified: mi-tura ('from the mountain') — the stone comes from God's mountain, the cosmic mountain that it will itself become (v. 35). The mountain of God produces the stone that becomes a mountain filling the earth.
45. The closing formula yatstsiv chelma u-meheiman pishreh ('the dream is certain and its interpretation trustworthy') uses legal language — yatstsiv means 'established, firm' and meheiman means 'reliable, faithful.' Daniel certifies both the accuracy of his dream report and the reliability of his interpretation.
45. The title Elah rav ('the great God') appears here for the first time in Daniel — Daniel proclaims God's greatness to the most powerful man on earth.
46. The verb segid ('did obeisance, worshipped, paid homage') is the same word used throughout Daniel 3 for worship of the golden image. Nebuchadnezzar prostrates himself before Daniel — an extraordinary act for the most powerful king on earth. Whether this constitutes actual worship or royal tribute is debated; Daniel does not refuse it, which has puzzled commentators.
46. The offering of minchah ('grain offering') and nichochin ('incense, pleasing aromas') are sacrificial terms — the king treats Daniel as a divine intermediary, though the next verse shows his praise ultimately directed at Daniel's God.
47. Nebuchadnezzar makes three confessions: Elah elahin ('God of gods') — supreme over all deities; Mare malkin ('Lord of kings') — sovereign over all rulers, including Nebuchadnezzar himself; and Galeh razin ('Revealer of mysteries') — possessing unique knowledge that no human wisdom can access.
47. The phrase min-qeshot ('from truth, truly') introduces a genuine acknowledgment, not mere flattery. This confession anticipates the fuller acknowledgment of chapter 4, though it falls short of exclusive monotheistic faith — Nebuchadnezzar ranks Daniel's God highest among gods rather than declaring him the only God.
48. Daniel's elevation follows the Joseph pattern — a captive exile rises to the second-highest position in the empire through divinely given wisdom. The twin roles of political governor (over the province) and intellectual chief (over the wise men) place Daniel at the intersection of power and knowledge.
48. The phrase rav signin ('chief of the prefects/governors') makes Daniel the administrative head over the very scholars who could not answer the king. He saves them from execution and then leads them.
49. Daniel's first act of authority is to share power with his companions — he does not hoard his elevation but immediately provides for the three who prayed with him in verse 18. Their Babylonian names are used here because they are being installed in official Babylonian positions.
49. The phrase be-tera' malka ('in the gate of the king') means at the royal court — the 'gate' being the seat of government in ancient Near Eastern administration. Daniel operates at the imperial center while his friends govern the provincial level. This positioning sets up the crisis of chapter 3, where the three friends will be present in the province while Daniel is apparently absent.

### 3

**Summary:** *Daniel 3 recounts Nebuchadnezzar's construction of a colossal golden statue on the plain of Dura and his decree that all officials must bow and worship it at the sound of music — under penalty of death in a blazing furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to bow. When brought before the furious king and given a second chance, they deliver one of the Bible's most remarkable statements of faith: their God is able to deliver them, but even if he does not, they will not serve the king's gods. Thrown into a furnace heated seven times beyond normal, they walk unharmed among the flames. Nebuchadnezzar sees a fourth figure in the fire, 'like a son of the gods,' and calls them out. He then decrees protection for their God and promotes them.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *This chapter is written entirely in Aramaic. Daniel himself is absent from the narrative — only his three companions appear, identified throughout by their Babylonian names (Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego) since they are operating in official Babylonian capacity. The declaration in verses 17-18 is one of the most theologically sophisticated statements in scripture: it simultaneously affirms God's power to save and accepts the possibility that he may choose not to — without this diminishing their obedience. The 'but even if he does not' (hen la, v. 18) distinguishes biblical faith from transactional religion. The fourth figure in the fire (v. 25), described as 'like a son of the gods' (bar elahin), has been interpreted as an angel, a theophany, or a Christophany. The*

*Aramaic is deliberately ambiguous — Nebuchadnezzar uses polytheistic language to describe a phenomenon beyond his theological categories.*

**Translation Friction:** *The chapter's repetitive style — listing the same officials (v. 2-3) and musical instruments (vv. 5, 7, 10, 15) multiple times — is a deliberate literary technique, not editorial sloppiness. The repetition creates a bureaucratic, imperial tone that contrasts with the simple directness of the three men's confession. Several of the musical instrument names are Greek loanwords (qitharos/kithara, pesanterin/psalterion, sumponayah/symphonia), which has bearing on dating discussions but does not affect our rendering. The phrase bar elahin ('son of the gods,' v. 25) versus malakh ('angel,' v. 28) — Nebuchadnezzar first describes what he sees in his own polytheistic terms, then in verse 28 reinterprets it as God's 'angel/messenger.' We preserve both descriptions without harmonizing them.*

**Connections:** *The golden image on the plain of Dura may respond to the gold-head identification of chapter 2 — Nebuchadnezzar attempts to make the entire statue gold, rejecting the prophecy of successive kingdoms. The fiery furnace echoes the 'iron furnace' (kur ha-barzel) of Deuteronomy 4:20 and Jeremiah 11:4, where Egypt was a smelting furnace — here the furnace purifies faith rather than destroying it. The refusal to bow before an image connects to the Decalogue's prohibition of idolatry (Exodus 20:3-5). The fourth figure in the fire anticipates the 'Son of Man' figure in Daniel 7:13. The pattern of persecution, faithful resistance, and divine deliverance becomes paradigmatic for Jewish and Christian martyrdom literature.*

<sup>1</sup>King Nebuchadnezzar made a statue of gold, sixty cubits tall and six cubits wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. <sup>2</sup>King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to assemble the satraps, prefects, governors, advisors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials for the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had erected. <sup>3</sup>So the satraps, prefects, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had erected. They stood before the statue that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. <sup>4</sup>A herald proclaimed loudly, "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages: <sup>5</sup>At the moment you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and every kind of instrument, you are to fall down and worship the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. <sup>6</sup>Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace of fire." <sup>7</sup>Therefore, at that moment, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, and every kind of instrument, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. <sup>8</sup>At that time, certain Chaldeans came forward and denounced the Jews. <sup>9</sup>They spoke up and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! <sup>10</sup>You, O king, issued a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and every kind of instrument must fall down and worship the golden statue, <sup>11</sup>and whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace of fire. <sup>12</sup>There are certain Jews whom you appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon — Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, have paid no attention to you. They do not serve your gods, and they do not worship the golden statue you have set up." <sup>13</sup>Then Nebuchadnezzar, in a rage of fury, ordered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego brought before him. The men were brought before the king. <sup>14</sup>Nebuchadnezzar asked them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden statue I have set up? <sup>15</sup>Now, if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and every kind of instrument, to fall down and worship the statue I have made — very well. But if you do not worship, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace of fire. And what god is there who can deliver you from my hand?" <sup>16</sup>Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, "Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. <sup>17</sup>If our God whom we serve exists, he is able to rescue us from the blazing furnace of fire and from your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup>But even if he does not — let it be known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, and we will not worship the golden statue you have set up." <sup>19</sup>Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He gave orders to heat the furnace seven times hotter than it was usually heated. <sup>20</sup>He commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace of fire. <sup>21</sup>So the men were bound in their robes, trousers, turbans, and other garments, and thrown into the blazing furnace of fire. <sup>22</sup>Because the king's order was so urgent and the furnace was heated to such an extreme, the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who carried Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego up. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup>And the three men — Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego — fell bound into the blazing furnace of fire. <sup>24</sup>Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and leaped to his feet in alarm. He asked his advisors, "Did we not throw three men, bound, into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, O king." <sup>25</sup>He exclaimed, "Look! I see four men, unbound, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are unharmed! And the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods." <sup>26</sup>Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and called out, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire. <sup>27</sup>The satraps, prefects, governors, and royal advisors crowded around and saw that the fire had no power over the bodies of these men. The hair on their heads was not singed, their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them. <sup>28</sup>Nebuchadnezzar declared, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who sent his angel and rescued his servants who trusted in him! They defied the royal decree and gave up their bodies rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. <sup>29</sup>Therefore I issue a decree: any people, nation, or language that speaks blasphemy against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will be torn limb from limb, and their houses will be reduced to rubble, for there is no other god who can rescue like this." <sup>30</sup>Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. This chapter is entirely in Aramaic, continuing the language begun at 2:4b.
1. The dimensions — sixty cubits high (roughly 90 feet / 27 meters) by six cubits wide (roughly 9 feet / 2.7 meters) — create an unusually elongated proportion (10:1), suggesting either a statue on a tall pedestal or a deliberately exaggerated monument. A cubit is approximately 18 inches (45 cm).
1. The phrase *tselem di dehav* ('image of gold') may mean solid gold or gold-plated — the latter being more practical at this scale. The word *tselem* is the same used for the dream statue in chapter 2. By making the entire image gold, Nebuchadnezzar may be asserting that his golden kingdom will not be succeeded by inferior ones — a defiant rejection of the dream's message.
2. The seven-fold list of officials represents every tier of the imperial bureaucracy — from satraps (*achashdarpenaiya*, a Persian loanword for provincial governors) down to local magistrates (*tiftaye*). The exhaustive listing emphasizes the totalitarian scope of the decree: no official is exempt.
2. The word *chanukkat* ('dedication') uses the same root as the Hebrew Hanukkah — an ironic connection, since the later Hanukkah festival celebrates the opposite: the rededication of God's temple after its desecration by a pagan king.
3. The near-verbatim repetition of the official list from verse 2 is deliberate — the narrator uses bureaucratic repetition to evoke the grinding, mechanical quality of imperial conformity. Everyone summoned, everyone assembled, everyone standing in formation. The individual disappears into the mass.
3. The slight variation in the list order (*adargozrayya*/'counselors' replaces 'advisors') is characteristic of Aramaic repetitive style, where minor variations prevent exact monotony.
4. The phrase *ammayya ummayya ve-lishanayya* ('peoples, nations, and tongues') is a universal formula that appears repeatedly in Daniel's Aramaic sections (3:4, 7, 29; 4:1; 5:19; 6:25; 7:14). It represents the totality of humanity under Babylonian rule — every ethnic group, every political entity, every language community.
5. The six instruments listed include both Semitic and Greek terms: *qarna* ('horn'), *mashroqita* ('pipe, flute'), *qitharos* ('lyre' — from Greek *kithara*), *sabbeka* ('trigon,' a triangular stringed instrument), *pesanterin* ('harp' — from Greek *psalterion*), and *sumponeyah* ('drum' or 'bagpipe' — from Greek *symphonia*). The Greek loanwords indicate cultural exchange between Babylonia and the Greek world, which is historically attested for the Neo-Babylonian period.
5. The command is binary: hear the music, prostrate yourself. No exceptions, no alternatives. The verb *tisgidun* ('worship, do obeisance') is the same verb used of Nebuchadnezzar's own prostration before Daniel in 2:46.
6. The phrase *bah-sha'ta* ('in that same hour, immediately') eliminates any possibility of reflection, appeal, or delay. The punishment is instant and public.
6. The *attun nura yaqidta* ('furnace of burning fire') was likely a lime kiln or smelting furnace — industrial furnaces of enormous size are archaeologically attested in ancient Mesopotamia. The punishment by burning was known in Babylonian law (attested in the Code of Hammurabi).
7. The *sumponeyah* ('drum/bagpipe') is omitted from this repetition of the instrument list — a minor variation typical of Aramaic repetitive style. The narrative emphasis falls on the universal compliance: 'all the peoples, nations, and languages' obeyed. Against this backdrop of total conformity, the three men's refusal in verse 12 stands out as an extraordinary act.
8. The phrase *akalu qartsehon* ('ate their pieces,' i.e., 'devoured their flesh') is an Aramaic idiom meaning to slander or maliciously accuse — rendered 'denounced' to capture the hostile intent without the literal cannibalistic imagery.

8. The accusers are identified as Kasdain ('Chaldeans') — the same professional class that failed in chapter 2. Their accusation may be motivated by professional jealousy: these Jewish exiles who replaced them in the king's favor are now vulnerable.
9. The formulaic greeting *malka le-almin cheyi* ('O king, live forever') is the standard court address, identical to 2:4. The courtly politeness contrasts sharply with the lethal intent of their accusation.
10. The accusers begin by restating the king's own decree — a legal strategy ensuring the king is committed to his own words before they name the offenders. The full instrument list is repeated yet again, reinforcing the oppressive thoroughness of the imperial command.
11. The penalty clause is quoted verbatim from verse 6 — the accusers are building an airtight legal case before springing the trap. They want the king to acknowledge the penalty before revealing who has violated the decree.
12. The accusation is layered with strategic barbs: they emphasize that these are Jews (foreigners), that the king himself appointed them (making their disobedience personally insulting), and that their refusal is comprehensive — they serve neither the king's gods generally nor this statue specifically.
12. The phrase *la samu alakh te'em* ('they have set no regard upon you') goes beyond describing the act — it accuses them of contempt for the king's authority. The accusers turn a religious act into a political crime.
12. Daniel is conspicuously absent from the accusation. His role 'at the king's gate' (2:49) may have placed him elsewhere, or his position may have been too powerful to attack.
13. The paired terms *birgaz va-chamah* ('in agitation and wrath') intensify each other — this is explosive, volcanic anger. Yet the king gives them a second chance in the next verses, suggesting his fury is mixed with reluctance to lose capable administrators he himself promoted.
14. The word *ha-tseda* ('is it deliberate, is it true') can mean either 'is it true?' or 'is it intentional?' — the king may be offering them an escape route, suggesting their absence from worship was accidental rather than defiant. The question form creates a moment of grace before the final ultimatum.
15. The king offers a second chance — *hen itekhon atidin* ('if you are ready/prepared') shows a willingness to overlook the first offense. The instrument list is repeated a fifth time, hammering the mechanical, relentless quality of the imperial cult.
15. The final challenge — *u-man hu Elah di yesheizvinkkhon min-yadai* ('and who is the god who can deliver you from my hand?') — is a direct challenge to divine sovereignty. It echoes the boasts of the Assyrian king Sennacherib in 2 Kings 18:35 and Isaiah 36:20. In biblical narrative, such challenges invariably receive divine answers.
16. The response omits the courtly greeting 'O king, live forever' — a deliberate breach of protocol signaling that they no longer acknowledge the king's authority over their worship.
16. The phrase *la chashchin anachna* ('we have no need') does not express indifference but confident clarity — they do not need time, counsel, or further deliberation. Their answer is already decided.
16. The word *pitgam* ('word, response, defense') carries legal overtones — they are declining to mount a defense, accepting the consequences.
17. The phrase *hen itay Elahana* ('if our God exists' or 'if it be so that our God...') is debated. Some take *hen itay* as 'if it be so' (a conditional introducing what follows), others as 'if our God... exists' (a bolder conditional acknowledging the possibility of divine non-intervention). We render it preserving the ambiguity — the Aramaic allows both readings.
17. The verb *yakhil* ('is able') affirms God's power absolutely — there is no doubt about capability. The question is not whether God can save, but whether he will.
18. The *ve-hen la* ('but if not') creates one of the most dramatic theological hinges in the Hebrew Bible. In two Aramaic words, the three men affirm that their obedience is not contingent on deliverance. This shatters the 'prosperity gospel' framework entirely — faithfulness is not a strategy for securing divine benefits.
18. The declaration is structured as a legal notice: *yedi'a leheve lakh* ('let it be known to you') — they are formally informing the king of their decision, treating him as a party deserving notification rather than an authority requiring obedience.
19. The phrase *tselem anpohi eshtanni* ('the image/form of his face changed') uses *tselem* — the same word for the golden statue. The king's face, his human 'image,' distorts with rage just as the golden image distorts true worship.
19. The sevenfold heating is an expression of extreme fury rather than a precise temperature measurement — 'seven' in Semitic usage often means 'to the uttermost.' The irony is that excessive heat will kill the executioners (v. 22) while the intended victims survive.
20. The phrase *guvrin gibbarei-chayil* ('men, mighty men of strength') — the strongest warriors are selected for the task, emphasizing the overkill of the response. The military language treats the three unarmed men as if they were a threat requiring overwhelming force.
21. The detailed list of clothing — *sarbalehon* ('robes/mantles'), *pattshehon* ('trousers/tunics'), *ve-kharbelathon* ('turbans/caps') — emphasizes that they were thrown in fully dressed, without any protective preparation. The same detail makes their emergence in verse 27 all the more miraculous when not even the smell of fire clings to them.
21. The exact identification of these garments is debated among scholars; the Aramaic terms may be Persian loanwords, and their precise meaning is uncertain. We follow the most widely accepted renderings.

- 22.** The irony is devastating — the men assigned to execute the sentence are themselves executed by the king's own excessive rage. The sheviva di nura ('flame/spark of fire') kills the soldiers but not the condemned men. The furnace obeys God's jurisdiction, not Nebuchadnezzar's.
- 22.** The verb hassiku ('brought up, lifted') indicates the furnace opening was above — the men had to be carried up and dropped in.
- 23.** The word mekhaffetin ('bound') is the last detail before the miracle — they entered the fire restrained, helpless, unable to do anything to save themselves. Their deliverance is entirely God's work.
- 24.** The verb tevah ('was astonished, was stunned') describes a shock so great it produces physical reaction — the king jumps up (qam be-hitbehalah, 'rose in haste/alarm'). The most powerful man on earth is shaken by what he sees.
- 24.** The verification question is shrewd narrative — by establishing the factual baseline (three men, bound, into the fire), the narrator heightens the impossibility of what the king sees next.
- 25.** We render 'like a son of the gods' rather than the KJV's 'like the Son of God.' The Aramaic bar elahin is indefinite and plural — 'a son of gods/divine beings' — not a definite monotheistic title. Nebuchadnezzar is describing what he sees through his own polytheistic framework.
- 25.** The four elements of the king's observation are carefully structured: four (not three), unbound (not bound as they went in), walking (not collapsed), and unharmed (chaval la itay behon — 'injury is not in them'). Every expected condition has been reversed.
- 25.** The verb sharayin ('loose, unbound') — the fire did what the soldiers could not undo: it burned the ropes but not the men.
- 26.** The title Elaha illaha ('God Most High') is a significant theological concession — Nebuchadnezzar now identifies their God not merely as 'your god' but as the supreme deity. The Aramaic illaha ('most high') echoes the Hebrew Elyon used of God in Genesis 14:18-22 (Melchizedek's God).
- 26.** The king himself approaches the furnace door — the same furnace whose heat killed his soldiers. His approach to the fire to summon God's servants is an act of submission disguised as a royal command.
- 26.** The phrase avdohi di Elaha illaha ('servants of the Most High God') redefines their identity — they are not Babylonian officials who happen to have a private religion; they are first and foremost servants of the supreme God.
- 27.** The fourfold negation builds to a climax of impossibility: the fire had no power (la shelet) over their bodies, their hair was not burned (la hitcharak), their garments were not changed (la sheno), and no smell of fire (reach nur) had come upon them. Each detail makes the miracle more emphatic — fire did not merely fail to kill them; it failed to touch them at all.
- 27.** The assembled officials serve as witnesses — the miracle is publicly verified by the empire's own bureaucracy. The same officials who bowed to the golden statue now see evidence of a power greater than the king's.
- 28.** The king now says malakheh ('his angel/messenger') — reinterpreting the bar elahin ('son of the gods') of verse 25 in less polytheistic terms. The progression shows Nebuchadnezzar groping toward a theology adequate to what he has witnessed.
- 28.** The phrase hitrekhitsu alohi ('trusted in him') uses a verb meaning 'to lean on, rely upon' — the three men leaned their full weight on their God. The king recognizes this trust as the operative force.
- 28.** Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges that the three men shanniv millat malka ('changed/overrode the king's word') — an extraordinary admission that a decree of the most powerful monarch on earth was nullified by the faith of three prisoners.
- 29.** The phrase yei'mar shalu ('speaks negligence/error/blasphemy') uses shalu, a word meaning carelessness or offense — any disrespectful speech about this God is prohibited. The punishment replicates the threat from 2:5, showing that Nebuchadnezzar's penalties are consistent.
- 29.** The king's conclusion — la itay Elah achoran di-yikhul le-hatsalah kidnah ('there is no other god who can rescue like this') — is a functional acknowledgment of supremacy without full monotheistic conversion. He ranks this God above all others in power but does not abandon his own gods.
- 30.** The verb hatslach ('caused to prosper, promoted') indicates advancement beyond their previous positions. The men who refused the empire's ultimate demand receive the empire's ultimate reward. The chapter ends where it began — in the province of Babylon — but the power dynamics have been permanently altered. The golden statue is never mentioned again.

## 4

**Summary:** *Daniel 4 is Nebuchadnezzar's first-person royal testimony — the most powerful monarch on earth narrating his own humiliation, madness, and restoration. The chapter opens with a royal proclamation praising God, then flashes back to the events: Nebuchadnezzar dreams of an immense tree that shelters all life, then is cut down by a divine watcher. Only its stump remains, bound with iron and bronze, and 'seven times' pass over it while it lives among the animals. Daniel (Belteshazzar) interprets the dream as referring to the king himself — he will be driven from humanity and live like an animal until he acknowledges that the Most High rules over human kingdoms. Twelve months later, the prophecy is fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar boasts over Babylon and is struck with madness. After the appointed period, his sanity returns, he lifts his eyes to heaven, and he praises the God who 'does according to his will among the host of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth.'*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *This chapter is unique in biblical literature — a pagan king writes his own conversion testimony, narrating his humiliation in first person. The literary frame (vv. 1-3 and 34-37) is Nebuchadnezzar's own voice; the central narrative (vv. 4-33) shifts between first and third person, mirroring the king's loss and recovery of selfhood. The condition described — living as an animal, hair like eagle feathers, nails like bird claws — has been compared to clinical lycanthropy (boanthropy), a documented psychological condition where a person believes they are an animal. The 'watchers' (irin, v. 13) are angelic beings unique to Daniel's vocabulary, later developed extensively in 1 Enoch. The theological lesson is stated three times with increasing force (vv. 17, 25, 32): 'the Most High rules over the kingdom of humanity and gives it to whomever he wishes.' This chapter is entirely in Aramaic.*

**Translation Friction:** *The verse numbering differs between English and Aramaic Bibles — the Aramaic text places 4:1-3 at the end of chapter 3 (as 3:31-33), making the Aramaic chapter 4 begin at English 4:4. We follow the English versification standard. The word irin ('watchers,' v. 13) appears nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible, though the concept developed significantly in Second Temple literature. The phrase shiv'ah iddanin ('seven times,' vv. 16, 23, 25, 32) is ambiguous — 'times' could mean years, seasons, or undefined periods. We render 'seven periods' in the expanded rendering to preserve the ambiguity while using 'seven times' in the reading text for familiarity. The shift from first to third person in the middle of the chapter (v. 28 onward) may reflect the king's loss of rational selfhood — he can no longer narrate his own story, so the narrator steps in.*

**Connections:** *The tree imagery connects to Ezekiel 31, where Pharaoh is compared to a great cedar of Lebanon that is cut down — both passages use cosmic tree symbolism to address imperial hubris. The 'watchers' anticipate the angelic hierarchies of Daniel 7-12 and the developed angelology of 1 Enoch. Nebuchadnezzar's madness and restoration follows the biblical pattern of exile and return — even the greatest Gentile king must pass through humiliation before he can rightly praise God. The confession in verse 35 ('he does according to his will among the host of heaven') echoes and anticipates the doxologies of the Psalms (Psalm 115:3, 135:6). The chapter's theme — God humbles the proud — resonates with Isaiah 14 (the fall of the king of Babylon), Proverbs 16:18, and the Magnificat (Luke 1:52).*

