

DANIEL 8 | *The Ram and the Goat*

1 In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar,¹ a vision (וִּזְיוֹן) appeared to me, Daniel,² after that which appeared to me at the first.³ 2 And I saw in the vision. And when I saw, I was in Susa the citadel,⁴ which is in the province of Elam.⁵ And I saw in the vision, and I was at the Ulai canal.⁶

Ram

3 I raised my eyes and saw, and behold, a ram⁷ standing on the bank of the [Ulai] canal.⁸ It had two horns, and both horns were high, but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last.⁹ 4 I saw the ram charging westward, northward, and southward.¹⁰ No beast could stand before him, and there was no one who could rescue from his hand (רָצַח). He did as he pleased and became great (גָּדַל).

¹ This was about 551 bc, two years after Daniel received the vision in Da 7 and about twelve years before the Medes and Persians conquered Babylon (Da 5).

² Daniel continues to write in the first person. Now he writes in Hebrew rather than Aramaic.

³ The dream and visions of Da 7 (Da 7:1).

⁴ Some believe Daniel was in Susa; others believe he envisioned Susa. Susa was 200 miles east of Babylon and is modern Iran. Hammurabi's code was discovered there in 1901. It became one of the capitals of the Persian empire. Esther (Es 1:2) and Nehemiah (Ne 1:1) lived there.

⁵ "After the collapse of Assyria, Elam was annexed by the Indo-Europeans, who had gradually gained power in Iran following their invasions c. 1000 bc. Teispes (c. 675-640 bc), ancestor of Cyrus, bore the title 'king of Anshan' and Susa eventually became one of the three chief cities of the Medo-Persian empire. Elam is called upon by Isaiah to crush Babylon (Is. 21:2) and this was carried out (cf. Dn. 8:2). Yet Elam will be crushed in turn, even the famous archers defeated (Je. 25:25; 49:34-39; cf. Is. 22:6; Ezk. 32:24). The crowd at Pentecost (Acts 2:9) contained men from as far away as Elam..." (A. R. Millard, "[Elam, Elamites](#)," ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 304-305).

⁶ Daniel is very specific as to where he was when he saw the vision. The Ulai is "[t]he canal or river flowing E of Susa in Elam (SW Persia) where Daniel heard a man's voice (Dn. 8:16). The river (Heb. *ūlāi*; Assyr. *Ulai*; classic *Eulaeus*) has changed its course in modern times, and the present Upper Kherkhah and Lower Karun (Pasitigris) rivers may then have been a single stream flowing into the delta at the N of the Persian Gulf" (D. J. Wiseman, "[Ulai](#)," ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 1218).

⁷ The ram was an important symbol for the Persians. When the Persian king went into battle, he carried the head of a ram. The Zodiac sign Aries, the ram, stood for Persia.

⁸ The ram will arise from the area of Elam.

⁹ This is the Medo-Persian empire, with the Persians more powerful than the Medes. They are unequal allies. **Da 7:5** 5 And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side.

¹⁰ The Medo-Persians will charge first west (Babylonia), then north (Lydia), then south (Egypt). **Da 7:5** 5 It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And it was told, Arise, devour much flesh.

Male Goat

5 As I was considering (בִּי), behold, a male goat¹¹ came from the west¹² across the face of the whole earth, without touching the ground.¹³ And the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes. 6 He came to the ram with the two horns, which I had seen standing on the bank of the canal, and he ran at him in his powerful wrath (הַקָּה). 7 I saw him come close to the ram, and he was enraged against him, struck the ram, and broke his two horns. And the ram had no power to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled on him. And there was no one who could rescue the ram from his hand (דָּ). 8 Then the goat became exceedingly great (גדל), but when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.¹⁴

The Little Horn of the Male Goat

9 Out of one of them [the four horns] came a little horn,¹⁵ which grew exceedingly great (גדל) toward the south [Egypt], toward the east [Babylonia], and toward the beauty/ornament/decoration (וְאֵל-הַצִּבְיָה)¹⁶ [the land of Israel]. 10 It grew great (גדל), even to the host of heaven (צָבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם). And some of the host (צָבָא) and some of the stars (כּוֹכָבִים) it threw down to the

¹¹ The zodiac sign Capricorn, a horned goat, stood for Greece.

