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Living in the Valley of Darkness
8: 15-26

Living in the valley of darkness DIG: How was Antiochus a type of the antichrist? In what ways is Gabri'el an important angel? Who was the two-horned ram? Who was the male goat? What does the ram and the goat have to do with each other? Why will the Tribulation be like living in the valley of darkness for unbelievers?

REFLECT: If Dani'el's response to the threats at the end of the world was grim, what do you think our response should be? All of us have at one time or another suffered under the attack of the evil one. How do you handle living in the valley of darkness? Where do you find comfort? How do you get the devil to flee from you (James 4:7)?

Even though I walk through the valley of darkness, I will fear no evil (Psalm 23:4a adapted).

Since **Dani'el** did not understand the vision of **the ram**, **the male goat**, and **the small horn** (**to see link click Ck – The Ram and the Male Goat**), he received the interpretation from **the angel Gabri'el**. **Dani'el** now reports **his** second vision, and once more animals are employed to symbolize empires. In **Chapter 7 ADONAI** had given a preview of world history with an emphasis on the end times, especially the evil deeds of **the antichrist**. But **God's people** needed to be warned of another crisis that would come in less than four hundred years after **Dani'el's** death, the persecutions of a madman named **Antiochus IV Epiphanes** (175-165 BC). **His** reign would be one of the most horrible periods in history for **the Jews**. It would only last for a few years, but **God** knew that for those extremely **dark** days, **His people** would need a supernatural revelation to encourage **them** as **they** encountered the face of evil.[237]



The Appearance of Gabriel (8:15-18): If **Dani'el** returned to a state of consciousness at all, **he** was soon sent back in a visionary state, and saw before **him** a **man**-like figure who spoke with a human voice. **While Dani'el was watching the vision and trying to understand it, there before him stood one who appeared to be a man (8:15).** There are several good reasons to believe that this unknown creature standing over **the Ulai Canal** was actually the Archangel **Micha'el**. First, **Angels** in the Bible always appear as young men. Second, **Micha'el** and **Gabri'el** are associated together later in the book **(10:13, 21,** and **12:1)**. Third, as the archangel, **Micha'el** has authority to give orders to other **angels**. **And I heard Micha'el** say to **Gabri'el, tell this man the meaning of the vision (8:16). Gabri'el** is an important **angel**. In the B'rit Chadashah **he** was chosen to announce to **Zacharias** that **he** would be the father of **John the Baptist** (see **The Life of Christ Ak – The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold**) and to **Mary** that **she** would bear **the Messiah** (see **The Life of Christ Al – The Birth of Jesus Foretold to Mary**). As **Gabri'el** approached **Dani'el**, the aged **prophet** was so overwhelmed by the spiritual power that stood before **him**, **he** fell on **his** face as **Ezeki'el** had done in **his visions (Ezeki'el 1:28, 3:23,** and **44:4)**. **As Gabri'el came near the place where Dani'el was standing, he was terrified and fell down prostrate,** stunned with awe and dread **(8:17a).**[238]

Then **Gabri'el** spoke to him, saying: **Son of man, understand that the vision concerns the time of the end.** Yet, if this **vision** describes **Antiochus IV Epiphanes**, how can it speak of **"the end?"** This is a general prophetic expression that means "**the end** of a specific prophecy." In the present case, **the end** means

the end of **Antiochus**.[239] **While he was speaking to me, I fainted and fell on my face. Abraham** experienced something similar in **Genesis 15:12**. When **Dani'el** was laying on the ground, knocked out by fear, **Gabri'el touched him** and helped **him** stand up straight. **Then Gabri'el touched Dani'el and raised him to his feet (8:17b-19).**

The interpretation of the ram (8:20): The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. The two horns represent **the Medes** and **the Persians**. Yet **they** belonged to the same animal. This fact emphasizes the unity of **the Medo-Persian Empire**: one **bear**, two sides (see **Cc – The Kingdoms of This World: The second beast**), one **ram**, **two horns**, one empire composed of **two kingdoms**.

The interpretation of the male goat (8:21-22): The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between its eyes is the first king. The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power. Dani'el describes **a king** who would conquer **the Medo-Persian Empire**. This was an historical event that took place several centuries after **Dani'el** lived. **The small horn** of **Chapter 8** springs from the division of **the Greek Empire** of **Alexander the Great**. We know **him** as **Antiochus Epiphanes. He** was **the ruler** who sought to show **his** contempt for **the Jews** by going to **the Temple** and slaughtering a pig, putting its blood on the altar.

