



## Read Daniel 1

The Book of Daniel, though set during the Babylonian exile (597–538 BC), is addressed to Jews suffering persecution in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes (167–164 BC). It begins with six stories about Daniel, showcasing his wisdom. Though Daniel and his three companions are instructed in Babylonian language and culture, they remain faithful to their religious practices. Even when pressured to partake of the king's food, they strictly observe Jewish dietary laws. By placing fidelity to God's law ahead of personal advancement and success, Daniel reveals how truly wise he is.

**Reflect:** When do social pressures or the desire to succeed tempt me to compromise my beliefs and values?

**Pray:** In prayer, I will ask for the courage not to abandon my convictions and to live according to God's law in all circumstances.

**Act:** Today I will try to live a truly godly life, and not to “fudge”—even in small matters.

## Four Young Israelites at the Babylonian Court

**1** In the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. <sup>2</sup> The Lord let King Jehoiakim of Judah fall into his power, as well as some of the vessels of the house of God. These he brought to the land of Shinar,<sup>a</sup> and placed the vessels in the treasury of his gods.

<sup>3</sup> Then the king commanded his palace master Ashpenaz to bring some of the Israelites of the royal family and of the nobility, <sup>4</sup> young men without physical defect and handsome, versed in every branch of wisdom, endowed with knowledge and insight, and competent to serve in the king's palace; they were to be taught the literature and language of the Chaldeans. <sup>5</sup> The king assigned them a daily portion of the royal rations of food and wine. They were to be educated for three years, so that at the end of that time they could be stationed in the king's court. <sup>6</sup> Among them were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, from the tribe of Judah. <sup>7</sup> The palace master gave them other names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

<sup>8</sup> But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the royal rations of food and wine; so he asked the palace master to allow him not to defile himself. <sup>9</sup> Now God allowed Daniel to receive favor and compassion from the palace master. <sup>10</sup> The palace master said to Daniel, “I am afraid of my lord the king; he has appointed your food and your drink. If he should see you in poorer condition than the other young men of

<sup>a</sup> Gk Theodotion: Heb adds *to the house of his own gods*

your own age, you would endanger my head with the king.”<sup>11</sup> Then Daniel asked the guard whom the palace master had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: <sup>12</sup> “Please test your servants for ten days. Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. <sup>13</sup> You can then compare our appearance with the appearance of the young men who eat the royal rations, and deal with your servants according to what you observe.” <sup>14</sup> So he agreed to this proposal and tested them for ten days. <sup>15</sup> At the end of ten days it was observed that they appeared better and fatter than all the young men who had been eating the royal rations. <sup>16</sup> So the guard continued to withdraw their royal rations and the wine they were to drink, and gave

them vegetables. <sup>17</sup> To these four young men God gave knowledge and skill in every aspect of literature and wisdom; Daniel also had insight into all visions and dreams.

<sup>18</sup> At the end of the time that the king had set for them to be brought in, the palace master brought them into the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, <sup>19</sup> and the king spoke with them. And among them all, no one was found to compare with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they were stationed in the king’s court. <sup>20</sup> In every matter of wisdom and understanding concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. <sup>21</sup> And Daniel continued there until the first year of King Cyrus.

### Read Daniel 2

Like Joseph, Daniel must interpret the king’s dream. But Daniel must also tell the king what his dream was. After Daniel prays, God reveals to him both the dream and its meaning. The statue represents five successive kingdoms, beginning with the golden reign of the Babylonians and degenerating through the Medes, Persians, Greeks, and the Ptolemies and Seleucids. When these are destroyed, the eternal kingdom of God will be established. Just as Joseph’s success had been rewarded with a promotion, Daniel is also raised to a position of glory and authority.

**Reflect:** When I struggle to understand the meaning of events in the world, do I turn to God in prayer?

**Pray:** I will pray today for a discerning mind to see God’s plan unfolding in human history.

**Act:** I will consciously look for and identify one way in which I see the kingdom of God being revealed in the world around me.

### Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream

**2** In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed such dreams that his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him. <sup>2</sup> So the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. When they came in and stood before the king, <sup>3</sup> he said to them, “I have had such a dream that my spirit is troubled by the desire to understand it.” <sup>4</sup> The Chaldeans said to the king (in Aramaic),<sup>a</sup> “O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will reveal the interpretation.” <sup>5</sup> The king answered the Chaldeans, “This is a public decree: if you do not tell me both the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins. <sup>6</sup> But if you do tell me the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation.” <sup>7</sup> They answered a second time, “Let the king first tell his servants the dream, then we can give its interpretation.” <sup>8</sup> The king answered, “I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time, because you see I have firmly decreed: <sup>9</sup> if you do not tell me the dream, there is but one verdict for you. You have agreed to speak lying and misleading words to me until things take a turn. Therefore, tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation.” <sup>10</sup> The Chaldeans answered the king, “There is no one on earth who can reveal what the king demands! In fact no king, however great and powerful, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. <sup>11</sup> The thing

<sup>a</sup> The text from this point to the end of chapter 7 is in Aramaic, except for 3.24-91a, the text of which is in Greek

that the king is asking is too difficult, and no one can reveal it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with mortals.”

12 Because of this the king flew into a violent rage and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. 13 The decree was issued, and the wise men were about to be executed; and they looked for Daniel and his companions, to execute them. 14 Then Daniel responded with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the king’s chief executioner, who had gone out to execute the wise men of Babylon; 15 he asked Arioch, the royal official, “Why is the decree of the king so urgent?” Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. 16 So Daniel went in and requested that the king give him time and he would tell the king the interpretation.

### God Reveals Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream

17 Then Daniel went to his home and informed his companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 18 and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions with the rest of the wise men of Babylon might not perish. 19 Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night, and Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

20 Daniel said:

“Blessed be the name of God from  
age to age,  
for wisdom and power are his.

21 He changes times and seasons,  
deposes kings and sets up kings;  
he gives wisdom to the wise  
and knowledge to those who have  
understanding.

22 He reveals deep and hidden things;  
he knows what is in the darkness,  
and light dwells with him.

23 To you, O God of my ancestors,  
I give thanks and praise,  
for you have given me wisdom and  
power,  
and have now revealed to me  
what we asked of you,  
for you have revealed to us what  
the king ordered.”

### Daniel Interprets the Dream

24 Therefore Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, “Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will give the king the interpretation.”

25 Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king and said to him: “I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who can tell the king the interpretation.” 26 The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, “Are you able to tell me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?” 27 Daniel answered the king, “No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or diviners can show to the king the mystery that the king is asking, 28 but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has disclosed to King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen at the end of days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed were these: 29 To you, O king, as you lay in bed, came thoughts of what would be hereafter, and the revealer of mysteries disclosed to you what is to be. 30 But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me because of any wisdom that I have more than any other living being, but in order that the interpretation may be known to the king and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.

31 “You were looking, O king, and lo! there was a great statue. This statue was huge, its brilliance extraordinary; it was standing before you, and its appearance was frightening. 32 The head of that statue was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. 34 As you looked on, a stone was cut out, not by human hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces. 35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, were all broken in pieces and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

36 “This was the dream; now we will tell the king its interpretation. 37 You, O king, the king of kings—to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the might, and the glory, 38 into whose hand he has given human beings, wherever they live, the wild animals of the field, and the birds of the air, and whom he has established as ruler over them all—you are the head of gold. 39 After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over the whole earth. 40 And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron; just as iron crushes and smashes everything,<sup>a</sup> it shall crush and shatter all these. 41 As you saw the feet and toes partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom; but some of the strength of iron shall be in it, as you saw the iron mixed with the clay. 42 As the toes of the feet were part iron and part clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. 43 As you saw the iron mixed with clay, so will they mix with one another in marriage,<sup>b</sup> but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. 44 And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a king-

dom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall this kingdom be left to another people. It shall crush all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever; 45 just as you saw that a stone was cut from the mountain not by hands, and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. The great God has informed the king what shall be hereafter. The dream is certain, and its interpretation trustworthy.”

### Daniel and His Friends Promoted

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, worshiped Daniel, and commanded that a grain offering and incense be offered to him. 47 The king said to Daniel, “Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery!” 48 Then the king promoted Daniel, gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. 49 Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon. But Daniel remained at the king’s court.

### The Golden Image

**3** King Nebuchadnezzar made a golden statue whose height was sixty cubits and whose width was six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. 2 Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent for the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to assemble and come to the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 3 So the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, assembled for the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. When they were standing before the statue that Nebuchadnezzar had set up, 4 the herald proclaimed aloud, “You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, 5 that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, you are to fall down and worship the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. 6 Whoever does not fall down and worship shall

<sup>a</sup> Gk Theodotion Syr Vg: Aram adds *and like iron that crushes*

<sup>b</sup> Aram by *human seed*

### Read Daniel 3:1–23, 91–97

When commanded to worship an idol of the king, Daniel's three companions refuse and are immediately sentenced to death by burning. The king boasts that not even a god can save them from their fiery fate. But, for the three youths, life itself is not the greatest good nor is it the most important value: fidelity to God is. They leave the matter of being saved in God's hands; that is God's job and God will do whatever is right. Their job is to do the right thing, even when faced with death.

**Reflect:** What do I value more than fidelity to God? Would I be prepared to suffer for my belief in God?

**Pray:** Today I will pray for people who are persecuted for their faith. I will ask God to give them courage and faith.

