



## Notes

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## The Book of Daniel and the Appearance of Angels

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### Abstract

The biblical Book of Daniel is an epic and chronicle telling of the Succession of Kings in the Middle East after the Babylonian conquest of UrShalīm al-Kuds. It is narrated by “Daniel” who has a cyclic existence as a visionary who first supports the Babylonian King of Kings, and later Darius the Mede, the Median King of Kings. Important to this discussion on angels is the appearance of a divine being arguably a “proto-angel.” The rabbinic redactors of Daniel’s narrative, twelve chapters written down and recorded, describe but do not mention the name of the proto-angel arguably “Sraosha.” Sraosha as understood in this study is a divine being known to us through Mazdaism. The two angels Michael and Gabriel known to early Judaism are not clothed or otherwise described, and it is not until Daniel supports Darius the Mede that Daniel’s vision presents Gabriel as a “personage” who “flies.”

**Keywords:** Book of Daniel, the appearance of angels, Sraosha and Mazdaism, Gabriel and Michael, Darius the Mede, an Aramaic biblical text

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## Introduction

The modern scholar, Ali Cyrus Zargar turns to Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn al-‘Arabī’s *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Beirut, 1968, II.78) to clarify regarding the universal phenomenon of revelation (Zargar, 2023):

*Responding to the universal phenomenon of revelation, Ibn ‘Arabī addresses the question ‘What is revelation?’ He responds with a brief and lexically oriented definition:*

*The reply is that revelation is when allusion (al-ishāra) takes the place of expression (al-‘ibāra), without any expression whatsoever. For expression is that which you pass through to the meaning intended by it, which is why it is called ‘ibāra (as in ‘crossing over’). This is contrary to allusion, which is revelation since allusion is identical to that to which one alludes. Revelation is both the thing first understood and the first making of it understood. Revelation does not fail to be the very understanding, the very making understood, and the very thing understood by it. That is, revelation works without the customary means of communication, by circumventing outward expression. Revelation, in other words, is the most direct form of communication, which Ibn ‘Arabī states rather directly. . .*

In Judaism, Daniel is considered to be a visionary rather than a prophet for the reason that he unlike the Prophets of the Hebrew Bible does not necessarily address any collective, public, or particular nation. However, outside the context of the biblical account and in keeping with Sufi mystical tradition, taking Sufism in the broadest sense as being Middle Eastern mysticism per se, Daniel could be and is thought to be a prophet. That is, Daniel is a prophet in the sense that he is the recipient of Revelation, the recipient of messages delivered by the messengers of the Holy One Blessed be He according to the above quoted understanding of the medieval philosopher Ibn ‘Arabi. Evidencing the antiquity of Daniel’s “book” with its stages of orality mingled with its having been recorded and written down over millennia, the *Book of Daniel* is almost a compendium of the introduction of the concept of angels to folkloric conceptions of the philosophical depths of epic and ritual. The following passages mention the proto-angel Sraosha and two subsequent angels, Micha-El and Gabri-El.

**Daniel Chapter 4. Verses 10, 14 and Verse 20:**

Daniel 4:1 tells us that Nebūchadnezzar King of Babylon was at rest in his house, and was revived in his palace. The King narrates and tells Daniel what he saw over his couch by way of a vision in his mind. The text takes care to say “in his mind,” which says that what the King saw is as he knew through Mazdaism, “mazdā” meaning mind. I have twice filled in the text with the name *Sraosha*: In Mazdaism, Sraosha is the divine being who is the messenger of Ohrmazd and the embodiment of the divine word. . . (see Sraosha: Encyclopaedia Britannica). To clarify, Sraosha precedes the *Yazata*, which are “an order of angels created by Ahura Mazdā,” as expounded by Prophet Zarathustra (see Yazata: Encyclopaedia Britannica):<sup>2</sup>

*Watching I saw in the visions of my mind over my couch*

*And beheld. A wakeful and holy [being, Sraosha] descended from the heavens<sup>3</sup> [10]*

*[Sraosha] called out forcefully and thus said:*

*Fell the sapling and limb its branches. Shake off its leaves and scatter its fruit.*

*Free the animals from under it and let free the birds from its branches [11]*

*Only leave the stump of its roots in the land.*

*And enclose [it] in a constraint of copper and gold*

*Leave it in the wild grasslands, and let it be moistened with the dew of the heavens*

*Since his lot is to be with the [wild] beasts among the grasses of the land<sup>4</sup> [12]*

*His human heart will be replaced.<sup>5</sup>*

*And the heart of an animal will be given to him.*

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<sup>2</sup> Ahura Mazdā: “Zoroastrianism” is generally used as an all-encompassing term for both Mazdaism and including from when Prophet Zarathustra / Zoroaster added “Ahura” to Mazdā, and formalized new rituals and scriptures.

