

Daniel 1v

**During the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign in Judah**, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it with his armies. **The Lord gave him victory** over King Jehoiakim of Judah. When Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon, he took with him some of the sacred objects from the Temple of God and placed them in the treasure-house of his gods in the land of Babylonia.

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, who was in charge of the palace officials, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah's royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives.

"Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men," he said. Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good sense, and have the poise needed to serve in the royal palace. Teach these young men the language and literature of the Babylonians.

The King assigned them a daily ration of the best food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for a three-year period, and then **some of them** would be made his advisers in the royal court.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah. The chief official renamed them with these Babylonian names:

Daniel was called Belteshazzar.

Hananiah was called Shadrach.

Mishael was called Meshach.

Azariah was called Abednego.

**What do we know** about the Babylonian re-education process from a historically point of view?

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A. The Babylonians selected from the best and brightest, generally from noble or royal families.

- Age 14 was the age of selection
- The training was a 3 year process
- They were being assimilated into the culture, trained to give their lives in some aspect of government.

Consider the obvious things that stand out?

- They were 14
- 3 years was a long time.
- Their personal ambitions were gone.

Consider this: **God** had arranged for them to be brought into this process.

The God they served arranged for them to be taken as captives and to be put into very difficult situations.

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B. They were to receive new names.

It is noteworthy to see how each Hebrew name includes a reference to Yahweh, and the Babylonian name aligns them to a false god worshipped by the Babylonians.

Therefore the purpose of changing the young men's names was to help erase their attachment to their own nation and religion. Thus, Daniel and his three friends were given Babylonian names.

Daniel, whose name meant "God is my judge" received the name Belteshazzar ("Belet protects his life / Keeper of the hidden treasures of Bel").

It is of interest to note that Daniel's name was shifted to a feminine allegiance.

Hananiah ('Jehovah has been gracious') became Shadrach which contains the name of the pagan deity Marduk.

Mishael ('Who is like God?') became Meshach—a name which contains one of the ancient forms of the name for the deity Venus.

Azariah ('Jehovah has helped') became Abed-nego ('the servant of Nebo').

To consider...

The names they were given at birth all had very strong significance about Yahweh. We could say these names were given by the *God-given* authority in their lives. (parents)

In this way, these names carried a supernatural declarative authority in the Kingdom over them.

The names given by their captors all had pagan significance. They were not given by God's authority (parents). They were actually antithetical to their true identity. They were false truths spoke over them.

*Could this name changes indicate a clue to a very real attack tactic from the enemy to shift personal God-given identity?*

How could they not?

***It is a direct attempt to challenge their God-given identity and convert it into something different.***

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C. They were to become eunuchs.

**Ashpenaz** was the palace official in charge of this process, he was a Eunuch.

Ashpenaz's name means, "chief of eunuchs,"

What is a Eunuch?

Definition:

Hebrew word, "saris," meaning one who was castrated for service, but was also used as a general term for palace workers.

Therefore, the selection of strong, healthy, and good-looking young men, who were entrusted to his care, is largely understood to be a selection into the Babylonian Eunuch program.

Were these young men just to become palace officials?

Or, were they facing the more grave definition?

There is a very real probability of all of these young men being forced into this reality, and we learn this by cross-referencing Isaiah's warning to Hezekiah in Isaiah 39.

*7 and some of your own sons, who will come from you, whom you will father, shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."*

This is an ominous warning to Hezekiah for his lack of trust in God. For them to simply be, "palace officials," would carry little gravity.

I would submit this word in Isaiah is to be understood as the more grave definition. Therefore, more probably than not, these young men were stripped of their ability to reproduce. Their lives would be changed forever.

Traditionally, legacy would happen through reproduction. Consider that these young men, the best and brightest of Jerusalem, would no longer be capable of this legacy. Yet, God didn't need them to be able to reproduce. He was going to use their spiritual DNA to change the history of Israel and the world.

What does that mean to my limitation?

***It means, in with God, ALL things are possible. He is not limited by limitation.***

Pt. 2

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As we consider this story and text, I want to draw our attention to the **way** these young men walked through this process.

Why? We live in a time when the church and humanity are riddled with offense issues. We see so many people walk away from their church, their faith, their family, their commitments, because they get offended at the situation when it isn't what they wish it were.

Maybe that is where you are right now.

Throughout Scripture there is a special group of people that God continues to highlight. They are the faithful who, like Joshua & Caleb, possess a different sprit.

We see this same sprit in these young men of the book of Daniel. They are willing to endure EVERYTHING God put at them...never complaining.

I believe we can learn from them and apply these principles to our lives.

But Daniel **made up his mind** not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king.