¹² Greece is in the west.

¹³ In a sort of blitzkrieg, Alexander the Great conquered the entire Middle East in three years. There were three significant battles between Greece and Persia: at the Granicus river (334 bc), at Issus (333 bc), and at Gaugamela (331 bc). The Persians had attacked the Greeks many times before Alexander's rise. The Greco-Persian wars lasted from 499-449 bc.

¹⁴ The four Diadochi. **Da 7:6** 6 After this I looked, and behold, 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. **Da 11:2-4** 2 Behold, three more kings shall arise in Persia, and a fourth shall be far richer than all of them. And when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece. 3 Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and do as he wills. 4 And as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor according to the authority with which he ruled, for his kingdom shall be plucked up and go to others besides these.

¹⁵ This is the little horn is of the third beast, not the little horn of the fourth beast (Da 7:8, 11, 24-26). It foreshadows the little horn of the fourth beast as a type. The crisis that will confront Israel in the time of the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-64 bc) will strongly resemble the crisis that will confront her in the tribulation. **Mt 24:15** 15 So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)....

¹⁶ “[O]rnamēt, splendour...meaning Palestine Da 11:16, 41...the ornament, decoration” (*HALOT*, 998). **Da 11:16** 16 But he who comes against him shall do as he wills, and none shall stand before him. And he shall stand in the beauty, with destruction in his hand. **Da 11:41** 41 He shall come into the beauty. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites. **Da 11:45** 45 And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him. **Jer 3:19** 19 I said, How I would set you among my sons, and give you a pleasant land, a heritage *most beautiful* of all nations. And I thought you would call me, My Father, and would not turn from following me. **Eze 20:6** 6 On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the *most glorious* of all lands. **Eze 20:15** 15 Moreover, I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land that I had given them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the *most glorious* of all lands.... **Eze 26:20** 20 ... Then I will make you go down with those who go down to the pit, to the people of old, and I will make you to dwell in the world below, among ruins from of old, with those who go down to the pit, so that you will not be inhabited; but I will set *beauty* in the land of the living. **Zec 9:16** 16 On that day Yahweh their God will save them, as the flock of his people, for like the *jewels of a crown* they shall shine on his land.

ground (אָרֶץ) and trampled on them.¹⁷ 11 It became great, even as great (גדל) as the Prince of the host (עַד שָׂרֵי־הַצָּבָא).¹⁸ And the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary (מִקְדָּשׁ) was overthrown. 12 And a host/army (צָבָא) will be given over to it together with the regular burnt offering because of transgression (פְּשָׁע), it will throw truth (אֱמֶת) to the ground, and it will act and prosper (צִלַּח). 13 Then I heard a holy one (אֶחָד־קְדוֹשׁ) speaking, and another holy one ([]) said to the one who spoke, For how long is the vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled underfoot? 14 And he said to me, For 2,300 evenings and mornings [six years, 140 days].¹⁹ Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state.

Daniel Seeks to Understand the Vision

15 When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought (בִּקֵּשׁ) to understand (בִּינֶה) it. And behold, there stood before me one having the appearance of a [young] man (בְּמַרְאֵה־גִּבּוֹר) [Jesus?].²⁰ 16 And I heard a man's voice (קוֹל־אָדָם) between the banks of the Ulai,²¹ and it called, Gabriel (גַּבְרִיאֵל),²² make this man here (הֲלֵז) understand (בִּין) the vision. 17 So he [Gabriel] came near

¹⁷ In one assault on Jerusalem, the army of Antiochus IV Epiphanes killed 40,000 Jews in three days and exiled 10,000 more. In December, 168 bc, Antiochus returned in frustration from Alexandria, where he had been turned back by the Roman commander Popilius Laenas. He vented his exasperation on the Jews, dispatching his general, Apollonius, with 20,000 soldiers to seize Jerusalem on a sabbath. Antiochus IV Epiphanes then erected an idol of Zeus in the temple and desecrated the altar by offering pig on it. This idol became known to the Jews as 'the abomination of desolation' (הַשְׁקִיץ הַשּׁוֹמֵם), Da 11:31), a type of a future abomination of desolation (τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως) that will be set up in the Jerusalem sanctuary in the future (Mt 24:15). Four years later, on 25 December 164 bc, Judas Maccabaeus led the Jews in rededicating the temple to Yahweh, which is the basis for the Jewish festival of Hanukkah.

