

Vs. 10: You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image;

Tehem is the noun for decree found last in 2.14 as “discretion.” It can have a fuller sense, more as an appeal compared to the common understanding of a decree as a summons to be effected on the spot as happens to be the case at hand.

Vs. 8 has the noun *gerats* along with the common verb to eat rendering the words “maliciously accused” (the Jews) as “ate the pieces.” The verse at hand shows this attitude at work with regard to King Nebuchadnezzar by reminding him of the decree just issued. Of course, he didn’t have to be reminded, but it is a way of intimidating him while the conspirators refrained from putting themselves on the line, of showing their innate vulnerability.

Although King Nebuchadnezzar was thrilled with Daniel’s interpretation of the dream that had troubled him and resulted in promoting him to an exalted position, he was fairly ignorant of him and his three friends. This ignorance could extend to the Jews in general although twice he invaded their land which was relatively insignificant compared with Egypt and the like. And so the conspirators sowed their seeds of doubt and suspicion based on rumors that Daniel and his three companions failed to comply. That means they’d have to produce evidence right away which they were ready to bring forward.

Vs. 11: and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace.

These words reflect those of vs. 6 and cap off perfectly what the conspirators hoped to achieve. All the while they were taking a chance, for despite the strong possibility of success, they were unsure as to King Nebuchadnezzar’s loyalty towards Daniel. Their plan might backfire. Still, they went ahead which is why they decided to approach the king before slinking back into the shadows.

Vs. 12: There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no heed to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up.”

Vs. 8 speaks of “certain Chaldeans” (*gevar*) which has a certain ominous ring to it and used here as applicable to the Jews though with a menacing tone. The Jews are identified as Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah but under their Babylonian names. Should King Nebuchadnezzar choose to go after these men, he would in essence be going after the entire population in exile at Babylon. Interestingly, the “certain Chaldeans” went after these “certain Jews,” omitting Daniel. Actually, he doesn’t appear until much later. Perhaps he was too powerful to attack directly, hence the focus upon his three compatriots. Such a plan would be in line with their long term strategy.

This direct report to King Nebuchadnezzar showed both the daring and cowardice of the “certain Chaldeans,” working in the shades, if you will. By saying to his face that he had appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon, they are making the case that he as king would be directly responsible for any subversive action by these Jews. *Havydah* is the word for “affairs” mentioned last in 2.29, that is, all three were administering the central province or seat of power whereas Daniel remained at the royal court...sufficiently close by to implicate him. *Menah* is the verb for “appointed” also in 2.29, use of which here can be used to implicate the king himself should he take no action.

As for not paying heed to the king, the text reads literally “these did not place on you.” Furthermore, the three companions failed to “serve” the king’s gods as well as to “worship” the image set up in Dura. *Pelach* is the verb for the former and is found next vs. 14, fundamentally meaning to cleave or to furrow a field. *Segad* is the verb for the latter and found last in vs. 6. The former can refer to

anything between their appointment up to the erection of the golden image. Being royal officials meant the three had to pay public homage to the local gods, something they couldn't avoid for very long.

Vs. 13: Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be brought. Then they brought these men before the king.

The king was won over immediately by the accusations these "certain Chaldeans" brought forth without questioning their motives. We could take Nebuchadnezzar's intense expression of anger as an assault on his pride and arrogance, but then again, he may have had in mind the cohesion of the Babylonian empire. If certain elements decided not to follow royal decrees, he would be confronted with the threat of rebellion.

"Furious rage" is rendered such by two nouns, *regaz* and *chema'*. The first is the only reference in the Bible and closely related to the Hebrew verbal root meaning to tremble, to be moved. The second also means warmth, an apt term to describe another meaning, anger, the next reference being vs. 19: "Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury."

The Chaldean informers got their way and acted more quickly than imagined. Some planning must have been involved, to be sure, for to approach the king with such a matter meant certain death if they miscalculated him. Nebuchadnezzar didn't have to go far to get Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego...next door, if you will, for as administrators of the province of Babylon meant they were close to the royal palace.

Vs. 14: Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image which I have set up?"

