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The Ram and the Male Goat
8: 1-14

The ram and the male goat DIG: Dani'el 7:8 refers to a "little horn," and here in Dani'el 8:9 it refers to a "small horn." Are these the same or different? Who would you say are the top five people, including Alexander the Great, who have shaped the world as you know it? Who is the ram? Who is the male goat?

REFLECT: Why did God speak so often in visions in Dani'el's time, but not today? Who are the people that you know who speak with the same authority as Dani'el? Can you name anyone in politics who has been used by God even though they were unaware of it? What reason does Dani'el give you to trust God?

No matter how brutally the Gentile nations may treat the people of Isra'el, ADONAI uses the nations to accomplish His ordained purposes. His plans for Isra'el will be fulfilled no matter how much the nations may oppose His chosen people. There has always been a believing remnant.

For the first time since **2:38 Dani'el** interprets **his** symbols. **The ram with two horns** represents **the Medo-Persian Empire (8:20)**; **the male goat** is **the king of Greece (8:21)**. This vision goes no further than the **Greek** empire. No mention is made of the setting up of the **Messianic Kingdom** as in **2:44** and **7:27**. But, **Dani'el** emphasizes one specific despotic ruler who rises from one part of the divided **Medo-Persian Empire**. This focus will become even more detailed in **Chapter 11** (**to see link click Dw – Antiochus Epiphanes**).[218]

The vision (8:1-2): In the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, I, Dani'el, had a vision, after the ones that had already appeared to me (see **Cb – Dani'el's Visions**)**. In my vision I saw myself in the palace of Susa in the province of Elam beside the Ulai Canal** (one of **the Persian** royal cities, more than 200 miles east of **Babylon**)**.** A century later **the Persian king Ahasuerus** built a magnificent **palace** there, which was where the events recorded in the book

of **Esther** took place (see the commentary on **Esther Ak – The King Gave a Grand Banquet in Susa, and Displayed the Vast Wealth of His Kingdom**), and where **Nehemiah** was **the cupbearer** for **king Artakhshasta** (see the commentary on **Ezra-Nehemiah Bu – Nehemiah Intercedes for Jerusalem**).[219] It is unlikely that **Dani'el** left **Babylon** and traveled to **Susa** to receive **his vision**. It's more likely that **ADONAI** transported **him** to **Susa** just as **He** transported **Ezeki'el** to **Jerusalem (Ezeki'el 8:3)**, and **the apostle John** to **the wilderness (Revelation 17:3)** and to **a high mountain (Revelation 21:10)**. Since **Dani'el** was about to describe the victory of **the Medes and the Persians** over **the Babylonians**, **God** put **him** into the future capital of **the Persian Empire**.[220] However, at the time of **Dani'el's vision**, **Susa** was simply a small, unassuming town. **The** future **palace** of **Susa** had not even been built yet.

The ram (8:3-4): When **he looked up, he saw a ram with two horns, standing beside the canal, and the horns were long (8:3a).** There are four reasons to interpret **the ram with the two horns** as a symbol of **the Medo-Persian Empire**. First, the Bible itself identifies **it** as such: **The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia (8:20).** Second, in a Persian religious book known as the *Bundahishn*, the guardian spirit of **Medo-Persia** is portrayed in the form of **a ram** with pointed **horns**.[221] Third, the **Persian** king bore the golden figure of **a ram's** head when he stood before his army.[222] And fourth, different nations in the Ancient Near East were represented by zodiac signs, and the sign for **Persia** was Aries, **the ram**.[223] Additionally, **the vision** of **the ram** also develops previous revelations concerning the second Gentile empire. It is a further elaboration of **the chest and arms of silver** (see **Az – The Second Empire: Chest and Arms of Silver**), and **the** lopsided **bear** (see **Cc – The Kingdoms of This World: The second beast**).[224]

One of the horns was longer than the other but grew up later (8:3b). Rams normally have **two horns**, but these **horns** were unique. **One horn grew up later** yet **grew longer** than **the other**. These **horns** symbolize the two divisions of the empire. **Persia** would begin with less strength, but would eventually become much more powerful than **Media** due to the rise of **Cyrus the Great**. Centuries before **he** appeared on the scene, **Isaiah** called **him** by name, and even called **him "God's shepherd"** (see the commentary on **Isaiah Ib – Cyrus is My Shepherd and Will Accomplish All**). It was **Cyrus** whom **ADONAI** chose to defeat **the Babylonians** and permit **the Jews** to return to **the Land**.

