**DANIEL**

**Background:**

*The Text:*

Daniel is considered a prophet. But in the Hebrew Bible, *Daniel* is not included among the prophets; rather, the book is in the section called *Ketuvim* (“Writings”) between the books of *Esther* and *Ezra/Nehemiah*. Chronologically, *Daniel* is earlier than E*sther*. *Daniel* takes place (in part) during the Jews’ exile under Babylonian rule and then under Persia. Historically, the events in *Ezra/Nehemiah* occurred at the end of Daniel’s time- during or after the Jews’ returned to Israel from exile with the permission of Persian king Cyrus.

In the LXX (Greek Septuagint of the OT) and in Christian Bibles, *Daniel* is with the other prophets between *Ezekiel* and *Hosea*. Also, the Greek/LXX Bible includes several additions (“Additions”), not in the Hebrew/Masoretic Text (“MT”). They are:

* *Prayer of Azariah and Hymn of the 3 Young Men/Holy Children* (Dan.3:23)
* *Susanna* (Dan.13:1-64)
* *Bel and the Dragon*- 3 stories (Dan.14:1-32).

Until the 16thC AD, Christians considered the Additions part of the Canon of Scripture. During the Reformation, Protestants rejected the Additions, calling them Apocryphal (meaning hidden, secret, doubtful) because they were not in the Hebrewebrew MT. Accordingly, they placed the Additions between the OT and NT or wholly omitted them from the Bible.

Note: Jesus quoted from *Daniel*, referring to “the abomination of desolation, spoken of through the prophet of Daniel.” (Mat.24:15; Mk.13:14). *Revelation* draws heavily from *Daniel*.

*Daniel* can be divided into halves. Chp.1-6 contain the much-loved stories about faithful, righteous Daniel and his friends in a foreign court. Chp.7-12 are filled with apocalyptic visions, strange monsters, numerologies/codes, and angels. The1st half of the book generally is written in the 3rd person; the last half is in the 1st person.

Moreover, the book is written in both Hebrew and Aramaic. Chp.1:1-2:3 and 8-12 were in Hebrew and focused on the survival of the Jewish people even in exile. Commentators, like Robert Alter, note the Hebrew is flawed as if the writer was more comfortable with Aramaic. Chp.2:4-7:28, dealing with lives of individual Jews in exile, were in Aramaic.

Historical issues exist between *Daniel* and other Biblical and non-biblical sources. For example, the bookindicates Belshazzar was Nebuchadnezzar’s son, but he was the son of Nabonidus, a usurper who assumed the throne after several kings post-Nebuchadnezzar were assassinated. Moreover, Babylonian records never refer to Belshazzar as king. (He was co-regent with his father, Nabonidus.) *Daniel* also refers to Darius as the Mede, but he was Persian. He ruled after Cyrus the Great; he was not Cyrus’ predecessor as *Daniel* implies. Other historical anomalies are discussed below. And See attachment “Aechmined Dynasty for a chronological list of Persian kings.

*Daniel:*

Daniel is introduced without many personal details. He probably was born c. 620 BC, about 3 years after Ezekiel. His name meant “God judges.” According to the text, Daniel and his friends were exiled to Babylon with other handsome, intelligent, noble, and royal youth of Jerusalem in 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar’s 1st exile. Daniel served in the royal palace throughout the rest of the Babylonian Empire and into the reign of Persian King Cyrus, which began in 539 BC, and probably past 538 BC, the 1st Jewish return to Palestine. (10:1). In short, Daniel spent about 70 years in Babylon.

[Some commentators suggest Daniel’s name was borrowed from earlier Ugaritic texts about a Daniel (also referred to in *Ezekiel)*, who was known for his wisdom and righteousness and who worshipped *El*, the Canaanite god.]

*Author:*

The traditional view was that *Daniel* was written contemporaneously with the events portrayed therein= c. 6thC BC, by a sole author named Daniel. That would mean the book was written during the last part of the Babylonian and 1st part of the Persian Empires. Traditional scholars suggest the Aramaic of the book is consistent with 6th or 5thC BC Aramaic, like that in *Ezra* and the *Elephantine Papyri*. (Elephantine was a large Jewish colony established in South Egypt, a/k/a “upper Egypt” near Aswan on an island in the Nile. Archeologist have discovered a cache of thousands of documents they named the “Elephantine Papyri,” which include one of the oldest collections of Jewish manuscripts, dating from the 5thC BC and written by the Jewish community at [Elephantine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephantine) Island.)

Also supporting the traditional view is the fact that Belshazzar was described as co-regent with Nabonidus, a fact not known until modern times. Further, fragments of *Daniel* have been found among other ancient documents in the Dead Sea Scrolls, indicating *Daniel* already was accepted by the 2ndC BC.

Modern scholars, however, generally believe *Daniel* was written in the Greek/Intertestamental (“IT”) Period during the reign of Antiochus IV (c.175 BC). The 2nd half of *Daniel* contains detailed descriptions of the Seleucid/Ptolemaic conflicts, Antiochus IV’s persecutions, and other contemporary events. *Daniel* resembles other apocalyptic texts of the Apocrypha and Dead Sea Scrolls, written during IT Period. Daniel 11 generally is correct about Antiochus IV up to his final events and death; hence, *Daniel* probably was written before Antiochus died.

In short, the date *Daniel* was written either was:

* c.530 BC during the early Persian period to fellow exiles to remind them of God’s sovereignty and to encourage them God would restore Israel or
* c.175 BC during the Maccabean period to help Jews withstand pagan persecution and encourage them to hold fast to the faith.

In either event, the promise was that God’s kingdom would come.

Another possibility: *Daniel* may have been written by more than one author at more than one time. Dan.1-6 may have circulated in the late Persian/early Hellenistic Period with hero tales from the 4th and 3rdC BC. [The hero tales reveal Greek/Persian influence from the 3rd C BC or earlier.] The later chapters, however, contain apocalyptic and visionary elements more characteristic of the 2ndC BC.