**He asked** the chief official for permission to eat other things instead. **Now God had given the chief official great respect for Daniel.** But he was alarmed by Daniel's suggestion. "My lord the king has ordered that you eat this food and wine," he said. "If you become pale and thin compared to the other youths your age, I am afraid the king will have me beheaded for neglecting my duties."

Daniel talked it over with the attendant who had been appointed by the chief official to look after Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. "Test us for ten days on a diet of vegetable and water," Daniel said. "At the end of the ten days, see how we look compared to the other young men who are eating the king's rich food. Then you can decide whether or not to let us continue eating our diet." So the attendant agreed to Daniel's suggestion and tested them for ten days.

At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who had been eating the food assigned by their king. So, after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the rich foods and wines.

## 1. Their understanding of God's sovereignty is important for us.

Please notice that we do not see them fight the process they were in.

Wouldn't it have been very easy for them to, "blame the enemy and fight the process, to say, 'This is not God's heart for us'?"

Yet what we see in them is not this.

What we see a *surrendered faithfulness*.

How did they do that?

***I would submit they chose to view life through the lens of trusting Him.***

### a. Where they were was not their choice.

They had not done anything to be there. This simple truth gave them an ability to trust the process, because where they were was not an outworking of their choice.

When I am not in control, I must choose to trust that He is.

When we settle this, we can live with an understanding that He is in control, and whatever happens **to** me, I can trust him.

### b. They were careful to manage their choices and their behavior.

They could not control their situation, but they **could** control their choices.

Two phrases jump out about Daniel's choices and behavior:

*Daniel made up his mind*

Root word is, 'labe,' the pictograph is a shepherd's crook / staff. The word represents having full authority over the inner man.

Daniel was in control of his behavior, he was actively choosing God's path.

*He asked the chief*

The word means, 'to request'

It is a picture of humility and request.

Daniel did not demand this, which tells us that he walked in honor and protocol towards authority.

Side note -

How do we handle authority? Consider the authority over you? It is God-given. Do you live with a Daniel-like heart towards ALL the authority in your life?

***Simply stated: they owned what they could own, and trusted what they could not control***

## 2. Their understanding of personal faithfulness is important for us.

As soon as they enter this process, we see Daniel make the choice not to eat what was offered by the King's officials. Why?

The word used in the narrative is, "defile." It is a key word. It gives us a clue as to why Daniel would not partake.

There are several possibilities that scholars will present that could give us understanding of why he made this choice:

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The Psalm 137 thought - connected to mourning for captivity. Some scholars postulate that Daniel refused due to a hardwired understanding that they were to live in mourning during captivity, as potentially declared in Psalm 137.

There are two problems with this theory. Firstly, In Jeremiah, God tells the people of Israel, in captivity, to settle in, build houses, plant vineyards...as it goes well for the city, it will go well for you. He seems to be directly combating the tendency to live in mourning.

Secondly, the Psalm is not universal. It is a perspective on repentance. They realized where they were and why.

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The Provision Thought - Some scholars postulate that Daniel and the three refused because they wanted to show Yahweh as their provider, not the King. This is a possible answer, but it would have been easy for the Babylonians to say, "If He is your provider, why are you here at all?"

The logic of this theory doesn't stand strong enough for me to believe this was why.

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The food violated what was revealed in Leviticus / Deuteronomy-

Two aspects are brought to the surface:

1. Idolatry
2. Babylonian cuisine was very pork-focused.

God had commanded Israel not to eat pork. Most often, the king's portion was offered to / "blessed by," Babylonian idols. To eat this food would be akin to alignment with a false god.

These are both great possibilities, and they point us to a bigger idea.

### ***Daniel's faithfulness to live in the revealed will of God.***

Daniel did not eat the King's portion because to do that would have forced him to violate what the Scriptures taught. I would submit that Daniel had made a prior decision to honor the Scriptures and live whatever they say. He came from Josiah's courts. The reformation of the text was very real in his lifetime.

So, what is a Daniel fast?

A true Daniel fast is the commitment to live a life rooted and grounded in the Scriptures.

A true Daniel fast is the determination to view your situation through the lens of Scripture. ***Daniel did not allow his situation to inform his obedience. He placed the Scriptures in authority of his situation.***

Application for us from this:

What comes at me, happens to me, is covered under the promise of His sovereignty.

My faithfulness is determined by my choices, and my choices are made through the lens of His revealed will in the Scriptures. *I walk in obedience to how He has taught me to live.*

**With these two tension points, I have balance. I can trust what is out of my control and submit what is in my control.**

When we don't understand this principle we begin to fight what comes at us, and assume our choices are covered by God.