**Act:** I will examine my life to see if there are things (e.g., success, security, reputation) that I “worship” more than I worship God.

immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, at this time certain Chaldeans came forward and denounced the Jews. <sup>9</sup> They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! <sup>10</sup> You, O king, have made a decree, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, shall fall down and worship the golden statue, <sup>11</sup> and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire. <sup>12</sup> There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These pay no heed to you, O king. They do not serve your gods and they do not worship the golden statue that you have set up.”

<sup>13</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought in; so they brought those men before the king. <sup>14</sup> Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods and you do not worship the golden statue that I have set up? <sup>15</sup> Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble to fall down and worship the statue that I have made, well and good.<sup>a</sup> But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire, and who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?”

<sup>16</sup> Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defense to you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us.<sup>b</sup> <sup>18</sup> But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.”

### The Fiery Furnace

<sup>19</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar was so filled with rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face was distorted. He ordered the furnace heated up seven times more than was customary, <sup>20</sup> and ordered some of the strongest guards in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire. <sup>21</sup> So the men were bound, still wearing their tunics,<sup>c</sup> their trousers,<sup>c</sup> their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown

<sup>a</sup> Aram lacks *well and good*

<sup>b</sup> *Or If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, he will deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king.*

<sup>c</sup> Meaning of Aram word uncertain

### Read Daniel 3:24–90

These verses are called “The Prayer of Azariah in the Furnace.” They are found in all Greek versions of the book of Daniel but are not in the Hebrew version. The Catholic and Orthodox Bibles follow the Greek text and include both the prayer and the hymn, inserting them where they fit logically. Azariah’s prayer is a confession of national sin. When the youths are protected from the fire by an angel, they burst into an unrestrained hymn of praise, summoning the entire created order to the praise of God.

**Reflect:** When have I experienced in a concrete way God’s saving and protecting presence in my life?

**Pray:** Today I will make my prayer a time of praise and thanks to God.

**Act:** I will imitate God’s goodness to me by being good to someone else.

into the furnace of blazing fire. <sup>22</sup> Because the king’s command was urgent and the furnace was so overheated, the raging flames killed the men who lifted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. <sup>23</sup> But the three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down, bound, into the furnace of blazing fire.

### The Prayer of Azariah in the Furnace

<sup>24</sup> They walked around in the midst of the flames, singing hymns to God and blessing the Lord. <sup>25</sup> Then Azariah stood still in the fire and prayed aloud:

- <sup>26</sup> “Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our ancestors,  
and worthy of praise;  
and glorious is your name forever!  
<sup>27</sup> For you are just in all you have done;  
all your works are true and your ways right,  
and all your judgments are true.  
<sup>28</sup> You have executed true judgments in all you  
have brought upon us  
and upon Jerusalem, the holy city of our  
ancestors;  
by a true judgment you have brought all this  
upon us because of our sins.  
<sup>29</sup> For we have sinned and broken your law in  
turning away from you;  
in all matters we have sinned grievously.  
<sup>30</sup> We have not obeyed your commandments,  
we have not kept them or done what you have  
commanded us for our own good.  
<sup>31</sup> So all that you have brought upon us,  
and all that you have done to us,  
you have done by a true judgment.  
<sup>32</sup> You have handed us over to our enemies,  
lawless and hateful rebels,  
and to an unjust king, the most wicked in all  
the world.  
<sup>33</sup> And now we cannot open our mouths;  
we, your servants who worship you, have  
become a shame and a reproach.  
<sup>34</sup> For your name’s sake do not give us up forever,  
and do not annul your covenant.  
<sup>35</sup> Do not withdraw your mercy from us,  
for the sake of Abraham your beloved  
and for the sake of your servant Isaac  
and Israel your holy one,  
<sup>36</sup> to whom you promised  
to multiply their descendants like the stars of  
heaven  
and like the sand on the shore of the sea.  
<sup>37</sup> For we, O Lord, have become fewer than any  
other nation,



- and are brought low this day in all the world because of our sins.
- 38 In our day we have no ruler, or prophet, or leader, no burnt offering, or sacrifice, or oblation, or incense, no place to make an offering before you and to find mercy.
- 39 Yet with a contrite heart and a humble spirit may we be accepted,
- 40 as though it were with burnt offerings of rams and bulls, or with tens of thousands of fat lambs; such may our sacrifice be in your sight today, and may we unreservedly follow you,<sup>a</sup> for no shame will come to those who trust in you.
- 41 And now with all our heart we follow you; we fear you and seek your presence.
- 42 Do not put us to shame, but deal with us in your patience and in your abundant mercy.
- 43 Deliver us in accordance with your marvelous works, and bring glory to your name, O Lord.
- 44 Let all who do harm to your servants be put to shame; let them be disgraced and deprived of all power, and let their strength be broken.
- 45 Let them know that you alone are the Lord God, glorious over the whole world.”

### The Song of the Three Jews

46 Now the king's servants who threw them in kept stoking the furnace with naphtha, pitch, tow, and brushwood. <sup>47</sup> And the flames poured out above the furnace forty-nine cubits, <sup>48</sup> and spread out and burned

those Chaldeans who were caught near the furnace. <sup>49</sup> But the angel of the Lord came down into the furnace to be with Azariah and his companions, and drove the fiery flame out of the furnace, <sup>50</sup> and made the inside of the furnace as though a moist wind were whistling through it. The fire did not touch them at all and caused them no pain or distress.

51 Then the three with one voice praised and glorified and blessed God in the furnace:

- 52 “Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our ancestors, and to be praised and highly exalted forever; And blessed is your glorious, holy name, and to be highly praised and highly exalted forever.
- 53 Blessed are you in the temple of your holy glory, and to be extolled and highly glorified forever.
- 54 Blessed are you who look into the depths from your throne on the cherubim, and to be praised and highly exalted forever.
- 55 Blessed are you on the throne of your kingdom, and to be extolled and highly exalted forever.
- 56 Blessed are you in the firmament of heaven, and to be sung and glorified forever.
- 57 “Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.
- 58 Bless the Lord, you heavens; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.
- 59 Bless the Lord, you angels of the Lord;

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Gk uncertain

- sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 60 Bless the Lord, all you waters above  
 the heavens;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 61 Bless the Lord, all you powers of the  
 Lord;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 62 Bless the Lord, sun and moon;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 63 Bless the Lord, stars of heaven;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 64 "Bless the Lord, all rain and dew;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 65 Bless the Lord, all you winds;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 66 Bless the Lord, fire and heat;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 67 Bless the Lord, winter cold and  
 summer heat;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 68 Bless the Lord, dews and falling snow;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 69 Bless the Lord, ice and cold;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 70 Bless the Lord, frosts and snows;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 71 Bless the Lord, nights and days;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 72 Bless the Lord, light and darkness;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 73 Bless the Lord, lightnings and clouds;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 74 "Let the earth bless the Lord;  
 let it sing praise to him and highly  
 exalt him forever.
- 75 Bless the Lord, mountains and hills;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 76 Bless the Lord, all that grows in the  
 ground;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 77 Bless the Lord, you springs;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 78 Bless the Lord, seas and rivers;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 79 Bless the Lord, you whales and all  
 that swim in the waters;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 80 Bless the Lord, all birds of the air;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 81 Bless the Lord, all wild animals and  
 cattle;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 82 "Bless the Lord, all people on earth;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 83 Bless the Lord, O Israel;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 84 Bless the Lord, you priests of the  
 Lord;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 85 Bless the Lord, you servants of the  
 Lord;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 86 Bless the Lord, spirits and souls of  
 the righteous;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 87 Bless the Lord, you who are holy  
 and humble in heart;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.
- 88 "Bless the Lord, Hananiah, Azariah,  
 and Mishael;  
 sing praise to him and highly exalt  
 him forever.



For he has rescued us from Hades  
and saved us from the power<sup>a</sup>  
of death,  
and delivered us from the midst of  
the burning fiery furnace;  
from the midst of the fire he has  
delivered us.

<sup>89</sup> Give thanks to the Lord, for he is  
good,  
for his mercy endures forever.

<sup>90</sup> All who worship the Lord, bless the  
God of gods,  
sing praise to him and give thanks  
to him,  
for his mercy endures forever.”

<sup>91</sup> Hearing them sing, and amazed at  
seeing them alive, King Nebuchadnezzar  
rose up quickly. He said to his counselors,  
“Was it not three men that we threw bound  
into the fire?” They answered the king,  
“True, O king.” <sup>92</sup> He replied, “But I see four  
men unbound, walking in the middle of the  
fire, and they are not hurt; and the fourth  
has the appearance of a god.”<sup>b</sup> <sup>93</sup> Neb-  
uchadnezzar then approached the door of  
the furnace of blazing fire and said, “Sha-

drach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants  
of the Most High God, come out! Come  
here!” So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-  
nego came out from the fire. <sup>94</sup> And the  
satraps, the prefects, the governors, and  
the king’s counselors gathered together  
and saw that the fire had not had any pow-  
er over the bodies of those men; the hair of  
their heads was not singed, their tunics<sup>c</sup>  
were not harmed, and not even the smell of  
fire came from them. <sup>95</sup> Nebuchadnezzar  
said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Me-  
shach, and Abednego, who has sent his an-  
gel and delivered his servants who trusted  
in him. They disobeyed the king’s com-  
mand and yielded up their bodies rather  
than serve and worship any god except  
their own God. <sup>96</sup> Therefore I make a de-  
cree: Any people, nation, or language that  
utters blasphemy against the God of  
Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall  
be torn limb from limb, and their houses  
laid in ruins; for there is no other god who  
is able to deliver in this way.” <sup>97</sup> Then the  
king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and  
Abednego in the province of Babylon.

