

Daniel 11 and Historical Events

Biblical Text	Likely Historical Activity
<p>Then I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a ram which had two horns was standing in front of the canal. Now the two horns were long, but one was longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last. I saw the ram butting westward, northward, and southward, and no other beasts could stand before him nor was there anyone to rescue from his power, but he did as he pleased and magnified himself. (Dan. 8:3-4)</p> <p>The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. (Dan. 8:20)</p>	<p>This vision, given to Daniel nearly a decade before the Babylonian empire was toppled, gives a description of the Medo-Persian empire's dominance as well as describing how even though the Persians began as the lesser of the two powers of the empire they would become preeminent.</p>
<p>"And now I will tell you the truth. Behold, three more kings are going to arise in Persia. Then a fourth will gain far more riches than all of them; as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will arouse the whole empire against the realm of Greece." (Dan. 11:2)</p>	<p>"The four kings would then be Cambyses (529–522 b.c, not mentioned in the Old Testament), Pseudo-Smerdis (522-521 B.C.), Darius I Hystaspes (521–486 b.c, Ezra 5, 6), and Xerxes I (486–465 b.c, Ezra 4:6). This identification has the advantage of taking Persian kings in order, climaxing with Xerxes I who led the great expedition against Greece. Xerxes represents, on the one hand, the acme in the development of Persian power, and, on the other hand, the beginning of its dissolution."</p> <p>"Arousing the whole empire against the realm of Greece" would have included the Persian incursion into Greece following their defeat at the Battle of Marathon (490 BC) and would include the important historical battles of Thermopylae (the '300 Spartans' last stand) and Salamis in 480 B.C. where Persia was triumphant as well as the battles of Plataea and Mycale in 478 B.C. where Persia was defeated.</p>
<p>While I was observing, behold, a male goat was coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground; and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes. He came up to the ram that had the two horns, which I had seen standing in front of the canal, and rushed at him in his mighty wrath. I saw him come beside the ram, and he was enraged at him; and he struck the ram and shattered his two horns, and the ram had no strength to withstand him. So he hurled him to the ground and trampled on him, and there was none to rescue the ram from his power. (Dan. 8:5-7)</p> <p>The shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king. (Dan 8:21)</p>	<p>"With the swiftness of a leopard, Alexander the Great conquered most of the civilized world all the way from Macedonia to Africa and eastward to India. The lightning character of his conquests is without precedent in the ancient world, and this is fully in keeping with the image of speed embodied in the leopard itself and the four wings on its back." (Walvoord)</p> <p>"Alexander the Great invaded Asia Minor in 334 B.C. and within ten short years (by the age of thirty-two) had conquered the entire Medo-Persian Empire to the borders of India. According to legend, he then wept because there were no more lands to conquer." (Miller)</p>

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<p>Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken; and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven. (Dan 8:8)</p> <p>And a mighty king will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases. But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded, for his sovereignty will be uprooted and given to others besides them. (Dan. 11:3-4)</p>	<p>"Upon Alexander's death, his empire came to be divided into four sections (cf. 8:8) by his military commanders. The rulers were commonly known as the "Diadochi," which means "successors" (cf. 7:6 and 8:8). Alexander's sons (Alexander IV and Herakles) were both murdered, so no part of his empire went to "his descendants." None of the divisions of the Greek Empire ever rivaled the combined strength of Alexander's dominion." (Miller)</p> <p>"Alexander's empire was not given to his posterity. Hercules, the son of Alexander at the time of his death, whose mother was Barsina, was murdered by Polysperchon. Young Alexander, born posthumously of Roxana, was murdered in 310 b.c. The empire of Alexander the Great, after it fell into the hands of his four generals, did not preserve the glory and power it had in Alexander's day. The strong central rule which had characterized it passed with the death of Alexander. This event, recorded in Daniel's prophecy written about 539 B.C., was fulfilled when Alexander died in 323 B.C." (Walvoord)</p>
<p>"Then the king of the South will grow strong, along with one of his princes who will gain ascendancy over him and obtain dominion; his domain will be a great dominion indeed. (Dan 11:5)</p>	<p>The key rulers in Daniel's vision were the kings of the areas to the north and south of Israel. The king of the north (the area of Syria) was Seleucus I, founder of the Selucid dynasty, and the king of the south (Egypt) was Ptolemy I, patriarch of the Ptolemaic dynasty.</p> <p>One of his princes (v.5) "alludes to Seleucus I Nicator (312/311–280 b.c.), who had been a lesser general under Alexander. He was appointed satrap of Babylonia in 321 b.c., but when another general, Antigonus, seized Babylonia, Seleucus fled (in 316 b.c.) to Ptolemy Soter in Egypt to serve under him, thus becoming "one of his commanders." Antigonus was defeated in 312 b.c. at Gaza, and Seleucus returned to his former satrapy; there he greatly increased his power, eventually controlling more territory than Ptolemy. With the inception of Seleucus's rule, the "Seleucid era" was inaugurated. Seleucus's kingdom included Babylonia, Syria, and Media. According to Arrian, it was the largest of all the divisions of the Greek Empire." (Miller)</p>

