Daniel 8:1-2

Overview of Chapter 8

Daniel chapter 8-12 is written in Hebrew whereas Daniel 2:4b-7:28 was written in Aramaic. As we noted in the introduction, during the sixth century B.C., Aramaic was the lingua franca of the day and was the most convenient language and was used in international business and diplomacy. The book of Daniel was written in two languages. Daniel 1:1-2:4a and chapters 8-12 are written in Hebrew. Daniel 2:4b-7:28 is written in Aramaic, which was also called “Chaldee” or “Syriac.” This use of the two languages appears in Ezra 4:8-6:18, 7:12-26 and Jeremiah 10:11. The reason for this unusual feature is that Daniel was writing for two different audiences. Aramaic was the language of the Gentile world when the book of Daniel was written. Hebrew was still the language of Israel at that time as well. Thus, the book has two major divisions. The first is related to God’s program for the Gentiles. The second is His program for the Jews. Therefore, Daniel 2:4b-7:28 was written for the Gentile world in Daniel’s day. Daniel 1:1-2:4a and 8-12 was written for the Israelites. The emphasis of Daniel 8-12 is God’s plan for the nation of Israel. It speaks of Israel during the times of the Gentiles and her relationship to the Gentile powers. It emphasizes with the Jews that God has not abandoned her but has a plan for her to be head of the nations with her Messiah as ruler of planet earth.

So the message and prophecies that appear in the Aramaic portions of Daniel are addressed to the Gentile world in their language whereas the message and prophecies that appear in the Hebrew portion of the book of are addressed to the nation of Israel. Daniel chapter 8 begins God’s message to the nation of Israel in relation to the times of the Gentiles. The message to both the Jew and Gentile in the sixth century B.C. is that the God of Israel is sovereign over them all.

Daniel chapter 8 addresses Israel’s relation to the world-empires of Medo-Persia and Greece. The Israelites returned to their land from exile in Babylon under the Persian government. However, under the empire of Greece, and in particular under the rule of Antiochus Epiphanes the city of Jerusalem and the temple were again desolated. Thus, chapter 8 would serve as an encouragement to the Jewish people during this period of terrible persecution and suffering.

Then, Daniel chapter 9 speaks of Israel’s history from the time of Ezra and Nehemiah to the establishment of the kingdom of heaven on earth through the Second Advent of Jesus Christ, which is immediately preceded by the worst time in Israel’s history, namely Daniel’s Seventieth Week and in particular the last three and a half years of this seven year period. Daniel chapters 10-11 present events in Israel’s history in relation to the Persian and Greek empires. The emphasis upon
these chapters is Israel being oppressed by these world-powers. Lastly, the final section of the book, namely Daniel 11:36-12:13, is related to the end of the age as well as the revived form of the Roman Empire and in addition the deliverance of Israel by God from this empire.

Therefore, we can see why Daniel 8-12 is written in Hebrew, namely so the Jews in their language could made aware of what will take place in their future. Also, Daniel chapters 8-12 are written in the Hebrew language, the subject is still Israel in relation to the times of the Gentiles just like it was in the Aramaic section in the book. Both the Hebrew and Aramaic sections prepare the Jewish people for the suffering they will have to endure during the times of the Gentiles. Both sections encourage the Jewish people and all of God’s people for that matter, both Jew and Gentile since both speak of God establishing His kingdom on the earth through the Messiah.

Another important fact about Daniel chapter 8 is that it contains the last of the book’s symbolic visions. The revelations that appear in Daniel 9-12 are more verbal in nature than visual and not symbolic, though mysterious nonetheless.

The vision presented in Daniel chapter 8 took place during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign, thus two years after the vision Daniel received recorded in Daniel chapter 7. The vision in chapter 8 does not deal with Babylon or the Roman Empire but rather the world-empires of Media-Persia and Greece.

Daniel chapter eight records the second of four great prophetic revelations that Daniel received from God. In Daniel chapter seven, he received prophetic revelation from God during the first year of Belshazzar’s reign as co-regent with his father Nabonidus. This would be the year 553 B.C. This dream took place 14 years prior to his experience in the lions’ den. He was 68 years of age in 553 B.C. since he was taken captive about the age of 16 or 17 which was 52 years earlier in 605 B.C. This revelation Daniel received from God as recorded in chapter eight also took place before the events of Daniel chapter five, which took place in 539 B.C. Thus, this revelation in chapter seven took place 14 years prior to the fall of Babylon. In chapter eight, he received his second great prophetic revelation from God in 551 B.C. during the third year of the reign of Belshazzar. Then, chapter nine records Daniel receiving his third great prophetic revelation during the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus in 539 B.C. Lastly, chapter ten records Daniel receiving the fourth and final great prophetic revelation from God in 536 B.C. during the third year of the reign of Cyrus king of Persia.

When approaching Daniel chapter 8, we must also be aware of the fact that the chapter has been fulfilled in history. Fulfilled prophecy is one factor that helps to support the Bible’s claims that its origin is divine and not merely a book written by men.
This being said, there are hints that parts of this chapter have a double-fulfillment meaning that there is a “near” fulfillment and a “far” fulfillment of prophecy in this chapter. “Near” emphasizes that there is prophecy in Daniel chapter 8 which was fulfilled in the short term whereas “far” emphasizes that some of the prophecies will also have a fulfillment in the last days or specifically during Daniel’s Seventieth Week. This “near” and “far” fulfillment is found in Daniel 8:23-25. Among expositors there is no question that the wicked king in this passage is speaking of Antiochus Epiphanes. In a “near” sense this wicked ruler fulfilled the prophecy contained in these verses. However, it also has a “far” fulfillment in that the prophecy looks beyond Antiochus Epiphanes to a future wicked ruler who we know is the Antichrist. Thus, Antiochus is foreshadowing the Antichrist. This is clearly indicated by the statement that this wicked ruler will “stand against the Prince of princes” (verse 25), which the New Testament reveals is the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is an outline of Daniel chapter eight: (I) The vision (8:1-14) (a) Daniel’s circumstances at the time of the vision (8:1-2) (b) The vision of the ram (8:3-4) (c) The vision of the goat (8:5-14) (II) The interpretation (8:15-27) (a) Gabriel interprets (8:15-18) (b) Gabriel’s interpretation (8:19-26) (c) Daniel’s response (8:27).
Daniel 8:1-Daniel Receives a Vision From God During the Third Year of Belshazzar’s Reign

Third Year of Belshazzar’s Reign

Daniel 8:1 In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king a vision appeared to me, Daniel, subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously. (NASB95)

“In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king” is composed of the preposition בֶּה (bĕ) (beh), “in” and its object is the feminine singular construct form of the noun שָׁנָה (sha’nā) (shaw-naw), “the year” which is modified by the masculine singular formal of the cardinal number שָׁלֹשׁ (šā-loshe’), “third” and this is followed by the preposition לְ (lé) (leh) “of” and its object is the feminine singular construct form of the noun מַלְכּút (mal-kooth), “the reign of” and then we have the masculine singular proper name בֶּלְשָׂנָה שֶׁר (bale-shats-tsar´), “Belshazzar” which is modified by the articular masculine singular formal of the noun מֶּלֶך (mē-lek), “the king.”

בִּשָּׁלֹשׁ שֵׁנָאְלִי מַלְכּút

The noun מַלְכּút, “reign” is in the construct state governing the proper name בֶּלְשָׂנָה שֶׁר, “Belshazzar” indicating that this reign “belongs to” Belshazzar. The construct state of the noun מַלְכּút means that it is governing this proper name which follows it, expressing a genitive relationship which is possession. This indicates that this reign “belongs to” Belshazzar.

The noun שָׁנָה means “year” referring to a unit of time involving a complete cycle of seasons, spring, summer, fall and winter. Daniel is writing according to the Jewish reckoning of time and thus this word denotes 360 days. It does not refers to 365 days but rather 360 days since the solar year, which we live by in the twenty-first century, of 365.25 days was unknown to the nations in the Old Testament. The Jewish year of biblical times was lunar-solar and had only 360 days. The noun שָׁנָה is modified by the cardinal number שָׁלֹשׁ, which means “third” in a series of time defining the year of the reign of Belshazzar’s reign when Daniel received this second vision from God. The construct state of this noun means that it is governing the word, which follows it which is שָׁלֹשׁ indicating a genitive of relationship, which is possession. This is indicated by the preposition לְ, which is a marker of possession indicating that this third year “belongs to” the reign of Belshazzar.

