

## Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar's Court

### Scriptural basis: Daniel 1

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had made war on the people of Judah and captured many of the Israelite people. After he returned to his own land, king Nebuchadnezzar ordered his chief of staff, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah's royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives. "Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men," he said. "Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good judgment, and are suited to serve in the royal palace. Train these young men in the language and literature of Babylon." They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah. The chief of staff renamed them with Babylonian names.

The Hebrew name Daniel means "God is Judge." His new Babylonian name was called "Belteshazzar" which means "Bel will protect."

The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. However, Daniel knew that the food was considered unclean according to Jewish laws (most likely because it had been offered as a sacrifice to false idols). Daniel was determined keep his allegiance to God of Israel. And God had given the Babylonian chief of staff both respect and affection for Daniel. When Daniel told the chief of staff that he wouldn't eat the king's food, he responded, "I am afraid of **my lord the king**, who has ordered that you eat this food and wine. If you become pale and thin compared to the other youths your age, I am afraid the king will have me beheaded."

Daniel said. "Please test us for ten days on a diet of vegetables and water," Daniel said. "At the end of the ten days, see how we look compared to the other young men who are eating the king's food. Then make your decision in light of what you see." The attendant agreed to Daniel's suggestion and tested them for ten days.

At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who had been eating the food assigned by the king. So after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the food and wine provided for the others.

Even though Daniel and his friends had been captured by Babylonian warriors and taken to a foreign land, (due to the sins of their people), God saw fit to take care of them and provide for them. He even kept them nourished on a simple diet of vegetables so that they could remain obedient to His ways. In this way, God was able to show his power and provision.

God also gave these four young men knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and wisdom. And in next week's story we'll learn how God gave Daniel the special ability to interpret the meanings of visions and dreams.