

1. Darius and the Lions' Den <https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/892890/>

2. Ibn Ezra to Zechariah 1:1

The power of refined souls which receive Divine inspiration as prophecy is not uniform. When there was honour in Israel, before they were exiled, there was no need to interpret prophecy, as in, 'Behold, a son is born to the house of David, and his name is Yoshiyahu.' It was clear on its own. After the exile, they are visions and they require interpretation, like the visions of Daniel, which Daniel could not have understood without a *malach* to interpret them.

3. Abarbanel to Zechariah 1:8

Chaggai, Zechariah and Malachi were contemporaries, and Chaggai and Malachi spoke clearly... and Zechariah himself had quite pure, clear words aside from his visions... This shows that the opacity of Zechariah's visions was not a function of a deficiency in his prophecy and grasp, but rather was due to the opacity of the subject and the difficulty of the words themselves. We see in all of the visions on the subject, whether from the start of Yechezkel or Nevuchadnezzar's dreams of the statue or Daniel's prophecies... there was great opacity in their words...

#### The Vision Begins

4. Daniel 7:1 (JPS 1985 edition, courtesy Sefaria.org)

In the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and a vision of his mind in bed; afterward he wrote down the dream. Beginning the account (ריש מלין אמר) -

5. Abarbanel, Maayanei haYeshuah 8:1

It appears that because Jeremiah prophesied regarding Nevuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, that all nations would serve him, his son and his grandson, therefore, after his death and that of his son Evil Merodach, when his grandson Belshazzar became king, Gd was concerned that Daniel might challenge, because Jeremiah's prediction had not been fulfilled. Daniel would have seen the nations serve Nevuchadnezzar, his son and grandson, such that the time for our recall should have arrived, but peace would not have arrived. Therefore Gd showed him...

6. Abarbanel, Maayanei haYeshuah 8:1

When Daniel saw this vision, he awoke, energized by it, as prophets are. And so that he would not forget... these were his reminders until morning, and then he wrote it upon this scroll, no less and no more than what he had seen.

#### Daniel 7:2-3 Four winds, and four empires envisioned as beasts

7. Daniel 7:2-3 (JPS 1985 edition, courtesy Sefaria.org)

Daniel related the following: "In my vision at night, I saw the four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea. Four mighty beasts different from each other emerged from the sea.

8. Abarbanel, Maayanei haYeshuah 8:1

This world is compared to a sea with its constant change, its great danger and great storms and silences corresponding with the prevailing winds. It also mentioned that he saw four great beasts ascending from the sea, different from each other. As the *malach* explained to him, these represented the four empires upon earth... And it said they ascended from the sea, to inform us that their nature would change, and not remain static, like the waters of the sea with their great waves which quickly flood and pass.

9. Rabbi Yosef Albo, Sefer halkkarim 4:42

Thus wrote Rabbi Chaim Galipha, too, in "The Scroll of Redemption", that all of Daniel's prophecies were only for the Second Temple... According to his words we must also say that the four beasts Daniel saw were not the four beasts as explained by all of the commentators, but the first would hint to the Babylonian Empire, the second to the Medean Empire, the third to the Medean-Persian Empire, and the fourth to the Greek Empire, all during the Second Temple.

#### 10. Ibn Ezra to 7:14

The fourth beast to appear was the Ishmaelite Empire, which was compared to iron in Nevuchadnezzar's dream... The meaning of "ten horns" is that the Ishmaelite Empire extended over most of civilization, and these are the horns: Khurasan, Isfahan, El Yemen or Saba, Mecca...

#### 11. Abarbanel, Maayanei haYeshuah 8:2

This view is not the error of a sage, but rank foolishness and lunacy and wonder of the heart. I won't trouble myself to respond to his words, lest I be equated with him, but from my explanation of the visions and their subjects the falseness of his position will be easily discerned. However, I will inform you that Porphyry the Christian also said these things, to flee from the ways the Christians explained these verses.

#### 7:4-8 The four beasts

##### 12. Daniel 7:4-8 (JPS 1985 edition, courtesy Sefaria.org)

The first was like a lion but had eagles' wings. As I looked on, its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted off the ground and set on its feet like a man and given the mind of a man.

Then I saw a second, different beast, which was like a bear but raised on one side, and with three fangs in its mouth among its teeth; it was told, 'Arise, eat much meat!'