<sup>3</sup> *Sraosha*: In Mazdaism, Sraosha is the divine being who is the messenger of Ohrmazd and the embodiment of the divine word. . . See Sraosha: Encyclopaedia Britannica. To clarify, Sraosha precedes the *Yazata*, which are “an order of angels created by Ahura Mazdā,” as expounded by Prophet Zarathustra (see Yazata: Encyclopaedia Britannica). “Zoroastrianism” is generally used as an all-encompassing term for both Mazdaism and including from when Prophet Zarathustra / Zoroaster added “Ahura” to Mazdā, and formalized new rituals and scriptures.

<sup>4</sup> *His lot*, i.e., the King’s lot. The King either does not understand or cannot psychologically accept. He needs Daniel’s support.

<sup>5</sup> *His heart* The human heart with its duality of Good and Evil.

*And seven years will overtake him [13]*

*The sentence has been determined by the wakeful<sup>6</sup>*

*And the inquiry at the holy being's command.*

*For the sake of the living to understand*

*Who rules On High in the kingdom of Mankind.*

*And to whomever He orders, [that kingdom] shall be given*

*And the lowest of men He shall raise up over it [14]*

Daniel was aghast when he heard the King's sentence. The King encouraged him not to fear, and to speak: . . . *do not let the dream or the interpretation scare you.* Then Daniel tried to brush it off by saying that . . . *the dream is of [those who] hate you. And the interpretation is of your adversaries [16].* However, although Sraosha had told the King how to postpone the sentence, ultimately it would come into effect:

*. . . whereas the King saw the wakeful and holy [being] descend from the heavens  
And say to fell the sapling and destroy it leaving only the stump of its roots in the land  
And with a constraint of iron and brass in the grassland of the wilderness  
And with the dew of the heavens to be moistened  
Nevertheless his lot will be with the wild beasts until seven years overtake him [20]*

Thus, in Chapter Four, Sraosha, a divine, wakeful, and powerful being communicates directly to the mind. This is in accord with the above quoted passage from Zargar on Ibn 'Arabi: “. . . *revelation works without the customary means of communication, by circumventing outward expression*—revelation works without speech. If the King's Mazdaism is placed in a Sufi context, we understand his outlook from a philosophical and analytical viewpoint. Keeping in mind that we are dealing with literature, there is a need and opportunity to stir up the imagination of the reader or listener with visual symbols and images which are then transferred into the otherwise rational, abstract discourse, a discourse in which are experiences significant to human existence (Meyerhoff, 1955).

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<sup>6</sup> *The wakeful, i.e. Sraosha, who watches.*

**Daniel Chapter 10. Verses 4 to 7 and Verses 16 to 19. Verse 21 (Micha-El):**

In Chapter Ten, Sraosha's appearance stirs up the imagination. As a man, indeed an apparition, his most obvious feature is that he is dressed in the purity of linen. This is because he is not only a wakeful and holy being with a strong voice, but also a Guardian of the Law. Daniel tells us that he was present beside the mighty Tigris:

*And on the fourth and twentieth day of the first month, I was beside the great river—  
That is the Tigris [4]*

*I raised my eyes and looked, and beheld a man dressed in [linen] cloth,*

*His thighs girded with the fine gold of Uphaz [5]*

*And his dead body was like beaten silver, and his face like [the inner man,] lightening,  
And his eyes like torches of fire, and his arms and his bound feet a sort of shining copper.<sup>7</sup>  
And the sound of his words, like the sound of a multitude [6]*

*And "I" Daniel, just me, saw the sight. The men who were with me did not see the apparition. But a great trembling befell them, and they fled to hide themselves <sup>8</sup> [7]*

The apparition continues speaking to Daniel, establishing a personal rapport by reminding him of the days of his service to Nebūchadnezzar, King of Kings through inference (*Daniel, a man treasured*). And then, Daniel who had fallen on his face and into a deep sleep was awakened by the intimacy of a touch. Verses 16 to 19 describe the gift of humanity, the kindness of one human being to another extended to us in the touch of the proto-angel:

*And behold, a sort of image of a son of Adam touched my lips.<sup>9</sup>*

*And I opened my mouth and spoke, and I said to [the image] standing opposite me:*

*My lord, during a vision my writhing overturned me, and I have no strength left <sup>10</sup> [16]*

*And how can a servant of this lord of mine speak with his Lord.*

*Speaking of myself, from now no strength shall be found in me. And no breath is left in me [17]*

*And again, sort of an apparition of a man, touched me, and made me strong [18]*

<sup>7</sup> *And his bound feet:* the apparition did not have bare feet; they were "bound."