The verb *hanah* (cf. 2.27) is used for "said" in conjunction with the common '*amar* (to speak, to say). It highlights both the surprise and disappointment King Nebuchadnezzar had when confronting three of his most trusted officials. One can detect a note of betrayal as well, especially when he says "Is it true?" or *tseda'*, the only use of this noun in the Bible which can be rendered something as "of a purpose." The suddenness with which Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were brought before the king surprised them. When they caught glimpse of the "certain Chaldeans" they knew for certain that they had been accused unjustly and had to face the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar. Quite a few royal officials were present which must have caught them off guard as well. Without a doubt, someone must have rushed off to inform Daniel who decided against coming, for he knew his turn was next. It was only a question of when this would happen.

Vs. 15: Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image which I have made, well and good; but if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace; and who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?"

Despite the unexpected awkward situation in which King Nebuchadnezzar found himself with so many eyes upon him waiting for a decision, he threatens the three men while at the same time hoping they would fall down and worship the image at Dura. He had hoped they heard the various musical instruments giving the command and obeyed but apparently such was not the case. *Hatyd* is the adjective for "ready," the only use in the Bible, and related to the Hebrew verbal root meaning to be prepared or to be prompt. After all, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were administrators of the most important province in the Babylonian empire. They were expected to take the lead in such important matters. However, there seems to be no first hand eyewitnesses to whether or not they

obeyed the royal decree.

Shezav is the verb for “will deliver” which connotes a setting free and is found next in vs. 17. In 2.47 King Nebuchadnezzar exclaims after Daniel had interpreted his dream, “Truly your God is God of gods and Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries.” How quickly he had forgotten this! The king knew that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were close friends with Daniel, but that wouldn’t save them now. At this point the “certain Chaldeans” must have gloated to themselves, trying their best from not showing their glee.

Vs. 16: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego answered the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

The three companions respond to the king without hesitation and fear, most likely in the presence of those “certain Chaldeans” who eagerly were waiting what they had to say. These sycophants must have been taken aback at their boldness which in itself was a refutation of their false accusation. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego respond with the proper name “Nebuchadnezzar” minus any formal title which serves to accentuate both their innocence and determination. *Chashach* is the participle for (no) “need” which has one other biblical reference, Ezra 6.9: “And whatever is needed—young bulls, rams or sheep for burnt offerings to the God of heaven.” *Chashach* is used with *pitgam* or “matter” which also applies to an edict or letter. It has one other reference in Daniel: “The sentence is by the decree of the watchers” [4.17].

King Nebuchadnezzar and the “certain Chaldeans” must have been puzzled at this answer which hinted at a righteousness indignation out there for all to behold. They know they’re in a situation where any rational response is fruitless. They also know the accusation brought against them is partially true insofar as they did not give obeisance to the image. Why bother with arguing against a decree of death they knew was to follow?

Vs. 17: If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.

Not only do Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego continue with calm resignation, they come off with an astounding claim of divine protection against this, the most powerful ruler in the world. They state their dedication to God whom they “serve” or *pelach* (cf. vs. 12) which naturally forbade them to worship the gold image. Other Jews living in Babylon must have followed suite though we have no record of them whereas others went through with the outward gesture and then got on with their lives.

Shezav or “deliver” (cf. vs. 15) is used twice here: with respect to the furnace and the king’s hand. That pretty much puts Nebuchadnezzar in a position where he had no other choice but to execute Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Would he do the same to Daniel? That question remains to be seen.

Vs. 18: But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods nor worship the golden image which you have set up."

The words “be it known to you” must have galled Nebuchadnezzar as well as having taken him by surprise, the three companions not showing the slightest intimidation or fear. Refusal to bow down to the golden image is one thing, but not serving “your gods” is a wholly different matter. The response is one of contempt as well, for “your gods” is a way of saying they do not exist nor ever have existed. Since the Babylonians were renowned for their astronomical observations, such contempt intimated that work as well, for it was interwoven with the practice of astrology.

The king must have been thinking of his earlier exclamation to Daniel in 2.47, “Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings.” How was he to reconcile the two? To condemn Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would be to condemn the very man (Daniel) who came to his rescue in a time of great need. Nevertheless, Nebuchadnezzar was on the spot. If he were to cave in, he would be doing so in a public manner that would be scandalous to those at court as well as to the Babylonian nation. And Arioch, captain of the guard, was always ready to step in and assist in any coup.