Nonetheless, *Daniel* has a unity of themes. Daniel and his friends, like the heroes of *1 and 2 Maccabees*, lived out Torah values of wisdom, piety, trust, and unswerving loyalty to the covenant with YHWH. The entire book is about God’s sovereignty, goodness, and power and only secondarily about models of human excellence. God permitted human suffering as punishment for sin, but He would prevail and deliver His people in the end.

*The Evil Villain, Antiochus IV Epiphanes:*

Antiochus IV was the epitome of evil. His terrible persecutions of the

Jews led to the Maccabean revolt. Here is some background:

Jason, the treacherous brother of good High Priest Onias III, bought the high priesthood from Antiochus and promised to Hellenize the Jews. Antiochus needed money and agreed. Jason sent Menelaus, a subordinate, to close the deal with Antiochus, but he outbid Jason. So, Menelaus became high priest, ending the hereditary, Zadokite high priesthood. He paid for it with money he embezzled from the Temple treasury. Good high priest Onias sought to expose Menelaus, who then had Onias killed in 171 BC and that was the end of the Zadokite high priestly line and of legitimate sacrifices at the Temple.

Antiochus’ efforts to Hellenize the Jews became increasingly vile and murderous. He robbed the Temple to pay bills after unsuccessfully attacking Egypt. The next year, he launched another attack on Egypt and was humiliated. Before Antiochus reached Alexandria, his path was blocked by a single, elderly Roman ambassador, [Gaius Popillius Laenas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaius_Popillius_Laenas), who delivered a message from the [Roman Senate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Senate) directing Antiochus to withdraw his armies or consider himself at war with Rome. Antiochus said he would discuss the request with his counsel. Whereupon the Roman envoy drew a circle in the sand (‘line in the sand”) around Antiochus and said, "Before you leave this circle, give me a reply that I can take back to the Roman Senate." Antiochus waited a bit, then turned around and went home.

Meanwhile, Jason heard Antiochus was dead and revolted. That was all the humiliated Antiochus needed to unleash terrible reprisals on Jerusalem and to massacre thousands of Jews. He built the Akra fortress overlooking the Temple, filling it with Gentile mercenaries, a move conservative Jews considered a sacrilege. He desecrated the sanctuary by sacrificing pigs there; installed a brothel within the Temple courts; erected a statue of a pagan god in the Temple, forbade Jews from observing Sabbath or other Jewish festivals, and refused to allow Jews to own Torah scrolls or to circumcise their babies. Indeed, it was said that women who circumcised their sons were crucified with their babies hung around their necks. Jews also were martyred for refusal to eat a bite of pork. (2 Maccabees).

*Historical Background:*

* 722 BC- Assyrian King Sargon II defeated the Northern Kingdom, a/k/a Israel/Samaria/Ephraim,
* From the mid-8thC BC, Assyria was the dominant power in the Near East until the death of King Osnappar, when Assyria slipped into decline,
* 626 BC- Nabopolassar, a Chaldean/Babylonian prince from So. Mesopotamia, marched on Assyria and defeated it, declaring himself king, but he was not able to oust Assyria completely,
* 614 BC- Medes from the East joined Babylon against Assyria and captured Asshur, Assyria’s ancient capital,
* 612 BC- Assyria’s capital, Nineveh, fell to the Medo-Babylonian forces and Assyria retreated to Haran on the Euphrates,
* 609 BC- Assyria collapsed when the combined Assyrian/Egyptian army was unable to retake Haran (Note: The decline of Assyria allowed good King Josiah of Judah to make substantial religious reforms, e.g., removing the worship of Assyrian gods from Jerusalem and Judah),
* 609 BC- Judah’s King Josiah went to the aid of Babylon against Egypt and was killed at Megiddo (2 Kings 23:29,30),
* Judah crowned Josiah’s younger son, Jehoahaz, but when Pharaoh Necho II returned from victory at Haran, he replaced the anti-Egyptian Jehoahaz with his older, pro-Egypt brother, Jehoiakim (2 Kings 23:31-35)
* 605 BC- Babylon/Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt at Carchemish and later at Hamath (Syria), and Judah became a vassal of Babylon,
* 605 BC- Nebuchadnezzar left Jehoiakim on Judah’s throne, but he exiled Daniel and others young nobles to Babylon (the 1st exile)
* 601 BC- Nebuchadnezzar failed to invade Egypt and Judah/Jehoiakim rebelled against Babylon,
* 597 and 587 BC- Babylon quashed 2 Jewish rebellions, each time exiling Jews and taking treasure from the Temple; the last time, he obliterated Jerusalem and the Temple,
* 556 BC- After Nebuchadnezzar’s death, Nabonidus, a noble not of royal blood, seized the Babylonian throne; he was devoted to the moon goddess, Sin, which led to opposition from the powerful priests of Merodach/Marduk, Babylon’s primary deity,
* Nabonidus moved the capital to Tema in Arabia, and in his absence, his son, Belshazzar was crowned co-regent, though not named king,,
* The Medes had annexed the North and East parts of the Assyrian Empire when it fell, and as Babylon decreased, the Medes increased in power,
* Early in Nabonidus’ reign, Cyrus, a vassal of Persian king Anshan, rebelled against Media,
* 550 BC- Cyrus captured the Median capital, Ecbatana, and dethroned King Astyges, extending his control North and East; Nabonidus returned to Babylon,
* 539 BC- Cyrus defeated a Babylonian army at Opis on the Tigris River, and Persian General Gubaru entered Babylon unopposed making Cyrus, the Persian king of the Babylonian Empire,
* 538 BC, Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Palestine,
* The Persian Empire continued for 200 years until it collapsed under the onslaught of Alexander the Great (331 BC).