<sup>1</sup>King Nebuchadnezzar, to all peoples, nations, and languages dwelling throughout the earth: May your prosperity increase! <sup>2</sup>It has pleased me to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me. <sup>3</sup>How great are his signs! How mighty are his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation. <sup>4</sup>I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace. <sup>5</sup>I had a dream that frightened me. The thoughts on my bed and the visions in my mind terrified me. <sup>6</sup>I gave orders to bring all the wise men of Babylon before me so they could make the dream's interpretation known to me. <sup>7</sup>Then the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and diviners came in, and I told them the dream, but they could not make its interpretation known to me. <sup>8</sup>Finally, Daniel came before me — he who is called Belteshazzar, after the name of my god — and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. I told him the dream: <sup>9</sup>"Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery is too difficult for you. Here are the visions of my dream — tell me its interpretation. <sup>10</sup>These were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I looked, and

there was a tree in the center of the earth, and its height was enormous. <sup>11</sup>The tree grew large and strong; its top reached the sky, and it was visible to the ends of the whole earth. <sup>12</sup>Its foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant — enough food for all. The wild animals found shade beneath it, the birds of the sky nested in its branches, and all living creatures were fed from it. <sup>13</sup>As I watched in the visions of my mind while on my bed, a watcher — a holy one — descended from heaven. <sup>14</sup>He called out in a loud voice: 'Cut down the tree and lop off its branches! Strip its foliage and scatter its fruit! Let the animals flee from beneath it and the birds from its branches. <sup>15</sup>But leave the stump with its roots in the ground, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the animals in the grass of the earth. <sup>16</sup>Let his mind be changed from that of a human, and let the mind of an animal be given to him. Let seven times pass over him. <sup>17</sup>The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, and the verdict by the word of the holy ones, so that the living may know that the Most High rules over the kingdom of humanity. He gives it to whomever he wishes and sets over it the lowliest of people.' <sup>18</sup>This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. Now you, Belteshazzar, tell me its interpretation, since none of the wise men in my kingdom can make the interpretation known to me. But you are able, because the spirit of the holy gods is in you." <sup>19</sup>Then Daniel, who was called Belteshazzar, was stunned for a time, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you." Belteshazzar answered, "My lord, may the dream apply to those who hate you, and its interpretation to your enemies! <sup>20</sup>The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, whose top reached the sky and was visible to the whole earth, <sup>21</sup>whose foliage was beautiful and fruit abundant, providing food for all, under which the wild animals lived and in whose branches the birds of the sky made their home — <sup>22</sup>that tree is you, O king. You have grown great and strong; your greatness has increased until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to the ends of the earth. <sup>23</sup>As for the king seeing a watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, 'Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump with its roots in the ground, bound with iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let him be drenched with the dew of heaven and let his portion be with the wild animals until seven times pass over him' — <sup>24</sup>this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High that has come upon my lord the king: <sup>25</sup>You will be driven away from human society. Your dwelling will be with the wild animals. You will eat grass like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass over you, until you acknowledge that the Most High rules over the kingdom of humanity and gives it to whomever he wishes. <sup>26</sup>As for the command to leave the stump with its roots — your kingdom will be restored to you once you acknowledge that Heaven rules. <sup>27</sup>Therefore, O king, may my counsel be acceptable to you: break away from your sins by doing what is right, and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed. Perhaps your prosperity may be extended." <sup>28</sup>All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>29</sup>Twelve months later, as he was walking on the roof of the royal palace in Babylon, <sup>30</sup>the king declared, "Is this not great Babylon, which I have built as a royal residence by my own mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" <sup>31</sup>While the words were still on the king's lips, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, this is declared to you: the kingdom has been taken from you! <sup>32</sup>You will be driven from human society, your dwelling will be with the wild animals, and you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass over you until you acknowledge that the Most High rules over the kingdom of humanity and gives it to whomever he wishes." <sup>33</sup>Immediately the decree was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from human society, ate grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws. <sup>34</sup>At the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored to me. I blessed the Most High and praised and honored the One who lives forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion and whose kingdom endures from generation to generation. <sup>35</sup>All the inhabitants of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the host of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain his hand or say to him, 'What have you done?' <sup>36</sup>At that time my sanity was restored to me, and my honor and splendor returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisors and nobles sought me out, and I was reestablished over my kingdom, and even greater majesty was added to me. <sup>37</sup>Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are truth and his ways are just. And those who walk in pride, he is able to humble.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. This chapter is entirely in Aramaic. The opening is formatted as a royal edict — the standard Babylonian letter format begins with the sender's name and rank, followed by the addressees and a greeting.
1. The phrase *shelamkhon yisge* ('may your peace increase') uses *shalam*, the Aramaic cognate of Hebrew *shalom*. We render 'prosperity' rather than 'peace' here because the greeting is formulaic court language from a king to his subjects, equivalent to 'may you flourish.' The universal address — all peoples, nations, and languages — matches the scope of 3:4 and signals that this is a public decree, not a private letter.
2. The king uses the title *Elaha illaha* ('God Most High') — the same title used in 3:26, showing theological continuity with the fiery furnace experience. But now the king speaks from personal experience, not merely as a witness.
2. The paired words *atayya* ('signs') and *timhayya* ('wonders') are the same Aramaic terms used for God's acts of deliverance throughout the Hebrew Bible — Nebuchadnezzar has adopted the vocabulary of Israel's worship to describe what God has done to him.
3. This verse is the climax of the prologue — Nebuchadnezzar's own words declaring God's eternal sovereignty. The exclamatory structure (*kemah ravrevin*, 'how great!') expresses genuine awe. The king who asked 'what god can deliver you from my hand?' (3:15) now proclaims that God's kingdom outlasts every human dynasty.
3. The phrase *im-dar ve-dar* ('from generation to generation') contrasts with the four-kingdom sequence of chapter 2 — human kingdoms pass in sequence, but God's kingdom spans all of them.
4. The first-person narration begins. The paired terms *sheleh* ('at ease, tranquil') and *ra'anana* ('flourishing, green, prosperous') paint a picture of complete security — the king is comfortable, thriving, without a care. This state of supreme contentment is precisely where the dream disrupts him, just as in chapter 2.
4. The word *ra'anana* ('flourishing') is the same adjective used for a thriving tree in Psalm 92:14 and Jeremiah 17:8 — an unintentional irony, since the king is about to dream of a flourishing tree that is cut down.
5. The escalation from *yedachlinnani* ('frightened me') to *yevahalunnani* ('terrified me') shows increasing distress. The king moves from discomfort to full terror. The word *harhorin* ('thoughts, anxieties') suggests the dream triggered cascading dread even after waking.
6. Unlike chapter 2, the king this time tells the wise men the dream — he does not demand that they both reveal and interpret it. Yet they still fail (v. 7), demonstrating that even with the data available, human wisdom cannot penetrate divine mysteries without divine enablement.
7. The four classes of wise men are the same as in chapter 2 — *chartummayya*, *ashfayya*, *Kasdaei*, and *gazrayya*. Their failure repeats the pattern: Babylonian wisdom is systematically inadequate before divine revelation. The king has learned from chapter 2 that Daniel can succeed where others fail, yet he summons the professionals first — perhaps protocol, perhaps hope that this time ordinary channels will suffice.
8. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges two things about Daniel: his Babylonian name connects to Bel (the king's god), and his abilities come from *ruach elahin qaddishin* ('the spirit of the holy gods'). The phrase is polytheistic — the king sees Daniel's inspiration as coming from the divine realm generally, not yet from one specific God.
8. The phrase *ad achoren* ('at last, finally') may indicate reluctance to consult Daniel, or simply that Daniel was last in the queue of specialists. Given the king's established relationship with Daniel, the former seems more likely — he hoped ordinary channels would spare him whatever Daniel might say.
9. The title *rav chartummayya* ('chief of the magicians') reflects Daniel's official position from 2:48. The phrase *kol-raz la anes lakh* ('no mystery presses/distresses you,' i.e., 'no mystery is too difficult for you') expresses the king's confidence based on chapter 2.
9. The king addresses Daniel by his Babylonian name *Belteshazzar* throughout this chapter — this is the king's perspective, narrating from within his own cultural framework.
10. The Aramaic *ilan* ('tree') begins one of the Bible's great symbolic visions. A tree 'in the center of the earth' (*be-go ar'a*) is a cosmic tree — a world-tree connecting heaven and earth, sheltering all life. This image appears in Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and later Norse mythology, but here it represents a specific king.
10. The phrase *rumeh saggi* ('its height was great') begins the description of the tree's cosmic proportions, which escalate through the following verses.
11. The three qualities — *revah* ('grew large'), *teqif* ('became strong'), and *rumeh yimte li-shemayya* ('its height reached the heavens') — parallel the progression from earthly power to cosmic pretension. A tree that touches heaven echoes the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:4), another Babylonian project of overreach.
11. The phrase *chazoteh le-sof kol-ar'a* ('its appearance/visibility to the end of all the earth') gives the tree universal scope — everyone on earth can see it, everyone is in its shadow.
12. The tree provides three things: shelter (the beasts rest under it), habitat (the birds dwell in its branches), and sustenance (all flesh is fed from it). This is the ideal of benevolent rule — a kingdom that protects, houses, and feeds all under its authority.
12. The phrase *kol-bisra* ('all flesh') encompasses every living creature. The tree's generosity is total, mirroring the universal dominion described in 2:38. The image is seductive — who would cut down such a tree? This is why the judgment shocks.

13. The term *ir ve-qaddish* ('a watcher and a holy one') introduces a class of angelic beings unique to Daniel's vocabulary. The word *ir* ('watcher,' from the root 'ur, 'to be awake, to watch') suggests a being who never sleeps — perpetually vigilant in divine service. The term is paired with *qaddish* ('holy one') as an explanatory apposition: a watcher, that is, a holy one.
13. This is the earliest biblical occurrence of this angelic designation, though it became enormously influential in Second Temple Judaism, particularly in 1 Enoch (the 'Watchers' who descended and sinned).
14. The watcher's commands are a series of imperatives — *goddu* ('cut down'), *qatsitstu* ('lop off'), *attaru* ('strip'), *baddaru* ('scatter'). The verbs are violent and thorough — not pruning but demolition.
14. The animals and birds are driven away — the tree's beneficiaries lose their shelter and sustenance. The cosmic tree that sustained all life is now rendered hostile to all life. The benevolent kingdom becomes a fallen ruin.
15. The transition from 'it' (the tree) to 'him' (a person) begins here — *yitstavva* ('let him be drenched') uses a masculine singular, shifting from botanical imagery to personal address. The dream is revealing that the tree is a person.
15. The band of iron and bronze (*eesur di farzel u-nechash*) around the stump is variously interpreted — it may represent protection (preserving the stump for future restoration), restraint (binding the madman), or simply the visual detail of a banded tree stump. The ambiguity is intentional.
15. The phrase 'leave the stump with its roots' (*iqqar sharshohi be-ar'a shevuqu*) is the key to hope in this judgment — the tree is cut down but not uprooted. The root system survives, making regrowth possible.
16. The word *levav* ('heart, mind') in Aramaic encompasses what English divides between heart and mind — the center of thought, will, and identity. We render 'mind' here because the transformation is cognitive: the king loses his human reasoning.
16. The phrase *shiv'ah iddanin yachlefun alohi* ('seven times will pass over him') uses the plural *iddanin*, whose singular *iddan* can mean 'time, season, year.' The ambiguity is preserved in our rendering. Seven is the number of divine completion — the madness is not random but measured.
17. The phrase *bi-gezerat irin* ('by the decree of the watchers') gives the angelic beings juridical authority — they issue decrees (*gezerat*, from the root *gazar*, 'to cut, determine') on God's behalf.
17. The three-part theological statement — God rules human kingdoms, gives them to whomever he wishes, and sometimes elevates the lowliest — appears three times in this chapter (vv. 17, 25, 32), functioning as a refrain. Each repetition occurs in a different context: in the dream, in the interpretation, and in the fulfillment.
17. The word *shefal* ('lowly, humble, base') does not necessarily mean morally base — it means of low status, socially insignificant. God's sovereignty is demonstrated most clearly when the least likely person receives the throne.
18. The king's appeal to Daniel repeats the formula from verse 9 — the spirit of the holy gods is in him. Nebuchadnezzar has by now fully accepted that Daniel possesses a capability rooted in the divine realm that his professional scholars lack.
18. The contrast is explicit: *kol-chakkimei malkuti la yakhlin* ('all the wise men of my kingdom are unable') versus *ve-ant kahel* ('but you are able'). The entire Babylonian intellectual establishment fails; one Jewish exile succeeds.
19. The word *eshtomam* ('was stunned, appalled') indicates Daniel was horrified by what the dream meant for the king he served. The phrase *ke-sha'ah chadah* ('for one hour/moment') describes a visible pause — Daniel went silent, processing the terrible revelation.
19. The king's reassurance 'do not let it alarm you' shows unusual tenderness — the most powerful man in the world encouraging his subordinate to speak freely, even if the news is bad.
19. Daniel's wish — 'may the dream apply to your enemies' — is a conventional expression of loyalty (not a literal wish that others suffer this fate) showing his genuine regard for Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel cares for the man whose kingdom held him captive.
20. Daniel recapitulates the dream description from verses 10-12 before delivering the interpretation. This is standard ancient Near Eastern dream-interpretation protocol: restate the dream, then interpret it, establishing that the interpreter has accurately understood the vision.
21. The recapitulation is nearly verbatim from verse 12, with slight variations: *tedur* ('dwelt') replaces the earlier *tattlel* ('found shade'), and *yishkenan* ('settled, nested') replaces *yedurun* ('dwelt'). The minor variations reflect natural Aramaic narrative repetition rather than substantive differences.
22. The identification *ant-hu malka* ('you are the king,' or 'it is you, O king') parallels 2:38 ('you are the head of gold'). Once again Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that he is the subject of the dream — but this time the message is judgment, not honor.
22. The parallel between the tree reaching the sky and the king's greatness reaching the sky (*revutak revat u-metat li-shemayya*) connects imperial ambition to the Babel motif — reaching toward heaven is always dangerous in biblical narrative.
23. Daniel repeats the watcher's decree almost verbatim, confirming that he has received the dream accurately. The long recapitulation builds suspense — the king and reader both wait for the interpretation that follows in verses 24-26.
23. The stump detail is emphasized again — the judgment is severe but not final. The roots remain, holding open the possibility of restoration.
24. Daniel calls it *gezerat Illaha* ('the decree of the Most High') — the watcher's decree in verse 17 is God's own decree. The watchers execute divine decisions, not independent judgments.

24. The respectful address *mari malka* ('my lord the king') maintains Daniel's personal regard for Nebuchadnezzar even while delivering devastating news. Daniel is a faithful counselor, not a vindictive prophet.
25. The second statement of the chapter's theological refrain: *shallit Illaha be-malkut anasha u-le-man di yitsbe yittinninnah* ('the Most High rules over human kingdoms and gives them to whomever he wishes'). This time it appears as the stated purpose of the madness — the king will suffer until he learns this truth.
25. The verb *tarda* ('you will be driven') is passive — Nebuchadnezzar will not choose to leave; he will be expelled from human society. The verbs describe progressive dehumanization: driven from people, dwelling with animals, eating grass, exposed to the elements.
26. The phrase *malkutak lakh qayyamah* ('your kingdom will stand/remain for you') promises restoration — the stump will sprout again. The madness is remedial, not destructive.
26. The shorthand *di shallitin shemaiyya* ('that Heaven rules') uses 'Heaven' as a metonym for God — one of the earliest examples of this substitution, which became common in later Judaism (and is reflected in Matthew's 'kingdom of heaven' versus the other Gospels' 'kingdom of God').
27. Daniel's counsel contains two imperatives: *chatayikh be-tsidqah peruq* ('break off your sins by righteousness') and *avayatak be-michan anayin* ('break off your iniquities by mercy to the poor/oppressed'). This is not a guarantee of escape but a conditional hope — *hen teheve arkha li-shlevatak* ('perhaps there will be a lengthening of your tranquility').
27. The word *anayin* ('poor, afflicted, oppressed') points to a specific social sin — Nebuchadnezzar's imperial projects were built on forced labor and exploitation. Daniel prescribes the cure that matches the disease.
27. The distinction between *chata'in* ('sins, failures') and *avayin* ('iniquities, perversions') preserves the Hebrew/Aramaic distinction between missing the mark and deliberate moral distortion.
28. This terse transition — *kolla meta* ('all of it came') — marks the shift from dream and interpretation to fulfillment. The narrator's brevity is devastating: everything Daniel warned about, happened. The verse also marks the shift from first-person narration back to third person, as if the narrator steps in because the king is about to lose his rational capacity to tell his own story.
29. The phrase *liqtsat yarchin tre'i asar* ('at the end of twelve months') indicates God gave Nebuchadnezzar a full year of grace after Daniel's warning — time to repent and change course. The king's failure to heed Daniel's counsel (v. 27) during this grace period makes the judgment both just and sorrowful.
29. The 'palace of the kingdom of Babylon' (*hekhmal malkuta di Bavel*) was likely the famous South Palace, from whose elevated terraces the king could survey the city he built.
30. The boast contains three first-person claims: *anah venoitah* ('I built it'), *be-teqof chisni* ('by the strength of my power'), and *li-yeqar hadri* ('for the glory of my splendor'). Every element attributes Babylon's greatness to the king himself — the exact opposite of what Daniel told him in verse 25 ('the Most High rules over human kingdoms and gives them to whomever he wishes').
30. Archaeologically, Nebuchadnezzar's building projects were indeed enormous — inscriptions boasting of his construction work have been found throughout Babylon. The biblical text presents the historical boast as the trigger for divine judgment.
31. The phrase *od milleta be-fum malka* ('while the word was still in the king's mouth') emphasizes the immediate divine response — the boast is not even finished when judgment falls. The timing is not coincidental but precisely calibrated.
31. The voice 'falls' (*nefal*) from heaven — the same verb used for falling before the golden image (3:5-6). What fell in chapter 3 was human worship before a false god; what falls now is divine judgment on false self-worship.
31. The phrase *malkutah adat minnakh* ('the kingdom has departed from you') uses the same verb as the removal of the gold head from the statue vision — kingdoms are removed by divine decree.
32. The third and final statement of the refrain — the Most High rules and gives kingdoms to whomever he wishes. This time it comes directly from heaven, spoken by God's own voice, not through an angel or through Daniel. The progression — dream, interpretation, divine declaration — gives the truth maximum authority.
32. The decree is nearly verbatim from verse 25 (Daniel's interpretation), confirming that Daniel's words were God's words.
33. The phrase *bah-sha'ata* ('in that same hour, immediately') — the fulfillment is instantaneous, just as the voice from heaven was immediate after the boast. The narrative compresses what must have been a gradual process into a single dramatic moment.
33. The description of physical transformation — *sa'reh ke-nishrin revah* ('his hair grew like eagles' feathers') and *tifrohi ke-tsipperin* ('his nails like birds' claws') — portrays extreme neglect and wildness rather than literal metamorphosis. The condition matches clinical descriptions of severe mental illness combined with prolonged exposure to the elements.
33. The shift to third person is complete — the king who narrated his own story can no longer do so. He has lost the rational selfhood required for first-person narration.
34. The first-person narration resumes — the king's self has been restored. The word *mand'i* ('my knowledge, my reason, my sanity') is the same root as *mada'* in 1:17 — the very capacity God gave Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar lost and now recovers.

34. The doxology closely parallels verse 3, creating an *inclusio* (literary bookend) that frames the entire chapter as a unified testimony. The king begins and ends with the same confession: God's kingdom is eternal.
34. The title *chay alma* ('the One who lives forever') distinguishes the living God from the dead idols of Babylon — a title that gains force from a king who was himself temporarily reduced to a subhuman state.
35. This is the fullest theological confession in the chapter. The king who boasted 'by my own mighty power' (v. 30) now declares that all earth's inhabitants — including himself — are *ke-lah chashivin* ('considered as nothing'). The scope encompasses both *cheil shemayya* ('the army of heaven' — angelic beings) and *dare'i ar'a* ('the inhabitants of earth') — God's sovereignty is total.
35. The double negation — no one can restrain (*yemache bi-ydeh*, 'strike his hand') or question (*ye'mar leh mah avadett*, 'say to him what have you done') — establishes absolute divine sovereignty. This language parallels Isaiah 45:9 and Job 9:12, placing the pagan king's confession in the stream of Israel's wisdom tradition.
35. The phrase *ke-mitsb'yeh aved* ('he does according to his will/pleasure') echoes Psalm 115:3 and 135:6 — God does whatever pleases him. Nebuchadnezzar has arrived, through suffering, at the theological position Israel's psalms have always held.
36. The restoration is comprehensive: *mand'i* ('sanity'), *hadri ve-zivi* ('honor and splendor'), and *malkuti* ('kingdom') are all returned. The phrase *revu yattirah husefat li* ('surpassing greatness was added to me') indicates Nebuchadnezzar emerged from his humiliation more powerful than before — God's purpose was transformation, not destruction.
36. The return of his counselors — *haddavray ve-ravrvanay yeva'on* ('my advisors and nobles sought me') — suggests the court had maintained his position during his incapacity, possibly managed by Daniel as chief administrator.
37. The three verbs — *meshabbech* ('praise'), *meromem* ('exalt'), *mehaddar* ('honor') — form a climactic triad of worship. The king who once demanded worship of his golden image now freely offers worship to the true King.
37. The title *Melekh Shemayya* ('King of heaven') goes beyond the earlier *Elaha illaha* ('God Most High'). 'Most High' ranks God above others; 'King of heaven' identifies him as the ruler above all rulers — the sovereign the 'king of kings' himself must acknowledge.
37. The closing *maxim* — 'those who walk in pride he is able to humble' — serves as both confession and warning. It is the king's personal testimony and a universal moral principle. The chapter that began with a royal proclamation ends with prophetic wisdom from the lips of a pagan king.

## 5

**Summary:** *Daniel 5 narrates the final night of the Babylonian empire. King Belshazzar hosts a lavish feast for a thousand of his nobles, sacrilegiously drinking from the gold and silver vessels taken from the Jerusalem temple. A disembodied hand appears and writes four mysterious words on the palace wall. When Babylon's wise men fail to read or interpret the inscription, the queen mother remembers Daniel. Summoned to court, Daniel refuses the king's gifts, recounts Nebuchadnezzar's humbling by God, rebukes Belshazzar for not learning from it, and reads the writing: MENE MENE TEKEL UPHARSIN. The kingdom has been numbered, the king has been weighed and found deficient, and the empire is being divided between the Medes and Persians. That very night Belshazzar is killed and Darius the Mede receives the kingdom.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *This chapter is entirely in Aramaic, continuing the section that began at 2:4b. The writing on the wall — MENE MENE TEKEL UPHARSIN — is a masterpiece of Aramaic wordplay. Each word carries a double meaning: mene derives from mena ('to number/count') but also denotes the mina, a unit of weight; tekel derives from teqal ('to weigh') and denotes the shekel; parsin (singular peres) derives from peras ('to divide') and also puns on 'Persia' (Paras). The wise men may have been able to read the consonants but could not unlock the wordplay. Daniel alone perceives both the surface vocabulary (weights: mina, mina, shekel, half-minas) and the verbal meanings (numbered, weighed, divided). Belshazzar is historically identified as the son of Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon; he served as co-regent while Nabonidus was absent at Tema. This explains why Belshazzar offers Daniel the 'third' rank in the kingdom (v. 16) — the highest rank available, since Nabonidus held the first and Belshazzar the second.*

**Translation Friction:** *The identification of 'Darius the Mede' (v. 31) remains one of the most debated historical questions in Daniel. No figure by this name appears in Babylonian or Persian records for this period; Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon in 539 BCE. Proposed identifications include Gubaru (a governor appointed by Cyrus), Cyrus himself under a throne name, or Cyaxares II (Xenophon's account). We render the text as given without imposing a solution. The phrase 'that very night' (*beh-lelyah*) in verse 30 creates dramatic immediacy — judgment is not deferred but falls within hours of the sacrilege. The Aramaic word*

*parsin in the inscription is plural; Daniel interprets it in the singular peres to make the wordplay with Paras ('Persia') explicit.*

*Connections: The desecration of the temple vessels connects back to Daniel 1:2, where Nebuchadnezzar placed them in the treasury of his god. What Nebuchadnezzar treated with at least formal respect, Belshazzar profanes for entertainment. The theme of divine humbling of arrogant kings connects to Nebuchadnezzar's madness in chapter 4. The fall of Babylon fulfills the prophecies of Isaiah 13-14, 21:1-10, and Jeremiah 50-51. The handwriting on the wall becomes one of the most widely recognized biblical images in Western culture. The transition from Babylonian to Medo-Persian rule corresponds to the shift from the gold head to the silver chest in the statue vision of chapter 2.*