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<p>After some years they will form an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the South will come to the king of the North to carry out a peaceful arrangement. But she will not retain her position of power, nor will he remain with his power, but she will be given up, along with those who brought her in and the one who sired her as well as he who supported her in those times. (Dan. 11:6)</p>	<p>N. King = Antiochus II Theos (261-246) S. King = Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246)</p> <p>This is referring to the failed political intrigue by marriage. The South is the more powerful, and Ptolemy II wanted to enhance his position by having the weaker nation's ruler (Antiochus II) marry his daughter Bernice so that their son would be the head of the Selucid empire.</p> <p>"Daughter of the king of the south" is Bernice who married Antiochus II after he put away his then current wife named Laodicea (Laodice).</p> <p>"She will not retain her position of power" Following the death of Ptolemy II in 256 BC, Antiochus divorced Bernice, and remarries Laodice.</p> <p>"nor will he remain with his power, but she will be given up, along with those who brought her...." Laodice had Bernice, Antiochus II and the child they had together all killed.</p>
<p>But one of the descendants of her line will arise in his place, and he will come against their army and enter the fortress of the king of the North, and he will deal with them and display great strength. Also their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold he will take into captivity to Egypt, and he on his part will refrain from attacking the king of the North for some years. (Dan. 11:7-8)</p>	<p>N: Seleucus II Callinicus (247-226) S: Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221)</p> <p>"One of the descendants of her line" - "her" refers to Bernice, and this is in reference to her brother who is now king. Ptolemy III raised a great army and attacked the north in a war that lasted from 246-241 BC.</p> <p>"Enter the fortress..." Ptolemy III went all the way to the heart of the northern kingdom and likely had Laodice executed.</p> <p>"gods with their metal images..." Ptolemy received the title "Euergetes" which means "benefactor" from the Egyptians because when he plundered the north he brought back Egyptian idols that the Persian ruler Cambyses had plundered from Egypt in 524 BC (300 years earlier).</p>
<p>Then the latter will enter the realm of the king of the South, but will return to his own land. (Dan. 11:9)</p>	<p>This most likely refers to some failed military reprisal by Seleucus Callinicus, but history has no record of this.</p>
<p>"His sons will mobilize and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one of them will keep on coming and overflow and pass through, that he may again wage war up to his very fortress. (Dan. 11:10)</p>	<p>N: Seleucus III (225-223) and Antiochus III the Great (223-187) S: Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221)</p> <p>"His sons" refers to Seleucus Callinicus' sons Seleucus III, who died in battle, and his brother Antiochus III the Great who is "one of them" who continues and wages war upon Ptolemy III ("his very fortress").</p>