*Themes and New Themes:*

*Daniel* contains many traditional Biblical and prophetic themes, especially

God’s sovereignty and control over history- even in pagan lands. God is trust-worthy even in remote, difficult places and circumstances. Although suffering may come to God’s people, generally because of their own sin, God ultimately will restore them. Like other prophets, the book of *Daniel* is eschatological, but the eschatology was presented in an apocalyptic fashion.

Especially in the first 6 chapters, *Daniel* declared that those who trust and obey God will be vindicated. All 6 stories are set in Babylon after the best of Jewish youth were taken there as captives and confronted by the greatest pagan power of their time. These stories portray faithful young Jewish heroes who continued to trust and obey God even in a foreign land. Accordingly, they were blessed and protected by God- trusting believers in a trustworthy God.

*Daniel* also injected some new Biblical themes, like bodily resurrection of

the dead. Although some earlier Scripture, like *Ezekiel’s* dry bones vision, referred to resurrection, *Daniel* explicitly dealt with it (as do several Apocryphal texts, like *2 Maccabees*). By the time of Jesus, at least one Jewish sect, the Pharisees, fully subscribed to the idea of bodily resurrection of the dead, but the more conservative Sadducees did not. Along with the idea of resurrection, Judaism began to accept the relatively new idea of martyrdom for the faith.

*Daniel* also introduced a broader vision of angels than in earlier Scripture. *Daniel* was the first in Scripture to provide angel names- Michael and Gabriel- and to depict an angel flying. Angelology continued to grow within Judaism during the IT Period. Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphal books, like *Enoch*, increased the focus on angelology by naming and creating ranks of angels. In *Daniel,* the concept that every nation had its patron angel was introduced. (Israel’s angel was Michael, the warrior leader of the archangels.) By Jesus’ time and thereafter, the world was full of angels (and demons).

Daniel has been compared to Joseph (Gen.37-50). Both were Jewish captives in a foreign land, known for their wisdom and piety, who remained faithful and righteous before God. Both were humble and had the ability to understand dreams known only to God. Both faced death but ultimately succeeded to high office in the land of their captivity by interpreting dreams of the king. But Daniel outdid Joseph by telling the king his dream as well as its meaning. Joseph, however, was able to propose ways to prevent the disastrous consequences of the dreams he interpreted. Daniel could do nothing to stop the inexorable dream path from being fulfilled- an apocalyptic view that marked *Daniel’s* era. In the end, both Daniel and Joseph received authority over the king’s servants and both Gentile potentates bore witness to the power God.

As with Mordecai, Esther’s uncle, threats to Daniel’s life (and those of his friends) occurred because he/they refused to bow to anyone except God. And See: The Daniel and the lion’s den is a prototype of Jesus’ suffering and resurrection. [See Attachment.]

**Chapter 1:**

In 605 BC, after defeating the Egyptians at Carchemish, Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar turned and besieged Jerusalem in the 3rd year of the reign of Judah’s king Jehoiakim. Nebuchadnezzar carried away some of the Temple treasure and the best of Judah’s royal and noble young men (probably teenagers) who were handsome, wise, intelligent, and competent to serve in the king’s palace. They were taken as captives to Babylon where they were to be educated there for 3 years. (Non-biblical sources confirm Babylonian education for such young men typically was for 3 years.)

Among the captives were 4 Judean youths, Daniel and his 3 friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. The first step in their acculturation was to change their Jewish names to names referring to Babylonian deities. They became called Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, respectively. [The same thing occurred with Esther and Mordecai. Both names were based on the names of Persian gods, Ishtar and Marduk/Merodoch. Esther’s Jewish name was Hadassah.]

Daniel and his friends resolved not to eat the sumptuous food the king provided to the youth at his training academy. Instead, they determined to remain faithful to Jewish dietary laws and follow a vegetarian diet, drinking only water. [During the Exile, IT, Hellenistic Periods, and beyond, Jewish food laws became far more important than in earlier times. See: 2 Maccabees martyrs who refused to eat one bite of pork and were gruesomely martyred, but, interestingly, both Esther and Jehoiakim ate Persian food. 2 Kings 25:29,30.]

Refusal to eat the food the king designated was risky for the young men, but God supported them and granted them favor with the steward, Ashpenaz the rab-saris (“master of his eunuchs”- New King James Version). He allowed them to continue their vegetarian diet for 10-days. At the end of the time, they looked more fit than their contemporaries, so, they were permitted to continue their diet through the training period.

The youth’s refusal to eat the king’s food set Daniel and his friends apart from the others in the academy. Their trust in and obedience to God was evident for all to see and God rewarded them for their devotion, giving them favor even with foreign/pagan superiors. In the end, they became the most outstanding youths in the academy, better than the court personnel and wise men, so they were assigned to the palace.

[Commentators disagree about the reason the youths believed the king’s food would defile them. Of course, pork and rabbit would be forbidden by Law, but they refused more than that. Perhaps, the first portion of all the food was offered to the Babylonian gods and the wine was first poured out to them, thereby contaminating it. Perhaps, the defilement came from the method of slaughter and preparation- the blood was not drained as required by the Law. Perhaps, the youth did not want to become dependent on the king but to serve only God. In any event, the message was clear. Compromise was unthinkable. Jews must remain true to the Law in all respects. See: 2 Maccabee martyr stories.]

**Chapter 2:**

The book continued to focus on the ideal Jewish person of the Diaspora with a miracle story proving that, with God’s wisdom and strength, Daniel could do what was impossible for other mortals. Although Nebuchadnezzar was the world’s mightiest king, he was subject to nightmares. [Chaldeans/Babylonians were famous for soothsaying, divination, and dream interpretation.] A dream was considered effective even if the dreamer could not remember its details; indeed, forgetting a dream was a bad omen.

Nebuchadnezzar could not remember his dream, so he summoned all the wise men, diviners, magicians, and soothsayers of the empire to tell him what his dram was and then to interpret it. No one could tell what another person’s dream was, so the wise men failed. When none of the wise men could tell the king the dream, Nebuchadnezzar ordered all the wise men executed- that would have included Daniel and friends. Daniel’s response to the crisis caused by the failure was to tell his friends about the death sentence. They all prayed, and God revealed the mystery to Daniel.

