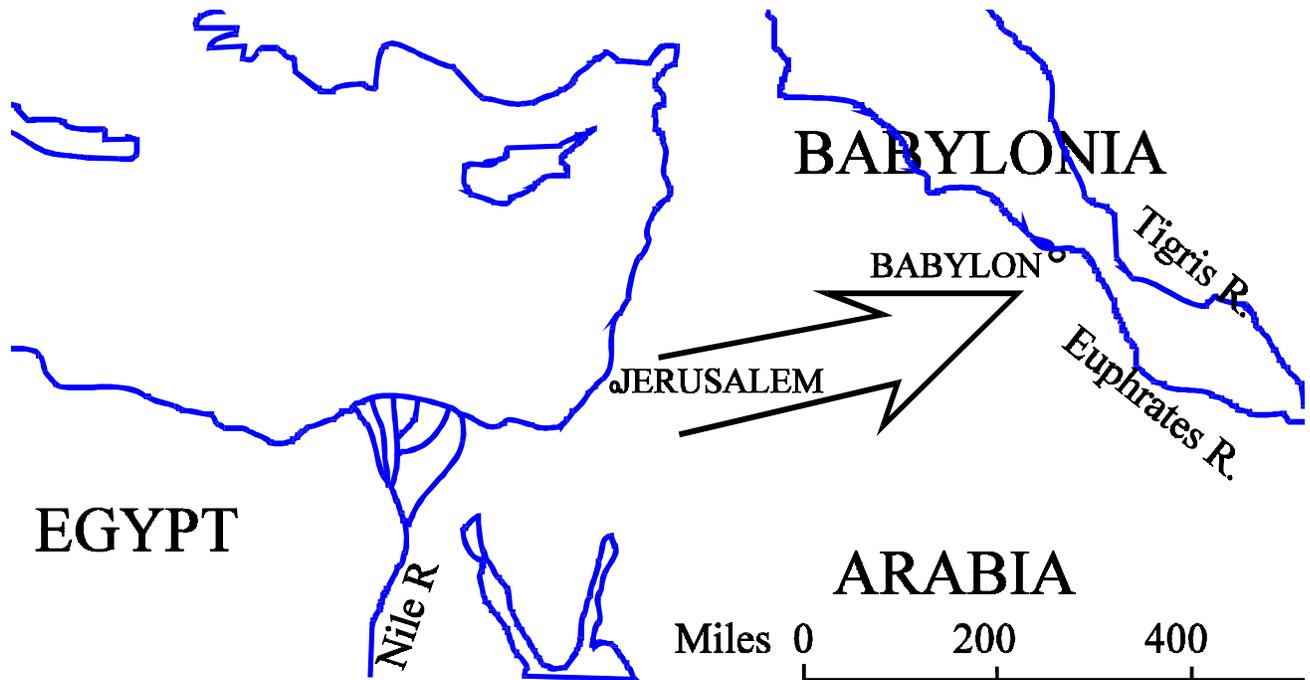


Daniel and His Friends



Jews are Taken to Babylon

Daniel 1:3-7

Then Nebuchadnezzar ordered Ashpenaz, who was in charge of his palace personnel, to select some of the Jewish youths brought back as captives—young men of the royal family and nobility of Judah—and to teach them the Chaldean language and literature.

“Pick strong, healthy, good-looking lads,” he said; “those who have read widely in many fields, are well informed, alert and sensible, and have enough poise to look good around the palace.”

The king assigned them the best of food and wine from his own kitchen during their three-year training period, planning to make them his counselors when they graduated. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah. However, their superintendent gave them Babylonian names, as follows:

Daniel was called Belteshazzar; Hananiah was called Shadrach; Mishael was called Meshach; Azariah was called Abednego. ■

Daniel and His Friends Refuse The King's Food

Daniel 1:8-20

But Daniel made up his mind not to eat the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the superintendent for permission to eat other things instead. Now as it happened, God had given the superintendent a special appreciation for Daniel and sympathy for his predicament. But he was alarmed by Daniel's suggestion.

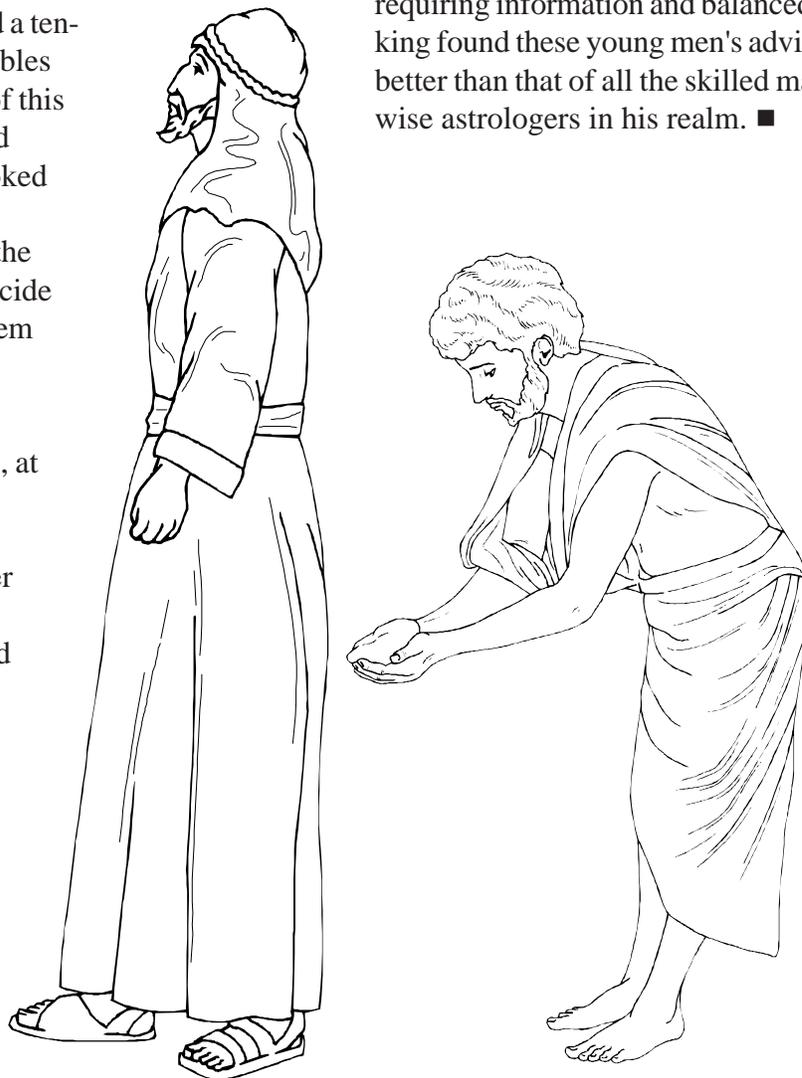
"I'm afraid you will become pale and thin compared with the other youths your age," he said, "and then the king will behead me for neglecting my responsibilities."