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<p>The king of the South will be enraged and go forth and fight with the king of the North. Then the latter will raise a great multitude, but that multitude will be given into the hand of the former. When the multitude is carried away, his heart will be lifted up, and he will cause tens of thousands to fall; yet he will not prevail. (Dan. 11:11-12)</p>	<p>N: Antiochus III the Great (223-187) S: Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-203 B.C.)</p> <p>"Raise a great multitude" refers to the fact that Ptolemy IV responded to prior aggression by launching a massive counterattack. This is one of the largest battles of the ancient world. The accounting of the forces during this conflict have been described as this:</p> <p>Ruler: Infantry - Cavalry - Elephants Ptolemy IV: 70k - 5k - 73 Antiochus III: 62k - 6k - 102</p> <p>This battle is known as the Battle of Raphia or, and this may help for us to understand why this is given such attention by Daniel, it is also called the battle of Gaza, having taken place in Israel.</p> <p>"When the multitude is carried away..." This refers to the fact that Ptolemy IV was victorious and captured many of the North's elephants, while "he will not prevail" marks the ultimate shift that occurred at this point in history from southern dominance to the northern dominance.</p>
<p>For the king of the North will again raise a greater multitude than the former, and after an interval of some years he will press on with a great army and much equipment. Now in those times many will rise up against the king of the South; the violent ones among your people will also lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they will fall down. (Dan. 11:13-14)</p>	<p>N: Antiochus III the Great (223-187) S: Ptolemy V Epiphanes (203-181)</p> <p>After the death of Ptolemy IV in 203 and the crowning of his young son (only 4-6 yrs old at the time) Antiochus the Great invaded and conquered much of the disputed lands, and in 201 BC the fortress in Gaza had fallen to him.</p> <p>"In 201 B.C., Antiochus managed to assemble another great army and again began a series of attacks on Egypt, as described in verse 13-16. The expression the robbers of thy people (11:14) refers to persons who violate law and justice; hence, they are "robbers," or "men of violence". (Walvoord)</p>
<p>Then the king of the North will come, cast up a siege ramp and capture a well-fortified city; and the forces of the South will not stand their ground, not even their choicest troops, for there will be no strength to make a stand. (Dan. 11:15)</p>	<p>"Encouraged by the rising power of Rome which threatened Syria, Egypt fought back. The Egyptian armies led by Scopas were defeated at Paneas, near the headwaters of the Jordan River. Antiochus III subsequently forced Scopas to surrender at Sidon, referred to as "the most fenced cities," literally "a city of fortifications," which the Seleucid king captured in 199-198 b.c. This victory resulted in the Syrian occupation of all Palestine as far south as Gaza. The allusion to "the arms at the south shall not stand" is to the unsuccessful attempt by three Egyptian leaders, Eropas, Menacles, and Damoyenus to rescue the besieged Scopas from Sidon." (Walvoord)</p>

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<p>But he who comes against him will do as he pleases, and no one will be able to withstand him; he will also stay for a time in the Beautiful Land, with destruction in his hand. (Dan. 11:16)</p>	<p>Antiochus III the Great, having defeated Egypt at Sidon, now has absolute control (“destruction in his hand”) and has permanently acquired the land of Israel (“the beautiful land”). While he did punish the Jews who opposed him in the fighting, many received him as a deliverer and benefactor.</p>
<p>He will set his face to come with the power of his whole kingdom, bringing with him a proposal of peace which he will put into effect; he will also give him the daughter of women to ruin it. But she will not take a stand for him or be on his side. (Dan. 11:17)</p>	<p>"Threatened by Rome [who was friendly with Egypt], however, Antiochus [III the Great] effected a diplomatic settlement with Egypt by marrying his daughter Cleopatra to the young king, Ptolemy V Epiphanes in 192 b.c. In so doing, he fulfilled the prophecy “he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him.” The expression corrupting her may mean “to ruin the land,” that is, Antiochus the Great purposed by this betrothal of his young daughter to the seven-year old Ptolemy to ruin his former opponent and present ally. As Young states, “In this stratagem, however, Antiochus fails, because Cleopatra constantly sides with her husband over against her father.” (Walvoord)</p>
<p>Then he will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many. But a commander will put a stop to his scorn against him; moreover, he will repay him for his scorn. So he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be found no more. (Dan. 11:18-19)</p>	<p>Encouraged by his victory against Egypt, Antiochus III the Great turns attention to Greece and "attempted to equal the conquests of Alexander" but he was soundly defeated by Rome under Scipio. "Antiochus the Great, who could have gone down in history as one of the great conquerors of the ancient world if he had been content to leave Greece alone, instead fulfilled the prophecy of verse 19 in that he had to return to his own land, defeated and broken. He was killed trying to plunder a temple in Elam." (Walvoord)</p>
<p>“Then in his place one will arise who will send an oppressor through the Jewel of his kingdom; yet within a few days he will be shattered, though not in anger nor in battle. (Dan. 11:20)</p>	<p>N: Seleucus IV Philopator (187-175)</p> <p>Because of the losses to Rome, the peace treaty required Syria to pay them 1,000 talents annually. Seleucus IV sent Heliodorus as a tax collector to cover the obligation.</p> <p>"Yet within a few days he will be shattered..." Seleucus IV's reign was short and it is speculated that he died because of poison ("not in anger nor in battle").</p>