The noun שָׁנָה is also the object of the preposition בֶּה, which is a marker of an extent of time within a larger unit and thus means “during.” Therefore, it
denotes that “during” the third year of Belshazzar’s reign, Daniel received revelation from God in the form of a vision in a dream, which was subsequent to the revelation he received in a vision recorded in chapter 7.

\[hāmē'·lēk bēl'(\)šās·šār']\]

The name Belshazzar is an Akkadian name which means “Bel protect the king.” Remember the name “Bel” is a reference to the Babylonian god Marduk. He was the first-born son of Nabonidus who had gone into semi-retirement in the oasis of Tema, leaving Belshazzar to rule the empire as co-regent. The noun \(mē·lēk\) means “king” and is used with reference to Belshazzar referring to the fact that he was the governmental head of Babylon. The articular construction of this noun designates a unique reference indicating that this king was unique in the sense that he was the king of Babylon at the time Daniel received this second vision from God.

A Vision Appeared to Daniel

Daniel 8:1 In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king a vision appeared to me, Daniel, subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously. (NASB95)

“A vision appeared to me, Daniel” is composed of the masculine singular form of the noun \(hā·zôn\) (ḥaw-zone'), “a vision” which is followed by the third person masculine singular niptal passive perfect form of the verb \(rā·ā(h)\) (raw-aw), “appeared” and then we have the preposition \(ā\) (ale), “to” and its object is the first person singular pronominal suffix \(ā\)nî (ān-ee), “me” which is followed by the masculine singular proper noun \(dā·niyēē\)l (daw-nee-yale), “Daniel.”

\(hā·zôn\)

The noun \(hā·zôn\) denotes that Daniel received revelation from God in which extrasensory audiovisual experiences, which were revelatory in character, were perceived by him. God communicated with him in a vision what would transpire in the future on planet earth and specifically what would take place with regards to the empires of Media-Persia and Greece.

\(rā·ā(h)\)

The verb \(rā·ā(h)\) means “to appear” and is used with reference to the vision Daniel received from God, which was prophetic revelation. Here it is used with
Daniel as its subject and the vision from God as its object. The word indicates that a vision “appeared” to Daniel during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign.

The niphal stem of the verb is a niphal passive expressing an action where the subject is acted upon. Here it expresses the fact that Daniel was acted upon by God in the sense that He, God the Holy Spirit caused a vision to appear to Daniel. The perfect conjugation of the verb is constative describing in summary fashion this act of God causing a vision to appear to Daniel.

'ēl āy'

The first person singular pronominal suffix ūnî (ān-ee), “my” and is the subject of the verb rā·ā(h) meaning that it is receiving the action of this passive verb.

ūnî

The independent personal pronoun ūnî means “I” and functions as the subject of the verb rā·ā(h) meaning that it is performing the action of this verb. It emphasizes the emotion of fear which this vision produced in Daniel.

dā·niy·yē(’)l

The proper noun dā·niy·yē(’)l literally means “God is my judge.” The book of Daniel itself testifies to the fact that he was a Jewish captive, of noble descent, who was carried off to Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar’s first conquest of Jerusalem in 605 B.C. which was the third year of Jehoiakim’s rule, after the Babylonians defeated the Egyptians. Daniel 1:7 records that Ashpenaz gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar.

\textit{Second Vision During Belshazzar Reign}

Daniel 8:1 In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king a vision appeared to me, Daniel, subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously. (NASB95)

“Subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously” is composed of the adverb ’ā·ḥār (akh-ar’), “subsequent to” which is followed by the definite article hā- (ṯ), “the one” and then we have the third person masculine singular niphal passive perfect form of the verb rā·ā(h) (raw-aw), “the one which appeared” and then we have the preposition ’ēl (āl) (ale), “to” and its object is the first person singular pronominal suffix ūnî (ān-ee), “me” which
is followed by the preposition ṣē (ז) (beh) and its object is the articular feminine singular form of the noun ℓhīl-lā(h) (ךליל) (tekh-il-law‘), which altogether are translated “previously.”

‘ā·ḥār

The substantive ‘ā·ḥār means “after” since it is functioning as a preposition and is pertaining to a time subsequent to another time. The two points of time are the vision which appeared to Daniel during the first year of Belshazzar’s reign and the one which appeared to him during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign. Therefore, this word indicates that this vision which appeared to Daniel during the third year of Belshazzar occurred “after” the vision during the first year of Belshazzar’s reign which is recorded in Daniel chapter 7.

ḥā-

The definite article ḥā- means “the one” since it is prefixed to a verb with a perfect aspect. It refers to the vision Daniel received from God during the first year of Belshazzar’s reign which is recorded in Daniel chapter 7.

rā·ā(h)

The verb rā·ā(h) means “to appear” and is used with reference to the vision Daniel received from God during the first year of Belshazzar reign. Here it is used with Daniel as its subject and this vision from God during the first year of Belshazzar’s reign, as its object. Therefore this verb indicates that a vision appeared to Daniel during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign, which took place after the one which appeared to him during the first year of this king’s reign.

The niphal stem of the verb is a niphal passive expressing an action where the subject is acted upon. Here it expresses the fact that Daniel was acted upon by God in the sense that God caused a vision to appear to Daniel. The perfect conjugation of the verb is constative describing in summary fashion this act of God causing a vision to appear to Daniel.

‘ēl ʾāy‘

The first person singular pronominal suffix ʾānî (אֵלִי) (an-ee), “my” and is the object of the preposition ‘ēl, which is a marker of direction indicating that this vision during the first year of Belshazzar’s reign was directed “to” Daniel by God.
The noun ֶהָלַם(h) means “the first” since it refers to a specific period of time in the past when Daniel received a vision from during the first year of Belshazzar’s reign. The articular construction of the word indicates that this is definite in the mind of Daniel. It could also be interpreted as indicating that this vision during the first year of Belshazzar’s reign is well-known to the reader since it is recorded in Daniel chapter 7. The noun ֶהָלַם(h) is the object of the preposition בֵּיה, which means “at” since it is functioning in a temporal sense marking the first time Daniel received a vision from God during the first year of Belshazzar’s reign. We could render this prepositional phrase “at the first” or we could translate with the adverb “previously.” We will choose the latter since it reads better.

Translation of Daniel 8:1

Daniel 8:1 During the third year of the reign of Belshazzar, the king, a vision appeared to me, I, Daniel after the one appearing to me previously.

Exposition of Daniel 8:1

In Daniel 8:1, Daniel informs the reader that he received a vision from God during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign which took place prior to the first one he received during the first year of this king’s reign, which is recorded in Daniel chapter 7. For the second time during the reign of Belshazzar, God gave Daniel information about future events which would take place on planet earth which would be related to his people, the Jews. God was once again giving Daniel information about world-empires.

In the first year of Belshazzar’s reign, Daniel received a vision regarding four great world-empires, which history tells us are Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece and Rome as well as the final form of the Roman Empire which will occur during the Seventieth Week of Daniel. This first revelation also contained information regarding a wicked ruler who will be the leader of the final form of the Roman Empire during Daniel’s Seventieth Week, namely the Antichrist. Lastly, this vision informed Daniel that God would establish His kingdom on earth through the Son of Man, which Jesus Christ interpreted as being a reference to Himself. This kingdom would be eternal and indestructible and would destroy the Antichrist and the Revived Form of the Roman Empire.

However here in Daniel chapter 8, Daniel receives revelation from God with regards to two of these Gentile world-powers, namely Media-Persia and Greece. The latter is emphasized and the kings which it would produce. One of these kings,
Antiochus Epiphanes would persecute the Jewish people and he would foreshadow the Antichrist.

Therefore, in Daniel 8:1, Daniel is telling the reader that God gave him revelation with regards to His future plans. This vision makes clear that Daniel was a prophet of God since he meets the criteria found with regards to prophets in Numbers 12:6.