I watched the ram as it charged toward the west and the north and the south. No animal could stand against it, and none could rescue it from its power. The rapid progress of **Cyrus** during the ten years of 549 to 539 BC suggested **a ram** goring every beast that got in his way. By thrusting westward and northward into Asia Minor, **he** bypassed **Babylon**, only to capture **it** later and take the lands to the southwest and southeast. **It did as it pleased and became great (8:4).** Nearly two hundred years of history and national expansion, such as the world had never seen before, are summed up in this one verse.[225] Why did **YHVH** call **Cyrus**? **For the sake of Jacob My servant, of Isra'el my chosen (Isaiah 45:4a).** No matter how brutally the Gentile nations may treat **the people of Isra'el, ADONAI** uses the nations to accomplish **His** ordained purposes. **His** plans for **Isra'el** will be fulfilled no matter how much they may oppose **His chosen people**.[226]

The male goat (8:5-8): According to **Dani'el Chapters 2** and **7**, **ADONAI** allots each Gentile empire a certain amount of time before terminating its dominion and transferring its power to another. This would also be the case with **the Medo-Persians**, as **verses 5-14** prophecy. Again it must be remembered that from **Dani'el's** perspective, none of what **he** saw in **his** vision had happened yet. At the point of **his** writing in 551 BC, the Babylonian Empire was still the most dominant monarchy in the world.[227]

As I was thinking about the ram, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between its eyes came from the west. In Nebuchadnezzar's statue, **Greece** was depicted as **a belly and thighs of bronze** (see **Ba – The Third Empire: Belly and Thighs of Bronze**), and **a** swift **leopard** (see **Cc – The Kingdoms of This World: The third beast**). Now, **Dani'el** sees **Greece** angrily **crossing the whole earth without touching the ground,** and like a **leopard**, **Alexander** was known of the speed in which **his** armies moved **(8:5).** The large **prominent horn** represents **Alexander the Great**. There are three reasons to interpret **the goat** as a prophetic symbol of **the Greek Empire**. First, the Bible itself identifies **it** as such: **The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between its eyes is the first king, Alexander the Great (8:21).** When **he** came to conquer Persia, **he** did so from Macedonia and **Greece**, which are both located west of **Persia**. Therefore, **Dani'el** stated that **he saw the male goat coming from the west.** Second, the zodiac sign for **Greece** was Capricorn, **the one-horned goat**. Third, the national emblem of Macedonia was **a goat**.[228]

Alexander was one of the great military strategists of history. **He** led the armies of **Greece** from victory to victory and extended **his** empire even beyond that of **Cyrus** had done with the **Persian** army. **He** was born in 356 BC, **the son** of a great conqueror in his own right, Philip of Macedon. Philip had united Greece with Macedonia and was planning to attack Persia when he was assassinated. **Alexander**, educated under the famed Aristotle, was only twenty in 336 BC when **he** succeeded **his** father as king. A year-and-a-half later (334 BC), **he** had launched **his** attack against **the Persians**. This focus will become even more detailed in **Chapter 11** (see **Dv – Alexander the Great**).



The destruction of the ram (8:6-7): The goat charging **the ram** in a fit of **great rage** rightly describes **Alexander's** assault on **the Medo-Persian Empire. The male goat came toward the two-horned ram I had seen standing beside the canal and charged at it in great rage (8:6).** Hatred for **the Persians** had grown steadily since the time of **Cyrus** due to constant quarreling and fighting between **Persia** and **Greece**, and **the Greeks** were especially bitter over the invasions of Darius 1 (490 BC) and his son Xerxes (480 BC). **Alexander** was determined to avenge those assaults on **his** homeland. In **his** vision, **Dani'el saw the goat attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering its two horns. The ram was powerless to stand against it; the goat knocked it to the ground and trampled on it, and none could rescue the ram from its power (8:7).** In that same year **Alexander** won the Battle of Granicus in Asia Minor, thereby bringing to an end the dominance of **the Medo-Persian Empire**. With **his** subsequent victories at Issus (333 BC) and Arbela (331 BC), the conquest of **Medo-Persia** was complete. Incredibly, after three years, **Alexander** had conquered the entire Near East. The details of this prophecy are so historically

accurate that literary critics have attacked the book, saying that it must have been written after these events took place. But we worship an omniscient **God** who is outside of time. **He** can predict the past and the future. In fact, **He** causes the future to happen.