¹⁸ **Jo 5:14** 14 And he said, No, but I [the preincarnate Jesus] am the commander of the army of Yahweh. Now I have come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, worshiped, and said to him, What does my lord say to his servant?

¹⁹ The time period of the domination by Da 8's little horn (2,300 days) differs from the time period of the domination by Da 7's little horn (1,260 days)(Da 7:25; 12:7; Re 11:2; 12:6; 13:5; 14:6).

²⁰ Is this person the Son of Man Daniel saw in Da 7:13-14? The shared humanness of this person and Daniel is emphasised, in contrast to Gabriel, who is not a man.

²¹ The Ulai canal is on Babylonia's eastern border, in the direction of the Persian heartland.

²² Angels have names.

where I stood. And when he came, I was frightened and fell on my face. But he said to me, Understand (בין), son of Adam (בן־אָדָם), that the vision is for the time of the end (לְעֵת־הַקֵּץ).²³

18 And when he had spoken to me, I fell into a deep sleep/was stunned (רדם) with my face to the ground. But he [Gabriel] touched me and made me stand up. 19 He said,

Behold, I will make known (ידע) to you what will be at the [latter] end (אַחֲרֵית) of the curse/indignation (זַעַם), for it refers to the appointed/fixed time (מוֹעֵד) of the end (קֵץ). 20 As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia.²⁴ 21 And the goat is the king of Greece. And the great horn between his eyes is the first king [Alexander the Great].²⁵ 22 As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms²⁶ shall arise from his nation, but not with his power. 23 And at the latter end (אַחֲרֵית) of their kingdom, when the transgressors (הַפְּשָׁעִים) have reached their limit, a king of bold face (מְלִיךְ עֲזֵי־פָנִים) with a good knowledge of intrigue (חֵידָה) shall arise (עמד). 24 His power (כֹּחַ) shall be great—but not by his own power (כֹּחַ).²⁷ And he shall cause unheard of disaster (וּנְפִלְאוֹת יִשְׁחִית),²⁸ be successful (צלח), accomplish (עשה), and destroy/annihilate/exterminate/ruin (שחית)²⁹ mighty men (עֲצוּמִים) and the people who are the saints (עַם־קִדְּוֹת). 25 By his striving/planning (שָׂרָר) he shall make deceit/trick/fraud (מְרָמָה)³⁰ prosper under his hand, and in

²³ There is an end to historical epochs and history itself. Things will not always go on as they do now. **Da 8:19** 19 He said, Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter *end* of the indignation, for it refers to the appointed time of the *end*. **Da 11:27** 27 And as for the two kings, their hearts shall be bent on doing evil. They shall speak lies at the same table, but to no avail, for the *end* is yet to be at the time appointed. **Da 11:35** 35 ...And some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the *end*, for it still awaits the appointed time. **Da 11:40** 40 At the time of the *end*, the king of the south shall attack him, but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. And he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through. **Da 12:4** 4 But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the *end*. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase. **Da 12:6** 6 And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, How long shall it be till the *end* of these wonders? **Da 12:9** 9 He said, Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the *end*. **Da 12:13** 13 But go your way till the *end*. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the *end* of the days.

²⁴ Da 5. This is the first time nations corresponding to the prophetic images/symbols are specifically named. This shows images/symbols in prophecy stand for real empires, people, things, and events in the real space-time-matter universe. We must not allegorise/spiritualise images/symbols in either *Daniel* or *Revelation*, unless clearly called to do so in the text. *Daniel* teaches us how to read *Revelation*.

²⁵ Daniel died in 536 bc, and Alexander conquered Persian in 331 bc. That's a 205-year interval!