### Nebuchadnezzar’s Second Dream

**4**<sup>d</sup> King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and  
languages that live throughout the earth: May you  
have abundant prosperity! <sup>2</sup> The signs and wonders that  
the Most High God has worked for me I am pleased to  
recount.

<sup>3</sup> How great are his signs,  
how mighty his wonders!  
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,  
and his sovereignty is from generation to  
generation.

<sup>4</sup><sup>e</sup> I, Nebuchadnezzar, was living at ease in my home  
and prospering in my palace. <sup>5</sup> I saw a dream that  
frightened me; my fantasies in bed and the visions of  
my head terrified me. <sup>6</sup> So I made a decree that all the  
wise men of Babylon should be brought before me, in  
order that they might tell me the interpretation of the  
dream. <sup>7</sup> Then the magicians, the enchanters, the  
Chaldeans, and the diviners came in, and I told them  
the dream, but they could not tell me its interpretation.  
<sup>8</sup> At last Daniel came in before me—he who was named  
Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and who is en-  
dowed with a spirit of the holy gods<sup>f</sup>—and I told him the

<sup>a</sup> Gk hand

<sup>b</sup> Aram a son of the gods

<sup>c</sup> Meaning of Aram word uncertain

<sup>d</sup> Ch 3.31 in Aram

<sup>e</sup> Ch 4.1 in Aram

<sup>f</sup> Or a holy, divine spirit

### Read Daniel 4

Another royal dream needs to be interpreted and, as before, Daniel alone can explain it. The majestic tree represents the king and the worldwide reach of its branches represents the extent of the king's rule. However, because of his pride, he is cut down but not destroyed (stump and roots survive). He is humiliated by being made to act like an animal. When he learns humility, the king is restored to sanity and acknowledges the greatness of the Lord who can "bring low those who walk in pride" (v. 37).

**Reflect:** Pride is a distorted view of myself, which in turn distorts my relations with others. How do I see myself?

**Pray:** I will pray for the grace to see myself honestly, acknowledging both my gifts and my weaknesses.

**Act:** I will practice humility by putting the needs of another ahead of mine.

dream: <sup>9</sup> "O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that you are endowed with a spirit of the holy god-<sup>a</sup> and that no mystery is too difficult for you. Hear<sup>b</sup> the dream that I saw; tell me its interpretation.

<sup>10c</sup> Upon my bed this is what I saw;

there was a tree at the center of the earth,  
and its height was great.

<sup>11</sup> The tree grew great and strong,  
its top reached to heaven,  
and it was visible to the ends of the whole earth.

<sup>12</sup> Its foliage was beautiful,  
its fruit abundant,  
and it provided food for all.

The animals of the field found shade under it,  
the birds of the air nested in its branches,  
and from it all living beings were fed.

<sup>13</sup> "I continued looking, in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and there was a holy watcher, coming down from heaven. <sup>14</sup> He cried aloud and said:

'Cut down the tree and chop off its branches,  
strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit.

Let the animals flee from beneath it  
and the birds from its branches.

<sup>15</sup> But leave its stump and roots in the ground,  
with a band of iron and bronze,  
in the tender grass of the field.

Let him be bathed with the dew of heaven,  
and let his lot be with the animals of the field  
in the grass of the earth.

<sup>16</sup> Let his mind be changed from that of a human,  
and let the mind of an animal be given to him.  
And let seven times pass over him.

<sup>17</sup> The sentence is rendered by decree of the  
watchers,  
the decision is given by order of the holy ones,  
in order that all who live may know  
that the Most High is sovereign over the  
kingdom of mortals;  
he gives it to whom he will  
and sets over it the lowliest of human beings.'

<sup>18</sup> "This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation, since all the wise men of my kingdom are unable to tell me the interpretation. You are able, however, for you are endowed with a spirit of the holy gods."<sup>a</sup>

### Daniel Interprets the Second Dream

<sup>19</sup> Then Daniel, who was called Belteshazzar, was severely distressed for a while. His thoughts terrified him. The king said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream

<sup>a</sup> Or a holy, divine spirit

<sup>b</sup> Theodotion: Aram *The visions of*

<sup>c</sup> Theodotion Syr Compare Gk: Aram adds  
*The visions of my head*

or the interpretation terrify you.” Belteshazzar answered, “My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you, and its interpretation for your enemies! <sup>20</sup> The tree that you saw, which grew great and strong, so that its top reached to heaven and was visible to the end of the whole earth, <sup>21</sup> whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and which provided food for all, under which animals of the field lived, and in whose branches the birds of the air had nests— <sup>22</sup> it is you, O king! You have grown great and strong. Your greatness has increased and reaches to heaven, and your sovereignty to the ends of the earth. <sup>23</sup> And whereas the king saw a holy watcher coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the ground, with a band of iron and bronze, in the grass of the field; and let him be bathed with the dew of heaven, and let his lot be with the animals of the field, until seven times pass over him’—<sup>24</sup> this is the interpretation, O king, and it is a decree of the Most High that has come upon my lord the king: <sup>25</sup> You shall be driven away from human society, and your dwelling shall be with the wild animals. You shall be made to eat grass like oxen, you shall be bathed with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, until you have learned that the Most High has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals, and gives it to whom he will. <sup>26</sup> As it was commanded to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be re-established for you from the time that you learn that Heaven is sovereign. <sup>27</sup> Therefore, O king, may my counsel be acceptable to you: atone for<sup>a</sup> your sins with righteousness, and your iniquities with mercy to the oppressed, so that your prosperity may be prolonged.”

### **Nebuchadnezzar’s Humiliation**

<sup>28</sup> All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>29</sup> At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace

of Babylon, <sup>30</sup> and the king said, “Is this not magnificent Babylon, which I have built as a royal capital by my mighty power and for my glorious majesty?” <sup>31</sup> While the words were still in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven: “O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: The kingdom has departed from you! <sup>32</sup> You shall be driven away from human society, and your dwelling shall be with the animals of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like oxen, and seven times shall pass over you, until you have learned that the Most High has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals and gives it to whom he will.” <sup>33</sup> Immediately the sentence was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven away from human society, ate grass like oxen, and his body was bathed with the dew of heaven, until his hair grew as long as eagles’ feathers and his nails became like birds’ claws.

### **Nebuchadnezzar Praises God**

<sup>34</sup> When that period was over, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me.

I blessed the Most High,  
and praised and honored the one  
who lives forever.

For his sovereignty is an everlasting  
sovereignty,  
and his kingdom endures from  
generation to generation.

<sup>35</sup> All the inhabitants of the earth are  
accounted as nothing,  
and he does what he wills with the  
host of heaven  
and the inhabitants of the earth.

There is no one who can stay his  
hand

or say to him, “What are you  
doing?”

<sup>36</sup> At that time my reason returned to me; and my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom. My counselors and my lords sought me out, I was re-established over my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me.

<sup>a</sup> Aram break off

37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are truth,

and his ways are justice; and he is able to bring low those who walk in pride.

### Read Daniel 5

The king takes the sacred vessels which had been plundered from Jerusalem's temple and uses them for drinking at a party. Such a profane use of sacred objects is sacrilege enough, but they are used to praise the Babylonian idols. An inscrutable message appears on the wall, written by a mysterious hand. Daniel once again is the only one who is able to interpret a mystical message. The four words represent a succession of kings. The words refer to diminishing weights, indicating that each new king is less than his predecessor. The words also announce judgment: the kingdom has been numbered (*mene*), weighed (*tekel*), and will be divided (*parsin*).

**Reflect:** What is my response to the sacred? Do I treat with care and respect those things that are holy?

**Pray:** I will pray for a deeper appreciation for what is sacred in my world.

**Act:** I will reverence God's word by treating my Bible with greater care.

### Belshazzar's Feast

**5** King Belshazzar made a great festival for a thousand of his lords, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand.

2 Under the influence of the wine, Belshazzar commanded that they bring in the vessels of gold and silver that his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. <sup>3</sup> So they brought in the vessels of gold and silver<sup>a</sup> that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. <sup>4</sup> They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

### The Writing on the Wall

5 Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and began writing on the plaster of the wall of the royal palace, next to the lampstand. The king was watching the hand as it wrote. <sup>6</sup> Then the king's face turned pale, and his thoughts terrified him. His limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. <sup>7</sup> The king cried aloud to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the diviners; and the king said to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever can read this writing and tell me its interpretation shall be clothed in purple, have a chain of gold around his neck, and rank third in the kingdom." <sup>8</sup> Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king the interpretation. <sup>9</sup> Then King Belshazzar became greatly terrified and his face turned pale, and his lords were perplexed.

10 The queen, when she heard the discussion of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall. The queen said, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts terrify you or your face grow pale. <sup>11</sup> There is a man in your kingdom who is endowed with a spirit of the holy gods.<sup>b</sup> In the days of your father he was found to have enlightenment, understanding, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods. Your father, King Nebuchadnezzar, made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and diviners,<sup>c</sup> <sup>12</sup> because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation."

<sup>a</sup> Theodotion Vg: Aram lacks and silver

<sup>b</sup> Or a holy, divine spirit

<sup>c</sup> Aram adds the king your father

### The Writing on the Wall Interpreted

13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king said to Daniel, “So you are Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? 14 I have heard of you that a spirit of the gods<sup>a</sup> is in you, and that enlightenment, understanding, and excellent wisdom are found in you. 15 Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and tell me its interpretation, but they were not able to give the interpretation of the matter. 16 But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you are able to read the writing and tell me its interpretation, you shall be clothed in purple, have a chain of gold around your neck, and rank third in the kingdom.”

