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Nebuchadnezzar's Decree Honoring the Jews and Their God
3: 28-30

Nebuchadnezzar's decree honoring the Jews and their God DIG: Why did the king reward Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego even though they defied him? What was the fate of all those who opposed them? Do you think this experience made him a believer? Why? Why not? What other reason might the king have had to reward them? Why did ADONAI include this story in the TaNaKh?

REFLECT: When did you know that the LORD was with you in the fiery furnace? When was the last time you "went along with the crowd" and regretted it? Are you willing to give up your life rather than serve or worship any god except ADONAI? How is this story of the Hebrews in the fiery furnace an encouragement to you today? Where is it the most difficult to maintain your identity as a believer?

This story is an encouragement in Dani'el's day, our day, and in the future.

Nebuchadnezzar and **his officers** had just been presented with irrefutable proof that **the God of Isra'el** was superior to all other gods. **They** had witnessed a miracle. Because **they** were present throughout the entire event, **they** were unable to claim that some trickery had been used. **They** had no choice but to accept the reality that **the God of Hananiah**, **Mishael**, and **Azariah** had accomplished something that the gods of Babylonia could never do.[146]

Then Nebuchadnezzar declared: **Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent the Angel of ADONAI** (**to see link click Bq – The Vindication of the Jews**) **and rescued His servants! They trusted in Him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God (3:28). The** pagan **king** expressed **his** administration for those **young men** because of **their**

willingness to defy **the king's** command and suffer a horrible death in order to remain true to **their God**. Although angered by **their** actions, **he** respected **their** commitment. Even in today's world, unbelievers may not understand or appreciate our convictions, but usually they respect those who are willing to take a stand for **ADONAI**.



Therefore, I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way. Such a command coming from **the king** is astounding, but one must consider the circumstances – **Nebuchadnezzar** had just witnessed a miracle. This decree may also have been an attempt to appease **the God of Isra'el**, for **the king** had mistreated **God's** followers and actually challenged **His** power. Thus, **Nebuchadnezzar** may have realized that **he** was in danger of divine retaliation. **Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego** were not only honored by **the king** but **they** were rewarded. **Then the king caused them to prosper in the province of Babylon (3:29-30).** Probably material rewards and respect among the people were involved as well as a job promotion. As a result, faithfulness in a horrible trial resulted in a great blessing for **the young Jewish men**.[147]

Why did **ADONAI** include this story in the TaNaKh? For the same reason **He** included the stories about faith experiences of **Abraham**, **Moses**, **Joshua**, **David**, and **the prophets**: to encourage **God's people** in our battle against **the world, the flesh, and the devil (First John 1:15-16** and **James 1:27). For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled (Romans 15:4).**

Encouragement in Dani'el's day: Things looked very bleak for **the Jewish people** during **the Babylon Captivity** (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Gu – Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule**). Their homeland was devastated, the Temple and Jerusalem were in ruins, and the people were either scattered among the Gentile nations or in bondage in **Babylon**. The situation looked hopeless. The prophets foresaw the day when the Jews would return to their Land and rebuild the Temple and the City; but first, they had to endure the shame and suffering of the captivity.

The experience of **Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah** must have greatly encouraged the faithful Jews and brought conviction to the Jews who were living with the pagan Babylonians. Those **three men** sent a strong message to **their people**: **ADONAI Elohim** was still on the throne. **He** hasn't abandoned us, and **He** will fulfill all the promises **He** has made to **His people**. **YHVH** promised to be with **them** in **their** furnace affliction if **they** would trust and obey **Him**. Later, when the believing remnant returned to the Land (see the commentary on **Ezra-Nehemiah Ak – Numbering the Exiles Who Returned Under Zerubbabel**), the account of the fiery furnace must have helped to sustain **them** in those years of difficulty and delay.

Encouragement in our day: Life may be fairly safe and comfortable where you and I live, but in many parts of the world, God's people are paying a high price to maintain their testimony and their separation from the world. Day after day, they hear the herald shouting, "Fall down before the golden statue! Everybody is doing it!" In his first letter, Peter warned that the "fiery trial" was about to begin, and surely they remembered what happened to the **three Hebrew men** in the days of **Nebuchadnezzar**. We are told that there were more martyrs for **Messiah** during the twentieth century than during all the preceding centuries (for more information on that topic, see Foxe's Book of Martyrs). Not all believers have been spared death in the furnace, but they haven't spared compromising their witness of **Messiah**, taking the easy way out.

As we move toward the end of the Dispensation of Grace (see the commentary on **Hebrews Bp – The Dispensation of Grace**), the furnace of opposition will be heated **seven times hotter**, and the pressure to conform will become stronger and stronger. It will take a great deal of grace, prayer, courage, and faith for **God's people** to **stand tall** for **Messiah** while others are bowing down to the gods of this world. The book of **Dani'el** is a great source of encouragement, because it reminds us that **ADONAI** cares for **His people** and **honors them** when **they** are true to

Him. **Those who honor Me, I will honor (First Samuel 2:30a).**

Encouragement for the future: The events in **Dani'el Chapter 3** remind us of the prophecies found in the book of **Revelation**, especially **Chapters 13** and **14**. Those who were left behind at **the Rapture** (see the commentary on **Revelation By – The Rapture of the Church**) will still have the opportunity to be saved, but they will have to spend some time in the furnace. As believers, we know that **we are not appointed to suffer wrath (First Thessalonians 5:9a)**, and will be in heaven with **the Lord** during the Great Tribulation because **Rosh Ha'Shanah** (see the commentary on **Numbers Fe – The Rosh ha'Shanah Offering**) comes before **Yom Kippur** (see **Numbers Ff – The Yom-Kippur Offering**).

However, for those left behind, one day there will arise a world leader like **Nebuchadnezzar** (see **Revelation Dn – All the Inhabitants of the Earth Worship the Beast**). The people who obey will be given a special **mark** on their **forehead** or their **hand**, and this **mark** will be the passport for staying alive and doing business (see **Revelation Dp – The Mark is the Name of the Beast**). Those who refuse to obey will be persecuted and many will be martyred (see **Revelation Cp – The Fifth Seal: I Saw Under the Altar Those Who Had Been Slain**). But **the Lord** will seal to **Himself 144,000 Jews** whom **the Beast** will not be able to touch (see **Revelation Dt – And They Sang a New Song Before the Throne**), and those who believe will come through the **Great Tribulation** to reign in **Messiah's Kingdom**.[148]