

Nebuchadnezzar's Troubling Dream

Dani'el 2: 1-49

601 BC during the eleven-year reign of Jehoiakim

Soon after **Nebuchadnezzar's** accession to the throne **he** was plagued with a recurring **dream**. Since **Dani'el's** recalled and interpreted only a single **dream** (**Dani'el 2:24-26**), the use of the plural in this section (**dreams**) seems to indicate a recurrence of the same **dream**. **Nebuchadnezzar** evidently perceived this **dream** as having great significance, for **he** was troubled by the **dream**, and was so agitated that **he** was unable to sleep.

As we read **Dani'el 2**, the **Joseph** narrative, which closely parallels this chapter, comes quickly to mind (see the commentary on **Genesis Jq - Joseph Before Pharaoh**). In **Genesis** a pagan king, the Egyptian Pharaoh, had a deeply troubling dream concerning seven lean and seven fat cows. When the wise men of Egypt could not interpret the dream for him, his cupbearer (paralleling the role of **Arioch** in **Dani'el 2:14-16**) helps him discover one who could interpret his dream, who turned out to be the imprisoned **Joseph**. Through the help of **ADONAI**, **Yosef** revealed the interpretation of the dream to the pharaoh, resulting in **his** rise in status in the court of Egypt.

Consequently, we see that **Dani'el** is like **Joseph**, perhaps even better than **Yosef**, since **he** not only interpreted the dream but, with the help of **YHVH**, actually tells the contents of the dream to the Babylonian king. Both **Yosef** and **Dani'el** serve as models for godly behavior to **God's** people who live in a foreign culture.

Here, in the chapter, we see **Dani'el** as a model of Israelite wisdom (**verse 14**) and a model of Israelite piety, in **his** prayer (**verse 18**), **his** wisdom (**verse 19**), **his** praise (**verses 19-23**), **his** witness (**verses 27-28**), **his** self-effacement (**verse 30**), and **his** conviction (**verse 45**). The fruit of **his** work is not merely rewards and promotion (**verse 48**), but obedience and recognition of **his God** (**verses 46-47**).²²⁸

The LORD's knowledge of the future is particularly important to the people in exile and under some measure of oppression because it implies that **He** controls history. This reminds us of the overall theme of the book: **In spite of present circumstances, God is in control.**

A (2:1-13) So the king summoned the magi, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed (Dani'el 2:2a).

B (2:14-16) When Arioch, the chief of the executioners, had gone out to put to death the magi, Dani'el spoke to him with wisdom and tact (2:14).

C (2:17-23) During the night the mystery was revealed to Dani'el in a vision. Then Dani'el praised the God of heaven (Dani'el 2:19).

B (2:24) Then Dani'el went to Arioch, saying, "Do not execute the magi. Take me to the king, and I will interpret his dream for him (2:24)"

A (2:25-49) No magi, enchanter or magician can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries (2:27).