²⁶ Thrace and Bithynia under Lysimachus; Macedonia under Cassander; Egypt under Ptolemy I Soter; and Syria under Seleucus I Nicator.

²⁷ Will he be empowered by Satan?

²⁸ “[S]omething amazing, dreadful, with הַשְׁחִית Da 8:24, KBL: to cause unheard of disaster, NRSV to cause fearful destruction” (*HALOT*, 927).

²⁹ “וּנְפִלְאוֹת יִשְׁחִית” he will ruin marvellous things...he inflicts unheard of damage...he brings harm unheard of...he shall cause fearful destruction...he will work havoc untold” (*HALOT*, 1471).

³⁰ **Da 11:21-23** 21 In his place shall arise a *contemptible person* to whom royal majesty has not been given. He shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. 22 Armies shall be utterly swept away before him and broken, even the prince of the covenant. 23 And from the time that an alliance is made with him he shall act *deceitfully*, and he shall become strong with a small people.

his own heart/mind (לִבּוֹ) he shall become great (גָּדֹל). Without warning³¹ he shall destroy (שָׁחַת) many (רַבִּים). And he shall even rise up against the prince of princes (שַׂר־שָׂרִים), and not by human hand (בְּאִפְסֵי יָד) he shall be broken (שָׁבַר).³² 26 The vision of the [2,300] evenings and the mornings (הַעֶרֶב וְהַבֹּקֶר) that has been told is true (אֱמֶת). But seal up (סָתַם) the vision (חֲזוֹן), for it refers to many days (לְיָמִים רַבִּים) from now.³³

27 And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days. Then I rose and went about the king's business (מִלְאֲכַת הַמֶּלֶךְ),³⁴ but I was devastated (שָׁמַם) by the vision and did not understand (בִּינֵן) it.

³¹ In the midst of peace/while they were at ease/unexpectedly (*HALOT*, 1505). **Da 11:21** 21 In his place shall arise a contemptible person to whom royal majesty has not been given. He shall come in *without warning* and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. **Da 11:24** 24 *Without warning* he shall come into the richest parts of the province, and he shall do what neither his fathers nor his fathers' fathers have done, scattering among them plunder, spoil, and goods. He shall devise plans against strongholds, but only for a time.

³² How did Antiochus IV Epiphanes die?

³³ This vision is clearly about Medo-Persia and Greece, not Rome.

³⁴ Daniel was still working for Belshazzar and the Babylonian government at this point.

Thoughts

1. Da 8 begins a new section in the book. The author resumes writing in Hebrew (cf. Da 1:1-2:3), and the emphasis is placed not on the Gentile nations but on Israel.
2. *Daniel* and *Revelation* follow a similar pattern: (1) introduction (Da 1; Re 1-3); (2) worldwide judgment (Da 2-7; Re 4-11); and (3) prophecies focused on Israel (Re 12-20; Da 8-12).
3. Da 8 reveals additional details about two empires that were introduced in Da 2 and Da 7. Da 2 is the blueprint of the times of the Gentiles (Lk 21:24), especially as they relate to the people and land of Israel. Da 7 focuses on the fourth empire. Da 8 focuses on the second and third empires. The relationship between Daniel 2, Daniel 7, and Daniel 8 is a good example of progressive revelation.
4. Antiochus IV Epiphanes typifies the Roman emperor Titus (ad 70), the Roman emperor Hadrian (129-30), and the future antichrist.
5. Unlike the other dreams and visions in *Daniel*, this particular vision already has been totally fulfilled. It was future to Daniel, but it is past to us.
- 6. Cross-References.**
 - a. Da 11:20-45.
 - b. 1 Mac 1:10, 20; 6:16.
 - c. 2 Mac
 - d. Josephus
- 7. Lessons for Life.**
 - a. God's ability to predict the future is incredible. But he doesn't just predict the future. He guides/superintends the future according to a well-thought-out plan.
 - b. God's enemies may seem like they're winning. But they won't win. They can't win.
 - c. Like Daniel, we are to have a strong inner desire to understand his revelation, including prophecy about the future.