He was taken before the king and said, “No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or diviners can show to the king the mystery that the king is asking, but *there is a God in heaven* who reveals mysteries, and he has disclosed to King Nebuchadnezzar what would happen at the *end of days*.” (Emphasis added- This was an eschatological dream.)

Then, Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar what the dream was and interpreted it. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream entailed a gargantuan statue with 4 parts made of

metals in descending orders of excellence. Each section represented an ancient empire. (Chpt.7 has the same ranks but with 4 beasts.) The statute contained:

* A gold head= Babylon/Nebuchadnezzar
* A silver upper torso= Media
* A bronze lower torso= Persia
* Iron legs with clay/terra cotta feet (the origin of the idiom: “feet of clay”) = Alexander the Great’s Greek/Hellenistic kingdom which split apart, with the Ptolemies (Egypt) and Seleucids (Syria) becoming his primary successors.

A 5th kingdom was reflected by a supernatural stone, not hewn by human hands, which would crush all the parts of the statue. This was the eschatological kingdom of God- a universal, messianic kingdom which would include all nations and never be destroyed.

[Some commentators suggest the gold head was Assyria; the silver section Babylon, and the bronze was the Medo-Persian Empire, with the iron legs being Alexander the Great and the Greeks. Others say the gold was Babylon, the silver section was the combined Medo-Persian Empire, the bronze part was Alexander the Great’s Greek Empire, and the iron legs with 2 clay feet was the Roman Empire, which divided between East and West, but this would date the book far beyond the latest possible time it could have been written, unless it was strictly predictive prophecy.]

So, the story has 5 scenes:

* The problem of the king’s dream and the magicians’ failure to describe or interpret the dream, which only God and the one to whom He revealed it could know
* Daniel’s intervention when he and his friends were threatened to be included in the purge of all the kingdom’s wisemen/magicians
* The miracle of Daniel’s proclamation of the dream – Daniel first told his friends of the decree, and they all prayed for Gods help, then Daniel received the solution to the mystery, which only was knowable through divine knowledge, not human reason or intellect
* Daniel’s interpretation of the dream with all credit being given to God, the Lord of all the earth and source of all wisdom
* The king’s praise of Israel’s God and reward to Daniel- strange since the head of gold (Babylon/Nebuchadnezzar) ultimately was crushed and destroyed.

Sources outside Israel and the OT refer to 4 sequential kingdoms, but the

statue was unique to *Daniel*. [See: 8thC BC Greek poet, Hesiod’s *Works and Days,* and Iranian literature, which began with Assyria and collapsed the Medes and Persians into a single layer; Daniel substituted Babylon.] The story declared God was the overwhelming power over all earthly kingdoms.

Nebuchadnezzar may not have been converted, but he worshiped Daniel and gave him many gifts, declaring God was the God of gods. He promoted Daniel over the whole province of Babylon, and at Daniel’s request, he named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the province while Daniel remained court.

**Chapter 3:**

The next story does not mention Daniel. It may have been an independent narrative. The story dealt with a statue of gold- 60 cubits (over 80 feet) high by 6 cubits in width- an unusually tall, skinny statue which probably would not stand. [Herodotus and others reported kings building monumental statues to Zeus and other gods, like the Colossus of Rhodes.] This statue probably was of the god, Nabu, for whom Nebuchadnezzar was named.

Nebuchadnezzar, who was known for his hubris, especially proud of his grand building projects. He summoned a long list of Babylonian bureaucrats and ordered a herald to proclaim that whenever his people heard the signal horn, they were to bow down and worship the statue. Anyone who failed to abide by the edict was to be burned in a fiery furnace.

[Punishment by burning was well known in the Near East. Lev.21:9 called for burning a priest’s daughter for prostitution. Achan and his family were burned after being stoned for taking valuables from Jericho against God’s orders. (Josh.7: 15,25). A mother and her 7 sons in *2 Maccabees* were roasted in a large frying pan for refusal to eat unclean food. Hammurabi prescribed burning for some crimes, and Assyrian king Ashurbanipal II burned prisoners alive. Jer.29: 22 speaks of 2 villains, Ahab and Zedekiah, who were roasted in a fire by Babylon’s king.]

Predictably, given the young men’s unswerving loyalty to God and the 1st and 2nd Commandments, they refused to bow to the king’s statue. They were brought before the king, but they still would not bow to the statue. They told the king, they did not know whether God would save them, but they would maintain their absolute devotion to God, no matter what the cost would be.

Nebuchadnezzar was furious. He had the prisoners bound, and the furnace stoked to an unimaginable heat- 7 times normal. Then he had 7 of his strongest guards lift the fully clad and bound young men over their heads and throw them into the fire. The fire was so hot the guards were burned to death when the threw the 3 young men into the furnace, but the garments of the 3 young men were not even singed, not even the smell of smoke touched them. Their bindings disappeared and the young men lived.

The king watched the spectacle, but when he peered in at the furnace gate, he saw 4, not 3, figures in the fire. [Some believe the 4th figure was an angel or the pre-incarnate Christ.] The king was amazed and called to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to come out of the fire. They did. They were totally unharmed and smoke-free. After the young men were released (between 3:23 and 24), the LXX provided the Prayer of Azariah a/k/a Abednego and the song of the 3 Young Men. (See attachment).

At the end, Nebuchadnezzar declared the God of the Jews had power to deliver. He did not convert, but he recognized YHWH’s power and issued a new edict ordering the same punishment by burning for anyone speaking badly about the God of Israel.

**Chapter 4:**

Nebuchadnezzar had another dream which his magicians and diviners could not interpret. So, he called for Daniel whose role was well established by that time as was his ability to interpret dreams correctly. His life was not in jeopardy if he delivered bad news.

