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The Kingdoms of This World
7: 1-6

The kingdoms of this world DIG: Who are these strange beasts? When you think of a kingdom, what kind of images come to mind? In Dani'el's vision, empires are described as beasts. Describe the nations that are in the headlines today and the beasts that they most remind you of. Which beast was Dani'el living under?

REFLECT: How do you react to these dreadful "beastly" forces within our world? Within your life? Do you look at your life right now with God as something majestic, or is your life in the world something dreadful? What reason does ADONAI give you to trust Him and believe that He has the whole world in His hands?

Dani'el 2 gives us the perspective of the times of the Gentiles from a human viewpoint as something majestic, but Dani'el 7 gives us the perspective from God's viewpoint as something dreadful. Thus, Chapter 7 elaborates on the prophecies that were made in Chapter 2.

Verse 1 introduces **Dani'el's dream visions** by providing a date. **In the first year of Belshazzar,** grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, **king of Babylon, Dani'el had a** disturbing **dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying in bed. The first year of Belshazzar** corresponds to 553 BC, and **he** would rule for only fourteen years before **his** death (**to see link click Ct – Belshazzar was Killed**). In Aramaic (see **Ac – Dani'el from a Messianic Jewish Perspective: Languages**), the method of revelation is referred to both as **dreams** and **visions**. **Dani'el** was asleep when **he** received **his visions**, but as soon as **he** woke up **he wrote down the substance of his dream** while **it** was still fresh in **his** mind **(7:1)**.[190] By recording **his** vision, **Dani'el** invites the reader to be a spectator and observe the action as it unfolds before **him**. The shift to the first-person distinguishes the visions portion of the book from the court stories and gives one the impression that **Dani'el** is sharing excerpts from **his** personal journal. **He** stands before the Mediterranean with a storm brewing.[191]



The Great Sea (7:2-3): Dani'el said: **In my vision at night I looked** (Aramaic *chazah*, pointing to *continuous action*). Thus, **he** was *continually gazing* at **his vision** that **night**. What **he** saw was a **great sea** that was **churning up,** or being agitated. It's not uncommon for an ocean to be stirred by storm fronts, but there was something peculiar about the disturbance of **the great sea**. **It** was moved by **the four winds of heaven (7:2).** The fact that **the winds** originated in **heaven** indicates that **they** represent something other than the natural movement of air. **They** symbolized the **heavenly** powers and forces by which **Ha'Shem** sets **the nations** of the world in motion. Hence, **the winds** point to **God's** sovereignty. Whenever the word **sea** is used symbolically in Scripture, it always refers to **the Gentile nations (Isa 17:12-13; Mt 13:47-50; Rev 13:1, 17:1; Eze 26:3).** So these **four great kingdoms** would be **Gentile kingdoms**, and each **kingdom** would be distinct from the others. **God**, in **His** sovereign will, was allowing this to happen for **His** own purposes and glory.

So, **the four great beasts came up out of the sea (7:3).** The number **four** is significant because all **the beasts** came out of **the Gentile nations**. But who were these **beasts?** The Aramaic word *cheivan*, simply refers to wild animals. However, in **7:17 it** is interpreted as referring to the **kingdoms** of this world. Hence, **the four beasts** represent **four Gentile kingdoms**, **each one different from the others.** Because **Chapter 7** elaborates on the prophecies that were made in **Chapter 2**, **the four kingdoms** of **King Nebuchadnezzar's dream** referred to the **Babylonian**, **Medo-Persian**, **Greek**, and **Roman** empires.

The first beast (7:4): The first **beast**, like **the head of gold** of **Nebuchadnezzar's statue**, represented **the Babylonian Empire** (see **Ay – The**

First Empire: A Head of Gold). So, the **first Gentile kingdom was** like **a lion.** The **lion** is the king of the beasts and it was used as a symbol of **Babylon (Jeremiah 4:7, 49:19, 50:17** and **44)**. What makes this **lion** different from other lions was that **it had the wings of an eagle.** The **eagle** is the **king** of the birds and it was also used as a symbol of **Babylon (Jeremiah 48:40, 49:22; Ezeki'el 17:3).** Thus, **the lion and the eagle** were both used by **Jeremiah** to describe **Nebuchadnezzar**. **Dani'el** said: **I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it.** This is a description of the proud and self-sufficient **King Nebuchadnezzar** being reduced to a field animal to realize **his** dependence on **God** (see **Bx – Humiliation: The King's Discipline**). But it also represents both **Nebuchadnezzar** and **his** empire, for as near as **a man** could become **a beast**, **he** became one. And as much as **a beast** can become **a man**, **Babylon** lost its **beast**-like nature and its animalistic characteristics and became more humane. This summarizes the experience of **Babylon** changing from the lust of conquest to the building of her culture.[192]

