

## Chapter Four

### **Vs. 1: King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you!**

This verse is 3.31 in the Syrio-Aramaic.

Chapter Four begins with an expansive King Nebuchadnezzar which immediately put his listeners on guard because it seems to be another one of his mood swings, and mood swings by an absolute despot are notoriously treacherous. His words have the air of a decree promulgated along with a certain pomposity giving the impression of royal magnanimity. Those whom Nebuchadnezzar addresses are “peoples and nations” (*ham* and *‘umah*) being of the same verbal root.

Daniel was right there along with Babylon’s dignitaries as well as ambassadors for the “peoples and nations” who had been summoned to hear what the king had to say. They were responsible for making this address reach all the corners of the Babylonian empire and even beyond. Scribes were at the ready to write the king’s words after which they gave copies to these representatives as well as to couriers at the ready. Once the decree had trickled down, everyone knew instinctively that best approach was to accept King Nebuchadnezzar’s decree for what it was. Also they knew full well that another could follow as an issue of condemnation or a new form of repression. No doubt these were the thoughts of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who were hastily condemned and just as hastily restored to favor. Everyone had to listen to the king ramble on, having recently felt the full fury of his wrath which could erupt again.

*Shelam* is the noun for “peace,” closely related to the Hebrew *shalom*, and has two other references, both in Ezra (4.17 and 5.7), the former being cited here: “To Rehum...and in the rest of the province Beyond the River, greeting.” Such peace is to be “multiplied” or *sga’* which has one other reference, 6.25.

### **Vs. 2: It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has wrought toward me.**

The words “It has seemed good to me” reflect King Nebuchadnezzar’s largesse which continues for most of this chapter, but as noted in the last verse, must be taken tongue-in-cheek. He could change his mind instantly as those close to him at court can testify. As you move through the text, the words at hand don’t seem to be part of a universal royal decree in and by itself but a kind of summary, as though Nebuchadnezzar were reflecting aloud to his court where scribes were recording his every word.

*Shephar* is the verb for “it seems good” and fundamentally means to be bright or radiant. It is found in two other instances (4.27 and 6.1), the former being cited here: “Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you.” In the verse at hand it is used with *chavah* or “to show” in the sense of declaring something and is noted last in 2.27. King Nebuchadnezzar obviously has in mind the dream and interpretation given by Daniel who most likely is present during this address. Furthermore, it doesn’t seem to be tied in with the golden image erected on the plain of Dura, presumably still there and all but ignored despite its dominating presence. And so everyone was

expecting a public account of the dream of the “great image” [2.31–public in that the contents were well known by now—but when the king starts with the details in vs. 11 concerning a tree, his audience was taken quite by surprise.

Daniel was alerted to the fact that the king was about to bring up his involvement in all this. He was very mindful of the way Nebuchadnezzar had treated his three companions but obviously could not and would not say anything.

King Nebuchadnezzar mentions the “signs and wonders” (*ath* and *temah*), both occurring in 6.27: “He delivers and rescues, he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth.” At least this ruler who had a brush with the God of Israel acknowledged his reality which ultimately worked in favor of the Jews in exile or at least prevented them from persecution. Word of all this reached Israel which must have created quite a stir although we have no reports emanating from there.

**Vs. 3: How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and his dominion is from generation to generation.**

Reading this public display of what we’d consider today as a confidential matter, it makes you wonder about the sincerity of King Nebuchadnezzar. Indeed, he is grateful for Daniel’s interpretation of the dream and the miraculous delivery of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. But, everyone was wondering, what is he after?

Nebuchadnezzar continues saying that the Lord’s kingdom and dominion endure “from generation to generation.” While objectively true, it’s a standard formula anyone could use for the Lord or even the Babylonian gods. Obviously he had in his service diviners and astrologers, men who were at the service of the Babylonian pantheon of gods and goddesses. Hearing this must have unnerved them, the most powerful man on earth giving glory to the God of a second, even third-rate power, such as Israel.

**Vs. 4: I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace.**

Now this strange address almost in the form of a decree—we’re not entirely certain how to label it—takes a personal turn. Everyone knew the facts, at least rumors of the facts, so King Nebuchadnezzar wishes to get the truth out for all to hear. Compare him being “at ease” and “prospering” with the reality of 2.1: “and his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him.” He wasn’t glossing over his inner condition—that he would make known in the next verse—but setting the stage for the dramatic intervention of Daniel. Regardless of what one may think of this king, to his credit he acknowledged those who had offered assistance in his need and was prepared to take the extra step in their defense, even if they were foreigners. And so the words of vs. 4 form a kind of introduction as to how his personal dilemma was resolved.

*Shelah* is the participle for “at ease” which means to be safe or secure and is the only use of this term in the Bible. *Rahanan* is the adjective for “prospering” which is akin to the Hebrew adjective for green as with respect to a tree or shrub. It, too, is the only use of this word in the Bible.

**Vs. 5: I had a dream which made me afraid; as I lay in bed the fancies and the visions of my head alarmed me.**

*Chelem* is the verb for “dream” (cf. 2.28), an experience common to everyone when we are generally passive to images passing through the mind. However, the ones at hand caused King Nebuchadnezzar fear, the verb being *dechal* (cf. 2.31). And so this verse is a summary of the king’s experience and the intervention of Daniel who resolved his dilemma.

Like many dreams, the one at hand consists of wild images or “fancies and visions” (*harhor* and *chazah* (cf. 2.34). The former is a synonym to *rayhon* or “thoughts” noted last in 2.30, this being the only use of the term in the Bible. These visions in the form of images “alarmed” King Nebuchadnezzar, *behal* meaning to tremble or to be afraid and used last in 3.24 as to be in haste. The text doesn’t say whether or not this alarm caused the king to wake up suddenly. Nevertheless, it made such an impact that immediately he sought consultation from the court astrologers and diviners. When they failed to give a satisfactory answer, Nebuchadnezzar turned to Daniel.

It should be noted that while in bed, Nebuchadnezzar must have had at least one concubine. To be there the entire night with such a disturbed individual was trying in the least. The next morning the concubine (or concubines) were sworn to secrecy not to reveal anything the king had uttered.

**Vs. 6: Therefore I made a decree that all the wise men of Babylon should be brought before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream.**

The “decree” at hand refers to 2.2 when “the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans be summoned.” *Tehem* is the noun for “decree” found last in 3.10. The general term “wise men” or *chakym* is noted last in 2.48 referring to the just mentioned religious officials.

**Vs. 7: Then the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans and the astrologers came in; and I told them the dream, but they could not make known to me its interpretation.**

Refer back to 2.2-3 when these men “came in and stood before the king.” However, King Nebuchadnezzar doesn’t say anything here about the threat looming over their heads: “if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb” [2.5]. Perhaps in hindsight he regretted that decision because Daniel solved the pressing issue of the dream and its interpretation. At the same time it shouldn’t be forgotten that Daniel himself was under the same threat though not from the king himself: “and they sought Daniel and his companions to slay them” [2.13].

**Vs. 8: At last Daniel came in before me—he who was named Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods—and I told him the dream, saying,**

Everyone knew Daniel’s Babylonian name of Belteshazzar which the king uses, perhaps in deference to those whom he speaking. After all, Daniel is a foreigner exalted to a high governmental position and in the king’s favor. Nevertheless, reliance upon a foreigner, no matter

how wise, could rouse suspicion and, course, jealousy. All the while Daniel has not made an appearance but must have been aware of what was transpiring.

Daniel had no choice by to be called Belteshazzar who is identified with the god of King Nebuchadnezzar. Furthermore, being put on a pedestal was embarrassing, for to be thought of such could set him up for a target of vengeance by the Babylonian religious officials. They would try to get at him behind the back of their king and most likely were already hatching a plot to eliminate him. If they tricked him up, it would be easier to go after Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

*Ruach* is the noun for “spirit” noted last in 2.25 as “wind.” They are called “holy” or *qadysh* which is found next in vs. 10. The text, however, reads literally “the spirit of the Holy God.”

**Vs. 9: "O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is difficult for you, here is the dream which I saw; tell me its interpretation.**

To Daniel’s surprise—he was used to being called Belteshazzar both at the royal court and by those under his authority—he is addressed as “chief of the magicians” or *chartumym* which occurs last in 1.20. As pointed out there, this noun derives from the verbal root *charat* meaning to engrave. Thus these magicians were not unlike sacred scribes who could both read, engrave and interpret texts. In sum, the Chaldean word is not as loaded as the English “magician” which connotes performing cheap tricks.

For the second time in a row, King Nebuchadnezzar says (literally) that “the spirit of the Holy God” is present in Daniel. This spirit, perhaps not fully known to Nebuchadnezzar, belongs to the God of Israel and is able to make mysteries known, the noun being *raz* noted last in 2.29. ‘*Anas* is a participle, the only use of this term in the Bible, meaning “difficult” and derives from a verbal root meaning to compel.

**Vs. 10: The visions of my head as I lay in bed were these: I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth; and its height was great.**

As noted in vs. 2, those belonging to the royal court were familiar with King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and Daniel’s interpretation as it had been recounted earlier, so they hadn’t been expecting anything new. They figured that he was simply making public what had transpired or just offering more details. So when the king began to speak of a tree, it grabbed everyone’s attention. Even if some thought it was foolish, they kept this to themselves as well as to those nearby, else their lives would be on the line.

King Nebuchadnezzar speaks of his “head” or *re’sh* (mentioned in 2.29 but not noted there) which suggests that these “visions” (*chazon*, cf. 1.17) for some time have been rolling around within him not just at night but troubling him during the day and possibly interfering with governance of the kingdom. He puts recognition of them in a twofold manner: first he “saw” them and then beheld them, *chazah* (cf. vs. 5) followed by ‘*alu*. This verb is the root for *chazon* joined with the exclamation ‘*alu*, expressive of a sudden realization and found four other times in Daniel, the last

time noted in 2.31. The seeing of these visions (again, *chazon-chazah*) implies no temporal distinction between when they happened and the seeing of them. However, '*alu*' suggests some distance, even miniscule, between the visions and Nebuchadnezzar's attempt to decipher them.

King Nebuchadnezzar sees and beholds a "tree" or more precisely '*ylan*' which, like the similar Hebrew noun, can apply to an oak tree. It has five other references in Daniel, the next being in vs. 11. This tree is not just planted anywhere but "in the midst of" the earth, *gav*, mentioned last in 3.26 but not noted there. Such a location is reminiscent of "the tree which is in the midst of (*betok* suggests being at the center) the garden" [Gn 3.3]. In the dream at hand, the (presumably) oak tree is very tall whereas nothing is said of the height of the one in the garden. The adjective *sagy*' ('great') is noted last in 2.48.

**Vs. 11: The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven and it was visible to the end of the whole earth.**

Despite the great height of this tree, it became even stronger, the adjective *revah* being used for "grew" which has four other references in Daniel, the next being vs. 20: "The tree which you saw, which grew and became strong." *Taqaph* is the verb for "became strong" which connotes overpowering someone or making an assault. It has four other references in Daniel, the next being in vs. 20. One can just imagine the head of King Nebuchadnezzar containing this image, as though it were expanding and ready to burst apart.

The "top of heaven" suggests the blue sky above. It's astounding for a tree to reach that enormous, especially in a land which is mostly desert. The earth's end, of course, implies that it is flat and visible from all around.

**Vs. 12: Its leaves were fair and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the air dwelt in its branches and all flesh was fed from it.**

In addition to the Garden of Eden, this verse has echoes of the Heavenly Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation. Given the general parched desert environment, such an enormous tree providing fruit, shade and shelter would attract people from the "end of the whole earth" as the previous verse notes. "All flesh" took nourishment from this tree, suggesting that both humans and animals would not have to eat each other, that they were vegetarians.

As for the tree in Revelation, the following verse may be helpful in conjunction with this part of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream: "on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" [22.2]. Also interesting is the mustard seed which sprang into a huge tree: "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches" [Mt 13.31].

**Vs. 13: "I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven.**

This is the second time King Nebuchadnezzar speaks of his visions while in bed which, of course, means nighttime. As noted above, it wouldn't be surprising that he had at least one concubine with him which must have been a very trying experience for this young girl...or girls.

The tree just described "reached to heaven" [vs. 11] whereas here we have what seems to be a man descending from heaven or from above the tree, as though growth of this tree induced him to come down.

This verse contains another example of "saw" followed by "behold" or *chazah* and then 'alu as in vs. 10, that is, a quick succession of perceiving and then grasping the vision. Not long ago King Nebuchadnezzar had seen a fourth man in the furnace along with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, so he may have identified this person with that mysterious being whose identity never had been resolved. Nevertheless, he called him a "watcher" or *hyr* which has two other references in Daniel, the next being vs. 17 and derives from a verbal root meaning to be awake or to arise. At the same time this watcher is someone who is holy which is reminiscent of Daniel's Babylonian name, "he who was named Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods" [vs. 8].

The RSV has a footnote with regard to this watcher: "The watcher was a celestial being who cried aloud to his attendants (vs. 14); such celestial beings, as a kind of heavenly council, execute the sentence given by God."

**Vs. 14: He cried aloud and said thus, 'Hew down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit; let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches.**

"Aloud" is rendered by the noun *chayl* which means force or power and has four other references in Daniel, the next being vs. 20: "The tree you saw which grew and became strong." As noted in vs. 13, perhaps this watcher was the fourth man walking around in the furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Here he not only cries out but does so with a voice no one can escape hearing. We have no details about when this watcher alighted upon earth or how he got there, presumably by the tree, but that is incidental to the text at hand.

The watcher orders the tree to be cut down and split up despite having attracted beasts and birds alike (nothing is said about humans). In other words, the tree that added so much to a barren desert landscape was removed, reverting the land to its original condition.

**Vs. 15: But leave the stump of its roots in the earth bound with a band of iron and bronze amid the tender grass of the field. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven; let his lot be with the beasts in the grass of the earth;**

The watcher gave the command to cut down the tree and its branches but not to uproot it, meaning that the tree could revive. To keep it from growing, however, the stump was bound with iron and bronze.

A just person often is compared to a tree as in Ps 1.3: "He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does he prospers." Perhaps the watcher had in mind not only to hew down the tree but to bind it tightly so as not to

produce offspring. But as we learn later as Daniel continues with his interpretation, the tree refers to King Nebuchadnezzar, a fact both men knew from the very beginning but were afraid to admit.

At the same time the watcher doesn't want the tree to wither which is why he bids it to be wet with heaven's "dew" or *tal*. This word occurs two other times in Daniel (vss. 25 and 33), the former being cited here: "and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven." So instead of a tree, the stump which has been hewn and bound with iron and bronze will have its "lot" with beasts, *chalaq*. This word occurs one other time in vs. 23 which repeats the words of the verse at hand.

**Vs. 16: let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him; and let seven times pass over him.**

As we move through these words coming from the watcher they take on the form of something not unlike a curse. In view of the just man implied in Ps 1.3 cited in the last verse, he speaks of this man's "mind" or *levav* cited last in 2.30. More specifically it applies to the heart, the seat of affections. The curse is that this *levav* "be changed" from that of a man, *shena'*, cited in 3.28. A beast also has a *levav* but not the same as a human's, meaning that King Nebuchadnezzar will descend to the level of non-rational animals. One cannot help but think of the consequences of the man and woman after they ate from the tree in Eden, that is, after the man's expulsion (the text doesn't say anything about the woman being expelled).

Next the watcher speaks of the number "seven" or *shivhah* which occurred in 3.19 with regard to the heating of the furnace. Any association with this number isn't given, but that is secondary to the meaning of *shivhah* whose Hebrew verbal root applies to an oath. Also it refers to a sacred number as well as to a curse. For such a curse to "pass over" the man means it will have its fullest effect. The verb is *chalaph* which occurs two more times in Daniel, vss. 23 and 25, the former being cited here: "till seven times pass over him." Of all the parts of Nebuchadnezzar's dream this must have intrigued him most of all, so eagerly he awaited Daniel's interpretation. All the while, however, the king must have had a keen eye on Daniel as well as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, testing their minds by the expression on their faces.

**Vs. 17: The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.'**

At last and to the relief of his audience Nebuchadnezzar comes to the end of his dream. He gives the distinct impression of being more confident than with his first dream, knowing that Daniel, right there in front of him, would work the same miracle of interpretation. At the same time, one can only imagine what people were thinking along with the scribes who dutifully recorded his words.

King Nebuchadnezzar now speaks of the "holy ones" or those who are *qadysh* (cf. vs. 8). This is the first time the plural is used implying more than one person or heavenly being who are not specified. The same applies to "watchers" compared to the singular watcher in vs. 13. Perhaps these other beings accompany the watcher, acting as his attendants which mirrors King Nebuchadnezzar and his earthly court.

The watchers promulgate a “sentence” or *pitgam*, the only other reference being 3.16 as “matter” and as noted there, applies to an edict or letter. It comes by way of a “decree” or *gezerah* from the watchers which has one other reference, vs. 24: “It is a decree of the Most High which has come upon my lord the king.” This noun suggests something that has been cut and therefore set aside.

The holy ones promulgate a “decision” or *she’ela’*, the only use of this word which derived from a verbal root meaning to ask as in 2.10: “for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean.” More specifically, this *she’ela’* comes through the speaking or the “word” (*amar*) whereas the watches lack such a word.

And so both the sentence and decision have a goal in mind put as an “end” or *divrah*, the only other reference occurring in 2.30 but not mentioned there: “but in order that the interpretation may be made known.” *Divrah* derives from the common verbal root meaning to speak.

“Most High” is rendered by the adjective *hilay* found last in vs. 2 but not noted there. See 3.26 for the last use of this title by King Nebuchadnezzar himself. In the verse at hand, the same king claims with confidence, showing no hesitation, that his second dream has a divine origin. For some mysterious reason God—and presumably the God of Israel whom he had acknowledged—allowed divine representatives to allow the tree, often symbolic of the just man (cf. Ps 3.1 cited in vs. 15), to be hewn even though it had been so beneficial to living beings.

*Shalyt* is an adjective for “rules” found last in 2.15 and here applies to the “kingdom of men,” Nebuchadnezzar’s way of speaking of the entire human race. So when the Lord doles out this kingdom to those whom he chooses, it becomes holy and part of the divine sovereignty. For God there are no distinctions which is why even the “lowliest” of men can exercise such authority, *shephal* being the adjective and only use of this term in the Bible. It derives from a verbal root meaning to cast down and contrasts with *qum* for “sets over” (cf. 3.4) which fundamentally means to rise.

**Vs. 18: This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. And you, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in you.”**

At last King Nebuchadnezzar ends his account with a predicable flourish, everyone listening to him supposedly in awe and ready to offer advice even if they think he is insane. Immediately he turns attention to Daniel, a.k.a. Belteshazzar, the only man capable of helping him. Long ago Nebuchadnezzar gave up on his Babylonian diviners. All eyes were upon Daniel, thereby putting him on the spot. One wonders what had been going through his mind as his master recounted his dream. Regardless, he had to pay close attention so as to respond correctly.