The division of the four horns (8:8): This verse prophetically describes what would happen to **the Greek Empire** after **Alexander's** death. **He** carved out an empire of 1.5 million square miles, but at the height of **his** career, having conquered much of the known world, **Alexander** was taken ill with a severe fever (possibly malaria) and on June 13, 323 died at the age of 32. **The goat became very great, but at the height of its power the large horn was broken off (8:8a). Alexander** spread the **Greek** language and culture all over the world, an act that prepared the world for the Gospel by giving it a common language, Koine Greek, the language of the B'rit Chadashah.[229]

When **Alexander** died, **he** left two sons, Alexander IV and Herakles, both of whom were murdered. Historically, this prophecy was fulfilled by **Alexander's four** generals. It took twenty years of infighting and struggle before the empire was successfully divided among **four prominent horns. They grew up toward the four winds of heaven (8:8b).** Cassander took Macedonia and Greece in **the west**; Lysimachus took Thrace and Bithynia in **the north**; Ptolemy took Egypt, Isra'el, and Arabia Petrea in **the south**; and Seleucus took Syria, Babylonia, and the territory in India in **the east**.[230]

The small horn (8:9-14): In contrast to **the little horn (the antichrist)** described in **Chapter 7** (see **Cd – The Kingdom of Satan**), a **small horn (Antiochus Epiphanes)** emerges in **Chapter 8**. **The little horn** of **Chapter 7** springs from the Empire of Imperialism (see **Bb – The Fourth Empire: Imperialism**). However, **the small horn** of **Chapter 8** springs from the division of **the Greek Empire** of **Alexander the Great**. But **they** both had one thing in common. The hatred of **the Jews** by **Antiochus** in the past, foreshadowed the hatred of **the Jews** by **the antichrist** in the future.

The activities of the small horn (8:9-12): Dani'el begins by describing how **the small horn** rose to power. **Out of one of them came another horn, which started small but grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land (8:9).** As we have already seen, after the death of **Alexander the Great**, **his** empire was divided into **four** parts with **four** of **his** generals taking control **(8:8)**. Out of one of those **horns**, **a small horn** appeared who became the

infamous **Antiochus Epiphanes**, the ruler of Syria from 175 to 163 BC, and known as one of the cruelest tyrants in history.

Antiochus gave **himself** the name **Epiphanes**, which means *illustrious manifestation*, for **he** claimed to be a revelation (*epiphany*) of the gods. **He** even had the word god (*theos*) put on the coins minted with **his** picture on it to look like the Greek god Zeus. In addition, **he** set up a statue of **himself** in the Most Holy Place in **the Temple**. And **he** had a passionate desire to turn **the Jews** into good Greeks. One of **his** first acts was to drive out the high priest Onias and replace him with Jason, a supporter of the Greeks. Jason was replaced by Menelaus, who actually bought the high priesthood. Believing a rumor that **Antiochus** had died, Jason attacked **Jerusalem** only to learn that **Antiochus** was very much alive (Oops). **The** angry **king** attacked **Jerusalem** and plundered **the Temple**. In 168 **he** sent an army of twenty thousand men under Apollonius to level **Jerusalem**. They entered **the City** on the Sabbath, murdered most of the men, and took women and children as their slaves. The remaining men fled to the army of Judas Maccabeus.[231]

