

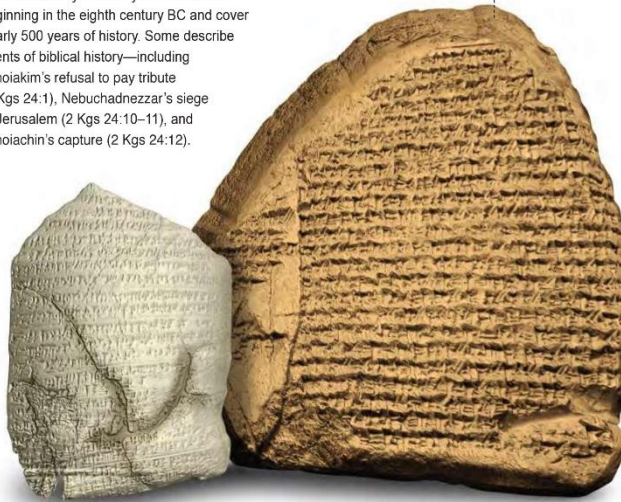
## Daniel Chapter 1

- A. The third year of Jehoiakim, 1:1
- B. The education of the captives established, 1:2–7
- C. Rejection of the king's food resolved, 1:8
  - D. Fear of a bad appearance, 1:9–10
  - E. Test proposed, 1:11–13
  - E' Test performed, 1:14
  - D' Fear of a bad appearance relieved, 1:15
- C' Rejection of the king's food continued, 1:16
- B' The education of the captives accomplished, 1:17–20
- A' The first year of Cyrus, 1:21

## The Babylonian Chronicles

The Babylonian Chronicles are a series of clay tablets inscribed with Babylonian history. They were written at different times, beginning around the sixth century BC. They narrate events beginning in the eighth century BC and cover nearly 500 years of history. Some describe events of biblical history—including Jehoiakim's refusal to pay tribute (2 Kgs 24:1), Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 24:10–11), and Jehoiachin's capture (2 Kgs 24:12).

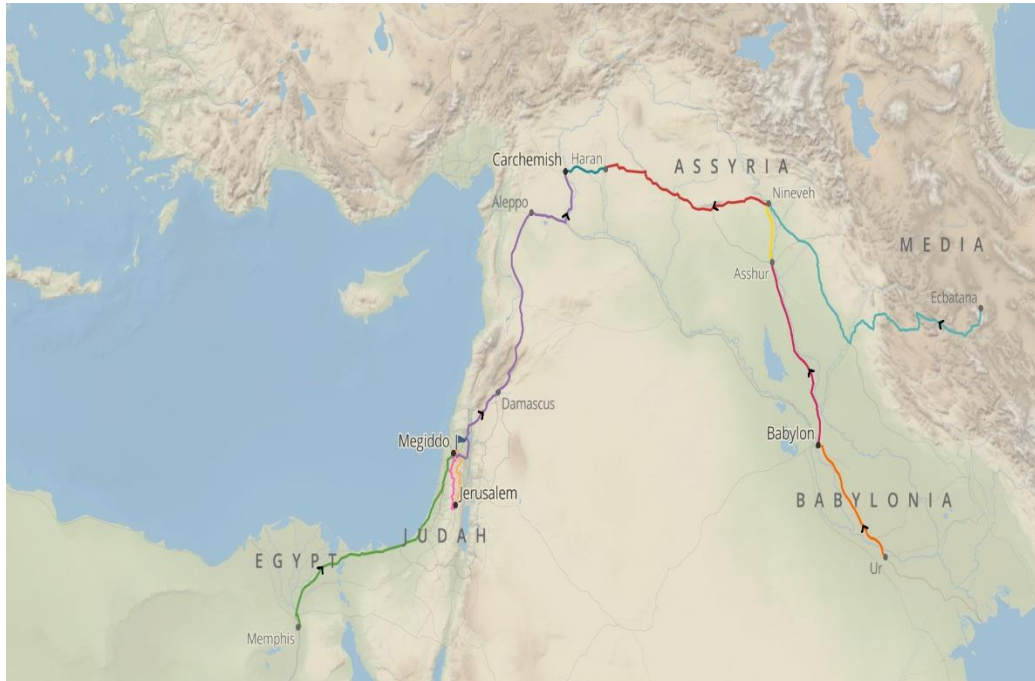
One of these—the Nabonidus Chronicle—describes the reign and downfall of the last king before Cyrus: Nabonidus. This tablet also mentions that Nabonidus had a regent, his son Bālsaru-usur—the Belshazzar of the book of Daniel. The banquet described in Daniel presumably took place during Belshazzar's regency, when Nabonidus was away from Babylon (Dan 5:1–4).