17 Then Daniel answered in the presence of the king, “Let your gifts be for yourself, or give your rewards to someone else! Nevertheless I will read the writing to the king and let him know the interpretation. 18 O king, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar kingship, greatness, glory, and majesty. 19 And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. He killed those he wanted to kill, kept alive those he wanted to keep alive, honored those he wanted to honor, and degraded those he wanted to degrade. 20 But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he acted proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and his glory was stripped from him. 21 He was driven from human society, and his

mind was made like that of an animal. His dwelling was with the wild asses, he was fed grass like oxen, and his body was bathed with the dew of heaven, until he learned that the Most High God has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals, and sets over it whomever he will. 22 And you, Belshazzar his son, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this! 23 You have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven! The vessels of his temple have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them. You have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know; but the God in whose power is your very breath, and to whom belong all your ways, you have not honored.

24 “So from his presence the hand was sent and this writing was inscribed. 25 And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. 26 This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of<sup>b</sup> your kingdom and brought it to an end; 27 TEKEL, you have been weighed on the scales and found wanting; 28 PERES,<sup>c</sup> your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

29 Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed in purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made concerning him that he should rank third in the kingdom.

30 That very night Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was killed. 31<sup>d</sup> And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

### The Plot against Daniel

**6** It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred twenty satraps, stationed throughout the whole kingdom, <sup>2</sup> and over them three presidents, including Daniel; to these the satraps gave account, so that the king might suffer no loss. <sup>3</sup> Soon Daniel distinguished himself above all the other presidents and satraps because an excellent spirit was in him, and the king planned to appoint him over the whole kingdom. <sup>4</sup> So the presidents and the satraps tried to find grounds for complaint against Daniel in connection with the king-

<sup>a</sup> Or a divine spirit

<sup>b</sup> Aram lacks the days of

<sup>c</sup> The singular of Parsin

<sup>d</sup> Ch 6.1 in Aram

## Read Daniel 6

As the three youths in chapter 3 had been sentenced to death for not worshiping an idol, now Daniel faces his own test. His enemies have concocted a plot to ensnare him: he must worship only the king or be thrown to the lions. Still Daniel does not veer from his pattern of praying to the Lord three times a day. When Daniel's enemies accuse him, the king is compelled to carry out the sentence, though he prays to Daniel's God to deliver him. And God does deliver him because Daniel trusted in his God (v. 23).

**Reflect:** Do I live my faith without shame? When do I hide or compromise my religious faith and practices?

**Pray:** In prayer today, I will ask for the grace to persevere in whatever hardships or difficulties beset me.

**Act:** Following Daniel's example of praying faithfully, I will reexamine my practice of prayer and take steps to improve it.

dom. But they could find no grounds for complaint or any corruption, because he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption could be found in him. <sup>5</sup> The men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God."

6 So the presidents and satraps conspired and came to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! <sup>7</sup> All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an interdict, that whoever prays to anyone, divine or human, for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions. <sup>8</sup> Now, O king, establish the interdict and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." <sup>9</sup> Therefore King Darius signed the document and interdict.

## Daniel in the Lions' Den

10 Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously. <sup>11</sup> The conspirators came and found Daniel praying and seeking mercy before his God. <sup>12</sup> Then they approached the king and said concerning the interdict, "O king! Did you not sign an interdict, that anyone who prays to anyone, divine or human, within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions?" The king answered, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." <sup>13</sup> Then they responded to the king, "Daniel, one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the interdict you have signed, but he is saying his prayers three times a day."

14 When the king heard the charge, he was very much distressed. He was determined to save Daniel, and until the sun went down he made every effort to rescue him. <sup>15</sup> Then the conspirators came to the king and said to him, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no interdict or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed."

16 Then the king gave the command, and Daniel was brought and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you faithfully serve, deliver you!" <sup>17</sup> A stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, so that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. <sup>18</sup> Then the



king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no food was brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

### Daniel Saved from the Lions

19 Then, at break of day, the king got up and hurried to the den of lions. <sup>20</sup> When he came near the den where Daniel was, he cried out anxiously to Daniel, “O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you faithfully serve been able to deliver you from the lions?” <sup>21</sup> Daniel then said to the king, “O king, live forever! <sup>22</sup> My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths so that they would not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no wrong.” <sup>23</sup> Then the king was exceedingly glad and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. <sup>24</sup> The king gave a command, and those who had accused Daniel were

brought and thrown into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. Before they reached the bottom of the den the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

<sup>25</sup> Then King Darius wrote to all peoples and nations of every language throughout the whole world: “May you have abundant prosperity! <sup>26</sup> I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people should tremble and fear before the God of Daniel:

For he is the living God,  
enduring forever.  
His kingdom shall never be  
destroyed,  
and his dominion has no end.

<sup>27</sup> He delivers and rescues,  
he works signs and wonders in  
heaven and on earth;  
for he has saved Daniel  
from the power of the lions.”

<sup>28</sup> So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

### Visions of the Four Beasts

**7** In the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head as he lay in bed. Then he wrote down the dream:<sup>a</sup> <sup>2</sup> I,<sup>b</sup> Daniel, saw in my vision by night the four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea, <sup>3</sup> and four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. <sup>4</sup> The first was like a lion and had eagles’ wings. Then, as I watched, its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a human being; and a human mind was given to it. <sup>5</sup> Another beast appeared, a second one, that looked like a bear. It was raised up on one side, had three tusks<sup>c</sup> in its mouth among its teeth and was told, “Arise, devour many bodies!” <sup>6</sup> After this, as I watched, another appeared, like a leopard. The beast had four wings of a bird on its back and four heads; and dominion was given to it. <sup>7</sup> After this I saw in the visions by night a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth and was devouring, breaking in pieces, and stamping what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that preceded it, and it had ten horns. <sup>8</sup> I was considering the horns, when another horn appeared, a little one coming up among them; to make room for it, three of the earlier horns were plucked up

<sup>a</sup> Q Ms Theodotion: MT adds *the beginning of the words; he said*

<sup>b</sup> Theodotion: Aram *Daniel answered and said, “I*

<sup>c</sup> *Or ribs*

## Read Daniel 7

The book now turns to Daniel's first-person account of four visions. The first vision of four bizarre creatures arising from the sea represents the passing of kingdoms: the Babylonians, Medes, Persians, and Greeks. The ten horns of v. 8 likely refers to the ten rulers from Alexander the Great to Antiochus Epiphanes, "the little horn." Antiochus brutally persecuted the Jews who finally revolted and defeated him in 164 BC. Those who persevere will be victorious and will reign in an everlasting kingdom (v. 27) under the rule of the glorified "like a human being" (vv. 13–14).

**Reflect:** Daniel's vision of hope consoled and strengthened those who suffered persecution. What sustains me in life's dark moments?

**Pray:** The vision takes a long view of history and the unfolding of God's plan. I will pray for patience, hope, and endurance.

**Act:** Despite the evil in the world, I will recall reasons for maintaining hope.

by the roots. There were eyes like human eyes in this horn, and a mouth speaking arrogantly.

### Judgment before the Ancient One

- <sup>9</sup> As I watched,  
thrones were set in place,  
and an Ancient One<sup>a</sup> took his throne,  
his clothing was white as snow,  
and the hair of his head like pure wool;  
his throne was fiery flames,  
and its wheels were burning fire.
- <sup>10</sup> A stream of fire issued  
and flowed out from his presence.  
A thousand thousands served him,  
and ten thousand times ten thousand stood  
attending him.
- The court sat in judgment,  
and the books were opened.

<sup>11</sup> I watched then because of the noise of the arrogant words that the horn was speaking. And as I watched, the beast was put to death, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. <sup>12</sup> As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. <sup>13</sup> As I watched in the night visions,

- I saw one like a human being<sup>b</sup>  
coming with the clouds of heaven.  
And he came to the Ancient One<sup>c</sup>  
and was presented before him.
- <sup>14</sup> To him was given dominion  
and glory and kingship,  
that all peoples, nations, and languages  
should serve him.
- His dominion is an everlasting dominion  
that shall not pass away,  
and his kingship is one  
that shall never be destroyed.

### Daniel's Visions Interpreted

<sup>15</sup> As for me, Daniel, my spirit was troubled within me,<sup>d</sup> and the visions of my head terrified me. <sup>16</sup> I approached one of the attendants to ask him the truth concerning all this. So he said that he would disclose to me the interpretation of the matter: <sup>17</sup> "As for these four great beasts, four kings shall arise out of the earth. <sup>18</sup> But the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever—forever and ever."

<sup>19</sup> Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of

<sup>a</sup> Aram an Ancient of Days

<sup>b</sup> Aram one like a son of man

<sup>c</sup> Aram the Ancient of Days

<sup>d</sup> Aram troubled in its sheath

bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped what was left with its feet; <sup>20</sup> and concerning the ten horns that were on its head, and concerning the other horn, which came up and to make room for which three of them fell out—the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke arrogantly, and that seemed greater than the others. <sup>21</sup> As I looked, this horn made war with the holy ones and was prevailing over them, <sup>22</sup> until the Ancient One<sup>a</sup> came; then judgment was given for the holy ones of the Most High, and the time arrived when the holy ones gained possession of the kingdom.