Daniel chapter 8 records the second of four great prophetic revelations, which Daniel received from God. In Daniel chapter seven, he received prophetic revelation from God during the first year of Belshazzar’s reign as co-regent with his father Nabonidus. This would be the year 553 B.C. This dream took place 14 years prior to his experience in the lions’ den. He was 68 years of age in 553 B.C. since he was taken captive about the age of 16 or 17 which was 52 years earlier in 605 B.C. This revelation Daniel received from God as recorded in chapter seven also took place before the events of Daniel chapter five, which took place in 539 B.C. Thus, this revelation in chapter seven took place 14 years prior to the fall of Babylon. In chapter eight, he received his second great prophetic revelation from God in 551 B.C. during the third year of the reign of Belshazzar. Then, chapter nine records Daniel receiving his third great prophetic revelation during the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus in 539 B.C. Lastly, chapter ten records Daniel receiving the fourth and final great prophetic revelation from God in 536 B.C. during the third year of the reign of Cyrus king of Persia.

So Daniel 8:1 records that during the third year of Belshazzar’s co-regency with his father in 551 B.C. Daniel received prophetic revelation from God in a dream, which the rest of the chapter reveals was concerning the future of planet earth. Specifically, it emphasizes the empires of Media-Persia and Greece. Like the prophetic revelation that Nebuchadnezzar received in chapter two and the one Daniel received in chapter seven, this prophetic revelation which Daniel received from God concerned itself with the Times of the Gentiles, which began in 605 B.C. with Nebuchadnezzar’s first invasion of Jerusalem and will end with the Second Advent of Jesus Christ.

Like the vision Daniel received during the first year of Belshazzar’s reign, this vision during the third year of this king’s reign was a supernatural revelation to communicate a truth to him, not seen as a sensory perception. Visions were often a revelation of the future plans of God, which could involve either judgment or blessing. This vision during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign like the one during the first year of his reign was revelation from God the Holy Spirit with regards to the Father’s will for planet earth. It denotes that God gave Daniel revelation with regards to His future plans for planet earth.

Unlike chapter seven, Daniel does not tell the reader that he was in a trance like state when he receives this vision during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign.
Chapter 8 does not tell us if he was in an altered state of consciousness while God revealed what would take place in the future with regards to planet earth.

Like the vision in chapter seven, this vision in chapter eight, was symbolic as indicated by the fact that Medo-Persia is represented by a ram with two horns with one horn shorter than the other while Greece is represented by a goat with a conspicuous horn which represents Alexander the Great. Like the vision in chapter seven, this one in chapter eight is an oracle of assurance since Daniel and the faithful Jewish remnant are being assured that God is sovereign over these empires.

Like the revelation in chapter seven, this revelation in chapter eight was designed to direct Daniel, the Jews and the Gentiles to submit to God’s will and to teach them and the reader that God is sovereign over all the nations and every world-empire that appears in history.
Daniel 8:2-Daniel Receives a Vision From God in Susa, the Citadel in the Province of Elam at the Ulai Canal

Daniel Staring in a Trance Like State

Daniel 8:2 I looked in the vision, and while I was looking I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam; and I looked in the vision and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal. (NASB95)

“I looked in the vision, and while I was looking” is composed of the conjunction wa (ו) (waw), which is not translated and followed by the first person masculine singular qal active imperfect form of the verb rā·‘ā(h) (יָאָה) (raw-aw), “I looked” and preposition bē (ב) (beh) “in” and its object is the articular masculine singular form of the noun ḥā·zōn (צון) (khaw-zone´), “the vision” and then we have the conjunction wa (ו) (waw), “and” which is followed by the third person masculine singular qal active imperfect form of the verb ḥā·yā(h) (יָא) (haw-yaw), “was” and then we have the preposition bē (ב) (beh) “while” and its object is the qal active infinitive construct form of the verb rā·‘ā(h) (יָאָה) (raw-aw), “looking” and then we have the first person singular independent personal pronoun dīnî (ני) (an-ee), “I.”

wa

The conjunction wa is emphatic meaning that it is introducing a statement which is advancing upon and intensifying upon the previous statement in verse 1, which tells the reader that a vision appeared to Daniel during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign. Here in verse 2, the conjunction wa introduces a statement which informs the reader that Daniel was staring because of this vision. So the advancement and intensification is that Daniel goes from telling the reader that a vision appeared to him to informing the reader that he was staring because of this vision. The rest of the chapter tells us why Daniel was transfixed to the vision as it was apocalyptic.

rā·‘ā(h)

The verb rā·‘ā(h) means “to stare” in the sense of steadily looking at something with studious attention and with openmouthed wonder and amazement. It is used of course with Daniel as its subject and refers to Daniel looking at a prophetic revelatory vision with studious attention and with open mouth wonder and amazement. The qal stem is stative expressing the state or condition of Daniel “staring” at this prophetic revelatory vision. The imperfect conjugation refers to a
completed action as part of a temporal sequence. The imperfect conjugation of the verb describes this event of Daniel staring at a vision while located in the palace of Susa in the province of Elam beside the Ulai canal. The imperfect conjugation describes this event in the past from the writer’s perspective. Here it is describing the circumstances of Daniel in the past from his perspective. We will translate this verb “I was staring.”

\( hā·zōn \)

The noun \( hā·zōn \) denotes that Daniel received revelation from God in which extrasensory audiovisual experiences, which were revelatory in character, were perceived by him. God communicated with him in a vision what would transpire in the future on planet earth and specifically what would take place with regards to the empires of Media-Persia and Greece.

The noun \( hā·zōn \) means “vision” and refers to prophetic, supernatural revelation from God. It describes an appearance of something in Daniel’s mind that was a supernatural revelation to communicate a truth to him, not seen as a sensory perception. It speaks of revelation from God the Holy Spirit with regards to the Father’s will for planet earth. It specifically contains information about two future world empires, namely Media-Persia and Greece.

The noun denotes that Daniel received this revelation while he was in a trance or altered state of consciousness in which extrasensory audiovisual experiences, which were revelatory in character, were perceived by him in the privacy of his own bedroom. Here Daniel was in an altered state of consciousness while God revealed His future plans for planet earth. The articular construction of this noun is anaphoric meaning that the article is telling the reader that this noun appeared in verse 1 and retains the same referent and meaning here in verse 2.

The noun \( hā·zōn \) is the object of the preposition \( bē \), which is a marker of cause indicating the basis or the reason why Daniel was in a trance like state staring. He was doing so “because of” his vision.

\( wa \)

The conjunction \( wa \) is epexegetical meaning that it is introducing a statement which defines specifically what Daniel was doing when this vision appeared to him. It introduces a statement which tells the reader that he was in a trance like state staring as he was in the palace of Susa in the province of Elam. So Daniel goes from telling the reader he was staring because of this vision to informing them that he was in a trance like state staring when the vision appeared to him. Thus, he is specifying for the reader his state when this vision appeared to him.
The independent personal pronoun ʔnî means “I myself” and functions as the subject of the verb rā·‘ā(h) meaning that it is performing the action of this verb. It is employed for emphasis, stressing with the reader that this is Daniel’s personal account regarding this vision which appeared to him during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign.

ha·yā(h)

The verb ha·yā(h) denotes Daniel’s trance like state when he received this revelation through a vision regarding His will for planet earth. The qal of the verb is stative expressing the trance like state of Daniel when he received this revelation from God about His will for planet earth. The imperfect conjugation refers to a completed action as part of a temporal sequence. It describes this event of Daniel in a trance like state staring at a vision while located in the palace of Susa in the province of Elam beside the Ulai canal in the past from the writer’s perspective. Here it is describing the circumstances of Daniel in the past from his perspective.

rā·‘ā(h)

Once again, the verb rā·‘ā(h) means “to stare” in the sense of steadily looking at something with studious attention and with openmouthed wonder and amazement. It refers to Daniel looking at a prophetic revelatory vision with studious attention and with open mouth wonder and amazement. The qal stem is stative expressing the state or condition of Daniel “staring” at this prophetic revelatory vision. This time the verb is not in the imperfect conjugation but rather the infinitive construct form. It is also the object of the preposition bē, which is a marker of a state or condition. When an infinitive construct form of a verb occurs as the object of a preposition, the nuance of the infinitive construct is then a function of the preposition and the context. Here the preposition bē and the infinitive construct form of this verb rā·‘ā(h) are expressing Daniel’s state of staring at this vision which appeared to him. We will translate this verb “staring.”

