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The Personal History of Dani'el 1: 1-21



Elizabeth Elliot, a Christian missionary, author, and speaker, was twice widowed; first by the martyred death of missionary Jim Elliot and then by the death of her second husband, theologian Addison Leitch. She tells of how helpful the Apostles' Creed was to her as she mourned the loss of Dr. Leitch. She used it to answer the question: What things have not changed even though my husband has died? One might imagine **Dani'el** and **his friends** asking a similar question after being hauled off to Babylon in 605 BC, far from Judah and all that was near and dear and clear. **They** might have wondered, what had not changed even though **they** had been carted to **Babylon**? And the text of **Dani'el Chapter 1** answers that question. **ADONAI has not changed; He is still there, wherever "there" is. Dani'el Chapter 1** hammers this point home three times with the theological note: **ADONAI gave**, in **verses 2, 9, and 17** (Hebrew: *nathan*, meaning *to give*). **Dani'el** will stir our souls in **Chapter 2** with **his** ringing declaration to **Nebuchadnezzar**, "**but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries (2:28a).**" Indeed, it is the foundation of **Dani'el Chapter 2**. But in **Dani'el Chapter 1** the writer makes a similar, yet different, point. **He** is saying, "**There is a God in Babylon.**" How,

then, do we recognize **His Presence**.¹⁴

The book of **Dani’el** is also significant because it bridges the gap between **Isra’el’s** historical writings and the B’rit Chadashah. It records events in Jewish history during the Babylonian Captivity (see the commentary on **Jeremiah, to see link click Gu - Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule**) that would have otherwise gone unrecorded because no other biblical author covered the topic as extensively as **Dani’el**. A rabbinic commentary on **Dani’el** provides the following concise historical background for the book. **The declining years of the kingdom of Judah were turbulent and bloody. They marked the end of the glorious period that began with the crossing of the Jordan into Eretz Yisra’el (the Land of Isra’el) and reached its zenith with the reigns of David and Solomon. The decline led to the tragedy of the Temple’s destruction and Isra’el’s exile to Babylon. There, laying the groundwork for the future rebirth of Jewish national greatness, was a boy being groomed for royal ministry in the academy of Nebuchadnezzar’s court. His name was Dani’el.**

The book of **Jeremiah** extensively covers the reasons for the divine punishment of **Judah** at the hands of **the Babylonians**. **Dani’el** records the perspective of those who were already in captivity. The book begins with a description of **Dani’el’s** life and time in exile. **Verses 1-7** provide information about the deportations of **Jews** to **Babylon** and the selection of **exiles** by **Nebuchadnezzar** (see **Ak - Dani’el’s Deportation to Babylon**); **verses 8-16** describe the testing of **Dani’el** and **his friends** (see **Al - Dani’el’s Devotion to God**); and **verses 17-21** conclude with **Dani’el’s** blessing (see **Am - Dani’el’s Reputation in Babylon**).¹⁵