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## Historical introduction (1:1, 2)

“The book opens with two verses which connect with world history. With characteristic brevity reference is made to the first ominous encounter between Nebuchadnezzar and the Davidic king of Jerusalem. All that the prophets had spoken indicated that this would not be the last of such encounters. Though on this occasion Jerusalem and its king had to give in to the superior might of the Babylonians, worse was to come in 597, when Jehoiachin surrendered and was deported, together with the cream of the population, and in 587, when the final destruction and deportation occurred (2 Kgs 24:10–25:21).”<sup>1</sup>



**1:1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.**

“This 605 B.C. expedition was the *first* of three major invasions of Palestine by Nebuchadnezzar son of Nabopolassar, the king of Babylon. The *second* occurred in 597 B.C., when Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, was compelled by the Chaldeans to surrender Jerusalem (2 Kings 24:10–14) and go into captivity with all his princes and leaders, the flower of his army, and all the skilled craftsmen in his capital—including some of the priests, like young Ezekiel. The *third* and final captivity took place after the storming of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. ....”<sup>2</sup>

**In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim<sup>3</sup>....** “The third year of Jehoiakim was 606–605 B.C. .... At this point Nebuchadnezzar is still crown prince conducting campaigns

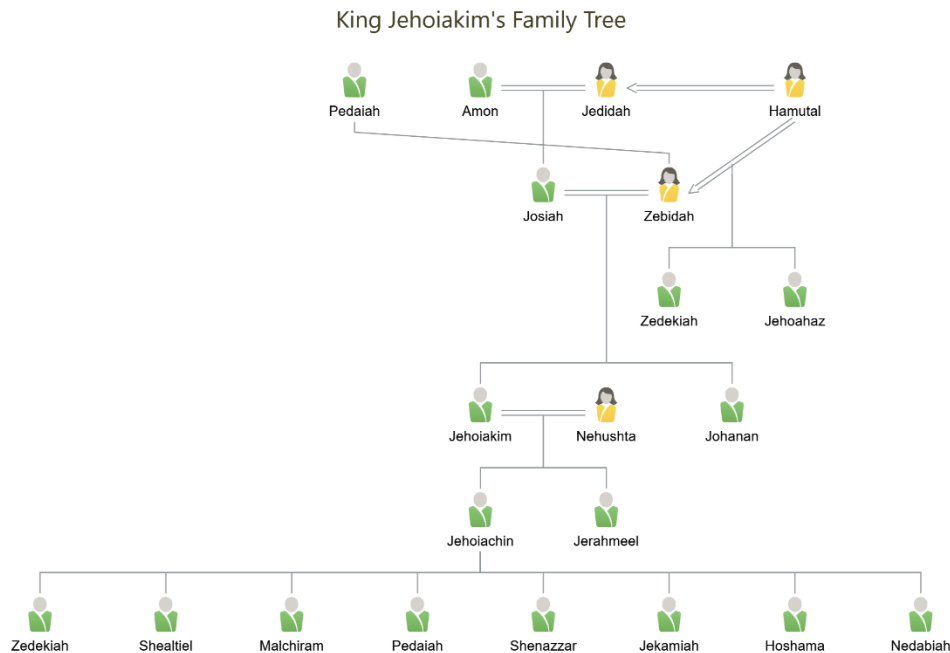
<sup>1</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 23, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 85.

<sup>2</sup> Gleason L. Archer Jr., “Daniel,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 31.

