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Dani'el's Deportation to Babylon

1: 1-7

Dani'el's deportation to Babylon DIG: What actions by Hezekiah led to Dani'el's exile to Babylon? What four areas did Nebuchadnezzar use to brainwash his captives in exile? What purpose did the king have for bringing the young Israelites into his palace? What qualities did the Babylonians look for when selecting candidates from among the Hebrews for potential loyal service? Why did the king change their names?

REFLECT: What's the most difficult situation you've ever had to face? How did you handle it? What did it reveal about your faith? What tests or trials are you facing right now? Are you clinging to God and continuing to faithfully live as He commands? Or are you compromising? Grade yourself and explain why you gave yourself that grade? How does the world try to rename you, and mold you into its image?

The same pattern employed by Satan to draw Dani'el away from God is still used today.

The fate of **Dani'el** and **his friends** being dragged off into exile was not merely a fulfillment of the general covenantal curse of the Torah (see the commentary on **Leviticus**, to see link click [Ey](#) -Discipline for Disobedience: **the sixth stage - exile**). It was also the specific fulfillment of the prophecy of **Isaiah**. **Judah's king Hezekiah** had received **emissaries** and **a gift** from **Merodach-Baladan, king of Babylon**. In response, **Hezekiah** showed **them** everything that was of value in **his storehouses** and all of **his treasures (Second Kings 20:13)**. For this, **he** was severely condemned by **the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 39:5-6)**.

Why was **ADONAI** so upset with **Hezekiah**? What was the problem with giving **the emissaries** from **Babylon** a royal tour of the palace? The answer is that in the world of ancient diplomacy, nothing came free. When **Merodach-Baladan** sent **emissaries** and **a gift** to **Hezekiah**, it wasn't merely a friendly gesture of goodwill on **his** recovery from sickness. Rather, **he** was soliciting **Hezekiah's** help and

support in **his** ongoing struggle against **Assyria**. So, when **Hezekiah** showed **his emissaries** around, **he** was responding to **the king of Babylon's** overtures of alliance, seeking to show **him** that **he** had the resources to be a useful ally against **Assyria**. In spite of **ADONAI's** miraculous deliverance of **Jerusalem** from the surrounding armies of **Sennacherib** and **the Assyrians** (see the commentary on **Isaiah Gw - Then the Angel of the LORD Put to Death a Hundred and Eighty-Five Thousand Men in the Assyrian Camp**), **Hezekiah** was looking to a political means for solving the **Assyrian** problem through an alliance with **Babylon**. Politics had replaced trust in **God**.

Therefore, far from assuring the security of **Hezekiah's descendants**, the foolish alliance with **Babylon** would only result in some of **his own offspring** being shipped off to become **eunuchs in the palace of the Babylonian king**. **God's** judgment upon **the line of Hezekiah** had been faithfully carried out, just as **Isaiah** had said: **And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon (Isaiah 39:7)**. It was this specific word of judgment that was fulfilled in the opening verses of the book of **Dani'el**.¹⁶



The deportation (1:1-2): In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah (see the commentary **Jeremiah Ca - Jehoiakim Ruled For 11 Years from 609/608 to 598 BC**), **Nebuchadnezzar** king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it (1:1). **The third year**, 606-605 BC, the third year by **Babylonian** dating, which did not count a king's initial (accession) year, but began with the following year; so **the third year** is in harmony with the same year labeled as "fourth" by the Judean system of dating.¹⁷

And ADONAI delivered (Hebrew: *nathan*, meaning *to give*) **Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels from the Temple of**

God. These he carried off to the temple of his god Marduk in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god side by side with other ornaments used for idol worship (1:2). An analogy is the placement of **the Ark of God** in **the temple** of **Dagon** after **the Philistines** defeated **the Israelites** (see the commentary on **the Life of King Sha'ul Bf - The Ark at Ashdod**). To **the Philistines**, it appeared that **Dagon** had defeated **YHVH**, but **they** soon realized that wasn't the case and quickly changed **their** minds. However, the reality of the situation would take much longer to develop in **Babylon**. The next time we see these **vessels** in the hands of drunken **Babylonians**, it will be on the eve of **their** destruction (see **Cq - Dani'el Interpreted the Handwriting on the Wall**).¹⁸