After that, as I looked on, there was another one, like a leopard, and it had on its back four wings like those of a bird; the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

After that, as I looked on in the night vision, there was a fourth beast—fearsome, dreadful, and very powerful, with great iron teeth—that devoured and crushed, and stamped the remains with its feet. It was different from all the other beasts which had gone before it; and it had ten horns. While I was gazing upon these horns, a new little horn sprouted up among them; three of the older horns were uprooted to make room for it. There were eyes in this horn like those of a man, and a mouth that spoke arrogantly.

##### 13. Abarbanel, Maayanei haYeshuah 8:2

It also informed us with this second clause that the lion had the wings of a *neshet*. This hints at two things: 1) The Babylonian Empire, aside from her might, was also very swift to conquer the lands of others... And 2) Nevuchadnezzar the Babylonian king possessed arrogance and haughtiness and a bad way. ...

##### 14. Talmud, Megilah 11a

"A roaring lion, a growling bear, a wicked ruler over a poor nation. (Proverbs 28:15)" –

"Roaring lion" is wicked Nevuchadnezzar, regarding whom Jeremiah 4:7 says, "The lion has ascended from its thicket."

"A growling bear" is Achashverosh, regarding whom Daniel 7:5 says, "Another, second beast, like a bear." And Rav Yosef taught: These are the Persians, who eat and drink like a bear, who are fleshy like a bear, who grow their hair like a bear, and who are restless like a bear.

##### 15. Ibn Ezra to 7:13

On one side of the Babylonian Empire, Cyrus and Darius slaughtered three great cities. I saw this recorded in the annals of the kings of Persia some forty years ago, and I don't recall the names of the cities. This is "Rise and eat great quantities of meat" – from the Babylonian Empire.

##### 16. Talmud, Kiddushin 72a

"And three ribs were in its mouth, between its teeth." Rabbi Yochanan said: This is Chilazon, Hadyav and Netzivin, which the empire swallows at times and spits out at times.

##### 17. Ralbag, cited in Abarbanel, Maayanei haYeshuah 8:3

Ralbag wrote that this is stated regarding Cyrus, who slaughtered many nations... He warred with the Queen of Shittim, and because he killed her sons she went to war with him, defeated him, killed him, cut off his head and threw it into a pit filled with people he had killed. She cried out against him, "Drink, cruel Cyrus, drink and be filled with the blood

you shed from these corpses for thirty years without being filled."... But it seems unlikely to me that this prophecy would come to Daniel to inform him of the words of the Queen of the Shittim, who spoke in her rage.

18. Abarbanel, Maayanei haYeshuah 8:3

What I found in the annals of the kings of Persia seems more likely to me – that this Cyrus, king of Persia, was the maternal grandson of the Assyrian king, for he was called his grandson. She married a lesser man without her father's permission, and she became pregnant. Since the king lacked another heir, he was enraged. To keep this lesser man from inheriting his throne, once his daughter gave birth the king had the child taken into the wilderness, to be killed there. The king's agent said, "I shall not see the child's death," and he cast the child into the field, for the beasts to kill him. In Gd's mercy, though, a female dog arrived there and she nursed him and raised him as a son...

19. Abarbanel, Maayanei haYeshuah 8:4

Medea and Persia did not travel ambitiously to conquer distant lands, and so Daniel did not see wings on the bear. Alexander of Macedonia, though, went forth with arms and conquered some of Africa, and all of Asia – which scholars say is itself larger than the rest of civilization, with its many cities and nations. Therefore it was fitting that he be described with wings, signifying his travels to distant lands.

20. Alexander in leopard skin - [http://www.vroma.org/images/mcmanus\\_images/indexcoins3.html](http://www.vroma.org/images/mcmanus_images/indexcoins3.html)

21. Abarbanel, Maayanei haYeshuah 8:4

Just as he saw three ribs in the mouth of the bear to indicate the three empires beneath this one – Medea, Persia and Babylon – so with this beast he saw that it would separate into four heads [empires]. Alexander would die in his youth, at about the age of 32, and then four heads would reign over the lands Alexander had conquered: Ptolemy over Egypt, Seleucus over Assyria and Babylon, Antigonus over Asia and Persia, and Popyleios [Phillip Arridaeus - <http://www.livius.org/phi-php/philip/arridaeus.htm>], brother of Alexander, who reigned in the land of Greece.