<sup>3</sup> “...on the reign of King Jehoiakim, see 2 Kgs 23:36–24:6 as well as 2 Chr 36:5–7.” René Péter-Contesse and John Ellington, *A Handbook on the Book of Daniel*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 9–10.

for his father, Nabopolassar, who dies in mid-August this same year. Early in the summer of 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, along with his allies, the Medes, conquered the last bastion of Assyrian strength at Carchemish. The Babylonians and the Medes then proceeded to divide up the Assyrian empire between them. Nebuchadnezzar staked a claim to Syria and set up his base at Riblah (see comment on 2 Kings 23:33), where he began to collect tribute from his new subjects. Judah fell within the territory allotted to the Babylonians, and Nebuchadnezzar was back in the area at the end of 604. There is no record of any direct siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians until 597, but the language in this verse is general enough to admit a number of possibilities.”<sup>4</sup>

**Jehoiakim** was a King of Judah who reigned 609/8–598/7 B.C.; he was the son of Josiah who was king from about 640 to 609 B.C.. He was put on the throne by the Egyptian pharaoh, Necho, as he attempted to exercise control over Syria-Palestine. “Jehoiakim was a wicked king, as is shown for example by his attitude toward Jeremiah’s prophecy (Jer. 36).”<sup>5</sup> “A son of the good king Josiah, Jehoiakim was 25 years old when he succeeded to the throne. He reigned 11 years in Jerusalem, from 609 B.C. to 598 B.C.”<sup>6</sup>



Daniel begins by telling us that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem ***in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim (1:1)*** which was three years after Pharaoh Necho II placed Jehoiakim on the throne in about 608 B.C. However, Jeremiah 25:1 says this took place, “***in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah....***” (Jeremiah 25:1, ESV).

<sup>4</sup> Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 1:2.

<sup>5</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 35.

<sup>6</sup> Ronald F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce, and R. K. Harrison, Thomas Nelson Publishers, eds., *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1995).

So, did this occur in the third year of Jehoiakim or the fourth? The answer is simple: there were “two systems of dating current in the ancient Near Eastern world, both of which can be found in the Old Testament. These passages are easily harmonized by assuming that Jeremiah utilized the Judaeen method of chronological reckoning, which counts the first year of a king’s reign as the first year, and that Daniel used the Babylonian system, which counts the first year as an “accession year.”<sup>7</sup> By the time Daniel wrote this, as would be expected, he was using the Babylonian system, while Jeremiah was using the system common to Egypt and Judah. Therefore, both refer to the same year.

Another problem that critics like to address (create) is that Nebuchadnezzar is called **king** here in his attack on Jehoiakim but, at this time, he was but crown prince. He would be king within weeks, however, for his father Nabopolassar will soon die. But as Daniel writes this, Nebuchadnezzar is king.

**Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon....** “Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 605–562 B.C.) was the second ruler of the Chaldean kingdom centered at Babylon that ruled the ancient Near East for nearly a century. He was the son of Nabopolassar, a Chaldean who declared independence from Assyria in 626 B.C. In his forty-three-year reign, Nebuchadnezzar pacified Egypt (though he was unsuccessful in conquering it) and literally rebuilt Babylon. In fact, most of the city of Babylon that has been uncovered by modern excavators dates from Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. Thus the Chaldean kingdom was primarily his creation, and it crumbled only a generation after his death.”<sup>8</sup>

**came to Jerusalem and besieged it.** “Nebuchadnezzar commanded the Babylonian army that defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish in the summer of 605 B.C. Soon afterward he returned to Babylon because of his father’s death and was crowned king there on September 6/7. He then rejoined the army and campaigned in Hattu (approximately modern Syria–Lebanon). Jehoiakim’s third year could have run into October 605, when Nebuchadnezzar probably was back with the army.”<sup>9</sup>

### The Last Kings of Judah

Josiah	641–609 B.C.	Killed in war with Egypt at Megiddo
Jehoahaz	609 B.C.	Taken prisoner to Egypt
Jehoiakim	609–598 B.C.	New king in Jerusalem
Jehoiachin	598–597 B.C.	After 3 months was taken captive to Babylon

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<sup>7</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 44.

<sup>8</sup> Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 1:1.

<sup>9</sup> John H Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 526.

Zedekiah 597–586 B.C.<sup>10</sup> King at the destruction of Judah

Soon after this he, or one of his generals, came to Jerusalem and laid siege to it. But the siege did not last long and Jehoiakim and the Jews decided it better to give in and send Jehoiakim into captivity than to endure this siege.

***1:2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god.***

***the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand....*** So, there was but a short siege at this time with Jehoiakim opening the doors Jerusalem and actually going into captivity—but soon being released.