*Peshar* is the noun for “interpretation” noted last in 2.36 with regard to the first dream. King Nebuchadnezzar speaks with Daniel with trust coupled with a certain veiled threat, putting him on the spot, more than during his first interpretation.

When King Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges that the “spirit” (*ruach*, cf. vs. 8) of the holy gods is in Daniel, he may be saying this for public consumption. That is to say, he knew that Daniel subscribed to the one God of Israel, bore the Babylonian name of Belteshazzar (‘Bel protect the king’), yet did not worship the Babylonian gods. That was fine in the king’s eyes provided Daniel

accomplish his task. However, the words just addressed were to protect him from any revenge from the local religious authorities who obviously must have been jealous.

**Vs. 19: Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was dismayed for a moment, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king said, "Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you." Belteshazzar answered, "My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies!"**

No small wonder that Daniel was "dismayed." The verb (only use in the Bible) is *shemam* which is akin to the Hebrew verb of the same meaning as well as to be desolate. The idea is that when a person is astonished, the breath is taken from him, and he is left abandoned. "Moment" is rendered as *shahah* which literally means an hour noted last in 3.6. "Hour" is not unlike the Greek *kairos* meaning a special event or circumstance which applies to the situation at hand. Duration is secondary; the event itself creates its own time and space, something that will be very important in Chapters Eleven and Twelve.

*Rayon* means "thoughts" noted last in 2.29 which here cause Daniel alarm, *behal* (cf. vs. 5), meaning to hasten and to be terrified. Actually Daniel felt this way as soon as King Nebuchadnezzar began to recount his dream before his entire court. At least he had Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego there to comfort him. Daniel didn't have to say a word, for his alarm was evident on his face which is why Nebuchadnezzar told him not to worry.

Immediately Daniel blurted out words to get himself off the hook, not so much with regard to the king but those assembled around him. So when Daniel mentions enemies, many an eye turned to him as well as to Nebuchadnezzar as they asked to themselves whether or not they were included. Both men had their own opinions but chose to keep it quiet.

**Vs. 20: The tree you saw, which grew and became strong, so that its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth;**

Immediately after acknowledging King Nebuchadnezzar Daniel begins to interpret the dream. This time he does it in full view of the court as well as the scribes who diligently wrote down every word. He gives the details of this tree just as it is found in vs. 12, so for this reason vs. 21 is not inserted here. Despite being dismayed, Daniel rebounds gracefully and in a straight-forward manner which impressed not only the king but his courtiers. That means the Spirit had been at work as soon as King opened his mouth back in vs. 4.

**Vs. 22: it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong. Your greatness has grown and reaches to heaven and your dominion to the ends of the earth.**

This verse continues as part of an extended sentence from the previous verse. Daniel's spontaneous address continues through vs. 27 without interruption. Already we can see that the tree which had been hewn down applies to the demise of King Nebuchadnezzar. The king must have picked this up on the spot but surprisingly allows Daniel to finish. What awaited Daniel, however, was another matter. He wouldn't know his fate until having finished the interpretation.

Of course, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who were standing nearby would suffer the same for good or ill.

The boldness of Daniel is evident by the direct response, "It is you, O king." He compares King Nebuchadnezzar to the tree in the dream as in vs. 11 ('have grown and become strong'). Singled out are two characteristics: 1) the king's "greatness" or *revu* which has four other references in Daniel, the next being vs. 36: "and still more greatness was added to me." 2) his "dominion" or *shaltan* mentioned in vs. 3 but not noted there.

Vs. 23 isn't cited because it is a repetition of vs. 16 above.

**Vs. 24: this is the interpretation, O king: it is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king,**

Daniel speaks both with continued confidence and in a matter-of-fact way saying "this is the interpretation" which implies that no other exists. Not only does Daniel begin with the interpretation, he marvels everyone about him, especially King Nebuchadnezzar, with use of "decree" or *gezerah* which has one other reference, vs. 17. The king of Babylon earlier had accepted both the existence and authority of the God of Israel so he was open (hopefully) to receive it here.

**Vs. 25: that you shall be driven from among men and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; you shall be made to eat grass like an ox and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven and seven times shall pass over you till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.**

Daniel speaks of the future which appears to be indefinite, leaving it up to King Nebuchadnezzar to figure that one out for himself. One thing is certain: surely he will know when it happens. However, there is a consolation. Daniel says nothing about Nebuchadnezzar being assassinated, for if that were in the future, he would have mentioned it.

*Terad* is the verb for "shall be driven out" and occurs three other times, the next being vs. 32: "and you shall be driven from among men." This verb suggests a dropping but not just that, one that happens continually. In addition to this, Nebuchadnezzar will be forced to leave the human race and take up residence with wild beasts. *Medar* is the noun for "dwelling," the only use of this term in the Bible and derives from the verbal root *dor* meaning to remain or to inhabit. Daniel continues with this prophecy, hearkening back to King Nebuchadnezzar's own words in vs. 15.

Finally we have the mysterious "seven times" which is not specified and perhaps refers to a curse. However, it is not permanent but will end once Nebuchadnezzar knows that the Most High is supreme ruler and gives authority to rule to whomever he "wills," the verb being *tseva'* which occurs four times in Daniel, the last being vs. 17 though not noted there.

**Vs. 26: And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be sure for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules.**

The common verb *'amar* (to say, to speak, cf. 3.14) is used for “commanded” with regard to Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom, that is, to “leave” it, *shevaq*. This verb occurs three other times in Daniel, the last time in 2.44 but not noted there. The verb is passive, perhaps indicating that the watcher of vs. 23 is responsible for this action although he isn’t mentioned anymore.

Harkening back to vs. 23, the watcher will bind the stump of the tree with a band of iron and bronze. In other words, the tree will be prevented from growing again but won’t be uprooted and hence not put to death. The same will apply to King Nebuchadnezzar. His kingdom will be “sure” or *qayam* which has one other biblical reference, 6.26: “for he is the living God, enduring forever.” This adjective derives from the verbal root *qum* meaning to arise.

As for Nebuchadnezzar knowing when Heaven rules, no specific length is given, depending upon the alacrity of his insight and acceptance of his fate. The verb “rules” is a noun (*shaltan*) noted last in vs. 22. Of course, the English proper name “Heaven” is another way of speaking about the Lord.

The Chaldean text lacks a specific word for “time.”

**Vs. 27: Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you; break off your sins by practicing righteousness and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your tranquility.”**

Now at last the small but very important word King Nebuchadnezzar was waiting for, *lahen* or “therefore” which signals the end or close-to-the-end of Daniel’s interpretation of the dream. At least the king would escape death; perhaps all this talk about him being among the beasts of the field means that he will go into exile. So better prepare for that to make it as comfortable as possible.

Daniel continues by giving a piece of “counsel” or *melak*, the only use of this word in the Bible and closely related to the noun “king” (*melek*). The idea behind this word seems to be that the king is the ultimate arbiter and source of advice. Daniel wishes his kingdom, if you will, to be “acceptable” to Nebuchadnezzar, *shephar*, which occurs two other times, the last being in vs. 1. Such acceptability is presented under two options:

1) “Practicing righteousness” which requires breaking off from sin, the verb *pereq* being the only use in the Bible. Such a break is to be made with regard to King Nebuchadnezzar’s sins, indeed many, but at least he is willing to listen to Daniel. “Righteousness” or *tsidqah* (the only use of this term in the Bible but similar to the Hebrew *tsedeq*. The text reads literally “break off your sins in righteousness.” The second object of this *pereq* is “iniquities” or *havyl*, the only use of this term in the Bible, which connotes being perverse.

2) “Showing mercy” or *chanan* which has one other biblical reference, 6.11: “and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God.” This gesture, especially by the most powerful man in the world, would have incredible ramifications should he carry it out. Certainly the Babylonian kingdom has many candidates who would qualify as being “oppressed” or *hanah* (only use of this term in the Bible) which more commonly refers to those who are poor.

The key word in this verse for King Nebuchadnezzar is *hen* or “perhaps.” Besides being an invitation for the repentance Daniel is speaking of, the future offers hope. Should the king follow

through, his “tranquility” or *shelevah* (only use of this term in the Bible) would be lengthened. *Shelevah* is related to the Hebrew *shalev* meaning peaceful as well as *shalom* (peace). ‘*Arka*’ or “lengthening” (only use of the word in the Bible) implies something drawn out. Despite the prophecy of King Nebuchadnezzar being reduced to dwelling with beasts (cf. vs. 25), he has the opportunity to live with them peacefully and therefore can set an unprecedented example not just to his subjects but to peoples of other nations.

**Vs. 28: All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar.**

A short but loaded sentence, to be sure. The king had just heard Daniel go into rather unpleasant details as to his future, this after the successful interpretation of his first dream. *Meta'* is the verb for “came upon” found last in vs. 24 but not noted there and is found in Daniel seven other times. This verb suggests a reaching to, that all the events Daniel just recounted will hit Nebuchadnezzar like a bolt from heaven. At least the king has an opportunity to prepare for these events, the time which is not given. It remains to be seen, however, whether or not Nebuchadnezzar obeyed Daniel.

**Vs. 29: At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon,**

Now fast-forward one year after Daniel had recounted the second dream to King Nebuchadnezzar. Nothing is said of what had transpired since then, let alone Daniel and his three companions. Presumably everyone went back to their duties, including members of the royal court. Nevertheless, the palace was buzzing with rumors as well as some insiders attempting to get at Daniel in one way or another.

Nebuchadnezzar must have done a lot of walking on his own away from people as on palace's roof. He favored the night when he could gaze upon the city sleeping below. Perhaps he would encounter a guard or two, but that's all. Soon he would be out beyond the city walls among the beasts and must have wondered what that would be like. Although the visions in his head (cf. vs. 13) finally made sense, that doesn't mean they went away with Daniel's interpretation. They even could have intensified, over and over, night after night, making it difficult for King Nebuchadnezzar to carry out his royal duties.

**Vs. 30: and the king said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?"**

These words may be taken either as a simple exclamation or to a group of courtiers who was accompanying King Nebuchadnezzar on one of his many walks on the palace rooftop. While he preferred to be alone, this may not have always been the case. Always several steps behind him were the ever vigilant bodyguards. Note that Nebuchadnezzar's observation is totally self-centered, not unlike his two dreams, which is to be expected from an absolute monarch. This obsession with self-aggrandizement is reflected by his identification of Babylon as a personal residence and monument to his majesty. Included but not mentioned must be that “image of gold” [3.1] set up in the plain of Dura which Nebuchadnezzar could see glistening in both the sun during the day and under the moon at night.

*Teqoph* is the noun for the English adjective “mighty” and has one other reference in 2.37. Much of this might which went into constructing Babylon was done by slave labor, the suffering of which served Nebuchadnezzar’s delusion of grandeur. *Heder* is the noun for “majesty” which has two other references (vs. 36 and 5.18), the former being cited here: “and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me.” This noun suggests ornamentation or decoration, that is, an external veneer placed upon an existing structure to enhance its beauty. The same may be said for “glory” or *yeqar* which has six references in Daniel, the last citation being in 2.38.

**Vs. 31: While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you,**

Here we have a contrast between “words” and “voice,” *milah* (cf. 3.22) and *qol*, so much so that for both to exist at the same time is virtually impossible. The contrast is made more striking by use of the verb *nephal* or “fell” with all its suddenness and weight which occurred last in 2.46 though not noted there.

Neither the Lord nor any heavenly being is responsible for speaking with King Nebuchadnezzar, a fact of lesser importance than the communication itself. Here the kingdom has a life of its own independent from Nebuchadnezzar. It “has departed” or *hadah* which suggests a passing and hence passage of authority from Nebuchadnezzar to someone who is not made known yet.

**Vs. 32: and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; and you shall be made to eat grass like an ox; and seven times shall pass over you until you have learned that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.”**

These words are certainly familiar to King Nebuchadnezzar and have rolled around his head continuously for the past year when Daniel gave the interpretation of his dream. During that time the two may have been in less contact than before. There was no further need of communication except when it came to matters of state. After all, Daniel was a highly placed official in Babylon and had dealings with the king. Over the ensuing twelve months, however, Daniel must have kept an eye on the king, watching him slowly degenerate into insanity after having had interpreted his dream.

*Terad* is the verb for “shall be driven” and implies a continuous thrusting movement. It occurs three other times in Daniel, the last being vs. 25. All the rest of this prophecy is very familiar to King Nebuchadnezzar, and he doesn’t have to be reminded of it. Now that the longest year in his life has passed with the prophecy not being fulfilled until now when he is forced to confront it once again, this time in a definitive sense.

**Vs. 33: Immediately the word was fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men, and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws.**

“Immediately” or *shahah* is noted last in vs. 19 as “moment” and often applies to an hour’s passage of time. As noted there, this word is not unlike the Greek *kairos* which means special event or

time. This hour, if you will, is “fulfilled” or *yesaph*, only use of this word in the Bible and closely related to the Hebrew which means to increase, to add. So the idea is that this word from heaven had continuous effect upon King Nebuchadnezzar.

No details are given as to the king’s sudden and dramatic change. Perhaps it happened while Nebuchadnezzar was on the palace rooftops during one of his nightly walks. No one seems to have been around to report this until, for example, he did not show up for his daily official duties the next morning. Furthermore, no one was to witness to this bizarre transformation or deformation. Once the king couldn’t be found, they recalled Daniel’s prophecy and knew it had been fulfilled. Also no one knew where King Nebuchadnezzar had went. He would have been unrecognizable anyway out in the field while retaining some of his human identity, he couldn’t communicate with people. So here we have the most powerful man on earth grazing on the hills with all the other beasts. Perhaps over time Nebuchadnezzar had second thoughts and realized that never had he been so free. That recognition would prove his redemption which is detailed in the next verse.

**Vs. 34: At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored him who lives for ever; for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation;**

*Qetsath* is the noun for “end,” is found last in 1.18, suggesting a sum or whole number and thus “end” as completion. However, the number of days is not given; the same applies to the unknown man or men governing Babylon in his absence, perhaps even Daniel.

Did a watcher or some heavenly being approach King Nebuchadnezzar and inform him of this good news or did he realize it himself? Use of the first person singular (‘I’) suggests someone in control of the situation despite having been reduced to the level of an animal in the field, so it appears he came to the conclusion on his own. While out there for this unspecified time most people didn’t couldn’t distinguish their former king from any other animal. If his enemies did, chances are they’d take the opportunity to kill him and claim the throne. However, the impression from ensuing verses is that a caretaker or sorts was in charge just in case Nebuchadnezzar would return. This even could have been Daniel along with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who already were in positions of high authority.

So here we have the king among animals who got the inspiration to raise his eyes heavenward which brought out the return of his “reason” or *mandah*. This noun derives from the verbal root *yadah* (to know) and alternately means knowledge. The verb *natal* (‘returned’) intimates a taking up or lifting and has one other reference, 7.4: “Then as I looked, its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground.” So there came a point when King Nebuchadnezzar was grazing in the field as he had grown accustomed to do. Suddenly he lifted his eyes up to heaven which just as suddenly brought about restoration of his reason. That means he got up from four legs onto two and began walking about. Just as suddenly Nebuchadnezzar shed his hair and nails (cf. vs. 33) and assumed a human form.

King Nebuchadnezzar’s immediate response was one of gratitude which consists of praise and honor of the Most High, a title which he used back in 3.26 upon seeing Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego unscathed in the furnace.

Just as important though perhaps unrealized by him at the moment was acknowledgment of the Most High's "dominion and kingdom" (*shaltan*, vs. 26 and *malkuth*, 3.37). After all, he had been king and now knows his place in the larger scheme of things.

**Vs. 35: all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing; and he does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What are you doing?"**

When King Nebuchadnezzar speaks of the earth's inhabitants, clearly he is speaking from painful, personal experience. First he was king of Babylon, the only superpower of its time, and then was reduced to a beast living in the field. In other words, he had first hand knowledge of all the living beings in between these two extremes, that they are "nothing" or *kelah* (*k-* prefaced to *l*). Such nothingness does not negative their inherent dignity nor value but only when compared are "accounted" as such, *chashav*. This is the only use of this verb in the Bible though closely related to the Hebrew which means to devise, to reckon.

*Tseva'* is the verb for "will" which here in English is a noun and is found last in vs. 25. In the verse at hand, *tseva'* covers two extremes of the created realm: heaven and earth. Both have their respective inhabitants, "host" and inhabitants, *chayl* being noted last in vs. 14. Perhaps the often mentioned watcher first noted in vs. 14 is part of this population.

*Mecha'* is the verb for "stay" noted last in 2.34 as "smote, so the Most High of vs. 34 can slay whomever or whatever he wishes. Although Nebuchadnezzar didn't suffer that dire fate, his experience of going from a human being to an animal was not far removed.

**Vs. 36: At the same time my reason returned to me; and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me.**

*Zeman* is the noun for "time" noted last in 3.8 which refers to when King Nebuchadnezzar lifted his eyes to heaven (cf. vs. 34) and praised the Most High. This restoration to his humanity is quite remarkable for a non-Jew and shows that God will respond to any sign of repentance.

In addition to having gotten back his humanity, King Nebuchadnezzar received what was taken from him, that is, his *yeqar* (cf. vs. 30). This is proper both to himself as well, his kingdom, "majesty and splendor" (*heder*, cf. vs. 3) and *zev* (cf. 2.31). Only when these two had been restored did Nebuchadnezzar stand out among all the animals.

It was his counselors and lords who sought him, an easy task due to their master's majesty and splendor. And so once back on the throne, Nebuchadnezzar grew in greatness but with a major difference. Before he had been unbelieving and arrogant. Now after having lost his humanity for an extended period of time, he was able to appreciate what it was to be a human being. And so King Nebuchadnezzar devoted the rest of his life doing good with the ready support of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to guide him.

**Vs. 37: Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven; for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to abase.**

As pointed out in vs. 34, the first person singular ('I') reveals a person in control of his situation which is certainly true of the repentant Babylonian king. He gives praise and exultation to God, the two verbs being *shevach* and *rum*. The former is noted last in 2.23 and the latter occurs three other times in Daniel, the next being 5.19: "whom he would he raised up and whom he would he put down." Thus the idea is of raising on high.

This verse concludes with a remarkable acknowledgment of humility for the mightiest ruler of the ancient world, admission of "pride" or *gevah*, the only use of this noun in the Bible which like *rum*, connotes being raised on high. Once so exalted in pride, a person sets himself up for a fall which is the fundamental meaning behind the verb *shephal* or "abase" (cf. vs. 17).

And so ends the remarkable story of King Nebuchadnezzar. We have no further information about him nor any record as to his efforts at setting things right in his own life or in the kingdom of Babylon. If such a person could repent of his deeds, his example alone would change everyone under his rule. However, it didn't seem to rub off on Belshazzar who had succeeded him.

## Chapter Five

**Vs. 1: King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand.**

This new king comes on the scene without any prior introduction, presumably after the reign (and restoration) of his father, King Nebuchadnezzar (the story presents him as such though historically he wasn't his son). Despite the latter's conversion, there are no details as to any concrete effects relative to this change of heart within the Babylonian kingdom. Still, we can assume there may have been modest successes here and there. At least Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego continued in their high positions which meant the exiled and captured Jewish population lived unmolested.