Vs. 19: Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

After such a bold, even brazen, few verses, King Nebuchadnezzar vented his “fury” or *chema*, the only other biblical reference being found in vs. 13 above. It is the same rage but here as directed to the immediate execution of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Until then he was willing to hear them out with the possibility of saving them or making some kind of excuse due to their exalted position in the government. The “certain Chaldeans” who accused the three must have been thrilled, doing their best to conceal their delight at this royal decision which was irrevocable.

Tselem is the noun for “expression” noted last in vs. 1 with regard to the golden image King Nebuchadnezzar had erected on the plain of Dura. This word is used with the verb *shena*’ in 2.21, there with regard to change of seasons. It’s almost impossible to describe what his face looked like, just as hideous to the three companions as the golden image. From there it was one step to heat the oven almost to the melting point. Earlier it was noted that quite a few such furnaces must have been scattered around the countryside for making bricks. The one at hand must have been considerably larger and more ominous looking because it was centrally located and therefore used for large scale building projects.

Vs. 20: And he ordered certain mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.

“Mighty” and “men” both derive from a common Hebrew verbal root, *gavar* meaning to prevail, to be strong. The noun is *gevar* noted last in vs. 2 as “certain” (Jews) which is modified by another noun (the only use of this term in the Bible), *gibar*. One gets the sense that King Nebuchadnezzar picked out not just the strongest men but those who distinguished themselves in his various campaigns, possibly against Israel. If this were true, these soldiers would take particular delight in the work they were about to accomplish. Perhaps Arioch, the captain of the guard was responsible for delegating the executioners, having no other choice to but obey even though he was on friendly terms with Daniel.

Kephat is the verb for “bind” found in the next verse and has three other references, all in Daniel.

The sense of power conveyed by *gevar/gibar* corresponds not only to Nebuchadnezzar’s altered look but to the furnace having been heated seven times its normal capacity.

Vs. 21: Then these men were bound in their mantles, their tunics, their hats and their other garments, and they were cast into the burning fiery furnace.

By reason of their combustibility, the various types of garments stress the intense heat and flames of the furnace adjacent to the royal palace. They could even be part of official garb for the high positions the three companions held. The flowing nature of these clothes are sufficient for binding them, no ropes or other external means are required. The four types of clothing are as follows: “mantles” or *sarbalyn* which refers to under garments, “tunics” or *petash*, “hats” or *karbela*’ and the most general term of them all, “garments” or *levush*. The first three are the only found here whereas the fourth has

one other reference, 7:9: "his raiment was white as snow."

Although these are rarely used terms, they are idea for conveying the intent of King Nebuchadnezzar to make the most dramatic spectacle possible. One can just imagine Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego so tightly bound up and as combustible as they could be, standing there a few moments before the order was given to case them into the furnace.

Vs. 22: Because the king's order was strict and the furnace very hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

Milah is the noun for "order" noted last in 2.23 as "matter" which here is "strict." It applies to the strong words from vs. 19 to now as "seven times more," "mighty men," "bound" (in combustible clothes), "strict," "very hot" and "slew." All are intended to heighten the powerless three companions confronted with certain death. At least their combustible clothing insured they would die instantly.

Chatsaph is found one other time (2.15) where it is rendered as "severe." Actually, the "certain Chaldeans" who had brought accusations against Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego couldn't be more delighted, being front row and center as they observed each and every move as closely as possible. The men consumed by the furnace are those "certain mighty men" of vs. 20 who must have been an unexpected treat of what was soon to happen.

Vs. 23: And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

Since the furnace had consumed the mighty men chosen to cast Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, the intense heat was sufficient to suck in the companions without further ado. Some kind of special fuel is being used to get the oven heated seven times above its normal capacity. Those in charge knew it might crack but went ahead anyway in order to make the execution of the three companions as spectacular as possible. However, they emerge unscathed and already must have had a premonition of this since they hadn't been burned at the very moment the fire consumed those chosen to cast them into the furnace.

NB: The Septuagint or Greek version inserts here *The Prayer of Azariah* and *The Song of the Three Young Men*, that is, between vs. 23 and vs. 24. However, those two texts are included in a supplement posted at the end of this document.

