

The Book of Daniel: Study Materials

I) Introduction: Composition History

- **Author:** Although written in part as first-person narratives by a certain "Daniel," the real author is anonymous. Another much earlier "Daniel" is mentioned, along with Noah and Job, as a wise sage in Ezek 14:14-20; 28:3.
- **Date:** Although the events purportedly take place during the Babylonian Exile (6th cent. BC), the stories actually stem from the 3rd and early 2nd cent. BC, and the book was not compiled until ca. 167-164 BC.
- **Language:** The various stories in this book are written in three distinct languages: Hebrew (1:1—2:4a; 8—12); Aramaic (2:4b—7:28); and Greek (13—14); scholars have various theories to explain this phenomenon.
- **Structure & Genre:** The book has three main parts, each from different eras and of distinct literary genres:
 - **Chapters 1-6**, from the 3rd cent., contain stories about the life and struggles of Daniel and his companions during the Babylonian exile; here Daniel is the interpreter of the dreams of various Babylonian kings.
 - **Chapters 7-12**, from the early 2nd cent., is a collection of four *apocalyptic* visions; here Daniel himself is the visionary, but he needs help from an angelic mediator to interpret and understand his own dreams.
 - **Chapters 13-14** are not found in the Hebrew Bible, but are in the Septuagint (ancient Greek Bible; LXX); they consist of **three** separate stories involving Daniel that are novelistic, not historical.

II) Outline of Contents:

Ch. 1 – Daniel & Companions at the Babylonian Court	Ch. 7 – Vision of the Four Beasts
Ch. 2 – Nebuchadnezzar's First Dream: Great Statue	Ch. 8 – Vision of a Ram and a Goat
Ch. 3 – Three Companions in the Fiery Furnace	Ch. 9 – Angel Gabriel and the Seventy Weeks
Ch. 4 – Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream: Great Tree	Ch. 10-12 – Historical Visions, Battles, the End
Ch. 5 – Belshazzar's Feast: Writing on the Wall	Ch. 13 (Greek) – The Story of Susanna
Ch. 6 – Daniel remains safe in the Lion's Den	Ch. 14 (Greek) – The Stories of Bel and the Dragon

III) An Overview of the Great Empires of the Ancient Middle East

- **Egyptians** – Ruled Palestine and many surrounding territories for most of 3rd and 2nd millennia BC.
- **[United Kingdom of Israel]** – "Golden Age" of Ancient Israel, when 12 tribes are independent and united under Kings Saul, David, and Solomon (ca. 1030-930 BC); but after Solomon's death the kingdom divides.
- **Assyrians** – King Sennacherib destroys the northern Kingdom of Israel & its capital Samaria; the ten northern tribes of Israelites are exiled and scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire (721 – 600's BC).
- **Neo-BABYLONIANS** – King Nebuchadnezzar captures the southern Kingdom of Judah, **destroys the Temple and city of Jerusalem**; many Jews taken captive to Babylon for several generations, in what is called the "Babylonian Exile" (587 – 539 BC).
- **MEDES** – a smaller kingdom which never directly ruled Israel, but helped others defeat the Assyrians and Babylonians; it was then incorporated into the Persian empire, becoming its largest province (by 550 BC).
- **PERSIANS** – King Cyrus conquers the Babylonian empire, allows the Jews to return to Judea and rebuild the temple; the Persians control Judea through approved local leaders (539 – 330's BC).
- **GREEKS** – After Alexander the Great becomes King of Macedonia (332 BC), his armies conquer the East (almost the whole Persian empire), but he dies very young (323 BC). His Hellenistic empire is then divided between four generals, who battle each other in the "Wars of the Diadochi." Eventually, two long-reigning dynasties rule in the East (see my page on [Hellenistic Era Rulers](#)):
 - **Ptolemies** – Greek rulers from Egypt who also control Palestine at first (ca. 323 – 198 BC);
 - **Seleucids** – Greek rulers from Syria who take over control of Palestine later (198 – 141 BC); the tenth in this dynasty (if starting from Alexander) is:
 - **Antiochus IV Epiphanes** – **desecrates the Jerusalem Temple** by placing statues in it (167 BC), thus sparking the "Maccabean Revolt"; the Jews soon recapture and **rededicate the Temple** (164 BC).
- **[Maccabean/Hasmonean Dynasty]** – the Jews briefly regain full independence (141 – 63 BC).
- **Romans** – General Pompey leads the Roman take-over of Israel in 63 BC [see my page on [Roman Era Rulers](#)].
- [See also my summary page on [Ancient Israelite and Jewish History](#)]