Palace of Susa in the Province of Elam

Daniel 8:2 I looked in the vision, and while I was looking I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam; and I looked in the vision and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal. (NASB95)
“I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam” is composed of the conjunction wa (ַ) (waw), which is not translated and followed by the first person singular independent personal pronoun ָnî (ןי) (an-ee), “I” and then we have the preposition bê (ְ) (beh) “in” and its object is the feminine singular proper name šû·šân (שון) (shoo-shan’), “of Susa” which is followed by the articular feminine singular form of the noun bî·rā(h) (בר) (bee-raw’), “the citadel” and then we have the relative particle ָšêr (שר) (ash-er), “which” and this is followed by the preposition bê (ְ) (beh) “in” but this time its object is the feminine singular form of the proper noun ֵלָם (לום) (ay-lawm’), “of Elam” and then we have the articular feminine singular form of the noun mî·nâ(h) (ננה) (med-ee-naw’), “the province.”

wa

This time the conjunction wa means “when” or “as” since it is used as a temporal marker relating points of time. The two points of time are Daniel in a trance like state staring because of the vision which appeared to him and Daniel located in the palace of Susa in the province of Elam. Therefore, this word indicates that “when” or “as” Daniel was staring in a trance like state, he was in the palace of Susa in the province of Elam when this vision appeared to him.

ָnî

The independent personal pronoun ָnî means “I myself” and functions as the subject of the verb hâ·yâ(h), which is omitted but implied due to Daniel’s use of the figure of ellipsis. As the subject ָnî is performing the action of this verb. It is employed for emphasis, stressing with the reader that this is Daniel’s personal account regarding this vision which appeared to him during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign.

Ellipsis

Daniel under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is employing the figure of ellipsis meaning that he is deliberately omitting the third person masculine singular qal active imperfect form of the verb hâ·yâ(h) (ה’à) (haw-yaw). However it is implied from the context. It denotes that Daniel “was” in the palace of Susa in the province of Elam when this vision appeared to him. The qal stem of the verb is stative meaning that Daniel “was in the state of being located” in the palace of Susa in the province of Elam when this vision appeared to him during the third
year of Belshazzar’s reign. The imperfect conjugation of the verb is stative expressing the same thing.

$bśū-šān’hā bī-rā(h)’$

The proper name $śū-šān$ means “Susa” referring to the chief city of Susiana or Elam and of all Persia in which the Persian kings passed the winters during the Achaemenid period (Nehemiah 1:1; Esther 1:2, 5). “Susa” or “Shushan” was “the palace” which in Hebrew means “fortress,” including the entire city as well as the royal residence.

This city was located approximately 230 miles east of Babylon. It was situated on the Euleus or Choaspes, River on the spot now occupied by the village of Shush or Schush. The noun $bī-rā(h)$ means “citadel” and refers to not only the fortified palace structure for a king but also the city itself since it stands in apposition to the proper name $śū-šān$, which is also supported by the fact that Daniel says that he was by the Ulai canal, which would indicate that he was not in the palace itself.

The articular construction of the noun $bī-rā(h)$ marks this word as unique in its class indicating that this citadel was unique to the city of Susa. This noun is also the object of the preposition $bē$ (מ) (beh) which is marking Daniel’s geographical location when this vision appeared to him.

$āšĕr$

The relative particle $āšĕr$ means “which” referring to the city of the fortified city of Susa.

Ellipsis

Once again, Daniel under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is employing the figure of ellipsis meaning that he is deliberately omitting the third person masculine singular qal active imperfect form of the verb $hā-yā(h)$ (חָיָה) (haw-yaw). However it is implied from the context. It denotes that the fortified city of Susa “was” in the province of Elam. The qal stem of the verb is stative meaning that the fortified city of Susa “was in the state of being located” in the province of Elam. The imperfect conjugation of the verb is stative expressing the same thing.

$mēgē-nā(h)$

The noun $mēgē-nā(h)$ means “province” referring to a governmental administrative district. Here it refers to the province of Elam. The articular
construction denotes that this was a specific province, namely it was the province of Elam.

ʾē·lām

The proper noun ʾē·lām means “Elam” referring to an area covering the territory of the Zagros Mountain range and of modern Luristan and Khuzestan, northeast of the Persian Gulf (in modern Iran) with its capital being Susa.

This word is the object of the preposition bē (ב) (beh) which is marking the province of Elam as Daniel’s geographical location when this vision appeared to him during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign.

Daniel Sees Himself by the Ulai Canal

Daniel 8:2 I looked in the vision, and while I was looking I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam; and I looked in the vision and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal. (NASB95)

“And I looked in the vision and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal” is composed of the conjunction wa (ו) (waw), “and” which is followed by the first person masculine singular qal active imperfect form of the verb rā·ʾā(h) (רָאָה) (raw-aw), “I looked” and then we have the preposition bē (ב) (beh) “in” and its object is the articular masculine singular form of the noun hā·zôn (חָזֹן) (khaw-zone´), “the vision” and then we have the conjunction wa (ו) (waw), “and” which is followed by the first person singular independent personal pronoun ānî (אני) (an-ee), “I myself” and then we have the third person masculine singular qal active perfect form of the verb hā·yā(h) (הָעָל) (haw-yaw), “was” and then we have the preposition ʿāl (אל) (al), “beside” and its object is the masculine singular construct form of the noun ʿū·bāl (עָבָל) (oo-bawl´), “the Canal” which is modified by the masculine singular form of the proper name ʿū·lāy (עַלַּי) (oo-lah’ee), “Ulai.”

wa

This time the conjunction wa is adjunctive meaning that it is introducing a statement which presents information regarding Daniel’s geographical location when this vision appeared to him during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign. It is introducing a statement which tells the reader that Daniel was beside the Ulai Canal when this vision appeared to him. So “in addition to” being located in the fortified city of Susa in the province of Elam, Daniel was located beside the Ulai Canal.
The verb \( rā·ā(h) \) means “to stare” in the sense of steadily looking at something with studious attention and with openmouthed wonder and amazement. It is used of course with Daniel as its subject and refers to Daniel looking at a prophetic revelatory vision with studious attention and with open mouth wonder and amazement. The qal stem is stative expressing the state or condition of Daniel “staring” at this prophetic revelatory vision. The imperfect conjugation refers to a completed action as part of a temporal sequence. The imperfect conjugation of the verb describes this event of Daniel staring at a vision while located in the palace of Susa in the province of Elam beside the Ulai canal. The imperfect conjugation describes this event in the past from the writer’s perspective. Here it is describing the circumstances of Daniel in the past from his perspective. We will translate this verb “I was staring.”

\( ħā·zôn \)

Once again, as was the case earlier in the verse, the noun \( ħā·zôn \) denotes that Daniel received revelation from God in which extrasensory audiovisual experiences, which were revelatory in character, were perceived by him. God communicated with him in a vision what would transpire in the future on planet earth and specifically what would take place with regards to the empires of Media-Persia and Greece.

This word means “vision” and refers to the prophetic, supernatural revelation from God. It describes an appearance of something in Daniel’s mind that was a supernatural revelation to communicate a truth to him, not seen as a sensory perception. It speaks of revelation from God the Holy Spirit with regards to the Father’s will for planet earth. It specifically contains information about two future world empires, namely Media-Persia and Greece.

The noun denotes that Daniel received this revelation while he was in a trance or altered state of consciousness in which extrasensory audiovisual experiences, which were revelatory in character, were perceived by him in the privacy of his own bedroom. Here Daniel was in an altered state of consciousness while God revealed His future plans for planet earth.

The articular construction of this noun is anaphoric meaning that the article is telling the reader that this noun appeared earlier in the verse and retains the same referent and meaning here at the end of the verse. The noun \( ħā·zôn \) is the object of the preposition \( bē \), which is a marker of cause indicating the basis or the reason why Daniel was staring. He was doing so “because of” his vision.
Again, the conjunction *wa* means “when” or “as” since it is used as a temporal marker relating points of time. The two points of time are Daniel staring because of the vision which appeared to him and Daniel located beside the Ulai Canal. Therefore, this word indicates that “when” or “as” Daniel was staring in a trance like state, he was beside the Ulai Canal when this vision appeared to him.

*nî*

Once again, the independent personal pronoun *nî* means “I myself” but this time it functions as the subject of the verb *hā·yā(h)*. As the subject *nî* is performing the action of this verb. It is employed for emphasis, stressing with the reader that this is Daniel’s personal account regarding this vision which appeared to him during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign.