**To recap:** “Jehoiakim began his reign in 608, as an appointee of Necho king of Egypt, who officially changed his name from Eliakim (“El will establish”) to Jehoiakim (“Yahweh will establish”). Necho then invested him as vassal king under Egyptian authority sometime in the fall of 609, after his brother Jehoahaz had ruled for the three months following the death of their father, Josiah.”<sup>11</sup>

As indicated in the Preface, “At the Battle of Megiddo, Josiah had made a vain attempt to halt the progress of Necho northward as he went to join his Assyrian allies at Haran.”<sup>12</sup> This failed and Josiah lost his life in the effort.

Jehoahaz 609 B.C., Josiah’s younger son was put on the throne in Israel by those that wanted to continue an anti-Egypt policy. However, Pharaoh Neco II returning victorious from the battle at Haran against Babylon came to Jerusalem and deposed Jehoahaz, putting on the throne his older brother, Jehoiakim, also called Eliakim (608-597 B.C.), who was not known to be against Egyptian foreign policy. In the meantime, Jehoahaz was taken a prisoner to Egypt where he died.

In Jehoiakim’s third year he was taken to Babylon but soon released and returned to Jerusalem.

*“Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord his God. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against him, and bound him in bronze fetters to carry him off to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also carried off some of the articles from the house of the Lord to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon.”* (2 Chronicles 36:5–7, NKJV)

Jehoiachin 598-597 B.C., who followed him as king, was also taken to Babylon with many people and much treasure; he did not return to Jerusalem.

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<sup>10</sup> John H Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 522.

<sup>11</sup> Gleason L. Archer Jr., “Daniel,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 31.

<sup>12</sup> Gleason L. Archer Jr., “Daniel,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 31.

Zedekiah 597-586 B.C. was the last king of Judah.

***the Lord gave....*** By this statement, Daniel is quick to note that it is God who directs the affairs of nations. “Nebuchadnezzar’s might, though considerable, was not the reason why Jerusalem fell under his influence; it was the result of the will and action of God himself. This subtle phrase introduces a major theme of the book, the conflict between overweening human power and the power of God. A major concern of the book is to reinforce the belief that the sovereignty of God far surpasses the power of even the most mighty of human rulers.”<sup>13</sup>

As indicated, Jehoiakim’s successor, his son Jehoiachin, reigned but three months and then surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar. “...Jehoiachin (Jehoiakim’s son), together with his queen, his ministers, and his servants, went out of the city and surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar, who captured them and the treasures (compare 2 Kgs 24:1–17).”<sup>14</sup>

Jehoiachin would have been in Babylon at the same time as Daniel.

***with some of the articles of the house of God....*** “These were made of valuable metals and therefore were desirable booty. There was also symbolic value in taking them. For most people in the ancient Near East, taking these vessels would have demonstrated the superiority of the gods of Babylonia over the God of Israel.”<sup>15</sup>

This treasure from the Temple will prove to be an important point in chapter 5 when Daniel narrates how a descendant, Belshazzar,

*“...commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought...and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.”* (Daniel 5:2–4, ESV).

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<sup>13</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 46.

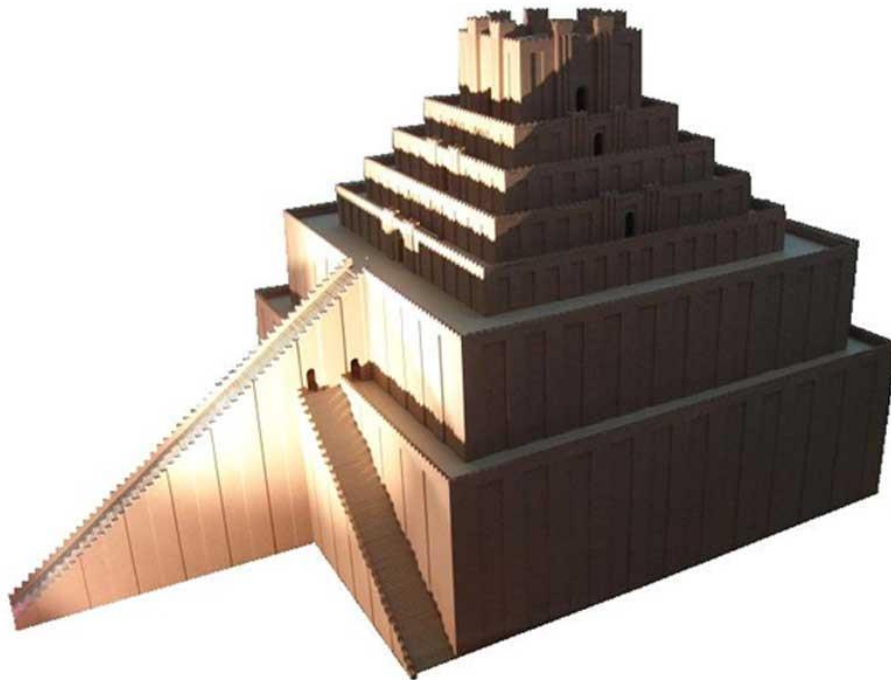
<sup>14</sup> René Péter-Contesse and John Ellington, *A Handbook on the Book of Daniel*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 12.