<sup>1</sup>King Belshazzar held a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles, and he drank wine in the presence of the thousand. <sup>2</sup>Under the influence of the wine, Belshazzar gave orders to bring in the gold and silver vessels that his predecessor Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his consorts might drink from them. <sup>3</sup>Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple — the house of God in Jerusalem — and the king and his nobles, his wives and his consorts, drank from them. <sup>4</sup>They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone. <sup>5</sup>At that very moment, the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the royal palace, opposite the lampstand. The king watched the hand as it wrote. <sup>6</sup>Then the king's face turned pale, his thoughts terrified him, the strength drained from his hips, and his knees knocked against each other. <sup>7</sup>The king called out urgently to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the diviners. The king addressed the wise men of Babylon: "Whoever reads this writing and tells me its interpretation will be clothed in purple, will wear a gold chain around his neck, and will rule as the third highest in the kingdom." <sup>8</sup>Then all the king's wise men came in, but they were unable to read the writing or make its interpretation known to the king. <sup>9</sup>Then King Belshazzar was deeply alarmed, his face grew even more pale, and his nobles were thrown into confusion. <sup>10</sup>Because of the words of the king and his nobles, the queen mother entered the banquet hall. She spoke and said, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts alarm you, and do not let your face grow pale. <sup>11</sup>There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your predecessor, illumination, insight, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. King Nebuchadnezzar, your predecessor — the king your predecessor — appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and diviners, <sup>12</sup>because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge, and insight — the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve difficult problems — were found in him, in Daniel, whom the king named Beltshazzar. Now let Daniel be summoned, and he will make the interpretation known." <sup>13</sup>Then Daniel was brought before the king. The king addressed Daniel: "Are you that Daniel, one of the Judean exiles whom my predecessor the king brought from Judah? <sup>14</sup>I have heard about you — that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that illumination, insight, and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you. <sup>15</sup>Just now the wise men and enchanters were brought before me to read this writing and make its interpretation known to me, but they were unable to explain what it means. <sup>16</sup>But I have heard about you, that you can give interpretations and solve difficult problems. Now, if you are able to read the writing and make its interpretation known to me, you will be clothed in purple, you will wear a gold chain around your neck, and you will rule as the third highest in the kingdom." <sup>17</sup>Then Daniel responded and said before the king, "Keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and make the interpretation known to him. <sup>18</sup>As for you, O king — the Most High God gave your predecessor Nebuchadnezzar kingship, greatness, glory, and majesty. <sup>19</sup>Because of the greatness that God gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whoever he wished, he killed; whoever he wished, he kept alive; whoever he wished, he elevated; and whoever he wished, he brought low. <sup>20</sup>But when his heart became arrogant and his spirit hardened in pride, he was deposed from his royal throne, and his honor was stripped from him. <sup>21</sup>He was driven away from human society, his mind became like that of an animal, and he lived among the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven — until he acknowledged that the Most High God rules over human kingdoms and sets over them whoever he chooses. <sup>22</sup>Yet you, his successor Belshazzar — you have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all of this. <sup>23</sup>Instead, you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven. The vessels from his house were

brought before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your consorts, drank wine from them. You praised gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone — gods that cannot see, cannot hear, and know nothing. But the God who holds your very breath in his hand and who controls all your ways — him you have not honored. <sup>24</sup>Therefore the hand was sent from his presence, and this inscription was written. <sup>25</sup>This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. <sup>26</sup>This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE — God has numbered your kingdom and brought it to an end. <sup>27</sup>TEKEL — you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. <sup>28</sup>PERES — your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians. <sup>29</sup>Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and a proclamation was issued concerning him that he would rule as the third highest in the kingdom. <sup>30</sup>Th at very night, Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. <sup>31</sup>And Darius the Mede received the kingdom at the age of sixty-two.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. This chapter continues in Aramaic, the language of the text since 2:4b. Belshazzar (Bel-shar-usur, 'Bel protect the king') was historically the son of Nabonidus, the last Neo-Babylonian king, serving as co-regent in Babylon while his father resided at Tema in Arabia.
1. The Aramaic lechem rav ('great feast/banquet') literally means 'great bread' — lechem covers food broadly. The number 'a thousand' indicates an enormous state banquet. The detail that Belshazzar drank 'in the presence of' (laqavel) the thousand highlights his public, ostentatious behavior — the king is performing for his court.
2. The phrase bi-te'em chamra ('at the taste of the wine' or 'under the influence of the wine') suggests the sacrilegious command was fueled by intoxication — not a calculated act but a drunken one, which makes it no less culpable.
2. The Aramaic avuhi ('his father') is rendered 'his predecessor' since Belshazzar was actually the son of Nabonidus, not Nebuchadnezzar. The Aramaic 'father' (av) can mean ancestor, predecessor, or dynastic forefather — it does not require direct paternity.
2. The sheglateh ('wives') and lechenateh ('consorts/concubines') indicate the full royal household is present. Bringing sacred temple vessels to such a gathering compounds the sacrilege.
3. The phrase beit elaha ('house of God') is the Aramaic equivalent of Hebrew beit Elohim. This is not merely a temple among temples — the narrator identifies it specifically as the house of the true God, heightening the sacrilege of the act.
4. The six materials — gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, stone — form a descending hierarchy of value, perhaps deliberately echoing the metals of Nebuchadnezzar's statue in chapter 2. The irony is sharp: they drink from vessels consecrated to the living God while praising lifeless idols made of inert materials. The juxtaposition is the theological climax of the sacrilege.
5. The phrase bah-sha'atah ('at that very hour/moment') indicates immediate divine response — the sacrilege triggers instantaneous judgment. The Aramaic etsbe'an di yad-enash ('fingers of a human hand') is deliberately uncanny: these are recognizable human fingers, but disembodied, with no arm or body attached.
5. The writing appears on gira ('plaster/lime coating') of the wall — Babylonian palace walls were coated with white gypsum plaster, making the writing visible. The detail 'opposite the lampstand' (laqavel nebrashtah) means the writing was illuminated and clearly visible to the king.
5. The phrase pas yedah ('the palm/part of the hand') indicates the king could see only the writing portion of the hand — not an arm, not a figure, just fingers and palm. This partial visibility increases the terror.
6. Four physical symptoms of terror are catalogued in sequence: facial pallor (zivohi shenohi, 'his brightness changed'), mental panic (ra'yonohi yevahalunneh, 'his thoughts alarmed him'), loosening of the hip joints (qitrei chartseh mishtarayin, literally 'the knots of his loins were loosened' — possibly indicating loss of bladder control), and knocking knees. The description moves from face to mind to body, conveying total collapse of composure.
6. The verb yevahalunneh ('terrified him') is from the root b-h-l, which connotes sudden, overwhelming alarm — the same root used of Nebuchadnezzar's disturbance in 4:2.
7. The reward offered — purple clothing, a gold chain, and the rank of 'third' (talti) in the kingdom — represents the highest honors available. The 'third' rank is significant: Nabonidus was first, Belshazzar was second as co-regent, so third was the maximum authority Belshazzar could grant. This detail reflects accurate knowledge of the Babylonian political arrangement.
7. The Aramaic argavana ('purple') indicates royal clothing — purple dye was extremely expensive, derived from murex shellfish. The hamnikha di-dahava ('gold chain/collar') was a standard emblem of high office in ancient Near Eastern courts.
8. The failure of the wise men is total — they cannot even read the script, let alone interpret it. The inscription may have been in an unfamiliar script, or the words may have been consonants without vowels that could be read multiple ways. The Aramaic la kahlin ('they were not able') emphasizes inability, not mere reluctance.

9. The verb *mishtabbshin* ('were perplexed, confused, agitated') applied to the nobles indicates the panic is spreading from the king to his entire court. The failure of the wise men has removed the last hope of rational explanation. The repeated mention of the king's changed appearance (*zivhi shanyin*, 'his brightness was altered') emphasizes the visible, physical toll of his fear.
10. The *malketah* ('queen') here is almost certainly the queen mother (Nabonidus's wife or Nebuchadnezzar's widow), not Belshazzar's wife — his wives are already at the feast (v. 2-3). The queen mother enters from outside, drawn by the commotion. Her knowledge of Nebuchadnezzar's era and of Daniel (whom Belshazzar apparently does not know) confirms her seniority.
10. Her composed entrance and reassuring address contrast sharply with the terror that has consumed the king and his court. She is the only calm voice in the scene.
11. The phrase *ruach elahin qaddishin* ('spirit of holy gods') is ambiguous in Aramaic — it could mean 'spirit of the holy gods' (polytheistic reading from the queen mother's perspective) or 'spirit of the Holy God' (theological reading). The Aramaic *elahin* is plural and *qaddishin* is plural, but Aramaic uses plural forms for the singular deity. We render as 'holy gods' to reflect the queen mother's likely perspective as a pagan speaker.
11. Three qualities are attributed to Daniel: *nahiru* ('illumination, brightness'), *sokletanu* ('insight, understanding'), and *chokmah* ('wisdom'). These parallel the threefold gifts mentioned in chapter 1. The repetition of 'your predecessor' (*avukh*) three times in the verse emphasizes the connection to Nebuchadnezzar's era.
12. The Aramaic *ruach yattirah* ('extraordinary/surpassing spirit') indicates a spirit that exceeds normal human capacity. Three abilities are listed: interpreting dreams (*mefashar chelmin*), explaining riddles (*achavayat achidin*, literally 'declaring knotted things'), and solving difficult problems (*mesharei qitrin*, literally 'loosening knots'). The metaphor of 'loosening knots' may derive from the ancient Near Eastern practice of reading knotted cords as divination tools.
12. The queen mother uses Daniel's Hebrew name, not his Babylonian name *Belteshazzar*, suggesting she knew him personally during Nebuchadnezzar's reign.
13. Belshazzar's question 'Are you that Daniel?' suggests Daniel has been forgotten or marginalized under this regime — a striking contrast to his prominence under Nebuchadnezzar. The phrase *benei galuta* ('sons of the exile/captivity') identifies Daniel by his status as a deportee, not by his former rank. Belshazzar defines Daniel by his subjugation, not his accomplishments.
14. Belshazzar's description echoes the queen mother's words almost verbatim, suggesting he is repeating secondhand information. He has no personal knowledge of Daniel. The phrase *chokmah yattirah* ('extraordinary/surpassing wisdom') uses the same adjective *yattirah* applied to Daniel's spirit in verse 12.
15. The phrase *peshar milletah* ('the interpretation of the matter') uses the Aramaic *peshar*, which denotes not merely translation but the disclosure of hidden meaning. The wise men's failure sets the stage for Daniel's success and reinforces the theme that divine mysteries are accessible only through divine revelation.
16. Belshazzar repeats the same reward offered to the wise men in verse 7. The 'third' (*talta*) position in the kingdom reflects the historical reality that Belshazzar himself held the second position under his father Nabonidus. This is the highest rank he has the authority to confer.
17. Daniel's refusal of gifts (*mattenatak lakh lehevyan*, 'let your gifts be yours') sets him apart from the professional diviners who serve for pay. This echoes his independence from the king's food in chapter 1. Daniel's authority comes from God, not from royal patronage, and he will not create even the appearance of being bought.
17. The word *nevazbevatak* ('your rewards/gifts') is a Persian loanword, reflecting the administrative vocabulary of the imperial court.
18. Daniel addresses Belshazzar but begins with a lesson about Nebuchadnezzar, establishing a pattern: what happened to the predecessor is about to happen to the successor. The title *Elaha Illaya* ('Most High God') is the Aramaic equivalent of Hebrew *El Elyon*, asserting divine sovereignty over all earthly kings.
18. Four gifts are listed — *malkuta* ('kingship'), *revuta* ('greatness'), *yeqara* ('glory/honor'), and *hadrah* ('majesty/splendor') — each given by God, not earned by Nebuchadnezzar.
19. The fourfold repetition of *di-havah tsave* ('whoever he wished') creates a portrait of absolute royal power — life, death, promotion, demotion — all at the king's whim. But Daniel's framing is crucial: this power was given (*yehav*) by God, not seized by Nebuchadnezzar. The sovereign who grants it can also revoke it.
19. The phrase *ammayya ummayya velishannayya* ('peoples, nations, and languages') is Daniel's standard formula for universal humanity (cf. 3:4, 7; 4:1; 6:25; 7:14).
20. The verb *rim* ('was lifted up, became exalted') describes the root sin: Nebuchadnezzar's heart elevated itself beyond its proper station. The verb *tiqefat* ('hardened, grew strong') combined with *lahazadah* ('in arrogance, presumptuously') depicts a spirit that has calcified in self-importance. This recalls Nebuchadnezzar's madness narrative in chapter 4.
21. This verse condenses the entire narrative of chapter 4 into a single sentence. The phrase *libbeh im cheyvata shavvi* ('his heart/mind was made equal with the beasts') describes the loss of human rationality — not a physical transformation but a mental dissolution.

- 21.** The lesson Nebuchadnezzar eventually learned — that the Most High rules over human kingdoms — is precisely the lesson Belshazzar has failed to learn. Daniel is building his case: ignorance is no excuse, because the precedent is in living memory.
- 22.** The pronoun 'you' (ant) is emphatic — Daniel is drawing a direct, personal contrast. The phrase *la hashpelet libbakh* ('you have not brought low your heart') is the exact opposite of what happened to Nebuchadnezzar. Where the predecessor was humbled by divine force, the successor should have humbled himself voluntarily. The phrase *kol-qavel di kol-denah yeda'ta* ('even though you knew all this') eliminates any defense of ignorance.
- 23.** Daniel's indictment has three charges: (1) self-exaltation against the Lord of heaven (*Mare Shemayya*), (2) desecration of temple vessels, and (3) praising dead idols while dishonoring the living God. The climactic contrast — gods that 'cannot see, cannot hear, and know nothing' versus the God who 'holds your breath in his hand' — echoes the idol polemic of Psalm 115:4-8 and Isaiah 44:9-20.
- 23.** The phrase *di nishmtakh bi-ydeh* ('who holds your breath/life in his hand') makes the point devastatingly personal: the very breath Belshazzar used to praise dead idols was on loan from the living God.
- 24.** The Aramaic *min-qadamohi* ('from his presence') refers to God — the hand was sent from God. Daniel identifies the author of the inscription: it is not a random omen but a deliberate divine communication. The verb *reshim* ('was inscribed/written') carries the weight of official decree — this is not graffiti but a divine verdict.
- 25.** The four words — MENE MENE TEKEL PARSIN — function on multiple levels simultaneously. As nouns, they are units of weight: a mina, a mina, a shekel, and half-minas (*parsin* is the plural of *peres*, a half-mina). As verbs (which Daniel will unpack in the following verses), they mean 'numbered, numbered, weighed, and divided.' The wordplay is untranslatable — it would be like writing 'pound, pound, ounce, quarters' and having each word also be a verb of judgment.
- 25.** We preserve the Aramaic words untranslated in the rendering, as they are proper to the inscription itself. The KJV's 'UPHARSIN' includes the Aramaic conjunction *u-* ('and'); we render as 'and PARSIN' for clarity while noting both forms.
- 26.** Daniel interprets *mene* as the verb *mena* ('to number, to count'). The phrase *menah elaha malkutak vehashlemah* ('God has numbered your kingdom and completed it') means God has tallied the full count of Belshazzar's reign and determined it is finished. The verb *hashlemah* ('completed, finished, brought to an end') is devastating — the kingdom is not just threatened but concluded.
- 27.** Daniel interprets *tekel* as the verb *teqal* ('to weigh'). The image is of a merchant's balance — Belshazzar has been placed on God's scales and the measurement has come up short. The Aramaic *chassir* ('lacking, deficient, wanting') is a commercial term for underweight goods. The metaphor is striking: the king of the greatest empire on earth does not have sufficient moral weight to register on God's scales.
- 27.** This verse has become one of the most quoted lines in the Hebrew Bible, entering dozens of languages as a proverb for being judged and found inadequate.
- 28.** Daniel switches from the plural *parsin* (v. 25) to the singular *peres* for the interpretation, unlocking the triple wordplay: (1) *peres* as a verb means 'divided,' (2) as a noun it means 'half-mina' (a unit of weight, continuing the scale metaphor), and (3) it puns on *Paras* ('Persia'). The kingdom is not merely falling — it is being specifically transferred to the Medo-Persian empire. The wordplay is the key the wise men could not find: the inscription is simultaneously a list of weights, a sequence of divine verdicts, and an identification of the conqueror.
- 29.** The bitter irony is that Belshazzar honors Daniel for delivering a death sentence against his own kingdom. The rewards are now meaningless — Daniel receives authority over a kingdom that will fall within hours. Whether Belshazzar is honoring his word despite the devastating interpretation, or whether he is acting in denial, the text does not say.
- 30.** The sentence is starkly brief — eight Aramaic words for the fall of Babylon. The phrase *beh beleilya* ('in that night itself') emphasizes the immediacy: the banquet, the writing, the interpretation, and the death all occur within a single night. The passive verb *qetil* ('was killed') does not identify the killer. Babylonian records indicate that Cyrus's general Ugbaru (*Gobryas*) entered Babylon with minimal resistance on the night of October 12, 539 BCE, possibly during a festival.
- 30.** The contrast between verse 1 (lavish banquet) and verse 30 (assassination) could not be sharper. The empire that seemed invincible at dinner is destroyed by dawn.
- 31.** This verse is numbered as 6:1 in some versification traditions (the Hebrew/Aramaic text places it at the end of chapter 5). The identity of 'Darius the Mede' remains one of the most discussed historical questions in Daniel studies. No figure by this name appears in Babylonian or Persian records for the conquest of Babylon — Cyrus the Persian is the attested conqueror. Proposed identifications include Gubar/Gobryas (a governor appointed by Cyrus), Cyaxares II (known from Xenophon), or Cyrus himself under a Median throne name. We render as the text reads without imposing a solution.
- 31.** The verb *qabbel* ('received') rather than 'took' or 'conquered' suggests a transfer of authority rather than a military seizure — consistent with the historical record of Babylon's relatively peaceful capitulation to Cyrus.

## 6

**Summary:** *Daniel 6 recounts the conspiracy against Daniel under the new Medo-Persian administration and his miraculous deliverance from the lions' den. Darius organizes his empire under 120 satraps with three chief administrators, of whom Daniel is one. Daniel's exceptional spirit draws the king's attention, prompting jealous officials to trap him through a decree forbidding prayer to anyone except the king for thirty days. Daniel continues his practice of praying three times daily toward Jerusalem. Caught in his own irrevocable law, Darius reluctantly sentences Daniel to the lions' den, but God sends an angel to shut the lions' mouths. Daniel is vindicated, his accusers are destroyed, and Darius issues a decree honoring the God of Daniel as the living God whose kingdom will never be destroyed.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *This chapter is the last in the Aramaic section of Daniel (2:4b-7:28), though the narrative returns to Hebrew at 8:1. The irrevocable nature of Medo-Persian law — 'the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked' (dat Madai u-Pharas di la tehade) — is a crucial plot mechanism, also attested in Esther 1:19 and 8:8. Daniel's practice of praying three times daily toward Jerusalem (v. 10) reflects the exile theology of Solomon's temple dedication prayer (1 Kings 8:46-50), where Solomon anticipated that future exiles would pray toward the temple and God would hear. The phrase 'the living God' (Elaha chayya) in Darius's decree (v. 26) stands in sharp contrast to the dead gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone that Belshazzar praised in 5:4. The structure of the chapter mirrors chapter 3 (the fiery furnace): faithful refusal, royal sentence, divine deliverance, pagan king's confession, enemies destroyed.*

**Translation Friction:** *The Aramaic word gob ('den, pit') may refer to a cistern-like structure rather than a cave — Babylonian and Persian records mention using animal pits for execution. The phrase di ruach yattirah beh ('in whom was an extraordinary spirit') in verse 3 echoes the same phrase applied to Daniel in 5:12, creating continuity across the change of empires. The sealing of the stone with the king's signet and the signets of his nobles (v. 17) creates a legal seal that prevents either party from tampering — the king cannot secretly release Daniel, and the nobles cannot secretly kill him. This legal precision reflects Persian administrative culture.*

**Connections:** *Daniel's deliverance from the lions parallels the three friends' deliverance from the furnace in chapter 3. The prayer toward Jerusalem connects to Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 8:46-50 and to the practice described in Psalm 5:7 and Psalm 28:2. Darius's decree (vv. 25-27) echoes and expands Nebuchadnezzar's decrees in 3:29 and 4:34-37, showing a progression of pagan kings acknowledging Israel's God. The 'living God' title connects forward to the New Testament (Matthew 16:16, Acts 14:15). Daniel's vindication and his accusers' destruction follows the same reversal pattern as Esther and Haman.*

<sup>1</sup>It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, stationed throughout the entire realm, <sup>2</sup>and over them three chief administrators, of whom Daniel was one. The satraps were to report to these three so that the king would suffer no loss. <sup>3</sup>Then Daniel distinguished himself above the other administrators and the satraps because an extraordinary spirit was in him, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom. <sup>4</sup>Then the administrators and satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in the conduct of government affairs, but they could find no grounds for accusation or evidence of corruption, because he was trustworthy, and no negligence or corruption was found in him. <sup>5</sup>Then these men said, "We will never find any grounds for charges against this Daniel unless we find something against him in connection with the law of his God." <sup>6</sup>Then these administrators and satraps came in a group to the king and said to him, "King Darius, live forever! <sup>7</sup>All the administrators of the kingdom, the prefects and satraps, the counselors and governors, have agreed that the king should issue a statute and enforce a decree that anyone who makes a petition to any god or person for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions. <sup>8</sup>Now, O king, issue the decree and sign the document so that it cannot be changed — in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." <sup>9</sup>So King Darius signed the written decree. <sup>10</sup>When Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper room open toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he knelt on his knees and prayed, giving thanks

before his God, just as he had always done. <sup>11</sup>Then these men came as a group and found Daniel praying and pleading before his God. <sup>12</sup>Then they approached and spoke to the king about the royal decree: "Did you not sign a decree that any person who makes a petition to any god or person for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den?" The king replied, "The matter stands firm, in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." <sup>13</sup>Then they answered and said to the king, "Daniel, one of the Judean exiles, has shown no regard for you, O king, or for the decree you signed. He prays three times a day." <sup>14</sup>When the king heard this, he was deeply distressed. He set his mind on rescuing Daniel and labored until sunset to find a way to save him. <sup>15</sup>Then these men came as a group to the king and said to him, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute the king establishes may be changed." <sup>16</sup>Then the king gave the order, and Daniel was brought and thrown into the lions' den. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually — may he rescue you!" <sup>17</sup>A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing regarding Daniel could be altered. <sup>18</sup>Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting. No entertainment was brought before him, and sleep fled from him. <sup>19</sup>Then at the first light of dawn the king rose and rushed in haste to the lions' den. <sup>20</sup>As he approached the den, he called out to Daniel in an anguished voice. The king said to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God — has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?" <sup>21</sup>Then Daniel spoke to the king: "O king, live forever! <sup>22</sup>My God sent his angel and shut the mouths of the lions, and they have not harmed me, because I was found innocent before him. And also before you, O king, I have done no wrong." <sup>23</sup>Then the king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. When Daniel was brought up from the den, no wound of any kind was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. <sup>24</sup>Then the king gave orders, and those men who had accused Daniel were brought and thrown into the lions' den — they, their children, and their wives. Before they even reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones. <sup>25</sup>Then King Darius wrote to all peoples, nations, and languages dwelling throughout the earth: "May your peace be multiplied! <sup>26</sup>I hereby issue a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom, people must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever. His kingdom will never be destroyed, and his dominion will last to the end. <sup>27</sup>He rescues and delivers; he performs signs and wonders in heaven and on earth — he who rescued Daniel from the power of the lions." <sup>28</sup>So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and during the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. This chapter continues in Aramaic. The Aramaic *achashdarpanayya* ('satraps') is a Persian loanword (Old Persian *xsacapan*, 'protector of the realm'). The number 120 may reflect administrative divisions of the Persian empire; Herodotus mentions 20 satrapies under Darius I, but sub-provincial divisions could account for a larger number.
1. Note: some versification traditions number this chapter starting from what we call verse 2, placing 5:31 as 6:1. We follow the Aramaic text's own chapter division.
2. The Aramaic *sarkin* ('administrators, chiefs') denotes the highest tier of imperial oversight. Daniel's appointment as one of the top three officials in the new Medo-Persian administration — after having served the Babylonian empire — demonstrates remarkable continuity and suggests his reputation transcended the regime change.
2. The phrase *malka la leheve naziq* ('the king should suffer no loss/damage') indicates the administrators' role was primarily fiscal — preventing corruption and mismanagement that would reduce royal revenue.
3. The verb *mitnatsach* ('distinguished himself, surpassed') indicates Daniel's competence was not merely adequate but conspicuously superior. The phrase *ruach yattirah* ('extraordinary/surpassing spirit') is the same expression used by the queen mother in 5:12, creating textual continuity: the same quality that marked Daniel under Babylon marks him under Persia.
3. The king's plan to elevate Daniel over the entire kingdom triggers the conspiracy that drives the chapter. Daniel's excellence becomes his vulnerability.
4. The Aramaic *illah* ('grounds, pretext, occasion') is a legal term — they are looking for formal charges, not gossip. The double negative is emphatic: no *illah* ('grounds') and no *shechitah* ('corruption, fault'). The reason is stated plainly: *meheman hu* ('he was trustworthy/faithful'). The word *meheman* is related to Hebrew *emunah* — Daniel's covenant faithfulness manifests as impeccable professional integrity.
4. The exhaustive investigation that yields nothing against Daniel is a rare biblical testimony of complete moral and professional integrity — paralleled only by Samuel's farewell speech (1 Samuel 12:3-5).

