

The beginning of Daniel's story

"In the third year of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. Then the Lord God delivered into his hand Jehoiakim king of Judah, and certain articles of the house of God; and he took them with him into the land of Shinar, into the house of his god, and brought the articles into the temple treasury of his god. Then the king told Ashpenaz, the chief chamberlain, to bring from among the children of Israel, both of the royal seed and of the nobles, young men who had no blemish, handsome in appearance, sensible in every respect, learned and understanding, and able to serve in the royal palace and to learn the Chaldean writing and language. The king had a daily allowance fixed for them out of the king's allowance and his banquet wine, to educate them for three years, and some of them to serve the king. Among them were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, of the sons of Judah. And the chief butler gave them names, Belteshazzar to Daniel, and Shadrach to Hananiah, and Meshach to Mishael, and Abed-nego to Azariah. al Belteshazzar, and Shadrach to Hananiah, and Meshach to Mishael, and Abed-nego to Azariah." Da 1:1-7;

Young Daniel was taken, along with other Judean settlers, to the royal court to learn the Babylonian script and language. Along with three other young friends who had a strong faith in the God of Israel. Even among God's people, doomed to punishment, there were individuals who had faith and faithfulness to God and His law. Daniel and his friends, along with the prophet Jeremiah, are a testimony that in every age God has faithful individuals.

The king's command to take young men from a captive nation with the expectation that they could be used for the benefit of his empire is again a testimony to his wisdom and practicality. He did not mind their beliefs as long as they did not harm his interests.

Daniel's effort not to defile himself with food from unclean animals

Daniel was not afraid of incurring the king's wrath by refusing the food from his table, but he acted wisely and had God's blessing ("Then God caused Daniel to obtain mercy and compassion from the chief butler."). He made a deal with the king's steward, who was in charge of them, to make sure that a more modest but healthier diet would not harm them and he (the steward) would not incur the king's wrath. This was also confirmed.

Above all, Daniel wrote down his experience with God one more time: *“As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.”* Da 1,17;

This is obviously the main message of Daniel's opening narrative. The lesson and encouragement for us is that God will sustain us if we truly want to do His will. Importantly, Daniel and his three friends were not just concerned with their own benefit, but with following God's Word. They felt they were God's ambassadors even in a foreign land and acted accordingly. This is still true today.