–Save This Page as a PDF–

Dani'el in the Lion's Den
6: 16-24

Dani'el in the lion's den DIG: Describe the lion's den. What was king Darius' attitude as he sent Dani'el into the pit? What was he hoping for? Why was the stone placed over the mouth of the lion's den? How did the king react that night? How did he react the next day? How did the king treat the conspirators?

REFLECT: How have you been transformed by troubles? What parallels do you see between Dani'el's betrayal and Yeshua? Between Dani'el's vindication and Messiah's? When in your life have you experienced ADONAI in the midst of the "lion's den?" How has God alone been your rope out of the pit?

Dani'el's God was the only One who could deliver him.

The text implies that **the lion's den** was **a pit** with two entrances; a ramp down which **the lions** would enter, and an opening at the top by which food would normally be fed to **them**. **The lions** weren't fed often or great amounts of meat so that **their** appetites would be intense in case there was to be an execution. Living at the gnawing edge of hunger would have been fatal for anyone subjected to this method of execution. Whether **Dani'el** was thrown in from the top or walked in from the bottom, there would be no way out unless someone lowered and let down a rope. **Dani'el** would be required to stay in **the pit** till morning.[340]

Darius' decree (6:16-17): So Darius abandoned Dani'el to his fate in the lions' den. Humanly speaking, **Dani'el** was left alone to face **his fate**. Yet, **Darius'** last words to **Dani'el** point to a higher **Source** of help. **Darius** was obviously impressed by **Dani'el's** faithfulness to **his God**, and **the king** expressed a simple hope that this **God** would somehow rescue **his** friend. **The king said to Dani'el, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you" (6:16)!** The fact that **Darius** believed it was even possible that **Dani'el** could be saved indicates that **the** Jewish **prophet** must have been telling **the** Persian **king** of the

great miracles that **the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** had performed. **Dani'el's** testimony not only would have included **YHVH's** miracles in **Babylon**, but also the wonders from **Isra'el's** past, like the dividing of **the Sea of Reeds**.[341]

A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his administrators for added security**, so that Dani'el's situation might not be changed (6:17).** To make sure that no outside help was given to **Dani'el**, the mouth of **the lion's den** was covered with **a** large **stone**, which was then **sealed** with **the signet rings** of **the king** and **his** two **administrators**. That double **sealing** did not lock **the mouth of the den** as much as prevent tampering with it. If someone were to open **it** before the next morning, it would be noticed because **the seal** would be broken. This reminds us of **the stone** at our **Lord's** tomb that was sealed by the Roman authorities; and yet, **Yeshua** came out alive!

Dani'el's deliverance (6:18-23): This story contrasts with sharp irony the experience of **Dani'el** and **Darius** during the night. **Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him.** Tossing and turning all **night**, **he could not sleep (6:18).** The waiting was difficult for **Darius**. **He** spent the night **fasting** instead of **feasting**. No musical instruments were brought before **him**. **The king** had a bad night, not unlike **King Ahasuerus** experienced in the story of **Esther** (see the commentary on **Esther, to see link click Be – That Night the King Could Not Sleep**). **He** was waiting until morning to come so **he** could legally open **the lion's den**.

Darius' anxiety over **Dani'el's** fate can be seen that at **the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. When he came near the den, he called to Dani'el in an anguished voice, "Dani'el, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions" (6:19-20)?** When **the king** said those words, **he** was actually confessing that **Dani'el's God** was the living **God**, not an idol, and **He** had the power to deliver **His** faithful **servant**. It is clear that, contrary to all expectations, **Dani'el** actually spent a far more comfortable night in **the pit** than **Darius** did in **his** royal luxury. We can almost imagine **the prophet** leaning back on a warm, furry **lion** until **he** was interrupted by **Darius'** question.[342]



Dani'el answered: **May the king live forever! My God sent His angel, and He shut the mouths of the lions. Dani'el's** survival attested to **his** innocence. Ordeals were broadly known in the ancient Near East.[343] They took many forms, but perhaps the most well-known was the water ordeal. An individual suspected of a crime was thrown into a river. If they died, they were guilty. But if they survived, they were declared innocent and set free. The TaNaKh contains only one instance of ordeal (see **Numbers Az – The Suspected Adulteress**). The theology behind an ordeal is that **ADONAI** knows the heart in a way the human judges do not, and will make a righteous judgment. **Dani'el's** survival then, was **Ha'Shem's** judgment of **innocence** on **His servant**. **Dani'el** declared: **They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in His sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty (6:21-22).**[344]