5. This admission is remarkable — Daniel's enemies acknowledge his complete integrity and recognize that the only vulnerability is his religious devotion. The phrase *bedat elah* ('in the law/religion of his God') identifies Daniel's faithfulness to God as the single exploitable weakness. Their strategy is to make obedience to God and obedience to the state mutually exclusive, forcing Daniel to choose.
6. The verb *hargishu* ('came as a mob, thronged, assembled tumultuously') suggests not an orderly delegation but a coordinated rush — they came together to create the impression of unanimous urgency and to prevent the king from consulting Daniel privately. The standard greeting 'live forever' (*le-almin cheyi*) carries dark irony given that they are engineering a situation designed to end Daniel's life.
7. The claim that 'all the administrators' agreed is a lie — Daniel, the most prominent administrator, was not consulted. The five-tier list of officials (*sarkei, signayya, achashdarpanayya, haddavrayya, pachavata*) gives an impression of comprehensive consensus that is fabricated.
7. The decree targets prayer (*yiv'eh va'u*, 'makes a petition/request') to 'any god or person' (*kol elah ve'enash*) except the king — this is not merely a restriction on worship but a temporary assertion of the king's exclusive divine mediation, essentially claiming divine status for thirty days. The punishment — the lions' den (*gov aryavata*) — was a known form of execution in the ancient Near East.
8. The phrase *kedat Madai u-Pharas di la te'addei* ('according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not pass away/cannot be revoked') is the key legal mechanism of the plot. Once the king signs, even he cannot undo it. This irrevocability of Persian law is also attested in Esther 1:19 and 8:8 and reflects a genuine feature of Persian legal culture — the king's word, once issued as formal law, was considered binding even on the king himself.
8. The conspirators exploit this feature deliberately: they know that once Darius signs, Daniel's fate is sealed and even royal favor cannot save him.
9. The brevity of this sentence — six Aramaic words — underscores the speed of the trap. Darius signs without investigating, without consulting Daniel, and without considering the implications. The word *resham* ('signed, inscribed') makes the decree legally binding and irrevocable.
10. Daniel's response to the decree is not defiance for its own sake but refusal to alter an established practice of covenant faithfulness. The key phrase is *kol-qavel di hava aved min-qadmat denah* ('just as he had been doing previously') — Daniel does not escalate or make a public protest. He simply continues what he has always done.
10. The windows open toward Jerusalem reflect the exile theology of Solomon's temple dedication prayer (1 Kings 8:46-50): 'If they pray to you toward the land you gave their ancestors, toward the city you have chosen, and toward the house I have built for your name.' Daniel's physical orientation in prayer embodies his spiritual orientation — he remains a citizen of Zion even in Babylon.
10. Three times daily (*zimmin telatah beyoma*) corresponds to the morning, afternoon, and evening prayer times that became standardized in Jewish liturgical practice (cf. Psalm 55:17). The practice predates the formal synagogue liturgy but reflects the same impulse.
11. The verb *hargishu* ('rushed together, thronged') is the same word used in verse 6 — they approach Daniel's house with the same coordinated urgency they used with the king. The phrase *ba'eh u-mitchannan* ('praying and pleading/seeking grace') combines two prayer terms: petition and supplication for mercy. They find Daniel doing exactly what they knew he would do.
12. The conspirators first establish the inviolability of the decree before naming Daniel — they trap the king into reaffirming the law before revealing who has broken it. The king's confirmation *yatstsiva milleta* ('the matter stands firm/true') uses a term of legal certainty. He has locked himself in before he knows who the prisoner will be.
13. The accusers frame Daniel's prayer as political disloyalty — *la sam alakh malka te'em* ('he has set no regard upon you, O king'). They cast his faithfulness to God as contempt for the king. The phrase *min-benei galuta di Yehud* ('from the sons of the exile of Judah') is calculated to remind the king that Daniel is a foreigner, a captive, an outsider — emphasizing his alien status to undermine royal sympathy.
13. Note the shift from 'makes a petition' (the decree's language) to the simpler *ba'eh ba'uteh* ('makes his request/prayer') — the accusers drop the formal legal language once the trap is sprung.
14. The phrase *saggi be'esh alohi* ('greatly it was displeasing to him') shows the king's anger is directed at himself — he realizes he has been manipulated. The phrase *sam bal* ('set his mind/heart') indicates focused, determined effort. The detail 'until sunset' (*ad me'alei shimsha*) is significant because the execution must occur before the next day begins — the decree demands immediate enforcement.
14. Darius's genuine distress and his efforts to find a legal loophole contrast sharply with the conspirators' calculated malice. The king is trapped by his own law.
15. The third use of *hargishu* ('came as a mob/group') emphasizes the relentless pressure of the conspiracy. The men are not offering legal counsel — they are closing the trap. Their reminder of the irrevocable law is not information the king needs; it is a demand that he stop looking for a way out. The phrase *da' malka* ('know, O king') is imperative — they are instructing their sovereign.
16. Darius's words to Daniel — *Elahakh di ant palach leh bi-tdira hu yeshezvinaikh* ('Your God whom you serve continually, he will rescue you') — can be read as a statement of hope, a prayer, or a wish. The king has exhausted his legal options and now places his hope in Daniel's God. The word *bi-tdira* ('continually, constantly') acknowledges Daniel's unwavering devotion — the same devotion that got him condemned is now his only hope.
16. The verb *yeshezvinaikh* ('will rescue you') is the same root (*sh-z-v*) used for divine deliverance throughout Daniel's Aramaic sections.
17. The dual sealing — the king's signet and the nobles' signets — creates mutual accountability. The king cannot secretly release Daniel (the nobles' seals would be broken), and the nobles cannot secretly harm Daniel further (the king's seal would be broken). The phrase *di la tishne tsevu be-Daniyyel* ('so that the situation/purpose concerning Daniel would not be changed') locks the outcome to divine intervention alone.

17. The sealing of the stone echoes, in reverse, the sealing of Jesus's tomb in Matthew 27:62-66 — in both cases human seals prove powerless against divine action.
18. Three signs of Darius's anguish: fasting (bat tevat, 'he spent the night fasting'), no entertainment (dachavan la han'el qadamohi — the Aramaic dachavan is debated: it may mean 'diversions,' 'food,' 'concubines,' or 'musical instruments'), and sleeplessness (shinnteh naddat alohi, 'his sleep fled from him'). The king who should be celebrating his authority over the empire is instead consumed by grief over a single prisoner.
18. The word dachavan is one of the most disputed terms in Biblical Aramaic — proposed meanings include 'concubines,' 'musicians,' 'tables of food,' and 'diversions.' We render broadly as 'entertainment' to cover the range.
19. The Aramaic bishafrpara ('at dawn') and benaghah ('at first light') together indicate the earliest possible moment — Darius could not wait for full daylight. The word behithbehalah ('in haste, in alarm, in agitation') from the root b-h-l (the same root describing Belshazzar's terror in 5:6) indicates the king's urgency. He runs to the den — hardly royal dignity, but consistent with his genuine attachment to Daniel.
20. The phrase beqal atsiv ('in a sorrowful/anguished voice') reveals the king's emotional state — he calls out expecting the worst. The title aved Elaha chayya ('servant of the living God') is remarkable on the lips of a Persian king. Darius calls Daniel's God 'the living God' (Elaha chayya), distinguishing him from the inert gods of the nations — the same distinction Daniel drew in 5:23.
20. The question haykhil leshezavutakh ('has he been able to rescue you?') uses the Aramaic perfect — Darius is asking whether rescue has already occurred, not whether it will. He is asking for a report, not expressing a wish.
21. Daniel's voice from the darkness of the pit, using the standard court greeting malka le-almin cheyi ('O king, live forever'), is at once reassuring and quietly triumphant. The same greeting that introduced the conspiracy (v. 6) now signals its failure. Daniel observes court protocol even from a lions' den.
22. Daniel's explanation has two dimensions: divine (God sent an angel) and legal (innocence before God and before the king). The phrase zakhu hishtechat li ('innocence/purity was found in me') is a declaration of legal vindication — the lions' den has functioned as a divine trial, and Daniel has been acquitted.
22. The angel (malakkeh, 'his angel/messenger') who shut the lions' mouths is not named. The verb segar ('shut, closed') is simple and physical — the divine intervention is described in utterly concrete terms. Daniel also asserts his loyalty to the king (chabula la avdet, 'I have done no injury/wrong') — his faithfulness to God did not constitute disloyalty to the crown.
23. The phrase kol chaval la hishtekach beh ('no wound/injury at all was found on him') emphasizes the completeness of the deliverance — not a scratch, not a mark. The reason given is striking in its simplicity: di heimin be'elaheh ('because he trusted in his God'). The Aramaic heimin is the cognate of Hebrew he'emin (from the root '-m-n), the same root that produces emunah ('faithfulness'). Daniel's faith is presented as the operative cause of his deliverance.
24. The phrase akhalu qartsohi ('ate his pieces' — an idiom meaning 'brought malicious accusations against') uses the Aramaic equivalent of a well-attested Akkadian legal idiom for slander. The punishment of the accusers along with their families reflects Persian legal practice (cf. Herodotus 3.119) and the principle that a false accuser receives the punishment they intended for their victim (cf. Deuteronomy 19:16-21).
24. The detail that the lions crushed them before they reached the bottom of the den serves to prove that Daniel's survival was miraculous — the lions were not old, toothless, or satiated. They were lethally active. The same beasts that left Daniel untouched destroyed his accusers instantly.
25. The address formula — all peoples, nations, and languages (ammayya, ummayya, velishannayya) — is the standard Danielic formula for universal humanity (cf. 3:4, 4:1, 5:19, 7:14). Darius's decree mirrors the structure of Nebuchadnezzar's decrees in 3:29 and 4:1, creating a pattern of pagan kings issuing proclamations about the God of Israel.
25. The greeting shelamkhon yisgei ('may your peace be multiplied') is the Aramaic form of the standard epistolary greeting, cognate to Hebrew shalom.
26. Darius's theology is remarkably developed for a pagan king: God is chayya ('living'), qayyam le-almin ('enduring forever'), ruler of an indestructible kingdom (malkuteh di la titchabbal), and possessing dominion that reaches to the end (sholtaneh ad sofa). This language echoes and expands Nebuchadnezzar's earlier confessions (4:3, 34) and anticipates the kingdom language of Daniel 7:14.
26. The decree does not mandate conversion to worship of Daniel's God exclusively — it mandates reverence (zayin vedachlin, 'trembling and fearing'). This is consistent with Persian religious policy, which typically honored local deities without demanding exclusive worship.
27. Darius's doxology moves from general attributes to specific evidence: God rescues (mesheziv), delivers (matsil), and works signs and wonders (aved atin vetimhin) — and the proof is Daniel's deliverance. The phrase min yad aryavata ('from the hand/power of the lions') uses 'hand' (yad) metaphorically for the power of the beasts.
27. The structure mirrors ancient Near Eastern royal inscriptions where a king praises a deity by listing general attributes and then citing a specific act of divine favor as evidence.
28. The final verse summarizes Daniel's career across two reigns — Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian. The Aramaic hatsalach ('prospered, succeeded') indicates not merely survival but flourishing in public life. Some scholars read the Aramaic conjunction u- ('and') as explicative ('that is') rather than additive, which would identify Darius and Cyrus as the same person: 'in the reign of Darius, that is, in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.' The grammar allows both readings; we render with 'and' as the more natural translation.

28. This verse effectively closes the narrative section of the Aramaic portion. Chapter 7, though still in Aramaic, shifts to apocalyptic vision rather than court narrative.

# 7

**Summary:** *Daniel 7 is the pivotal apocalyptic vision of the book. In the first year of Belshazzar, Daniel sees four great beasts rising from a storm-tossed sea: a lion with eagle's wings, a bear raised on one side with three ribs in its mouth, a leopard with four wings and four heads, and a terrifying fourth beast with iron teeth and ten horns. A small horn emerges among the ten, uprooting three and speaking arrogant words. The scene shifts to the heavenly court where the Ancient of Days (attiq yomin) takes his seat on a throne of fire, attended by myriads. The court sits in judgment, the fourth beast is destroyed, and 'one like a son of man' (kebar enash) comes on the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days and receives an everlasting, universal kingdom. An angelic interpreter explains: the four beasts are four kingdoms, the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom, and the arrogant horn will persecute the saints for 'a time, times, and half a time' before the court strips his authority and gives everlasting dominion to the holy people of the Most High.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *This is THE key apocalyptic chapter of the Hebrew Bible and the FINAL chapter in Daniel's Aramaic section (2:4b-7:28). Chapter 8 returns to Hebrew. The phrase 'one like a son of man' (kebar enash, 7:13) becomes arguably the single most important title in the New Testament — Jesus's primary self-designation 'Son of Man' derives from this passage. The vision parallels the four-metal statue of chapter 2 but adds crucial elements: the heavenly throne scene, the divine court, the bestowal of the kingdom on a human-like figure, and the suffering of the saints before their vindication. The Ancient of Days vision (vv. 9-10) is the most detailed theophany in the Hebrew Bible outside Ezekiel 1 — white clothing, hair like pure wool, a throne of fire with wheels of flame, a river of fire flowing from his presence, and myriads of attendants. Jewish tradition reads 'one like a son of man' as corporate Israel or the messiah; Christian tradition identifies him with Jesus. Both readings have ancient roots and the text itself supports the tension between individual and corporate interpretation. The Aramaic phrase attiq yomin ('Ancient of Days') appears only in this chapter (vv. 9, 13, 22) and nowhere else in Scripture.*

**Translation Friction:** *The identification of the four beasts parallels the four metals of chapter 2: traditionally Babylon (lion), Medo-Persia (bear), Greece (leopard), and Rome or a Greek successor (fourth beast). An alternative scholarly reading sees Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece. We render the imagery without imposing either identification. The phrase kebar enash ('one like a son of man') is deliberately ambiguous in Aramaic — bar enash simply means 'a human being,' and the ke- prefix ('like, as, resembling') adds further ambiguity: this figure resembles a human but may be more. The relationship between 'one like a son of man' (v. 13-14) and 'the saints of the Most High' (vv. 18, 22, 27) is debated — is the son of man a symbol for the saints, their heavenly representative, an angelic figure, or the messiah? The phrase iddan ve-iddanin u-felag iddan ('a time, times, and half a time,' v. 25) has generated centuries of interpretation; we render literally and note the range of readings.*

**Connections:** *The four beasts parallel the four metals of chapter 2's statue. The heavenly throne scene influenced all subsequent Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature, including 1 Enoch 46-47, 4 Ezra 13, and Revelation 1:13-16, 4:1-11, and 20:11-12. Jesus's 'Son of Man' sayings in the Gospels consistently draw on Daniel 7:13-14 (cf. Mark 14:62, Matthew 26:64, Luke 22:69). The court scene (vv. 9-10) parallels 1 Kings 22:19 and Isaiah 6 but exceeds both in detail. The 'saints of the Most High' (qaddishei Elyonin) connects to the concept of holy ones throughout the Hebrew Bible (cf. Psalm 89:5-7, Zechariah 14:5). The fiery river from the divine throne connects to Ezekiel 1:27 and anticipates Revelation 22:1.*

1In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions passed through his mind as he lay on his bed. He wrote the dream down and recorded the substance of the matter. 2Daniel declared: "In my vision during the night I watched as the four winds of heaven churned up the great sea. 3Four great beasts came up from the sea, each one different from the others. 4The first was like a lion with eagle's wings. I watched until its wings were plucked off. It was lifted from the ground, set on its feet like a human, and a human mind was given to it. 5Then a second beast appeared, resembling a bear. It

was raised up on one side, with three ribs in its mouth between its teeth, and it was told, 'Get up and devour much flesh!' <sup>6</sup>After this I watched, and there was another beast, like a leopard with four bird's wings on its back. The beast also had four heads, and authority was given to it. <sup>7</sup>After this I watched in the night visions, and there was a fourth beast — terrifying, dreadful, and extraordinarily powerful. It had great iron teeth. It devoured and crushed, and whatever remained it trampled with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that preceded it, and it had ten horns. <sup>8</sup>I was contemplating the horns when another horn — a small one — came up among them, and three of the previous horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like human eyes and a mouth speaking arrogant words. <sup>9</sup>I watched until thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head was like pure wool. His throne was flames of fire, its wheels were blazing fire. <sup>10</sup>A river of fire flowed out from before him. Thousands upon thousands served him, and myriads upon myriads stood attending him. The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. <sup>11</sup>I kept watching then because of the arrogant words the horn was speaking. I watched until the beast was killed, its body destroyed and given over to the burning fire. <sup>12</sup>As for the remaining beasts, their authority was stripped from them, but an extension of life was granted to them for a set time and season. <sup>13</sup>I watched in the night visions, and there — coming with the clouds of heaven was one like a son of man. He approached the Ancient of Days and was brought into his presence. <sup>14</sup>To him was given authority, glory, and a kingdom, so that all peoples, nations, and languages would serve him. His authority is an everlasting authority that will never pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. <sup>15</sup>As for me, Daniel — my spirit was deeply troubled within me, and the visions passing through my mind alarmed me. <sup>16</sup>I approached one of those standing by and asked him for the true meaning of all this. He spoke to me and made the interpretation known to me: <sup>17</sup>"These great beasts, which are four in number, represent four kings who will arise from the earth. <sup>18</sup>But the holy ones of the Most High will receive the kingdom and possess it forever — for all ages to come." <sup>19</sup>Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others — exceedingly terrifying, with iron teeth and bronze claws, devouring, crushing, and trampling whatever remained with its feet; <sup>20</sup>and about the ten horns on its head, and the other horn that came up, before which three fell — the horn that had eyes and a mouth speaking arrogant words, and whose appearance was greater than its companions. <sup>21</sup>I watched as that horn waged war against the holy ones and was prevailing over them, <sup>22</sup>until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was rendered in favor of the holy ones of the Most High, and the appointed time arrived when the holy ones took possession of the kingdom. <sup>23</sup>He said: 'The fourth beast represents a fourth kingdom on earth, which will be different from all other kingdoms. It will devour the entire earth, trample it, and crush it. <sup>24</sup>The ten horns mean that ten kings will arise from this kingdom. After them another will arise, different from the previous ones, and he will bring down three kings. <sup>25</sup>He will speak words against the Most High and will wear down the holy ones of the Most High. He will intend to change the sacred times and the law, and they will be handed over to him for a time, times, and half a time. <sup>26</sup>But the court will sit in judgment, and his authority will be stripped away, to be annihilated and destroyed completely. <sup>27</sup>Then the kingdom, the authority, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High. Their kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all authorities will serve and obey them.' <sup>28</sup>Here the account ends. As for me, Daniel — my thoughts greatly alarmed me and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter in my heart."

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**TRANSLATOR NOTES**

1. This chapter is in Aramaic — the FINAL chapter in the Aramaic section that began at 2:4b. Chapter 8 returns to Hebrew. The chronological setting 'first year of Belshazzar' places this vision before the events of chapter 5 (Belshazzar's feast), making the narrative arrangement thematic rather than chronological.
1. The phrase *chelev chezei reishteh* ('visions of his head') reflects the ancient Near Eastern understanding that visions occur in the head/mind during sleep. Daniel wrote (*ketav*) the dream — this is the first indication that Daniel is the author of this section, shifting from third-person narrative (chapters 1-6) to first-person account.
1. The phrase *reish millin* ('the head/chief of the words') means the substance, summary, or main points — suggesting that Daniel's written account is a distillation rather than an exhaustive transcript.

2. The 'four winds of heaven' (arba ruchi shemayya) represent the totality of divine cosmic forces — from every direction. The verb megichan ('stirring up, churning, bursting forth upon') conveys violent agitation. The 'great sea' (yamma rabba) in apocalyptic imagery represents the primordial chaos — the deep from which hostile powers emerge (cf. Isaiah 27:1, 51:9-10, Psalm 74:13-14, Revelation 13:1). The beasts rise from chaos, not from order.
3. The Aramaic chevan ravravan ('great beasts') uses a term for powerful, fearsome creatures — these are not mere animals but monstrous beings. The phrase shanyan da min da ('different one from another') emphasizes that each beast is unique, representing a distinct kingdom. The four beasts correspond to the four metals of the statue in chapter 2, but the imagery has shifted from inert metal to living, predatory power.
4. The lion-eagle composite evokes the Babylonian lamassu — the winged lion guardians that flanked Mesopotamian palace gates. If the lion represents Babylon, the plucking of wings and the giving of a human heart may allude to Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation and restoration in chapter 4 — stripped of imperial power (wings), then restored with human reason (levav enash, 'a human heart/mind').
4. The verb meritu ('were plucked') is passive — the wings are removed by an external force, not shed naturally. This suggests divine action constraining the beast's power.
5. The bear raised on one side (listar chad hoqimat) suggests asymmetry — if this represents Medo-Persia, one side (Persia) was dominant over the other (Media). The three ribs (telat il'in) between its teeth are variously identified as three conquered kingdoms: possibly Lydia, Babylon, and Egypt.
5. The command 'Get up and devour much flesh' (qumi akhuli besar saggi) is a divine commission — the beast does not act independently but is commanded by a heavenly voice. Even destructive empires operate under divine authority.
6. The leopard represents speed (the four wings amplify the leopard's natural swiftness), and the four heads suggest division into four parts. If this represents Greece, the speed corresponds to Alexander's lightning conquests (334-323 BCE), and the four heads to the division of his empire among the Diadochi: Ptolemaic Egypt, Seleucid Syria, Antigonid Macedonia, and Pergamum/Thrace.
6. Again the passive: sholtan yehiv lah ('authority was given to it') — divine sovereignty stands behind even this predatory power.
7. Unlike the first three beasts, the fourth is not compared to any known animal — it defies natural categories. Three adjectives heap up: dechilah ('terrifying'), ve'eimetani ('dreadful/inspiring terror'), vetaqqifa yattira ('extraordinarily strong'). The iron teeth (shinnayyin di farzel) echo the iron legs of the statue in chapter 2, linking this beast to the fourth kingdom.
7. Three actions describe its destructiveness: akhlah ('it devoured'), maddequah ('it crushed/ground to pieces'), and ush'ara beraglah rafsah ('it trampled the remainder with its feet'). Total annihilation — consumption, pulverization, and trampling of whatever is left.
7. The ten horns (qarnayyin asar) represent ten kings (v. 24). Horns in ancient Near Eastern symbolism represent power and authority.
8. The 'small horn' (qeren achori ze'eirah) is the most analyzed symbol in Daniel. In the context of the fourth beast, it represents a king who arises after the ten and subdues three of them. Many scholars identify this with Antiochus IV Epiphanes if the fourth beast is Greece, or with a Roman or end-time figure if the fourth beast is Rome.
8. The horn has human features — eyes (aynin ke-ayney anasha, 'eyes like human eyes') and a mouth (pum) — making it more than a symbol of power; it is personal, intelligent, and articulate. The phrase memalil ravravan ('speaking great/arrogant things') indicates blasphemous self-exaltation against God, elaborated in verse 25.
9. THIS IS THE KEY THEOPHANY OF DANIEL. The phrase korsavan remiyu ('thrones were set in place/cast down') has been debated: remiyu can mean 'were placed' or 'were thrown down.' The context of a court convening favors 'set in place' — thrones are being arranged for a judicial session, not being overthrown.
9. Attiq Yomin ('Ancient of Days') appears only here, in verse 13, and in verse 22 — nowhere else in Scripture. The title conveys primordial, absolute antiquity. The white garments and white hair signify purity, wisdom, and transcendent age. The throne of fire (korseveh shevvin di nur) and wheels of fire (galgilllohi nur daliq) connect to Ezekiel's throne-chariot vision (Ezekiel 1:15-21, 26-28) — the divine throne is mobile, living, and ablaze.
9. The plural 'thrones' (korsavan) suggests a heavenly court — the Ancient of Days does not sit alone. Who occupies the other thrones is debated: angelic assessors, the divine council, or (in later Jewish and Christian reading) the Messiah.
10. The nehar di nur ('river of fire') flowing from the divine presence is unique in biblical theophanies — a torrent of fire as a permanent emanation from God. The numbers — elef alfin ('thousands of thousands') and ribbo ribbevan ('myriads of myriads') — are meant to overwhelm: the heavenly court is beyond counting.
10. The phrase dina yetiv ('the court/judgment sat') marks the formal opening of the heavenly tribunal. The books (sifrin) that are opened contain the record of deeds — a concept that recurs in Revelation 20:12. This is not a trial to determine facts but a sentencing based on a record already written.
10. The shift from the chaos of the sea (v. 2) to the perfect order of the heavenly court is deliberate — earthly kingdoms emerge from chaos, but God governs from absolute order.
11. The horn's arrogant speech (millayya ravrevatah, 'great/boastful words') continues even as the heavenly court renders its verdict — the horn is defiant to the end. The destruction of the fourth beast is total: killed (qetilat), body destroyed (hubad gishmah), and given to fire (yehivat liqedat esha). Unlike the first three beasts, which lose authority but continue to exist (v. 12), the fourth beast is annihilated.

11. The progression from boastful speech to fiery destruction embodies the pattern of arrogance-meets-judgment that runs through Daniel (cf. Nebuchadnezzar in ch. 4, Belshazzar in ch. 5).
12. The distinction matters: the first three beasts lose power but are not destroyed — their cultural and civilizational legacies persist even after their political dominion ends. The fourth beast alone faces complete annihilation. The phrase *ad zeman ve-iddan* ('for a time and a season') indicates a divinely determined duration — even the lingering existence of fallen empires is bounded.
13. THIS IS THE KEY VERSE OF DANIEL 7 and one of the most important verses in the Hebrew Bible for both Jewish and Christian theology. The phrase *kebar enash* ('one like a son of man') must be carefully rendered. *Bar enash* simply means 'a human being' — it is not a title here but a description. The figure looks human, in contrast to the beasts that preceded. The *ke-* ('like, as') adds deliberate ambiguity: this figure resembles a human but the comparison implies he may be more than human.
13. He comes 'with the clouds of heaven' (*im ananei shemayya*) — cloud-riding is elsewhere associated exclusively with deity in the Hebrew Bible (Psalm 68:4, 104:3, Isaiah 19:1). The combination of human appearance with divine cloud-riding creates a figure who bridges heaven and earth.
13. He is 'brought near' (*haqrevuhi*) before the Ancient of Days — the passive voice and the plural subject ('they brought him') suggest angelic attendants presenting him to the divine throne. This is a coronation scene.
14. Three gifts are bestowed: *sholtan* ('authority/dominion'), *yeqar* ('glory/honor'), and *malku* ('kingdom/sovereignty'). These correspond to the authority, glory, and kingdom that God gave Nebuchadnezzar (5:18) — but that was temporary. This bestowal is permanent.
14. The phrase *kol ammayya ummayya velishannayya leh yiflchun* ('all peoples, nations, and languages will serve him') uses the same universal formula applied to Nebuchadnezzar in 3:4 and 5:19, but now applied to the son of man — the universal dominion of human empires is transferred to a divinely appointed figure.
14. The double negative — *sholtan alam di la ye'addei* ('everlasting authority that will not pass away') and *malkuteh di la titchabbal* ('kingdom that will not be destroyed') — creates an absolute statement of permanence. This echoes the stone that 'became a great mountain and filled the whole earth' in 2:35.
15. The verb *etkeriyyat* ('was distressed, was pierced, was grieved') conveys intense emotional disturbance — Daniel is not merely curious about the vision but shaken by it. The phrase *bego nidneh* ('within its sheath') uses a striking metaphor: the body is the sheath for the spirit, as a scabbard holds a sword. Daniel's spirit is agitated within its bodily housing.
16. The 'one standing by' (*chad min qa'amayya*) is one of the angelic attendants of the heavenly court introduced in verse 10. Daniel can interact with this figure — the vision is not purely visual but participatory. The word *yatstsiva* ('truth, certainty') indicates Daniel wants not speculation but the authoritative meaning.
17. The interpretation is startlingly brief — four beasts equal four kings (*arba'ah malkin*). The angel does not identify which kingdoms they represent. The phrase *min ar'a* ('from the earth') contrasts with the son of man's origin from heaven (v. 13) — the beast-kingdoms are earthly, the final kingdom is heavenly. 'Kings' here stands for 'kingdoms' (as clarified in v. 23), a common metonymy in ancient Near Eastern texts.
18. This verse creates the interpretive tension at the heart of chapter 7: in verses 13-14 the kingdom is given to 'one like a son of man' (an individual figure); here it is given to *qaddishei Elyonin* ('the holy ones of the Most High,' a collective group). Are these the same? Is the son of man the representative of the holy ones, or a distinct figure who shares his kingdom with them? Both Jewish and Christian traditions have grappled with this relationship.
18. The phrase *ad alma ve-ad alam almayya* ('forever, and for the age of ages') is the strongest possible expression of permanence in Aramaic — it stacks 'forever' on top of 'forever of forevers' to convey absolute endlessness.
19. Daniel's retelling adds a new detail not in the original vision description: bronze claws (*tifraihi di nechash*). The iron teeth and bronze claws together echo the iron-bronze combination of military technology in the ancient world. The beast is armored for both biting (offense) and tearing (predation).
20. Daniel adds another detail in his retelling: the small horn's appearance was 'greater than its companions' (*chezvah rav min chabraytah*) — despite being called 'small' in verse 8, it has grown to surpass the other horns. This paradox — beginning small but becoming dominant — characterizes the trajectory of the figure this horn represents.
21. This verse adds information not included in the initial vision account (vv. 2-14): the horn actively wars against the holy ones (*qaddishin*) and temporarily defeats them. The verb *yakhlah* ('prevailed, overcame') indicates real, if temporary, victory — the holy ones suffer genuine persecution and defeat before their vindication. This honest acknowledgment of the saints' suffering distinguishes Daniel's apocalyptic vision from mere triumphalism.
22. Third and final occurrence of *Attiq Yomayya* ('Ancient of Days'). The phrase *dina yehiv leqaddishei Elyonin* ('judgment was given to/for the holy ones of the Most High') can mean either 'judgment was rendered in favor of' or 'authority to judge was given to.' Both readings are attested in scholarship; we follow the contextual meaning of vindication after persecution.
22. The sequence is crucial: persecution by the horn (v. 21), intervention by the Ancient of Days (v. 22a), judicial vindication (v. 22b), and possession of the kingdom (v. 22c). Suffering precedes glory — a pattern that profoundly shapes New Testament theology.