The small horn grew until it reached the host of the heavens (Isra'el), and it threw some of the starry host (the army of Antiochus) down to the earth and trampled on them (8:10). In other words, **Dani'el** accurately prophesied that **Antiochus** would attack **the Jewish people**. **The historical fulfillment of verse 10 is recorded in 1 Maccabees 1:29-32: Two years later the king sent to the cities of Judah a chief collector of tribute, and he came to Jerusalem with a large force. Deceitfully, he spoke peaceable words to them, and they believed him; but he suddenly fell upon the City and dealt it a severe blow and destroyed many people of Isra'el. He plundered the City, burned it with fire, and tore down its houses and its surrounding walls. And they took captive women and children, and seized the cattle (also see 1 Maccabees 1:37-38, 41-42, 48-50, 60-61, and 64).** This quotation shows that while the Maccabean books are not inspired Scripture, they record the fulfillment of many of **Dani'el's** prophecies and are important historical documents and are of the same value as the records of Josephus.[232]

But **the king** wasn't satisfied, so **he** issued an edict to abolish the **Jewish** religion. **Antiochus set himself up to be as great as the commander of the army of ADONAI,** or the high priest**;** and **took away the daily sacrifice from YHVH Himself, and God's Sanctuary was thrown down,** or desecrated**.** In addition**, because of rebellion, the LORD's people and the daily sacrifice were given over to Antiochus. He prospered in everything he did, and God's truth (the**

Torah) was thrown to the ground or disregarded **(8:11-12). He** prohibited **the Jews** from honoring the Sabbath, practicing circumcision, obeying **Jewish** dietary mitzvot, and offering sacrifices. Any **Jew** found possessing a copy of **the Torah** was put to death. And **he** climaxed his campaign of terror on December 14, 168 BC, by replacing **the Jewish bronze altar** (see the commentary on **Exodus Fa – Build Altar of Acacia Wood Overlaid with Bronze**) with an altar to Zeus . . . and sacrificed a pig on it! What **Antiochus** did was a foreshadowing of what **the antichrist** will do when **he** puts **his** image in the Tribulation Temple and commands the world to worship **him** (see the commentary on **Revelation Dr – The Abomination That Causes Desolation**).[233]

The 2,300 evenings and mornings (8:13-14): Dani'el overheard two **angels** speaking, and from **their** conversation **God's** prophetic timetable was revealed to **him**. **Then I heard an angel speaking, and a second angel asking him, "How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled – the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, the surrender of the Sanctuary and the trampling underfoot of the Lord's people?"** The question was asked for **Dani'el's** sake, since the answer was given to **him** rather than **the second angel**. **The first angel said to me, "It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the Sanctuary will be properly restored (8:13-14)."** In the Hebrew text, the conjunction **"and"** is missing. Instead of **evenings and mornings,** the Hebrew reads *erev boker*, or *evening-morning.* This expression refers to two parts of one day and *the korban tamid*, meaning *a perpetual offering*, since it was offered twice daily, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Therefore, the duration that was prophetically allotted to **Antiochus Epiphanes** was **2,300** whole days.

To enforce **his** laws and ensure that **the Jewish people** engaged in idol worship, **Antiochus** sent **his** soldiers to villages throughout Judea. When the Syrians reached Modi'in, a town located about twelve miles northwest of Jerusalem, they demanded a local Levite leader, Mattathias, be an example to his people by sacrificing a pig on a pagan altar. The priest refused and he not only killed a **Jew** who stepped forward to do the Syrian's bidding, but he also killed the king's representative. Then Mattathias tore down the pagan altar. **Antiochus** responded swiftly by attacking **the Jewish people** of Modi'in and killing **their** men, women, children, and animals. **One thousand people are said to have died on that day (1 Maccabees 2:38).** That event triggered a major revolt, their October 7th you might say. In 167 BC, Mattathias and his five sons were joined in their fight for

the liberation of their country **by a group of devout and patriotic Jews (1 Maccabees 2:42).** The priest's family, which belonged to the Hasmonean dynasty, became known as the Maccabees. The name Maccabee means *the hammar.* It was applied to Judah, the leader of the five brothers, who kept *hammering away* against the Syrians until they were defeated three years later. After the victory, the Maccabees cleansed **the Temple** and initiated **the Festival of Lights**. As the Bible shows, **Hanukkah** was observed in the first century AD (see the commentary on **the Life of Christ Hj – Then Came Hanukkah at Jerusalem, and It Was Winter**), and it is still commemorated by **the Jewish people** today.[234]