We have no specific reason for the feast at hand though it appears that King Belshazzar had been in power some years which meant a change in royal officials or at least the high probability of change. *Lechem* is the noun for "feast," the only one in the Bible but closely related to the Hebrew "bread." Thus the phrase would read literally as "made a great bread" though this noun can apply to food in general. The Hebrew noun itself occurs in 10.3: "I ate no delicacies" (literally, 'delightful or pleasant bread').

There's a connection between "great" and "lords" (*rav* and *ravrvan*), the latter having the same root as the former. *Ravrvan* occurs seven other times in Daniel, the last being 4.36 but not noted there.

We get the impression that King Belshazzar himself "drank wine in front of the thousand" as though he were showing off how much he could consume without become intoxicated. While most of the thousand were equally intoxicated, some thought their new king was making a public fool of himself.

**Vs. 2: Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought that the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.**

The last verse gave the impression that King Belshazzar was making a public fool of himself as he got himself more intoxicated. People at the feast may have thought the same but would never admit it. And so we get a rather dark, even sinister introduction to the new king. First Belshazzar tastes the wine brought to him (presumably after a slave had taken some to prove it didn't contain poison) and now showed his true colors which were contrary to the repentant Nebuchadnezzar. In other words, he shows no indication to carry on all that his predecessor had accomplished. While growing up, Belshazzar had witnessed that man's slip into mental derangement, Daniel's interpretation of the two dreams, the terrible denigration into being an animal and finally, restoration. Could the same happen to him as well? He seemed indifferent at the prospect.

So this use (rather, abuse) of the sacred vessels from the Jerusalem temple was a public refutation of his predecessor's acknowledgment of Israel's God as well as Daniel's influence. The noun for "vessels" is *ma'en* which occurs three other times in Daniel, the next being in vs. 3. We don't have any specifics as to where these vessels were stored, presumably in a temple dedication to some Babylonian god. They may have been left there, more or less forgotten, until now. Their desecration in such a public orgy of drunkenness is made all the worse by the fact that Belshazzar's wives and concubines drank from them. Of course, word reached Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, but they couldn't do anything at this insult towards symbols of all that they held dear. Perhaps Daniel's family had contributed some of these vessels to the temple and therefore had greater significance for him.

The next verse (3) more or less repeats the contents of vs. 2 except by identifying the temple as "the house of God." Also the vessels are specified as being made of gold.

**Vs. 4: They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone.**

"They" refers to the king, lords, wives and concubines of vs. 2 including the other guests at the feast drinking wine from the sacred vessels from the Jerusalem temple. During this drunken orgy all "praised" their Babylonian gods, *shevach* being the verb which has the connotation of soothing and therefore wooing the divinities in order to answer prayers, etc. The drunken way in which this soothing took place must have filled the hall with a cacophonous sound that reached far and wide...certainly far from soothing.

The gods are made of six materials, gold being among them, which is the composition of the vessels of the Jerusalem temple. Thus the revelers led by King Belshazzar used them to mock the God of Israel, singling out the golden vessels. Obviously Belshazzar was oblivious to the fate of his predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar, and now faced the real possibility of ending up like him, a beast of the field. While Nebuchadnezzar repented and was restored to his kingship, this wouldn't be the case with the new king.

**Vs. 5: Immediately the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace opposite the lamp stand; and the king saw the hand as it wrote.**

“Immediately” or *shahah* is noted last in 4.33 and also can refer to one hour. Here *shahah* follows upon Belshazzar using the Jerusalem temple’s sacred vessels for a profane use to honor the Babylonian gods which the Lord could not tolerate.

*Nephaq* is the verb for “appeared” noted last in 2.13 as “went forth” which means that the fingers came out of the clear blue and began to write. Aptly it is used with *shahah* to convey the immediacy of what was transpiring. The Chaldean *’etsbhan* (two other references in Daniel, 2.41 and 42) is closely related to the Hebrew as found in Ex 31.18: “the two tables of the testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.” There the material was stone whereas here it is “plaster” or *gyr*; the only use of this word in the Bible which most likely is lime and similar to the Hebrew of the same spelling in Is 27.9 meaning chalk stone. If so, this writing must have caused some flakes to fall on the ground, not unlike snow, because the it had been done quickly. In fact, many present at the banquet noticed these flakes before the hand itself.

Note the use of “lamp stand” or *nevrashtah*, the only use of this word in the Bible which can apply to a chandelier of some sort suspended from the ceiling. Chances are it too had been taken from the Jerusalem temple and displayed for this special occasion. The many lights on this large suspended device served to highlight the actual act of writing and the words, not to mention the falling flakes of plaster, an unsettling scene to all present. While this caught everyone’s attention, vs. 5 singles out the king as having seen it, the perpetrator of this blasphemous feast.

**Vs. 6: Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together.**

A verse with some obvious humor but a realistic description and tied in with the use of *shahah* as “immediately” just mentioned. What’s striking here is not so much Belshazzar’s physical change but his “thoughts” or *rahyon* noted last in 2.30. They consisted of a sudden recollection of the feast with the profane use of Jerusalem’s sacred vessels along with thoughts of his predecessor, King Nebuchadnezzar. Despite his vanity and evil deeds, he had repented and acknowledged the God of Israel. Yet from what we gather, it didn't seem to have influenced Belshazzar in the least. Would he turn into a beast of the field? Because of the severity of his crime never would he return to human form. No small wonder the verb *behal* is used for “alarmed” with its connotation of terror and alarm.

**Vs. 7: The king cried aloud to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans and the astrologers. The king said to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and shows me its interpretation shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold about his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."**

A verse which has more the air of a bribe to elicit an immediate response which, of course, doesn’t work with divine intervention.

“Aloud” is rendered by the noun *chayl* noted last in 4.35 as “host” and here can be rendered as something as “with might” along with the verb *qera’* (cf. 3.4). Given the reaction of King Belshazzar described in vs. 6, most likely this was a cry of sheer terror at the unknown. Like Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar turned to his diviners which include “wise men” or *chakym* as in 4.6. Such important men were on duty at all times and were nearby, even with the king was traveling. As soon as they got word of what had transpired, they were terrified at not giving a proper response and knowing the earlier success of Daniel, a foreigner, who had put them and their predecessors to shame.

King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream meaning it was confined to himself whereas King Belshazzar had a multitude of witnesses, a “thousand of his lords” [vs. 1], everyone one of which beheld the same thing. So the time between this sight and the arrival of the diviners, however short, must have been an eternity as everyone stood there looking up at the handwriting. We don’t know if Daniel had any influence with King Belshazzar as he did with Nebuchadnezzar. Judging from the little we’ve seen of him, this doesn’t seem to be the case. If Belshazzar had Daniel in his court, he’d be the first person to be summoned. This means that the king may have dismissed Daniel as an uncomfortable reminder of the past though now regretted it dearly.

The position of “third ruler in the kingdom” could refer to the position Daniel had held for many years and even to the man himself. So if any Babylon diviner could solve the handwriting on the wall, he would take Daniel’s place at once. Regardless of the way in which Belshazzar’s words can be taken, they were a slight to Daniel as well as his three companions.

**Vs. 8: Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation.**

We don’t know how long it took for the summons from King Belshazzar to the messengers and then on to the diviners though fear must have made him act very quickly. Now all eyes were upon the door, greeting the wise men not so much with an applause but a general sigh of relief. In the meanwhile that mysterious handwriting up on the wall was gazing down at everyone in an intimidating manner.

With plenty of shouts and animated gestures people pointed to the handwriting which made the situation very difficult for the wise men and diviners. On top of this they had King Belshazzar to contend with, knowing full well that their lives were on the line. Some time must have passed as the diviners gazed upward and consulted with each other. Finally...and certainly under considerable pressure...they agreed that they could not decipher the writing. They came to this conclusion remembering full well many years ago how King Nebuchadnezzar threatened to literally tear their predecessors limb from limb (cf. 2.5). He didn’t go through with this due to the intercession, if you will, of Daniel. However, Belshazzar was in no position to make any dire threats.

**Vs. 9: Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his color changed; and his lords were perplexed.**

*Behal* is the verb for “alarmed” noted in vs. 6 and used here with the adjective *sagy* or “greatly” noted last in 4.10. So it seems that not only was King Belshazzar terrified when the unknown hand was writing but at the inability of his diviners to give an answer.

*Zev* is the noun for “color” noted last in 4.36 as “splendor” which suggests a certain brightness, here in the sense of being alive. Also Belshazzar had been drinking wine with his nobles, so his face was flushed implying that both the sight of the hand writing and the diviners’ inability was so compelling that it drained the alcohol entirely from his system.

*Shevash* translates as “perplexed,” the only use of this verb in the Bible and akin in meaning to *behal*. And so every person within the banqueting hall was stymied which sets the stage for the introduction or in a sense, the re-introduction of Daniel.

**Vs. 10: The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall; and the queen said, "O king, live for ever! Let not your thoughts alarm you or your color change.**

We don't have any identity as to this queen who, as a footnote in the RSV says, “was the queen mother” which means the wife of former King Nebuchadnezzar. Regardless, she was absent from the orgy and entered the hall when she heard about the commotion that was still taking place. Apparently this woman was acquainted with Daniel, a relationship built up over the years, as evidence by the recommendation she is about to present.

**Vs. 11: There is in your kingdom a man in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans and astrologers,**

This verse gives credence to the RSV's notation about the queen being the mother of King Belshazzar by reason of her knowledge of Daniel. After all, she had to put up with Nebuchadnezzar's descent into madness and worse, when he became a wild beast. The queen gets right to the point in front of the assembled mass of guests and diviners. That is to say, she speaks of Daniel as though Belshazzar hadn't the slightest clue as to his existence. Apparently he was still in an important governmental position though that was of no real concern to the king. He had been doing his job well and quietly all along, so no reason to single him out.

“Spirit of the holy gods” is mentioned last in 4.18 as used by King Nebuchadnezzar himself, something that must have stayed fixed in the queen's memory all those years. Then this *ruach* referred to the Babylonian pantheon, certainly not the God of Israel, although the queen must have been aware of the distinction even if she didn't subscribe to this alien though powerful god.

The queen certainly had a good point at attributing to Nebuchadnezzar “light, understanding and wisdom” or *nehyr* (only biblical reference), *sakltanu* (cf. vss. 12 and 14) and *chakmah* (cf. 2.3). This third characteristic is the most important since it resembles that of the gods. It seems she was attempting to prime Belshazzar for speaking with Daniel. Although he must have heard of him, he never had any dealing with this foreigner now in the Babylonian bureaucracy. We don't have any information whether Daniel was appointed head of the diviners, just that he excelled them all.

Certainly Daniel would not have accepted that position, but perhaps the queen was speaking of the high regard in which he was held and still remained so.

**Vs. 12: because an excellent spirit, knowledge and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve problems were found in this Daniel whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation."**

The queen enumerates six qualities she had seen in Daniel which is rendered as "were found:":

1) "Spirit" or *ruach* (cf. vs. 11) which is "excellent" or *yatyr* found last in 4.26 as "more" but not noted there. It is close to the Hebrew verbal root meaning to be redundant or to be beyond measure.

2) "Knowledge" or *mandah* noted last in 4.34.

3) "Understanding" or *sakltanu* as in the previous verse.

4) "Interpret" or *peshar*, the only use of this verb in the Bible which means to explain as in the noun "interpretation" frequently used throughout the Book of Daniel.

5) "Explain" or *chavah* noted last in 4.2, here with respect to riddles.

6) "Solve" or *shere'* noted last in 3.25 as "loose" and here with respect to "problems" or *qetar* found last in vs. 6 as "limbs.

The queen attempts to refresh the memory of Belshazzar by referring to the Babylonian name of Belteshazzar given by the chief eunuchs shortly after Daniel's capture and introduction into the court of King Nebuchadnezzar. There the name contains one "z" whereas here it has two. Regardless, this name is "after the name of my (Nebuchadnezzar) god" [4.8]

So if Daniel/Belteshazzar was able to help the previous king, he was expected to do the same for Belshazzar. If the circumstances weren't so dramatic and frightful, Belshazzar might not take up the queen's advice. Obviously this was a unique situation, so he was ready to try anything. Besides, he and all his diviners were put on the spot in front of his lords.

**Vs. 13: Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king said to Daniel, "You are that Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom the king my father brought from Judah**

"Brought before" suggests a certain amount of coercion, for being in the banquet hall is the last place Daniel wished to be after the sacred vessels had been defiled. Surely he had been informed of the mysterious hand and the writing and wasn't surprised. All eyes were fixed on this man as well as the queen who had accompanied him.

"That Daniel" intimates some contempt tempered by recognition that Belshazzar was aware of this foreigner's crucial role in having interpreted his father's dream. It seems to be the first contact between the two men even though they must have heard of each other. Daniel, of course, had the upper hand here since he knew in advance the significance of the hand and writing. This time he had a larger audience of some one thousand of Babylon's lords compared to the more limited royal court of King Nebuchadnezzar.

**Vs. 14: I have heard of you that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you.**

“I have heard of you” is in line with the just mentioned “that Daniel” which also was a ploy on Belshazzar's part to say that he was in charge of the situation even though everyone knew it wasn't so. Although the king heard about Daniel both through Nebuchadnezzar, the queen and all those at court, we have no evidence that the two men had ever met. Perhaps Belshazzar was afraid of Daniel, even jealous, and was determined to stay as far away as possible. He would have liked to start a persecution against the Jews living in Babylon but knew Daniel had popular support as well as those in the royal court. So with all these nobles and diviners present as they listened to the king's words with rapt silence, he had no choice but to consent and see what Daniel could do.

The English text has “holy gods” whereas the Hebrew has “Holy God.” Belshazzar couldn't help but be aware of this though he was far from acknowledging it which could be a way of showing independence from his predecessor, King Nebuchadnezzar. Everyone could pick up on this attitude which eventually set the stage for Daniel to step in and save the day.

**Vs. 15: Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation; but they could not show the interpretation of the matter.**

Although Daniel hadn't been present during the startling event in the banquet hall, it wasn't difficult for him to know what was going on. His job would turn out to be easier than having interpreted the dreams of his predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar. Still, he had to allow Belshazzar speak on mostly for the benefit of his Babylonian lords who must have been completely stoned, wishing the hand and the writing were only a part of their alcoholic daze which would vanish once they sobered up.

**Vs. 16: But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold about your neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.**

This is the second time Belshazzar says “I have heard” which barely conceals his sarcasm and willingness insofar as Daniel might help, a kind of last resort. Daniel was aware of this all along but was forced into a situation in which he had no choice. He was thinking of his three companions, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and feared for their safety as well as the exiled Jews throughout Babylon. Even though Daniel knew full well that the handwriting was adverse to Belshazzar, he would proceed regardless. Given the absolute nature of the king's rule, an adverse reading might spell the doom of all the drunken lords present.

**Vs. 17: Then Daniel answered before the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself and give your rewards to another; nevertheless I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation.**

Mention of “before” has some significance, given the situation where the eyes of a thousand Babylonian lords and the diviners were riveted upon Daniel. Despite their drunken stupor, the fear which gripped them had drained the alcohol from their systems. All were in the same condition as their king described so vividly in vs. 6. Although King Belshazzar knew of Daniel's sterling reputation, he felt even more intimidated by his outright rejection of any gifts. Daniel just wanted to get on with the job for which he was summoned and return to normal life. However, he must have had a strong inkling that his life was about to change forever; Belshazzar was a far more wicked person than King Nebuchadnezzar.

And so the easily intimidated Belshazzar gave way to Daniel. After all, he was in the presence of so many officials who wanted to see if this Hebrew...a foreigner...could interpret the handwriting on the wall. Many were familiar with Daniel, having dealt with him and knew of his relationship with the current king's predecessor. For him, no real drama was involved. It was simply a matter of going through the motions of first reading and then interpreting the writing, no more.

**Vs. 18: O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty;**

Daniel launches into an account of his dealings with Belshazzar's predecessor marked by boldness and fearlessness, most of the details being known to everyone present in the banqueting hall. Only a few had a cursory knowledge of the “Most High God,” that is, the God of Israel, whom King Nebuchadnezzar had come to acknowledge. Without proceeding further, all the Babylonian lords realized that the hand and its writing belonged to God, not their own gods “of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone” [vs. 4]. Surely Belshazzar knew this but never admitted it.

**Vs. 19: and because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations and languages trembled and feared before him; whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; whom he would he raised up and whom he would he put down.**

This is the second time at the beginning of his address that Daniel mentions “greatness” or *revu* noted last in 4.24 which could infer a concealed slight concerning Belshazzar. That is to say, he is like his predecessor, but after having degenerated into a beast, Nebuchadnezzar was restored to his kingship because he acknowledged “the Most High” [4.34] God of Israel.

Certainly King Nebuchadnezzar exercised absolute rule as is the case with his successor. Obviously it's up to Belshazzar to repent, if you will, and follow the same example. Because Belshazzar intimated this is where Daniel is going in his speech, he knew the mysterious writing on the wall pertained to him as a king who has not lived up to expectations. However, he had a unique opportunity to rectify all this. Unfortunately that would not prove to be the case: “That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain” [vs. 30].

**Vs. 20: But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him;**

Those assembled in the banqueting hall knew that by speaking in detail about King Nebuchadnezzar Daniel was taking some risks. However, judging by the tone of his words throughout, he has a confidence that is so unshakable that he barely reflects upon it which is why his words come off in a simple, matter-of-fact way yet endowed with a certain authority. Obviously Belshazzar felt the same and had to put up with what seemed to him an indictment that was barely concealed.

Here Daniel speaks of Nebuchadnezzar...actually Belshazzar...as having “dealt proudly” or *zud*, the only use of this verb in the Bible which fundamentally means to boil over as with arrogance and fury. Such an attitude brought about his removal from the throne, the verb being *nechath*, found last in 4.13 but not mentioned there as “came down.” This verb and the others of vs. 20 are passive, as though King Nebuchadnezzar was acted upon and thus against his free will. However, the intent can also be a way of putting some space between Daniel recounting the story and attributing the action to God.

**Vs. 21: he was driven from among men, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild asses; he was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of men and sets over it whom he will.**

This verse continues in the passive mode described above: “was driven, was made like, was fed and was wet.”

*Levav* is the noun for “mind” which often applies to the heart, seat of emotions, noted last in 4.16.

Here Daniel says that King Nebuchadnezzar lived among “wild asses” whereas “beasts of the field” are mentioned” in 4.32. However, “ox” is found in that same verse.

The phrase “dew of heaven” is noted last in 4.33 and as found in Gn 27.28, means a blessing which could indirectly apply to King Nebuchadnezzar, Isaac's blessing of Jacob: “May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine.”

If King Belshazzar were paying close attention to Daniel, he would see an opportunity for redemption after the pattern of his predecessor. However, chances are that he was closed to this...always had been...wanting to strike out on his own. As for Daniel's reference to the Lord setting up whom he wishes in order to rule, Belshazzar knew for sure he wasn't included. Was his fate to be like Nebuchadnezzar or worse? Daniel would reserve that for the actual interpretation...translation...of the words written on the wall.