23. The interpreter now shifts from 'kings' (v. 17) to 'kingdom' (malku), confirming that the individual rulers represent entire political systems. The scope is universal: teikhul kol ar'a ('it will devour the whole earth'). The three verbs — devour, trample, crush (teikhul, tedushinnahh, taddequinnahh) — escalate from consumption to grinding destruction. This fourth kingdom does not merely conquer; it pulverizes.
24. The ten horns are decoded as ten successive or simultaneous kings from the fourth kingdom. The eleventh (the 'small horn' of v. 8) arises after them, is distinct from them (yishnei min qadmeyei), and deposes three (telatah malkin yehashshpil). The verb yehashshpil ('will bring low, will humble') is the same root used for Nebuchadnezzar's humbling in 4:37 — this king forcibly removes rivals.
25. Three offenses define this king: (1) blasphemy — speaking words 'against the Most High' (letsad Illaya), (2) persecution — 'wearing down' the holy ones (yevalei, from a root meaning to wear out, to exhaust through persistent harassment), and (3) religious disruption — attempting to change zimnin vedat ('appointed times and law'). The 'times and law' likely refer to the Jewish festival calendar and Torah observances — this king attacks not just the people but their religious identity.
25. The duration ad iddan ve-iddanin u-felag iddan ('a time, times, and half a time') is one of the most interpreted phrases in Daniel. If 'time' equals one year, the total is three and a half years — corresponding to the approximate duration of Antiochus Epiphanes' desecration of the temple (167-164 BCE). The number also appears in Revelation 12:14 and is related to the '42 months' and '1,260 days' of Revelation 11:2-3 and 13:5.
26. The heavenly court (dina, 'the judgment/court') reconvenes — the same court described in verses 9-10. The horn's authority (sholteneh) is removed by three devastating verbs: lehashmadah ('to annihilate'), ulhobadah ('to destroy'), ad sofa ('to the end'). The legal process that began with opened books (v. 10) now reaches its verdict: permanent, irreversible destruction of the arrogant power.
27. This verse closes the interpretive section with a climactic statement that parallels verse 14. Compare: in v. 14 the son of man receives sholtan, yeqar, and malku; here the people of the holy ones receive malkutah, sholtana, and revutah. The language is parallel but not identical — suggesting intimate connection between the individual figure and the collective people.
27. The phrase le-am qaddishei Elyonin ('to the people of the holy ones of the Most High') adds 'people' (am) to the earlier 'holy ones' — this is a national, communal entity, not isolated individuals. The closing affirmation malkuteh malkut alam ('their kingdom is an everlasting kingdom') uses the identical language applied to God's own kingdom in 4:3 — the people's kingdom participates in God's own eternal reign.
28. THIS IS THE FINAL VERSE IN ARAMAIC. Chapter 8 returns to Hebrew — the language shift back to Hebrew signals that the content now concerns Israel specifically rather than the nations broadly.
28. The phrase sofa di milletah ('the end of the matter') formally closes Daniel's written account of the vision. His physical symptoms — facial pallor (zivay yishtannun alay, 'my brightness changed upon me') — mirror Belshazzar's reaction to the handwriting (5:6, 9). But where Belshazzar's terror led to death, Daniel's disturbance leads to faithful memory: milletah belibbi nitret ('I kept the matter in my heart'). The phrase echoes Mary's response to the shepherds' testimony in Luke 2:19 — treasuring revelatory experience through silent pondering.
28. The verb nitret ('I guarded, I kept, I preserved') indicates active retention — Daniel does not merely remember but deliberately guards the vision for future disclosure.

## 8

**Summary:** *Daniel 8 presents a vision from the third year of Belshazzar's reign, set in the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam. Daniel sees a ram with two horns — one higher than the other — charging westward, northward, and southward without opposition. Then a goat with a single prominent horn comes from the west at tremendous speed, shatters the ram's two horns, and tramples it. At the height of the goat's power, the great horn breaks and is replaced by four conspicuous horns. From one of them emerges a small horn that grows exceedingly great, reaching toward the south, the east, and the Beautiful Land. It exalts itself against the host of heaven, removes the daily sacrifice, and desecrates the sanctuary for 2,300 evenings and mornings. The angel Gabriel is commissioned to explain the vision: the ram is the kings of Media and Persia, the goat is the king of Greece, the great horn is the first king, and the four horns are four kingdoms that arise from his nation. The small horn represents a king who will arise in the latter time, fierce and cunning, who will destroy many and stand against the Prince of princes — but will be broken without human hand.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *THIS CHAPTER RETURNS TO HEBREW after the extended Aramaic section (2:4b-7:28). The shift back to Hebrew signals that the content now concerns Israel specifically — the desecration of the temple and the persecution of the Jewish people. This is also the first time an interpreting angel is named: Gabriel (Gavri'el, 'man of God' or 'God is my warrior'), who reappears in 9:21 and then in Luke 1:19, 26 to announce the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. The vision's historical referents are more transparent than chapter 7: the ram is explicitly identified as Medo-Persia (v. 20), the goat as Greece (v. 21), the great horn as the first king (Alexander the*

*Great), the four horns as the Diadochi kingdoms, and the small horn as Antiochus IV Epiphanes (reigned 175-164 BCE), who desecrated the Jerusalem temple in 167 BCE. The '2,300 evenings and mornings' (v. 14) corresponds approximately to the period from Antiochus's initial interference with the temple (171 BCE) to the Maccabean rededication (December 164 BCE). The phrase 'the Beautiful Land' (ha-tsevi) for the land of Israel appears also in 11:16, 41 and Ezekiel 20:6, 15.*

*Translation Friction: The Hebrew of this chapter contains several difficult phrases. The expression *erev boqer alpayim u-shelosh me'ot* ('2,300 evenings and mornings,' v. 14) is debated: does it mean 2,300 individual evening and morning sacrifices (totaling 1,150 days) or 2,300 full days? Both calculations have been proposed. We render the number as given and note the ambiguity. The phrase *sar ha-tsava* ('prince/commander of the host,' v. 11) is variously identified as God, the high priest, or the archangel Michael. The vision's relationship to chapter 7 is complex — both describe a sequence of empires and a persecuting horn, but the imagery and scope differ. The instruction to 'seal up the vision' (v. 26) contrasts with Revelation 22:10's command not to seal the prophecy.*

*Connections: The ram and goat parallel the bear and leopard of chapter 7 and the silver and bronze of the statue in chapter 2. Gabriel's appearance here anticipates his role in 9:21 and in the New Testament (Luke 1:19, 26). The desecration of the sanctuary connects forward to the 'abomination of desolation' in 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11, which Jesus cites in Matthew 24:15. The phrase 'broken without human hand' (v. 25) echoes the stone 'cut without hands' in 2:34 — divine action replacing human agency. Antiochus IV Epiphanes' persecution is the primary historical background for the books of 1-2 Maccabees and the festival of Hanukkah. The 'Beautiful Land' (ha-tsevi) for Israel connects to Jeremiah 3:19 and Ezekiel 20:6, 15.*

<sup>1</sup>In the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, a vision appeared to me — to me, Daniel — after the one that had appeared to me previously. <sup>2</sup>I looked in the vision, and as I saw it, I was in the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam. I looked in the vision, and I was standing beside the Ulai canal. <sup>3</sup>I raised my eyes and looked, and there standing before the canal was a ram with two horns. Both horns were tall, but one was taller than the other, and the taller one came up last. <sup>4</sup>I watched the ram charging westward, northward, and southward. No animal could stand against it, and none could rescue from its power. It did as it pleased and grew powerful. <sup>5</sup>While I was considering this, a male goat came from the west, crossing the entire surface of the earth without touching the ground. The goat had a conspicuous horn between its eyes. <sup>6</sup>It came toward the ram with two horns that I had seen standing before the canal, and it charged at it in furious rage. <sup>7</sup>I watched it reach the ram, and it was enraged against it. It struck the ram and shattered its two horns. The ram had no strength to stand against it. The goat hurled it to the ground and trampled it, and there was no one to rescue the ram from its power. <sup>8</sup>The male goat grew exceedingly powerful, but at the height of its strength the great horn was broken. In its place four conspicuous horns came up toward the four winds of heaven. <sup>9</sup>From one of them came a small horn that grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land. <sup>10</sup>It grew great, reaching up to the host of heaven. It cast some of the host and some of the stars down to the ground and trampled them. <sup>11</sup>It even exalted itself against the Prince of the host. The daily offering was removed from him, and the foundation of his sanctuary was thrown down. <sup>12</sup>A host was given over along with the daily offering because of transgression. It cast truth to the ground, and it acted and prospered. <sup>13</sup>Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to the one who was speaking, "How long will the events of this vision last — the daily offering removed, the desolating transgression set up, and the sanctuary and the host given over to be trampled?" <sup>14</sup>He said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be restored to its rightful state." <sup>15</sup>When I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking to understand it, there standing before me was one who looked like a man. <sup>16</sup>I heard a human voice calling from between the banks of the Ulai: "Gabriel, explain the vision to this man!" <sup>17</sup>He came to where I was standing, and when he arrived I was terrified and fell on my face. He said to me, "Understand, son of man, that the vision pertains to the time of the end." <sup>18</sup>While he was speaking with me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground. But he touched me and set me on my feet. <sup>19</sup>He said, "I am going to make known to you what will happen in the latter period of the wrath, for it refers to the appointed time of the end. <sup>20</sup>The ram you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. <sup>21</sup>The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the great horn between its eyes is the first king. <sup>22</sup>As for the horn that was broken, in whose place four others arose — four kingdoms will rise from that nation, but not with its power. <sup>23</sup>In the

latter period of their reign, when the transgressors have reached their full measure, a king will arise — fierce in countenance and skilled in intrigue. <sup>24</sup>His power will be great, but not by his own strength. He will cause extraordinary destruction and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the powerful and the holy people. <sup>25</sup>Through his cunning he will make deceit prosper under his hand. In his heart he will exalt himself, and in a time of security he will destroy many. He will even stand against the Prince of princes, but he will be broken — not by human hand. <sup>26</sup>The vision of the evenings and mornings that was declared is true. But you must seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now." <sup>27</sup>Then I, Daniel, was overwhelmed and lay ill for days. Afterward I got up and attended to the king's affairs. I was appalled by the vision, and no one could explain it.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. CRITICAL LANGUAGE SHIFT: This chapter returns to HEBREW after the Aramaic section that began at 2:4b and ended at 7:28. The return to Hebrew signals that the content now concerns Israel's own story — the desecration and restoration of the Jerusalem temple.
1. The emphatic 'to me, Daniel' (ani Daniyyel) reinforces the first-person authorship established in chapter 7. The phrase acharei hanir'ah elai battehillah ('after the one that appeared to me at first') refers back to the vision of chapter 7, set in the first year of Belshazzar. This vision is two years later.
2. Shushan ha-birah ('Susa the citadel/capital') was a major administrative center of the Persian empire — a significant location given that the vision concerns the rise and fall of Persia. Whether Daniel was physically present in Susa or transported there in the vision (cf. Ezekiel 8:3, 40:1) is debated.
2. The Ulai (Uval Ulai) is identified with the Eulaeus river or an artificial canal near Susa. The setting by a waterway for a vision parallels Ezekiel's visions by the Chebar canal (Ezekiel 1:1, 3) and Daniel's later vision by the Tigris (10:4).
3. The ram (ayil) with two unequal horns is identified as the kings of Media and Persia in verse 20. The taller horn that 'came up last' (olah ba-acharonah) represents Persia — historically the junior partner that ultimately became dominant over Media. The asymmetry matches the bear 'raised on one side' in 7:5.
3. The ram was the symbol of the Persian empire in the ancient world; Persian kings wore ram-headed crowns, and the zodiacal sign of Persia was Aries (the ram).
4. The three directions — west, north, south — correspond to Persia's historical conquests from its eastern base: westward to Lydia and Greece, northward into Central Asia, and southward into Egypt. Eastward is absent because Persia was already the eastern power.
4. The phrase asah khirtsono ('it did as it pleased') echoes the description of Nebuchadnezzar's absolute power in 5:19 — the same unchecked authority that proved temporary. The verb higdil ('grew great, magnified itself') will become significant when the small horn also 'magnifies itself' (v. 9-11).
5. The male goat (tsefir ha-izzim) is identified as the king of Greece in verse 21. Its approach 'from the west' (min ha-ma'arav) matches Greece's geographic position relative to Persia. The phrase ein noge'a ba-arets ('not touching the ground') conveys extraordinary speed — the goat moves so fast it seems to fly. This corresponds to Alexander the Great's lightning military campaigns (334-323 BCE).
5. The 'conspicuous horn' (qeren chazut, literally 'horn of vision/prominence') between its eyes represents Alexander himself (v. 21). A single horn in a prominent position symbolizes concentrated, unified power.
6. The phrase bachamat kocho ('in the fury/heat of its power') conveys not just military force but emotional intensity — the goat attacks with rage. This matches the historical record of Alexander's campaigns against Persia, motivated by both strategic ambition and Greek anger over Xerxes' earlier invasion of Greece (480 BCE).
7. The verb yitmarmar ('was embittered, was enraged') is an intensified form expressing violent fury. Three actions follow in rapid sequence: struck (vayyakh), shattered the horns (vayshabber), and hurled to the ground (vayyashlikehu artsah). The shattering of both horns — not just the taller one — indicates the total destruction of the Medo-Persian empire, not merely the defeat of one component.
7. The phrase lo hayah matstsil la-ayil mi-yyado ('there was no one to rescue the ram from its power') echoes verse 4, where the same was said of the ram's victims — the conqueror becomes the conquered, suffering the same helplessness it once inflicted.
8. The phrase ukhe-otsmo ('at the height of its strength') creates a devastating irony — the horn breaks not in weakness but at its moment of maximum power. This corresponds to Alexander's death in Babylon in 323 BCE at age 32, at the zenith of his conquests.
8. The four horns that replace the one (arba chazut, 'four conspicuous ones') represent the four major successor kingdoms (the Diadochi): Ptolemaic Egypt, Seleucid Syria/Mesopotamia, Antigonid Macedonia, and the kingdom of Pergamum/Thrace. The phrase le-arba ruchot ha-shamayim ('toward the four winds of heaven') indicates the empire fragmented in every direction.
9. The 'small horn' (qeren achat mits'eirah) from one of the four horns is widely identified with Antiochus IV Epiphanes (reigned 175-164 BCE), who arose from the Seleucid dynasty. His expansion 'toward the south' refers to his campaigns against Ptolemaic Egypt, 'toward the east' to his eastern campaigns, and 'toward the Beautiful Land' (el ha-tsevi) to his assault on Judea.

9. The word *tsevi* ('beauty, splendor, ornament') as a designation for the land of Israel appears also in 11:16, 41 and in Ezekiel 20:6, 15 and Jeremiah 3:19. It expresses Israel's status as God's treasured possession — the beautiful land.
10. The 'host of heaven' (*tseva ha-shamayim*) and 'stars' (*kokhavim*) are debated: they may represent (1) the Jewish people or their leaders (cf. Genesis 15:5, 22:17, where Israel is compared to stars), (2) angelic beings, or (3) both — the earthly community and its heavenly counterparts. The act of casting stars to the ground and trampling them indicates a figure who assaults the cosmic order itself, reaching beyond mere political conquest to challenge heaven.
10. Historically, this corresponds to Antiochus's persecution of faithful Jews — executing those who kept Torah, desecrating the temple, and attempting to abolish Jewish religious identity.
11. The 'Prince of the host' (*sar ha-tsava*) is most likely God himself, though some identify this figure as the high priest or the archangel Michael. The horn 'magnifies itself' (*higdil*) against this Prince — the same verb used for the horn's growth in verses 9-10, now directed against the divine.
11. The *tamid* ('daily/continual offering') refers to the twice-daily burnt offering prescribed in Exodus 29:38-42 and Numbers 28:3-8 — the perpetual sacrifice that constituted Israel's ongoing worship. Its removal represents the cessation of legitimate worship. Historically, Antiochus suspended the *tamid* in 167 BCE and erected an altar to Zeus Olympios in the temple (1 Maccabees 1:44-47, 54).
11. The phrase *mekhon miqddasho* ('the foundation/place of his sanctuary') indicates not merely interruption of worship but physical desecration of the temple site itself.
12. This verse is notoriously difficult in Hebrew. The phrase *tsava tinnaten al ha-tamid be-fasha* ('a host was given over against the daily offering because of transgression') may mean that (1) a military force was deployed against the daily sacrifice, (2) the host of heaven (Israel) was given over because of their transgression, or (3) the worship system was surrendered because of the horn's rebellion. The ambiguity may be intentional, suggesting both divine permission and human culpability.
12. The phrase *tashlekh emet artsah* ('it cast truth to the ground') personifies truth (*emet*) as something that can be physically overthrown — not merely denied but actively suppressed. The verse ends with chilling efficiency: *ve-asetah ve-hitslicah* ('it acted and prospered') — evil succeeds. This candid acknowledgment of the prosperity of wickedness is characteristic of Daniel's realism.
13. Two angelic figures (*qadosh*, 'holy one') converse while Daniel overhears — a dramatic technique that allows the question to arise naturally rather than from Daniel himself. The word *palmoni* ('a certain one' — possibly from *peloni almoni*, 'a certain unnamed one') is unique to this verse and may be a deliberate concealment of the angel's identity.
13. The phrase *ha-pesha shomem* ('the desolating transgression') anticipates the fuller phrase *shiqquts meshomem* ('abomination of desolation') in 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11 — which Jesus cites in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14. The question 'how long?' (*ad matai*) is the characteristic cry of the suffering faithful (cf. Psalm 13:1-2, Habakkuk 1:2, Revelation 6:10).
14. The phrase *erev boqer alpayim u-shelosh me'ot* ('2,300 evenings and mornings') is one of the most debated numbers in Daniel. Two main interpretations: (1) 2,300 individual evening and morning sacrifices, equaling 1,150 days (about 3 years and 2 months); (2) 2,300 full days (about 6 years and 4 months). The first calculation roughly matches the period from Antiochus's initial interference (171 BCE) to the rededication under Judas Maccabeus (December 164 BCE) if counted from a later starting point; the second matches a longer period of Seleucid control.
14. The verb *venitsdaq* ('will be restored to its rightful state / will be vindicated / will be justified') is from the root *ts-d-q* (righteousness/justice). It means the sanctuary will be set right, returned to its proper holy state. This was fulfilled historically in the Maccabean rededication — the event commemorated as Hanukkah.
15. The phrase *kemar'eh gaver* ('like the appearance of a man/warrior') uses *gever* rather than the more common *ish* or *adam* — *gever* connotes strength, a warrior or mighty man. The angelic interpreter appears in human form but with a warrior's bearing, anticipating Gabriel's name (*Gavri'el*, 'warrior of God').
16. This is the first time an angel is named in the book of Daniel and only the second time in the Hebrew Bible (Michael is named in 10:13). The name *Gavri'el* means 'man of God,' 'warrior of God,' or 'God is my strength.' The voice commanding Gabriel comes from 'between the banks of the Ulai' — this unidentified voice carries divine authority, commissioning the angel.
16. Gabriel reappears in Daniel 9:21 and then in the New Testament in Luke 1:19 (announcing John the Baptist to Zechariah) and Luke 1:26 (announcing Jesus to Mary). The continuity of this angelic figure across nearly six centuries of biblical narrative is remarkable.
17. Daniel's response to the angel — terror and prostration (*niv'atti va-eppelah al panay*) — is the standard human response to angelic encounter in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Ezekiel 1:28, Revelation 1:17). The address *ben adam* ('son of man') is striking — the same phrase applied to Ezekiel over 90 times, meaning simply 'human being.' It emphasizes Daniel's mortality in contrast to the angelic messenger.
17. The phrase *le-et qets* ('to the time of the end') frames the vision as eschatological — not merely about the immediate future but about the culmination of history. Whether 'the end' refers to the end of Antiochus's persecution, the end of the exile, or the ultimate end of days is deliberately left open.
18. The verb *nirdamti* ('I fell into a deep sleep / I was stunned into unconsciousness') suggests not ordinary sleep but a visionary trance — the overwhelming divine presence has rendered Daniel unconscious. Gabriel's physical touch (*vayyigga bi*) and the restoring to an upright position (*vayyaamidni al omdni*) mirror similar angelic interactions in 10:10, 18 and Revelation 1:17.

19. The phrase *be-acharit ha-za'am* ('in the latter part of the wrath/indignation') identifies the vision's timeframe as the tail end of a period of divine anger — specifically, God's wrath against Israel manifested through foreign oppression. The phrase *lemoed qets* ('for the appointed time of the end') reinforces that this period has a divinely determined limit. The persecution is real but bounded — God has set an endpoint.
20. Unlike chapter 7, where the beasts are not explicitly identified with specific nations, Gabriel names the empires directly: *malkhei Madai u-Pharas* ('the kings of Media and Persia'). This explicit identification removes the ambiguity — the ram is unequivocally Medo-Persia. The two horns correspond to the dual nature of the empire, with Persia (the taller horn) dominant.
21. The 'king of Greece' (*melekh Yavan*) uses the Hebrew word *Yavan*, derived from 'Ionia,' the Greek coastal region most familiar to the ancient Near East. The 'first king' (*ha-melekh ha-rishon*) is Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE), though he is not named. In Daniel's time, Greece was a relatively minor power compared to Persia — the specificity of this identification has been both a source of wonder for traditional readers and a key factor in critical dating discussions.
22. The four kingdoms (*arba malkhuyot*) that arise from Alexander's nation (*mi-goy*) correspond to the *Diadochi* — the successor kingdoms of Alexander's generals. The phrase *velo vekocho* ('but not with his power') indicates that none of the successor states will match Alexander's unified strength. This is historically accurate — none of the Hellenistic kingdoms individually achieved Alexander's scope of empire.
23. The phrase *kehatem ha-posh'im* ('when the transgressors have reached their full measure') is ambiguous: the transgressors may be (1) the Hellenistic rulers whose sins have reached their limit, (2) unfaithful Jews whose apostasy invites divine judgment, or (3) both — a convergence of pagan aggression and Jewish unfaithfulness that creates the conditions for Antiochus's rise.
23. The king who arises is *az panim* ('fierce/bold of face') and *mevin chidot* ('understanding riddles/skilled in intrigue'). This describes not mere military strength but political cunning — Antiochus IV gained his throne through manipulation and deception rather than legitimate succession (he usurped the throne from his nephew).
24. The phrase *velo bekhochi* ('but not by his own power') is a significant qualifier — his destructive capacity comes from elsewhere. This may mean (1) divine permission enables his power (God uses him as an instrument of judgment), (2) he relies on deception and alliances rather than personal military strength, or (3) demonic empowerment. The first reading is most consistent with Daniel's theology of divine sovereignty.
24. The phrase *am qedoshim* ('the holy people') explicitly identifies the target of persecution as Israel — God's consecrated people. The juxtaposition of 'prosper and succeed' (*hitslach ve-asah*) with 'destroy the holy people' is theologically agonizing: God permits an enemy to prosper against his own people.
25. The phrase *beshalvah yashchit rabbim* ('in a time of peace/security he will destroy many') describes treacherous attack during periods of supposed safety — Antiochus was known for attacking allies and violating treaties when they were least expected.
25. The 'Prince of princes' (*sar sarim*) is a superlative — the supreme Prince, which can only mean God himself. Antiochus's sacrilege against the temple is an assault against the divine sovereign. The parallel to the 'small horn' speaking against the Most High in 7:25 is exact.
25. The phrase *uve-efes yad yishaver* ('he will be broken without hand / not by human power') echoes the stone 'cut without hands' (*di la bi-yadin*) in 2:34. Antiochus's end will come by divine action, not human military defeat. Historically, Antiochus IV died in 164 BCE during an eastern campaign — ancient sources variously report madness, disease, or an accident. No human conqueror defeated him; he simply broke.
26. Gabriel certifies the vision: *emet hu* ('it is true') — a formal attestation of reliability. The command *setom he-chazon* ('seal up the vision') means to preserve it for the future, not to hide it. Sealing a document in the ancient world meant authenticating and preserving it, often for a future opening date. The phrase *le-yamim rabbim* ('for many days') indicates the fulfillment is distant from Daniel's perspective.
26. This instruction to seal contrasts with Revelation 22:10, where the angel tells John 'Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near' — what Daniel sealed, John is told to leave open.
27. The vision's physical toll on Daniel is severe: *nihyeiti* ('I was overwhelmed/exhausted') and *necheleti yamim* ('I was sick for days'). The apocalyptic experience is not exhilarating but devastating — the knowledge of future suffering against God's people makes Daniel physically ill. Compare the similar reaction in 10:8-9, 15-17.
27. The phrase *va-aqom va-e'eseh et melekhet ha-melekh* ('I got up and attended to the king's business') reveals a striking duality: Daniel lives simultaneously in the world of divine revelation and in the world of imperial administration. He carries the weight of prophetic knowledge while fulfilling mundane bureaucratic duties.
27. The closing phrase *ve-ein mevin* ('and no one understood it') — or possibly 'and I did not understand it' — indicates that even Daniel did not fully grasp the vision's meaning. The mysteries of God's future action remain partially veiled even to the prophet who receives them.