<sup>15</sup> John H Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 527.





**Nabu the god of Nebuchadnezzar**



**Model of Etemenanki the Temple of Nabu**



**The Neo-Babylonian Empire**

**which he carried into the land of Shinar....** "...at the time the Book of Daniel was written, this [Shinar] was simply another name for the country of Babylonia...."<sup>16</sup>

"To all appearances, the God of Jerusalem has been defeated by the gods of Babylon. Removing the possessions of the Jerusalem temple and taking them to a temple in Babylon encourages this impression."<sup>17</sup>

"Nebuchadnezzar believed that he was greater than that God. So when he forced the capitulation of Jerusalem, his cause and his gods seemed vindicated. It was in demonstration of that conviction that he brought the gold and silver articles that had been dedicated to the service of Jehovah in Jerusalem to Babylon to be placed in the treasure house of his gods. The heathen gods had triumphed! Nebuchadnezzar was sovereign!"<sup>18</sup> Or, so he thought.

### **The captives introduced (1:3–7)**

**1:3 Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles,**

***the king....*** Nebuchadnezzar.

<sup>16</sup> René Péter-Contesse and John Ellington, *A Handbook on the Book of Daniel*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 12.

<sup>17</sup> John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, vol. 30, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 21.

<sup>18</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Daniel: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 15.



**some of the children of Israel....** “Taking young nobles to Babylon might have various objects: to bring home Judah’s vassal status in relation to Babylon ... to discourage them from rebelling, to Babylon-ize their future leadership....”<sup>19</sup>

**some of the king’s descendants and some of the nobles....** In this deportation, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were also taken. Daniel and his friends were probably **of the king’s descendants (1:3)**, or from the royal family of Judah.

It is likely, although not certain that at this time all the men chosen to serve in the King's palace became eunuchs. “Ashpenaz’s title has been understood to literally mean “chief of the eunuchs.””<sup>20</sup> On the subject of castration, we read that “early rabbinic and Christian commentary on these verses concluded that Daniel and his friends literally became eunuchs at this point.”<sup>21</sup>

Josephus comments on Daniel saying, “He also made some of them to be eunuchs; (187) which course he took also with those of other nations whom he had taken in the flower of their age and afforded them their diet from his own table, and had them instructed in the institutes of the country, and taught the learning of the Chaldeans; and they had now exercised themselves sufficiently in that wisdom which he had ordered they should apply themselves to. (188) Now among these there were four of the family of Zedekiah, of most excellent dispositions, the one of whom was called Daniel, another was called Ananias, another Misael, and the fourth Azarias: and the king of Babylon changed their names, and commanded that they should make use of other names.”<sup>22</sup>

It was not uncommon for those that were going to work in the inner circles of government and the palace to be castrated. Indeed, this was prophesied years earlier by Isaiah:

*“And some of your own sons, who will come from you, whom you will father, shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”*  
(Isaiah 39:7, ESV)

The Babylonian kings and most kings in the East found this necessary: 1) these captives (often of royal families) would not generally have an interest in the overthrow of the government, as they would have none to follow them in setting up a family dynasty. 2) They would not be a concern to the harem of the king. “...eunuchs were valued officials in a king’s harem precisely because they were incapable of having sexual relations.”<sup>23</sup> 3) Moreover, they would not be diverted from their government duties by the pull of their own family.

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<sup>19</sup> John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, vol. 30, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 15.

<sup>20</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 51.

<sup>21</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 51.

<sup>22</sup> Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 278–279.

<sup>23</sup> Gleason L. Archer Jr., “Daniel,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 33.