The interpretation of time (8:19): Gabri'el said: **I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the end of the appointed time of wrath. His** oppression of **the Jews** was directly predicted in **8:9-14**. **An angel** had asked: **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 ADONAI's people?"** And the answer was: **It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the Sanctuary will be properly restored (8:13-14).** Therefore, the duration of that **time of wrath** was prophetically allotted to **Antiochus Epiphanes it** was **2,300** whole days.

Antiochus Epiphanes (8:23-25): These verses are the heart of the vision and the reason for the revelation to **Dani'el**. **ADONAI** disclosed this historical summary to **the prophet** to prepare **the Jewish people** for the coming crisis – **Antiochus'** persecution. Jewish worship and lifestyle stood in the way of **his** policy of

Hellenization. It was **in the latter part of their reign** when **Antiochus** would **rise** to power**.** This refers to the period near the end of Greek rule when **the four kings** who succeeded **Alexander the Great** carved up **his** empire into **four kingdoms**. Additionally, **his rise** to power was **because of rebellion (8:12)**, **when rebels had become completely wicked (8:23a).** This may allude to the sins of **the Jewish people themselves,** when reaching its climax, brought about divine judgment in the form of **Antiochus'** persecutions. **The books of 1 and 2 Maccabees record many in Isra'el who were not faithful to ADONAI and even adopted the idolatrous Greek religion (1 Maccabees 1:11-15 and 43).** Those sins would have brought about the discipline of **Ha'Shem** in order to purify the nation.[240]

Antiochus is described as **a fierce-looking king and a master of intrigue,** who would deal harshly with those who oppose **him (8:23b)**. 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 bought the high priesthood. Believing a rumor that **Antiochus** had died, Jason attacked **the holy City** only to learn that **Antiochus** was very much alive. **The** angry **king** attacked **Jerusalem**.[241] Raging like a wild animal, **he** sent an army of twenty thousand men under Apollonius to level **Tziyon**. **He** ordered **his** soldiers to cut down without mercy those whom they met, and to slay those who took refuge in their houses. **They entered the City on the Sabbath and there was a massacre of young and old, a killing of women and children, a slaughter of virgins and infants. In the space of three days, eighty-thousand were lost, forty thousand meeting a violent death, and the same number being sold into slavery (2 Maccabees 5:11-14).** For **the Jews**, it was like living in the valley of **darkness**.

Antiochus began to rule a rather weak kingdom in 175 BC, but attained great power through military conquests. **He will become very strong; but not by his own power,** but only by **the power** of Satan, the prince of **darkness**. Through **his** numerous wars with Egypt and other nations, and **his** persecution of **the Jews, Antiochus will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men,** military and political of other countries who were killed by **Antiochus**, and **the righteous of the TaNaKh** who would not follow the command to accept **his** Greek gods **(8:24).** Consequently, for **2,300 days Antiochus** appeared to be invincible.[242]

Through his shrewdness he will cause deceit to succeed and will consider

himself superior. He will rise to power by promising false security **and will destroy many, and take his stand against the Prince of princes,** that is **against God Himself.** But such arrogance can only lead to one end, **he will be destroyed, but not by human power (8:25).** The ultimate power behind the Maccabean freedom fighters was **Ha'Shem Himself**, who allowed them to restore **the Temple** to its former function as the center for worship of the true and living **God**. **His House** was more than a building; **it** was a symbol of **His** presence with **His people**, hence a source of life and hope. Its desecration at the hands of **Antiochus** was an assault against **ADONAI** and a cause for despair among the righteous of the TaNaKh. But the restoration of **the Temple** meant new life, the offering of the sacrifices, and the possibility of fellowship with **God** once again.[243] But it did not end well for **Antiochus Epiphanes**, for in the same year that **he** desecrated the Temple, **he** died from a divinely-inflicted disease!

In the final analysis, it may be concluded that there is a dual reference in this striking prophecy. It is not only speaking of **Antiochus** in **his** desolation and desecration of **the Temple**; it is also looking forward to the great desolator who would come, the one who is called **the little horn (7:23-25).** What **Antiochus** did in history, **the antichrist** will do in the **far eschatological future**; in addition, **God's** destruction of **Antiochus** will be a foretaste of **His** final destruction of **the antichrist**. 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 affirmation (8:26): The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, in the sense of concluding it, not in the sense of keeping it secret, **for it concerns the distant future. He** kept **the vision** in **his** mind and later preserved **it** in writing when **he** wrote **it** down under the inspiration of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**.