*hā·yā(h)*

The verb *hā·yā(h)* denotes that Daniel “was” beside the Ulai Canal when this vision appeared to him during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign. The qal stem of the verb is stative meaning that the fortified city of Susa “was in the state of being located” in the province of Elam. The perfect conjugation of the verb is stative expressing the same thing.

‘āl ʿū·lāy’ ʿū·ḥāl’

The noun ʿū·ḥāl is relatively rare word in biblical Hebrews since it appears only here in Daniel 8:2 as well as in Daniel 8:3 and 6. It means “canal” referring to some sort of watercourse or in other words, a gated body of water. Here it refers to an artificial canal in Susa which was of some size and not a river in the ordinary sense of the word. The construct form of the word indicates that it is governing the word which follows it. This would be the proper name ʿū·lāy, which means “Ulai” and is designating the name of this canal, which Daniel was beside when he received this vision. This construct state of the noun ʿū·ḥāl is expressing a genitive relation, which is apposition meaning which is an individual member of the class given by the construct term. The sense is that of “the canal, that is, the Ulai.” The noun ʿū·ḥāl is the object of the preposition ʿāl, which means “at, near, by, beside” since it is a marker of a spatial location in very close, virtual proximity to another object. Here it denotes that Daniel was “at, near, by, beside” the Ulai Canal.
Translation of Daniel 8:2

Daniel 8:2 Indeed, I was staring because of this vision. Specifically, I myself was in a trance like state staring as I myself was in Susa, the citadel, which was in the province of Elam. Furthermore, I was staring because of this vision as I myself was beside the Ulai Canal.

Exposition of Daniel 8:2

In verse 1, Daniel informed the reader that a vision appeared to him. He identifies the time period in which this occurred, namely during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign. Now, here in verse 2, he informs the reader as to his geographical location when this took place. In verse 2, Daniel advances upon and intensifies his previous statement in verse 1 in the sense that he goes from telling the reader that a vision appeared to him to informing the reader that he was staring because of this vision.

The rest of the chapter tells us why he was transfixed to the vision, namely it was apocalyptic presenting in symbolic imagery Alexander’s Greek Empire conquering the Persian Empire. The latter is symbolized by a ram with two horns with one longer than the other. The former is symbolized by a male goat with a conspicuous horn between its eyes. Daniel explains further by providing even more details. He was in a trance like state staring as he was located geographically in Susa, the citadel, which was in the province of Elam, beside the Ulai Canal, which was an artificial canal about nine hundred feet wide that flowed near Susa on the northeast. Today this canal is dry.

The fact Daniel is in the capital city of the Persian Empire some 200 miles east of Babylon where he served under Belshazzar the king of Babylon in the city of Babylon is significant. It indicates that in the vision Daniel was transported by the Holy Spirit from Babylon to the Persian capital when he received this vision, much like Ezekiel’s experience (Ezekiel 8:3; 40:1). The contents of chapter 8 indicate that God the Holy Spirit transported Daniel to the Persian capital because Media-Persia would conquer Babylon and be the next world-wide empire after Babylon. This contributes to Daniel in a trance like state staring because of this vision.

There is a possibility that Daniel was on a diplomatic mission for Belshazzar but Daniel chapter 5 makes clear that Daniel was not a significant player in Belshazzar’s administration. Therefore, in the vision Daniel was no longer in Babylon but in Persia. It does not appear that Babylon controlled Susa during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign. In fact, it is highly unlikely since Babylon was in decline at the time and Media-Persia was on the rise as a world power.
Excursus: Susa

D.J. Wiseman commenting on Susa writes that “SUSA (av Shushan), the ruins of which lie near the river Karun (*ULAI), SW Persia, was occupied almost continuously from prehistoric times until it was abandoned by the Seleucids. Here was the capital of *ELAM, whose royal inscriptions of the 2nd millennium have been recovered. It maintained its importance under the Kassites and its independence until sacked in 645 BC by Ashurbanipal, who sent men of Susa (Susanchites) to exile in Samaria (Ezr. 4:9). Under the Achaemenids Susa flourished as one of the three royal cities (Dn. 8:2; Ne. 1:1). Darius I built his palace here, the ruins of which, restored by Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) and II (Mnemon), remain, with the Apadana, one of the outstanding Persian architectural features of the 5th century BC. This palace figures prominently in the book of *ESTHER (1:2, 5; 2:3; 3:15, etc.). (*AHASUERUS.) The site was first excavated by Loftus in 1851, and subsequently extensive operations have been undertaken there by the French.¹

A.C. Myers commenting on Susa writes that it was “The capital city of Elam, located near modern Shush in the Ulai river plain in southwestern Iran; later the winter royal residence for the Persian Empire. Inhabited from the fourth millennium B.C., Susa was situated on the important trade routes and flourished particularly under the Achaemenids and Alexander the Great. It remained occupied until captured by Arab forces in the seventh century A.D. Excavations have uncovered the Persian royal palace, acropolis, and artisans’ quarter. Also, an extensive archive has been discovered containing Elamite historical and literary inscriptions as well as Old Akkadian, Ur III, and Old Babylonian texts (including a copy of the Code of Hammurabi). One of Daniel’s visions took him to Susa, which was controlled by Media at the time (Dan. 8:2; KJV “Shushan”); Muslim tradition locates his tomb there. Susa was the scene of the events described in the book of Esther (Esth. 1:2 and passim). Exiles from Susa were among the residents of Samaria who opposed the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Ezra 4:9–10; KJV “Susanchites”). Nehemiah was cupbearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes at Susa (Neh. 1:1).²

Winter capital of the ancient Persian Empire. The territory is now in modern Iran. Cyrus made Susa a capital city along with Ecbatana and Babylon. When Alexander the Great captured Susa, he found a large treasure that he confiscated. Archaeologists have excavated Susa largely around four areas: the royal palace, the

acropolis, the royal city, and an artisan tell. Some believe Susa to be the place where Queen Esther and King Ahasuerus ruled.\(^3\)

The Lexham Bible Dictionary has the following article regarding Susa, they write “One of two major ancient cities in the country of Elam, in modern southwest Iran. Modern Shush in southwest Iran. One of the capitals of the Achaemenid Persian Empire. Located in the province of Elam when the Assyrian Empire was reigning. Susa sits on the Shaur River, between the Karkheh and Ab-i Dez Rivers—in the eastern reaches of the Mesopotamian flood plains and below the southern Zagros Mountains. The book of Esther is primarily set in the court of Ahasuerus in Susa (Esth 1:2). The book’s setting implies that a community of Jews lived in the region (e.g., Esth 4:16), as does Nehemiah. Dalley argues, however, that Esther actually implies an Assyrian setting (Stephanie Dalley, *Esther’s Revenge*). Elam, the province Susa was located in, is mentioned in Ezra 2:7 and 2:31. These passages describe the “children of Elam” and the “children of the other Elam” (compare Ezra 8:7; 10:2, 26); the ‘other Elam’ may be describing Susa itself. Nehemiah begins his memorial by stating that he served as a cupbearer in Susa (Neh 1:1); his brother Hanani and other Judeans visit Nehemiah there. A Jewish alabastron and a text from the Talmud also imply that a Jewish community lived near or around Susa (Mark Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris für Semitische Epigraphik*, 47–48; *Tractate Sanhedrin* 94a). Daniel sees a vision while in Susa, by the river ‘Ulai’ (Dan 8:2). “Ulai” is usually identified with the Greek Eulaeus River, but the identity of this river is uncertain (Karkheh, Karun, or Shaur; I. Diakonoff, “Elam,” 1; Richard Talbert, *Barrington Atlas*, Map 93). This vision is set in reign of ‘Belshazzar.’ The length of Neo-Babylonian control and timing of the Persian acquisition of Susa is unknown (Rémy Boucharlat, “Susa under Achaemenid Rule,” 57; I. Diakonoff, “Elam,” 23). Several sites in the Susan region are traditionally identified as the tomb of Daniel (Parviz Varjavan, “Dānīāl-e Nabī iii. The Tomb of Dānīāl”; Amnon Netzer, “Dānīāl-e Nabī i. in Biblical and Popular Traditions”; Terence Mitchell, “Achaemenid History and the Book of Daniel,” 69). Susa was occupied at least from the 4th millennium BC (I. Diakonoff, “Elam,” 2). It was one of the great cities of the Elamites, their rulers taking the title ‘King of Anshan and Susa’ (I. Diakonoff, “Elam,” 12). Susa passed through several periods of rule by native Elamite dynasties and various Mesopotamian conquerors (I. Diakonoff, “Elam”; François Vallat, “Susa ii. History during the Elamite Period”; George Cameron, *History of Early Iran*). The famous code of the Babylonian King Hammurabi was found in Susa (William Hallo, *Context II*, 335–353). Susa finally came under the control of the Persians sometime in the reign of Cyrus II (558–530 BC). There had been previous Iranian interactions in Susa even before Persian