The picture was of 2 sovereigns, 1 in heaven and 1 in Babylon, juxtaposed in the context of a cosmic tree representing Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom. The tree reached to heaven and to the ends of the earth. The majestic, beautiful tree was home to all sorts of birds and animals. The mystery was the tree had the mind of a man, but later it was changed into a mindless beast.

One day, the king saw a watcher, a heavenly personage, probably an angel, cut down the tree. (The term, “watcher,” only is used here in Scripture, but it regularly appeared in the Pseudepigraphal books, *Enoch, Jubilees,* and *Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs*, meaning an angel.) The mind of the tree/Nebuchadnezzar was changed from that of a human to that of a beast, so all mankind would know God is sovereign over all mortals.

Daniel paused with fear when he saw the vision and declared he hoped the dream was about Nebuchadnezzar’s enemies because he saw the time of reckoning coming for the tree-man (Nebuchadnezzar). The dream indicated the king would be reduced to bestiality for 7 years. So, Daniel urged Nebuchadnezzar to repent and become righteous to delay the prophesy.

Nothing happened for a year. Then one evening, when Nebuchadnezzar was walking on his royal place roof, he admired what a magnificent royal capital he had built with his mighty power. Immediately, he heard a voice saying he would be driven from human society and would live with the animals of the field. The sentence was fulfilled at once.

No ancient reports exist of Nebuchadnezzar leaving his throne or suffering such a malady. Ancient reports, however, do indicate that a successor, Nabonidus, was incapacitated for about 10 years. At Qumran, The *Prayer of Nabonidus* has been found. In it, he asked to be healed from an evil psychological disease -psychotic break. The moral was God can bring the mighty low.

After the designated period, (Nebuchadnezzar’s reason returned, and he was restored to his kingdom. He was further enriched and praised God.

**Chapter 5:**

This chapter continues from chapter 4.Nabonidus, who had assumed the throne by a palace coup, was the last king of Babylon. [He may have been the one, rather than Nebuchadnezzar, who was mentally incapacitated for a time.] Nabonidus was a worshipper of Sin, the moon god; therefore, he drew strong opposition from the priests of the chief god, Murdoch/Marduk. Nabonidus left for a new capital in Arabia, perhaps to tap the wealth of the Arabian trade routes. For 10 years (550-540 BC), his son Belshazzar, became regent of Babylon and exercised all the powers of the king, though he was not monarch.

Belshazzar gave a feast for a thousand lords (extravagant consumption was more like the Persians than the Babylonians). At the feast, Belshazzar used the sacred vessels from Jerusalem’s Temple for his guests- a sacrilege that spelled Babylon’s doom.

During the banquet, disembodied fingers of a hand wrote 3 words on the palace wall (4 words, but 1 was a duplicate)- They wrote: *Mene, mene, tekel, parsi/peres*. None of Babylon’s wise men, counsellors, or guests could decipher the writing, even though Belshazzar offered his signet ring, royal robes, and a gold neck chain to anyone who could read the words.

The queen mother entered the room and suggested Daniel, whom she previously had known, should be called to interpret the writing. (*Daniel* said Belshazzar was Nebuchadnezzar’s son, but Nebuchadnezzar’s son was Amel-marduk, the Evil-merodach of 2 Kings 25:27. Belshazzar was Nabonidus’ son, whose name has been confirmed to have been Bel-shar-usur, and who ruled Babylon in Nabonidus’ absence.) The intruder probably was Belshazzar’s mother, Nitocris, whom Herodotus said fortified Babylon with a canal system. The queen mother was not worried about appearing before her son unsummoned (as was Esther.) She burst into the room to counsel her son.

Daniel declined compensation, but he would serve as God’s mouthpiece. Then, he read and explained the writing. Like a prophet of old Daniel sternly indicted Belshazzar for his arrogance and desecration of the Temple vessels. His father had lost his mind, now, they both would lose the Empire, especially due to Belshazzar’s desecration of the Temple vessels.

Literally, the words on the wall meant: “numbered, numbered, weighed, and divided.” God had numbered the days of the kingdom; it had been weighed in the balance scales and found wanting; the kingdom would be divided, broken apart, and given to the Medes and Persians. That night, even though Babylon was well-fortified, the Persians diverted the Euphrates River, sneaked in on the dry riverbed, and conquered the city without a fight. (Herodotus and Xenophon).

[The words may have referred to 3 Mesopotamian weights: a mina (=60 shekels), a shekel, and a ½ mina (*pera*, not *parsin)*, or to 3 rulers: Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-Merodach, Nabonidus/Belshazzar.]

**Chapter 6:**

The lions’ den was a relatively small pit with an opening at the top. The Persian kingdom had 120 satraps, an inflated number, with 3 presidents over them, including Daniel. The king found Daniel far superior to the other presidents and satraps and had decided to elevate Daniel over all of them. [The book indicates Darius was king, but this is one of the most disputed issues in the book. Darius was Cyrus’ successor, not his predecessor. Cyrus was the Persian king who overthrew Babylon. He almost certainly was the king referred to here. See attachment re: Achaemenid kings for chronology.]

Darius (Cyrus) plan to elevate Daniel created great jealousy within the satrap ranks. They wanted to eliminate Daniel, but they could not find any grounds to unseat him. No one could find a flaw in Daniel. So, the satraps tried another tactic. They flattered the king and caused him to issue an unchangeable edict (as in Esther). The edict prohibited everyone from worshipping any god but the king for a period of 30 days. Violators would be thrown into the lions’ den. [This was a highly unlikely scenario. Persians were known for their religious tolerance; indeed, Cyrus authorized the Jews to return to Palestine soon after he conquered Babylon.]

Daily prayers while facing Jerusalem were standard practice in late Judaism, and Daniel was an observant Jew. He prayed to God 3 times each day. The satraps knew this and went to the king. They told him that Daniel had been praying to his God, not to the statue. The king respected Daniel, but he could not think of a way to change or mitigate the edict. He had to throw Daniel, who was in his 80s at the time, into the lions’ den. So, he did. [In this story, Daniel was the free man; the king was the one who was trapped by his own arrogance and inflexible law.]

