

Daniel 8:9-14

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The Vision of the Ram and the Goat:

Another horn grows from the four horns on the goat's head. This horn grows enormous, reaching up into heaven and knocking stars from the sky, trampling them. It glorifies itself as equal with God. It puts itself in the Temple of God and prevents the Jewish people from making sacrifices. Daniel hears an angel tell another angel that this evil time will last for 2,300 days and nights, before the Temple is rescued.

Chapter 8 covers Daniel's witnessing of another vision. In his vision, he is standing beside the Ulai Canal in Susa, one of the cities of the Babylonian empire during the reign of Belshazzar. A ram (the Medo-Persian empire) appears beside the canal. He has two horns, and one horn is longer than the other. He begins kicking and bucking about so wildly that no other beasts can stand in his way. No one can stop him. He is both powerful and vain. Suddenly a goat (Greece) with a giant horn (Alexander the Great) flies through the air and shatters the ram's horns, proceeding to trample the ram to death. The goat is proud, yet as soon as it is victorious, his own horn breaks off, and four other horns grow from his head.

This scene portends the rise of the Medo-Persian empire, the Grecian empire which topples it, the death of Alexander the Great, and the four kingdoms that emerge thereafter, led by four of Alexander's generals. One of Alexander's generals, Seleucus I Nicator, takes control of a kingdom that rules much of the Middle East, including the land of Israel.

Daniel's vision becomes more specific. He observes that *Out of one of the four horns came forth a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land.* The *Beautiful Land* is Israel and Judah (Daniel 11:16). This new horn started small, likely indicating that this kingdom was initially weak. But the kingdom then grew exceptionally large. It continues to grow in power, so much that it *grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down.*

The angel Gabriel will explain that this *horn*, like the other horns in the vision, represents a king (Daniel 8:23). Horns traditionally represent power. This king will come from one of the four successors to Alexander the Great. History shows who this king was: Antiochus Epiphanes of the Seleucid dynasty. The Seleucids descended from one of Alexander the Great's generals, named Seleucus. The Seleucids ruled over *the Beautiful Land* (Israel) during the centuries after Alexander's conquest, leaving God's people (the Israelites) alone for the most part.

Antiochus Epiphanes, however, wanted the Jews to assimilate to Greek culture. His worst offense is described here and in another vision Daniel would witness, where Antiochus would "do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation" (Daniel 11:31). The Abomination of Desolation (in other words, a wickedness which causes horror)

happened when Antiochus established an altar to Zeus in the Jewish temple, then sacrificed pigs there. He killed and enslaved many Jews, prompting a rebellion.

The arrogance of this *horn* (Antiochus) is far greater than the goat or the ram's: It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host. The horn removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down.

Antiochus's title, "Epiphanes," is one he gave himself, which means "God Manifest." He claimed he was a god, just like Alexander the Great before him. Antiochus was an enemy to the *truth*; he metaphorically would *fling it to the ground*, opposing the true God, claiming to be a god himself.

For years Antiochus was able to *perform his will*, to do whatever he pleased, especially to the Jews, *and prosper*. Nothing stopped him, he was successful, he was performing a *transgression* in the temple, blaspheming the Lord and offering unclean sacrifices to idols. He had uprooted the Jewish faith and scattered the Jewish faithful all over the country. He targeted the Jewish people by trying to destroy their faith. And worst of all, he took over the temple in Jerusalem and prevented the Jews from making *regular sacrifice* to God.

Daniel sees that *on account of this transgression, the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice*. The *transgression* being spoken of is the first Abomination of Desolation, Antiochus's order to halt Jewish religious worship, in direct contradiction to God's commands. At that point, *regular sacrifice* will cease. But also *the host will be given over to the horn* which represents the power of Antiochus. The *host* being described here might refer to the angelic armies who have their influence curbed, those described as being *trampled*.

The word translated *host* can apply to any large assembly. However, it usually refers to an army. The *Commander of the host* here would describe God. God is the *Commander* of all the heavenly armies. Even though God is supreme over all, Antiochus Epiphanes will dare to defy God directly. He *removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down*. This is a direct affront to God.

We are not given an explanation of who is being referred to in the phrase *the host of heaven*, or the *stars* that are caused to *fall to the earth*. When the phrase *host of heaven* appears elsewhere in scripture, it most often refers to the literal stars in the sky (Deuteronomy 4:19, 17:3). However, in a couple of instances the phrase *host of heaven* refers to the angelic beings in heaven (2 Chronicles 18:18; Nehemiah 9:6). This seems the most likely reference, and might refer to an angelic conflict layered upon the human conflict that is described. We might see a hint of this when Gabriel is sent to explain a vision to Daniel, but must fight a spiritual force he describes as the "Prince of Persia" who held him up for twenty-one days (Daniel 10:13). It seems that the conflict is so severe that even some of these angelic beings were *trampled down*.

Apparently what is being described is a large conflict of spiritual forces intermingled with the maneuverings of human political figures. This is similar to the events described in the book of Revelation, which describes events in heaven being directly connected with events occurring upon the earth. The *horn* that represents the power of Antiochus Epiphanes *will fling truth to the*

ground. When tyrants rule, they redefine truth. Truth becomes an extension of their will to power. This redefinition of *truth* from being what God says to being whatever they say is part and parcel of Antiochus being able to *perform its will and prosper*, because truth no longer stands in the way. For a time, it acknowledges no boundaries, no limitations on its power.

How long would this evil last? Whether or not Daniel pondered this question, his vision answers it. He hears *a holy one*, probably an angel, speaking, *and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, "How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?"* This question refers to the time when Antiochus will be allowed to desecrate Jewish religious practice.

The other voice answers Daniel, rather than the first voice: *He said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored."*

The phrase *2,300 evenings and mornings* references the time period between the ban on sacrifices in the temple to its restoration.

Just as God said in this vision, this would be the length of time that the *transgression* which *causes horror* (the Abomination of Desolation) would last. Antiochus' persecution against the Jews began in late 171 BC and ended in December 165 BC, roughly a 6.3 year period (2,300 days).

An Israelite named Judah Maccabee, the son of a priest, was a central figure in this struggle against Antiochus's drive to stomp out Judaism. Maccabee raised a revolt, and against all odds helped to drive out the Seleucid occupiers. Judah Maccabee and his followers cleaned up the temple (*then the holy place will be properly restored*) and relit the lampstand (the "menorah") which is commemorated by the Jewish people each year as the Festival of Lights, also known as "Hanukkah."

As we will see in Chapter 11, Antiochus Epiphanes foreshadows the beast and antichrist of Revelation, who will also conduct activities described as an Abomination of Desolation. Roughly 200 years after the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, Jesus told His disciples that He would not return to earth until the sign of the "ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet" (Matthew 24:15). So this prophecy of Daniel written down during the time of the Babylonian Empire has already had one fulfillment, but has another that is yet to come, as of this writing (in 2023).

Biblical Text

⁹ Out of one of them came forth a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land. ¹⁰ It grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down. ¹¹ It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down. ¹² And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn

along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper. ¹³ Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, “How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?” ¹⁴ He said to me, “For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored.”