More often than not, the items carried off were statues of idols. However, when **the Babylonians** entered **the Temple** in **Jerusalem**, there were no idols to be found. **YHVH** was the invisible **God** who did not require that images of **Him** be made by human hands. In fact **He** prohibited that exact thing (**Exodus 20:4**). Therefore, **the Babylonians** had to carry off **vessels** of brass, gold, and silver. A parallel passage to **verse 2** is **Second Kings 24:1-2**, which states: **During Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded the land, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. But then he turned against Nebuchadnezzar and rebelled. ADONAI sent Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite and Ammonite raiders against him to destroy Judah, in accordance with the word of ADONAI proclaimed by His servants the prophets.**

But when **Nebuchadnezzar** carried off **the Temple vessels**, he unwittingly sowed the seeds of **Babylon's** destruction. **His** grandson **Belshazzar** would use those holy **vessels** as an act of worship before **the Babylonian** gods. When he did so, **God** decreed the fall of **Babylon** (see **Co - The Great Banquet of Belshazzar and the Fall of Babylon**). After conquering the **Babylonian** Empire, **Cyrus the Great** returned **the Temple** treasures to **Jerusalem** (**Ezra 1:7-11** and **6:5**).¹⁹

Isolation (1:3): Then the king ordered **Ashpenaz**, the master of the **eunuchs** (Hebrew: *saris*, meaning *a man who has been castrated, often employed in royal courts as a trusted official*), to bring into the king's service some of **the sons of Isra'el**. Therefore, whoever **Ashpenaz** chose would be castrated. **Nebuchadnezzar** demanded that the chosen **come from the royal family and the nobility (1:3)**. The royal family was **the House of David**, and **Dani'el** was a member of that dynasty. In this context, it is important to note that throughout the book, **Dani'el** is consistently distinguished from **his three friends**, who were probably from **the nobility of Isra'el**. They were isolated from the influences that

would mold **their** lives and characters in the ways of **ADONAI**. In **Babylon they** were separated from the regular public worship of **God**, the teaching of the Torah, from the fellowship and wisdom of the people of **God**, and from the daily illustration of what it meant to be a citizen of **Jerusalem**. Separated from the furnace of godliness, **Nebuchadnezzar** anticipated that the last dying embers of true faithfulness to **the LORD** would die out.

Indoctrination (1:4): Those **young men** (Hebrew: *yeledim*, referring to **young men** between the ages of fifteen to twenty) were superior in every way, “the best and the brightest,” prepared by **God** for a strategic ministry far from home. **They** were **without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning** (Hebrew: *sepher*, meaning *massive, document, writing, or a book*), **well informed, quick to understand, qualified, and expected to serve in the king's palace. Their** reprogramming included studies in **the language and literature of the Babylonians**, who prided itself as the “city of wisdom” (1:4). That might seem harmless enough. After all, there is surely nothing wrong with **God's people** studying foreign literature. The aim, of course, was not merely academic.²⁰ **Babylon** was the center of idolatry. In the case of **Dani'el** and **his friends**, the term *sepher* encompassed both science and the occult. As a result, **they** were required to study **Babylonian** theology. **Those young men** from **Jerusalem's** court needed to be secure in **their** knowledge of **YHVH** to be able to study this **literature** objectively without allowing it to undermine their faith. Evidently the work of **Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk** had not been in vain.²¹

Compromise (1:5): The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. This would have been a luxurious manner of living for these **Hebrew young men**, quite in contrast to what **they** had been accustomed to, and to the extremely plain diet that **Dani'el** requested for **himself** and **his companions** (see [Al - Dani'el's Devotion to God](#)).²² **They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service (1:5).** **Young men** would generally be more teachable and would be in a position to give more years of fruitful service to **the king**. The good life that **Dani'el** was offered was intended by **the king** to wean **him** away from the hard life to which **God** had called **him**. It would encourage **him** to focus on **himself** and on a life of enjoyment. No mention is made of **Dani'el** having to agree with **Babylonian** theology or to argue against the teachings of the Torah. The attack was far more subtle than that, and therefore, potentially far more lethal. Somebody in