## 9

**Summary:** *Daniel 9 transitions from apocalyptic vision back to prayer and prophetic revelation. Daniel, reading Jeremiah's prophecy of seventy years for Jerusalem's desolation (Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10), turns to God in fasting and confession. His prayer (vv. 4-19) is one of the great penitential prayers of the Hebrew Bible, saturated with Deuteronomic covenant language. Gabriel then appears with the revelation of 'seventy sevens' (shavu'im shiv'im) — a chronological prophecy stretching from a decree to restore Jerusalem through the coming and cutting off of an anointed one, to a final period of desolation. This prophecy has generated more interpretive debate than perhaps any other passage in the Hebrew Bible.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The chapter divides sharply between Daniel's backward-looking prayer of confession (vv. 4-19), rooted in the Deuteronomic covenant tradition, and Gabriel's forward-looking revelation (vv. 24-27), which introduces an entirely new prophetic timeline. Daniel's prayer never mentions the visions of chapters 7-8 — it is thoroughly grounded in Torah and the prophets. The seventy-sevens prophecy (v. 24) uses six infinitival phrases to describe the ultimate goal: to finish transgression, seal up sin, atone for iniquity, bring in everlasting righteousness, seal vision and prophet, and anoint a most holy. The term mashiach nagid ('anointed leader,' v. 25) and the subsequent reference to an anointed one being 'cut off' (v. 26) have been read as references to a high priest (Onias III), a future messiah, or the concept of anointed kingship itself. We present the Hebrew transparently without privileging any single interpretive tradition.*

**Translation Friction:** *The seventy-sevens prophecy is notoriously difficult. The Hebrew of verses 24-27 is compressed and syntactically ambiguous at several points. The division of the seventy sevens into 7 + 62 + 1 requires careful punctuation decisions — the Masoretic accents place a major break after 'seven sevens' in verse 25, separating it from 'sixty-two sevens,' but some interpreters connect them. We followed the Masoretic accentuation. The phrase mashiach nagid could mean 'an anointed one who is a leader' or 'an anointed one, namely a leader' — we rendered it transparently as 'an anointed leader.' The verb yikkaret ('will be cut off') in verse 26 is followed by ve'ei lo, which is extremely compressed — it could mean 'and will have nothing,' 'and there will be no one for him,' or 'and not for himself.' We rendered with the most literal option and documented alternatives.*

**Connections:** *Daniel's prayer draws heavily on Deuteronomy 28-30 (covenant blessings and curses), Leviticus 26 (the covenant consequences), and Jeremiah 25 and 29 (the seventy-year prophecy). The penitential style connects to Nehemiah 9, Ezra 9, and Psalm 106. The seventy-sevens prophecy is cited by Jesus in Matthew 24:15 (the 'abomination of desolation') and has shaped Jewish and Christian eschatological thought profoundly. Gabriel's appearance links back to Daniel 8:16. The six goals listed in verse 24 form a comprehensive vision of redemption that echoes across both testaments.*

<sup>1</sup>In the first year of Darius son of Ahasuerus — a descendant of the Medes, who had been made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans — <sup>2</sup>In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, discerned from the writings the number of years that the word of the LORD had come to Jeremiah the prophet to fulfill — seventy years for the desolation of Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>So I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him in prayer and pleas for mercy, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. <sup>4</sup>I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying: Please, Lord — the great and awe-inspiring God who keeps the covenant and faithful love for those who love him and keep his commandments — <sup>5</sup>We have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly, and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and your judgments. <sup>6</sup>We did not listen to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our officials, our ancestors, and to all the people of the land. <sup>7</sup>To you, Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us — open shame, as on this day: to the people of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and all Israel, those near and those far away, in every land where you have driven them because of the treachery they committed against you. <sup>8</sup>LORD, to us belongs open shame — to our kings, our officials, and our ancestors — because we sinned against you. <sup>9</sup>To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, even though we have rebelled against him. <sup>10</sup>We did not obey the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his instructions, which he set before us through his servants the prophets. <sup>11</sup>All Israel transgressed your instruction, turning aside and refusing to obey your voice. So the curse and the sworn judgment written in

the instruction of Moses, the servant of God, were poured out on us, because we sinned against him. <sup>12</sup>He carried out his words that he spoke against us and against our rulers who governed us, bringing upon us a disaster so great that nothing like what was done to Jerusalem has been done under all of heaven. <sup>13</sup>Just as it is written in the instruction of Moses, all this disaster came upon us, yet we did not seek the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our iniquity and attending to your faithfulness. <sup>14</sup>So the LORD kept watch over the disaster and brought it upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in all that he does — and we did not obey his voice. <sup>15</sup>Now, Lord our God — you who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a strong hand and made a name for yourself, as is known today — we have sinned, we have acted wickedly. <sup>16</sup>Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, please let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy mountain. Because of our sins and the iniquities of our ancestors, Jerusalem and your people have become an object of scorn to all those around us. <sup>17</sup>So now, our God, hear the prayer of your servant and his pleas for mercy. Let your face shine upon your desolated sanctuary — for your own sake, Lord. <sup>18</sup>Incline your ear, my God, and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolation and the city that bears your name. For we are not presenting our pleas before you because of our own righteousness, but because of your abundant compassion. <sup>19</sup>Lord, hear! Lord, forgive! Lord, pay attention and act — do not delay! For your own sake, my God, because your name is invoked over your city and your people. <sup>20</sup>While I was still speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, presenting my plea before the LORD my God concerning the holy mountain of my God — <sup>21</sup>While I was still speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight and touched me at about the time of the evening offering. <sup>22</sup>He gave me understanding, speaking with me and saying: Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and comprehension. <sup>23</sup>At the start of your pleas for mercy, a word went out, and I have come to declare it, for you are treasured. So give attention to the word and understand the vision. <sup>24</sup>Seventy sevens are decreed concerning your people and your holy city: to put an end to transgression, to seal up sin, to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. <sup>25</sup>Know and understand: from the issuing of a word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until an anointed leader — seven sevens. Then for sixty-two sevens it will be restored and rebuilt, with plaza and moat, but in times of distress. <sup>26</sup>After the sixty-two sevens, an anointed one will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of a coming leader will destroy the city and the holy place. Its end will come like a flood, and until the end there will be war — desolations are decreed. <sup>27</sup>He will make a strong covenant with many for one seven, and in the middle of the seven he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering. On the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, until the decreed destruction is poured out on the desolator.

#### TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The identification of this Darius remains one of the most debated historical questions in Daniel. He is called 'son of Ahasuerus' and 'of the seed of the Medes,' yet no Median king named Darius son of Ahasuerus appears in extant Persian records. Various proposals identify him with Gubaru (a governor under Cyrus), Cyrus himself, or treat the figure as a literary composite. The Hebrew *homiakh* ('was made king') uses the passive Hophal stem, suggesting he received kingship rather than seizing it.
2. The Hebrew *binoti* ('I discerned, I understood') suggests careful study, not casual reading. The 'writings' (*sepharim*) likely refers to a collection of prophetic scrolls that Daniel had access to in exile. The reference is to Jeremiah 25:11-12 and 29:10, which prophesied seventy years of Babylonian dominance. The word *charbot* ('desolations') is plural, intensifying the devastation. Daniel's engagement with earlier scripture within scripture itself is a rare and significant moment of inner-biblical interpretation.
3. The phrase 'I turned my face' (*va'ettenah et panai*) indicates deliberate orientation toward God — a posture of focused, whole-body intention. The word *tachanumim* ('pleas for mercy, supplications') comes from the root *ch-n-n* ('to be gracious') and carries an inherent admission of dependence on undeserved favor. Fasting, sackcloth, and ashes together constitute the full penitential posture in ancient Israel — bodily participation in grief and humility.
4. The verb *va'etvaddeh* ('I made confession') is Hithpael of *y-d-h*, meaning to confess or acknowledge openly — a public, voluntary declaration of wrongdoing. The phrase *shomer ha-berit vеха-chesed* ('who keeps the covenant and faithful love') echoes Deuteronomy 7:9 and Nehemiah 1:5, placing Daniel's prayer squarely in the Deuteronomic tradition. The adjective *nora* ('awe-inspiring, fearsome') is rendered with its full force — this is not mere respect but trembling awareness of God's overwhelming power.

5. Daniel uses four distinct terms for wrongdoing in an escalating sequence: *chatanu* ('we sinned' — missing the mark), *avinu* ('we committed iniquity' — twisted what is right), *hirshanu* ('we acted wickedly' — declared guilty by conduct), and *maradnu* ('we rebelled' — actively defied authority). This fourfold confession covers the full spectrum from inadvertent failure to deliberate revolt. Daniel uses first-person plural throughout — he includes himself in the nation's guilt despite his personal faithfulness.
6. The phrase 'spoke in your name' (*dibberu beshimkha*) indicates prophetic authority — the prophets were not sharing private opinions but delivering words carrying divine authorization. The list of addressees — kings, officials, ancestors, and all the people — emphasizes that the prophetic message reached every level of society. No one can claim ignorance. The word *sarim* ('officials, princes') refers to the ruling class beneath the king.
7. The contrast between God's *tsedaqah* ('righteousness') and Israel's *boshet ha-panim* ('shame of face') is the structural axis of the prayer. The phrase *boshet ha-panim* is vivid — faces burning with shame, unable to look up. The word *ma'al* ('treachery, unfaithfulness') is used specifically for covenant betrayal, often of a sacred trust violated. Daniel encompasses both diaspora communities — 'near and far' — in the confession.
8. This verse intensifies verse 7's confession by stripping it to its essentials. The shame belongs not just to the common people but to the leadership class — kings and officials who should have guided the nation in covenant faithfulness. The verb *chatanu* ('we sinned') returns to the most basic term for wrongdoing from verse 5.
9. The Hebrew *rahamim* ('compassion') is related to *rechem* ('womb'), carrying the sense of deep, visceral tenderness — the compassion a mother feels for her child. The plural *selichot* ('forgivenesses') suggests repeated, abundant acts of pardon, not a single transaction. The conjunction *ki* ('because, though') creates a striking paradox: God's compassion and forgiveness exist precisely in the context of rebellion, not despite it.
10. The word *torotav* ('his instructions') is the plural of *torah*. Here it refers not to the Torah as a single book but to God's teachings delivered through multiple prophetic voices over centuries. The phrase 'set before us' (*natan lefaneynu*) echoes the Deuteronomic motif of God placing the covenant choice before the people (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19).
11. The verb *avru* ('transgressed') literally means 'crossed over' — they crossed the boundary of Torah. The word *alah* ('curse') is specifically the covenant curse, the sworn penalty for violation. The word *shevu'ah* ('oath, sworn judgment') reinforces that these consequences were not arbitrary but were the penalties Israel swore to accept at covenant ratification. Moses is called *eved ha-Elohim* ('servant of God'), a title of highest honor in the Hebrew Bible.
12. The verb *vayyaqem* ('he carried out, confirmed') means God made good on his word — the covenant curses were not empty threats. The word *shofeteynu* ('our rulers/judges') may refer to the line of leaders from judges through kings. The phrase 'under all of heaven' is a superlative expressing the unprecedented scale of Jerusalem's destruction — a claim echoed in Lamentations 1:12 and 2:13.
13. The phrase *chilinu et peney* ('we sought the favor of') literally means 'we softened the face of' — an idiom for entreating God's mercy through prayer and repentance. The Hebrew *amitekha* is often rendered 'your truth' but in covenantal context carries the stronger sense of 'your faithfulness, your reliability.' The verb *lehaskil* ('to attend to, to gain insight') implies more than intellectual understanding — it means to discern and act wisely in response.
14. The verb *vayyishqod* ('he kept watch') uses the same root as the almond branch (*shaqed*) vision in Jeremiah 1:11-12, where God says 'I am watching over my word to carry it out.' Here the watching is ominous — God vigilantly ensured that the covenant curses were fulfilled. The adjective *tsaddiq* ('righteous') reaffirms verse 7's claim: God's punishment was just, not excessive. The word *ra'ah* here means 'disaster, calamity' — a consequence, not divine malice.
15. The prayer pivots from confession to appeal with *ve'attah* ('and now'). Daniel invokes the Exodus — the foundational act of divine rescue — as the precedent for what he is about to ask. The phrase 'made a name for yourself' (*vatta'as lekha shem*) echoes Nehemiah 9:10 and Jeremiah 32:20. The reputation God earned through the Exodus is the implicit argument: 'You did it once; your name is at stake.'
16. Daniel appeals to God's *tsidqot* ('righteous acts') — the plural refers to God's historical acts of deliverance and justice. The argument is sophisticated: because God is righteous, and because he has a track record of righteous intervention, he should act again. The word *cherpah* ('reproach, scorn') describes the humiliation of God's people before the nations — and implicitly, the humiliation of God's reputation among them.
17. The phrase 'let your face shine' (*ha'er panekha*) echoes the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6:25 — it is a request for restored divine favor and presence. The sanctuary (*miqdash*) is described as *shamem* ('desolated, made desolate') — the same root that appears in the 'abomination of desolation' later in this chapter (v. 27) and in 11:31. The crucial phrase *lema'an Adonai* ('for your own sake, Lord') shifts the argument from Israel's merit to God's reputation — Daniel asks God to act not because Israel deserves it but because God's own name is bound to this place.
18. The anthropomorphic language — inclining the ear, opening eyes — is not naive theology but urgent rhetorical entreaty, pressing God to engage with Israel's suffering. The phrase 'the city that bears your name' (*asher niqra shimkha aleha*) means God's reputation is publicly linked to Jerusalem's fate. The theological climax of the prayer arrives here: the appeal rests entirely on God's *rahamim* ('compassion'), not on Israel's *tsidqot* ('righteous acts'). This is pure grace theology within the Hebrew Bible — salvation is asked for on the basis of who God is, not who Israel is.
19. The prayer reaches its rhetorical peak with three urgent imperatives, each preceded by the divine address *Adonai* — *shema'ah, selachah, haqshivah va'aseh* ('hear, forgive, attend and act'). The staccato rhythm conveys desperation. The plea *al te'achar* ('do not delay') introduces the theme of divine timing that Gabriel's response will address with the seventy-sevens chronology. The final argument is again God's own stake: his name (*shem*) is publicly attached to both city and people.

- 20.** The narrative transition indicates that God's response came while Daniel was still praying — the answer was dispatched before the prayer was finished (cf. Isaiah 65:24, 'Before they call, I will answer'). Daniel again takes personal ownership, confessing 'my sin' alongside 'the sin of my people.' The phrase *har qodesh* ('holy mountain') refers to Mount Zion, the temple mount, which is the geographic focus of Daniel's entire petition.
- 21.** Gabriel is called *ha-ish* ('the man'), even though he is an angelic being — this reflects the human-like appearance of angelic messengers in the Hebrew Bible. The phrase *mu'af bi'af* is debated: it could mean 'caused to fly swiftly' or 'wearied with weariness' (from the root *y-'-f*, 'to be weary'). We follow the more common reading of swift flight. The 'evening offering' (*minchat erev*) indicates the late afternoon sacrifice time — approximately 3 PM — which continued to mark Daniel's prayer schedule even in exile where no sacrifice could be offered. Gabriel appeared previously in 8:16.
- 22.** The verb *vayyaven* ('he gave understanding') and the noun *binah* ('comprehension') both come from the root *b-y-n* ('to discern, understand'). Gabriel's mission is explicitly pedagogical — he comes to help Daniel comprehend what has been revealed. The verb *lehaskilekhah* ('to give you insight') is the Hiphil of *s-k-l*, meaning to cause to understand or act wisely.
- 23.** The phrase *chamudot attah* ('you are treasured') indicates Daniel's special standing before God — the word *chamud* means 'desired, precious, treasured.' This is not flattery but a statement of Daniel's covenantal status. The 'word' (*davar*) that went out at the beginning of Daniel's prayer suggests that God responded immediately — the answer was dispatched the moment Daniel began praying. Gabriel commands Daniel to 'understand the vision' (*haven bammar'eh*), preparing him for the difficult revelation that follows.
- 24.** *Shavu'im shiv'im* ('seventy sevens') is the foundational phrase. The Hebrew *shavu'a* means a unit of seven — it could refer to weeks of days (490 days), weeks of years (490 years), or symbolic periods. Most interpreters read 'weeks of years.' The verb *nechtakh* ('are decreed, cut off') appears only here in the Hebrew Bible, making its precise meaning uncertain — 'decreed, determined, cut off' are all possibilities. The six infinitival purposes divide into two triads: the first three are negative (ending transgression, sin, iniquity) and the second three are positive (bringing righteousness, sealing prophecy, anointing). The phrase *qodesh qodashim* ('most holy') could refer to the most holy place in the temple, a most holy object, or a most holy person — the Hebrew is genuinely ambiguous. We render 'a most holy place' as the most natural reading of the construct but note the ambiguity. This verse is the most debated chronological prophecy in the Hebrew Bible, interpreted variously as fulfilled in the Maccabean period (Antiochus IV), in the time of Jesus, or in a still-future eschatological fulfillment.
- 25.** The Masoretic accents place a major disjunctive accent (*atnach*) after *shavu'im shiv'ah* ('seven sevens'), separating it from the sixty-two sevens that follow. This means the anointed leader (*mashiach nagid*) arrives after seven sevens, not after sixty-nine. Some interpreters disregard the Masoretic punctuation and connect all sixty-nine sevens to the anointed leader's arrival. We follow the Masoretic accentuation in our rendering. The term *mashiach nagid* ('anointed leader') does not carry the later technical meaning of 'the Messiah' — *mashiach* in the Hebrew Bible refers to anyone anointed for a role (kings, priests, even Cyrus in Isaiah 45:1). The word *nagid* ('leader') is the standard term for a designated ruler. The phrase *rechov vecharuts* ('plaza and moat') describes the rebuilt city's infrastructure — *rechov* is an open square or broad street, and *charuts* likely refers to a trench or moat, though some read it as 'wall' or 'decision.'
- 26.** The verb *yikkaret* ('will be cut off') is the same verb used for being cut off from the covenant community (e.g., Genesis 17:14) and for making/cutting a covenant (*karat berit*). The phrase *ve'ein lo* is extremely compressed Hebrew — literally 'and nothing to him' or 'and there is not for him.' Interpretive options include: 'and will have nothing' (destitution), 'and there will be no one for him' (abandonment), 'and not for himself' (vicarious suffering). We render the most literal option. The 'people of a coming leader' (*am nagid habba*) who destroy the city and sanctuary have been identified with Antiochus Epiphanes's forces (167 BCE), the Roman legions under Titus (70 CE), or a future eschatological army. The word *shomemot* ('desolations') connects to the 'abomination of desolation' in verse 27 and in 11:31.
- 27.** The verb *higbir* ('he will make strong, enforce') is unusual for covenant-making — the normal verb is *karat* ('to cut'). This suggests an imposed or forced covenant rather than a mutually ratified one. The phrase 'on the wing of abominations' (*al kenaf shiqqusim*) is one of the most difficult phrases in the Hebrew Bible. *Kenaf* ('wing') could mean 'extremity,' 'pinnacle,' or 'wing' — possibly referring to the pinnacle of the temple. *Shiqqusim* ('abominations, detestable things') is the standard term for idolatrous objects. The phrase *meshomem* ('one who makes desolate' or 'causing desolation') combined with *shiqqusim* forms the famous *shiqquts meshomem* ('abomination of desolation') referenced by Jesus in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14. Historically, this has been connected to Antiochus Epiphanes's desecration of the temple in 167 BCE (1 Maccabees 1:54), the Roman destruction of 70 CE, or a future eschatological event. The final clause promises that the destruction decreed (*necharatsah*) will ultimately fall on the desolator himself — judgment is not the last word; the one who desolates will himself be destroyed.

