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Dani’el’s Devotion to God
1: 8-16

Dani’el’s devotion to God DIG: Why did Dani’el ask his Babylonian captors for a vegetarian diet? What happened as a result? Why do you think this incident was included in inspires Scripture? Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep your heart with all diligence?” How does this apply to what Dani’el and his friends faced?

REFLECT: Dani’el proposed in his heart not to defile himself. In other words, he resolved not to compromise his principles. Dani’el and his friends determined which parts of the Babylonian culture they could live with, and which parts they could resist. How do you make that determination in your own culture?

How were Dani’el and his friends to live without being swallowed up by Babylonian culture?

Dani’el and **his three friends** had to decide how **they** were willing to adjust to living in an environment unsympathetic to their religious convictions. Like everyone caught in a cross-cultural change, **they** had to think through all the principles involved in **their** actions, and decide how **they** were going to act.[26]



The request (1:8): Dani’el and **his three friends** were under intense pressure.

Their principles were under attack. No doubt there were others, Jerusalem-born like **themselves**, who laughed at **their** sensitivities. What harm would good **food** do **them**? **Dani'el** had accepted **his Babylonian** schooling and a new name, but drew a line in the sand regarding **food** supplied from the **royal table**. **The king's food** was of the best quality anywhere in the nation; yet, **it** did not meet the standards of the Torah. Notice also that **Dani'el** didn't leave **his** actions to a spur-of-the-moment response. **So Dani'el purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked Ashpenaz, master of the eunuchs (1:3), for permission not to defile himself this way. He** made a decision for **God**.

What made **food** kosher for **Jews** was both **its** origin and **its** preparation. **The royal food** might have included meat that was not kosher (see the commentary on **Leviticus, to see link click Bl – Ritually Clean and Unclean Beasts**). It may also have included kosher meat that was prepared in such a way that would have **defiled** it. For example, the Torah required that **the fat (Leviticus 7:22-25)** and **the blood (Leviticus 7:26-27, 17:10-13)** be removed. In addition, the Torah prohibited eating meat dedicated to false **gods (Exodus 34:15; Numbers 25:2)**. The second problem was **drinking the king's wine**. The Torah did not prohibit **drinking wine**. In **Babylon**, however, it was part of the ritual of **idol** worship **(5:1-4)**. First Century believers faced a similar dilemma (see the commentary on **First Corinthians Bt – Using Freedom for God's Glory**).[27] **Drinking wine** from **the king's table** would have **defiled Dani'el**.

Not only that, but by eastern standards, to share a meal was to commit oneself to friendship . . . and they took it very seriously **(Gen 31:54; Ex 24:11; Neh 8:9-12)**. That meant that if you ate at **the king's table**, you were obligated to be loyal to **the king**. It would seem that, aside from the biblical reasons above, **Dani'el** rejected this symbol of dependance on **the king** because **he** wanted to be free to fulfill **his** primary loyalty to **ADONAI**.

The request granted (1:9-14): So, for all those reasons, **Dani'el** requested permission from **Ashpenaz** to be excused from **the king's table**. **But he told Dani'el, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you" (1:10).** So, **Ashpenaz** refused to give permission. **His** reluctance was understandable if **Dani'el's** motive was to remain free from commitment to **the king**. **Nebuchadnezzar** would have certainly interpreted the motive as treasonable and would have held **Ashpenaz** responsible.

But like any royal court, **the king's** household had different levels of power and authority. **Ashpenaz** was the most senior official of **Nebuchadnezzar's eunuchs** and reported directly to **him**. **Stewards** were appointed under **him** to care for **the Jewish captives**. **Now God had caused** (Hebrew: *nathan*, meaning *to give*) **the steward to show chesed** (see **Ruth Af – The Concept of Chesed**) **and mercy to Dani'el (1:9).**[28] This was an explicit answer to **King Solomon's** prayer at the dedication of **the Temple**. On that occasion, **Solomon** prayed that when **the Israelites** ended up in exile, as **they** would surely do because of **their** sinfulness, then **Ha'Shem** would cause **their** captors to show **them mercy** (see the commentary on **the Life of Solomon Bn – Solomon's Prayer of Intercession**). And **mercy** was exactly what **the steward** showed to **Dani'el** and **his three friends**.[29]