23 This is what he said: “As for the fourth beast,

there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth  
that shall be different from all the other kingdoms;  
it shall devour the whole earth,  
and trample it down, and break it to pieces.

<sup>24</sup> As for the ten horns,  
out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise,  
and another shall arise after them.  
This one shall be different from the former ones,

and shall put down three kings.

<sup>25</sup> He shall speak words against the Most High,  
shall wear out the holy ones of the Most High,  
and shall attempt to change the sacred seasons and the law;  
and they shall be given into his power for a time, two times,<sup>b</sup> and half a time.

<sup>26</sup> Then the court shall sit in judgment,  
and his dominion shall be taken away,  
to be consumed and totally destroyed.

<sup>27</sup> The kingship and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High;  
their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom,  
and all dominions shall serve and obey them.”

28 Here the account ends. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly terrified me, and my face turned pale; but I kept the matter in my mind.

### Vision of a Ram and a Goat

**8** In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after the one that had appeared to me at first. <sup>2</sup> In the vision I was looking and saw myself in Susa the capital, in the province of Elam,<sup>c</sup> and I was by the river Ulai.<sup>d</sup> <sup>3</sup> I looked up and saw a ram standing beside the river.<sup>e</sup> It had two horns. Both horns were long, but one was longer than the other, and the longer one came up second. <sup>4</sup> I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward. All beasts were powerless to withstand it, and no one could rescue from its power; it did as it pleased and became strong.

<sup>5</sup> As I was watching, a male goat appeared from the west, coming across the face of the whole earth without touching the ground. The goat had a horn<sup>f</sup> between its eyes. <sup>6</sup> It came toward the ram with the two horns that I had seen standing beside the river,<sup>e</sup> and it ran at it with savage force. <sup>7</sup> I saw it approaching the ram. It was enraged against it and struck the ram, breaking its two

<sup>a</sup> Aram the Ancient of Days

<sup>b</sup> Aram a time, times

<sup>c</sup> Gk Theodotion: MT Q Ms repeat in the vision I was looking

<sup>d</sup> Or the Ulai Gate

<sup>e</sup> Or gate

<sup>f</sup> Theodotion: Gk one horn; Heb a horn of vision

## Read Daniel 8

Gabriel explains the second vision of the warring beasts (vv. 20–25): it refers to a succession of kingdoms, climaxing in the violent reign of Antiochus. He will desecrate the temple, prohibit the offering of the daily sacrifices (vv. 11–13), launch war against devout Jews, and affront God (v. 25) by declaring himself divine. This time of chaos will be limited to about three and a half years (v. 14) when Antiochus shall be broken and “the sanctuary shall be restored.”

**Reflect:** Violence, war, and suffering are difficult to understand. How do I try to make sense of these everyday occurrences?

**Pray:** In order to understand this vision, Daniel needs the help of an angelic interpreter. I will pray today for the grace to understand how God is at work in my life and in the world.

**Act:** I will cherish my freedom to practice my faith and safeguard the rights of others to do so as well.

horns. The ram did not have power to withstand it; it threw the ram down to the ground and trampled upon it, and there was no one who could rescue the ram from its power. <sup>8</sup> Then the male goat grew exceedingly great; but at the height of its power, the great horn was broken, and in its place there came up four prominent horns toward the four winds of heaven.

<sup>9</sup> Out of one of them came another<sup>a</sup> horn, a little one, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the beautiful land. <sup>10</sup> It grew as high as the host of heaven. It threw down to the earth some of the host and some of the stars, and trampled on them. <sup>11</sup> Even against the prince of the host it acted arrogantly; it took the regular burnt offering away from him and overthrew the place of his sanctuary. <sup>12</sup> Because of wickedness, the host was given over to it together with the regular burnt offering;<sup>b</sup> it cast truth to the ground, and kept prospering in what it did. <sup>13</sup> Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to the one that spoke, “For how long is this vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled?”<sup>b</sup> <sup>14</sup> And he answered him,<sup>c</sup> “For two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state.”

## Gabriel Interprets the Vision

<sup>15</sup> When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I tried to understand it. Then someone appeared standing before me, having the appearance of a man, <sup>16</sup> and I heard a human voice by the Ulai, calling, “Gabriel, help this man understand the vision.” <sup>17</sup> So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I became frightened and fell prostrate. But he said to me, “Understand, O mortal,<sup>d</sup> that the vision is for the time of the end.”

<sup>18</sup> As he was speaking to me, I fell into a trance, face to the ground; then he touched me and set me on my feet. <sup>19</sup> He said, “Listen, and I will tell you what will take place later in the period of wrath; for it refers to the appointed time of the end. <sup>20</sup> As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. <sup>21</sup> The male goat<sup>e</sup> is the king of Greece, and the great horn between its eyes is the first king. <sup>22</sup> As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his<sup>f</sup> nation, but not with his power.

<sup>23</sup> At the end of their rule,  
when the transgressions have reached their  
full measure,  
a king of bold countenance shall arise,  
skilled in intrigue.

<sup>a</sup> Cn Compare 7.8: Heb one

<sup>b</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>c</sup> Gk Theodotion Syr Vg: Heb me

<sup>d</sup> Heb son of man

<sup>e</sup> Or shaggy male goat

<sup>f</sup> Gk Theodotion Vg: Heb the

- <sup>24</sup> He shall grow strong in power,<sup>a</sup>  
shall cause fearful destruction,  
and shall succeed in what he  
does.  
He shall destroy the powerful  
and the people of the holy ones.
- <sup>25</sup> By his cunning  
he shall make deceit prosper  
under his hand,  
and in his own mind he shall be  
great.  
Without warning he shall destroy  
many

and shall even rise up against the  
Prince of princes.  
But he shall be broken, and not by  
human hands.

<sup>26</sup> The vision of the evenings and the mornings that has been told is true. As for you, seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now.”

<sup>27</sup> So I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days; then I arose and went about the king’s business. But I was dismayed by the vision and did not understand it.

### Read Daniel 9

Daniel offers a lengthy prayer confessing his sins and the sins of the people. He acknowledges that the destruction of both Jerusalem and the temple and the people’s deportation to Babylon are a just punishment for Judah’s history of sin. Daniel wisely knows that he cannot appeal to God on the basis of human righteousness but must depend entirely upon the mercy of God (v. 18). The many references to weeks and years, though variously interpreted and calculated, indicate that all is unfolding according to the set design and plan of God.

**Reflect:** Acknowledgement of sin lays the groundwork for an appeal for mercy. Do I avoid thinking about my sin, or am I overcome by a sense of sin and guilt?

**Pray:** In prayer I will honestly acknowledge my sin and ask for God’s mercy.

**Act:** When I am inclined to judge others harshly, I will instead evaluate my own behavior.

### Daniel’s Prayer for the People

**9** In the first year of Darius son of Ahasuerus, by birth a Mede, who became king over the realm of the Chaldeans—<sup>2</sup> in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to the prophet Jeremiah, must be fulfilled for the devastation of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

<sup>3</sup> Then I turned to the Lord God, to seek an answer by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. <sup>4</sup> I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying,

“Ah, Lord, great and awesome God, keeping covenant and steadfast love with those who love you and keep your commandments, <sup>5</sup> we have sinned and done wrong, acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and ordinances. <sup>6</sup> We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land.

<sup>7</sup> “Righteousness is on your side, O Lord, but open shame, as at this day, falls on us, the people of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. <sup>8</sup> Open shame, O LORD, falls on us, our kings, our officials, and our ancestors, because we have sinned against you. <sup>9</sup> To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him, <sup>10</sup> and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by following his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

<sup>11</sup> “All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. So the curse and the oath written in the law of Moses, the servant of God,

<sup>a</sup> Theodotion and one Gk Ms: Heb repeats (from 8.22) *but not with his power*

have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against you. <sup>12</sup> He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers, by bringing upon us a calamity so great that what has been done against Jerusalem has never before been done under the whole heaven. <sup>13</sup> Just as it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us. We did not entreat the favor of the LORD our God, turning from our iniquities and reflecting on his<sup>a</sup> fidelity. <sup>14</sup> So the LORD kept watch over this calamity until he brought it upon us. Indeed, the LORD our God is right in all that he has done; for we have disobeyed his voice.

<sup>15</sup> “And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and made your name renowned even to this day—we have sinned, we have done wickedly. <sup>16</sup> O Lord, in view of all your righteous acts, let your anger and wrath, we pray, turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy mountain; because of our sins and the iniquities of our ancestors, Jerusalem and your people have become a disgrace among all our neighbors. <sup>17</sup> Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his supplication, and for your own sake, Lord,<sup>b</sup> let your face shine upon your desolated sanctuary. <sup>18</sup> Incline your ear, O my God, and hear. Open your eyes and look at our desolation and the city that bears your name. We do not present our supplication before you on the ground of our righteousness, but on the ground of your great mercies. <sup>19</sup> O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, listen and act and do not delay! For your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people bear your name!”

### The Seventy Weeks

<sup>20</sup> While I was speaking, and was praying and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God on behalf of the holy mountain of my God—<sup>21</sup> while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen before in a vision, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. <sup>22</sup> He came<sup>c</sup> and said to me, “Daniel, I have now come out to give you wisdom and understanding. <sup>23</sup> At the beginning of your supplications a word went out, and I have come to declare it, for you are greatly beloved. So consider the word and understand the vision:

<sup>24</sup> “Seventy weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city: to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.<sup>d</sup> <sup>25</sup> Know therefore and understand: from the time that the word went out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the time of an anointed prince, there shall be seven weeks; and for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with streets and moat, but in a troubled time. <sup>26</sup> After the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing, and the troops of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its<sup>e</sup> end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. <sup>27</sup> He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall make sacrifice and offering cease; and in their place<sup>f</sup> shall be an abomination that desolates, until the decreed end is poured out upon the desolator.”