Vs. 24: Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He said to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered the king, "True, O king."

The King himself took special interest in the execution of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, possibly having mixed feelings by reason of their remarkable ability. He knew, albeit sadly, that they were intimates of Daniel which means the "certain Chaldeans" might go after him next.

Tevah is the verb for "astonished," the only use of this word in the Bible and used concurrently with *behal* or "in haste," a verb noted last in 2.25 which connotes being afraid as well as taking flight. This rising up suggests that King Nebuchadnezzar was seated close to the opening of the furnace yet far back enough so as not be burned. Thus he was the first person to witness the astonishing sight at hand. Right beside the king were his counselors, the first time these men are mentioned. Chances are they had no association with the "certain Chaldeans" and may even have had numerous run-ins with them over the years. As royal counselors it was difficult to deal with such shady characters who always tried to interfere in matters of state. The noun for "counselors" is *hadavar* which occurs three other times in the Book of Daniel, the next being vs. 27. The verbal root is *davar* which means to speak and thus is indicative of this consultative role. King Nebuchadnezzar was too taken aback at what was

happening to say or do anything. In fact, he may have thought the sight before his eyes was some kind of optical illusion.

Vs. 25: He answered, "But I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

While both Nebuchadnezzar and his counselors agreed that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had been cast into the furnace (they didn't seem concerned about those who were burnt doing it), the king saw four men. They were "loose" or *shere'*, that is, untied from "their mantles, their tunics, their hats and their other garments" noted in vs. 21. Obviously the flames had dissolved their bonds while not harming the wearers. *Shere'* is found last in 2.22 with another meaning, "dwells."

Furthermore, the three companions are not "hurt," *chaval* (the only use of this word in the Bible), as they walk about within the furnace which, as noted earlier, must have been one the largest around due to its central location in Babylon and used for making bricks in the city's unending construction projects.

As for the fourth man who remain unidentified, his "appearance" or *demah* is singled out, the noun being close to the Hebrew verbal root *damah*, to be like. It occurs one other time, 7.5: "And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear." To both King Nebuchadnezzar and his counselors this fourth man resembled a "son of the gods." They must have had an idea of what such a being looked like from their tradition even though it could be an illusion due to the leaping of flames. Refer to vs. 28 where Nebuchadnezzar calls this being an angel.

Vs. 26: Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come forth and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire.

Due to the intensity of the fire, everyone stood back at a safe distance else they be consumed as had been the case of those who tossed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So when King Nebuchadnezzar approached the door, the fire must have died down a bit...not fast enough for him after what he had just witnessed...and bade the three men to come out. He didn't order the fourth man, the son of the gods, to exit, fearful of who he might be and take revenge for having issued a decree of execution.

Nebuchadnezzar calls the three "servants" of the Most High God or *havad* noted last in 2.4. He had a not entirely dissimilar experience with Daniel, that is, when he acknowledged "your God is God of gods and Lord of kings" [2.47]. This occurred immediately after the successful interpretation of the dream, the memory of which now must have hit Nebuchadnezzar with considerable force, even with some recrimination.

So as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego made their way out of the furnace, the fourth man "like a son of the gods" remained although we have no account of anyone seeing him. Chances are that as soon as the three exited, much effort was made to extinguish the furnace...no small task...to discover the identity of this mysterious person. However, nothing nor no one was to be found.

Vs. 27: And the satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men; the hair of their heads was not singed, their mantles were not harmed and no smell of fire had come upon them.

Here we have three governing bodies mentioned last in vs. 3 as being assembled for the dedication of King Nebuchadnezzar's golden image set up on the plain of Dura. These people were responsible for the empire's governance and did not come together except during special occasions. Obviously the dedication of the statue was important (for the king, at least). The same applies to the miraculous

event that just transpired, the rescue and preservation of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego after their recent ordeal. King Nebuchadnezzar deemed this so important an event that he summoned his officials. The first summons was for a dedication whereas this time it was to behold and verify a miracle. They got the details by courier, of course, and wondered if it were actually true. At least curiosity urged them on, so as soon as the officials had arrived home, they turned around and hastened to Babylon. Hence there was some gap of time between their arrival and when the three companions emerged from the furnace meaning that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were treated as curiosities, even gods, by reason of their experience.

