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Nebuchadnezzar's Decree to Worship the Statue 3: 1-7

Nebuchadnezzar's decree to worship the statue DIG: Why was Dani'el absent during this time? Where was the statue built, why was that important? What two goals did king Nebuchadnezzar have in mind when he built his statue of gold? In a similar way, how do the dictators of today use the same tactics? The king used music to get the people to worship the statue. How is it used today to build our allegiances to someone?

REFLECT: What might be a golden statue in your life? How does today's culture place the same kind of pressure on each one of us to put ADONAI in second place? Is there an area of your life where you are putting God in second place? What do you think made the difference between the Jews who fell down and worshipped the statue and those who didn't? How do you use music to worship the Lord?

Nebuchadnezzar's statue of gold was designed to establish a lasting testimony to his glory,
and to provide a unifying focus for his kingdom.

After conquering **Jerusalem** (see the commentary on **Jeremiah, to see link click Gb – The Destruction of Solomon's Temple on Tisha B'Av in 586 BC**), **Nebuchadnezzar** had set up **a golden statue on the plain of Dura**. That victory made **him** believe that **he** was supreme in **his** power and could defy **the God** whose **City** and **Temple he** had destroyed. We don't know how much time elapsed between the night **Nebuchadnezzar dreamt** about the metallic **statue** in **Chapter 2**, and the day **he** commanded **the people** to **fall down** before **the golden statue** that **he** had made. But it seems logical that **the statue** was constructed as a test of loyalty to **Nebuchadnezzar** some time at the beginning of **his** reign.

Dani'el was absent on this occasion, but it seems **his** absence is explained in **2:49**, which states: **Moreover, at Dani'el's request, the king appointed Shadrach,**

Meshach and Abednego to serve under **Dani'el** in **the province of Babylon, while Dani'el himself remained at the royal court (2:49).** With **the king** and other important officials absent, someone was needed to govern in **the city**. **His** absence may also have been due to other factors, but it is certain that **Dani'el** would never have **bowed down** to **the statue**.[116]



The heart of the king (3:1-3): King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold representing **himself, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide (that is, about 90 feet high and 9 feet wide or about 27 meters high and 2.7 meters wide), and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon (3:1).** The location of **the statue** was significant, for **the Babylonian plain** was also the location for building **the Tower of Babel** (see the commentary on **Genesis Dm – Let Us Build a City and Make a Name for Ourselves**). **The Tower of Babel** had a twofold function in the mind of its builders: it was a defiant attempt to make a name for the people who built it as a lasting legacy to their glory, and also to prevent the people from being scattered throughout the earth, as **God** had declared **(Gen 11:4)**. **The king's statue** had the same two goals in mind: **it** was designed to establish a lasting testimony to **his** glory and to provide a unifying focus for **his** kingdom. This is why **he summoned** not merely the local dignitaries, but all the leading officials from throughout the empire – **the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to stand before the statue** for **its dedication (3:2-3).**[117]

The hearts of the people (3:4-7): Then a herald loudly proclaimed, "Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre,

harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that Nebuchadnezzar has set up" (3:4-5). All this was based upon the pagan model of that day: the right of the state was also the law of the state. Thus, to worship the law of the state was to submit one's self to that state. But if they were a conquered people, they were admitting that the conquering god was more powerful than their own national god. And by worshiping the conquering god, they were pledging allegiance to the state of that god. Now if you were polytheistic, as most of the conquered peoples were, this would not violate your conscience. You wouldn't be rejecting your national god; it was merely a statement of loyalty, nothing more.

Centuries later we have a modern example of this pagan concept in the Nazi Germany. On July 29, 1936, the head of the Hitler Youth, Baldur von Schirach, made a speech in which he said. "One cannot be a good German and, at the same time, deny **God**. But a declaration of faith in eternal Germany is, at the same time, a declaration of faith in the eternal **God**." In other words, "If we act as true Germans, we act according to the laws of **God**. Whoever serves Adolph Hitler serves Germany, and whoever serves Germany serves **God**."[118]

Later, Paul Schneider stood lined up with the other prisoners at Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany. It was April 20, 1938, Hitler's forty-ninth birthday and, in tribute, the prisoners were ordered to remove their berets and honor the Nazi swastika flag. At once all whipped off their headgear. But the guards observed one man who would not "bow" to the swastika . . . Paul Schneider. They beat him with twenty-five lashes with an ox-hide whip. But that was only the first time he was beaten because he refused to **worship the idol**.[119]

When we put it in those terms, it becomes evident that our culture places the same pressure on each one of us to put our **God** in second place, although in more subtle ways. We too find ourselves constantly pressed to keep our beliefs private, and therefore secondary. We are told that the public sphere must be kept untainted by any religion, for any other opinion threatens the false unifying dogma of the separation of church and state. We can believe what we want, no problem. However, we are strongly discouraged from talking about it, or trying to influence the beliefs of others. In our public schools, any hypothesis may be taught in a science class, except the idea that the universe shows the evidence of intelligent design. Similarly, students are told that they can read any book they want in study hall, so long as it's not the Bible. Thankfully, in our society, we are not likely to get shot or thrown into a fiery furnace for being the odd one out, and we still have a

remarkable amount of freedom, but we still feel other kinds of pressures to conform and put **ADONAI** in second place.[120]

The herald continued: **Whoever does not fall down and worship the idol will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace (Dani'el 3:6). It was used for smelting ore, with a vertical shaft and an opening at the bottom for extracting the metal. It was usually built by a cliff so you approached the top from the cliff, or there would be an incline leading up to the top. The Persians are said to have had similar ovens for the execution of criminals.** Such cruel punishment was common in **Babylonia** and Assyria **(Jeremiah 29:22)**. **Dani'el's** three friends had a choice, **fall down** before **the image** or **fall down into the blazing furnace. The rabbis teach that this was a deliberate attempt to lead the Jews astray, and so cause them to forfeit God's favor and their right to the promises of YHVH.**

But this was more than a political rally, it was a religious service complete with **music**, and it called for total commitment on the part of **the worshippers**. **Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up (3:7).** Notice that the word **worship** is used ten times in this chapter. **Nebuchadnezzar** used instrumental **music** because it could stir **the people's** emotions and make it easier for **him** to manipulate **them** and win **their** submission and obedience. Throughout history, **music** and song have played an important role in strengthening nationalism, motivating conquest, and inspiring people to act. **Music** has the power to grip human thoughts and emotions that people can be transformed from being free agents into becoming mere puppets. Therefore, **music** can be a wonderful tool and treasure from **the Lord**, or it can be a destructive weapon from Satan.[121] When the **music** began, a sea of government officials **fell to the ground and worshiped the statue of gold** just as **they** had been commanded. However, three **men** stood alone (see **Bm – The Accusation Against the Jews**).

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, praise **You** that **Your** almighty power extends over life and death. **Yeshua said to her: I am the resurrection and the life! Whoever believes in Me, even if he dies, shall live (John 11:25). Dani'el's** three **friends** were convinced that **You** had the power to save **them**; but if not, it was more important for **them** to please **You** than to save **their** own lives. **If it is so,***

our God whom we serve is able to save us from the furnace of blazing fire and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. Yet even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image that you set up (3:17-18). ADONAI, *help me to love* ***You*** *as much as they did. Thank* ***You*** *for being such a wonderful, wise and loving* ***Father*** *that I can entrust my life to* ***You****. In* ***Messiah Yeshua’s*** *holy* ***Name*** *and power of* ***His*** *resurrection. Amen*