**1:4 young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans.**

“Nebuchadnezzar resolved to pool the best brains and abilities discoverable in the ranks of the nations he had conquered. Since the hostages from Judah included the finest of the royalty and nobility, it was reasonable to open up special opportunities for gifted young Jews at the royal academy in Babylon.”<sup>24</sup>

Part of their qualification required that they be **young men (1:4)**. The king wanted to get many years of service from them, plus young people are easier to educate—and very often propagandize. We note that “according to the word used here, these young men were adolescents of at least fifteen years of age.”<sup>25</sup> But beyond this qualification, they were to have **no blemish, but good-looking (1:4)**. The word **blemish** “is very similar to the word used in Leviticus to describe those men who were to be excluded from the priestly service (Lev 21:17–23) and the animals not allowed as sacrifices (Lev 22:17–25).”<sup>26</sup>

In addition, they were to be mentally above average if not intellectually exceptional **in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand (1:4)**. Or, they must possess “(1) the inborn quality of common sense; (2) the aptitude or the ability to learn new things; and (3) breadth of knowledge.”<sup>27</sup> “As their royal background should itself imply, they are to be such as will have already received some education to prepare them for political life.”<sup>28</sup> They will now receive more. Wise leaders want exceptional people in their government.

**who had ability to serve in the king's palace....** “The training the young men were scheduled to receive was intended to prepare them for royal service. As courtiers, they might serve as scribes, advisors, sages, diplomats, provincial governors or attendants to members of the royal household.”<sup>29</sup>

**whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans....** The **language and literature of the Chaldeans** were two of the important subjects taught.

As to what **language** or languages, we note that “the native language of the Babylonians was Akkadian, a Semitic language like Hebrew, but with an extremely complex writing system. It was written in syllabic cuneiform, with the additional

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<sup>24</sup> Gleason L. Archer Jr., “Daniel,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, ed. Frank E. Gaebel, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 33.

<sup>25</sup> René Péter-Contesse and John Ellington, *A Handbook on the Book of Daniel*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 14.

<sup>26</sup> René Péter-Contesse and John Ellington, *A Handbook on the Book of Daniel*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 14.

<sup>27</sup> René Péter-Contesse and John Ellington, *A Handbook on the Book of Daniel*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 14.

<sup>28</sup> John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, vol. 30, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 15.

<sup>29</sup> Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 1:4–5.

complexity that is often utilized in the ancient language of the region, Sumerian, in its technical literature. It is likely that our text has Akkadian specifically in mind in terms of the special training that Daniel and his friends were about to receive.”<sup>30</sup> “The *literature* in question is specifically the professional literature of the soothsayers.”<sup>31</sup>

**Chaldeans....** “In the Hellenistic age...the name becomes synonymous with astrology and prognostication.”<sup>32</sup>

“Daniel clearly would have been trained in the arts of divination through such means as interpreting unusual terrestrial and celestial phenomena, astrology, the examination of sheep livers.... Divination was a learned practice in that portended events were associated with certain signs (like symptoms of an illness), whether the shape of a liver, unusual births, the flight pattern of birds, the stars, or dreams.”<sup>33</sup> His education would be very much like a Christian being taught evolution and humanism in college today. Learning the theory is not the same thing as believing and practicing it. We never see Daniel or his companions using these techniques to tell the future.

“That the youths did not accept the superstitious and false elements in this *wisdom* is shown by the later examples of their steadfast faith in God....”<sup>34</sup>

“Babylonian religion had always required a thorough knowledge of Sumerian literature—religious, magical, astrological, and scientific. Daniel and his three friends were subjected to a very rigorous and demanding curriculum, requiring their full attention as they mastered the important documents written in cuneiform Akkadian and Sumerian and contained in the central imperial library in Babylon. Thus they prepared themselves for the final examinations in “all kinds of literature and learning” (v.17).”<sup>35</sup>

So, the king set before them a curriculum requiring **three years of training (1:5).**

“Three years]—Plato, Alcibiades 1:121, states that the education of Persian youths began in their 14th year, and Xenophon, Cy., 1, 2 mentions the 16th or 17th years as the close.”<sup>36</sup> If so, then Daniel and his friends would still be in their teen years by the completion of their education.

The children of Israel not only took these courses, they graduated at the top of their class.

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<sup>30</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 49.

<sup>31</sup> John Joseph Collins and Adela Yarbro Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 138.

<sup>32</sup> John Joseph Collins and Adela Yarbro Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 137.

<sup>33</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 50.

<sup>34</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 49.