So after **his** initial request to be excused from **the king's table** was rejected, **Dani'el** tried another approach. **A steward** served as **Dani'el's** immediate supervisor. Assigned by **Ashpenaz**, **he** was personally responsible for providing **food** and **drink** to **Dani'el** and **his friends**. However, unlike **Ashpenaz**, **he** did not report directly to **Nebuchadnezzar** and was, therefore, more willing to attempt a compromise. **Dani'el then said to the steward, "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see."** After **ten days**, **the steward** was to compare the appearance of **Dani'el** and **his friends** with the other young Jewish men who continued eating the proposed **Babylonian** diet. Then **he** could make a decision. **So the steward agreed to this and tested them for ten days (1:11-14).**[30]

The result (1:15-16): At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. However, this positive result cannot be attributed to **Dani'el's** proposed **vegetarian** diet, but to the intervention of **God. Vegetables** are certainly healthy, but this verse does not prove that a **vegetarian** diet is preferable to one that includes meat and dairy. **Vegetarians** tend to lose weight on **their** diets, not gain weight. Hence, the verse makes another point: Obedience is better than disobedience. Had **Dani'el** and **his friends** eaten from **the king's table**, **they** would have broken the mitzvot of the Torah. **So the steward took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables and water instead.** Since the **ten-day** test was successful, **the steward** agreed

with **Dani'el's** suggestion to maintain the **vegetarian** diet throughout **the three years of training (1:5a)**.[31] This is not a diet for us today; **Dani'el** and **his three friends** did not prosper because of **the food**, **they** prospered in spite of **the food**.

Why did **Dani'el** propose such a test to begin with? **He** had good reason to believe that **ADONAI** would reward **their** faithfulness because the issue at stake was **God's** Kingdom and glory. Living for **His** glory produces a spirit of humble confidence that **He** will act. Such confidence marked the heroes of faith in the TaNaKh **(Hebrews 11:1-31)**, and marks men and women of faith even to this day. Those whose hearts are set on self-glory rather than on **God's** glory can never have any confidence that their heart's desire will be granted. On the other hand, those who strive to align their **purposes** with **His** will never be disappointed.

We need such confidence not only for its own sake, but because it is a necessary function of **God's** power. One of the many stories about Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892), the great Victorian preacher in London, illustrates this rather well. On one occasion a young preacher was lamenting to him about how few people seemed to be converted under his preaching. "What?" said Spurgeon, "You don't expect people to be converted every time you preach, do you?" Taken aback that he might have appeared presumptuous to the great Spurgeon, the young preacher replied, "No, of course not." To which Spurgeon responded, "Perhaps, then, that is the very reason you have seen so few converted."

Is it possible to turn the idea of the confidence of faith into a kind of magic trick: If only you convince yourself that something is going to happen, then it will happen? That is far from the spirit that characterized either **Dani'el** or Spurgeon. The confidence of faith is an assurance based on what **God** has the power to perform and what **He** has promised to do. If we know what **He** has promised to do, and trust in **His** power to do it, we can expect that **He** will hear, and answer, the prayers of our hearts in **His** timing.[32]

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** that **You** always hear my prayers. **ADONAI will hear when I call to Him (Psalms 4:3c).** Praise **You** also for so wisely and tenderly caring for me. **You** know the future and what is the best, so you always answer in the wisest and best way – sometimes "Yes," sometimes No, and sometimes "Wait." **Dani'el** requested permission from **Ashpenaz** to be excused from **the king's table**, but **he** was told No. When **Dani'el** tried another approach, asking for a test for **Dani'el and his friends** in **their** appearance after a vegan diet for ten days, he was told "Yes." When **David** prayed for **Your** help and*

*protection from **Sha'ul**, **You** said both "Yes" protection for now but "Wait" till later, which turned out to be several years, until the problem was completely solved.*

***You** do not give in to what **Your** children prays for when we ask, prompted by selfish **motives**. **You crave and have not. . . You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives so you may spend it on your passions (James 4:2a, c-3). Dani'el** and **David** were able to live with positive attitudes because, even in the midst of trials and problems, **they** had already resolved to set their hearts on **Your** almighty character before the problem even came up. **Dani'el resolved not to defile himself (Daniel 1:8)** and **David** wrote **My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast. I will sing, yes, I will make music (Psalms 57:7)**. **Dani'el and his friends** and **David** were committed to following **You**, no matter what the cost, for **they** knew that **You** are the one who holds the future! It is wise to live trusting and following **You, Abba Father**, for **You** are almighty and all-loving and hold the future in the palm of **Your** hand! In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **Him** who **sits at Your right hand**. Amen*