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control (Amélie Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire*, 55). Susa was not a Persian capital until the reign of Darius I, who built a palace complex there (Rémy Boucharlat, “Susa under Achaemenid Rule,” 57; Rémy Boucharlat, “Susa iii. The Achaemenid Period”). The Greeks considered Susa one of the main capitals, and Herodotus incorrectly believed that the Royal Road ended at Susa (Herod V.52–54). Ctesias claimed that Cambyses forced the Egyptian king and 6000 courtiers to move to Susa (Photius, *The Bibliotheca*, 57). Nevertheless, remains in Susa from the Achaemenid period are modest, and Boucharlat suggests Susa was sparsely populated and ‘a magnificent showcase, used only from time to time.’ (Rémy Boucharlat, “Susa under Achaemenid Rule,” 67). This could be related to the royal practice of moving often (e.g., Christopher Tuplin, “Seasonal Migration”). Although both Esther and Nehemiah mention the fortress at Susa, the site appears to have been unfortified (Rémy Boucharlat, “Susa under Achaemenid Rule,” 63). Several important Old Persian inscriptions come from Susa, the most notable being DSe and DSf (Roland Kent, *Old Persian*, 141–146, 154).

*Excursus: Elam*

Elam — highland, the son of Shem (Gen. 10:22), and the name of the country inhabited by his descendants (14:1, 9; Isa. 11:11; 21:2, etc.) lying to the east of Babylonia, and extending to the shore of the Mediterranean, a distance in a direct line of about 1,000 miles. The name Elam is an Assyrian word meaning ‘high.’ ‘The inhabitants of Elam, or ‘the Highlands,’ to the east of Babylon, were called Elamites. They were divided into several branches, speaking different dialects of the same agglutinative language. The race to which they belonged was brachycephalic, or short-headed, like the pre-Semitic Sumerians of Babylonia. The earliest Elamite kingdom seems to have been that of Anzan, the exact site of which is uncertain; but in the time of Abraham, Shushan or Susa appears to have already become the capital of the country. Babylonia was frequently invaded by the Elamite kings, who at times asserted their supremacy over it (as in the case of Chedorlaomer, the Kudur-Lagamar, or ‘servant of the goddess Lagamar,’ of the cuneiform texts). The later Assyrian monarchs made several campaigns against Elam, and finally Assur-bani-pal (about 650) succeeded in conquering the country, which was ravaged with fire and sword. On the fall of the Assyrian Empire, Elam passed into the hands of the Persians” (A.H. Sayce). This country was called by the Greeks Cissia or Susiana.

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Eerdman’s Bible Dictionary has the following article regarding Elam, “A country in southwestern Iran, comprising the plain of Khuzistan and the adjacent Zagros mountains; at various points in its history the country also included territory to the northeast and southeast. Although Elam was strengthened commercially by natural trade routes and an abundance of timber and metal resources, the varied terrain hampered political unification; thus it functioned generally as a loose confederation of city-states. Urbanization in Elam has been traced to at least the late fourth millennium B.C. Cultural contacts with lower Mesopotamia were high throughout most of the third millennium, and this period saw frequent clashes between the Elamites and their Sumerian neighbors. The Sumerian ruler of Kish is said to have raided Elam ca. 2700. Elam invaded Early Dynastic Babylonia ca. 2500, Eannatum of Kish subdued Elam and destroyed its capital at Susa ca. 2400, and Elam again asserted its independence before falling to Sargon of Akkad (ca. 2300). His successor, Naram-sin, effected a treaty with the Elamite dynasty of Awan, but both peoples succumbed to the Gutian invasion ca. 2100. Elam remained subject to Lagash and the Third Dynasty of Ur. With the decline of the Ur dynasty, an Elamite coalition headed by the dynasty of Simash destroyed Ur ca. 2030 (ANET, pp. 455–463) and deported its king Ibbi-sin to Anshan. Although soon driven from Ur by Išbi-irra of Isin, the governors (Elam. sukalmaḫ) of the Elamite confederation wielded sufficient power to meddle in Babylonian politics, even placing Elamite rulers on the throne of Larsa (Warad-sin, Rim-sin; ca. 1800). Elamite emissaries were attested in Syria and Palestine, and their mercenaries were common in Mesopotamian armies; the activities of Chedorlaomer (Gen. 14:1–17) probably belong to this period. The powerful Hammurabi (1792–1750) checked Elamite expansion, and Elam remained under Babylonian control until both fell to the Kassite invaders in 1595. Little is known of the ensuing dark age, although Elam apparently dissolved into the numerous city-states until subjugated as a Babylonian province when the Kassite Kurigalzu II invaded ca. 1330. Under Ḫumban-numena (ca. 1285–1266) Elam revived as a unified country; Šutruk-naḥunte invaded Babylon, capturing the stele bearing Hammurabi’s law code, and Šilhak-inššinak expanded Elamite control throughout most of Mesopotamia east of the Tigris. Independence ended abruptly when Nebuchadnezzar I sacked Susa ca. 1130 and annexed Elam to his Babylonian kingdom. Elam’s next three centuries remain shrouded in obscurity. The remaining centuries of Elamite history are marked by increased pressure from the Medes and Persians as well as various independent tribes. The country gained an appreciable degree of political importance by allying with the Babylonians against Assyria; military aid to Merodach-baladan II, refuge for Babylonian nationalists, and other forms of antagonism were reciprocated by Sargon II, Sennacherib, and finally by Assurbanipal, who destroyed Susa and drove out Elam’s last king, Ḫumban-ḫaldaš
(ca. 640). Many of the leading citizens were deported to Assyria and then resettled in Samaria (cf. Ezra 4:9). The region around Anshan was taken by the Persians ca. 680. Following the fall of Nineveh in 612, the rest of Elam came under Median control (cf. the Median-Elamite attack on Babylon in 596; Isa. 22:2); it was subsequently transferred to the Persians under Cyrus II (ca. 550; cf. Jer. 49:35–37), and became the third satrapy of the Persian Empire. Having quelled a revolt early in his reign, Darius I established his residence at Susa (cf. also Esth. 1:1–2). In Hellenistic times the region survived as the semi-autonomous Parthian state of Elymais (cf. 1 Macc. 6:1). From the earliest times, Elam was culturally related to the civilizations of lower Mesopotamia, perhaps explaining its inclusion among the descendants of Shem (Gen. 10:22). The native pictographic (Proto-Elamite) script, possibly influenced by the earliest Sumerian writing, was replaced with Akkadian cuneiform following the rule of Sargon of Akkad. Although Elamite royal inscriptions do exist in the linear cuneiform script, Akkadkan remained the official language throughout Elamite history. The agglutinative language appears unrelated to other ancient tongues and has no modern derivatives; trilingual inscriptions of the Persian period have aided in decipherment of that later stage of the language, but classical Elamite remains highly problematic. No native literature is yet known. Although in prehistoric times Elamite art was quite distinctive, from the third millennium on it bears strong witness to Mesopotamian influence. The greatest artistic accomplishments occur in bronze figures dating to the thirteenth-century period of expansion. Although excavations have been limited, Elamite architecture also appears to have paralleled that of Mesopotamia, particularly the temples and temple towers. No religious epics or ritual texts survive, but inscriptions and cylinder seals provide basic information concerning Elamite religion. Ḫumban was the chief god, but his consort Kiririsha (called Pīnikir at Susa) was head of the pantheon. Other important gods were Naḫḫunte, the sun-god, and numerous local patrons, most famous of which was In-šušinak (‘lord of Susa’). Funerary gifts from royal tombs suggest a belief in an afterlife. Occupied primarily with the power struggles in Mesopotamia, the Elamites played no great role in Israel’s destiny. Portions of the Israelite polulace were exiled in Elam (Isa. 11:11), and Jewish settlements continued there in New Testament times (cf. Acts 2:9). Famed for their skilled archers (Isa. 22:6; Jer. 25:25), the Elamites were scored for their cruel and merciless treatment of other nations (Ezek. 32:24–25). Elam’s fortunes are depicted as subject to God’s divine plan of punishment and restoration (Jer. 49:38–39).6

