

## The Book of Daniel in its Historical Contexts

### Foreign rulers in the Book of Daniel:

#### **Babylonians :**

Dan 1-4: Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BCE)

Dan 5, 7, 8: Belshazzar (co-regent with Nabonidus: 549-539 BCE)

#### **Medes:**

Dan 6, 9: "Darius the Mede" (non-existent ruler; possibly referring to Cyrus' successor, Darius I: 522-486 BCE)

#### **Persians :**

Dan 10-12: Cyrus of Persia (550-530 BCE)

### Selected Timeline of Jewish History

**606-535 BCE** - Approximate era of the *literary setting* of the Book of Daniel

**597 BCE** - Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem; first expulsion of Jews to Babylon

**586 BCE - Babylonian Exile:** Nebuchadnezzar razes Jerusalem; second (larger) expulsion of Jews to Babylon

**539 BCE** - Cyrus the Persian conquers Babylon and liberates Judea; exiled Jews return to their land, now under Persian rule. The Temple at Jerusalem is rebuilt; beginning of the **Second Temple period**.

**333 BCE** - Persian Empire is among the lands conquered by Alexander the Great; the Land of Israel comes under Hellenistic rule (first Ptolemaic and then Seleucid).

**168-167 BCE** – Persecutions of Jews under the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes = Current scholarly consensus for the composition of the latest portions of the Book of Daniel (i.e., the apocalyptic material in Dan 7-12) and their compilation together with earlier narrative material about Daniel (i.e., the stories in Dan 1-6)

**167-164 BCE - Maccabean Revolt:** under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus and other members of his family, Jews respond to the persecution by means of a successful military revolt against the Seleucids and gained the freedom of self-rule in their own land for the first time since the Babylonian Exile.

### The Languages and Literary Structure of the Book of Daniel

Languages	Literary Structure
1:1-2:4a Hebrew	1-6, Six <b>Diaspora Stories</b> about Daniel and his friends in the courts of a series of foreign kings
2:4b-7:28 Aramaic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Daniel and his friends at the Babylonian court of Nebuchadnezzar</li> <li>2. Daniel interprets the statue dream of Nebuchadnezzar</li> <li>3. The three friends are placed in the furnace</li> <li>4. Daniel interprets the tree dream of Nebuchadnezzar</li> <li>5. Daniel interprets the handwriting on the wall of Belshazzar</li> <li>6. Daniel is placed in the lion's pit of Darius</li> </ol>
8:1-12:13 Hebrew	<p>7-12, Daniel's <b>Apocalyptic Visions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. The four beasts and the Son of Man</li> <li>8: The ram and the goat</li> <li>9: Gabriel interprets Jeremiah's prophecy of the seventy weeks</li> <li>10-12: Vision of future history</li> </ol>
<i>Additions to Daniel = Chapters only in the Greek translation/version</i>	
13-14, Greek	<p>13-14, More <b>Diaspora Stories</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13: Susanna</li> <li>14: Bel and the Dragon</li> </ol>