IV) Daniel's Apocalyptic Visions as related to Ancient Jewish History

Statue in Dan 2:31-45	Beasts of Dan 7:1-28	Ram & Goat of Dan 8:1-25	Empire
vv. 32a, 37-38: head of gold	vv. 4, 17: lion w/ eagle's wings	-x-	Babylonians
vv. 32b, 39a: chest & arms of silver	vv. 5, 17: bear w/ three tusks	vv. 3-4, 20: ram w/ two horns	Medes
vv. 32c, 39b: middle & thighs of bronze	vv. 6, 17: leopard w/ 4 wings & 4 heads	(same as above)	Persians
vv. 33a, 40: legs of iron	vv. 7, 17, 19, 23: terrifying beast w/ iron teeth.	vv. 5-7, 21: goat w/ one horn	Greeks: <i>Alexander the Great</i>
vv. 33b, 41-43: feet partly iron, partly clay;	vv. 20a, 24a: and with 10 horns;	vv. 8, 22: it breaks & becomes four horns	Ptolemies & Seleucids
-x-	vv. 8, 20b-21, 24b-25: another horn w/ arrogant mouth	vv. 9-14a, 23-25d: another horn acts arrogantly	Antiochus IV Epiphanes
vv. 34-35, 44-45: stone that becomes mountain	9-14, 18, 22, 26-27: Ancient One & Son of Man	vv. 14b, 25e: (restoration implicit; not by human hands)	<i>[God restores Israel forever]</i>

V) Babylonian, Mede and Persian Rulers

BABYLON	MEDIA	PERSIA
Nebuchadnezzar (605-562) Amel-marduk (562-560) Neriglissar (560-556) Nabonidus (556-539)	Cyaxares (625-585) Astyages (585-550) [?Darius the Mede?]	
Belshazzar (co-regent 549-539)		Cyrus (550-530): defeats Astyages 550; captures Babylon 539 Cambyses (530-522); Darius I Hystaspes (522-486) Xerxes I (486-465); Artaxerxes I (465-424) Xerxes II (423); Darius II (423-404) Artaxerxes II (404-358); Artaxerxes III (358-338) Arses (338-336); Darius III (336-331)

VI) The Seleucid and Ptolemaic Dynasties (Greek)

- 332-323: King **Alexander the Great** leads Greek armies invading East, but he dies of a fever at age 33.
- 323-321: General **Perdiccas** is appointed regent over the whole empire, but is soon assassinated.
- 321-281: **Wars of the Diadochi:** Alexander's generals and their successors divide the empire into four parts, but fight each other for 40 years to gain control of more territory; by 281 the two main rulers are **Ptolemy & Seleucus**.
- At first **Palestine** was controlled by the Ptolemies (320-198), but later by the Seleucids (198-141).

PTOLEMAIC DYNASTY (Egypt)	SELEUCID DYNASTY (Syria)
Ptolemy I "Soter" (323-282; a.k.a. Ptolemy Lagi)	Seleucus I "Nicator" (312-281)
Ptolemy II "Philadelphus" (282-246)	Antiochus I "Soter" (281-261); Antiochus II "Theos" (261-246)
Ptolemy III "Euergetes" (246-221)	Seleucus II "Callinicus" (246-226); Seleucus III "Soter" (226-223)
Ptolemy IV "Philopator" (221-204)	Antiochus III "The Great" (223-187)
Ptolemy V "Epiphanes" (204-180)	Seleucus IV "Philopator" (187-175)
Ptolemy VI "Philometor" (180-145)	Antiochus IV "Epiphanes" (175-164)
Cleopatra I (180-176)	Antiochus V "Eupator" (164-162)
Cleopatra II (170-164)	Demetrius I "Soter" (162-150)
Ptolemy VII "Neos Philopator" (145-44)	Alexander Balas (150-145)
Ptolemy VIII, "Euergetes II" (170-163; 144-116)	Demetrius II "Nicator" (145-139, 129-125)
	[Antiochus VI "Epiphanes Dionysus": 145-142]
	Antiochus VII "Sidetes" (138-129)
116-30: more Ptolemies (IX-XV) and Cleopatras (III-VII) ruled until the Romans took over	125-65: descendants of Demetrius II and Antiochus VII fight for control until the Romans take over

[For more detail, see also my webpage on the [Hellenistic Era Rulers](#).]

VII) The Hasmonean Family: Main Leaders by Generations

- Mattathias (d. 166)
- Judas Maccabeus (d. 160); Jonathan (160-42); Simon (142-134)
- John Hyrcanus I (134-104)
- Judas Aristobulus I (104-103); Alexander Jannaeus (103-76); wife Salome Alexander (76-67)
- Aristobulus II (67-63, d. 49); Hyrcanus II (63-40; d. 30)

VIII) Bibliography: Recommended Readings

- Book of Daniel - introduction and full text available on the USCCB website.
- Carol A. **Newsom**. *Daniel: A Commentary*. The Old Testament Library. Westminster John Knox Press, 2014.
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- John J. **Collins**. *Daniel*. Hermeneia Commentaries. Fortress Press, 1994.
- Louis Francis **Hartman** and Alexander A. **Di Lella**. *The Book of Daniel*. Yale Anchor Bible Commentaries. Yale University Press, 1978.
- Carey A. **Moore**. *Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah: The Additions*. Yale Anchor Bible Commentaries. Yale University Press, 1995.