## 10

**Summary:** *Daniel 10 introduces the final vision of the book (spanning chapters 10-12) with an elaborate account of the heavenly messenger who comes to Daniel. Set in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, Daniel mourns and fasts for three full weeks before a glorious figure appears to him by the Tigris River. The description of this figure — clothed in linen, body like beryl, face like lightning, eyes like torches of fire — is one of the most vivid theophanies or angelophanies in the Hebrew Bible. The messenger reveals that he was delayed twenty-one days by 'the prince of the kingdom of Persia' until Michael came to help, introducing the concept of cosmic warfare behind earthly politics — angelic powers contending over the destinies of nations.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The description of the heavenly figure in verses 5-6 has remarkable parallels to the glorified Christ in Revelation 1:13-15, leading to debate about whether this is an angel or a pre-incarnate divine appearance. The concept of angelic 'princes' assigned to nations (the prince of Persia, the prince of Greece, Michael as Israel's prince) introduces a cosmology where earthly political conflicts mirror heavenly spiritual battles. The twenty-one-day delay — matching Daniel's twenty-one days of fasting — implies that Daniel's prayer and fasting were directly connected to the heavenly conflict. This chapter presents one of the clearest biblical texts for the idea that prayer participates in cosmic spiritual warfare.*

**Translation Friction:** *The identity of the glorious figure in verses 5-6 versus the speaking angel in verses 10-14 is debated. Some scholars see a single figure; others distinguish between a divine or exalted being in the vision (vv. 5-6) and the interpreting angel who speaks (vv. 10ff). We rendered the text as it stands without resolving the ambiguity. The phrase 'prince of Persia' (sar malkhut paras) could refer to a human ruler or a cosmic/angelic being — the context strongly favors an angelic interpretation since Michael is explicitly called 'one of the chief princes.' The verb nitgashsheti is a rare Hithpael form in verse 8.*

**Connections:** *The vision's setting by the Tigris connects to the rivers of Eden (Genesis 2:14) and Ezekiel's river visions (Ezekiel 1:1). The heavenly figure's description parallels Ezekiel 1:26-28 and Revelation 1:13-16. Michael appears here and in Daniel 12:1, Jude 9, and Revelation 12:7. The angelic princes concept connects to Deuteronomy 32:8 (where God assigned nations to divine beings) and to Paul's 'principalities and powers' language (Ephesians 6:12). The three-week fast connects to Daniel's earlier prayer practices (chapter 9).*

<sup>1</sup>In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a word was revealed to Daniel, who was called Belteshazzar. The word was true, and it concerned a great conflict. He understood the word and had comprehension of the vision. <sup>2</sup>In those days, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three weeks of days. <sup>3</sup>I ate no rich food; no meat or wine entered my mouth, and I did not anoint myself with oil until the three full weeks had passed. <sup>4</sup>On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, I was beside the great river — that is, the Tigris. <sup>5</sup>I raised my eyes and looked, and there was a man clothed in linen, with a belt of pure gold from Uphaz around his waist. <sup>6</sup>His body was like beryl, his face like the flash of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the roar of a multitude. <sup>7</sup>I, Daniel, alone saw the vision. The men who were with me did not see the vision, but a great terror fell upon them and they fled into hiding. <sup>8</sup>I was left alone, gazing at this great vision. No strength remained in me; my vigor drained away completely, and I could not summon any strength. <sup>9</sup>I heard the sound of his words, and as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep stupor, face down on the ground. <sup>10</sup>Then a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. <sup>11</sup>He said to me: Daniel, you who are treasured — attend to the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you. When he spoke this word to me, I stood up, trembling. <sup>12</sup>He said to me: Do not be afraid, Daniel. From the very first day you set your heart to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard. I have come because of your words. <sup>13</sup>The prince of the kingdom of Persia stood opposing me for twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there beside the kings of Persia. <sup>14</sup>I have come to help you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision concerns days yet to come. <sup>15</sup>When he spoke these words to me, I turned my face to the ground and was struck speechless. <sup>16</sup>Then one in the likeness of a human being touched my lips. I opened my mouth and

spoke, saying to the one standing before me: My lord, because of the vision anguish has overwhelmed me, and I have no strength left. <sup>17</sup>How can this servant of my lord speak with my lord? As for me, no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me. <sup>18</sup>Again one with a human appearance touched me and strengthened me. <sup>19</sup>He said: Do not be afraid, treasured one. Peace to you — be strong, yes, be strong! As he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said: Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me. <sup>20</sup>Then he said: Do you know why I have come to you? Now I must return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I leave, the prince of Greece will come. <sup>21</sup>But first I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. There is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael, your prince.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The phrase *tsava gadol* ('great conflict' or 'great army/warfare') is rendered 'a great conflict' rather than the KJV's 'the time appointed was long,' following the more natural meaning of *tsava* ('army, warfare, conflict, service'). Some translations read 'a great task' or 'a long time of warfare.' The dual naming — Daniel (Hebrew) and Belteshazzar (Babylonian) — reminds the reader of Daniel's bicultural existence. The verb *niglah* ('was revealed') is the Niphal passive, indicating divine initiative — the word was not discovered by Daniel but disclosed to him.
2. The phrase *sheloshah shavu'im yamim* ('three weeks of days') adds *yamim* ('days') to distinguish these weeks as literal seven-day periods, unlike the symbolic 'sevens' (*shavu'im*) in chapter 9. This deliberate clarification suggests awareness that *shavu'im* in the previous chapter meant something other than literal weeks. The verb *mit'abel* ('mourning') indicates deep grief, not merely fasting — Daniel is in a state of lamentation, likely over the situation described in the revealed word.
3. The phrase *lechem chamudot* ('rich food' or 'food of desire') describes delicacies or choice foods — Daniel did not fully fast but abstained from luxury and pleasure. This partial fast (sometimes called the 'Daniel fast' in later tradition) contrasts with the complete fast of chapter 9. The refusal to anoint with oil was a sign of mourning — anointing was associated with celebration and normal grooming (cf. 2 Samuel 12:20). The three-week period will prove significant: the angelic messenger was delayed exactly twenty-one days.
4. The twenty-fourth day of the first month (Nisan) falls just after Passover and the seven days of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 14-21). Daniel's three-week mourning fast apparently overlapped with or followed the Passover season. The river *Hiddekel* is identified as the Tigris (one of the four rivers of Eden in Genesis 2:14). The setting by a great river echoes Ezekiel's vision by the Chebar canal (Ezekiel 1:1) — major prophetic visions are associated with rivers throughout the Hebrew Bible.
5. The 'man' (*ish echad*, literally 'one man' or 'a certain man') is described in terms that transcend ordinary humanity. The linen garment (*baddim*) is priestly clothing — the high priest wore linen on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:4). Uphaz is an otherwise unknown location famous for gold, possibly identical with Ophir. The combination of priestly garments and royal gold suggests a figure who unites priestly and royal functions. The parallels with Revelation 1:13 (Christ clothed in a long robe with a golden sash) are striking.
6. The description unfolds in five elements, each comparing the figure to something overwhelmingly vivid: *tarshish* (a precious stone, likely topaz or chrysolite — the exact identification is uncertain), lightning, fire, bronze, and the sound of a crowd. The word *qalal* applied to the bronze means 'polished, burnished' — gleaming metal. The 'voice of a multitude' (*qol hamon*) could also mean 'the sound of a tumult' — an overwhelming, composite sound. Compare Ezekiel 1:24 ('like the sound of many waters') and Revelation 1:15 ('like the sound of many waters'). This figure embodies concentrated divine radiance — every surface burns or gleams.
7. The pattern of a visionary seeing what companions cannot parallels Paul's experience on the Damascus road (Acts 9:7; 22:9). The word *charadah* ('trembling, terror') is a deep, instinctive dread — the companions sensed the presence of something overwhelming even though they could not perceive it visually. Their flight was not cowardice but the natural human response to proximity with the numinous. This detail authenticates the vision as a genuine encounter, not a psychological episode — it affected others who were present.
8. The Hebrew *hodi* ('my splendor, my vigor') refers to Daniel's physical vitality or healthy appearance — the vision drained him of all natural energy. The verb *nehpakh* ('was turned, overturned') suggests a total reversal — his life force turned to destruction (*mashchit*). The threefold emphasis on loss of strength (*lo nishar bi koach... lo atsarti koach*) conveys complete physical collapse. Encountering the divine drains human capacity — compare Isaiah 6:5, Ezekiel 1:28, and Revelation 1:17.
9. The word *nirdam* ('deep sleep, stupor') describes an overwhelmed unconsciousness — not ordinary sleep but a state of incapacitation brought on by the encounter. Daniel could hear but could not remain conscious — the auditory impact alone was too much. The posture 'face down on the ground' (*panai artsah*) is the ultimate posture of human vulnerability before divine power.
10. The verb *vateni'eni* ('set me trembling, shook me') comes from the root *n-w-* ('to shake, totter'). The hand is not identified — it may belong to the glorious figure of verses 5-6 or to a different angelic attendant. Daniel is raised only to hands and knees — he cannot yet stand. The progression from face down to hands and knees to standing upright (v. 11) depicts a staged recovery from the overwhelming vision, assisted by angelic touch at each stage.
11. The phrase *ish chamudot* ('man of treasures' or 'treasured man') echoes 9:23 where Daniel is called *chamudot attah* ('you are treasured'). This is a title of exceptional divine favor. The command 'stand up' (*amod al omdekha*, literally 'stand on your standing place') restores Daniel's dignity and prepares him to receive the message. The angel's statement 'I have been sent to you' (*shullachti eleykha*) uses the passive — the angel was dispatched

by a higher authority. Daniel obeys but cannot stop trembling (mar'id) — obedience does not eliminate awe.

12. The phrase 'from the very first day' reveals that God's response was immediate — there was no delay on God's part. The twenty-one-day gap was caused by opposition en route, not by divine indifference. The verb lehit'annot ('to humble yourself') is the same reflexive verb used for the affliction of Yom Kippur fasting (Leviticus 16:29, 31). Daniel's three-week fast was an act of self-humbling before God. The phrase 'I have come because of your words' (ba'ti bidvareykha) establishes a direct causal link between Daniel's prayer and the angelic mission — prayer moves heaven.
13. The sar malkhut paras ('prince of the kingdom of Persia') is widely understood as an angelic or cosmic being assigned to Persia — a spiritual power behind the earthly empire. This interpretation is supported by the parallel with Michael, who is explicitly called one of the chief princes (sarim harishonim) and later identified as Israel's prince (12:1). The twenty-one-day delay matches Daniel's twenty-one days of fasting (v. 2), creating a direct correspondence between earthly prayer and heavenly warfare. The phrase malkhey paras ('kings of Persia') at the end of the verse is textually difficult — it may mean 'beside the kings of Persia' (i.e., the angelic powers over Persia) or may be emended to 'king of Persia' (singular). We follow the MT as it stands.
14. The phrase be'acharit hayyamim ('in the latter days' or 'at the end of days') is a standard prophetic formula for the future era when God's purposes reach fulfillment (cf. Genesis 49:1, Numbers 24:14, Isaiah 2:2, Micah 4:1). Whether this refers to the Maccabean crisis, the messianic age, or the eschatological end depends on one's interpretive framework. The angel's purpose is explicitly pedagogical — lahavinekha ('to help you understand'). The vision 'concerns days yet to come' (od chazon layyamim) — from Daniel's perspective, the events are still future.
15. The verb ne'elamti ('I was struck speechless, I became mute') is the Niphal of aleph-lamed-mem, meaning Daniel lost the capacity for speech. This is the second physical collapse — after the initial loss of strength (v. 8), Daniel now loses the ability to speak. The encounter with the heavenly progressively strips away human faculties — strength, consciousness, speech — before restoring them. The downward gaze (panai artsah) is both physical incapacity and instinctive reverence.
16. The phrase kidmut beney adam ('in the likeness of human beings') echoes the 'son of man' language of Daniel 7:13, though here it describes an angelic being who appears in human form. The touch on the lips restores Daniel's speech — compare Isaiah 6:7 where a seraph touches Isaiah's lips with a coal. The word tsiray ('my pangs, my anguish') originally refers to birth pangs — the vision has caused Daniel a pain as intense and involuntary as labor.
17. Daniel refers to himself as eved ('servant') of the angel — a posture of deep humility. The loss of neshamah ('breath') suggests Daniel is on the verge of death from the encounter — the breath of life itself (Genesis 2:7) is failing. The double address 'my lord... my lord' (adoni zeh... adoni zeh) expresses both deference and bewilderment. The rhetorical question — how can a mortal speak with a heavenly being? — echoes the ancient conviction that humans cannot survive direct contact with the divine.
18. This is the third touch in the sequence (vv. 10, 16, 18), each restoring a lost faculty — first the ability to move, then speech, now strength. The phrase kemar'eh adam ('like the appearance of a human') is another variant of the human-likeness language — the angelic being has a recognizably human form. The verb vaychazeqeni ('he strengthened me') uses the Piel intensive of ch-z-q, indicating active, deliberate strengthening — the angel pours strength into Daniel.
19. The repeated imperative chazaq vachazaq ('be strong, yes, be strong') uses the emphatic doubling pattern common in Hebrew for emphasis and encouragement. The progression is complete: Daniel went from collapsed and speechless to upright and ready to hear. The word chamudot ('treasured') appears for the third time in relation to Daniel (9:23, 10:11, 10:19), establishing it as his angelic title. Daniel's response — 'let my lord speak' — signals readiness to receive the revelation that follows in chapters 11-12.
20. The angel's question is rhetorical — he is about to explain. The cosmic warfare continues: the angel must return to the conflict with the prince (sar) of Persia, and a new antagonist, the prince of Greece (sar yavan), is approaching. Yavan ('Greece/Ionia') appears in Genesis 10:2 as a descendant of Japheth and becomes the standard Hebrew term for the Greek world. The sequence — Persia, then Greece — mirrors the historical succession of empires and the vision sequence of chapters 2, 7, and 8. The angelic conflict mirrors and drives the earthly political transitions.
21. The 'writing of truth' (ketav emet) suggests a heavenly book in which future events are recorded — a concept found also in Psalm 139:16 and Malachi 3:16. The word rashum ('inscribed') indicates something permanently written, not subject to revision. Michael is called sarkhem ('your prince') — Israel's patron angel, the cosmic defender of the covenant people. The angel's statement that only Michael supports him reveals the intensity of the heavenly conflict — it is not a minor skirmish but a battle requiring the highest angelic powers. This verse sets the stage for the detailed revelation of chapters 11-12.

## 11

**Summary:** *Daniel 11 contains the most detailed predictive text in the Hebrew Bible — a blow-by-blow account of the wars between the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt ('the king of the south') and the Seleucid kingdom of Syria ('the king of the north') spanning approximately 323-164 BCE. The chapter traces Persian kings (v. 2), Alexander the Great's empire and its division (vv. 3-4), the Ptolemaic-Seleucid wars (vv. 5-20), and the career of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in extraordinary detail (vv. 21-35), including his desecration of the Jerusalem temple — the 'abomination of desolation' (shiqquts meshomem, v. 31). Beginning at verse 36, the text shifts to descriptions that do not clearly correspond to any known historical events, leading to debate about whether these verses describe Antiochus in idealized terms, a future eschatological figure, or a literary transition from history to apocalyptic prophecy.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The historical precision of verses 2-35 is so detailed that critical scholars almost universally date this section to the Maccabean period (c. 167-164 BCE), viewing it as prophecy after the fact (vaticinium ex eventu). Conservative scholars maintain it as genuine predictive prophecy from the sixth century BCE. Either reading makes the chapter remarkable: as history, it provides one of the most detailed ancient accounts of the Ptolemaic-Seleucid wars; as prophecy, its accuracy is unparalleled. The 'abomination of desolation' (v. 31) becomes a template for desecration that Jesus applies to future events (Matthew 24:15). The description of 'those who are wise' (maskilim, vv. 33, 35) suffering and refining anticipates the theology of redemptive suffering. The shift at verse 36 to events without clear historical referent has generated centuries of interpretive debate.*

**Translation Friction:** *The primary challenge is rendering the relentless military and political language with clarity while preserving the Hebrew's compressed style. The chapter uses 'king of the north' and 'king of the south' without naming specific rulers — we preserve this ambiguity as the Hebrew intends. Many verses are syntactically dense, with pronoun references that can be ambiguous (whose daughter? whose army? whose forces?). We resolved these based on context while noting ambiguities. The word shiqquts ('abomination') in verse 31 carries strong overtones of idolatrous defilement — we preserved the traditional rendering. The shift at verse 36 is handled by noting the break without imposing an interpretation.*

**Connections:** *The chapter connects to Daniel 2 (four kingdoms), Daniel 7 (four beasts), and Daniel 8 (ram and goat, the 'little horn' = Antiochus). The 'abomination of desolation' connects to 9:27, 12:11, Matthew 24:15, and Mark 13:14. 1 Maccabees 1:54-64 describes the historical fulfillment under Antiochus. The maskilim ('wise ones') appear again in 12:3, 10. The chapter's theology of God's sovereignty over political history connects to Isaiah 10:5-19 (Assyria as God's instrument) and to the book's overall theme that earthly kingdoms rise and fall under divine governance.*

<sup>1</sup>As for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and strengthen him. <sup>2</sup>Now I will tell you the truth. Three more kings will arise in Persia, and a fourth will gain wealth far exceeding all of them. When he becomes strong through his wealth, he will stir up everything against the kingdom of Greece. <sup>3</sup>Then a mighty king will arise, ruling with vast dominion and doing as he pleases. <sup>4</sup>When he has arisen, his kingdom will be shattered and divided toward the four winds of heaven — but not to his descendants, and not with the authority with which he ruled. For his kingdom will be uprooted and given to others besides these. <sup>5</sup>The king of the south will grow strong, but one of his commanders will grow stronger still and will rule — his domain will be a vast domain. <sup>6</sup>After some years they will form an alliance. The daughter of the king of the south will come to the king of the north to seal an agreement, but she will not retain her power, nor will he keep his strength. She will be given over, along with those who brought her, the one who fathered her, and the one who supported her in those times. <sup>7</sup>From a shoot of her roots one will arise in his place. He will come against the army and enter the fortress of the king of the north, acting against them and prevailing. <sup>8</sup>He will also carry off to Egypt their gods, along with their cast images and their precious vessels of silver and gold. Then he will stand back from the king of the north for some years. <sup>9</sup>Then he will invade the realm of the king of the south but will return to his own land. <sup>10</sup>His sons will mobilize and assemble a vast multitude of forces. One of them will sweep forward like a flood, pressing on; then he will return and wage war all the way to

his fortress. <sup>11</sup>The king of the south will be enraged and go out to fight against him — against the king of the north — who will raise a great multitude, but the multitude will be given into his hand. <sup>12</sup>When the multitude has been swept away, his heart will be exalted. He will bring down tens of thousands, yet he will not prevail. <sup>13</sup>The king of the north will return and raise a multitude even greater than the first. After a period of some years, he will advance with a large army and abundant resources. <sup>14</sup>In those times, many will rise against the king of the south. Violent ones among your own people will lift themselves up to fulfill the vision, but they will stumble. <sup>15</sup>The king of the north will come, build siege ramps, and capture a fortified city. The forces of the south will not stand — not even his best troops will have the strength to resist. <sup>16</sup>The one who comes against him will do as he pleases, with no one able to stand before him. He will take his stand in the beautiful land, with destruction in his hand. <sup>17</sup>He will set his determination to come with the strength of his entire kingdom, making equitable terms with him. He will do this, giving him the daughter of women to destroy it — but she will not stand with him or be on his side. <sup>18</sup>Then he will turn his attention to the coastlands and capture many of them, but a commander will put an end to his insolence — indeed, he will turn his insolence back upon him. <sup>19</sup>He will turn back toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be found no more. <sup>20</sup>In his place will arise one who sends an exactor through the splendor of the kingdom. But within a few days he will be broken — not in anger and not in battle. <sup>21</sup>In his place will arise a despised one to whom the royal honor was not given. He will come in a time of security and seize the kingdom through intrigue. <sup>22</sup>Overwhelming forces will be swept away before him and shattered — along with the prince of the covenant. <sup>23</sup>After allying with him, he will act deceitfully. He will rise to power with only a small force. <sup>24</sup>In a time of security he will enter the richest parts of the province and do what none of his ancestors or his ancestors' ancestors did — he will distribute plunder, spoil, and wealth among them. He will plot his schemes against fortified places, but only for a time. <sup>25</sup>He will rouse his strength and determination against the king of the south with a large army. The king of the south will mobilize for war with an extremely large and powerful army, but he will not stand because plots will be devised against him. <sup>26</sup>Those who eat his royal food will destroy him. His army will be swept away, and many will fall slain. <sup>27</sup>Both these kings, with their hearts set on evil, will speak lies to each other at the same table. But it will not succeed, for the end is still at the appointed time. <sup>28</sup>He will return to his land with great wealth, but his heart will be set against the holy covenant. He will take action and then return to his own land. <sup>29</sup>At the appointed time he will return and come against the south, but this time it will not be as before. <sup>30</sup>Ships of Kittim will come against him, and he will lose heart and turn back. He will rage against the holy covenant and take action. He will return and show favor to those who abandon the holy covenant. <sup>31</sup>Forces from him will arise, profane the temple fortress, abolish the regular offering, and set up the abomination that causes desolation. <sup>32</sup>Those who act wickedly against the covenant he will seduce with smooth words, but the people who know their God will stand firm and take action. <sup>33</sup>Those who are wise among the people will give understanding to many, though they will fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder, for a time. <sup>34</sup>When they stumble, they will receive a little help, though many will join them insincerely. <sup>35</sup>Some of the wise will stumble so that they may be refined, purified, and made clean until the time of the end, for it is still for the appointed time. <sup>36</sup>The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt himself and magnify himself above every god. Against the God of gods he will speak astonishing things. He will prosper until the wrath is completed, for what has been decreed will be accomplished. <sup>37</sup>He will show no regard for the gods of his ancestors, nor for the one desired by women, nor for any god, for he will magnify himself above all. <sup>38</sup>Instead, he will honor a god of fortresses in their place. He will honor a god his ancestors did not know with gold, silver, precious stones, and costly gifts. <sup>39</sup>He will deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he will load with honor, making them rule over many, and he will distribute land for a price. <sup>40</sup>At the time of the end, the king of the south will engage him in battle. The king of the north will storm against him with chariots, cavalry, and many ships. He will invade lands, sweeping through like a flood. <sup>41</sup>He will enter the beautiful land, and many will fall. But these will escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the foremost of the Ammonites. <sup>42</sup>He will stretch out his hand against the lands, and the land of Egypt will not escape. <sup>43</sup>He will gain control over the treasuries of gold and silver and all the precious things of Egypt. The Libyans and Cushites will follow in his train. <sup>44</sup>But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to annihilate and completely destroy many. <sup>45</sup>He will pitch his royal tents between the sea and the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The speaker is the angel from chapter 10. He states that he supported Michael (the 'him' of the previous verse) in the first year of Darius the Mede — the same year Daniel prayed in chapter 9. The verbs *lemachaziq ulema'oz* ('to support and to be a stronghold for') describe military alliance language — the angel served as a reinforcement for Michael in the cosmic conflict over the transition from Babylonian to Persian power.
2. The three kings following Cyrus are generally identified as Cambyses, pseudo-Smerdis (Bardiya), and Darius I, with the wealthy fourth being Xerxes I (Ahasuerus of Esther), whose massive invasion of Greece in 480 BCE fits the description perfectly. The Hebrew *ya'ir hakkol* ('he will stir up everything/everyone') indicates a total mobilization — Xerxes assembled the largest army the ancient world had seen for his Greek campaign. The word *yavan* ('Greece/Ionia') is the standard Hebrew designation for the Greek world.
3. The 'mighty king' (*melekh gibbor*) is universally identified as Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE), whose conquests created the largest empire the world had yet seen. The phrase 'doing as he pleases' (*asah kirtsonno*) characterizes his unchallenged authority — no one could resist him. The same phrase recurs for later kings in this chapter, becoming a marker of absolute power that is always temporary.
4. Alexander died in 323 BCE at age 32, and his empire was eventually divided among four generals (the Diadochi): Cassander (Macedonia/Greece), Lysimachus (Thrace/Asia Minor), Seleucus (Syria/Mesopotamia), and Ptolemy (Egypt). The phrase 'not to his descendants' (*lo le'acharito*) is historically precise — Alexander's son Alexander IV and half-brother Philip III were both murdered. The four winds (*arba ruchot hashamayim*) correspond to the four divisions, matching the four-headed leopard of 7:6 and the four horns of 8:8.
5. The 'king of the south' (*melekh ha-negev*) introduces the Ptolemaic dynasty of Egypt. The first is Ptolemy I Soter (323-285 BCE). The commander (*sar*) who becomes even stronger is Seleucus I Nicator (305-281 BCE), who had initially served under Ptolemy but eventually built a larger empire stretching from Asia Minor to India. The text establishes the two-power dynamic — north (Seleucid) and south (Ptolemaic) — that drives the rest of the chapter, with the land of Israel caught between them.
6. This describes the marriage of Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (king of the south), to Antiochus II Theos (king of the north) around 252 BCE. The marriage was a diplomatic alliance (*mesharim*, 'equitable terms, agreement'). When Ptolemy II died, Antiochus's first wife Laodice had Berenice, her young son, and her attendants murdered, and then poisoned Antiochus — fulfilling the prophecy that none would retain power. The Hebrew is notably compressed, requiring the reader to track multiple pronoun referents. The word *hayoldeha* ('the one who fathered her') likely refers to Ptolemy II, who died before the consequences unfolded.
7. The 'shoot of her roots' (*netser sharasheyha*) — a branch from the same family tree as Berenice — is her brother Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-222 BCE), who invaded the Seleucid empire to avenge his sister's murder. The botanical metaphor (*netser*, 'shoot, branch') emphasizes dynastic continuity. Ptolemy III's invasion of the Seleucid heartland was spectacularly successful, reaching deep into Mesopotamia.
8. Ptolemy III's plunder of Seleucid temples and the removal of cult images to Egypt is historically documented — ancient sources say he recovered Egyptian idols that had been carried off by the Persians. The word *nesikheyhem* ('their cast images, libation vessels') can refer to molten images or drink offerings. The phrase *shanim ya'amod* ('he will stand for years') indicates a period where Ptolemy III refrained from further conflict with the north — he consolidated his gains rather than pressing further.
9. The subject shifts to the king of the north — Seleucus II Callinicus (246-226 BCE) — who attempted a counterattack against Egypt but failed and was forced to withdraw. The brief verse captures an unsuccessful retaliatory campaign. Some read the subject as the king of the south returning home, but the context (a northern response to the southern invasion) supports the northern king as subject.
10. The sons of Seleucus II are Seleucus III Ceraunus (226-223 BCE), who died quickly, and Antiochus III 'the Great' (223-187 BCE), who became one of the most significant Seleucid rulers. The singular shift ('one of them') focuses on Antiochus III. The flood metaphor (*shataf ve'avar*, 'overflow and pass through') describes an overwhelming military advance. The 'fortress' (*me'uzoh*) at the end likely refers to the Egyptian border fortifications — Antiochus III pushed his campaign to the gates of Egypt.
11. This describes the Battle of Raphia (217 BCE), where Ptolemy IV Philopator, despite his normally indolent character, roused himself (*yitmarmar*, 'will be bitterly enraged') to fight Antiochus III. Antiochus brought a massive army but Ptolemy won a decisive victory. The phrase 'given into his hand' (*nittan beyado*) means the southern king's hand — Ptolemy defeated the northern multitude. The pronoun references here are potentially confusing; context clarifies that the king of the north raised the multitude and the king of the south defeated it.
12. Ptolemy IV won at Raphia and inflicted enormous casualties, but he failed to press his advantage. His heart was 'exalted' (*ram levavo*) — pride and self-satisfaction — but he did not use the victory to destroy Seleucid power permanently. The word *ribb'ot* ('myriads, tens of thousands') indicates massive casualties. The paradox — victory without lasting strength — captures Ptolemy IV's character perfectly. He returned to Egypt and declined into luxury and neglect.
13. Antiochus III spent years rebuilding his forces after Raphia, campaigning eastward to restore Seleucid authority before turning south again. The phrase *leqets ha'ttim shanim* ('at the end of the times, years') indicates a significant passage of time — approximately sixteen years elapsed between Raphia (217 BCE) and Antiochus III's renewed southern campaign (201 BCE). By then Ptolemy IV had died and his young son Ptolemy V Epiphanes was a child, making Egypt vulnerable.
14. The phrase *beney paritsey ammekha* ('violent ones/breakers among your people') refers to a faction within Judah that allied with Antiochus III against Ptolemaic Egypt. The word *parits* means 'violent one, breaker, robber' — these were aggressive, ambitious men within the Jewish

community. Their motivation — 'to fulfill the vision' (leha'amid chazon) — suggests they saw in the shifting political situation an opportunity to advance prophetic expectations, perhaps of national independence. The text says they will 'stumble' (nikhshalu) — their aspirations would fail. This is one of the few moments where the text directly addresses Daniel's own people within the political narrative.