The fulfillment of the prophecies of Dani'el 8:14 is recorded in 1 Maccabees 4:36-59, 2 Maccabees 10:1-9, and by Josephus in his *Jewish Antiquities*. The following quotation reflects 2 Maccabee 10:1-9, "Now Maccabeus and his followers, ADONAI leading them on, recovered the Temple and the City; and they tore down the pagan altars which had been built in the public square by the foreigners (the Syrians), and also destroyed the sacred grounds. They purified the Sanctuary of the Temple and made another bronze altar of sacrifice; then, striking fire out of flint, they offered sacrifices, and burned incense and lighted lamps and set out the bread of the Presence. And when they had done this, they fell prostrate and begged ADONAI that they might never again fall into such trials, but that, if they should ever sin, they might be disciplined by ADONAI Himself and not to be handed over to blasphemous and barbarous Gentile nations. It happened on the same day on which the Sanctuary had been profaned by the foreigners, the purification of the Sanctuary took place, that is, on the twenty-fifth of Kislev (November-December of the Jewish calendar) 164 BC**. And as they celebrated for eight days with rejoicing, like Sukkot.**

Since the dedication of **the** First **Temple** was such a joyous occasion, **Solomon decided that** the festivities should reflect the joyous **seven-day** festival of **Sukkot** (see the commentary on **Numbers Fg – The Hag Sukkot Offering**), followed by **the eighth day assembly** (see the commentary on **Numbers Fh – The Eighth Day Assembly**). Therefore, the dedication of **the** First **Temple** was observed for **eight days** with the lighting of lampstands. Three-hundred-and-fifty-two years later, **the Maccabees decided to duplicate those same celebrations.** This is why **Hanukkah** is celebrated for **eight days**. It is also the reason that **lights** became associated with **the Feast of Dedication**. **The Temple**

was purified, the daily tamid offering was restored and **Jewish** worship began once again. **Much later, the rabbis invented the legend of the miracle of Hanukkah: a small jar of oil kept the candles burning in the rededicated Temple for eight full days.** However, this legend did not appear in any **Jewish** texts until 600 years after the first **Hanukkah**, and there is no historical record of any such miracle taking place.[235] Thus, the real miracle of **Hanukkah** was in the Maccabean victory over **Antiochus Epiphanes** on December 14, 165 BC**,** and their Persian oppressors.

Therefore, bearing beautiful branches, and also palm fronds, they sang psalms of thanksgiving to ADONAI who had given success in cleansing His own Holy Place. They decreed by public ordinance and voted that the whole nation should observe those eight days every year. And this was the end of Antiochus Epiphanes, who died that same year from a divinely-inflicted disease![236]

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **Your** almighty power and omniscient wisdom! **Your** plans for **Isra'el** will be fulfilled no matter how much the nations may oppose **His chosen people**. **You** are always sovereign and totally in control. No matter who the monarch is, only **You** give **Your** permission to rule **(Revelation 13:5)**. Just as **You** rescued **Isra'el** from the hands of the cruel **Antiochus Epiphanes**, so you will again rescue **Isra'el** during the Tribulation from a tyrant acting in a similar proud manner. It will be a terrible time. Death and martyrdom are to be preferred over following the beast. But what a joy for those experiencing trials to focus on the wonderful future that you promise to all who believe in **You**, an eternal home in heaven with **You** where there will be no crying, dying, mourning nor pain! **I also heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is among men, and He shall tabernacle among them. They shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them and be their God" (Revelation 21:3).***

*Thank **You** that when politics and problems in the world seem insurmountable: No matter how brutally the Gentile nations may treat **Isra'el**, **You** use them to accomplish **Your** ordained purposes! How wonderful all the many great deeds you have done for **Your people**. **You** so graciously and mercifully conquered sin **(Second Corinthians 5:21), You** have promised to live within those who **love You (John 14:23)** and **Messiah** is making an eternal home in heaven for **Your children.** I am filled with hope when I remember how wonderfully **You** have worked to rescue **Isra'el** throughout history, and how you will rescue them on the last three*

*days of the Tribulation when **they** come to recognize you as their Messiah **(Zechariah 12:10)**. In **Messiah's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*