Nebuchadnezzar's palace knew enough about the human heart to see that most men can be bought, and that in good times, comfort, self-esteem, and a position in society are usually a sufficient price for a soul.²³

Confusion (1:6-7): The fourth element in the process of weaning those **young men** from the truth of the Torah was the changing of **their** names. **Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Dani'el, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (1:6). The chief official gave them new names: to Dani'el** (meaning, *God is my Judge*), **the name Belteshazzar** (meaning, *Bel Protect the King*); **to Hananiah** (meaning, *beloved of the LORD*), **the new name Shadrach** (meaning *the command of Aku, another Babylonian god*); **to Mishael** (meaning, *who is as God*), **the new name Meshach** (meaning, *who is what Aky is*); **and to Azariah** (meaning, *ADONAI is my help*), **the new name Abednego** (meaning, *the servant of Nego, the god of wisdom*) **(1:7)**. This tactic illustrates an important principle for us: The way we think - about **God**, ourselves, others, and the world, determines the way we live. If **Nebuchadnezzar** could only change those **young men** to *think* like **Babylonians**, then **they** would *live* like **Babylonians**. That principle is still true today. The secret of faithfully living for **ADONAI** lies in the way we *think*. We are not to be conformed to **the world (First John 2:15-16)**, but to have our lives transformed by the renewing of our minds (see the commentary on **Romans Bq - The Background of the Messianic Mikveh: Five ways to win the battle of the mind**).

The same pattern employed by **the Adversary** to draw **Dani'el** away from **YHVH** is employed all around us today: **isolation** from **God's** influence to produce holiness in our lives; **indoctrination** with the worldly ways of thinking; **compromise** with the riches of this world instead of commitment to **God**, and **confusion** about our real identity and purpose in life. Yes, too many of us would have found quite excellent reasons for compromise in **Nebuchadnezzar's** court. After all, "How can we sing **the Lord's** song in a foreign land?"²⁴

Babylon and **Jerusalem** represent the **two cities, two kingdoms**, to which men and women belong. **They** symbolize the two loyalties of which the Bible speaks in several word pictures: **two gates** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Dw - The Narrow and Wide Gates**), and **two masters** (see **The Life of Christ Dr - Store Up Treasures in Heaven**). How can we learn from these **two kingdoms** and maintain our dual identity **of being in the world but not of the world (John 17:16)**? Surely one way is by taking every opportunity that we can to celebrate our heavenly citizenship with others. It is a well-observed phenomenon that exiles are

often more profoundly patriotic than those who have never left the mother country. St. Patrick's Day is certainly celebrated with more enthusiasm in Boston than it ever is in Dublin, and the Fourth of July means more to Americans abroad than it does at home. Exiles desire and need opportunities to celebrate and preserve their true identity. So, as citizens of heaven, we need to take every opportunity to gather with our fellow exiles, so that we can remind one another of "home." We cannot preserve our heavenly identity on our own: left to ourselves, the pressure of the world will inevitably crush us into its mold. But together we can help one another to keep the memory of heaven strong.²⁵

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for going everywhere with me. **You** are **the God of Isra'el**, but **You** are also **the Sovereign Ruler** over all the world (**Dani'el 7:27**). What a comfort it is for me to know that **You** are everywhere in the world, at the same time. There is nowhere I can go and be alone, for **God Himself has said, "I will never leave you or abandon you."** **You** were with **Dani'el** and **his friends** in **Babylon** and **You** are with me wherever I go. How wonderful that **You never sleep nor slumber (Psalms 121:4)**. **You** never leave me to go and do something else. **Your** power is right there to help, protect and to guide me. In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*