The king’s seal was placed on the stone, which was rolled over the opening of the den, so that no one could move it. All night the king fasted and was anxious about Daniel’s fate. He could not sleep and arose at dawn the next morning. As he approached the den, he called out to Daniel. (Perhaps he was afraid of what he would see if he had the stone rolled away.) When he did, he found Daniel unharmed. [See Addendum comparing this story with Jesus.]

According to the Apocryphal Addition*,* *Bel and the Dragon*, for 6 days, neither Daniel nor the lions ate anything. On the 7th day, the prophet Habakkuk flew to Persia carrying food to Daniel and the lions. He then disappeared back to Judea. On that same day, Daniel was released.

The king’s vengeance was swift and savage. The accusers and their families (in the LXX, only the 2 presidents) were thrown into the den. They immediately were eaten by the hungry lions before they even hit the ground.

**Chapter 7:**

This is the most important and pivotal chapter in the book. The visions and dream certainly are apocalyptic. The date of writing may have been 533 BC. The story is much like the one in Chapter 2, but here Daniel was the one who received a fearsome dream/visions; hence, he is the first-person narrator, not just an interpreter of someone else’s vision.

In the 1st year of Belshazzar, who was called king in the book but never was king (just co-regent with Nabonidus), Daniel received a dream with a vision. The 4 winds of heaven stirred the great sea. Out of it came 4 great beasts, each of which was different. [Such visions were common in Canaanite cosmogonic myths.] A sea monster (Leviathan, Lotan, Yamm) rose to battle the weather god of the land.

The 4 monsters referenced the same kingdoms that composed the statue made of 4 metals, which scholars suggest represented Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece, respectively. The beasts became more fantastic with each iteration.

The 1st beast was like a lion with eagle’s wings- a common mythological figure in the Near East. (That was Babylon.) The 2nd was a bear with ribs in his teeth, again not an uncommon ancient image. (Media) The 3rd was like a leopard with 4 wings on its back and 4 heads- stranger still. (Persia) The 4th beast was the most fantastic. It was frightening, dreadful, and strong, with large iron teeth that devoured and crushed- and it had 10 horns.

Commentators suggest the 4th beast represented the 10 kings of the Greek/Seleucid dynasty, with the last horn being Antiochus IV, who supplanted 3 claimants to the throne. (The reference to Antiochus being a “little horn” was a demeaning comment about him.) Antiochus came to the throne by killing his general Heliodorus, who failed to seize and deliver Jerusalem’s Temple treasure to him and the son of his brother, Seleucus IV, who was named Demetrius.

Then, as Daniel looked, he saw a throne with the Ancient of Days (God) with wheels of fire and a river of fire greatly exceeding all earthly kingdoms. (The picture invokes *Ezekiel’s* vision of God.) The heavenly court *Daniel* surrounded the throne, on which God sat in shiny white raiment. [Although most of *Daniel* is written in prose, this theophany is in poetry to emphasize the celestial aspect.] Daniel looked at the boastful little horn until God killed and destroyed him.

A heavenly being, perhaps Christ, who was “like a son of man,” descended onto the scene. He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power over all peoples, nations, and men. His dominion was everlasting; no one could destroy it; and it would not pass away. [This clearly was a Messianic passage.]

So, Daniel approached one of those standing there and asked the meaning of what he had seen. He was told the 4 beasts were 4 kingdoms. The Holy Ones/ saints of the Most High were God’s people (or heavenly beings, or as in the literature of Qumran, *Enoch* and other IT writings, angels), who would receive and possess the kingdom forever.

Then Daniel asked about the little horn whom he saw waging war against the saints. The angel told him he/Antiochus IV would prevail for 3½ years, until God (the Ancient of Days) intervened and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints, who then would win.

Daniel remained shaken by the vision, but as he was instructed, Daniel kept the matter to himself. The vision referred to end times; it was eschatological

**Chapter 8:**

This chapter chronologically may have preceded Chapter 5. These events were said to have occurred in the 3rd year of Belshazzar’s reign, 551 BC. What was portrayed is a vision that came to Daniel- hence, a 1st person account, written in (bad) Hebrew (according to Alter), which will be the case for the rest of *Daniel*.

The setting is the royal city of Sushan/Susa, where most of *Esther* occurred. (“Capital” can mean “fortified city,” other cities, such as Ecbatana and Persepolis, also were known as capitals of Persia.) [This presents another factual problem. Susa was in the province of Elam in Media, not Babylon (modern Iran’s Khuzistan province). Susa was destroyed in 645 BC and remained in ruins until it was rebuilt by King Darius I in 521 BC. Also, Daniel said he was standing by the Ulai river, but there is no such river in or near Susa. The Ulai is 200 miles East of Babylon. Perhaps, the translation should read: Daniel was inside the gate of Susa which opened in the direction of the far off Ulai River.]

Daniel’s vision was of a ram with 2 horns. [In later literature, primarily in IT times, zodiac signs became associated with countries. IT literature declared fallen angels taught humans the meanings of the zodiac signs. The ram, Aries, was Persia.] In Daniel’s vision, the ram represented the Medo-Persian Empire, with Persia being the dominant nation. The Persian Empire expanded West, North and South and was the most powerful of its day.

The Greek Empire (the he-goat/Capricorn/Alexander) invaded Persia from the West. He defeated Darius III of Persia in a series of battles between 334-331 BC. The vision portrayed the he-goat as not touching the ground, probably referring to the legendary swiftness of Alexander’s army and his famous, devastating frontal attacks. [Alexander took Tyre in 333 BC; Palestine/Egypt in 332 BC; and Persia, Darius III Codomannus, in 331 BC at the Battle of Gaugamela. Alexander died in 323 BC.]