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<p>In his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue. (Dan. 11:21)</p>	<p>vs.21-35 focus on Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164)</p> <p>Antiochus is the younger brother of Antiochus IV Phlopatar, the previous king in the north. He is described as a 'despicable person' because of those things that he would do during his reign.</p> <p>"The honor of kingship" belonged to Antiochus IV's uncle, Demetrius I Soter the son of Antiochus IV, who was a hostage in Rome. Antiochus IV was able to take power by intrigue, and not by a military conquest.</p>
<p>The overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the prince of the covenant. (Dan. 11:22)</p>	<p>N: Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164) S: Ptolemy VI Philometor (181-146)</p> <p>Ptolemy VI attempted to regain lost territories (including Israel) but was defeated.</p> <p>"Prince of the Covenant" Some see this as a reference to Ptolemy VI who made a short pact with Antiochus to regain his throne in the south from his brother, but others see this as a reference to the Jewish high priest Onias III who was no friend of a secularizing Syrian influence and his treacherous death at the behest of his brother, Menelaus, is recored in 2 Macc 4:30ff.</p>
<p>After an alliance is made with him he will practice deception, and he will go up and gain power with a small force of people. (Dan. 11:23)</p>	<p>"...there was a contest for power between two of Antiochus' nephews, Ptolemy Philometor and Ptolemy Euergetes for control of Egypt. Antiochus supported Ptolemy Philometor, but only for his own gain. Out of it, Antiochus became stronger himself." (Walvoord)</p>
<p>In a time of tranquility he will enter the richest parts of the realm, and he will accomplish what his fathers never did, nor his ancestors; he will distribute plunder, booty and possessions among them, and he will devise his schemes against strongholds, but only for a time. (Dan. 11:24)</p>	<p>"When they felt "secure" (or "without warning"; cf. v. 21), Antiochus invaded "the richest provinces" (lit., "the fatnesses [or "fat ones"] of the province") and plundered their treasures. These areas included Egypt, Judea, and other provinces where Syrian forces were successful. Young notes that some historical sources indicate that Antiochus gave gifts to the people. Yet the context of this verse seems to suggest the idea of dividing the spoils of war ("plunder, loot and wealth") with his followers rather than with the people generally." (Miller)</p>
<p>He will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South with a large army; so the king of the South will mobilize an extremely large and mighty army for war; but he will not stand, for schemes will be devised against him. Those who eat his choice food will destroy him, and his army will overflow, but many will fall down slain. (Dan. 11:25-26)</p>	<p>Ptolemy VI attempted to respond to Antiochus IV attacks but was utterly defeated. "Those who eat his choice food..." likely refers to Ptolemy's advisors who unwisely advised him to attack Antiochus IV.</p>

