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Interpretation: The King's Danger
4: 19-26

Interpretation: The King's danger DIG: List the risks you think Dani'el may have faced in telling the king the bad news of the dream. Nebuchadnezzar was warned of God's coming judgment and yet did nothing about it. Why? What keeps the king (and us) from repenting even when we are confronted with our wrongdoing? Whom do you credit for your prosperity? What "tree" of yours has been cut down to size?

REFLECT: How does Dani'el's courage in speaking God's truth to the king relate to our responsibility to speak God's Word in your world? What kind of burden do you think it would be to know the future and all the hard times that you were going to have to face over the next seven years? If you knew what hardships you were going to face, how do you think you would approach God differently?

When we refuse to submit ourselves to God as creatures made in His image,
we are in grave danger of descending to the level of animals.

Dani'el's reluctance (4:19): After hearing the description of **Nebuchadnezzar's dream** (**to see link click Bu – Agitation: The King's Dream**), **Dani'el (also called Belteshazzar),** visibly shaken, **was speechless for a moment and his thoughts terrified him.** When **Dani'el** received **God's** interpretation he was **terrified** because **he** saw what lay ahead for **the Babylonian monarch**. **So the king**, recognizing **Dani'el's** agitated state, said: **Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you,** essentially mitigates **Dani'el's** responsibility for the contents of the interpretation. Only at the insistence of **Nebuchadnezzar** did **Dani'el** finally open up. Tactfully trying to prepare **the king** for the bad news, **Dani'el** answered: **My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries (4:19)!** This was a typical Jewish curse. We get the impression that **Dani'el** had a great personal concern for **Nebuchadnezzar**, and as **they** had worked together in the affairs of **Babylon**, **he** had sought to

introduce **the king** to **the One True God.**

The meaning of the tree (4:20-22): **The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth, with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the wild animals, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds.** The description of **the tree reaching to the heavens (4:11)** reminds us once again of the attempt by the rebels of **the Tower of Babel** to **build a tower that reached to the heavens (Genesis 11:4a)**. And years before, **Dani'el** announced to **Nebuchadnezzar, "You are this head of gold"** (see **Ay – The First Empire: A Head of Gold**), and now **he** announced: **Your Majesty, you are that tree!** As the center of the **Babylonian** world empire, **the king** provided protection and sustenance to the people who lived in **Babylon's** vast boundaries. So far, it was good news, for **Nebuchadnezzar** would have been quite happy to see **himself** in the role of the cosmic **tree (Ezeki'el 31)**, the center and pivotal point of the entire universe. **You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth. ADONAI** had given **Nebuchadnezzar** authority over the entire known world as a divine grant; however, a grant that **the Babylonian king** never chose to exercise.

The meaning of the decree (4:23-26): Then came the bad news. As a result of **Nebuchadnezzar** taking credit for all these achievements, **he** was in great danger because **his** heart had become proud. **The king** should have learned from **his** first **dream** that **the Most High God** ruled the kingdoms of men and no earthly throne was secure. **The Babylonian Kingdom** would end one day and **Ha'Shem** would raise up another kingdom to take **its** place. (**Az – The Second Empire: Chest and Arms of Silver**). In the episode of **the fiery furnace**, **Nebuchadnezzar** witnessed the miracle of **the three** faithful **Jewish men**, and **he** had decreed that **no one speak against their great God (3:29)**. But now **Nebuchadnezzar** was about to meet that **Most High God** and receive severe discipline from **His** hand.[160]



Your Majesty saw a holy one, an angelic **messenger, coming down from heaven and** saying: **Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump, bound with iron and bronze, in the grass of the field, while its roots remain in the ground (4:23a).** While much of what was said up to this point was a repetition of **Nebuchadnezzar's** own words **(4:13-15a)**, **Dani'el** then presented **the king** with a startling bit of new information. **Dani'el** reveals the reference of **the tree** symbol. It is **Nebuchadnezzar himself**; and **he** was also the subject of coming judgment. As **the tree** will be desolated, so **he** will be desolated. **The Divine Lumberjack** would bring **the tree** crashing to the ground, removing **it** from **its** place of influence and glory.[161]

