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The Historical Background of Dani'el



The book of **Dani'el** contains eight important dates (**1:1** and **21**; **2:1**; **5:30**; **7:1**; **8:1**; **9:1**; **10:1**). The earliest date refers to the third year of **Jehoiakim** (see the commentary on [Jeremiah Ca - Jehoiakim Ruled For 11 Years from 609/608 to 598 BC](#)), and reports the first **Babylonian** invasion of **Judah** by King **Nebuchadnezzar (1:1)**. This means **Dani'el** was among the first of the **Hebrews** taken captive by **the Babylonians** and deported to Mesopotamia, a fact that has significance for **his** later prayer (**9:2-3**). The latest date places **Dani'el** in the Persian royal court during **the third year** of the Persian king **Cyrus (10:1)**. This means the historical setting for **Dani'el** is the Babylonian exile in the royal courts of **Babylon, Median, and Persian** kings between 605 and 536 BC.

The dated portions of **Dani'el** are as follows:

1:1 the third year of King Jehoiakim of Judah 609/608 BC

1:21 the first year of King Cyrus of Persia 539 BC

2:1 the second year of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia 604 or 603 BC

5:30 the last year of King Belshazzar of Babylonia/first year of Darius the Mede 539 BC

7:1 the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylonia 553 BC

8:1 the third year of King Belshazzar of Babylonia 551 BC

9:1 the first year of Darius the Mede 539 BC

10:1 the third year of King Cyrus of Persia 537 or 536 BC

King Josiah of Judah died in battle near Megiddo (see [Jeremiah Ai - Josiah Ruled For 31 Years from 640 to 609 BC](#)). Perhaps obligations to the Babylonians motivated **his** attempt to intercept the Egyptian forces of Pharaoh Neco en route to Carchemish (**Second Kings 23:29**). **Josiah** was the last reformer and “good” king of Judah, and **his** death triggered the rapid decline of the southern Hebrew monarchy. The last twenty-plus years of the southern kingdom of Judah saw four kings ascend to the throne.

Jehoahaz Ruled For 3 Months in 609 BC

Jehoiakim Ruled For 11 Years from 609 to 598 BC

Jehoiachin Ruled For 3 Months in 598 BC

Zedekiah Ruled For 11 Years from 597 to 586 BC

After **Josiah** died in battle, the people then chose **Jehoahaz, Josiah's** fourth son, who was only 23 years old, as **the new king of Judah** (see [Jeremiah Bm - Jehoahaz Ruled For 3 Months in 609 BC](#)). When Pharaoh Neco II of Egypt assumed control of the Israelite territories, he set up headquarters at Riblah. Neco II then called **Jehoahaz** to meet him there, but removed **him** from the throne and sent **him** in chains back to Egypt (**Second Kings 23:31-35; Second Chronicles 36:1-4**). Then, **Jehoiakim** was installed by Pharaoh Neco II (**Second Kings 23:34**). **He** later surrendered to **King Nebuchadnezzar** of Babylonia, but rebelled three years later (see [Jeremiah Ca - Jehoiakim Ruled For 11 Years from 609/608 to 598 BC](#)). Nebuchadnezzar was unable to resume his military campaigns in Isra'el until 598 BC, but then moved swiftly to punish the disloyal king. By the time **Nebuchadnezzar** reached **Jerusalem**, **Jehoiakim** had died and **Jehoiachin** succeeded **him** as king of **Judah** (see [Jeremiah Du - Jehoiachin Ruled For 3 Months in 598 BC](#)). As a result of the second Babylonian invasion of **Judah**, **Jehoiachin** was deposed and exiled along with ten thousand of the best and brightest of **Jerusalem**, including **Ezeki'el** (see [Jeremiah Gt - In the 37th Year, Jehoiachin Released from Prison](#)).

Zedekiah was installed by **Nebuchadnezzar** as a puppet king of Babylonia after the exile of **Jehoiachin** (see [Jeremiah Dz - Zedekiah Ruled For 11 Years from 598/597 to 586 BC](#)). **Zedekiah** foolishly rebelled against the Babylonian overlord and allied **Judah** with Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt in 589 BC. The third Babylonian invasion of **Judah** was swift and decisive. **Nebuchadnezzar** surrounded **Jerusalem** in 588 BC, and after a lengthy siege the city was sacked, **ADONAI's Temple** was destroyed (see [Jeremiah Gb - The Destruction of Solomon's Temple on Tisha B'Av in 586 BC](#)), and the **Davidic** kingship ceased, awaiting the return of **the Messiah** (see the commentary on [Isaiah Kg - The Second Coming of Jesus Christ to Bozrah](#)).⁷

Suggested Timeline for Dani'el:

605 BC Jerusalem taken by Nebuchadnezzar,
Dani'el and **his three friends** taken to **Babylon**

602 BC Dani'el and **his friends** complete **their** three years of training,
Nebuchadnezzar has **his dream** and **Dani'el** interprets **it (Dani'el 2)**

586 BC Jerusalem and **the Temple** are destroyed by **the Babylonians**
(see the commentary on [Jeremiah Ga - The Fall of Jerusalem](#))

539 BC Belshazzar's feast (Dani'el 5)
Cyrus, king of Persia, conquers **Babylon** and reigns until 530 BC

538 BC Cyrus decrees that **the Jews** can return to **Judah** and rebuild **the Temple**
(see [Ezra-Nehemiah Ah - Cyrus Decrees: Rebuild the Temple](#))

537 BC About 50,000 Jews returned, led by **Sheshbazzar** and **Zerubbabel**
(see [Ezra-Nehemiah Ag - The First Return](#))
Dani'el had his prophetic vision about the end times (**10:1** to **12:13**)

458 BC About 2,000 Jews returned, led by **Ezra** the teacher of **Isra'el**,
purifying of **the people** by the reading of **Deuteronomy**
(see [Ezra-Nehemiah Bf - The Second Return](#))

445 BC A small group returned, led by **Nehemiah**
(see [Ezra-Nehemiah Bt - The Third Return](#))
The walls around **Jerusalem** were completed.



432 BC Nehemiah returned to **Tziyon** and final enacted **his** final reforms.