<sup>35</sup> Gleason L. Archer Jr., “Daniel,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 34–35.

<sup>36</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 42.

*“And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.” (Daniel 1:20, ESV)*

“Nebuchadnezzar is attempting to turn the next generation of Israel (in the persons of its royal leaders) into good Babylonians.”<sup>37</sup>

While in Babylon, it is thought Daniel and his friends were influential in forming a group of educated and godly men that would one day welcome a new King into the world.

*“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”” (Matthew 2:1–2, NKJV)*

It is likely that these would have been disciples of Daniel and students of the prophecies in his book.

***1:5 And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king’s delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king.***

Clearly, these young men were important to the future of Babylon and therefore must receive not only the best education but the best food, food from the Kings own ***delicacies***.

***1:6 Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.***

***1:7 To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego.***

***the chief of his eunuchs....*** Not necessarily Ashpenaz; this was probably a subordinate that worked for him, a ***steward*** (1:16). There are two different Hebrew words here for “chief,” *rābab* in 1:3 and *śar* in 1:7.

***Belteshazzar....*** “Recently an Assyriologist has suggested the alternative derivation *Bēlet-šar-ušur*, ‘lady, protect the king’, ‘Bēlet being a title for the wife of Marduk or Bēl, the patron of Babylon’. ... ‘*Shadrak* represents *šādurāku*, “I am very fearful (of God)”’; *Meshach mēšāku* “I am of little account”; *Abed-nego* apparently an Aramaic form meaning “servant of the shining one”, possibly involving wordplay on an Akkadian name including the god Nabû.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, vol. 30, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 23.

<sup>38</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 23, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 90.

“Changing someone’s name was one way in which a conqueror expressed his authority.”<sup>39</sup> Their names were changed from names that reflected the faith of Israel’s God to names that reflected a commitment to the Gods of Babylon.

### ***Daniel’s Faithfulness (1:8-1:21)***

***1:8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.***

“Up to this point, Daniel and his three friends have provided no recorded resistance to their assimilation into Babylonian society and culture. They have received new names, submitted to a foreign educational curriculum, and perhaps even have had their gender erased. All of this makes their next move all the more startling. “*Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine*” (v. 8). What does Daniel hope to accomplish by his determined stand? Why has he chosen the area of his diet as the moral and theological line over which he refuses to step?”<sup>40</sup>

Goldingay suggests seven reasons why Daniel may have done this, although he is not convinced by any of them.

- 1) “The food and drink of the palace would be likely to have come from the temple and thus to have been offered to the deity....”<sup>41</sup> It appears that this Daniel could not countenance.
- 2) “The palace would not observe laws in the Torah about which animals can be eaten and how they are to be killed.... But the reference to wine as well as meat suggests this is not the focus.”<sup>42</sup>
- 3) “Meat and wine are festival food, and abstaining from it is a sign of mourning or penitence and would be appropriate in exile .... But this understanding would not account for Daniel’s reference to defilement.”<sup>43</sup>
- 4) “Abstention from meat and wine was an ascetic practice among various groups, including the Essenes and the Hasidim.... Yet no such ascetic significance is attached to Daniel’s self-denial here....”<sup>44</sup>
- 5) “Accepting the king’s provisions would indicate dependence on him, entry into a covenant-style relationship with him, becoming his courtiers, and accepting a

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<sup>39</sup> John H Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 529.

<sup>40</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 51–52.

<sup>41</sup> John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, vol. 30, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 18.

<sup>42</sup> John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, vol. 30, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 18–19.

<sup>43</sup> John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, vol. 30, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 19.

<sup>44</sup> John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, vol. 30, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 19.

commitment to supporting him as he supported them.... But it is not clear why this should be spoken of as defilement; and anyway, they *do* accept a position as the king's courtiers."<sup>45</sup>

6) "The Mishnah infers from Lev 11:37–38 that grain does not become unclean through contact with meat as long as the grain is kept dry.... But it is not clear that Lev 11:37–38 refers to grain for eating or that Daniel alludes to that understanding of it."<sup>46</sup>

7) "Pagan food and drink may simply epitomize the pagan uncleanness associated with exile (cf. Isa 52:11)."<sup>47</sup> Yet, it appears that Daniel's normal diet did include these foods for we read, "*In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks.*" (Daniel 10:2–3, ESV)

However, the first explanation appears to be the right one.