Laurie E. Pearce writes that “Elam (ee’lahm), the region east of the Tigris River, which provided Mesopotamia with a rich source of raw materials; hence the

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continuing Mesopotamian interest in Elam. Three rivers water the region, making it especially fertile. The unification of Anshan, the mountainous eastern region, with the southeastern plain of Shushan meant independence for Elam. The diverse areas of Elam were always organized into a federal state. Elamite pictographs first appear around 2900 B.C., whereas writing begins in Mesopotamia around 3100 B.C. A linear Elamite script, known from only eighteen inscriptions, dates from the twenty-third century B.C. Carved seals from the third millennium B.C. depict various activities of the Elamite economy: hunting, fishing, herding, and agriculture. A female deity, Pinikir, headed the Elamite pantheon until the middle of the second millennium B.C., when the male Humban replaced her. Contact between Mesopotamia and Elam appears as early as 2550 B.C., when Enmebaragesi of Kish records carrying off ‘as booty the weapons of the land of Elam.’ Elam remained under Mesopotamian control until Ibbi-Sin, the last ruler of the Ur III dynasty, was carried off to exile in Elam, where he died. The early Sumerian view of the Elamites as undesirables prevailed throughout the second millennium B.C. Conflict between these two regions continued until the thirteenth century B.C., the floruit of Elamite civilization, when Elam freed itself of Babylon’s control. In the Bible, Elam is best known from Genesis 14, which details the coalition of several kings, including the Elamite Chedorlaomer, against the kings of the Dead Sea region. The coalition captured Lot, who was rescued by his uncle, Abram. The Hebrew name (Chedorlaomer) may reflect an actual Elamite name; Kuter-Lagamar would mean ‘the goddess Lagamar is protection.’ The name, however, is not yet attested in native inscriptions. In the Table of Nations, Elam is listed as a descendant of Shem (Gen. 10:22). Shushan (Susa), the capital of Elam, is called ‘the castle’ in Neh. 1:1, Dan. 8:2, and Esther 1:2. During the reign of Darius, Susa became the winter palace of the Persian Empire. In the eighth and seventh centuries B.C., Elam alternatively showed its last independence and joined Chaldean and Aramean coalitions against Assyria. The Assyrians prevailed, and in 646 B.C. Ashurbanipal sacked Susa. Ezek. 32:24 describes the destruction of Elam. Isaiah (11:11; 21:2; 22:6) records Elamite help in Assyrian attacks on Judah. In all of these instances, Elam is depicted as a fierce nation, whose warriors are adept at the use of the bow and arrow as well as chariотry. During the reign of Zedekiah, Jeremiah (49:35-39) prophesied God’s promise of a total victory over Elam and a return from the captivity. Jews from Elam are counted among the returnees from the Babylonian captivity in Ezra 2:7, 31 and 8:7. The chiefs of the Jewish tribes in Elam were among those who set their seals to the reform covenant upon their return (Neh. 10:14). Neh. 12:42 records the participation of a priest named Elam in
the rededication of the walls of Jerusalem. The one mention of Elamites in the NT (Acts 2:9) records their presence in Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost.  

ELAM  

(a) The biblical name of a hilly country, ‘Elamtu’ in Accadian, east of the River Tigris (Hiddekel) bordered by Assyria (Mesopotamia) and Madai on the north, the Persian Gulf on the south and Persia on the east and southeast. Its capital was Susa (Shushan). Most of our knowledge of it derives from Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian sources. There was a constant state of war between Elam and the kingdoms of Lagash and Assyria. By the end of the 2nd millennium BC the Elamites had succeeded in deposing the Sumerian Dynasty of Ur. According to Genesis (14) Chedorlaomer, King of Elam, ruled over all the countries which were formerly under the yoke of Babylon, and the countries on the Jordan were his tributaries. At the beginning of the 12th century BC the Elamites invaded Babylon, and the stone on which Hammurabi wrote his code of laws was captured by them and taken to Susa, where it was indeed found in 1902. The rise of Assyria in the 8th–7th centuries BC led to clashes between the two kingdoms. Sargon II, Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal conducted continuous military campaigns against Elam. Susa fell in 645 BC. Elamites then took part in the Assyrian campaigns against Judah (Isa. 22:6), and after the fall of Nineveh Elam regained its freedom. Isaiah prophesied the unification of Elam and Media, which was to bring about the conquest of Babylon (Isa. 21:2, 9). The fall of Elam was foretold by Jeremiah (49:34–9) and by Ezekiel (32:24–5). During the period of the Persian Empire Elam was one of the satrapies, with Susa as its capital. Elamites who had been settled in Samaria impeded the Jews who returned from the Babylonia exile (Ezra 4:8–9).  

(b) A town in Judah which was settled after the Restoration, known as ‘the other Elam’ (Ezra 2:7, 31; Neh. 7:34) to distinguish it from the land of Elam. Not identified.  

The Lexham Bible Dictionary has the following article concerning Elam, “An ancient Near Eastern kingdom located in Iran. A rival to the Mesopotamian kingdoms for over 2,000 years. The Elamite Empire had all but vanished by the time of the Bible, but it influenced many great empires that shaped the biblical world. Over its long history, Elam interacted with the Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians, and the Assyrians. Under the Persians, Susa—one of Elam’s great cities—makes several biblical appearances. ‘Elam’ is a name coined by Mesopotamian scribes, referring to the peoples living high in the Zagros Mountains and their environs. Appearing as early as the middle of the third millennium, the name was written with the Sumerian sign NIM—meaning ‘high’—often with the sign for ‘land,’ KI. The Akkadian form was elammatum, or

