

shrines of the Egyptian gods. Ptolemy successfully continued the same methods and was able to use the great resources of Egypt to play a vital part in the political and military affairs of Greece itself. His successors, each of whom was called Ptolemy, ruled Egypt for almost three centuries. The statement that "the king of the South will become strong" is a good summary of the establishment of the Ptolemaic power in Egypt.

Verse 5 reads: "The king of the South will become strong but one of his commanders will become even stronger than he and will rule his own kingdom with great power." This gives a concise summary of what would occur in the region northeast of Egypt. A general named Seleucus had established his authority in Babylon, but in 316 B.C. he was compelled to flee to Egypt where he served as one of Ptolemy's commanders. Four years later, with Ptolemy's help, he made a dash back to Babylon and in 312 B.C. his power there was reestablished. He considered this year as marking a great turning point in his career, and events were dated from it for many centuries thereafter. Even Hebrew manuscripts copied in the Middle Ages are often dated according to the number of years after the time when Seleucus returned to Babylon!

Although the Ptolemies were very strong, often exerting a great deal of influence in Greece itself, their control was generally limited to Egypt and Palestine. Seleucus became "even stronger" than Ptolemy, for he eventually succeeded in gaining control of most of the Asiatic territory that had been included in the Persian empire, including most of Asia Minor, northern Syria, and the regions farther east. Thus verse 5 briefly describes the beginning of two of the kingdoms that came out of Alexander's empire -- the two that most directly concerned Palestine, which was held by the Ptolemies for more than a century and then was taken from them by the Seleucids.

Seleucids verses Ptolemies

Verses 6-20 are concerned with the later history of these