### Conflict of Nations and Heavenly Powers

**10** In the third year of King Cyrus of Persia a word was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar. The word was true, and it concerned a great conflict. He understood the word, having received understanding in the vision.

<sup>2</sup> At that time I, Daniel, had been mourning for three weeks. <sup>3</sup> I had eaten no rich food, no meat or wine had

<sup>a</sup> Heb *your*

<sup>b</sup> Theodotion Vg Compare Syr: Heb *for the Lord's sake*

<sup>c</sup> Gk Syr: Heb *He made to understand*

<sup>d</sup> Or *thing or one*

<sup>e</sup> Or *His*

<sup>f</sup> Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain



## Read Daniel 10

Chapters 10 through 12 form one unit: chapter 11 contains the central vision, while chapter 10 serves as an introduction and chapter 12 as the conclusion. In this chapter, Daniel sees a heavenly being in human form; the vision leaves him overcome with fear and physically weakened. Because Daniel is greatly beloved, wise, and humble (10:11–12), a messenger comes and explains that the vision Daniel is about to see concerns the end of days and that Daniel must be courageous and strong (v. 19). In the battle against evil, the righteous are assisted by heavenly protectors: Israel's protector is Michael (v. 13, 21; 12:1).

**Reflect:** How do I experience God's protective presence in my life?

**Pray:** When I feel challenged by life's demands, I will pray for courage and strength.

**Act:** Daniel's humility is as pleasing to God as the pride of rulers is offensive. In my dealings with others, I will act with greater humility.

entered my mouth, and I had not anointed myself at all, for the full three weeks. <sup>4</sup> On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris), <sup>5</sup> I looked up and saw a man clothed in linen, with a belt of gold from Uphaz around his waist. <sup>6</sup> His body was like beryl, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the roar of a multitude. <sup>7</sup> I, Daniel, alone saw the vision; the people who were with me did not see the vision, though a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled and hid themselves. <sup>8</sup> So I was left alone to see this great vision. My strength left me, and my complexion grew deathly pale, and I retained no strength. <sup>9</sup> Then I heard the sound of his words; and when I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a trance, face to the ground.

<sup>10</sup> But then a hand touched me and roused me to my hands and knees. <sup>11</sup> He said to me, "Daniel, greatly beloved, pay attention to the words that I am going to speak to you. Stand on your feet, for I have now been sent to you." So while he was speaking this word to me, I stood up trembling. <sup>12</sup> He said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. <sup>13</sup> But the prince of the kingdom of Persia opposed me twenty-one days. So Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia,<sup>a</sup> <sup>14</sup> and have come to help you understand what is to happen to your people at the end of days. For there is a further vision for those days."

<sup>15</sup> While he was speaking these words to me, I turned my face toward the ground and was speechless. <sup>16</sup> Then one in human form touched my lips, and I opened my mouth to speak, and said to the one who stood before me, "My lord, because of the vision such pains have come upon me that I retain no strength. <sup>17</sup> How can my lord's servant talk with my lord? For I am shaking,<sup>b</sup> no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me."

<sup>18</sup> Again one in human form touched me and strengthened me. <sup>19</sup> He said, "Do not fear, greatly beloved, you are safe. Be strong and courageous!" When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me." <sup>20</sup> Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? Now I must return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I am through with him, the prince of Greece will come. <sup>21</sup> But I am to tell you what is inscribed in the

<sup>a</sup> Gk Theodotion: Heb *I was left there with the kings of Persia*

<sup>b</sup> Gk: Heb *from now*

### Read Daniel 11

Ptolemy (“the king of the south”) and Seleucus (“the king of the north”) were two of the four kings who divided Alexander’s empire at his death and who vied for control of Judah. The central concern of this chapter is the evil done by the Seleucid king, Antiochus Epiphanes (vv. 21–45) who desecrates the temple when he erects a pagan altar (the “abomination that makes desolate,” v. 31) in the sanctuary. Though his evil deeds are great, evil shall not triumph because God has decreed an appointed end (v. 27, 35). Until evil is vanquished, however, the wise must keep faith even in the face of death.

**Reflect:** Can I name, confront, or diminish the power of evil in my own corner of the world?

**Pray:** Today I will pray for world leaders, asking God to guide them to use their power for good and not evil.

**Act:** I will resist evil and perform one act of kindness today.

book of truth. There is no one with me who contends **11** against these princes except Michael, your prince. <sup>1</sup> As for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to support and strengthen him.

<sup>2</sup> “Now I will announce the truth to you. Three more kings shall arise in Persia. The fourth shall be far richer than all of them, and when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece. <sup>3</sup> Then a warrior king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and take action as he pleases. <sup>4</sup> And while still rising in power, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor according to the dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted and go to others besides these.

<sup>5</sup> “Then the king of the south shall grow strong, but one of his officers shall grow stronger than he and shall rule a realm greater than his own realm. <sup>6</sup> After some years they shall make an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to ratify the agreement. But she shall not retain her power, and his offspring shall not endure. She shall be given up, she and her attendants and her child and the one who supported her.

“In those times <sup>7</sup> a branch from her roots shall rise up in his place. He shall come against the army and enter the fortress of the king of the north, and he shall take action against them and prevail. <sup>8</sup> Even their gods, with their idols and with their precious vessels of silver and gold, he shall carry off to Egypt as spoils of war. For some years he shall refrain from attacking the king of the north; <sup>9</sup> then the latter shall invade the realm of the king of the south, but will return to his own land.

<sup>10</sup> “His sons shall wage war and assemble a multitude of great forces, which shall advance like a flood and pass through, and again shall carry the war as far as his fortress. <sup>11</sup> Moved with rage, the king of the south shall go out and do battle against the king of the north, who shall muster a great multitude, which shall, however, be defeated by his enemy. <sup>12</sup> When the multitude has been carried off, his heart shall be exalted, and he shall overthrow tens of thousands, but he shall not prevail. <sup>13</sup> For the king of the north shall again raise a multitude, larger than the former, and after some years<sup>a</sup> he shall advance with a great army and abundant supplies.

<sup>14</sup> “In those times many shall rise against the king of the south. The lawless among your own people shall lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they shall fail. <sup>15</sup> Then the king of the north shall come and throw up siegeworks, and take a well-fortified city. And the forces of the south shall not stand, not even his

<sup>a</sup> Heb and at the end of the times years

picked troops, for there shall be no strength to resist. <sup>16</sup> But he who comes against him shall take the actions he pleases, and no one shall withstand him. He shall take a position in the beautiful land, and all of it shall be in his power. <sup>17</sup> He shall set his mind to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and he shall bring terms of peace<sup>a</sup> and perform them. In order to destroy the kingdom,<sup>b</sup> he shall give him a woman in marriage; but it shall not succeed or be to his advantage. <sup>18</sup> Afterward he shall turn to the coastlands, and shall capture many. But a commander shall put an end to his insolence; indeed,<sup>c</sup> he shall turn his insolence back upon him. <sup>19</sup> Then he shall turn back toward the fortresses of his own land, but he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found.

<sup>20</sup> "Then shall arise in his place one who shall send an official for the glory of the kingdom; but within a few days he shall be broken, though not in anger or in battle. <sup>21</sup> In his place shall arise a contemptible person on whom royal majesty had not been conferred; he shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom through intrigue. <sup>22</sup> Armies shall be utterly swept away and broken before him, and the prince of the covenant as well. <sup>23</sup> And after an alliance is made with him, he shall act deceitfully and become strong with a small party. <sup>24</sup> Without warning he shall come into the richest parts<sup>d</sup> of the province and do what none of his predecessors had ever done, lavishing plunder, spoil, and wealth on them. He shall devise plans against strongholds, but only for a time. <sup>25</sup> He shall stir up his power and determination against the king of the south with a great army, and the king of the south shall wage war with a much greater and stronger army. But he shall not succeed, for plots shall be devised against him <sup>26</sup> by those who eat of the royal rations. They shall break him, his army shall be swept away, and many shall fall

slain. <sup>27</sup> The two kings, their minds bent on evil, shall sit at one table and exchange lies. But it shall not succeed, for there remains an end at the time appointed. <sup>28</sup> He shall return to his land with great wealth, but his heart shall be set against the holy covenant. He shall work his will, and return to his own land.

<sup>29</sup> "At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south, but this time it shall not be as it was before. <sup>30</sup> For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall lose heart and withdraw. He shall be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay heed to those who forsake the holy covenant. <sup>31</sup> Forces sent by him shall occupy and profane the temple and fortress. They shall abolish the regular burnt offering and set up the abomination that makes desolate. <sup>32</sup> He shall seduce with intrigue those who violate the covenant; but the people who are loyal to their God shall stand firm and take action. <sup>33</sup> The wise among the people shall give understanding to many; for some days, however, they shall fall by sword and flame, and suffer captivity and plunder. <sup>34</sup> When they fall victim, they shall receive a little help, and many shall join them insincerely. <sup>35</sup> Some of the wise shall fall, so that they may be refined, purified, and cleansed,<sup>e</sup> until the time of the end, for there is still an interval until the time appointed.