Alexander, the he-goat had 4 horns. Alexander’s Empire was divided among his 4 generals, the *Diadoche* (successors):

* *Cassander*- murdered Alexander’s mother, wife, and son, and married Alexander’s sister; he controlled Macedonia and Greece
* *Lysimachus* ruled Thrace and Asia Minor
* *Seleucus* and his successors, ruled Northern Syria, Mesopotamia, and regions of the East; the Seleucid dynasty ultimately controlled and terrorized Israel; it continued into the time of Roman Empire
* *Ptolemy* governed Egypt, Palestine and ‘southern Syria, but for centuries the Ptolemies fought with the Seleucids over Palestine/ Israel; the Seleucids finally won; however, the Ptolemaic dynasty continued until its last member, Cleopatra, committed suicide after her lover, Mark Anthony, was defeated by Augustus Caesar.

Ultimately, 10 kingdoms can be said to have come from Alexander’s Empire: Ptolemaic Egypt, Seleucia (Syria), Macedon, Pergamum, Pontus, Bithynia, Cappadocia, Armenia, Parthia, and Bactria. [Some believe the reference to 10 kingdoms meant successors to the Roman Empire, not Alexander.]

After his summary explanation of the vision, an angel/celestial being named Gabriel appeared to Daniel. (This was the 1st time an angel was named in the OT. Only late in the IT Period were angels given names. In 1 Enoch 9:1, Gabriel and Michael were listed as archangels among the 7 archangels named in 1 Enoch 20:1-7. Gabriel was said have been responsible for Paradise. He also was the messenger angel, e.g., he gave Virgin Mary news that she was with child.)

The angel spoke to Daniel while standing in the middle of the brook of Ulai, and he told Daniel about Antiochus’ tyranny and evil deeds. [The puny little horn was a derogatory reference.] Antiochus grew (conquered) to the East and South. In 167 BC, he gained control over Judah and Jerusalem and desecrated the Temple, which was an assault on God. *Daniel* described Antiochus’ shrewd, deceitful rise to power by political intrigue and his self-given title, *“Epiphanes,”* meaning “God manifest.” [Others noted that a one letter change to “*Epimanes”* would have meant “madman.”]

Antiochus captured Jerusalem by surprise and seized the Temple. In 167 BC, he banned the daily (morning and evening) sacrificial Temple offerings and other cultic practices within Judaism, which according to the vision affected God Himself, the Commander of the Host (a military term for heavenly hosts- God’s angelic army).

Antiochus’ desecration of the Temple lasted 3 years, 2 months/1150 days (167-164 BC) until the Temple was restored by Judas Maccabee on December 165 BC (the 1st Hannukah). That would be 1150 days, but if each sacrifice was counted separately, the number would be 2300. On the other hand, some count from the removal of good High Priest Onais III in 171 BC to the rededication of the Temple and arrive at 2300 days.

As ordered, Daniel did not disclose the substance of the vision to anyone. Accordingly, Daniel returned to his work for the Persian king. (Antiochus died in 164 BC from illness or accident- God allowed it but not in the way described in *Daniel*.)

**Chapter 9:**

*Daniel* inaccurately referred to the 1st year of the reign of Darius, son of Ahasuerus/Xerxes. Almost certainly, Darius here meant Cyrus, who conquered Babylon and freed the Jews to return to Judea. The year would have been 539 BC. [Neither Cyrus nor Darius was the father of Xerxes, whose father was Cambyses. See Attachment re: Aechmenid Dynasty. But Ahasuerus may have been a throne name applicable to any king of Persia.] None of the Aechmenids were Medes, but Cyrus’ maternal great-grandfather, Cyaxares, led a large Median force involved in the destruction of Assyria.

*Daniel* meditated on the prophecy in Jer.25:11, which declared Israel was to be saved from Babylon after 70 years (Lev.25:8). Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 587 BC- about 50 years earlier. So, Daniel began fervent penitential prayer with fasting. He confessed sins in 1st person plural, meaning himself and the people, following the format of Solomon’s great prayer at 1 Kings 8:47; 2 Chron.6:37.

Although Alter indicated the translation is not certain, an angel seemed to have floated down to Daniel. (He would have been the 1st airborne angel.) The angel told Daniel the people would pay for their sins for 490 years- a period of 70 “weeks of years” (70 x 7). In 62 x 7 (434 years), the “anointed” prince (perhaps Antiochus, in the sense that he was a crowned monarch, not a divinely sanctioned one) would come. [The 1st exile from Jerusalem to Babylon with Daniel and his friends was in 605 BC; Antiochus had good high priest Onias killed in 171 BC, thereby ending the Zadokite high priesthood and sacrificial system. That would be 434 years between the 2 events.] Antiochus captured Jerusalem and desecrated the Temple in 167 BC and was defeated by Judas Maccabee about 3½ years later in December, 165 BC (the middle of his 7-year persecution of Jews).

**Chapter 10:**

In 537 BC, the 3rd year after Cyrus conquered Babylon, Daniel received another revelation. (According to 1:21, Daniel’s mission continued until the 1st year of Cyrus’ reign, but this meant Daniel would have received this revelation after Cyrus allowed the 1st group of exiles to return to Israel.)

Daniel mourned and fasted for 3 weeks. Fasting was a common mourning practice and was part of preparation for a vision. Again, he was on a riverbank (Tigris River) and saw a man dressed like a priest (angel garb generally was white linen.) He was shining like fire and jewels. People were present with Daniel when the angel appeared, but they could not see the angel. (Similar to Saul’s Damascus Road vision). They fled and left Daniel all alone. Daniel went into a trance. He fell down in terror and the angel had to administer celestial first aid to him.

The angel, probably Gabriel, was described anthropomorphically as a man. He had been delayed from helping Daniel for 3 weeks because Persia’s angelic patron had held him off until the patron archangel of Israel (who became a leading figure in the literature of Qumran and the IT), went to his aid. (This concept is hinted at in earlier Scripture- celestial agents for the nations battled each other on another plane on behalf of the nations for which they were patrons.)