**Vs. 22: And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this,**

A footnote to the RSV says here: “His father,’ i.e., his predecessor, for three kings ruled between Nebuchadnezzar and Nabonidus.”

At last, Daniel comes out and reveals what is on his mind. It's one thing for Belshazzar not have had humbled himself, *levav* being used which translates generally as “heart” (cf. vs. 21 as 'mind') and another thing for knowing his predecessor's background or more accurately, his failure to act

upon it by imitating his humility. *Shephal* is the verb for “humbled” noted last in 4.17 as “lowliest.” By this time in his address to the king Daniel won over many of the lords in the banqueting hall to an open acknowledgment of Belshazzar’s arrogance.

**Vs. 23: but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven; and the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.**

*Rum* is the verb for “lifted up” noted last in 4.37 as “extol” with regard to God, that is, by King Nebuchadnezzar, the exact opposite of what his successor has been doing, that is, against the “Lord” of heaven, *mare’* (cf. 2.47). As soon as Belshazzar heard this, he realized what he had known right from the beginning, that here was the source of the hand and the writing on the wall.

*Shevach* is the verb for “praised” found last in vs. 4 in the same context of idolatry, the sense of which contrasts with these gods not being able to see, hear or know.

Daniel’s mention of God’s hand can be taken as a play on words, obviously the same hand which had done the writing on the wall of the banqueting hall. Not only does this divine hand write, it contains Belshazzar’s “breath” or *nishma’*, the only use of the term in the Bible. It is related closely to the Hebrew which corresponds to the Greek *psuche* or soul. In addition to this essence of man, if you will, the divine hand contains Belshazzar’s *’archa’* or “ways,” also as a path and has one other reference, 4.37. And so the contrast between him and his supposed father, Nebuchadnezzar, is all the more obvious which is Daniel’s attempt to jog his memory to repentance.

*Hedar* means “honored” found last in 4.34 but not noted there.

Such is the address Daniel made with a calm, straight-forward courage in the presence of King Belshazzar, the huge assembly of Babylonian officials and the diviners. Now he moves on to explain the handwriting on the wall which is what everyone was waiting for.

**Vs. 24: "Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed.**

“Then” is an important word signifying the transition Daniel is now making from King Nebuchadnezzar to Belshazzar, right out in the open before the assembled nobles. There’s a direct correlation between what Daniel has spoken about Nebuchadnezzar and the divine “presence” or *godam*, a preposition meaning before and noted last in 2.27. It does not matter whether the left or right hand has appeared, just that it had done so. Although everyone’s attention was riveted upon the writing, certainly afterwards people must have wondered about the rest of the body. Was it in the banquet hall or outside it? Regardless, the being to whom the hand belonged was a giant even though we don’t have any information as to the size of the hand nor the writing. Chances are it was larger than life so everyone could see it.

*Resham* is the verb for “inscribed” which occurs in the next verse. It occurs six other times in the Book of Daniel.

**Vs. 25: And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL and PARSIN.**

As a footnote to the RSV says, “all three words represent weights, *mene* a mina, *tekel* a shekel and *parsin* two half-minas, but they may also be read as the verbs ‘to number,’ ‘to weigh’ and ‘to divide.’” The same footnote goes on to give some historical background to this weighing, namely, that three kings have succeeded Nebuchadnezzar which seems to support the fact that Belshazzar was not his son.

Note that the first word *mene* is inscribed twice whereas the second two are not. This seems to give emphasis upon the numbering of days left to King Belshazzar which Daniel speaks of next.

**Vs. 26: This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end;**

Certainly Daniel was familiar with the process at hand, *peshar* as “interpretation” having been used with regard to King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream as in 4.18.

Daniel begins now with the first word written on the wall, *mene* which means to be numbered, the noun and verb being used. However, he doesn’t comment on why *mene* is written twice. Perhaps Belshazzar got the hint once he knew the meaning of the word, that is, his days are numbered and probably will end in assassination. The verb *menah* is found last in 3.12 as “appointed.”

Even though God has numbered the days of Belshazzar, Daniel doesn’t say how long they are, leaving the king in suspension (actually is was only a few hours away). It was equally bad news for the assembled nobles and diviners to hear. Belshazzar might suspect any number of them and have them done in on the slightest suspicion.

Daniel then speaks of the end of Belshazzar’s reign, confirming that already it has been determined. Perhaps this end could be his assassination right then and there, the verb being *shelam* (closely related to *shalom*) which has two other biblical references, Ezra 5.16 and 7.19, the former being cited here: “We make known to the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls finished.”

**Vs. 27: TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting;**

*Teqal* (the Chaldean spelling) as weighing can suggest the comparison of Belshazzar with his predecessor, king Nebuchadnezzar. The point is not human sinfulness and depravity but the ability to repent. *Chasyr* is the adjective for “wanting,” the only use of this word in the Bible. Keeping with the image of a balance, if placed in one, Belshazzar would not even register.

**Vs. 28: PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."**

At last the third and final word on the wall, *peres*, which means “divided,” a term freighted with political overtones. The Babylonian nobles were afraid of hearing the first word (twice) and even

more so with this one meaning the division of the kingdom and hence some if not many losing their power.

The words “and given” suggest a betrayal from within the Babylonian kingdom, possibly Belshazzar’s own court.

At least Daniel came out with a threat laying in the future, invasion by the Medes and Persians. Perhaps with some preparation, the Babylonians just might prevail against these two enemies.

All in all, the interpretation of the three words were done quickly and without embellishment so that everyone would get the message.

**Vs. 29: Then Belshazzar commanded, and Daniel was clothed with purple, a chain of gold was put about his neck, and proclamation was made concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.**

“Purple” or *’argvana’* is the only use of this word in the Bible though similar to the Hebrew. Such a color derives from shellfish and is associated with royalty.

*Keraz* means “made proclamation,” the only use of this verb in the Bible.

Despite Daniel’s harsh criticism, Belshazzar nevertheless fulfills his promise made in vs. 16 or as soon as he beheld the hand and the writing on the wall. He must have had mixed motives. Chief among them was having been put on the spot before the Babylonian lords and diviners. That’s why he acted immediately and to Daniel’s chagrin. Daniel, of course, had no recourse but to submit. This sudden elevation must have galled many present, for the king was honoring a foreigner without further discussion on the matter of the handwriting.

**Vs. 30: That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.**

Mention of night suggests that the banquet had begun earlier in the day and not long afterward came the incident of the handwriting. “Was slain” is passive and does not say anything about who carried it out or why. Perhaps some thought it was a conspiracy on Daniel’s part along with his three companions Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego or even broader, that the captive Jews would use this assassination as a pretext to take over the kingdom of Babylon.

**Vs. 31: And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.**

Fortunately for Daniel and those associated with him there was no connection between them and the sudden death of King Belshazzar. No one seemed to mourn him in contrast to King Nebuchadnezzar who was remembered because of his extraordinary fall from power and more importantly, his restoration after having been transformed into a wild beast.

A footnote to the **RSV** says that “no such person as Darius the Mede is known to history. It was Cyrus who overthrew the Neo-Babylonian power. Perhaps it means Gobyras who was about sixty-two.”

Chapter Five ends on a positive note, this new king setting the stage for further drama concerning Daniel who was now “third ruler in the kingdom” [vs. 29]. Obviously he was in a precarious position which he had to manage with extreme care. We have no clue whether or not Daniel was involved with the succession of Darius. Daniel’s later unjust accusation would follow the pattern of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego under King Nebuchadnezzar, that is, a miraculous rescue. Even if Daniel had an inkling of what was to transpire, by this time he was beginning to wonder what would become of his fellow exiled Jews in Babylon. Like their ancestors in Egypt, many have come to adapt to the local culture which posed the threat of forgetting their ancestral customs and religion. Did Daniel see himself as a kind of new Moses or Joseph? Of course, he was familiar with their stories and must have pondered the similarities. The problem was when and if a like opportunity would arise or if not, what to do next, if anything.

As for the handwriting on the banquet hall, people decided to leave it there, fearful of what would happen if they erased it. It stood as a reminder of King Belshazzar's fate and anyone who would act accordingly. Then after more time had passed, people felt they could either plaster over the handwriting or chip it away. Chances are this task fell to the Babylonian diviners.

## Chapter Six

**Vs. 1: It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom a hundred and twenty satraps to be throughout the whole kingdom;**

King Darius appoints a new crop of satraps (mentioned last in 3.27) to staff various governmental positions in order to put Babylon on a new and more secure footing. *Shephar* is the verb for “it pleased” noted last in 4.27 and fundamentally means to be bright or radiant. In the next verse Daniel is mentioned as holding the position of a satrap which means that King Darius had been aware of his outstanding reputation in having dealt with two earlier kings. Darius’ age was sixty-two, a very old man for the day, so both he and the newly appointed satraps knew time was short to effect meaningful reform. Judging from what these new appointees were to do, one wonders about Darius' judgment in choosing them.

The preposition *b-* is used for “throughout” and more generally means “in.”

**Vs. 2: and over them three presidents, of whom Daniel was one to whom these satraps should give account so that the king might suffer no loss.**

*Sarkyn* is the noun for “presidents” which occurs four other times in the Book of Daniel, and the prophet himself was appointed as one of these three, the other two not being mentioned. Presumably these two presidents were former officials...native Babylonians...who knew each other well and could work together along with Daniel. In a sense Darius’ appointment of Daniel as one of these three presidents fulfills the prophecy, using that term loosely, of King Belshazzar when he placed him as “third ruler in the kingdom” [5.39].

*Taham* is the noun for “account” which has four other biblical references, all in Ezra, as in 5.5: “and they did not stop them until a report should reach Darius.” It is similar to *tehem* (‘decree’) as in 4.6.

*Nezaq* is the verb for “suffer no loss” and has three other biblical references, all in Ezra, the first being 4.13: “and the royal revenue will be impaired.”

Judging from these first two verses Darius seems to be a far better king than his predecessors, perhaps by reason of coming on the scene as a mature, even elderly, statesman. The ultimate question in Daniel’s mind, however, is whether this ruler or anyone like him will allow the exiled Jews to return home.

**Vs. 3: Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other presidents and satraps because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.**

*Netsach* is the verb for “distinguished,” the only one in the Bible which is similar to the Hebrew meaning to be over and from which is derived the noun “glory.” It results from that “spirit” which is “excellent” or *yatyr*, both words being found in 5.12. That is to say, the *ruach* within Daniel was inspired by God and recognized by the queen who mentioned it to King Belshazzar. It was present from his introduction into the court of King Nebuchadnezzar where Daniel had excelled among his peers, Jewish, Babylonian and foreign.

It was obvious from the outset of his reign that King Darius would tap Daniel for some governmental position. He was wise enough not to set him among the Babylonian diviners which he wouldn’t accept anyway, thereby avoiding an unnecessary ruckus. *Hashith* is the verb for “planned,” the only term in the Bible akin to the Hebrew which means to shine. Given the prudent nature of Darius, he must have consulted widely among members of his new court as well as other Babylonian officials. Those who had been present in the banquet hall to see the hand writing on the wall would testify on his behalf though Daniel’s elevation (yet again, the third time, three kings) roused suspicions and caused jealousy which soon would break out into the open.

**Vs. 4: Then the presidents and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom; but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him.**

The importance of the small word “then” (*edayin*) was noted in 4.24 as signifying the transition from one state of affairs to another, especially when it has significant consequences. As soon as King Darius ascended the throne he made a complete change in the governance of the kingdom, appointing new satraps and three men to serve as presidents over them, Daniel being among them. The precise reason for the collective hostility from these new appointees isn’t given, but judging from earlier examples, jealousy towards Daniel’s outstanding gifts and personality were at the root of it. Of course, they would never admit this and play out their jealousy in ways that would advance their own careers. Then again, one can’t help but wonder about Darius’ ability to pick worthy men.

*Hilah* means “ground” and has two other references, again in this verse and the next, and is related to the Hebrew root meaning to go up or to cause to go up. It is used with the participle *shechath* (‘complaint’) which occurs two other times (twice in the verse at hand), the other being 2.9 as “corrupt.” The time gap between Darius’ new appointments and this back-stabbing among the new leaders seems minimal for now, but it had been brewing for some time with jealousy as the motive. If these men could eliminate Daniel and preclude Darius from appointing a new man, they could consolidate their power after which they could overthrow Darius himself.

*Shalu* is a noun which means “fault” found last in 3.29 though not translated as such but as “against” (the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego”).

Not only was Daniel “faithful” or *‘aman* (cf. 2.45) in this new situation but had been from the very day he set foot in the Babylonian court of King Nebuchadnezzar. So all the attempts to slander Daniel made these appointees and their supporters look foolish even if they succeeded (or thought they had succeeded) in bringing about his demise.

**Vs. 5: Then these men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God."**

The previous verse describes the new leaders meeting to conspire against Daniel whereas here we have it in their own words. Obviously they met in secret so as not to rouse suspicion, especially from King Darius. They admitted Daniel was flawless in fulfilling his current duties and had no skeletons in his closet. And so they had to dig deeper by capitalizing on his foreign-ness which to them meant his religion. When they brought up this subject they must have been aware that it is central to his life and powerful enough to get King Nebuchadnezzar to acknowledge the God of Israel.

The conspirators knew they had to narrow down their options considerably and thus turned to the Jewish “law” or *dath* in order to trip up Daniel. This word is noted last in 2.13 as “decree.” Because they were unfamiliar with the Torah, they consulted some Jews knowledgeable in the matter which amounted to treasonous behavior if these countrymen of Daniel were discovered. The conspirators may have threatened or bribed scholars of the Torah to extort any pertinent information.

**Vs. 6: Then these presidents and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever!"**

Anything done between what transpired in the last verse and the present one had been done in total secrecy. Once these officials had agreed upon a sure-fire strategy, it was time to approach King Darius. They did this “by agreement” or *regash*, a verb which has two other references, vss. 11 and 15. Interestingly, it means to be in a tumult which aptly describes the conspirators both among themselves and in the presence of the king. Although they greeted him with the usual “Live forever,” this wise elderly man could see right through them. He had no other choice but to receive them due to their high position in the government.

**Vs. 7: All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an interdict, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.**

Yet another mention of these conspirators is a bit unsettling insofar they seemed to have nullified any support for Daniel. A few Babylonian officials might be so inclined, but had been intimidated into silence and compliance. One can't but help wonder how so many came up with such a plot against Daniel, that he was hated so roundly by all these men. Surely Daniel had gotten wind of this conspiracy, given its broad scope, and was braced for the consequences.

*Yehat* is the verb for "are agreed" and has two other biblical references used as participles, Ezra 7.14 and 15, the former being cited here: "For you are sent by the king and his seven counselors to make inquires about Judah and Jerusalem." Their proposal essentially was to elevate King Darius as a god for one month which seemed to have a twofold purpose: to get into good graces with the new king and once that had been accomplished, go after Daniel where they felt he was the most vulnerable. This was his religious observance centered upon the sovereignty of the one God compared with the bewildering Babylonian pantheon. In fact, Daniel had acquitted himself very well over the years not having given into this polytheism, no mean feat after living so long as an exile in a foreign land.

The proposal brought to King Darius consisted of both an "ordinance" and an "interdict." The first is *qeyam* which derives from the verbal root *qum* meaning to arise and has one other reference in vs. 15. Actually *qum* is the verb for "establish" noted last in 4.17. The second is *'esar* which has five other references, all in Chapter Six, and fundamentally means that which is bound fast. It is used with the verb *teqeph* ('enforce') as in 4.22 but not noted there and translates as "become strong."

So the specific issue brought forth to King Darius is making a "petition" or the verb *behah* (noted last in 2.18) not to any of the Babylonian gods but only to King Darius. The penalty not to follow through with this is death which the officials decided upon as being eaten alive by lions. The noun *gov* means "den" which is similar to Hebrew and can refer to a cistern, hence something dug in the ground compared to a room on level ground.

**Vs. 8: Now, O king, establish the interdict and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed according to the law of the Medes and the Persians which cannot be revoked."**

The "interdict" or *'esar* is unbending simply because the entire governing body of Babylon has proposed it which can override any royal authority. The conspirators approach King Darius with a confident boldness knowing that he doesn't suspect what they're up to. So when they all assembled he was hit with something unexpected which ran against his deepest wishes.

Although the officials appeal to the "law" of the Medes and Persians (*dath* noted in vs. 5 as it pertains to the Jews), they do so in a lame fashion. All this is transpiring under the guise of normal business because all the rulers are present at the court of King Darius. They had no doubt he would comply to putting their demand into law as one which cannot "be revoked" or *hadah*. This verb is found last in 4.31 as "has departed."

**Vs. 9: Therefore King Darius signed the document and interdict.**

Here the interdict is also called a “document” or *ketav* which literally means writing as found in 5.7, the handwriting on the wall.

Any direct response by King Darius to this underhanded proposal isn't recorded, but later in vs. 14 we have: “the king...was much distressed.” He had been forced into passing a decree valid for thirty days time during which everyone of his subjects had to worship him as a god, a distasteful prospect for such a wise man. And so these thirty days must have been the longest in his life. Still, King Darius had to put up with it as gracefully as he could in order not to upset the order of things. Once this had been enacted, the officials rushed from the royal court to pass on the decree to couriers who ran as quickly as they could to all corners of the Babylonian empire. The common people didn't receive it as unusual...just another quarrel among leaders they never saw...and would comply if and when necessary because they were more focused upon going about their daily lives.

**Vs. 10: When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem; and he got down upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God as he had done previously.**

Word about this draconian measure reached Daniel immediately which could have come via a messenger from Darius himself. Darius may have wanted to see Daniel himself but felt it was more discreet to act indirectly.

*Resham* is the verb for “signed” noted last in 5.24, the handwriting on the wall. So for such a document to have the king's signature and seal meant the decree could not be revoked.

Daniel did the only thing he could: go home and pray, the verb being *tsela'* which has one other biblical reference, Ezra 6.10: “and pray for the life of the king and his sons.” The idea behind *tsela'* is being prone or in a declining position, certainly indicative of Daniel's mind and heart at the moment. However, he did not give into despair and he “gave thanks” or *yeda'* which has one other reference, 2.23. As noted there, this verb is similar to the Hebrew *yadah* which also means to profess or to confess and fundamentally as to throw or to cast. The words “as he had done previously” are important because they reveal that Daniel did not break his routine of prayer “toward” Jerusalem, the preposition being *neged* which suggests being before Jerusalem as though it were right outside his window.

**Vs. 11: Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God.**

*Regash* is the verb for “came by agreement” noted last in vs. 6, that is to say, they had made an appointment with Daniel who, after all, was still in his position of authority appointed by King Darius. Most likely not all the presidents and satraps (cf. vs. 3) came but a delegation of select officials who knew Daniel and felt as though they could intimidate him. It was well known that Daniel prayed three times a day, so it was easy for these men to break in upon him at these known times, that is, in that upper chamber noted in the last verse. If there were any servants or the like

present, they were brushed aside at once. Daniel heard the commotion downstairs and knew that what he had feared all along was about to happen.