<sup>36</sup> "The king shall act as he pleases. He shall exalt himself and consider himself greater than any god, and shall speak horrendous things against the God of gods. He shall prosper until the period of wrath is completed, for what is determined shall be done. <sup>37</sup> He shall pay no respect to the gods of his ancestors, or to the one beloved by women; he shall pay no respect to any other god, for he shall consider himself greater than all. <sup>38</sup> He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these; a god whom his ancestors did not know he shall honor

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Heb *kingdom, and upright ones with him*

<sup>b</sup> Heb *it*

<sup>c</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>d</sup> Or among the richest men

<sup>e</sup> Heb *made them white*

with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. <sup>39</sup> He shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall make more wealthy, and shall appoint them as rulers over many, and shall distribute the land for a price.

### The Time of the End

40 “At the time of the end the king of the south shall attack him. But the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. He shall advance against countries and pass through like a flood. <sup>41</sup> He shall come into the beautiful land, and tens

of thousands shall fall victim, but Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites shall escape from his power. <sup>42</sup> He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. <sup>43</sup> He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the riches of Egypt; and the Libyans and the Ethiopians<sup>a</sup> shall follow in his train. <sup>44</sup> But reports from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to bring ruin and complete destruction to many. <sup>45</sup> He shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with no one to help him.

### Read Daniel 12

There will be a time of final reckoning. Many who have died will rise from the dead: the righteous, whose names are written in the book, will rise to everlasting life, but the evil to everlasting punishment. The references to specific periods of time (v. 7, 11, 12) are meant to convey that there is a limit to the time of evil and that God has a plan that is moving irresistibly to a predetermined end. Daniel, beloved of God and faithful in all things, will rise to a glorious reward at the end of days.

**Reflect:** My choices and decisions today have eternal consequences. How are my actions tipping the scales of my life?

**Pray:** I will pray to be delivered from fear and to live with confidence in God’s mercy and protection.

**Act:** I will act with justice and virtue today so that my name may be written in the book of life.

### The Resurrection of the Dead

**12** “At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. <sup>2</sup> Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth<sup>b</sup> shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. <sup>3</sup> Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky,<sup>c</sup> and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. <sup>4</sup> But you, Daniel, keep the words secret and the book sealed until the time of the end. Many shall be running back and forth, and evil<sup>d</sup> shall increase.”

<sup>5</sup> Then I, Daniel, looked, and two others appeared, one standing on this bank of the stream and one on the other. <sup>6</sup> One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was upstream, “How long shall it be until the end of these wonders?” <sup>7</sup> The man clothed in linen, who was upstream, raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven. And I heard him swear by the one who lives forever that it would be for a time, two times, and half a time,<sup>e</sup> and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end, all these things would be accomplished. <sup>8</sup> I heard but could not understand; so I said, “My lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?” <sup>9</sup> He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are to remain secret and sealed until the time of the end. <sup>10</sup> Many shall be purified, cleansed, and refined, but the wicked shall continue to act wickedly. None of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand. <sup>11</sup> From the time that the regular burnt

<sup>a</sup> Or Nubians; Heb Cushites

<sup>b</sup> Or the land of dust

<sup>c</sup> Or dome

<sup>d</sup> Cn Compare Gk: Heb knowledge

<sup>e</sup> Heb a time, times, and a half

offering is taken away and the abomination that desolates is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred ninety days. <sup>12</sup> Happy are those who persevere and attain the

thousand three hundred thirty-five days. <sup>13</sup> But you, go your way,<sup>a</sup> and rest; you shall rise for your reward at the end of the days.”

### Read Daniel 13

This story, like those in chapters 1 through 6, features a hero who faces death for remaining faithful to God’s law. The hero, however, is a woman: Susanna. This time the threat is from within the community: two Jewish elders who should uphold virtue and justice succumb to lust and pervert justice. The turning point of the story comes when Susanna says, “I choose not to do it; I will fall into your hands, rather than sin in the sight of the Lord.” (13:23). Death is preferable to sin, and virtue is a greater good than life itself.

**Reflect:** Though the chapter ends with a celebration of Daniel’s wisdom, the focus is on Susanna’s virtue, fidelity, and courage. How are these qualities evident in my life?

**Pray:** I will pray for the wisdom to value most what is pleasing to God.

**Act:** I will emulate the integrity of Susanna in all my dealings with others.

### Susanna’s Beauty Attracts Two Elders

**13** There was a man living in Babylon whose name was Joakim. <sup>2</sup> He married the daughter of Hilki-ah, named Susanna, a very beautiful woman and one who feared the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Her parents were righteous, and had trained their daughter according to the law of Moses. <sup>4</sup> Joakim was very rich, and had a fine garden adjoining his house; the Jews used to come to him because he was the most honored of them all.

<sup>5</sup> That year two elders from the people were appointed as judges. Concerning them the Lord had said: “Wickedness came forth from Babylon, from elders who were judges, who were supposed to govern the people.” <sup>6</sup> These men were frequently at Joakim’s house, and all who had a case to be tried came to them there.

<sup>7</sup> When the people left at noon, Susanna would go into her husband’s garden to walk. <sup>8</sup> Every day the two elders used to see her, going in and walking about, and they began to lust for her. <sup>9</sup> They suppressed their consciences and turned away their eyes from looking to Heaven or remembering their duty to administer justice. <sup>10</sup> Both were overwhelmed with passion for her, but they did not tell each other of their distress, <sup>11</sup> for they were ashamed to disclose their lustful desire to seduce her. <sup>12</sup> Day after day they watched eagerly to see her.

<sup>13</sup> One day they said to each other, “Let us go home, for it is time for lunch.” So they both left and parted from each other. <sup>14</sup> But turning back, they met again; and when each pressed the other for the reason, they confessed their lust. Then together they arranged for a time when they could find her alone.

### The Elders Attempt to Seduce Susanna

<sup>15</sup> Once, while they were watching for an opportune day, she went in as before with only two maids, and wished to bathe in the garden, for it was a hot day. <sup>16</sup> No one was there except the two elders, who had hidden themselves and were watching her. <sup>17</sup> She said to her maids, “Bring me olive oil and ointments, and shut the garden doors so that I can bathe.” <sup>18</sup> They did as she told them: they shut the doors of the garden and went out by the side doors to bring what they had been commanded; they did not see the elders, because they were hiding.

<sup>19</sup> When the maids had gone out, the two elders got

<sup>a</sup> Gk Theodotion: Heb adds *to the end*

up and ran to her. <sup>20</sup> They said, "Look, the garden doors are shut, and no one can see us. We are burning with desire for you; so give your consent, and lie with us. <sup>21</sup> If you refuse, we will testify against you that a young man was with you, and this was why you sent your maids away."

<sup>22</sup> Susanna groaned and said, "I am completely trapped. For if I do this, it will mean death for me; if I do not, I cannot escape your hands. <sup>23</sup> I choose not to do it; I will fall into your hands, rather than sin in the sight of the Lord."

<sup>24</sup> Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and the two elders shouted against her. <sup>25</sup> And one of them ran and opened the garden doors. <sup>26</sup> When the people in the house heard the shouting in the garden, they rushed in at the side door to see what had happened to her. <sup>27</sup> And when the elders told their story, the servants felt very much ashamed, for nothing like this had ever been said about Susanna.

### The Elders Testify against Susanna

<sup>28</sup> The next day, when the people gathered at the house of her husband Joakim, the two elders came, full of their wicked plot to have Susanna put to death. In the presence of the people they said, <sup>29</sup> "Send for Susanna daughter of Hilkiah, the wife of Joakim." <sup>30</sup> So they sent for her. And she came with her parents, her children, and all her relatives.

<sup>31</sup> Now Susanna was a woman of great refinement and beautiful in appearance. <sup>32</sup> As she was veiled, the scoundrels ordered her to be unveiled, so that they might feast their eyes on her beauty. <sup>33</sup> Those who were with her and all who saw her were weeping.

<sup>34</sup> Then the two elders stood up before the people and laid their hands on her head. <sup>35</sup> Through her tears she looked up toward Heaven, for her heart trusted in the Lord. <sup>36</sup> The elders said, "While we were walking in the garden alone, this woman

came in with two maids, shut the garden doors, and dismissed the maids. <sup>37</sup> Then a young man, who was hiding there, came to her and lay with her. <sup>38</sup> We were in a corner of the garden, and when we saw this wickedness we ran to them. <sup>39</sup> Although we saw them embracing, we could not hold the man, because he was stronger than we, and he opened the doors and got away. <sup>40</sup> We did, however, seize this woman and asked who the young man was, <sup>41</sup> but she would not tell us. These things we testify."

Because they were elders of the people and judges, the assembly believed them and condemned her to death.

<sup>42</sup> Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and said, "O eternal God, you know what is secret and are aware of all things before they come to be; <sup>43</sup> you know that these men have given false evidence against me. And now I am to die, though I have done none of the wicked things that they have charged against me!"

<sup>44</sup> The Lord heard her cry. <sup>45</sup> Just as she was being led off to execution, God stirred up the holy spirit of a young lad named Daniel, <sup>46</sup> and he shouted with a loud voice, "I want no part in shedding this woman's blood!"

### Daniel Rescues Susanna

<sup>47</sup> All the people turned to him and asked, "What is this you are saying?" <sup>48</sup> Taking his stand among them he said, "Are you such fools, O Israelites, as to condemn a daughter of Israel without examination and without learning the facts? <sup>49</sup> Return to court, for these men have given false evidence against her."