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'Land of Elam.’ It was not until the 18th century BC that this land was described in writing by its own inhabitants, who called it Ha(l)tamti. Most likely this was composed of hal (“land”) and tamt (“gracious lord”), together meaning ‘land of the lords/gracious lords.’ Thus the term Elam is somewhat artificial, not occurring indigenously until late in its history. This suggests that for some time, Elam’s own diverse inhabitants did not consider themselves a unified country or land. The boundaries of Elam varied over the course of its long history, but its heart was in the southwest of modern-day Iran, above the Persian Gulf. In a strict sense, Elam may have referred to what roughly equates to today’s Fars province, and its capital was Anshan. In a broader sense, however, Elam could also refer to a much larger region of associated states, stretching north from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea. The variety of these geopolitical entities can be explained by the land’s diverse topography. Its dominating feature is the Zagros mountain range, which covers most of the west and extends into the southeast portion of the land. The Zagros range is marked by numerous valleys and plains, many of which contain tepe (mounds), representing the remains of ancient settlements. Through Iran’s center, the mountains level out into a plateau, referred to as the ‘Iranian’ or ‘Central’ plateau (or simply the “Plateau”). Two deserts demarcate the eastern boundaries of the Zagros, and their southwestern boundary is marked by a dramatic decline in elevation into what is now the Khuzestan Plain. This lowland area was a large portion of ancient Susiana. This made it much more a part of neighboring Mesopotamia, geographically speaking, which may explain why for much of its history Susiana went back and forth between being a Mesopotamian or Elamite province. This geographic diversity resulted in great variety in the number and composition of local cultures; Elam’s diversity was probably the greatest in the entire Near East. This cultural regionalism, due in large part to geography, is responsible for much of the historical and political happenings of ancient Elam. Elam appears in Gen 10:22 as one of Shem’s sons (and in the same way in 1 Chr 1:17). Kedorlaomer, king of Elam, appears in Gen 14 as the king whom Abram defeats to bring Lot and his family back home. The next occurrences in the Bible are not until the prophets and the exile. Elam can appear as a prophetic instrument of judgment (Isa 21:2; 22:6), as the object of judgment (Jer 49:34–38), and also an object lesson for those yet to be judged (Ezek 32:24–25). Assyria deported many Israelites to Elam upon conquering it, which sets the stage for Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. According to Acts 2:9, a Jewish population still remained in Elam into the New Testament period. The Elamite language is not related to any known linguistic group, and the frequency and exact location of its use is uncertain. The earliest texts from the area where Elamite was known to be spoken are written in two scripts (called “proto-Elamite” and “linear Elamite”), though they have yet to be adequately deciphered. Readable Elamite was written in versions of the same
Mesopotamian cuneiform script used to write Sumerian and Akkadian, among many other Near Eastern languages. Women enjoyed cultural, religious, and civic prominence in Elam—something unique to the Near Eastern world. This was mirrored in the divine realm, with many cities having goddesses for patron deities. The oldest document written in Elamite with cuneiform characters—the Treaty of Naram-Sin—listed the goddess Pinikir at the head of the list of 36 other deities. This is not necessarily an indication of her supremacy within the Elamite pantheon, however. It seems rather that the god Inshushinak ruled a Susanian pantheon that resembled a Mesopotamian one in structure and function, and Napirisha was the high god of Elam. Perhaps Pinikir played a role in the Susanian pantheon similar to Mesopotamian Inanna/Ishtar. Our main sources for a reconstruction of the Elamite pantheon(s) are building inscriptions and personal names, in addition to a Mesopotamian god-list called An-Anum and a series of incantations called the Shurpu series. Additionally, the city of Dur-Untash—established in the Middle Elamite period—shows how Susanian and Elamite pantheons may have coexisted. The king was Elam’s chief priest; below him was a high priest, followed by common priests and priestesses. High temples were constructed in cities, usually stepped as ziggurats—a common construction throughout Mesopotamia. Elamite ziggurats were often adorned with large horns of alabaster or wood, frequently gilded with gold. ‘Holy gardens’ are also frequently mentioned in texts. François Vallat suggests, however, that a ‘strong secular spirit … permeates the composition’ of many inscriptions. He suggests that ‘in Elam religion was more likely to be manifested among the masses than within royal circles, the kings turning to it strictly for political purposes’ (Vallat, “Susa and Susiana,” 1031–32). Elam’s history remains one of the lesser known in the ancient Near Eastern world. Its entire existence is defined by its interactions—friendly and hostile—with its Mesopotamian neighbors to the west. It is primarily the Mesopotamian record that gives information about Elam, dividing its history into four historical ages: the Proto-, Old, Middle, and Neo-Elamite periods. ‘Proto-Elamite’ is the term used to define the inhabitants of the region in the late fourth and early third millennium. Though the earliest human presence in the region dates back to the Paleolithic era, this period is identified by the emergence of the first Elamite written documents in their own local script (Proto-Elamite, see above), circa 3200. Although about 1,600 clay tablets with this writing have been recovered, the script is yet to be deciphered. Determining how close the connection was between these earlier peoples and later Elamites remains difficult. Archaeology has shed light on many originally distinct groups during this period, most notably from Elam (Fars) and Susa, which come to be associated together later in history. This distinction is preserved in the later Sumerian Gudea Cylinder (Cylinder A, lines 392–93), which says: ‘The Elamites came to him from Elam, the Susians came to him from Susa.’
This Elamite-Susanian duality lasted throughout Elamite history, as a Middle Elamite title for a unified ruler would be ‘king of Anshan and Susa.’ By the end of this period, then, these city-states associated themselves with certain elements of a common culture—perhaps language and writing system. The Old Elamite Period is marked by the succession of three regional dynasties: the Awan, the Simashki, and the sukkalmaš (a Mesopotamian term used in Elam to the effect of “grand regent”) Dynasty. This corresponds roughly to the Mesopotamian Akkad, Ur III, Old Babylonian periods, and the beginning of the Kassite period. Considerable interactions between Mesopotamia and greater Elam occurred during these years—sometimes hostile and sometimes peaceful. Both Awan and Elam appear in the Sumerian King List as adversaries of various Sumerian cities. During the Awan Dynasty (circa 2400–2100), Susiana was a province of Akkad. Akkadian kings Sargon and his successor Rimush led military expeditions far beyond Anshan (to modern day Kerman province), establishing themselves as rivals with interior provinces of Elam. For a short time during the breakdown of the Akkad Dynasty, Puzur-Inshushinak of Awan was able to restore Susiana to Elam. During the Simashki Dynasty (circa 2100–1900), Susiana was again a Mesopotamian province—this time under the Ur III kings. In response to pressure from Ur III, the interior states (such as Simashki and Elam) formed an alliance that sacked Ur and brought the Ur III Dynasty to an end. By the end of the Old Elamite period during the sukkalmaš Dynasty, Elam had grown to unprecedented heights in its Near Eastern prominence. To capture some idea of the influence Elam enjoyed during this period, Siwe-palar-huppak (circa 1765) impressed his Near Eastern contemporaries with westward shows of strength—the king of Mari, Zimri-Lin, and the king of Babylon, Hammurabi, addressed each other as “brother” but called the Elamite king ‘father.’ The Middle Elamite period is considered the zenith of Elamite history—Elam’s ‘Classical Period.’ It also can be subdivided into three dynasties, this time marked by its founder or greatest ruler: Kidinuids, Ighalkids, and the Shuttukids. Soon after the Ighalkides period began (circa 1400 BC), a radical break with Mesopotamian ruling traditions and culture occurred, and also with that of prior Middle Elamite rulers. Untash-Napirisha constructed the completely new city of Dur-Untash (modern Chogha Zanbil) with its well-known ziggurat, perhaps to establish greater social, political, and religious control over the regions he governed. Soon after the Shuttukids period began (circa 1200), Elamite relations with Kassite Babylonia worsened. One of the most important figures in Elamite history, Shutruk-Nahhunte, ended the Kassite Dynasty in Babylonia during the final years of this period. During his military conquest of southern Mesopotamia (1158 BC), Shutruk-Nahhunte defeated the Kassites and took Babylonian monuments and other booty back to Susa. This included a cult statue of Marduk from his temple, the law code of Hammurabi, and the victory memorial
(called a “stele”) of Naram-Sin. Nebuchadnezzar I of Babylon (1125–1104 BC) took revenge, however, by defeating Elam and taking back the stolen treasures. This also marks the end of the Middle Elamite period, and little is known of Elam for the following three centuries. The Neo-Elamite Period can be characterized by the gradual decline of the Elamites as a Near Eastern power. It too can be divided into three separate periods, this time based on historical circumstances: Neo-Elamite I (1000–circa 760), II (circa 750–653), and III (653–539). When Elam (re)emerges in the second period, it is caught between the warring states of Babylonia and Assyria, both of which shared portions of its western border. Also on the scene was Media, occupying a region of the Zagros Mountains to the north of Elam, and Persia, to Elam’s south. The geographical realm of Elam had been greatly reduced, being divided into a number of separate, practically independent, political units. Elam’s greatest enemy during this time was Assyria, which caused their eventual undoing. The Medes and the Persians probably began to flourish as Elam was preoccupied with their Assyrian rivals. Though Elam enjoyed some success based on various alliances with neighbors (most notably Babylonia), the Assyrian king Assurbanipal invaded Susa in 647—which eventually fell in 640. His narration of the destruction indicates that his actions were punitive; with them he intended to shock the world and signal the demise of Elam. Though Elam was not eradicated (third-period Elamite rulers ruled from Susa), the kingdom was severely reduced, having been pushed from the plateau by the increased presence of the Medes and the Persians to primarily Susiana. Towards the end of this period, Elam is mentioned more frequently in the Bible and is referred to by the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah mention Elam together with Babylonia and Media, accurately reflecting the political scene (see references above). Elam was geographically reduced to Susiana by the Assyrians, and the Medes and the Persians were firmly rooted in the Plateau. When Cyrus II (Cyrus the Great) conquered Babylonia (539) and established the great Persian Empire, Elam (Susiana) fell into Persian hands, becoming a valuable Persian province. The Persians inherited many characteristic traits from the Elamites, who continued to serve in various administrative roles under them. In fact, archives of Elamite clay tablets have been found in Persepolis—an important Persian center—from late in the reign of Darius to that of Artaxerxes (late fifth century). These shed considerable light on the political and cultural atmosphere of the time. Under Darius, Susa became a prominent city in the empire. Here, set up as the winter citadel for the Persian Empire, that the biblical book of Nehemiah begins, and where Esther is also set. Recent archeological discoveries in Susa have given
clarification to the book of Esther. However, by this time, ‘Susa, in the province of Elam’ (Dan 8:2) had ceased to be anything but the shell of Elam that it once was.\(^9\)