But there was even worse news for **Nebuchadnezzar**. **Dani'el** continued: **This is the interpretation, Your Majesty, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king:** Just as the subject of **the dream** will be reduced to an **animal**-like state, so **you** would be reduced from **his** humanity and become **beast**-like. **You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox.** At night you will not come inside like a man, but remain in the open field. Thus, in the mornings **you** will **be drenched with the dew of heaven** (see **Bx – Humiliation: The King's Discipline**)**.** Years later, **Dani'el** would tell **Nebuchadnezzar's** grandson **Belshazzar** that **his** grandfather **lived with the wild donkeys (5:21)**. **Seven years will pass by for you until you repent, and acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes. The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that**

Heaven rules (4:23b-26).

As Warren Wiersbe relates in his commentary on *Daniel*, the grand lesson **ADONAI** wanted **the king** to learn – and the lesson we must learn today – is that **YHVH** alone is **sovereign** and will not permit mortals to usurp **His** throne or take credit for **His** works. We are but creatures, and **God** is **the Creator**; we are only **His** subjects, but **He** is **the King of kings**. When men and women refuse to submit themselves to **God** as creatures made in **His** image, they are in grave danger of descending to the level of animals. It's worth noting that **the LORD** used animals when **He** wanted to describe the great empires of history (see **Bz – Dani'el's Vision of Four Beasts**), and that the last great world dictator is called **the beast** (see the commentary on **Revelation Dn – All the Inhabitants of the Earth Worship the Beast**).

Men and women are made in the image of **ADONAI**, but when we leave **God** out of our lives and resist **His** will, we can descend to the level of animals. **Don't be like the horse or the mule**, warned **King David**, who was guilty of acting like both **(Psalm 32:9)**. Like **the** impressive **stallion**, **he** rushed into sin when **he** committed adultery with **Bathsheba** (see the commentary on **the Life of David Dc – David and Bathsheba**), and then like **a** stubborn **mule**, **he** delayed confessing **his** sins and repenting (see **the Life of David Dd – Nathan Rebukes David**). When **Messiah** confronted **Sha'ul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road**, **He** compared the pious rabbi to a stubborn **ox** when **He** said: **It's hard for you to kick against the goads (Acts 9:5** and **26:14).**[162]

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **Your** love and wisdom that graciously lives within all who believe in **You**. **Yeshua answered and said to him: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:23).** Because **You** desire to bless, **You** warn using trials and problems. Both **King Sha'ul and Sha'ul of Tarsus** had trials; but only **Sha'ul of Tarsus** obeyed you.*

*Like clay hardening in the sun, so **King Sha'ul's** heart remained proud and did not follow **Your** clear commands spoken by the prophet **Samuel**. On the one hand, **King Sha'ul's** actions were prideful and showed that **he** thought more about **himself** than about wanting to please **You**. **Sha'ul's** heart could have softened by the warmth of **Your** love, but **he** chose pride. On the other hand, **Sha'ul of Tarsus'** heart melted like wax before **You**. **He** had been a blasphemer, and a persecutor of **Your people (Acts 8:1-3)**. But after **You** struck **him** with blindness,*

his *heart softened to obedience.* ***His*** *change of heart meant that* ***You*** *could use* ***him as a choice instrument to carry Your Name before nations and kings and Bnei-Yisrael (Acts 9:15b).***

You *are always gracious, calling people to come back to* ***You*** *in* ***repentance****.* ***The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some consider slowness. Rather, He is being patient toward you – not wanting anyone to perish, but for all to come to repentance (Second Peter 3:9).*** *May we wisely seek* ***You*** *when trials and problems come upon us and remember that life on this earth will soon be over with its trials.* ***For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).*** *In* ***Messiah Yeshua's*** *holy* ***Name*** *and power of* ***His*** *resurrection. Amen*