Daniel talked it over with the steward who was appointed by the superintendent to look after Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, and suggested a ten-day diet of only vegetables and water. At the end of this trial period the steward could see how they looked in comparison with the other fellows who ate the king's rich food and decide whether or not to let them continue their diet.

The steward finally agreed to the test. Well, at the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the youths who had been eating the food supplied by the king!

So after that the steward fed them only vegetables and water, without the rich foods and wines!

God gave these four youths great ability to learn, and they soon mastered all the literature and science of the time; and God gave to Daniel special ability in understanding the meanings of dreams and visions. When the three-year training period was completed, the superintendent brought all the young men to the king for oral exams, as he had been ordered to do. King Nebuchadnezzar had long talks with each of them, and none of them impressed him as much as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they were put on his regular staff of advisors. And in all matters requiring information and balanced judgment, the king found these young men's advice ten times better than that of all the skilled magicians and wise astrologers in his realm. ■



Daniel Interprets Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Daniel 2:1-12; 2:24-28, 31-45

One night in the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had a terrifying nightmare and awoke trembling with fear. And to make matters worse, he couldn't remember his dream! He immediately called in all his magicians, sorcerers, and astrologers, and demanded that they tell him what his dream had been.

"Sir, tell us the dream and then we can tell you what it means." But the king replied, "I tell you the dream is gone-I can't remember it. They said again, "How can we tell you what the dream means unless you tell us what it was?"

The king retorted, "If you don't tell me the dream, you certainly can't expect me to believe your interpretation!" The astrologers replied to the king, "There isn't a man alive who can tell others what they have dreamed! This is an impossible thing the king requires. No one except the gods can tell you your dream."

Upon hearing this, the king was furious and sent out orders to execute all the wise men of Babylon. Then Daniel went in to see Arioch, who had been ordered to execute the wise men of Babylon, and said, "Don't kill them. Take me to the king, and I will tell him what he wants to know."

Then Arioch hurried Daniel in to the king. Daniel said, "No wise man, astrologer, magician, or wizard can tell the king such things, but there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has told you in your dream what will happen in the future. This was your dream:

"O king, you saw a huge and powerful statue of a man, shining brilliantly, frightening and terrible. The head of the statue was made of purest gold, its chest and arms were of silver, its belly and thighs of brass, its legs of iron, its feet part iron and part clay. But as you watched, a Rock was cut from the mountainside by supernatural means. It came hurtling toward the statue and crushed the



feet of iron and clay, smashing them to bits. Then the whole statue collapsed into a heap of iron, clay, brass, silver, and gold; its pieces were crushed as small as chaff, and the wind blew them all away. The Rock that knocked the statue down became a great mountain that covered the whole earth.

“That was the dream; now for its meaning: “Your Majesty, you are a king over many kings, for the God of heaven has given you your kingdom, power, strength, and glory. You rule the farthest provinces, and even animals and birds are under your control, as God decreed. You are that head of gold.

“But after your kingdom has come to an end, another world power will arise to take your place. This empire will be inferior to yours. And after that kingdom has fallen, yet a third great power—represented by the bronze belly of the statue—will rise to rule the world. Following it, the fourth kingdom will be strong as iron—smashing, bruising, and conquering. The feet and toes you saw—part iron and part clay—show that later on, this kingdom will be divided. Some parts of it will be as strong as iron, and some as weak as clay. This mixture of iron with clay also shows that these kingdoms will try to strengthen themselves by forming alliances with each other through intermarriage of their rulers; but this will not succeed, for iron and clay don’t mix.

“During the reigns of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed; no one will ever conquer it. It will shatter all these kingdoms into nothingness, but it shall stand forever, indestructible. That is the meaning of the Rock cut from the mountain without human hands—the Rock that crushed to powder all the iron and brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold.

“Thus the great God has shown what will happen in the future, and this interpretation of your dream is as sure and certain as my description of it.” ■

Daniel 2:47

“Truly, O Daniel,” the king said, “your God is the God of gods, Ruler of kings, the Revealer of mysteries, because he has told you this secret.”