Shelet is the noun for “power” found last in 2.38 as “rule.” The observation that their hair wasn’t singed, their clothing harmed nor did they have the smell of fire is compounded by the fact of having been cast into the furnace with bound with their mantles, tunics, hats and other garments. This means that King Nebuchadnezzar had to preserve the three companions in their original condition, as it were, as he awaited the arrival of his officials. He had the support of numerous eye witnesses who could testify to what had happened.

Vs. 28: Nebuchadnezzar said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him and set at nought the king's command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.

Berak is a participle for “blessed” first noted in 2.20 which in this instance is both an exclamation and recognition by King Nebuchadnezzar that the God of Israel was responsible for delivering Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. As has been pointed out several times earlier, the king did pretty much the same in recognition of Daniel’s interpretation of the dream. So now the most powerful man on earth gives homage to four men, more accurately, the God whom they worship, taken from an obscure nation he had subdued. Actually, Nebuchadnezzar is extravagant in his praise which could fade away just as quickly as it came on, something the Jews were used to. Nevertheless, word of this must have spread rapidly throughout Babylon to all the Jewish exiles, a cause of great delight and pride in their leaders.

The “angel” or *mali’ak* of whom King Nebuchadnezzar speaks most likely is that fourth man in the furnace “like a son of the gods” [vs. 25]. It has one other reference (6.22) in not a dissimilar situation: “My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths.” Like its Hebrew counterpart, *mali’ak* pertains to a messenger. If that fourth man was actually present, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego don’t speak of him to the king nor to anyone else. Later they must have mentioned it in some detail to Daniel which is why he refers to this *mali’ak* in the lions’ den, the same one who had been in the furnace. It is to Nebuchadnezzar’s credit, however, that he didn’t press the three companions for further information.

Three words in rapid succession, all related to each other: *shezav* is the verb for “delivered” noted last in vs. 17, 2), *rechats* is the verb for “trusted,” the only biblical reference and seems related to the Hebrew verb to wash and *shena’* for “set at nought” noted last in vs. 19, its fundamental meaning to change.

Vs. 29: Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins; for there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way."

Now King Nebuchadnezzar decides to formalize his enthusiasm, going way overboard but keeping with his tendency to swing from one mood to another. Although the new promulgation will protect the Jews, it could cause trouble for non-Jews, presumably the bulk under the king’s rule and therefore the Babylonians themselves. He stops short of making them worship Israel’s God but instead promulgates against speaking against him.

Netsal is the verb for “deliver” and has two other references, 6.14 being the next: “and set his mind to deliver Daniel.” Like its Hebrew counterpart, *netsal* means to draw out or to pull away, thereby conveying a more hands-on approach to rescuing someone.

One can only imagine the response of those in the royal court listening to these words. After all, the full spread of Babylonian power was represented there (cf. vs. 27) along with those “certain Chaldeans” who had been responsible for the charge against Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

Vs. 30: Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

Prior to their sudden, dramatic fall from grace, the three companions were exalted once again, the first being after Daniel’s correct interpretation of the dream (cf. 2.49). Apparently they were restored to their former position “in the province of Babylon” which also occurs in 2.49. The only difference here, however, is one of promotion, the verb *tselach* being used which means to prosper and occurs one other time in Daniel, 6.28: “So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.” Despite this, it couldn’t subdue any hostility native Babylonians had for foreigner masters within their own borders.

Thus Chapter Three ends on a promising note, the fortunes of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego having been restored. Although those around them must have badgered them about their experience, especially as to the identity of the fourth man in the furnace, they did best to keep quiet. Given King Nebuchadnezzar’s mood swings, they could fall out of favor yet again.

Earlier mention was made that Daniel does not appear in this drama, as though he were absent. It was best for him to remain in the background though he couldn’t hide. If the three had been executed, he might stand a chance to stay alive long enough to protect his fellow Jews in exile. However, Daniel’s travail is to make its appearance shortly.

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, vs. 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 others 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 knew 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 *qodam*, a preposition meaning before and noted last in 2.27. It does not matter whether the left of 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. *'Azal* 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 was 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 *behal* 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.