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<p>As for both kings, their hearts will be intent on evil, and they will speak lies to each other at the same table; but it will not succeed, for the end is still to come at the appointed time. (Dan. 11:27)</p>	<p>"The struggle between Syria and Egypt, however, led to various agreements which did not prosper. Neither the rulers of Egypt nor Syria were honorable in their agreements as indicated in verse 27, "they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper." As the last part of verse 27 makes clear, in spite of all his intrigue, Antiochus was fulfilling prophecy on schedule." (Walvoord)</p>
<p>Then he will return to his land with much plunder; but his heart will be set against the holy covenant, and he will take action and then return to his own land. (Dan. 11:28)</p>	<p>Antiochus IV returns from Egypt with the plunder of victory"by way of Palestine and found an insurrection in progress (cf. 1 Macc 1:16–28; 2 Macc 5:1–11). He put down the rebellion, massacring eighty thousand men, women, and children (2 Macc 5:12–14) and then looted the temple with the help of the evil high priest, Menelaus (cf. 2 Macc 5:15–21). The persecution of the Jews by this evil tyrant had now escalated to calamitous proportions." (Miller)</p>
<p>"At the appointed time he will return and come into the South, but this last time it will not turn out the way it did before. For ships of Kittim will come against him; therefore he will be disheartened and will return and become enraged at the holy covenant and take action; so he will come back and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant. (Dan.11:29-30)</p>	<p>In 168 BC Antiochus IV invades Egypt, but was unsuccessful because of the intervention of the Roman military referred to as "ships of Kittim".</p> <p>"As the Syrians were moving to besiege Alexandria, the Roman commander Gaius Popilius Laenas met Antiochus four miles outside of the city and handed him a letter from the Roman Senate ordering him to leave Egypt or face war with Rome. Then the Roman commander drew a circle in the sand around Antiochus and told him that he must respond before stepping from the circle. Well aware of the might of Rome, having been a hostage there, and also remembering his father's (Antiochus III) defeat by the Roman legions at the Battle of Magnesia, the Syrian king stood in humiliated silence for a brief interval and then acquiesced to the demand. Antiochus withdrew from Egypt to Antioch in utter humiliation." (Miller)</p>

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<p>“Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation. By smooth words he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action. Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder for many days.(Dan. 11:31-33)</p> <p>Out of one of them came forth a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land. It grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down. It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down. And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper. (Dan 8:9-12)</p>	<p>"In 167 B.C., Antiochus turned his humiliation into anger against the Jewish people ("the holy covenant") once more (cf. 1 Macc 1:29–40; 2 Macc 6:1–6). He sent Apollonius (2 Macc 5:23–26), the head of his mercenaries and the “chief collector of tribute” (1 Macc 1:29), to Jerusalem. Apollonius pretended to come in peace, but on the Sabbath Day he suddenly attacked, massacring many people and plundering the city (cf. 1 Macc 1:30–32; cf. 2 Macc 5:25–26). But he rewarded those apostate Jews like the high priest Menelaus, who supported his Hellenistic policies (cf. 1 Macc 1:1, 43; 2 Macc 4:7–17)." (Miller)</p> <p>"Disgruntled by his defeat in Egypt at the hands of Rome, Antiochus Epiphanes seems to have vented his wrath upon the Jewish people as intimated in verse 30 in the expression, “have indignation against the holy covenant.” The history of the period is given in 1 and 2 Maccabees. The added statement and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant indicates his affiliation with those who sided with Antiochus, who became his favorites and proteges (cf. 1 Mac 2:18; 2 Mac 6:1).</p> <p>In the process of his opposition to the Jews, Antiochus polluted the holy altar in the temple by offering a sow upon the altar and forbidding the continuance of the daily sacrifices (cf. 1 Mac 1:44–54). He also issued orders that the Jews should cease their worship and erected in the holy place an idol, probably the image of Zeus Olympius." (Walvoord)</p>
<p>Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy. (Dan. 11:34)</p>	<p>"Join with them in hypocrisy" is likely a reference to Jews who joined with the faithful resistance to Antiochus IV while they were not believers in God themselves but wanted to be on the winning side.</p>
<p>refine, purge and make them pure until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time. (Dan. 11:35)</p>	<p>The descriptions in vs.33-35 depict, in general, the persecution of the faithful Jews ("those who have insight").</p>