“Making prayer and supplication” or *behah* (cf. vs. 7) and *chanan* (cf. 4.27 as 'showing mercy' reveal Daniel at his strongest and at the same time at his most vulnerable. Although he heard the men hurrying up the stairs, he continued with his prayer, Jerusalem being so close yet so far away. The preposition for “before” is *qodem* and similar to *neged* of vs. 10 which signifies more in the presence of. The sight of Daniel at prayer doesn't seem to have moved them because they were fully intent on carrying out their deadly mission. Because the decree they squeezed from King Darius was to worship him for a period of thirty days, technically Daniel was in violation of it. Just seeing Daniel at prayer was enough. No words were necessary, and the men departed as quickly as they had come. Nothing is said here about arresting Daniel. They figured it wasn't necessary, knowing his uprightness would preclude any show of force.

**Vs. 12: Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the interdict, "O king! Did you not sign an interdict, that any man who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked."**

Without missing a beat, the conspirators left Daniel's residence and hastened to King Darius, confident they had achieved their goal. All that was required was to carry out the unjustly obtained sentence. The verb *qerev* is noted last in 3.8 and suggests that the delegation had done some quick planning in order to present their case to the king. They did so with an air of reverence in order to keep up appearances as well as to show they were sincere in following Mede and Persian law. *Qerev* is used with the preposition *qodem* found in the previous verse. As soon as these men entered his presence, Darius could tell from their expression and general demeanor that at last they succeeded in their plan, and he could do nothing except comply. Certainly Darius must have regretted that he allowed himself to be gotten into a situation from which he couldn't back out.

**Vs. 13: Then they answered before the king, "That Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no heed to you, O king, or the interdict you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day."**

Another use of the preposition *qodem* or “before” the king which here shows the feigned obeisance of the conspirators in their eagerness to have Daniel put to death by royal decree. They bring up a sore spot, if you will, Daniel being an “exile” or *galoth*, the same term as in 5.13 when he was brought in before King Belshazzar to interpret the hand writing on the wall. No matter how intelligent and spiritual Daniel may be, he remains a *galoth* in the obvious pejorative sense.

The words “pays no heed” is rendered literally as “does not place on you.” Privately King Darius doesn't care whether or not Daniel prays to his God, let alone three times a day, but he was put on the spot. If he didn't comply, the assembled mass of Babylonian officials would seek to overthrow him and put one of their own on the throne.

**Vs. 14: Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel; and he labored till the sun went down to rescue him.**

Here King Darius reveals his true love for Daniel, being aware of what he had done under the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar and what he might do for him now. *Be'esh* translates as "was distressed, the only use of this verb in the Bible which is quite vivid in that it means to stink. In other words, Darius smelled the terrible odor of his officials' conspiracy which revolted him, something he picked up from the day they came into office. This distress was compounded by the fact that he had been duped, if you will, to having appointed such wicked men to high public office.

"Set his mind" reads literally as "placed his heart" or *bal*, the only use of this term. Chances are the conspirators could see this in Darius' face and knew that they would have to deal with him once their plan of executing Daniel had been accomplished. After all, Darius was sixty-two and hadn't much longer to live.

*Shezav* is the verb for "deliver" found last in 3.28. The text here has "till the sun went down" meaning Darius had a very short period of time. The conspirators knew this which is why they set up their meeting with him late in the day. In the meanwhile, Daniel remained at home praying even more intensely, perhaps in the company of his three friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They were rescued from the fiery furnace through the intercession of the mysterious fourth "son of the gods" [4.25]. Surely they discussed that event, hoping the same heavenly being would come to Daniel's rescue.

**Vs. 15: Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no interdict or ordinance which the king establishes can be changed."**

This is the second use of the verb *regash* for "came by agreement," the previous reference in vs. 11. It seems the author of the book enjoys using this to describe these conspirators, a hint that eventually they will be caught and punished.

Darius, of course, knew all about the law proper to both Medes and Persians. Anything promulgated in accord with them could not be altered, even by royal decree. Since the conspirators approached the king as one man...the sense of *regesh*...he could see through them clearly, hoping the discord they keep hidden beneath a veneer of authority would implicate them.

**Vs. 16: Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king said to Daniel, "May your God whom you serve continually, deliver you!"**

*'Amar* is the verb for "commanded" noted last in 4.26 and usually translates as to say or to tell. Any word uttered by the king of Babylon is as though this word were the king himself.

The den of lions must have been located in a nearby prison, a favorite way of disposing prisoners. Before Daniel was taken away, he had a brief but poignant encounter with King Darius who loudly acknowledges the God of Israel before the conspirators as a means of belittling them. Although Daniel knew Darius' predicament, he must have thought him a coward in some way.

*Pelach* means “serve” noted last in 3.17 in the case of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego before being tossed into the fiery furnace, a situation parallel to Daniel's. They knew, of course, about their mutual friend's demise but could not be present else they would suffer the same fate. All three wouldn't mind, of course, but they had to think of the people under their watch, especially their fellow Jews in exile. Certainly they prayed to God that he may send as a deliverer that mysterious person who was “like as son of the gods” [3.25]. Because Daniel held a high public position and was well known for the interpretations of dreams of two Babylonian kings, his being tossed into the lions' den was done secretly else the people would have revolted.

Not only did King Darius, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego pray for Daniel's deliverance, quite a few others did the same, that is, those who got wind of the conspiracy and disliked the new satraps. *Shezav* is the verb here as in vs. 14 above.

**Vs. 17: And a stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.**

Surely King Darius thought of his predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar standing before the fiery furnace and was hoping for a similar miraculous deliverance. Darius and Daniel didn't have any verbal exchange because the conspirators were lurking nearby to make sure Darius fulfilled his obligation. Perhaps this den or hole in the prison floor had permanent bars and a gate. The stone was used...perhaps at the insistence of King Darius himself...to block out any sounds of the lions eating Daniel alive.

*Chatam* is the verb for “sealed, the only use of this verb in the Bible though similar to the Hebrew. A “signet” or *hizqa*’ is used for the purpose. although King Darius would like to use his ring alone, the lords or conspirators insisted on putting their own seal to the rock and did so with great delight, a way of taunting Darius. Both parties didn't exchange a word as they made their way separately up the stairs. Perhaps the conspirators waited around after Darius left to hear any screams which they did not. That could have puzzled them for a brief moment, but they were confident that the lions were doing their job.

**Vs. 18: Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.**

King Darius knew he couldn't sleep that night so decided to spend it in “fasting” or *tevath*, the only use of this adverb in the Bible but similar to the Hebrew *tavah* meaning to suffer hunger. Mention of “diversions” or *dachavan* (again, the only use of this term) can be interpreted as musical instruments but also can refer to concubines.

*Nedad* (only use of this verb) means “fled” is similar to the Hebrew meaning to move, to wander about. Vividly it describes the condition of Darius as he was left alone while the conspirators spent the night celebrating...getting drunk...because of the coup they had just effected. Now the stage is set to surprise both the king and these men.

**Vs. 19: Then at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions.**

After the longest night in his life, King Darius rose at first light, making his way by torchlight into the depths of the dungeon and further down to the lions' den. He went alone, not wanting to be bothered, and to gather up any remains of Daniel for proper burial. After that, he would give orders to dispatch the lions. Consider, for example, the parallel between this verse and Mary Magdalene coming to the tomb of Jesus, more or less on a similar mission, and finding it empty. *'Aza'* is the verb for "went in haste" found last in 2.24 but not noted there. The Hebrew is similar, connoting the idea of spinning or rolling, and can be applied to Darius' making as much haste as humanly possible. Earlier the guards could see the anguish on his face, knowing that he would return as quickly as possible and without the conspirators there to taunt him.

**Vs. 20: When he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish and said to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you serve continually been able to deliver you from the lions?"**

King Darius made haste in the predawn darkness to the prison which was dark no matter the time of day. The verb *qerev* ('came near') describes this hesitancy as he slowed down in anticipation of what he would find. He knew that the lions had been starved deliberately when some one was about to be cast in their den. The same sense of slowing down, of *qerev*, is intimated in vs. 12 when the conspirators approached Darius.

Now as he stood before the rock at the den King Darius asked to be left alone by any guards or attendants so that he could cry out or *zehaq*, the only use of the verb similar to the Hebrew, the sound itself conveying distress. "Tone of anguish" is rendered literally as "in a lamentable voice," the adjective being a participle (only use of this word) which like the Hebrew, connotes pain and grief.

Darius expected, of course, to see just skeletal remains yet nevertheless addresses Daniel as though he were alive and well right beneath the huge rock. How very much he would want Daniel to respond. Compare Darius present there like King Nebuchadnezzar before the fiery furnace to gaze upon the three men he had cast in. While Nebuchadnezzar gave the order, he must have had an underlying sympathy for the three but never could express it.

"Living God" reveals that Darius subscribed to this divinity and was attracted to worship him but couldn't, given his position as absolute ruler over a society with a multitude of gods. However, shortly he would openly declare his allegiance to the Lord by a formal decree.

*Tedyra'* is an adverb for "continually (only use) which suggests a circuit or perpetuity. The king knew full well that Daniel was faithful to his God which was evident since he had been taken captive and served in the royal court.

*Shezav* is the verb for "deliver" noted last in vs. 16.

**Vs. 21: Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live for ever!"**

This brief sentence, more words of jubilation, prefaces what Daniel is about to say to Darius in the next verse, but first he wanted to let the king know that he was alive. The words "live for ever" are typical when people address a Babylonian king as had been the case with Nebuchadnezzar and

Belshazzar. However, both the spirit in which Daniel uttered them and the way in which Darius received them caused an immense thrill despite the huge rock separating them. Actually Darius wished to say to Daniel “live for ever” as well but was too overcome with shock and joy to express this.

Immediately thoughts of taking vengeance upon the conspirators flooded Darius' mind. At the same time he was filled with some regret for having appointed these conspirators and to some extent being responsible for their actions.

**Vs. 22: My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no wrong."**

As soon as Daniel uttered “My God” it must have resounded deeply within King Darius on the other side of the rock and contained in essence everything he wanted to hear. Daniel attributes his safety to God's *mali'ak* ('angel'), found last in 3.28 where King Nebuchadnezzar used this term with regard to the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. There the angel seems to be identified with that fourth man who had been present in the furnace and most likely is the same divine accompanying Daniel though we have no express mention of it. So while Daniel had spent the night in the den, he was engaged in a conversation with this angel while the lions did nothing but look on. Daniel had been concerned less about being restored to favor and taking vengeance on the conspirators who landed him in the den than the ultimate fate of the Israelites scattered throughout the Babylonian kingdom. King Nebuchadnezzar turned out to be favorable to them, but after his death we have no record as to what his successors had felt or had done. While it seems Darius would be equally favorable, his satraps may have had other ideas. Despite this and the more the Book of Daniel advances, a fate larger than Israel and Babylon begins to emerge. That theme, the real focus of the conversation in the den, will become clearer as the text develops.

As soon as Daniel had been cast into the den, the angel shut the mouths of the lions first so as not to eat him and second, that they remain quiet throughout the night in order for the two to speak with each other. The lions were prevented from hurting Daniel, *chaval* being similar to the Hebrew verb which means to tighten, to twist or to spoil. It has one other reference, Ezra 4.22: “Why should damage grow to the hurt of the king?” The noun *chaval* as “wrong” derives from this. To King Darius, Daniel didn't have to speak like this since he knew all along of his innocence.

Daniel says with all simplicity that he was found “blameless” before God, *zaku* (the only reference in the Bible) similar to the Hebrew which connotes purity effected by cleansing. And so the conspiracy initiated by the Babylonian presidents and satraps (cf. vs. 3) made this clearer although Daniel had been blameless right from the beginning, even before his captivity. However, before being taken captive we have no information since Daniel was very young.

**Vs. 23: Then the king was exceedingly glad and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of hurt was found upon him because he had trusted in his God.**

Here “glad” is the adjective *tov* (cf. 1.4 as 'handsome') with the adjective *sagy'* noted last in 5.9, almost an understatement, given King Darius' fondness for Daniel. The idea of taking Daniel “up out of” the den intimates that it was, as noted above, a kind of cistern, not a walk-in type of jail.

*Chaval* is the noun for “hurt” as in the last verse, “wrong.” This is an apt observation, for it involves more than not having been eaten alive by the lions but Daniel's release from the grip of the conspirators who had put him in the den. The preposition *b-* means “upon” which more usually applies to “in.”

The verb *'aman* means “trusted” noted last in vs. 4. Here as in the previous verse the words “was found” are used, that is, the passive, suggesting that Daniel had undergone a period of testing which is acknowledged both by people (as with King Darius) and the Lord.

**Vs. 24: And the king commanded, and those men who had accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children and their wives; and before they reached the bottom of the den the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.**

This verse begins with the conjunctive *w-* or “and” which, despite its apparent insignificance, serves to reveal the heart and mind of King Darius, the immediacy with which he acted to gather the conspirators and to bring them to justice. He had been waiting for this moment from the day they had brought false charges against Daniel, so here was his chance.

Darius struck with a vengeance that must have surprised Daniel. Not only did he arrest the conspirators but their families, sparing not even their children. *Qerats* is the verb for “accused” noted last in 3.8 which literally means pieces of food, an apt description for the situation at hand.

Even the lions...we don't know how many were in the den...mirror Darius' desire to do away with the conspirators and their families when they “overpowered” them, *shelet* being found last in 2.28 as “rules.” The idea is that the lions had rule or command of all these people even before hitting the ground which most likely turned out to be more merciful and quicker death.

**Vs. 25: Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied to you.**

The proclamation Darius issues continues through vs. 27, that is, scribes wrote it down and gave copies to couriers who then sped to every nook and cranny of the Babylonian empire. Once it had reached a given town, someone like a crier hastily assembled the people and read it aloud. Because an event like this was relatively rare as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar's decree to worship the golden image (cf. 3.4), everyone rushed to gather around the crier to hear what he had to say. Being a representative of the king, he held special authority for the time he spoke which means that the people were in the presence of King Darius himself. Nebuchadnezzar sent out a similar decree with the greetings of “peace” (*shelam*) as in 4.1.

The conspirators had attempted to execute Daniel secretly, but word leaked out right away because Daniel held a high governmental position and would be missed almost immediately. Apparently King Darius made no mention of the conspiracy which he took as instrumental of a divine plan. Besides, it wouldn't help to make such an event known to the public.

*Sga'* is the verb for “multiplied” which has one other references in Daniel (4.1) plus Ezra 4.22: “why should damage grow to the hurt of the king?” Even if people knew that Daniel was a foreigner, they appreciated his manner of governing, even more so under a benign ruler as King Darius. And so Darius' words had a unifying effect throughout the Babylonian empire, something that was very important to him as well as to any foreigner who might be considering an invasion.

**Vs. 26: I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring for ever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end.**

The opening words read literally as “I place before me a decree,” the noun being *tehem* as in 4.6. So when a king as Darius speaks like this, he is creating a kind of mirror image of himself—his royal authority—which will be present among the people as though he were there physically, that is, in his “dominion” or *shaltan* (cf. 4.34).

“Tremble and fear” or *zohah* (cf. 5.19 but not mentioned there) and *dechal* (cf. 4.5) with respect to Daniel’s God who endures forever, *qum* being the verb noted last in 6.7 and fundamentally means to arise or to establish.

Although Darius is king of the mightiest empire on earth, he is not afraid to acknowledge God’s “kingdom” or *malku* (cf. 2.44) as well as his “dominion” (*shaltan*). Use of the term “end” or *suph* (cf. 4.11) is significant insofar as it intimates the “end of days,” the very last verse of this book where the term is *qets* which connotes an extremity and pertains to the completion of prophecy.

**Vs. 27: He delivers and rescues, he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions."**

Now King Darius concludes his proclamation which is both threatening and comforting. He speaks of Daniel’s God as active in delivering and rescuing, *shezav* (cf. vs. 20) and *netsal* (cf. 3.29).

“Signs and wonders” or *ath* and *temah* which are both found together in 4.2 with respect to the person of King Nebuchadnezzar. We have no information as to these events which suggests that Darius had insight into a connection between heaven and earth in the indefinite future. Perhaps he had gotten this from conversations with Daniel and wished to make it public with a view of preparing his subjects. although Darius came on the scene late in life, he was more aware of the nearness of death and therefore more open to Daniel's words.

Darius concludes by referring to Daniel being saved (*shezav*) from the lions’ “power” or literally, “hand.” It seems that if people were to examine the life and travails of Daniel...always he was in the public eye...they would gain insight into future events, albeit vaguely.

**Vs. 28: So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.**

Chapter Six concludes with two small but significant words. First, the conjunctive *w-* (‘so’) noted last in vs. 24 which conveys a sense of completion with regard to this dramatic episode in Daniel’s life. The second word is “this” applied to Daniel. It seems to be a way that the story of his deeds

thus far have reached a conclusion but not a final one. Daniel will have more to say in the second half of the book.

*Tsaleach* is noted last in 3.30 as “promoted” in reference to King Nebuchadnezzar concerning Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego after their escape from the fiery furnace. Although it’s comforting to know that Daniel continues to prosper throughout two reigns, he is bothered by the nagging question about Israel and whether or not he will return there. Like his predecessor Nebuchadnezzar, Darius acknowledges the authority of the God of Daniel within the kingdom of Babylon. We don’t know how well that had been received by the various peoples within the empire who worshiped a multitude of gods, but as we move further in the book, this becomes less an issue than Daniel’s visions not just for Babylon but for all human history.

## Chapter Seven

**Vs. 1: In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter.**

This chapter lies at the heart of the entire book because, as a footnote to the RSV says, “It makes way for the kingdom of God.” However, mention of King Belshazzar may catch the reader by surprise since it speaks of the reigning monarch who had been present in the banqueting hall and saw the hand and the writing on the wall which Daniel had interpreted. In other words, we just dealt with King Darius and the conspirators who sought unsuccessfully to toss Daniel to the lions. It is almost as though Chapter Six is an interlude...albeit an important one...not quite central to the divine visions to come. If Daniel's ordeal hadn't been recounted, chances are what flows now throughout the second half of the book would not make as much sense.

The first year of Belshazzar's reign hearkens back to the beginning of Chapter Five when he became ruler after Nebuchadnezzar. That king had fallen into the condition of a beast yet repented and therefore returned to the throne, having had dealings with Daniel in a dream that troubled him. That means someone had been ruling Babylon in his absence though we have no information about it. The royal court was privy to Nebuchadnezzar’s plight, knowing that his descent to an animal of the field as temporary. With this in mind, wisely they set up an interim government where Daniel must have held a position even more important than the one he held already. All these high ranking officials must have devised a plan or explanation as to the absence of Nebuchadnezzar...illness or the like...or maybe not since such a ruler was an absolute despot who appeared in public more or less rarely.