What a stark contrast this provides! **King Darius** had at **his** disposal every pleasure that the ancient world had to offer, yet **he** couldn't enjoy any of them, while **Dani'el** had nothing except the presence of **his God**, and **His angel**, and yet **he** enjoyed a peaceful night's rest. This shows us that true peace does not come from possessions that we accumulate but from the presence and favor of **ADONAI** in our lives. What was meant to be a terrifying and deadly trial for **Dani'el** became a strengthening encounter with **the angel**. **God** was with **him** and preserved **him** safely through the ordeal. **His** fearsome lodging turned out to be **a den** with **an angel** rather than **a den of lions: the angel shut the mouths of the lions** and kept **Dani'el** safe.[345] **The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Dani'el out of the den. And when Dani'el was lifted up from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God (6:23).**

The conspirator's demise (6:24): **King Darius** came to realize that **the conspiracy** was directed as much against **himself** as it was against **Dani'el** (see **Dm – The Conspiracy of the Royal Administrators**). Relieved that **the God of Isra'el** had rescued **his** friend, **Darius** ordered the punishment of **the conspirators**. According to the common principle in the ancient Near East that anyone who made a false charge against someone else should be punished by receiving the same fate they had sought for their victim (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Do – Life for Life, Eye for Eye**). **The accusers** set a trap for **Dani'el**, but **they** were caught in **their** own trap – and not only **the accusers themselves**, but **their** families as well. **At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Dani'el were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children.** But the experience of **the conspirators** was exactly the opposite of **Dani'el's**. **Before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones (6:24).**

There are some liberal theologians who claim that **Dani'el** was saved by the fact that **the lions** were not hungry when **he** was lowered into **the den**. These are the same people who make excuses regarding the miracles of the Ten Plagues in Egypt, and try to explain away the worldwide **Flood** in the days of **Noah** (see the commentary on **Genesis Cj – The Waters Rose and the Ark Floated on the Surface of the Water**). But on average, male **lions** consume sixteen pounds of meat per day. If given the opportunity, even lionesses will eat up to fifteen percent of their body weight every day. They are notoriously gluttonous and will hunt even when they are not hungry. The description of the vicious attack on **the conspirators** and **their families** demonstrates that those **lions** were, indeed, ravenous. Hence the idea that **they** simply lacked the appetite is neither supported by scientific evidence nor by the account in **Dani'el**. **His** survival was a miracle, and it took divine intervention to make it happen.[346]

What was the difference in their fate? **God** was **the One** whose decision truly counted: **the Most High God** holds the power of life and death, not an earthly **king**. In saying: **the lions have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in God's sight, Dani'el** was simply living up to **his** name, which means *My God is the Judge*. **His** experience in **the lion's den** confirmed that basic truth. **YHVH** had judged **him** "not guilty" and so **he** emerged from **the lion's den** without a scratch. **God** had indeed answered **his** earlier prayers and showed **him His** mercy. Equally, **the conspirators'** fate demonstrated that **they** had been judged and found guilty

by **God**, not just **the** earthly **king**, confirming the justice of **their** sentence of death.[347]

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for **Your** steadfast love**,** and for the peace that passes all understanding. **You keep in perfect peace one whose mind stays on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in ADONAI forever, for the Yah ADONAI is a Rock of ages (Isaiah 26:3-4).** I have no fear about the future and the unknown trials and troubles that it may bring. There is nothing outside of your control! **Your** mighty **angel** held back **the lions** in **the den** where **Dani’el** was thrown. Thank **You** for always caring for me and for using trials to polish and refine me to be purer and to shine more for **You**! **These trials are so that the true metal of your faith (far more valuable than gold, which perishes though refined by fire) may come to light in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Messiah Yeshua. (First Peter 1:7).** In **Messiah Yeshua’s** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*