22. Abarbanel, Maayanei haYeshuah 8:5

Three types of rule passed upon her: 1) Rule of kings who reigned over her; 2) After the Romans overthrew the kings, there was a reign by one aged ruler with three hundred of Rome's best advisors... 3) Then Rome adopted Caesars, who ruled... After rule fell to advisors, then Rome achieved great things and conquered mighty nations... The stature of the advisors, known as consuls, is portrayed in the teeth. Due to their greatness and might they are called "great", and due to their strength they are depicted as iron... He compared the advisors to teeth because teeth are individual physical units and yet they break down food for the entire body's benefit... The advisors do not benefit from, or give benefit to themselves from, their work for the government. They flee benefit, to pursue the general good... They are also compared to teeth because their work is counsel and speech and teaching merit to Rome...

7:9-12      The judgment of the beasts

23. Daniel 7:9-12 (JPS 1985 edition, courtesy Sefaria.org)

As I looked on, Thrones were set in place, And the Ancient of Days took His seat. His garment was like white snow, And the hair of His head was like lamb's wool. His throne was tongues of flame; Its wheels were blazing fire. A river of fire streamed forth before Him; Thousands upon thousands served Him; Myriads upon myriads attended Him; The court sat and the books were opened.

I looked on. Then, because of the arrogant words that the horn spoke, the beast was killed as I looked on; its body was destroyed and it was consigned to the flames. The dominion of the other beasts was taken away, but an extension of life was given to them for a time and season.

24. Talmud, Chagigah 14a

One is for Gd and one is for David, according to Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Yosi haGlili said: Akiva! How long will you make the Shechinah mundane? Rather: one is for judgment and one is for tzedakah...

7:13-14 Enter the Jews

25. Daniel 7:13-14 (JPS 1985 edition, courtesy Sefaria.org)

As I looked on, in the night vision, One like a human being came with the clouds of heaven; He reached the Ancient of Days and was presented to Him. Dominion, glory, and kingship were given to him; All peoples and nations of every language must serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, And his kingship, one that shall not be destroyed.

26. Abarbanel, Maayanei haYeshuah 8:9

This also has multiple meanings, whether to inform that the nation would be reduced to the last extreme... meaning, as though there was just one man... And it also meant that they would be low and very poor, due to the might of their foes.

Daniel 7:15-28 Explanations

27. Daniel 7:15-28 (JPS 1985 edition, courtesy Sefaria.org)

As for me, Daniel, my spirit was disturbed within me and the vision of my mind alarmed me. I approached one of the attendants and asked him the true meaning of all this. He gave me this interpretation of the matter:

'These great beasts, four in number [mean] four kingdoms will arise out of the earth; then holy ones of the Most High will receive the kingdom, and will possess the kingdom forever—forever and ever.'

Then I wanted to ascertain the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from them all, very fearsome, with teeth of iron, claws of bronze, that devoured and crushed, and stamped the remains; and of the ten horns on its head; and of the new one that sprouted, to make room for which three fell—the horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spoke arrogantly, and which was more conspicuous than its fellows. (I looked on as that horn made war with the holy ones and overcame them, until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was rendered in favor of the holy ones of the Most High, for the time had come, and the holy ones took possession of the kingdom.)

This is what he said: 'The fourth beast [means]—there will be a fourth kingdom upon the earth which will be different from all the kingdoms; it will devour the whole earth, tread it down, and crush it. And the ten horns [mean]—from that kingdom, ten kings will arise, and after them another will arise. He will be different from the former ones, and will bring low three kings. He will speak words against the Most High, and will harass the holy ones of the Most High. He will think of changing times and laws, and they will be delivered into his power for a time, times, and half a time. Then the court will sit and his dominion will be taken away, to be destroyed and abolished for all time. The kingship and dominion and grandeur belonging to all the kingdoms under Heaven will 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.'"

Here the account ends. I, Daniel, was very alarmed by my thoughts, and my face darkened; and I could not put the matter out of my mind.

A time, times and half a time				
	"A time"	Total	Counting from when?	Counting to when?
Ibn Ezra	One year	3.5 years	Siege of the Second Temple	
Rav Saadia Gaon Rashi	890 years (Exodus - 1 <sup>st</sup> Temple)	1335 years יחמשה עשר אסתר-ish	Destruction of the Second Temple	Mashiach
Abarbanel	410 years (1 <sup>st</sup> Temple)	1435 years	Destruction of the Second Temple	Mashiach