Hope in the blackest night: As Ian Duguid explains in his commentary on *Daniel*, we need to see clearly how **Dani'el Chapter 8** gives us hope in the blackest of nights, in the face of the worst of our own failures and the worst assaults of the devil against us. Like the apostle Paul, we often find ourselves under stress to the point that we may be tempted to despair of the future **(Second Corinthians 1:8-9)**. We have our own personal failures in the ongoing struggle against sin. We may be tempted to ask how can **God's** purposes to save and sanctify stand in the face of mankind's continual rebellion and the Tempter's constant assaults?

The answer to that question comes as we see how **Dani'el 8** affirms **ADONAI's** victory, even in the face of the coming **darkness** of the days of **Antiochus Epiphanes**. If **God's** purpose were not thwarted by that period of rebellion and defilement, then they will certainly never be thwarted by our personal experience of unfaithfulness or persecution.

Even though **Antiochus** desecrated **the Temple**, **he** couldn't lay a hand on **YHVH Himself**. But nearly two hundred years later, in the person of **Yeshua Messiah**, the dwelling place of **God** was once again desecrated because of our sin and rebellion. **The LORD's** own **people** rejected **the Messiah** that **He** had sent. As **John's** Gospel declares: **He came to His own people, and even they rejected Him (John 1:11 NLT).** Instead, the leaders of **God's chosen people** actually allied **themselves** with the forces of evil against **the Son of God** and handed him over to the Romans, and to death, crying out: **Crucify him (Matthew 27:22)!** What worse abomination or act of betrayal could there ever be than crucifying **YHVH**? No wonder it was **dark** on that day (see **The Life of Christ Lv – Jesus' Second Three Hours on the Cross: The Wrath of God: Darkness That Covers the Entire World**). It seemed that **darkness** had completely triumphed and **God's, "Let there be light,"** had been swallowed up by **night**.

The cross is surely the ultimate expression of the rebellion of **God's people** and the hatred of the kingdoms of this world against **Him**. Nor should we think that, as believers, we are any better than those first-century **Jews**. We too were once the enemies of **Ha'Shem** because of our fallen nature **(Romans 3:23)**, all of us are rebels against **God**. We too loved **darkness** rather than light because **our deeds were evil (John 3:19)**. Our own hearts testify to the profound truth of that judgment. By our comfortable coexistence with our cherished sins, we bear witness daily to **the darkness** that still remains in our hearts.

Yet, even such abominable rebellion and hatred could not thwart **God's** purposes. At the cross, the Adversary did his worst to **Yeshua**, and as a result, simply brought about what **ADONAI** had planned from the beginning of time. **The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:5)**. The cross is therefore the guarantee that **God's** plan will always prevail in the face of our weakness, rebellion, and sin, and in spite of the relentless attacks of the Serpent and all of his demons. Because of the victory won on the cross, the gates of hell can never prevail against **Messiah's** flock (see **The Life of Christ Ms – The Eternal Security of the Believer**). To be sure, evil remains awful and powerful in this world. Sin still has devastating effects, whether it comes from inside or outside the

Church, and it will not simply pass away as our world matures. Our path to heaven often takes us through the valley of **darkness**. The horrible realities in the here and now may be the fruits of our own sin, or of the sin of others, or the hate of powerful spiritual forces.

But **God** remains in control. Despite the best efforts of the enemy, **He** will bring all things to their proper end at the proper time (see **Ao – The Times of the Gentiles**). In the meantime, we are called to be faithful and obedient, trusting in **Messiah** alone and giving thanks daily for the cross, the place of triumph over our sin. **How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled (8:13)? How long** will it be until the darkness will finally be over and the daylight will come? **How long** until the Son of righteousness will rise, and **His** children will shine with **Him** forever? **How long** until we are sanctified and cleansed of all our remaining sin? **How long, O Lord?** Come quickly, **Lord Yeshua**, and bring **Your** great work to its completion in us.[244]

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** that when I am living in dark trials, **You** are always there with me. **You** never leave me alone. **For God Himself has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you . . . the Lord is my helper; I will not fear (Hebrews 13:5b** and **6b).** When I keep my focus on **You** and not my circumstances, it gives me strength and courage. Thank **You** that no time is so dark that **Your** light cannot penetrate it. **Yeshua spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. The one who follows Me will no longer walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).** Thank **You** for walking with me **(John 14:23),** lighting up dark times with **Your** steadfast **love (Psalms 63:3)** and your almighty power (**Rev 19-20**). In **Messiah** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*