15. This describes Antiochus III's capture of Sidon (198 BCE), where an Egyptian garrison under the general Scopas was besieged. The solelah ('siege ramp') was the standard technique for assaulting fortified cities. The phrase am mivcharav ('his chosen troops, his elite forces') indicates that Egypt sent its best warriors to relieve the siege, but they failed. The repeated emphasis on inability to 'stand' (lo ya'amodu... ein koach la'amod) conveys the totality of southern military collapse.
16. Antiochus III now 'does as he pleases' (ya'aseh kirtsono) — the same phrase applied to Alexander in verse 3, marking a peak of unchallenged power. The 'beautiful land' (erets ha-tsevi) is the land of Israel — tsevi means 'beauty, splendor, ornament' (cf. 8:9). Antiochus III's control of Judea after the Battle of Panium (198 BCE) brought Israel under Seleucid rule for the first time. The phrase vekhalah beyado ('with destruction in his hand' or 'with all of it in his hand') is ambiguous — it could mean total control or total devastation.
17. Antiochus III, rather than invading Egypt directly, pursued diplomacy — he gave his daughter Cleopatra I in marriage to the young Ptolemy V (194 BCE). The phrase bat ha-nashim ('daughter of women') is an unusual designation, perhaps emphasizing her beauty or her human vulnerability as a pawn in geopolitics. The purpose — lehachchitah ('to destroy it/her') — suggests Antiochus intended Cleopatra to undermine Egypt from within as a Seleucid agent. Instead, she sided with her husband's interests against her father's plans — 'she will not stand with him or be on his side.'
18. Antiochus III turned to conquering islands and coastal territories in Asia Minor and Greece (197-190 BCE), bringing him into conflict with Rome. The 'commander' (qatsin) is the Roman consul Lucius Cornelius Scipio (or his brother Scipio Africanus), who defeated Antiochus at the Battle of Magnesia (190 BCE) and imposed humiliating terms. The word cherpah ('reproach, insolence, disgrace') is used twice — the Romans ended the reproach Antiochus was inflicting and turned it back on him through the Treaty of Apamea, which stripped him of territory and imposed massive indemnity.
19. Antiochus III retreated to his own territories after the Roman defeat and was killed in 187 BCE while attempting to plunder a temple in Elymais to pay the Roman indemnity. The phrase 'stumble and fall and be found no more' (nikhshal venafal velo yimmatse) describes his death with stark brevity — the mighty king who 'did as he pleased' (v. 3, echoed in v. 16) ends ignominiously. The pattern of rising and falling power is a recurring motif throughout this chapter.
20. This brief reign describes Seleucus IV Philopator (187-175 BCE), son of Antiochus III. The 'exactor' (noges) is generally identified as Seleucus's minister Heliodorus, who was sent to plunder the Jerusalem temple treasury (2 Maccabees 3). The phrase heder malkhut ('splendor/glory of the kingdom') likely refers to the temple or the land of Israel. Seleucus IV was assassinated by Heliodorus after only a few years — 'not in anger and not in battle' indicates he died by intrigue rather than in open conflict.
21. The 'despised one' (nivzeh) is Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BCE), the central antagonist of Daniel 8 and 11. He was not the legitimate heir — the throne should have passed to Seleucus IV's son Demetrius, who was a hostage in Rome. Antiochus seized power through political maneuvering (chalaqlaqot, 'smooth words, flatteries, intrigues'). The word nivzeh ('despised, contemptible') is the narrator's assessment of his character. He took the title Epiphanes ('God Manifest'), which his detractors parodied as Epimanes ('the Madman').
22. The 'prince of the covenant' (negid berit) is debated: it may refer to the Jewish high priest Onias III, who was deposed and later murdered (2 Maccabees 4:34), or to Ptolemy VI of Egypt. If Onias III is meant, the phrase carries enormous theological weight — the person who represented Israel's covenant relationship with God was destroyed by Antiochus's political machinations. The flood metaphor (zer'ot ha-shetef, 'arms of the flood') describes an irresistible military sweep.
23. Antiochus IV used deception (mirmah) as a consistent strategy — forming alliances only to betray them. The phrase bim'at goy ('with a small people/nation') indicates he initially commanded limited resources but leveraged them through cunning rather than brute force. The combination of deception and small numbers sets up the contrast with his eventual ambitions.
24. Antiochus IV bought loyalty through lavish distribution of plunder — an unprecedented strategy among Seleucid kings ('what none of his ancestors did'). The word yibzor ('he will scatter, distribute') indicates generous, even profligate dispersal of wealth among supporters. The phrase ve'ad et ('but only for a time') introduces the crucial theological qualification that recurs throughout Daniel: all human power is temporary and operates within divinely set limits.
25. This describes Antiochus IV's first Egyptian campaign (170/169 BCE). Ptolemy VI Philometor (king of the south) assembled a massive army but was undermined by treachery from within his own court — 'plots will be devised against him' (yachshevu alav machashavot). The defeat was caused not by military inferiority but by internal betrayal. The verb ya'er ('will rouse') carries the sense of stirring up courage and resolve for a major undertaking.
26. The betrayers are those closest to the king — those who eat his pat bag ('royal food, food from the king's table'). The word bag is the same term used for the food Daniel refused in 1:5 — a link within the book. Ptolemy VI was betrayed by members of his own court who were in league with Antiochus IV. The phrase chalelim rabbim ('many slain') describes the human cost of the resulting military collapse.
27. After defeating Ptolemy VI, Antiochus IV negotiated with him — both deceiving the other. The image of lying at the same table (al shulchan echad kazav yedabberu) is vivid diplomatic cynicism. The theological conclusion — 'it will not succeed, for the end is still at the appointed time' (ki od qets lammot) — asserts divine sovereignty over the timeline. Human scheming cannot alter God's schedule. This is a key theme throughout Daniel: human empires operate within divinely appointed boundaries.

28. On his return from Egypt (169 BCE), Antiochus IV turned against Jerusalem and the Jewish religion — his heart was 'against the holy covenant' (al berit qodesh). The phrase berit qodesh ('holy covenant') refers to the Sinai covenant and its associated worship — the entire system of Jewish religious life centered on the temple. The vague 'he will take action' (ve'asah) likely refers to his plundering of the Jerusalem temple (1 Maccabees 1:20-24; 2 Maccabees 5:15-21), where he seized the golden altar, the lampstand, the table of showbread, and other sacred vessels.
29. Antiochus IV's second Egyptian campaign (168 BCE) would end very differently from his first. The phrase lo tihyeh karishonah vekha'acharonah ('it will not be as the first or as the last') indicates this campaign will fail. The word mo'ed ('appointed time') again emphasizes divine scheduling — even this invasion occurs within God's predetermined timeline.
30. The 'ships of Kittim' (tsiyim kittim) refer to Roman warships. In 168 BCE, the Roman legate Gaius Popilius Laenas confronted Antiochus IV outside Alexandria and drew a circle in the sand around him, demanding he leave Egypt before stepping out of it. This humiliation (nikah, 'he lost heart, was disheartened') drove Antiochus into a rage (za'am) that he directed against Jerusalem and the Jewish religion. The phrase 'those who abandon the holy covenant' (ozvey berit qodesh) refers to Hellenizing Jews who cooperated with Antiochus's religious persecution — a collaboration that divided the Jewish community and intensified the crisis.
31. This verse describes the climactic desecration of December 167 BCE, when Antiochus IV's forces profaned the Jerusalem temple (1 Maccabees 1:54). The 'regular offering' (ha-tamid) refers to the daily morning and evening sacrifices that were the heartbeat of temple worship. The shiqquts meshomem ('abomination that causes desolation') is the defining phrase of the crisis — most likely a pagan altar or idol set up on the altar of burnt offering. The word shiqquts ('abomination, detestable thing') is the standard term for idolatrous defilement, possibly a deliberate distortion of a pagan deity's name (ba'al shamem, 'lord of heaven' shiqquts meshomem). Jesus cites this phrase in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14, applying it to a future desecration.
32. A sharp contrast emerges between two Jewish responses to the persecution. The marshiey berit ('those who act wickedly against the covenant') are the Hellenizers who cooperated with Antiochus — he will win them over with chalaqot ('smooth words, flattery, slippery persuasion'). But the am yodey Elohav ('the people who know their God') — identified with the Maccabean resistance — will yachaziku ('stand firm, hold fast') and take action. The verb ya'asu ('they will act') likely refers to the armed resistance led by Judas Maccabeus and his family.
33. The maskilim ('wise ones, those who have insight') are a distinct group — not warriors but teachers who give understanding (yavinu) to the many. They suffer persecution — sword, fire, captivity, and plunder — yet continue their instructive mission. The maskilim appear again in verse 35 and in 12:3, where they 'shine like the brightness of the sky.' Their role is to sustain faithful understanding during the crisis. The word yamim ('days') here means 'for a time, for a period' — the suffering has limits.
34. The 'little help' (ezer me'at) has been read as a guarded reference to the Maccabean revolt — significant enough to provide relief but described modestly, perhaps because the book's theology values faithful endurance (the maskilim) over military action. Alternatively, the author may view the Maccabean victory as only partial deliverance. The 'many who join insincerely' (nilvu... bachalaqlaqot) describes opportunists who allied with the faithful once the tide turned — their commitment was superficial rather than principled.
35. The suffering of the maskilim is given theological purpose — it serves to refine (litsrof), purify (levarer), and cleanse (lehalben) them. The metallurgical metaphor (refining) combines with the laundering metaphor (whitening) to describe suffering as purification. This is one of the earliest expressions of redemptive suffering theology in the Hebrew Bible — suffering that produces spiritual purity rather than merely punishment. The phrase ad et qets ('until the time of the end') sets a limit on the suffering, and ki od lammo'ed ('for it is still for the appointed time') reaffirms divine scheduling. The 'time of the end' introduces eschatological vocabulary that becomes central in chapter 12.
36. Beginning with this verse, the chapter describes events that do not clearly match the known history of Antiochus Epiphanes. Some interpreters see this as an idealized portrait of Antiochus pushed beyond historical accuracy into theological typology; others see a transition to a future eschatological figure (an 'antichrist' type); still others view it as genuine prophecy about Antiochus that simply does not match our incomplete historical records. The phrase 'God of gods' (El elim) is a superlative — the supreme deity. The king's self-exaltation echoes Isaiah 14:13-14 and anticipates Paul's 'man of lawlessness' in 2 Thessalonians 2:4. The word za'am ('wrath, indignation') refers to God's measured judgment — the king's success operates only within the span of divine wrath against Israel.
37. The phrase chemdat nashim ('the desire of women') is one of the most debated expressions in Daniel. Interpretations include: (1) a deity especially beloved by women, such as Tammuz/Adonis (cf. Ezekiel 8:14); (2) the natural desire for women, suggesting the king rejects normal human affection; (3) a reference to a specific figure desired by women (sometimes read messianically). We render literally to preserve the ambiguity. The verb yavin ('he will regard, understand, consider') is rendered 'show regard for' — the king dismisses all religious and human attachments in his self-deification.
38. The 'god of fortresses' (eloah ma'uzzim) is unidentified — no known deity bears this title. It may refer to Jupiter Capitolinus (Zeus Olympios), whose cult Antiochus promoted; to a deified concept of military power itself; or to a deity associated with fortified places. The phrase 'a god his ancestors did not know' (eloah asher lo yeda'u hu avotav) echoes the Deuteronomic warning against foreign gods (Deuteronomy 32:17). Despite rejecting all existing gods (v. 37), this king installs a new cult of power.
39. The king rewards his supporters with governance over populations (himshilam barabbim) and distributes land (adamah) as political patronage. This system of rewarding religious compliance with political power describes the Hellenizing program in Judea, where cooperative Jews received positions of authority. The 'foreign god' (eloah nekhar) is a deity alien to the nation's tradition — the introduction of foreign worship enforced through political incentives.

40. The phrase *be'et qets* ('at the time of the end') signals a shift — from this point, no clear historical correspondence to known events of Antiochus IV's reign can be established with certainty. The verb *yitnagach* ('will charge, butt, engage') suggests aggressive initiation by the south. The king of the north's response — *yista'er* ('will storm') — describes a tornado-like assault. The flood metaphor (*shataf ve'avar*) returns from verse 10. Whether these events describe unknown historical episodes, idealized typological events, or future eschatological conflicts remains debated.
41. The 'beautiful land' (*erets ha-tsevi*) is Israel, as in verse 16. The nations that escape — Edom, Moab, and Ammon (all Transjordanian peoples) — are precisely those east of the Jordan River, suggesting the invasion route bypasses the eastern desert. The word *re'shit* ('foremost, first, best') applied to the Ammonites may mean their leading people or their territory's chief region. These three nations were traditional enemies of Israel (cf. Psalm 83:6-7), making their escape from the invader ironic.
42. Unlike the Transjordanian nations of verse 41, Egypt will not escape. The phrase *yishlach yado* ('he will stretch out his hand') is a gesture of aggressive power projection. Historically, Antiochus IV was prevented from conquering Egypt by Roman intervention (v. 30), but this section — if describing events beyond Antiochus — depicts a successful Egyptian conquest. The verse's brevity creates menace through understatement.
43. The conquered wealth of Egypt and the submission of North African peoples — Libim (Libyans) and Kushim (Cushites/Ethiopians) — depict total domination of the southern territories. The phrase *bemits'adav* ('in his steps, at his heels') means they will follow as subjects or vassal troops. Cush refers to the region south of Egypt (modern Sudan/Ethiopia). The comprehensive plunder of Egyptian treasures echoes Ptolemy III's earlier plunder of Seleucid temples (v. 8), reversing the direction of conquest.
44. The threatening reports (*shemu'ot*, 'news, rumors') from east and north suggest military threats from multiple directions. The king's response — going out 'in great rage' (*bechema gedolah*) to 'annihilate and completely destroy' (*lehashmid ulehacharim*) — describes genocidal fury. The verb *hacharim* ('to devote to destruction, to put under the ban') is the language of herem warfare (cf. Joshua 6:21), adding a quasi-religious dimension to the destruction. Antiochus IV did die during an eastern campaign (164 BCE), but the details here do not closely match the historical accounts of his death.
45. The 'beautiful holy mountain' (*har tsevi qodesh*) is Mount Zion — the temple mount in Jerusalem. The location 'between the seas' (*beyn yammim*) places his encampment between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea (or between the sea and the mountain), which describes the coastal plain west of Jerusalem. The phrase 'he will come to his end' (*uva ad qitso*) is abrupt and final — the mighty king who exalted himself above every god simply ends. The statement 'no one will help him' (*ve'ein ozer lo*) marks total abandonment — neither gods nor allies will save him. This anonymous, unheroic death contrasts with his grandiose self-exaltation. The historical Antiochus IV died in Persia in 164 BCE, not near Jerusalem, which is one reason many interpreters see this section as referring to a figure beyond Antiochus.

# 12

**Summary:** *Daniel 12 brings the book to its climax with the most explicit resurrection text in the Hebrew Bible. Michael, Israel's guardian prince, rises during an unprecedented time of distress. Those who sleep in the dust awake — some to everlasting life, some to everlasting shame (v. 2). The wise shine like the brightness of the sky (v. 3). Daniel is told to seal the book until the time of the end. Two angelic figures appear beside the river, and one asks the luminous figure above the water how long these wonders will last. The answer — 'a time, times, and half a time' — introduces the final chronological formulas: 1,290 days and 1,335 days. The book closes with a personal promise to Daniel: 'You will rest, and will stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.'*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *Verse 2 is the clearest and most unambiguous statement of bodily resurrection in the Hebrew Bible. While hints of resurrection appear elsewhere (Isaiah 26:19, Ezekiel 37, Job 19:25-27), Daniel 12:2 states it with theological precision — distinguishing between resurrection to life and resurrection to judgment. Verse 3 introduces the concept that the righteous dead will 'shine' — luminous, transformed existence that Jesus echoes in Matthew 13:43. The command to 'seal the book' (v. 4) implies the prophecy is for a distant future, creating a literary contrast with Revelation 22:10 ('Do not seal up the words of prophecy, for the time is near'). The final verse (v. 13) is one of the most personally tender moments in prophetic literature — God speaks directly to Daniel about his own death and resurrection.*

**Translation Friction:** *The phrase *rabbim miyyesheney admat afar* ('many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground') in verse 2 uses 'many' (*rabbim*) rather than 'all,' raising the question of whether this envisions universal resurrection or selective resurrection. We rendered literally and noted the interpretive options. The chronological numbers — 1,290 days (v. 11) and 1,335 days (v. 12) — do not obviously correspond to any known historical period and their relationship to the 'time, times, and half a time' (v. 7) and to the 2,300 evenings and mornings of 8:14 remains debated. The word *goralekhah* ('your allotted portion') in verse 13 carries inheritance and destiny language that we preserved.*

*Connections: The resurrection language connects to Isaiah 26:19, Ezekiel 37, and becomes foundational for New Testament resurrection theology (1 Corinthians 15, John 5:28-29). Michael's role connects to 10:13, 21 and to Jude 9 and Revelation 12:7. The sealed book motif connects to Isaiah 8:16 and is reversed in Revelation 22:10. The luminous wise in verse 3 connect to Matthew 13:43. The 'time of distress' connects to Jeremiah 30:7 ('the time of Jacob's trouble') and Jesus's discourse in Matthew 24:21. Daniel's personal promise of resurrection (v. 13) connects to the covenant promise that death does not sever the relationship between God and his faithful ones.*

**1**At that time Michael will arise — the great prince who stands guard over your people. There will be a time of distress such as has never occurred since nations first came into being until that time. But at that time your people will be rescued — everyone who is found written in the book. **2**Many of those who sleep in the ground of dust will awake — some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting abhorrence. **3**Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever and ever. **4**But you, Daniel — close up the words and seal the book until the time of the end. Many will search back and forth, and knowledge will increase. **5**Then I, Daniel, looked, and there were two others standing — one on this bank of the river and one on the other bank of the river. **6**One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river: How long until the end of these astonishing things? **7**I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river. He raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by the One who lives forever that it would be for a set time, set times, and half a time. When the shattering of the power of the holy people is completed, all these things will be finished. **8**I heard but did not understand. So I said: My lord, what will be the outcome of these things? **9**He said: Go on your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. **10**Many will be purified, made clean, and refined. The wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand — but the wise will understand. **11**From the time the regular offering is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. **12**Blessed is the one who waits and reaches 1,335 days. **13**But you — go on to the end. You will rest, and you will stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.

#### TRANSLATOR NOTES

- 1.** Michael (mikha'el, 'who is like God?') is identified as ha-sar ha-gadol ('the great prince') and as the one who 'stands over' (ha'omed al) Daniel's people — Israel's cosmic guardian. The verb ya'amod ('will arise, will stand') could mean 'rise to action' or 'take his stand' — either way, Michael moves from watchful readiness to active intervention. The 'time of distress' (et sarah) of unprecedented severity echoes Jesus's words in Matthew 24:21. The 'book' (sepher) in which names are written is a heavenly register of the faithful — the concept appears in Exodus 32:32, Psalm 69:28, and Malachi 3:16, and becomes the 'book of life' in Revelation 20:12.
- 2.** This is the clearest resurrection text in the Hebrew Bible. The word yesheyney ('those who sleep') uses sleep as a metaphor for death — a metaphor that persists into the New Testament (1 Thessalonians 4:13). The phrase admat afar ('ground of dust') echoes Genesis 3:19 ('to dust you shall return') — resurrection reverses the sentence of death. The word rabbim ('many') rather than kol ('all') has generated debate: does this envision partial resurrection (only some rise) or is rabbim used inclusively (as in Isaiah 53:11-12, where 'the many' means 'the multitude, the great number')? The dual outcome — chayyey olam ('everlasting life') and dir'on olam ('everlasting abhorrence') — introduces a post-mortem moral differentiation not clearly attested elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. The word dir'on ('abhorrence, contempt') appears only here and in Isaiah 66:24, where it describes the fate of rebels against God.
- 3.** The maskilim ('wise ones') reappear from 11:33, 35 — those who taught and suffered during the persecution now receive their ultimate vindication. The verb yazhiru ('will shine, will radiate') describes active luminosity, not reflected light. The zohar ('brightness, radiance') of the raqia ('sky, firmament') is the brilliant light of the heavens themselves. The matsdiqey harabbim ('those who lead the many to righteousness') are the teachers who turned others toward right relationship with God — their reward is astral, star-like permanence. Jesus echoes this verse in Matthew 13:43: 'Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.' The verse establishes a direct connection between faithful teaching, suffering, and luminous resurrection glory.
- 4.** The command to 'seal the book' (chatom ha-sepher) means the prophecy is to be preserved but not fully understood until its appointed time of fulfillment. This contrasts with Revelation 22:10 ('Do not seal the words of prophecy of this book, for the time is near'). The phrase yeshotu rabbim ('many will search/rove about') uses the verb sh-w-t ('to go about, to rove, to search') — it could mean many will travel widely (literal movement) or many will search through the text (intellectual exploration). The promise that 'knowledge will increase' (tirbeh ha-da'at) may mean understanding of the prophecy will grow as the time of fulfillment approaches.
- 5.** The scene shifts to a new vision — two angelic figures positioned on opposite banks of the river (the Tigris, from 10:4). The word ha-ye'or is used here rather than nahar — ye'or typically refers to the Nile, but in this context it describes the river from the previous vision. The positioning of one angel on each bank creates a formal, symmetrical setting for the solemn question and answer that follows.

6. The 'man clothed in linen' (ish levush ha-baddim) is the same figure from 10:5 — the glorious being whose description parallels Revelation 1:13-16. He is positioned 'above the waters' (mimma'al lememy ha-ye'or), suggesting he stands or hovers over the river, not beside it. The question ad matay qets ha-pela'ot ('how long until the end of the wonders?') is the consummate apocalyptic question — when will the suffering end and vindication come? The word pela'ot ('wonders, astonishing things') encompasses both the terrible events and the divine interventions described in the vision.
7. The figure raises both hands for the oath — normally only one hand is raised (cf. Deuteronomy 32:40), so the use of both intensifies the solemnity. The phrase mo'ed mo'adim vachetsi ('a set time, set times, and half a time') is the same formula from 7:25 — generally understood as three and a half years (one time + two times + half a time = 3.5). This period appears again in Revelation 12:14. The phrase nappets yad am qodesh ('the shattering of the hand/power of the holy people') indicates that the end comes only after God's people have been completely broken — a disturbing but theologically significant claim that deliverance follows total dependence. The word tikleynah ('will be finished, completed') indicates definitive conclusion, not gradual fading.
8. Daniel's honest confession — 'I heard but did not understand' (shamati velo avin) — is striking from one who has been called 'treasured' and given angelic instruction. Even the visionary who receives the revelation cannot fully comprehend it. The word acharit ('outcome, end, latter part') asks not just 'when' but 'what kind of conclusion' — Daniel wants to understand the nature of the final resolution, not just its timing.
9. The response gently refuses Daniel's request for further understanding — the words are stumim vachatumim ('closed up and sealed'), repeating the command of verse 4. The verb lekh ('go') is not dismissive but pastoral — Daniel is released from the burden of needing to understand everything. Some knowledge is sealed by divine decree, and the appropriate response is faithful living rather than exhaustive comprehension. The 'time of the end' (et qets) will bring its own revelation.
10. The three verbs — yitbareru ('will be purified'), yitlabbenu ('will be made clean/whitened'), yitsarfu ('will be refined') — repeat the refining language from 11:35, confirming that suffering serves a purifying purpose for the faithful. The contrast between the wicked and the wise is absolute: the wicked both act wickedly and lack understanding, while the maskilim ('wise ones') will understand. Understanding in Daniel is not merely intellectual — it is the capacity to perceive God's purposes within historical suffering and to respond with faithfulness rather than compromise.
11. The 1,290 days begin from two simultaneous events: the removal of the tamid ('regular offering,' the daily sacrifice) and the installation of the shiqquts shomem ('abomination that causes desolation'). This period is approximately three and a half years — close to the 'time, times, and half a time' of verse 7 and 7:25, but not exactly equivalent to 1,260 days (3.5 years of 360 days). The extra 30 days beyond 1,260 may represent an additional period of transition or cleansing. The relationship between 1,290 days here, 2,300 evenings and mornings in 8:14, and 1,335 days in verse 12 has generated extensive scholarly discussion without consensus.
12. The word ashrey ('blessed, happy, fortunate') introduces a beatitude — the only beatitude in Daniel. The 1,335 days are 45 days beyond the 1,290 of verse 11. What happens in those additional 45 days is not specified — it may represent a final period of restoration, cleansing of the sanctuary, or the inauguration of the blessed era. The verb yagia ('reaches, arrives at') suggests endurance through a difficult period — reaching this point requires faithful waiting (hamechakkeh, 'the one who waits'). The combination of waiting and blessing echoes the wisdom tradition's emphasis on patient trust in God's timing.
13. The final verse of Daniel is addressed directly and personally to the prophet. Three verbs chart Daniel's future: lekh ('go' — continue living faithfully), tanuach ('you will rest' — you will die, using the language of peaceful death), and ta'amod legoralekha ('you will stand in your allotted place' — you will be resurrected to receive your inheritance). The word goral ('lot, allotted portion') is used for land inheritance distributed by lot (cf. Joshua 14-19) — Daniel's 'lot' is his resurrection inheritance. The phrase leqets hayyamin ('at the end of the days') is the book's final word — the same word qets ('end') that has echoed throughout the apocalyptic visions. The book that began with Daniel taken from his homeland ends with a promise of his ultimate homecoming — not to Jerusalem but to his allotted place in God's restored creation. This is among the most personally intimate moments in prophetic literature.