It came as no surprise to Daniel that he experienced a “dream and visions” which were of a wholly different order, more universal in scope, though his dealings with King Nebuchadnezzar certainly paved the way. The words “dream and visions” do apply to the former king, *chelem* and *chezev*, found in 4.5. In the verse at hand they are explicitly mentioned as in Daniel's head suggesting that not only did they come at night but informed his actions throughout the day while he went about fulfilling the duties of his high office. Yet in comparison to King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel wasn't alarmed (cf. 4.5), taking them in a matter-of-fact way and not allowing the dream and visions to interfere with the rest of his life.

Upon waking—and it must have been very early in the morning—Daniel wrote down the dream. Nothing is said about the visions though he uses this word (in the singular) in the next verse. And so the singular dream contained a plurality of visions. By writing down his experience of the previous night, Daniel was able to get it out of him and objectify it for future reference. He must have had a trusted scribe at hand for such a personal matter. Surely Daniel kept this document secret though he shared it with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego later in the day. Eventually the dream would be made known to a much wider audience. This may account for his having told “the sum of the matter.” The first word is *re’sh* which also translates in this verse as “head.” So we could say that Daniel wrote down the *re’sh* which was in his *re’sh*. *Milah* is the noun for “matter” noted last in 4.31 as “words.” Thus what Daniel had experienced the previous night was a word communicated through a dream and visions or to put it in another way, something that had been spoken and became manifest visually.

As for Daniel’s vision, compare it with St. John who “was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day” [Rev 1.10].

**Vs. 2: Daniel said, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.**

“Daniel said” can refer to the just mentioned three friends or a play-back of what his scribe had written down. It has the air of issuing a decree which would turn out to be more important than one from the mouth of any Babylonian monarch. This phrase introduces an account of his vision which goes through vs. 22 after which vs. 23 begins with “he said.” The whole matter or *milah* of the previous verse is summed up in the concluding verse (28), “Here is the end of the *milah*.” The verb *hanah* (cf. 3.14) is used for “said” which fundamentally means to answer. So this speaking aloud, if you will, which Daniel also wrote down, is a kind of response...and answering...to God who gave him the dream and visions.

“Vision” or *chezev* is singular compared with the previous verse where it’s plural. This noun is derived from the same verbal root as “saw,” *chazah* (cf. 4.13). Such seeing occurs at night or in the darkness and only occurs then, not during the day. “By night” is rendered literally as “in night,” the preposition *b-* being used.

*’Aru* or “behold” is found four other times, all in Chapter Seven, the next occurrence being vs. 5. It applies to seeing, of having one’s attention directed to an object or event that stands out. Here *’aru* serves to introduce the vision Daniel has begun to say or *hanah*.

*Ruach* is the noun for “winds” noted last as its alternate meaning of “spirit” and here is associated with the four corners of the earth, that is, the four cardinal directions of north, south, east and west. All these winds resided in their respective areas until summoned to stir up the great (Mediterranean) sea. *Gyach* is the verb, the only use in the Bible though related closely to the Hebrew meaning to break forth. Thus the four winds...spirits...are to come from the earth’s bounds and converge upon the sea in order to cause a violent storm causing damage to the seacoasts. This terrifying image serves to introduce the four beasts which will dominate the rest of Chapter Seven.

**Vs. 3: And four great beasts came up out of the sea different from one another.**

Compare the four winds...spirits...of vs. 3 with the four great "beasts" or *chayvah* found last in 5,21 but not noted there. They are representative of the four kingdoms which King Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream (cf. 2.31-45). Sticking with the image of four beasts, we could say that they had laid dormant for aeons and unknown to mankind though stories circulated about them inhabiting the ocean's depths. Perhaps each of the four was associated with the winds. Until now they had been inactive or harmless, but once summoned, would prove to be a formidable force to be reckoned with.

The difference between each is noted here but will be spelled out shortly. The two from the north and south may share a certain similarity due to their proximity to the poles. On the other hand, the one from the east and the other from the west were on the same latitude and hence would have their own similarity. And so the four formed two pairs according to their respective locations, north and south, east and west. This doesn't seem to bear upon what will follow but is based solely on the fact of geographical longitude and latitude, nothing more.

**Vs. 4: The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand upon two feet like a man; and the mind of a man was given to it.**

At a later time or when Daniel is rescued from the lions' den under the rule of King Darius, he could have recalled this particular beast with mixed emotions. The Lord had shut up their mouths which means that Daniel felt secure in recounting this particular part of his dream which can apply to the other three beasts.

The first beast or lion to make its appearance has the wings of an "eagle" or *neshar* which is mentioned in 4.31 but not noted there in reference to King Nebuchadnezzar when he was living as a wild beast. The image at hand, however, combines two of the most fearsome animals of land and air. Even this did not suffice to protect against another foe which is not mentioned but intimated as the God of Israel. Four verbs are in the passive which point to this foe: were plucked, was lifted up, made to stand and was given.

Once this lion-eagle was made to stand upright as a man, a human "mind" was given it, *levav* as noted last in 5.22 and often translated as heart. Nothing further is said of this beast, let alone what it was set out to accomplish or more accurately, destroy.

**Vs. 5: And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side; it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.'**

Daniel uses the exclamation *'aru* again (cf. vs. 2) as he will with the remaining two beasts in order to draw attention to the situation at hand. He calls it "another beast, a second one," which sounds redundant but needs to be seen in the context of this vision. Daniel wants to be certain he sees clearly so as to distinguish the bear from the lion.

The presence of three ribs between its teeth seem to belong to in between the upper and lower teeth, filling the space of the tongue making this mouth as one big eating machine. This bear was given a command, that is, another use of the passive voice noted in the previous verse. However,

the lion had not been ordered to do anything which is unusual since it is more natural to attack and eat “much flesh” compared with a bear.

**Vs. 6: After this I looked, and lo, another like a leopard with four wings of a bird on its back; and the beast had four heads; and dominion was given to it.**

“After this” can suggest the fairly rapid appearance of a leopard with *'aru* ('lo') and the verb “looked” (*chazah*, cf. vs. 2) whereas any verb of seeing is not found concerning the vision of a bear. The leopard is not unlike the first beast (the lion) insofar it is a feline but swifter. This is borne out by having four wings. Perhaps these four wings (and heads) correspond to the “four winds of heaven” of vs. 2, that the leopard is keenly aware of their source which is north, south, east and west.

*Shaltan* or “dominion” is noted last in 6.26 with regard to the Lord. Although the *shaltan* at hand isn't spelled out, the leopard's power may be said to rival that of God.

**Vs. 7: After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.**

Yet another use of the verb *chazah* ('saw') as in the last verse though it is not found with the previous three beasts of Daniel's vision. The phrase “night visions (*chezev*)” occurs next in vs. 13 and is similar to “my vision by night” of vs. 2. Again as in the previous verse *'aru* ('behold') serves to draw attention to the situation at hand though not used with regard to the first animal, the lion.

This fourth and final beast (*chayvah*, cf. vs. 3)—more fearful than the three just mentioned—isn't identified, leaving the rest to one's imagination, . Daniel calls it “terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong:” *dechal* (cf. 6.26), *'eymtan* (only use of this term in the Bible) and *taqyph* (mentioned last in 4.3 but not noted).

Surely this beast with its iron teeth was far stronger than the lion, bear and leopard, apparently with huge feet as well, implying that despite its ferocity, it was somewhat slow and lumbering. The chief difference, however, between this beast and the others is that it has ten horns. While the three others had characteristics that made them different but recognizable, the one at hand clearly lacks them.

**Vs. 8: I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots; and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking great things.**

While having this dream, Daniel “considered” the ten horns, *sekal* being the verb (only use in the Bible) which is close to the Hebrew meaning to behold as well as to to attend and be prudent. Thus Daniel considered these horns with a certain reserve and fear which is understandable. Apart from its fearsomeness, he hadn't a clear idea of what this beast was really like.

Although the little horn had human eyes, it was his speaking “great things” that got Daniel's attention, *ravrav* being the adjective, an exaggeration or *revah*, something like “great great” and noted last in 2.48. Daniel doesn't spell out what this little horn was speaking though most likely it consisted of great pretensions to compensate for its littleness. Chances are such “great things” weren't even worth recording.

This little horn comes into existence independently from the others: “there came up among them” which would make this horn an eleventh one.

**Vs. 9: As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire.**

*Chazah* is the verb for “looked” found last in vs. 7 and before that, vs. 6 as well as vs. 2. In other words, Daniel is engaged in a lot of looking which is re-enforced, if you will, by other words relative to sight concerning his dream. It's as though such looking needed to be sustained to get through such an unusual dream, that is, to make sure he interpreted it correctly.

Although this is a dream and Daniel is asleep, the vivid imagery doesn't seem to have waken him, especially the dreadful beast with iron teeth and horns which beget yet another one. So while that beast as well as the other three presumably were present at court, thrones appeared (passive; no word as to what or to whom set them up). Once ready, a man whom Daniel designates as “ancient of days” sits down. The adjective *hatyq* has two other references, vss. 13 and 22 and is close to the Hebrew which fundamentally means shining and hence venerable as is the case here. *Hatyq* is used with “days” suggestive of long duration, even eternity, although at Daniel doesn't attribute divinity to him at this juncture.

The image of this man...and he doesn't necessary have to be old...is one of brightness: white as snow, pure wool, fiery flames and burning fire. There might come to Daniel's mind the fourth being who “is like a son of the gods” [3.25], the one present in the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. However, this person, most likely of divine origin, seems greater than that one.

This mysterious being is sitting on a throne whereas the verse at hand begins with “thrones were placed.” They were akin to princes or subordinates to the “ancient of days,” one of whom easily could be that “son of the gods.” There is no indication as to the number, but the Lord may have made it correspond to the Babylonian court with which Daniel was all too familiar. Note that the elder's “throne” (*karse'*: one other reference, 5.20) was mobile but consisting of a special mobility, namely, with wheels of burning fire. This is reminiscent of Ezekiel's vision though the wheels don't consist of fire: “for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels” [Ezk 1.20]. Resemblance of the throne with fire suggests rapid movement either upward (like a flame) or horizontal to any direction (like a fire spreading).

**Vs. 10: A stream of fire issued and came forth from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.**

“Stream” or *nehar* is the only use of this noun in Daniel and has numerous references in Ezra, the first being 4.10: “and in the rest of the province Beyond the River.” Although *nehar* can refer to a stream, it often applies to a larger body of flowing water. In the verse at hand it consists of continuous fairly large stream of fire “before him,” “him” not being in the original text. It is before the ancient of days although this preposition (*naged*) is not translated (see next paragraph). Since this divine being is upon a throne consisting of “fiery flames” with wheels of “burning fire,” the word used is *nur* as in the “burning fiery furnace” in which Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had been cast [3.6]. Note the play on words, *nehar* and *nur*; the two being one and the same.

The verb *nephaq* means “came forth” is noted last with respect to the hand doing the writing on the wall ('appeared') in 5.5 and used with the preposition *qodem*, “before” which isn't to be confused with the untranslated *naged* above. And so we have two “befores:” *naged* implying in the presence of and *qodem* as existing prior to anything.

So while this immense river-like flow of fire is going on continuously, an innumerable multitude is present and is divided into two groups: the “thousand thousands” which “served” or *shemash*, the only use of this verb which connotes performance of religious or liturgical rites. Note that it bears resemblance to *shemesh* or “sun” which ties in with all the words pertaining to intense brightness and so forth. The second group consists of “ten thousand times ten thousand”...much larger...who perform no apparent function but simply stand (*qum*) before him (*qodem*), another play on words. Most likely this group was right by the “stream of fire” yet was unharmed by it. Chances are that the mysterious being present with the three companions in the furnace is a representative of this group.

“Court” is *dyn* (last reference being 4.37as 'just'), and the English “judgment” is not in the text, the two being the same. During such a legal proceeding documents were presented by both the defense and prosecution, hence the need for “books” or *sephar* which has four references in Ezra, the first being 4.15: “in order that search may be made in the book of the records of your fathers.”

**Vs. 11: I looked then because of the sound of the great words which the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire.**

So while this dramatic scene filled with intense brightness was unfolding, Daniel's attention (*chazah*, 'looked,' vs. 9) shifted to a commotion that started within this courtroom, namely, the fourth beast. The horn first mentioned in vs. 9 was speaking or more accurately, was babbling on incoherently trying to disrupt the proceedings. Compare this speaking with vs. 8 when it is “speaking great things.” In the presence of the ancient of days and countless witnesses the horn did not have the courage to be arrogant as it had been just recently

*Chazah* occurs a second time, that is, when Daniel sees the “beast” (*chayvah*, vs. 7) “slain” (*qetal*; found last in 5.30 but not mentioned there). Most likely this hideous creature was put to death right outside the court, not in it, for that would defile this sacred gathering. Nothing is said about the manner of execution, the horn being representative of the larger beast. The court wished to make sure this animal was dead which is why the verse speaks of its body being destroyed and burned with fire. That “stream of fire” coming from the ancient of days was the means by which this had been carried out.

**Vs. 12: As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.**

Although attention had been focused upon the beast and more specifically the little horn “speaking great things” [vs. 8], the lion, bear and leopard seemed to have been present in the courtroom but said nothing. In fact, they may not have been endowed with the gift of speech. Regardless, they were too dumbfounded at the carrying-on of the fourth beast. Because they were of a lesser evil though deadly, the court decided on leniency.

Vs. 6 speaks of the leopard, the only beast to which is given *shaltan* or “dominion,” although the others certainly had their own. They had been divested of this *shaltan* before being hauled off to court and after they had gone on their own destructive rampages which aren't detailed.

The ancient of days is acting here as a judge but in consultation with the thousands and ten thousands about what to do with these remaining creatures. All were in agreement that they not be put to death but that their lives be “prolonged” though this verb doesn't occur in the original text. Instead, it has “season and time” or *zeman* and *hidan*, both being noted in 2.21, the latter often in reference to one full year. Such a period of grace is temporary; what may come afterward isn't spelled out but may offer the hope for some type of repentance. Nothing is said what the lion, bear and leopard are to do nor what they actually did after the court was adjourned.

**Vs. 13: I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.**

As far as this dream goes, it is the last time Daniel uses the verb *chazah* ('saw') which implies that while asleep, his heart and mind were awake to divine communication through “night visions.” Now Daniel sees... *'aru* ('behold,' vs. 7)...a person resembling the “son of man.” This is the first (and last) time such a man appears in the Book of Daniel, perhaps the person who will restore the exiled Israelites in Babylon to their homeland. Note the word “like” which means Daniel had an inkling of this son of man, perhaps a messiah or sorts. In 8.17 Daniel himself is addressed as such: “Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end.”

This mysterious person arrives on the scene “with the clouds of heaven,” that is, he descends to the court after the four beasts had been judged and dispensed with. There comes to mind the appearance of Jesus Christ in Mt 24.30: “and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” This appearance is preceded by people seeing the “sign” of the Son of man in heaven, *semeion* be taken as a signal or token. It is not described but intimated, possibly the cross, because once seen, everyone “will mourn.”

The son of man in Daniel presents himself at court and then approaches the Ancient of Days (capital letters in the **RSV**). While drawing near, he has the full attention of the thousands and ten of thousands, all focused on what was to transpire although they knew the reason for his coming. Upon reaching the throne, the son of man is “presented” or *qerev* (cf. 6.20), a verb which means to draw near but in the sense of being escorted by some of the vast assembly present. Nothing verbal is communicated here and in the following verses which describe the interaction taking place.

**Vs. 14: And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.**

“Was given:” another verb in the passive mode which suggests someone else is doing the giving, that it did not originate from the son of man himself. Involved here are “dominion, glory and kingdom” or *shaltan* (cf. vs. 12), *yeqar* (cf. 4.36) and *malku* (cf. 6.26). Another group of threes follows, namely, “peoples, nations and languages” whose duty is to “serve” the son of man. However, in the previous verse he is presented to the Ancient of Days who has authority over him. With this in mind, chances are the former acted as mediator for the latter although both shared in the subjection of all peoples.

From among these three attributes “dominion” or *shaltan* is singled out which connotes having mastery and therefore contains the other two. This is emphasized by the adjective *halam* ('everlasting,' cf. 2.20).

*Hadah* is the verb for “shall (not) pass away” (cf. 6.8) and connotes a sense of departing. Close to its meaning here is *chaval* (cf. 2.44) which implies a spoiling or corrupting.

With this ends Daniel's more immediate account of the dream possibly taken down by a scribe and later recounted to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. He will take up the various images and explain them in fuller detail until he reaches “the end of the matter” [vs. 28].

**Vs. 15: "As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious and the visions of my head alarmed me.**

The first thought that comes to mind is, who wouldn't be terrified? Daniel mentions his own name almost as though he had come close to losing his life through the dream and wishes to reaffirm his existence, that is to say, he survived the dream and is among the living. To confirm this he uses the word “spirit” or *ruach* noted last in vs. 2 as “winds,” its essential meaning, but here suggests the essence of a human being.

Two verbs express Daniel's experience: “anxious and alarmed.” The first is *kerá'* (only use in the Bible) which connotes being confined or shortened. The second is *behal* (cf. 5.9) which suggests a certain hastening. Thus *ruach* = *kerá'* and *re'sh* ('head') = *behal*. To the latter belong “visions” (*chezev*, cf. vs. 7) which were rolling around within Daniel and needed to get out, hence the value of recording them.

**Vs. 16: I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things.**

“One of those” in the court is either from “a thousand thousands” or “ten thousand times ten thousand” [vs. 10]. Certainly that's a large amount to choose from although we don't have specific information as to their identities. Daniel decided upon asking just after the court had reached its verdict and everyone was milling about in preparation to depart. He spotted one of the

participants, most likely angelic beings, who wasn't engaged in conversation, hoping to obtain knowledge about the four beasts as well as the son of man and the Ancient of Days. In other words, Daniel saw accurately (the events were so vivid that they couldn't help but stick in his mind) but was ignorant as to their meaning. Compare this ignorance with the confidence he had while interpreting King Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the handwriting on the wall.

Daniel's question was more specific, asking about the “truth” with regard to what had just transpired, this word not being in the original text. It reads literally, “asking from him on all of this,” the verb being *behah* noted last in 6.11 and suggestive of making an inquiry. This person/angel obliged and gave a straightforward answer, namely, the event's “interpretation” or *peshar* (cf. 5.26).

**Vs. 17: 'These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth.'**

The member of the court with whom Daniel conversed provided the information he had longed for ever since he saw the four great beasts back in vs. 2. Apparently he had no qualms about informing Daniel, knowing that he was sent to the court, as it were, for a specific purpose and had full knowledge of the outstanding way had comported himself since arriving in Babylon. If Daniel were unworthy, not only would he be privy to this court but not have the slightest clue as to its purpose. Daniel had dealt with two kings thus far in his career, Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. Although he would be in especially good terms with Darius, this dream occurred under King Belshazzar. All were kings of Babylon, though the four spoken of in the vision don't seem to originate from that country, rather, threats to it as well as to the rest of the world. So when Daniel heard the number “four,” right away he associated it with the four winds of vs. 2 as well as the obvious four beasts.

**Vs. 18: But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.'**

“Saints” or *qadysh* occurs numerous times in the Book of Daniel and related closely to the Hebrew *qodesh* meaning to be sacred or consecrated (to God). It is noted last in 4.17 with those who are in the company of the “watchers” concerning the judgment about to fall upon King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel must have wondered whether or not the being with whom he is having a conversation is one of the saints or watchers. Regardless, this being wouldn't reveal his identity, and Daniel knew better not to press further.