*"Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons."* (1 Corinthians 10:20–21, NKJV)

Gleason Archer says, "Only these four, however, had the courage to observe the dietary laws of the Torah (cf. Lev 11; Deut 14), which forbade Jews to eat unclean foods. Probably most of the meat items on the menu were taken from animals sacrificed to the patron gods of Babylon (Marduk, Nebo, and Ishtar, for example), and no doubt the wine from the king's table (v.5) had first been part of the libation to these deities. Therefore even those portions of food and drink not inherently unclean had been tainted by contact with pagan cultic usage."<sup>48</sup> This seems like the best explanation for this situation.

But did they continue to eat this way all their lives? I believe this answer is this: After the three years of training, Daniel would no longer have been eating from the king's table and therefore, no longer eating food sacrificed to idols and therefore at liberty to eat whatever he chose.

**1:9 Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. <sup>10</sup> And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king."**

For Daniel to avoid the risk of defilement is for the **chief of the eunuchs**, to take on the risk of losing his head.

<sup>45</sup> John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, vol. 30, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 19.

<sup>46</sup> John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, vol. 30, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 19.

<sup>47</sup> John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, vol. 30, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 19.

<sup>48</sup> Gleason L. Archer Jr., "Daniel," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 33–34.



**1:11 So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, <sup>12</sup> “Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink.**

“Daniels’s attempt to secure his wish from the **chief** eunuch had failed....<sup>49</sup> So Daniel now goes to the **steward** and asks again. This person “should be regarded as the title of an official who was under the chief eunuch.”<sup>50</sup>

**Please test your servants....** “To accomplish this end, Daniel displays no fanaticism or rudeness, but candidly states his purpose to the chief chamberlain and asks his help. At this point as throughout his life, Dan. exhibits himself as a true gentleman. He never yields in devotion to principle, but he does not permit devotion to principle to serve as a cloak for rudeness or fanaticism.”<sup>51</sup>

**ten days....** Ten days would not be an adequate time to determine anything. However, ten days may have been as much as they could hope to obtain for fear of an apparent failure to “look good” to the powers that be.

**1:13 Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king’s delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants.” <sup>14</sup> So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days.**

Although he was not inclined to do so, eventually the steward took his life in his hands and agreed to a ten-day test to see how well they appeared on a diet of vegetables from some source other than the king’s table. He may have been thinking, “they are not likely to look that bad in such a short period, so why not?”

**1:15 And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king’s delicacies. <sup>16</sup> Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.**

**ten days....** Again, it is not likely that 10 days would have proved anything if God was not in the test. But in the providence of God, they not only looked as well as the others; they looked better than the others. So, the steward agreed to this as a permanent diet.

**1:17 As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.**

“...we read that **God gave** the four Judeans “knowledge and understanding.” Of course, Nebuchadnezzar and those involved in their education would take credit for their brilliance, but Daniel and the others would know to whom the credit was due.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 46.

<sup>50</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 45–46.

<sup>51</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 44.

<sup>52</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 54.

**Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.** “All four made progress in literature and wisdom, but Daniel, in addition, was favored with the understanding of visions and dreams.”<sup>53</sup>

“Thus, Daniel received the ability to tell whether a vision was from God and thus true, or whether it was a mere invention of the mind of man. In addition he was able to declare the true interpretation of the vision or dream.”<sup>54</sup>

**1:18 Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.**  
**1:19 Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king.**  
**1:20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm.**

**Now at the end of the days....**

“And the king appointed for them ... three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king.” (Daniel 1:5, NKJV)

“Just by talking with them, Nebuchadnezzar recognizes that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah ... are far better than the professional “magicians and enchanters” of Babylon.”<sup>55</sup> At the end of three years, they had their graduation interview with King Nebuchadnezzar and the king found these four to be “**ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm.**” Of course, that is a hyperbolic way of saying that they excelled in learning.

**1:21 Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.**

“Presumably this refers to the first year of Cyrus’s reign over Babylon, which began in October 539.”<sup>56</sup>

“But Daniel lived through the seventy years of submission to Babylon prophesied by Jeremiah, on to “the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia,” who encouraged Jewish exiles to return with the temple articles to rebuild the temple (2 Chr 36:22–23; Ezra 1).”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 48.

<sup>54</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 49.

<sup>55</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 54.

<sup>56</sup> John H Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 531.

<sup>57</sup> John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, vol. 30, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 27.