<sup>8</sup> The meaning of *mar'eh* shifts from "vision" in Daniel 10:1 to "sight" and then "apparition" in Daniel 10:7. To feel the nature of "apparition," see Salim Barakat's modernistic depictions of the intermediary world (*barzakh*) of apparitions in *Sages of Darkness*.

<sup>9</sup> *Son of Adam:* a human being.

<sup>10</sup> *My writhing /* see BDB—"the physical effects of mental distress."

*And he said: Do not fear; treasured man, peace be with you—be strong and [ever] stronger:<sup>11</sup>  
And as he spoke with me I became strong, and I said:*

*Let my lord speak, for you cause me to become strong [19]*

It is only in the last verse of Chapter Ten that an angel is mentioned as such:

*But [before I leave] I shall tell you truly what is inscribed in writing.*

*There is no one with me to support [you] in these [matters]<sup>12</sup>*

*Except Micha-El, your angel<sup>13</sup> [21]*

The above angel is called Micha-El. It is the first mention of an angel by name. In Dan 6:23, the word “angel” was used only in the sense of messenger: *My Elāh sent His angel and shut the mouth of the lions—and they did not do me any hurt.* Micha-El is one of four archangels of the late Second Temple period in Judaism. Both Micha-El and Gabri-El (Michael and Gabriel) are mentioned in the *Book of Daniel*. The other two so-called archangels are in non-canonical texts. In the Talmud, Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish states that “Israel took the names of the angels from the Babylonians during the period of the Exile” (Yer. R. H. 56d). However, there is no direct imagery that includes “wings,” or depiction of their appearance.

### **Chapter 8. Verses 13 to 17 (Gabri-El):**

Verses 13 to 17 occur while Daniel sees himself included in the vision, *And I [again] appeared in the vision. / And it came to pass upon looking that I was in Shushan the capital in the province of Elam: / And I saw in the vision that I was looking through the clear water of the Ulay [River][2].* In the following verses, an *image of a man* identified by the name of Gabri-El is called upon to imbue *that one* with understanding, i.e., intelligence. Gabri-El’s voice informs him that the vision would be about the End of Days:

*And I actually heard a holy being speak. Indeed, the speaker, a holy one, was saying:  
Until when will you allow the perpetual vision of burnt offering  
And transgression’s devastation—and what is holy and of the hosts—be trampled [13]*

*And he said to me: When dusk is dawn, two thousand and three hundred [times]:*

<sup>11</sup> *Do not fear. . . Be strong:* these two injunctions in the *Book of Daniel* hearken back to the *Book of Joshua* 1:6 “Be strong and courageous. . . and again *Joshua* 1:7 “But be strong and courageous, especially to keep. . .

<sup>12</sup> *Matters:* Daniel’s allegiance to the king Darius the Mede, and the Medes.

<sup>13</sup> *Your:* plural.

*Then shall the Temple be sanctified [14]<sup>14</sup>*

*And it came to pass that when “I” Daniel saw my vision, and I sought understanding,*

*Behold opposite me stood the image of a man [15]*

*And I heard a human voice, roundabout the Ulay [River]. And it called out and said:*

*Gabri-El,<sup>15</sup> make that one understand the vision [16]*

*And it drew near to where I stood. And when it approached, I was terrified and fell on my face.*

*And [the voice] said to me: Know, O son of Adam, that the vision is of the End of Time [17].*

Daniel was terrified and fell on his face, so he failed to see the vision of the End of Time. Later he would be reawakened, recreated in another cycle of his existence, renewed and strengthened to support Darius the Mede, a just and wise King of Kings, the Golden Age and onset of the medieval period of the Kurdish nation.