As soon Daniel heard the words “Most High,” he knew for sure that he was in good company. Up until then he must have had his doubts, for all those present in the court, the son of man and Ancient of Days, could be from the Babylonian pantheon. After all, Daniel was very familiar with Babylonian religious practices and always was on guard that visions could come from them. *Helyon* is the adjective for “Most High” and is found next in vs. 22.

With respect to the “kingdom” (*malku*, cf. vs. 14), the saints are destined to both “receive” and then “possess” it. *Qeval* is the verb for the former and noted last in 2.6 (it occurs one other time in 5.31) and *chasan* (one other reference, vs. 22). The latter connotes being strong or wealthy.

In order to drive home this reception and possession of the kingdom, the being with whom Daniel is speaking says that this kingdom will last just not “forever” but “forever and ever, *had-halma' wehad halam halmaya'*. Note the three occasions of *hal*, indicative of that which is above as well as intimating a joyous, upward sort of expression.

**Vs. 19: "Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrible, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze; and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped the residue with its feet;**

The verb *tseva'* conveys a sense of desire and willing and is used twice to convey the words “I desired to know the truth.” It is found last in 5.19 as “(whom) he would slew.” It's understandable that Daniel wishes to know as much as possible about the fourth beast, so different from the first three (lion, bear and leopard). The word “like” is used with regard to each of them which means that Daniel hadn't precise knowledge about the beasts, only their external form.

In the verse at hand, the verb *shena'* means “is different” and implies change. It is quite frequent in Daniel, being used first in 2.9: “You have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the times change.” The difference with regard to this beast is that is “terrible” (*dechal*, vs. 7). The not fully identified fourth beast isn't just terrible but “exceedingly” so, *yatyr* as noted in 6.3 ('excellent') intimates excess.

Vs. 19 says that the beast has claws of bronze, not mentioned earlier. They help clarify similar words in vs. 7, “it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped the residue with its feet.”

**Vs. 20: and concerning the ten horns that were on its head and the other horn which came up and before which three of them fell, the horn which had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things and which seemed greater than its fellows.**

Daniel was focused mostly upon the beast's horns which are ten in number (cf. vs. 7). The horn which spoke great things hearkens back to the adjective *ravrav* in vs. 8, an exaggeration or *revalh*, something like “great great.” By reason of such boasting, this horn was greater than its “fellows” or *chavrah*, the only use of this noun. It is close to the Hebrew verbal root meaning to bind together, to bring into fellowship. Nothing is said about this beast's relationship with the lion, leopard and bear. They seem to have remained silent and were submissive to what the fourth beast ordered them to do.

**Vs. 21: As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them,**

Daniel was awe-struck by the fourth beast's strength and fearsome look but more so by the fact that just one of its horns...a little one...came to preeminence and have an existence almost independent of the beast itself. In this verse Daniel looks...*chazah* (cf. vs. 11)...which means he didn't shift his gaze from the vision transpiring before his eyes but was captivated by a new phase of the action. And that consisted in making war or *qerav*, the only use of this term which is similar to the verb *qerev* noted last in vs. 13, “was presented.” Both connote the idea of drawing near and hence suggestive of combat at close quarters, here with the saints (cf. vs. 18).

*Yekal* means “prevailed” and is found last in 6.4 but noted there as “could.” The nature of this prevailing isn't spelled out and doesn't necessarily intimate being victorious. The same applies as to the means used to gain victory.

**Vs. 22: until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints received the kingdom.**

Here Daniel gets a clear picture of the horn prevailing over the saints, that is, until the arrival of the Ancient of Days. Back in vs. 9 “thrones were placed” when this mysterious person came on the scene apparently while the horn is “speaking great things” [vs. 8]. So there seems to be more focus upon the boastful arrogance this horn is uttering, not so much violence in the physical sense.

Because the Ancient of Days made his appearance in the setting of a court, it is only natural for “judgment” to follow, *dyn* being the actual word for “court” in vs. 7. Throughout this dramatic dream Daniel realized something far larger was being revealed to him than the fate of the Babylonian empire, let alone his native Israel.

In vs. 18 the kingdom is to be given to the saints at a given “time” or *zeman* (cf. vs. 12) which in the verse at hand is fulfilled though that is not spelled out nor how the saints are to exercise authority. *Zeman* seems to be similar to *kairos*, time in the sense of an event.

**Vs. 23: "Thus he said: 'As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth and trample it down and break it to pieces.**

Everything said here through vs. 28 is to be accomplished in the future and is not spelled out. Perhaps Daniel is wondering whether or not he will have a role in making it known.

Now the Ancient of Days himself approaches Daniel and explains the meaning of the fourth beast, satisfying his desire “to know the truth” [vs. 19] about it. That is to say, Daniel didn't have to say anything; this mysterious person read Daniel's heart and knows that the vision at hand has meaning not just for him but for mankind in general.

This fourth kingdom represented by the beast (again, it isn't described in the sense of its overall form, just its death, feet and ten horns) is singled out from the other three whose role seems to be of lesser significance. The Ancient of Days specifically says that it will be “on earth” as opposed to heaven where presumably Daniel's vision was taking place. At this early stage of his vision Daniel could have taken the beast either as Babylon or some as yet unknown nation that will not only destroy Babylon but all nations on the earth which is why it “shall be different” from them, *shena'* [vs. 19].

Something more ominous is in store than one kingdom conquering another. Its path of destruction will consist of three actions:

1) It will “devour” the entire earth, *'akal* being the common verb to eat and not as violent as the English translation. The idea seems that the beast/kingdom will simply walk throughout the earth and eat...take its time grazing... everything before it.

2) It will “trample or *dush*, the only use of this verb in the Bible but similar to the Hebrew which connotes threshing of grain.

3) Finally, it will “break to pieces” the earth or *deqaq* noted in 2.40 with regard to the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar which also pertained to this fourth kingdom though the image of a human being, not a beast.

**Vs. 24: As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones and shall put down three kings.**

Daniel saw this beast having ten horns in vs. 7 while another (it isn't called 'little') came up “among them” which means one wholly different from them. This horn was the one “speaking great things” [vss. 8 and 20] which is of primary concern here as arising after the ten horns, not “among them.” It may have been present “among” these other horns but was not a threat and hence not recognized.

This new horn “shall be different” or *shena'* as is the fourth beast in vs. 23.

The task of this horn is to “put down” three kings, *shephal*, as noted last in 5.22 where it refers to being humbled in heart as opposed to being destroyed which seems to be the case in the verse at hand.

**Vs. 25: He shall speak words against the Most High and shall wear out the saints of the Most High and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, two times and half a time.**

In vs. 8 the little horn is speaking “great things” and in vs. 11 “great words,” the adjective *ravrav* being used in both instances though not necessarily against the “Most High” or *Hilay* (cf. vs. 22). In the verse at hand the horn is speaking words, the verb *mela'* having four other references in Daniel, the last being 6.21. It is used with *tsad* or “against” which here means in opposition. Nothing is said about the content of these words, just that the horn is speaking them.

*Bela'* means “wear out,” the only use of this verb which means to afflict or to trouble and is directed against the “saints” or *qadysh* (cf. vs. 18) who are identified as belonging to the Most High (cf. vs. 22).

*Sevar* means “to change,” the only use of this verb which connotes hope in the sense of having an intention which the horn directs to both “times and law” or *zeman* (cf. vs. 22) and *dath* (cf. 6.8). The latter is more akin to a statute or something set compared with the divine Law or Torah. If the horn manages to change them, the whole religious structure of not only of the Babylonians and the Jews is destroyed but every governing principle in other lands. *Zeman* here is in the plural whereas *dath* is the singular (vs. 22 has it in the singular).

Another noun for time is found in vs. 25, *hidan* being found last in vs. 12 where it usually refers to the span of one year. “Two times and half a time” means three and a half years. Nothing is said as to how the horn will treat the saints, but the common image of a hand implies not simply subjection and manipulation but destruction.

**Vs. 26: But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away to be consumed and destroyed to the end.**

*Dyn* means “court” and also applies to “judgment” as in vs. 22 which Daniel first saw in his vision (vs. 10) where “books were opened” and presumably is the case here.

*Shaltan* means “dominion” noted last in vs. 14 as pertaining to the son of man. It will be both “consumed and destroyed,” *shemad* and *'avad*. The former is the only use of this verb similar to the Hebrew and means to lay waste. The latter occurs last in vs. 11 but not noted there and implies being lost. Both verbs are in conjunction with the “end” or *suph* and found last in 6.26.

**Vs. 27: And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them.'**

The saints will receive the following three: “kingdom, dominion and greatness (of the kingdoms)” or *malku* (cf. vs. 18), *shaltan* (cf. vs. 26) and *revu* (cf. 5.19). In the verse at hand all three will not necessarily will be given to the saints directly but to the people belonging to them, the saints acting as their guardians, if you will.

“Serve and obey” or *pelach* (cf. 6.16) and *shemah* (cf. 6.14 but not noted there) pertain to such people in union with the saints.

**Vs. 28: "Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed; but I kept the matter in my mind."**

Daniel knew the “end” (*suph*, cf. vs. 26) of his vision was at hand; “matter” or *milah* is found last in 7.2 with the same intent. He realized this when the Ancient of Days finishes speaking and concludes with the saints having total domination over all kingdoms and powers on the earth.

Daniel may have thought of sharing this vision with some confidants such as his three companions who had been cast into the fiery furnace but decides against this. Instead, he keeps it in his “mind” or *lev*, the only use of this term though similar to *levav* in vs. 4. His reasoning was that people wouldn't understand the vision even if they heard it. In this way he overcame a temptation to interpret the dream, something he had done so well for Kings Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. The motive laying behind this is that his “thoughts” caused him alarm, *rahyon* (cf. 5.6) being the noun and *behal* being the verb (cf. vs. 15).

*Zev* is the noun for “color” noted last in 5.9 as pertaining to King Belshazzar though for a very different reason. Daniel hoped that by the time day came around no one would notice this. Even if they did, no one dare inquire as to how he felt.

## Chapter Eight

**Vs. 1: In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first.**

This new chapter begins in the third year of Belshazzar's "reign" or *malkuth* (noted last in 4.35) which means that between now and the beginning of Chapter Seven ('in the first year of Belshazzar') two full years have past. During that time Daniel has plenty of time—and it may not have seemed enough for him—to ponder the vision of the four beasts. After the initial shock of the vision, if you will, he may have consulted trustworthy friends as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego though we have no record of their feedback nor of anyone else. In the meanwhile Daniel went about his business and seems not to have had further visions until now. We can intimate this by the words "after that which appeared to me at the first." Again, this second vision takes place under the reign of Belshazzar; Chapter Nine jumps forward to King Darius.

Chapter Seven begins with "Daniel had a dream and vision of his head as he lay in his bed" whereas here "a vision appeared to me." The noun for "vision" in the former is *chezev* whereas in the later it's *chazon*; both are essentially the same, different spelling. Possibly in the verse at hand Daniel was not sleeping which means the vision occurred during prayer or even while (for example) taking a walk by himself. A case not unlike the latter will occur shortly by the Ulai River and a bitter later by the Tigris River. The passive use of "appeared" or the common verb *ra'ah* (to see) suggests that Daniel had nothing to do with this vision coming upon him, that he was completely passive to its operation. Daniel speaks of himself as though he were another person which can be taken as an attempt to be as objective as possible about this vision. The same attitude is found in 7.28 ('as for me, Daniel').

**Vs. 2: And I saw in the vision; and when I saw I was in Susa, the capital, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision, and I was at the river Ulai.**

In the previous verse the vision "appeared to me" whereas here Daniel "saw in the vision," the verb again being *ra'ah*. Note its position, if you will, "in (*b-*) the vision." The whole idea of this seems to be that Daniel, his seeing, the passive appearing and the vision are one and the same.

After having been brought attention to this vision, Daniel specifies it ('And I saw in the vision') by mentioning three locations. Because Susa was the winter capital of Babylon, he could have been there in attendance to King Belshazzar, that is, residing in that area for most of the winter. *Byrah* or "capital" means a fortress or palace and occurs this one time in the Book of Daniel. "Now it happened in the month of Chislew...as I was in Susa, the capital" [Neh 1.1]. Secondly, we have the "province" of Elam, *medynah*, which occurs one other time, 11.24: "Without warning he shall come into the richest parts of the province." Thirdly, Daniel seems to have been out for a stroll by the river Ulai, that is, away from the palace intrigue. He may have sensed the advent of a vision so decided to be in an isolated spot for the duration.

**Vs. 3: I raised my eyes and saw, and behold, a ram standing on the bank of the river. It had two horns; and both horns were high but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last.**

Daniel raises his eyes which intimates that he was not focused upon the river nor anything else, the vision having just come to him. As Daniel began his vision he couldn't help but recall the four beasts, the court, the Ancient of Days and everything else associated with it. Would this vision be the same or radically different? He would know soon enough.

*'Ayil* means "ram," often as a symbol of strength as well as an offering for sacrifice, will figure significantly in this chapter. "The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs" [Ps 114.4]. Obviously Daniel was at the river Ulai when he saw this ram on one of the banks. It seems that he was some distance from it as on a hill close by. As soon as the two horns with differing lengths caught Daniel's attention, he was reminded of the previous vision and wondered if it was the same or some kind of extension of it. Even though it's a few years later, the words of 7.28 apply here as they had done back then: "my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed."

**Vs. 4: I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward; no beast could stand before him, and there was no one who could rescue from his power; he did as he pleased and magnified himself.**

*Nagach* is the verb for "charging" which connotes violent pushing and has one other reference, 11.40: "At that time of the end the king of the south shall attack him." The ram does this in three cardinal directions with the exception of the east. East is the direction of the rising sun as well as Jerusalem and could be part of the reason why the ram did not charge there. Apparently there were other beasts in the three cardinal directions which is why "no beast could stand before him." Some could have attempted resistance but to no avail.

*Natsal* means "could rescue" as well as to despoil, to strip oneself and thus implies a sudden snatching away. The other reference in the Book of Daniel is vs. 7: "and there was no one who could rescue the ram from his power" ...no one except that mysterious prohibition, if you will, from charging eastward.

*Ratson* is the noun for "pleased" and means delight or satisfaction as well as referring to the will. "Then a mighty king shall arise...and do according to his will" [11.3]. Such freedom to do as he pleased (again, not charging eastward) caused the ram to magnify himself, *gadal*. "Then the he-goat magnified himself exceedingly" [8.8].

**Vs. 5: As I was considering, behold, a he-goat came from the west across the face of the whole earth without touching the ground; and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes.**

*Byn* is the verb for "was considering" and implies understanding. It occurs next in vs. 23: "one who understands riddles shall arise." It is used with "behold" or *hineh* (cf. vs. 3) which signifies the sudden appearance of something which here is a "he-goat" or *tsaphyr* (the same word is used for 'goat' in this verse). It occurs two other times, vss. 8 and 21, the former being cited here: "Then the he-goat magnified himself exceedingly." The direction from which this animal came was the west, directly opposite the east where the ram did not charge, the direction of the setting sun and hence darkness.

The he-goat not touching the ground suggests it did not belong to it but participated in another dimension, that of darkness or the west.

*Chazuth* is a noun for the adjective “conspicuous,” the text reading literally “a horn of sight.” It is similar to *chazon* last noted in vs. 1 Compare this “horn of sight” (and it doesn't necessarily mean to contain one or more eyes) with the little horn of 7.8, “eyes like the eyes of a man.”

**Vs. 6: He came to the ram with the two horns which I had seen standing on the bank of the river, and he ran at him in his mighty wrath.**

*Had* is the preposition “to” suggesting right up to or before with respect to the ram. It doesn't necessarily imply closeness but as being in the line of sight. The he-goat (goat) “ran at” the ram, *ruts*. “They shall run like mighty men” [Jl 2.7]. No reason is given for this attack, but the ram which couldn't charge eastward was now facing a goat from the opposite direction, the west. We could say that a battle between these two horizontal planes is engaged, east vs. west, with neither representing the good and the other evil, just physical strength with a view towards conquering the entire earth.

“Mighty wrath” reads literally “in the wrath of his strength,” the two nouns being *chemah* and *koach* (cf. 1.4 as 'competent'). The next reference to the former is 9.16: “let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem.”

**Vs. 7: I saw him come close to the ram, and he was enraged against him and struck the ram and broke his two horns; and the ram had no power to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled upon him; and there was no one who could rescue the ram from his power.**

The sudden appearance of this he-goat caught Daniel by surprise and must have been smaller than the ram. It “came close” to the ram or *nagah* which is the same verb in vs. 5 as “(without) touching (the ground).” That is to say, there the he-goat traversed the earth just above it though how he did this is not spelled out. It must have had contact with the ram from this plane above the earth, if you will, which made the ram quite helpless despite its more formidable strength and ability to charge as recounted in vs. 4.

*Marar* is the verb for “enraged” which more specifically means to be bitter and in the context at hand, implies being jealous of the ram's power and strength. “Then the king of the south, moved with anger” [11.11]. Such bitter jealousy caused the he-goat to strike the ram, *nakah* as meaning to kill. “He has stricken, and he will bind up” [Hos 6.1]. Because the ram had been wounded mortally and lacked two horns, it was helpless. After this the he-goat cast it down and then trampled it.

*Natsal* is the verb for “rescue” noted last in vs. 2. Both that verse and vs. 7 have the same phrase “from his power” which literally reads as “from his hand.”

**Vs. 8: Then the he-goat magnified himself exceedingly; but when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.**

*Gadal* is the verb for “magnified” as in vs. 4 with regard to the ram whereas here it is “exceedingly” or *had-me’od* which reads literally as “until excessively.” This details are left to one’s imagination, though this must have terrified Daniel.

“When he was strong” seems an understatement in light of what had just transpired, but the he-goat’s victory over the ram made him all the stronger. The verb is *hatsam* (‘bone’ is derived from it; cf. vs. 24) and means fundamentally means to bind or tie fast.

*Chazuth* means “conspicuous” as in vs. 5. The four “winds” (*ruach*, cf. 7.15) belonging to heaven suggest the four cardinal points of the earth, intimating that the he-goat will have dominion of the entire earth.

**Vs. 9: Out of one of them came forth a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east and toward the glorious land.**

The last mention of a little horn is 7.8 with regard to the fourth beast. The verb *gadal* (‘grew’) is used as in the previous verse with the noun *yeter* (‘exceedingly’) which means the rest, the remaining. “The rest of the people bowed down” [Judg 7.6].

Two specific cardinal directions are singled out, south and east, whereas the “glorious land” is left unspecified but seems to be Israel, Daniel’s native land, of which the interpretation of his past dreams spoke, the God of Israel. So while Daniel is both terrified and enthralled by this vision, mention of *tsvy* hits a nerve, for it is his homeland. The noun means splendor as well as a gazelle by reason of its beautiful form. “And he shall stand in the glorious land, and all of it shall be in his power” [11.16].