The second beast (7:5): The second **beast**, like **the chest and arms of silver** of **Nebuchadnezzar's statue**, represented **the Medo-Persian Empire** (see **Az – The Second Empire: Chest and Arms of Silver**). So, the **second Gentile kingdom looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides** because **the Persians** were stronger than **the Medes**. **The bear** is less majestic than **the lion**. **Its** bulky body appears less graceful and agile. Nevertheless, in the Bible **it** is frequently associated with great fierceness **(First Samuel 17:34-36; Second Samuel 17:8; Proverbs 28:15; Hosea 13:8; and Amos 5:19)**. Indeed, **the Medo-Persian Empire** was fierce **(Isaiah 13:15-18)**. Yet, it lacked the cohesive strength that made **Babylon** so formidable. In addition, just as **a bear** moves more slowly than **a lion**, so did **the Medo-Persian Empire** move more slowly in its military campaigns. The loss of speed was a result of its enormous size. **They were conquered** by sheer force of numbers. Finally, **the bear had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth**, indicating that **it** had already dismembered some prey. Most likely, **the ribs** represent three of the three historical conquests of **the Medo-Persian Empire**: Lydia in 546 BC, Babylon in 539 BC, and Egypt in 525 BC. At the end of the verse, **the bear** is encouraged to **"get up and eat** even more until **you have your fill of flesh!"** In other words, **the Medo-Persian Empire** was given the authority to conquer other **nations**.[193]

The third beast (7:6): After that, I looked, and there before me was

another composite animal, part **leopard**, part **bird**, this third **beast looked like a leopard.** That **third beast,** like **the belly and thighs of bronze**, represented **the Greek Empire** (see **Ba – The Third Empire: Belly and Thighs of Bronze**), and **the leopard** was used as a motif for **the Greek Empire (Jeremiah 5:6; Hosea 13:7). It** is less majestic than **the lion** and less grand than **the bear**, but **it** is swifter and faster than both. With **leopard**-like swiftness Alexander the Great conquered **the Medo-Persian Empire**, including Egypt, Syria, and **Isra'el**. Within six more years, he covered more than 11,000 miles of territory, from Greece in the west to the borders of India in the east, which greatly extended **Greek** culture and influence. What made this **leopard**-like creature different from the rest was that **it had four wings like those of a bird on its back.** This made it twice as swift as the other **two-winged lion** and surely faster than **the** lumbering **bear**. **Alexander's** empire had **four** divisions like the **four wings**: the first **wing** was Thrace, the second **wing** was **Greece**, the third **wing** was Egypt, and the fourth **wing** was Mesopotamia. Nearly two hundred years before Alexander was born, **Dani'el** received this prophecy that predicted **the Greek Empire** would be divided between **four** others. So, **this beast** also **had four heads. Alexander's** untimely death in 323 BC left **him** without a successor after **his** two sons were murdered, and **his** empire was divided among **his four** generals: Lysimachus, Cassander, Ptolemy, and Seleucus. Ptolemy and Seleucus ruled the two kingdoms that had a direct impact on **Isra'el's** history: Egypt and Syria. **And the Greek Empire was given authority to rule (7:6b)**. This **beast** was the third of **four Gentile empires** to dominate **Zion**.

Summary of the first Three Beasts: The times of the Gentiles (see **Ao – The Times of the Gentiles**) began with **the Babylonian Empire**, which was represented by **the golden head** of **Nebuchadnezzar's dream statue**, and **the lion-like** creature **Dani'el** saw in **his vision**. The second **empire** was **the Medo-Persian Empire**, symbolized by **the silver arms and chest** and **the bear-like** creature. Various aspects of this **empire** are described in **2:39a, 5:31** to **6:28, 7:5, 8:1-7** and **10:1** to **11:2**. **The brass belly** and **the leopard-like** creature symbolized **the Greek Empire**. It began as a single **empire** under Alexander the Great, but it split into **four** separate empires upon **his** death. Extensive revelation regarding **his empire** can be found in **2:39a**, **7:6**, **8:7** to **27**, and **11:3-35**.[194] So in **his** first vision, **Dani'el** saw the first three **Gentile kingdoms**, like animals that **he** was familiar with, **a lion**, **a bear** and **a leopard**. However, in the second vision **(7:7-8)**, it changed drastically.

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** that **You** are **the Almighty Sovereign Ruler** of the Universe! **You** are greater than any power, no matter how big or how strong they are. Sometimes it seems that life seems to be run by "beastly" forces, such as the government or our boss at work; yet it is such a comfort that **You** are sovereign over every government and every situation. Praise you that when those who love **You** come to live with **You** in heaven, there will be no crying, dying, mourning nor pain **(Revelation 21:4);** but for now, while still living on earth, **Your** children will face beastly trials of many kinds. You purify your children by trials so that they grow stronger in godly character. **We also boast in suffering – knowing that suffering produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Ruach Ha'Kodesh who was given to us (Romans 5:3b-5).** Hope in trials is like an anchor of rescue. **David** so trusted in **You** that when **he** was in the wilderness in the midst of severe trials, **he** still looked to **You**, saying: **Since Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise You. So I will bless You as long as I live. In Your name I lift up my hands. My soul is satisfied as with fat and oil, so my mouth praises You with joyful lips (Psalms 63:3-5). Your steadfast love** is always right there with me in every moment of every trial. Thank you for your awesome love and care! In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*