### **Chapter 9. Verse 21 (Gabri-El)**

In what is already the medieval period starting with Neo-Aramaic and the Median King of Kings Darius, a new invasive register, vocabulary and culture nears the familiar in today’s world. Daniel writes:

*And I went on speaking, and praying, and confessing my sins, and the sins of my nation Israel, And casting my supplication before HaShem Elohai on the holy mount of Elohai<sup>16</sup> [20]*

*And I went on speaking in prayer:*

*And the personage of Gabri-El that I had seen in the vision, at the start,*

*Flew and flew reaching me about the time of the evening offering [and sacrifice] [21]*

With the words *And I went on speaking, and praying, and confessing my sins, and the sins of my nation Israel / And casting my supplication before HaShem Elohai on the holy mount of Elohai* [20], Daniel envisages his return to the Temple in UrShalīm al-Kuds. He writes that *the*

<sup>14</sup> See Salim Barakat’s epic poem *al-Mu’jam* (The Obscure) 2004, in Butt, Aviva. *Salim Barakat, Mahmud Darwish, and the Kurdish and Palestinian Similitude: Qamishli Extended*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing. UK: September 2021. The poet explains how time rolls over before the End. He calls upon his persona “Evil” to help him make the twilight-dawn roll-over one more time. That is, there are two twilights, before dusk and before dawn. Dusk and dawn are both *fajr*.

<sup>15</sup> *Gabri-El*: an angel appears to the apparition of Daniel so that Daniel sees both Gabri-El and his own apparition.

<sup>16</sup> *On the holy mount of Elohai* : The Temple Mount / Mount Moriah.

*personage of Gabri-El that I had seen in the vision, at the start, / Flew and flew reaching me about the time of the evening offering. . . This is the first time that an angel is depicted, at least by inference, as having “wings.” In the Common Era, perhaps to be reckoned as “modern times,” both Judaism and Islam would question pictorial representations. By the same token, in these verses, Gabri-El’s role in relation to the nation is also clarified.*

**The Concluding Chapter of the Book of Daniel: Verse 1 (Micha-El); Verses 6-7 (Sraosha)**

*And at the time that Micha-El appeared, the great angel who guards  
The people of your nation, it was a time of trouble such as had never befallen people  
Until that very time. And at that time your nation was rescued, everyone present,  
Everyone who was written into the Book [1]*

Chapter 12 summarizes as regards the nation and the created world. In the above initial verse and those following, Micha-El a divine being is guardian of the righteous of the nation and fulfils this function. The rest of this chapter of the *Book of Daniel* concludes with Daniel’s vision of Sraosha, symbolic of the divine utterance, the sound that enters the mind of the visionary, the utterance that He who is the *Life of the World* and cares for the life of the world:

*And you, Daniel. Stop up matters and seal the Book—until the End of Time.*

*Many shall be cleansed, and knowledge amplified [4]*

*And I Daniel looked and beheld two others standing*

*One above the near bank of the watercourse. And one above the far bank of the watercourse [5]*

*And the man dressed in [linen] cloth, who was above the water in the watercourse, was saying:*

*When is up to the End of the Difficulties<sup>17</sup> [6]*

*And I heard the man dressed in [linen] cloth, who was above the water in the watercourse*

*As he raised his right [hand] and his left towards the skies, and took an oath by [HaShem],*

*The Life of the World.<sup>18</sup> Indeed at the appointed time, two appointed times and a half.<sup>19</sup>*

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<sup>17</sup> Daniel sees himself still asking when the End of Time will come.

*Pela’ot* / (*wonders / difficulties*) takes on its opposite meaning as “difficulties.” “Wonders” becomes a euphemism for “difficulties.” In any case, the Hebrew word is a contranym.

<sup>18</sup> *The Life of the World* is *HaShem* (Midrash of Ralbag), [www.mgketer.org/tanach35/12/7](http://www.mgketer.org/tanach35/12/7) .



*And when they have brought to an end the shattering of the might of the Holy Nation,  
All else will come to an End [7]*

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<sup>19</sup> *Two appointed times and a half /: mo ‘adim / “appointed times. . . . Or more likely, the dual plural, which at this stage would have been the same as the plural. Thus, “an appointed time of two appointed times and a half.”*

**Online**

Lexilogos Arabic Transliteration: [www.lexilogos.com/keyboard/arabic\\_latin.htm](http://www.lexilogos.com/keyboard/arabic_latin.htm) (and Hebrew).

BDB Lexicon <https://www.sefaria.org/BDB?tab=contents> Biblical Hebrew and List of Aramaic.

*The Book of Daniel* (with, without vowels, with Midrash): (MT with English translation):<sup>20</sup>

<https://mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt3401.htm>

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<sup>20</sup> MT: Masoretic Text.