<sup>50</sup> So all the people hurried back. And the rest of the<sup>a</sup> elders said to him, "Come, sit among us and inform us, for God has given you the standing of an elder." <sup>51</sup> Daniel said to them, "Separate them far from each other, and I will examine them."

<sup>52</sup> When they were separated from each other, he summoned one of them and said

<sup>a</sup> Gk lacks *rest of the*



to him, “You old relic of wicked days, your sins have now come home, which you have committed in the past, <sup>53</sup> pronouncing unjust judgments, condemning the innocent and acquitting the guilty, though the Lord said, ‘You shall not put an innocent and righteous person to death.’ <sup>54</sup> Now then, if you really saw this woman, tell me this: Under what tree did you see them being intimate with each other?” He answered, “Under a mastic tree.”<sup>a</sup> <sup>55</sup> And Daniel said, “Very well! This lie has cost you your head, for the angel of God has received the sentence from God and will immediately cut<sup>a</sup> you in two.”

<sup>56</sup> Then, putting him to one side, he ordered them to bring the other. And he said to him, “You offspring of Canaan and not of Judah, beauty has beguiled you and lust has perverted your heart. <sup>57</sup> This is how you have been treating the daughters of Israel, and they were intimate with you through fear; but a daughter of Judah would not tolerate your wickedness. <sup>58</sup> Now then, tell

me: Under what tree did you catch them being intimate with each other?” He answered, “Under an evergreen oak.”<sup>b</sup> <sup>59</sup> Daniel said to him, “Very well! This lie has cost you also your head, for the angel of God is waiting with his sword to split<sup>b</sup> you in two, so as to destroy you both.”

<sup>60</sup> Then the whole assembly raised a great shout and blessed God, who saves those who hope in him. <sup>61</sup> And they took action against the two elders, because out of their own mouths Daniel had convicted them of bearing false witness; they did to them as they had wickedly planned to do to their neighbor. <sup>62</sup> Acting in accordance with the law of Moses, they put them to death. Thus innocent blood was spared that day.

<sup>63</sup> Hilkiyah and his wife praised God for their daughter Susanna, and so did her husband Joakim and all her relatives, because she was found innocent of a shameful deed. <sup>64</sup> And from that day onward Daniel had a great reputation among the people.

### Daniel and the Priests of Bel

**14** When King Astyages was laid to rest with his ancestors, Cyrus the Persian succeeded to his kingdom. <sup>2</sup> Daniel was a companion of the king, and was the most honored of all his friends.

<sup>3</sup> Now the Babylonians had an idol called Bel, and every day they provided for it twelve bushels of choice flour and forty sheep and six measures<sup>c</sup> of wine. <sup>4</sup> The king revered it and went every day to worship it. But Daniel worshiped his own God.

So the king said to him, “Why do you not worship Bel?” <sup>5</sup> He answered, “Because I do not revere idols made with hands, but the living God, who created heaven and earth and has dominion over all living creatures.”

<sup>6</sup> The king said to him, “Do you not think that Bel is a living god? Do you not see how much he eats and drinks every day?” <sup>7</sup> And Daniel laughed, and said, “Do not be deceived, O king, for this thing is only clay inside and bronze outside, and it never ate or drank anything.”

<sup>8</sup> Then the king was angry and called the priests of Bel<sup>d</sup> and said to them, “If you do not tell me who is eating these provisions, you shall die. <sup>9</sup> But if you prove that Bel is eating them, Daniel shall die, because he has spoken blasphemy against Bel.” Daniel said to the king, “Let it be done as you have said.”

<sup>a</sup> The Greek words for *mastic tree* and *cut* are similar, thus forming an ironic wordplay

<sup>b</sup> The Greek words for *evergreen oak* and *split* are similar, thus forming an ironic wordplay

<sup>c</sup> A little more than fifty gallons

<sup>d</sup> *Gk his priests*

### Read Daniel 14:1–22

This story reiterates many themes from the first part of the book of Daniel: his wisdom, his fidelity to God, and the foolishness of worshiping idols. Daniel denies the reality of Babylon's chief god, Bel (= Marduk). He tells the king that Bel does not consume all the food offered to him in sacrifice because he is a lifeless idol made of clay and bronze. Daniel is able to foil a test created by the priests of Bel and to expose them—and Bel—as frauds.

**Reflect:** Daniel uses his skill and wisdom to assert his belief and defend his faith. What gifts do I possess that I can use in service of my faith?

**Pray:** I will ask God for the courage to remain true to my beliefs and the wit to present my faith well to others.

**Act:** When the opportunity presents itself, I will speak simply of my faith to another.

10 Now there were seventy priests of Bel, besides their wives and children. So the king went with Daniel into the temple of Bel. <sup>11</sup> The priests of Bel said, “See, we are now going outside; you yourself, O king, set out the food and prepare the wine, and shut the door and seal it with your signet. <sup>12</sup> When you return in the morning, if you do not find that Bel has eaten it all, we will die; otherwise Daniel will, who is telling lies about us.” <sup>13</sup> They were unconcerned, for beneath the table they had made a hidden entrance, through which they used to go in regularly and consume the provisions. <sup>14</sup> After they had gone out, the king set out the food for Bel. Then Daniel ordered his servants to bring ashes, and they scattered them throughout the whole temple in the presence of the king alone. Then they went out, shut the door and sealed it with the king's signet, and departed. <sup>15</sup> During the night the priests came as usual, with their wives and children, and they ate and drank everything.

<sup>16</sup> Early in the morning the king rose and came, and Daniel with him. <sup>17</sup> The king said, “Are the seals unbroken, Daniel?” He answered, “They are unbroken, O king.” <sup>18</sup> As soon as the doors were opened, the king looked at the table, and shouted in a loud voice, “You are great, O Bel, and in you there is no deceit at all!”

<sup>19</sup> But Daniel laughed and restrained the king from going in. “Look at the floor,” he said, “and notice whose footprints these are.” <sup>20</sup> The king said, “I see the footprints of men and women and children.”

<sup>21</sup> Then the king was enraged, and he arrested the priests and their wives and children. They showed him the secret doors through which they used to enter to consume what was on the table. <sup>22</sup> Therefore the king put them to death, and gave Bel over to Daniel, who destroyed it and its temple.

### Daniel Kills the Dragon

<sup>23</sup> Now in that place<sup>a</sup> there was a great dragon, which the Babylonians revered. <sup>24</sup> The king said to Daniel, “You cannot deny that this is a living god; so worship him.” <sup>25</sup> Daniel said, “I worship the Lord my God, for he is the living God. <sup>26</sup> But give me permission, O king, and I will kill the dragon without sword or club.” The king said, “I give you permission.”

<sup>27</sup> Then Daniel took pitch, fat, and hair, and boiled them together and made cakes, which he fed to the dragon. The dragon ate them, and burst open. Then Daniel said, “See what you have been worshiping!”

<sup>28</sup> When the Babylonians heard about it, they were very indignant and conspired against the king, saying, “The king has become a Jew; he has destroyed Bel, and killed the dragon, and slaughtered the priests.” <sup>29</sup> Going

<sup>a</sup> Other ancient authorities lack in that place

### Read Daniel 14:23–42

In the previous story, the idol was clearly something inanimate. In this episode, the dragon—a great serpent, really—is actually alive and believed to be a god and therefore immortal. Daniel disproves belief in such false gods by killing the serpent. Babylonian worshipers blackmail the king into ordering that Daniel be thrown into the lion's den (see chapter 6). When the king sees that Daniel is miraculously protected, he releases him from the den and orders that Daniel's accusers be thrown in.

**Reflect:** Daniel does more than persevere in his personal belief: he actively confronts beliefs that are clearly wrong. What is my reaction when I hear or see something that is wrong or offensive?

**Pray:** I will ask God for the courage and strength to stand up for my faith and values.

**Act:** I will engage with a friend or loved one in a conversation about my faith or values.

to the king, they said, “Hand Daniel over to us, or else we will kill you and your household.”<sup>30</sup> The king saw that they were pressing him hard, and under compulsion he handed Daniel over to them.

### Daniel in the Lions' Den

31 They threw Daniel into the lions' den, and he was there for six days.<sup>32</sup> There were seven lions in the den, and every day they had been given two human bodies and two sheep; but now they were given nothing, so that they would devour Daniel.

33 Now the prophet Habakkuk was in Judea; he had made a stew and had broken bread into a bowl, and was going into the field to take it to the reapers.<sup>34</sup> But the angel of the Lord said to Habakkuk, “Take the food that you have to Babylon, to Daniel, in the lions' den.”<sup>35</sup> Habakkuk said, “Sir, I have never seen Babylon, and I know nothing about the den.”<sup>36</sup> Then the angel of the Lord took him by the crown of his head and carried him by his hair; with the speed of the wind<sup>a</sup> he set him down in Babylon, right over the den.

37 Then Habakkuk shouted, “Daniel, Daniel! Take the food that God has sent you.”<sup>38</sup> Daniel said, “You have remembered me, O God, and have not forsaken those who love you.”<sup>39</sup> So Daniel got up and ate. And the angel of God immediately returned Habakkuk to his own place.

40 On the seventh day the king came to mourn for Daniel. When he came to the den he looked in, and there sat Daniel!<sup>41</sup> The king shouted with a loud voice, “You are great, O Lord, the God of Daniel, and there is no other besides you!”<sup>42</sup> Then he pulled Daniel<sup>b</sup> out, and threw into the den those who had attempted his destruction, and they were instantly eaten before his eyes.

<sup>a</sup> Or by the power of his spirit

<sup>b</sup> Gk him

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