**Chapter 11:**

*Daniel* purported to foresee events of the next 1½ centuries. [If the book was written in 167 BC, most of the events already would have occurred.] Again, as in Chapter 9, Daniel spoke of the 1st year of Darius the Mede?

Everything the angel told him about history and fighting the prince/angel of Persia and the prince/angel of Greece was written in the Book of Truths. Vs.2-39 are a fairly accurate, though not detailed, history from the Persian conquest of Babylon through Antiochus’ time. A total of 10 Persian rulers existed after Cyrus.

The angel, probably Gabriel, said 3 more Persian kings would appear, then a 4th. Some commentators suggest this was merely schematic. Others say the kings were: Cambyses, who carried off Egyptians gods when he conquered Egypt in 525 BC (530-533 BC); Gaumata (522 BC); Darius I (522-486 BC), and Ahasuerus/Xerxes I, the Persian king who invaded Greece (486-465 BC). The 4th may have been Darius III Codommanus who was defeated by Alexander the Great.

Alexander the Great was the mighty king (336-323 B C) who conquered Persia. On his death, Alexander’s Empire was divided among his 4 generals, but only 2 of them, the rulers of Egypt (kingdom of the South) and Syria (kingdom of the North) remain for a substantial time.

As a matter of well-established fact, centuries of war prevailed between the Ptolemies of Egypt, kings of the south, and the Seleucids of Syria, kings of the north. (See Addendum about Ptolemies versus Seleucids.) Initially, Seleucus I *Nicator* created a larger Empire than Ptolemy I. In an effort at peace, Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, married Antiochus II *Theos*, of the Seleucid dynasty. But Antiochus’ first wife, Laodice, poisoned him and then killed Berenice and their child.

In 246 BC, Ptolemy III *Euergetes*, Berenice’s brother, defeated Laodice’s son Seleucus II *Callinicus* (the shoot from her roots) and took much plunder, but Seleucus regained the land he had lost. His sons, Seleucus III *Ceraunus* and Antiochus III (the Great) dominated the region for 30 years due to weakness of Ptolemy III.

In 217 BC, Antiochus III marched against Ptolemy IV, who soundly defeated Antiochus at the battle of Rafia (SW Gaza) where Greek historian, Polybius, said Antiochus lost 10,000 infantrymen. Antiochus then re-captured the Eastern part of his Empire (212-205 BC). Finally, after the suspicious deaths of Ptolemy IV and his queen, Antiochus attacked Egypt which then was ruled by the 6-year-old Ptolemy V.

After several more skirmishes and battles, Antiochus III defeated Egypt and took control of Palestine for the last time at the Battle of Panion (Caesarea Philippi, modern Banias). By 200 BC, the Seleucids had control of Judah. Many Jewish Hellenizers allied with them.

In 197 BC, Antiochus III betrothed his daughter, Cleopatra to Ptolemy V, to help him continue to control Egypt, but Cleopatra became loyal to Egypt rather than to her father. Antiochus led his forces to Asia Minor but was defeated by Roman general Scipio at the Battle of Magnesia in 190 BC. He was forced to surrender in humiliation. Antiochus III died in 187 BC at Elymaiis trying to sack the temple of Bel.

Seleucus IV succeeded his father. He had good relations with Jerusalem, but he needed money and sent general Heliodorus to abscond with gold from the Temple, but he failed. Antiochus IV killed Heliodorus killed his own brother Seleucus’ son, Demetrius.

Antiochus took the name “*Epiphanes*” (God manifest), though as his enemies noted, by changing one letter, he would be “*Epimanes*” (madman). Antiochus also was the 1st to claim divine honors by imprinting the name “God” on his coins.

Antiochus IV, the “contemptible man,” had good high priest Onias III, the “prince of the covenant” murdered, which ended the Zadokite priesthood and tainted the sacrificial system.

He successfully defeated Ptolemy VI *Philometor*. The, in 167 BC, Antiochus again attempted to invade Egypt, but he was stopped by a Roman official who humiliated Antiochus and made him go home.

On his way back to Syria, Antiochus vented his frustration on Jerusalem and the Jews, killing thousands. The embattled Jewish minority was viciously persecuted and subjected to torture and martyrdom for observing the faith, owning a Torah, circumcising their son, observing Sabbath or the Jewish dietary restrictions. Antiochus, the god of strongholds, also built the hated Akra fortress in Zion and populated it with Gentile mercenaries. Conservative Jews saw this was a desecration of the holy city. No mention is made of Judas Maccabee and his rededication of the Temple in December 164; therefore, the book may have been written before that date.

Vs. 40 begins the final portion of the prophecy about the “end time.” Vs.40-45 envision an apocalyptic cosmic clash between Antiochus and Egypt, but it never happened. In an apocalyptic war between the forces of good and evil, evil initially would seem to be winning, but ultimately good would prevail. [The prophecy of that clash and of the death of Antiochus did not come true either.]

**Chapter 12:**

In this last chapter, *Daniel* explicitly referred to the Book of Life, which only is hinted at otherwise in the Bible. The archangel Michael was assigned to protect those listed in the Book.

Vs.2 contains the 1st and only clear reference to resurrection of the dead in the Hebrew Bible, though the concept is hinted at elsewhere, as with *Ezekiel’s* valley of the dry bones. Here, it was said that multitudes who had been buried deep in the ground would rise. Resurrection was to be accompanied by rewards for the righteous and punishment for the wicked, although disgrace, not the tortures of hell, await the wicked.

2 other angels, besides Michael stood on opposite banks while Michael stood over the river.

1290 would elapse from the abolition of the sacrifice (Onias’ death in 171 BC) until abomination that causes desolation (which Daniel never defined, perhaps because if was so loathsome). Those who persevered 1335 days, until Antiochus was defeated would rest. Then the end of days would come. (Also, a prophecy which has not been fulfilled.)

The book closes with Daniel’s work being done.