**Vs. 10: It grew great, even to the host of heaven; and some of the host of the stars it cast down to the ground and trampled upon them.**

This is the second mention of the little horn growing great (*gadal*), here at the height of its conceit. The “host” of heaven or *tseva’* refers to an army usually associated with God. It is the first mention in the Book of Daniel, the next reference being vs. 11: “It magnified itself, even up to the Prince of the host.” *Tseva’* also refers to the stars implying that they were guardians of the divine realm, not unlike angels. Mention of stars is important because the Babylonians put great stock in astrology and astronomy, the two being intertwined.

The he-goat’s success at having trampled it’s rival, the ram, gives birth to this little horn which, in turn, manages to overcome the stars, the first line of defense belonging to the heavenly realm. If the horn could do that—trampling suggestive of that height being brought to the other extreme—it can assault God himself and usurp his place. *Shalak* is the verb for “cast down” which means the little horn was so powerful that by one gesture it could send the stars above all the way to the “ground” or *’erets*.

**Vs. 11: It magnified itself even up to the Prince of the host; and the continual burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown.**

It wasn't enough for the little horn (it grew from the he-goat's great horn from which came four conspicuous horns and from which came the little horn) to stop at having trampled to the earth the host of heaven, the verb *gadal* being used for a third time. It was emboldened to go further, the "Prince" of this host or *sar* being first used in 1.7 as "chief of the eunuchs." This person is not identified but could be the son of man (cf. 7.13) who appeared before the Ancient of Days. The same identification can refer to the Prince (*sar*) of princes in vs. 25.

This exalted heavenly figure seems to be a priest, hence mention of the "burning offering" or *rum*, a verb which means to lift up noted last in 5.23. Unlike sacrificial offerings which have been so lifted up (reference to their ascending smoke), the Prince's was "continual," *tamyd* or taking place in the heavenly places.

"Place" and "sanctuary" are distinguished though the two are one and the same: *mekon* signifies a base or foundation. "From where (the place) he sits enthroned he looks forth" [Ps 33.14]. *Miqdash* refers to that which is set apart for God and found in 9.17: "cause your face to shine upon your sanctuary which is desolate."

The two verbs related to the burnt offering and sanctuary are in the passive, "was taken away" and "was overthrown," the verb *shalak* (to cast, to throw) used for both, a result of the little horn magnifying itself. There's no indication of resistance on the part of the Prince or the host of heaven since they had been taken off guard.

**Vs. 12: And the host was given over to it together with the continual burnt offering through transgression; and truth was cast down to the ground, and the horn acted and prospered.**

This giving over (*natan* is the common verb 'to give') lacks "to it" in the original text. It is in the passive (the same with 'cast down') and is imprecise as to who or what is involved. An advantage of putting it this way is that despite the apparent conquest of heaven by the little horn, some larger power is involved which will resolve the situation favorably.

The burnt offering as being continual is specified as one "through transgression" or *peshah* which connotes a fault or violation and is found in the next verse. "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord" [Ps 32.5]. It appears that the *peshah* involved is that of the little horn. Also it could refer to the behavior of people (the Israelites) who had been unfaithful and contributed to bringing on this tragedy.

"Truth" or *'emeth* is presented almost in human form to make the situation personal and is found next in vs. 26. Compare the passive use of the verb of its casting down or *shalak* to the "ground" (*'erets*) with the active use in vs. 10, that is, concerning these two word.

"Acted and prospered" or *hasah* and *tsaleach*. The former is the common verb meaning to do or to make (cf. 1.13) and the latter has the alternate meaning of to attack, to fall upon. The Chaldean form is found in 6.28; the next Hebrew reference occurs in vs. 24: "and shall succeed in what he does." It seems this little horn acts and prospers by taking over the divine authority located in the

heavens yet has an intimation this won't last for long. although vs. 11 speaks of the Prince of the host, nothing is said about him being cast down or the like. Apparently he escaped and withdrew in order to plan retaking his lost authority including the burnt offering associated with him.

**Vs. 13: Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to the one that spoke, "For how long is the vision concerning the continual burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled under foot?"**

The little horn attained the limit of its success in the previous verse, hence the words "acted and prospered." It is destined to last for a limited time (cf. vs. 14), and the horn seems to have sensed it, wishing to make the most of a relatively short duration. Obviously it will create as much havoc as possible.

Surely Daniel was relieved to hear the "holy one" speaking (*qadosh* being the adjective) although he doesn't see this being nor his companion. He seems to be privy to a conversation transpiring between this being and another who has knowledge of the current situation as well as its outcome. A similar being is noted in 4.13 and 23 (*qadysh*, cf. 7.25). Chances are these two holy ones are in hiding and communicating to each other and allowed Daniel to listen in order to communicate the dream's interpretation to others. Although the second *qadosh* had more knowledge as to the future for reasons not given, it is incidental to the situation at hand.

The first holy one speaks in terms of a "vision" or *chazon* and begins with the opening verse of this chapter. This puts everything into perspective, namely, a reality which has not yet come to fruition and ultimately has a successful resolution by divine intervention. By necessity the question posed here is put in temporal duration which doesn't apply to a vision. Yet the distressing images make it drag on, especially when no resolution has been offered up to this point.

A key word revealing the thoroughness of the little horn's assault is "makes desolate" or *shamem*, a verb which refers to laying waste; an alternate meaning is to be astonished. "Open your eyes and behold our desolations" [9.18].

"Sanctuary" is noted last in vs. 11 as *miqdash* whereas here it is *qodesh* or "holy." Again, use of the two passive words "giving over" and "to be trampled" suggest that despite the destruction being wrought, a higher force is involved and will intervene at the appropriate time.

**Vs. 14: And he said to him, "For two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state."**

The first holy one, including Daniel, is both surprised and delighted to receive an immediate response to the question he just posed. The time frame of three and a half years is put in terms of evenings and mornings with regard to the sanctuary can intimate the daily evening sacrifice as well as the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath.

*Tsadaq* is the verb (passive again) for "shall be restored" and fundamentally means to be righteous. Nothing is said of the little horn's fate which is secondary compared with the pressing matter at hand. "And those who turn many to righteousness" [12.3]. Such is the conclusion of

Daniel's vision which, as a reminder, takes place under the rule of King Belshazzar. Daniel couldn't but help be mindful of this, especially since he held a banquet during which were used the sacred vessels taken from the Jerusalem temple. So the question in Daniel's mind, is Belshazzar the little horn and Nebuchadnezzar the ram which this little horn had trampled?

**Vs. 15: When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; and behold, there stood before me one having the appearance of a man.**

The verb "had seen" and "vision" are of two different verbal roots: the former is the common *ra'ah* and the latter, *chazah* or seeing in the sense of beholding, often with regard to prophetic vision (cf. vs. 2 for both words, the verb and noun).

*Baqash* and *byn* or "sought and understand:" the former suggests a striving after (cf. 20). From the latter derives the preposition (same spelling) "between" thereby saying that any understanding is a kind of seeing in between.

Immediately after these two verbs comes *hineh* (cf. vs. 5) or "behold," a sudden presence of what Daniel had sought ever since his vision had begun. What Daniel sees now is not simply a man but the "appearance" of one, *mar'eh* (cf. 1.15; derived from the verbal root *ra'ah*). Thus the seeing of the vision is not especially trustworthy but requires being verified by first seeking and then understanding or *baqash* followed by *byn*.

**Vs. 16: And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, and it called, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision."**

Daniel hearkens back, if you will, to the site of his vision, the River Ulai. He may have decided to escape the poisonous atmosphere of the court or felt an urge deep within go there in preparation for the vision about to be revealed. Apparently his vision is focused towards the front or towards the appearance of the man, but suddenly he hears a human "voice" (*qol*, cf. 4.31) from behind. As soon as Daniel heard this voice, instinctively he knew it was better not to turn around but to remain stationary to see what would happen. The person behind the voice might approach him or prefer to remain unseen. The voice was not directed to Daniel but to Gabriel who as yet remains unidentified and is mentioned one other time in 9.21. After that he disappears from the narrative. After all, Gabriel is in the *mar'eh*...appearance...of a man, not a man proper which means he has some kind of heavenly nature.

The voice from behind Daniel disappears as soon as it bids Gabriel to understand the vision though as of yet Gabriel has not revealed himself. It turns out that when he does, he continues to speak through vs. 26.

**Vs. 17: So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I was frightened and fell upon my face. But he said to me, "Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end."**

Gabriel approached Daniel by the bank of the River Ulai, that is, he had been behind him along with the source of that "man's voice." Although this lasted a minute or two, it had to be one of the

longest waits in Daniel's life. Obviously Daniel was "frightened" or *bahat* which connotes suddenness. "Then Haman was in terror before the king and the queen" [Est 7.6]. Daniel was paralyzed, if you will, and couldn't flee even if he wished to do so. Falling upon his face was the most natural response, often reverence before God or a divine being. "Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and did homage to Daniel" [2.46].

Gabriel addresses Daniel as "son of man," a phrase used last in 7.13 with respect to the Ancient of Days. although it's a phrase commonly employed by a heavenly being to a human, it must have triggered this mysterious person in Daniel's dream, that in some mysterious as yet unknown way he was tied in with him.

At last Gabriel gives Daniel what he longed for so desperately, an understanding (the verb *byn*) of the dream that had troubled him. The vision pertained to the "time of the end," the latter word being *qets* which often applies to the fulfillment of prophecy, almost always with calamitous events. This phrase appears in vs. 19, and *qets* is found at the very last verse of the Book of Daniel: "and you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days." Note that in the verse at hand *qets* is bound up with *heth* or "time," suggesting it does occur within time itself after which it (and space) will be superseded by something hitherto unimaginable.

**Vs. 18: As he was speaking to me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me and set me on my feet.**

Normally a person wouldn't fall asleep under such dramatic circumstances, but Gabriel's speaking with (*ham-*) Daniel is no ordinary sleep but *radam* (it connotes snoring), not unlike that which God brought upon Adam when he created the first woman from his rib: "So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man" [Gn 2.21]. The other reference to this verb, not unlike the Genesis verse, is 10.9: "when I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in a deep sleep with my face to the ground." Yet another example of this type of sleep concerns Peter and John who witness Jesus' transfiguration: "Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they wakened they saw his glory" [Lk 9.32].

*Nagah* is the verb for "touched" found last in vs. 7 as "came close" and here seems to be a gentle tap on the shoulder, if you will. Daniel was so overcome by this *radam* that he needed help standing up in order that Gabriel communicate to him the significance of the vision.

**Vs. 19: He said, "Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation; for it pertains to the appointed time of the end.**

*Hineh* or "behold" is found last in vs. 15. In the verse at hand Gabriel uses it to make sure Daniel is fully roused from sleep that he may "make known" (*yadah*, cf. 2.45) future events; not just any events but those with respect to the "indignation" or *zaham* which means intense anger, the same as in 11.36: "He shall prosper until the indignation is accomplished." Apparently the little horn made its assault by surprise, quite embarrassing for those involved, though God is not mentioned. Obviously this created a tremendous desire to seek a time for revenge. Earlier reference had been made to some verbs being in the passive which is indicative of divine action or inaction, if you will, allowing events to unfold according to a purpose everyone involved did not quite understand fully.

Gabriel specifies the “latter end” or *'acharyth* of the indignation, neither its beginning nor middle but the final result when vengeance is brought the little horn due to the havoc it has caused. “And at the latter end of their rule” [vs. 23]. This *'acharyth* is related to the *mohed* or “appointed time” which also can refer to an assembly. “For the end is yet to be at the time appointed” [11.27]. *Qets* (cf. vs. 17) or “end” differs from *'acharyth* insofar as it pertains more to prophetic fulfillment as well as the event itself.

**NB:** Vss. 20 through 22 are not listed. They have historical significance for the vision which one way must have been a relief for Daniel. although powerful nations and monarchs are mentioned, they pale in comparison to any diabolical or heavenly powers.

**Vs. 23: And at the latter end of their rule, when the transgressors have reached their full measure, a king of bold countenance, one who understands riddles, shall arise.**

A second mention of *'acharyth* or “latter end,” here with regard to “their” rule meaning the four kingdoms of vs. 22 whom Gabriel identifies as “transgressors,” the verb *pashah* as a participle which means to fall away, to break away. “But the transgressors shall be altogether destroyed; the posterity of the wicked shall be cut off” [Ps 37.38]. Their fate is contained in the very meaning of this verb...those who will be cut off, if you will...once they have “reached” their full measure, *tamam*. This verb (infinitive) implies being completed or finished as in 9.24: “Seventy weeks of years are decreed...to finish the transgression.” The noun *pesheh* as “transgression” derives from *pashah*. The idea seems to be that those engaged in falling away or breaking away will continue to behave thus until they have expended it, all through the permission of some unknown yet divine authority.

Waiting in the wings, if you will, is a “king” (*melek*; compare with *malkuth*, 'rule') who is described here and in succeeding verses but whose identity remains incomplete and implying someone more dreadful than anyone who had come before. “Bold confidence” or *haz-panym* is rendered literally as “strong face” where *haz* can mean harsh or cruel. “For, lo, they lie in wait for my life; fierce men band themselves against me” [Ps 59.3]. This hardness of face by the king is sufficient to cause terror among the transgressors. “Calling to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb'” [Rev 6.16].

This mysterious king has some knowledge of the magic arts not unlike those of the Babylonian magicians, enchanters and sorcerers (cf. 2.2) whom King Nebuchadnezzar summoned to interpret his dream. He has special knowledge of “riddles” or *chydah*, the only use of the word in the Bible which fundamentally means something which is twisted and involved. And so the person who can “understand” (*byn*, cf. vs. 17) them has the ability to straighten them out, literally. “I will solve my riddle to the music of the lyre” [Ps 49.4]. This Psalm quote suggests the manner by which a riddle or something twisted is fixed, by means of music.

In the verse at hand, the verb “arise” (*hamad*) more specifically means to stand or here, to stand in the midst of the four kings and with that “strong face” bring out their ruin.

**Vs. 24: His power shall be great, and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people of the saints.**

Beginning in the last verse and continuing into the next references to the “king of bold countenance” are in the future tense which means the four kings are causing havoc while Gabriel is speaking with Daniel. Obviously this was a great source of consolation to Daniel in a vision like no other he had experienced.

*Koach* or “power” is noted last in vs. 6 as “wrath” and modified by the verb *hatsam* which (‘bone’ is derived from it) means to bind or to tie up and found last in vs. 8. Therefore this *koach* will be not just great but will have the power to crush the four kings and any other opposition with ease. An alternate meaning is to do wickedness or behave in that fashion as well as corrupt.

The verb *shachath* (‘shall cause destruction’) is an apt consequence of this terrible power and is used here as “destroy” as well as found in the next verse. “And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary” [9.26]. In the verse at hand *shachath* is modified by the participle *pala’* meaning to be wonderful or distinguished. “And shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods” [11.36].

The verb *tsaleach* as “shall succeed” is noted last in vs. 12, the consequences of which is the destruction of “mighty men and the people of the saints.” The object of this *shachath* is first the “mighty men” or *hatsum* or those who are *hatsam*. “An exceedingly great and mighty army” [11.25]. Next comes the “people of the saints” or those who are *qadosh* (cf. 8.13) noted last in 7.27 to whom both the kingdom and dominion are promised.

**Vs. 25: By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall magnify himself. Without warning he shall destroy many; and he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes; but by no human hand he shall be broken.**

Opposite to *koach* or “power” in the last verse but in attendance with it is this new king's “cunning” or *sekel* which usually refers to understanding coupled with wisdom. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who practice it” [Ps 111.10]. Closely allied with this *sekel* is *mirmah* or “deceit” which implies fraud and what is gained by it. “And from the time that an alliance is made with him he shall act deceitfully” [11.23]. Connected with both is the action of *tsaleach* or “prosper” not unlike the meaning found in the last verse.

“Under his hand” reads literally as “in (*b-*) his hand.” The same type of expressions is used with regard to “in (*b-*) his own mind” or *lev* which usually refers to the heart (cf. 7.28). The verb *gadal* (‘magnify’ himself; cf. vs. 11).

*Shalvah* is translated as “without warning” but more literally reads “in (*b-*) prosperity or peace, being related to *shalom*. This can bring to mind the prosperity given to those with the mark of the beast as in the Book of Revelation (cf. 13.17). “He shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom by flatteries” [11.21]. The destruction (*shachath*, cf. vs. 24) wrought here is similar to that related to the sign of the beast incident.

Most likely the “Prince (*sar*) of princes” is the “Prince of the host” of vs. 11. He will “destroy” (*shachath*; cf. 8.26) many,” the precise number not being given. Human strength and ingenuity can't destroy this king, *shavar* being the verb mentioned last in 8.8 but not noted there with regard to the horn. *Aphes* is the word for “no” which connotes an end or extremity. “And the ends of the earth your possession” [Ps 2.8].

**Vs. 26: The vision of the evenings and the mornings which has been told is true; but seal up the vision, for it pertains to many days hence."**

Evening and mornings seem to refer to vs. 14 (two thousand of them) when the sanctuary will be restored, placed in the context of a "vision" or *mar'eh* noted last in vs. 16. Note that the vision "has been told" or uttered compared with having been seen.

Gabriel bids Daniel to "seal up" this vision, *satam* meaning more to shut up in the sense of to hide. A similar command is found in 12.4: "But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book until the time of the end." In other words, Daniel is to keep this vision strictly personal and not reveal it even to his closest associates, a difficult task to carry out. The "many days hence" seem to refer to the two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings" as pertaining to the sanctuary's restoration in vs. 14. While that isn't a long time in the larger scheme of things, certainly the prospects of waiting was a considerable burden for Daniel.

**Vs. 27: And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days; then I rose and went about the king's business; but I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it.**

Here at the conclusion of the momentous Chapter Eight Daniel refers to himself to make sure he is back in his familiar everyday world compared with the time spent in his vision. And that time is unspecified and essentially is irrelevant since both the passage of time and spacial orientation are suspended.

*Havah* is the common verb to be and reads something like "and I was" minus the English "overcome." It's a fairly accurate and concise way to describe Daniel's recent vision, that he had been naught-ed. On the physical plane this naught-ing caused Daniel to be ill for a considerable length of time, a source of concern both to his friends and associates in the Babylonian court. If King Belshazzar got wind of this, he would press Daniel for the reasons of his absence. Of course, Daniel couldn't reveal his vision, so he decided to get up from his sickbed and return to the "business" of the king, *mela'kah*. This noun is related to the noun *mal'ak* or "angel" or more specifically, "messenger. And so Daniel and others in the king's employment could be called messengers insofar as they do his bidding. "And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done" [Gn 2.2]. In the verse at hand note the similarity between *mela'kah* and *melek* or "king" though of a different verbal root.

*Shamem* (cf. vs. 13) is an apt word to describe Daniel's condition, for it suggests being laid waste or made desolate and devoid of complete understanding (*byn*, cf. vs. 23). The relief Daniel would find is the death of King Belshazzar which isn't mentioned at all in Chapter Eight and the emergence of Darius to the throne with whom he would enjoy a fruitful relationship.