

Daniel 4:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.

Analysis

This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof—The king's direct appeal to Daniel after his magicians failed (4:7) reveals both desperation and confidence. Nebuchadnezzar learned from chapter 2 that only Daniel's God reveals mysteries. The phrase "declare the interpretation" (pishra emer, פִשְׁרָא אָמֵר) uses the imperative—commanding yet respectful, acknowledging Daniel's unique ability.

Forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation—(כל-קביל די כל-חכמי מלכוּתִי לא-יכלֵין פִשְׁרָא להוֹצָעָתִי) The Aramaic kol-chakmey malkuthi la-yakhlin ("all the wise men of my kingdom are not able") emphasizes comprehensive failure of Babylon's wisdom establishment. This recurring pattern (chapters 2, 4, 5) demonstrates human wisdom's bankruptcy before divine mysteries. Pagan learning, divorced from revelation, cannot penetrate God's purposes.

But thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee (אנְתָה בְּכָל די רֹוח) Though Nebuchadnezzar misidentifies the source ("gods" plural rather than the one true God), he correctly recognizes supernatural enablement. The phrase ruach elahin qaddishin ("spirit of holy gods/God") acknowledges Daniel

operates by divine power, not human technique. This inadvertent testimony from a pagan king confirms what Scripture consistently teaches: true wisdom requires God's Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10-14). Daniel will soon interpret a dream announcing the king's humiliation—demonstrating that God's servants speak truth even to power.

Historical Context

This occurred late in Nebuchadnezzar's reign (after 37 years of rule, based on 4:29-30). Despite earlier encounters with Daniel's God (chapters 2-3), the king remained essentially pagan, acknowledging Yahweh's power while maintaining polytheism. His inability to learn from previous humbling experiences sets up the dramatic judgment of chapter 4. Ancient kings surrounded themselves with yes-men; Daniel's willingness to interpret bad news truthfully (4:19, 27) exemplifies prophetic courage.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Nebuchadnezzar's recognition that Daniel has 'the spirit of the holy gods' challenge you to live in such a way that even unbelievers recognize God's presence in your life?
2. What does it mean to speak truth to power when the message is unwelcome, as Daniel must in interpreting this dream?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵת נָתָה This	לְמַלְךָ אֶת־הָרָם dream	בְּנִירָבָעָצָר have seen	אָנָּה I	מֶלֶךְ אָנָּה king	נְבֻכָּדְנֶצֶר Nebuchadnezzar	וְאֵת נָתָה Now thou
H1836	H2493	H2370	H576	H4430	H5020	H607
וְאֵת נָתָה O Belteshazzar	לְמַלְכָתְךָ אֶת־הָרָם the interpretation	בְּלִיטְשָׁאצָר declare	אָמֵן all	כָּל־אָמֵן thereof forasmuch as	כָּל־אָמֵן H1768	כָּל־אָמֵן all
H1096	H6591	H560	H3606	H6903		H3606
וְאֵת נָתָה the wise	לְמַלְכָתְךָ אֶת־הָרָם men of my kingdom	אָמֵן are not	כָּל־אָמֵן able	כָּל־אָמֵן the interpretation	כָּל־אָמֵן to make known	
H2445	H4437	H3809	H3202	H6591		H3046
וְאֵת נָתָה Now thou	לְמַלְכָתְךָ אֶת־הָרָם art able	אָמֵן H1768	רָוּם for the spirit	אָלָה gods	קָדוֹשׁ of the holy	
H607	H3546		H7308	H426	H6922	H0

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 41:8 (Spirit): And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

Daniel 5:15 (Parallel theme): And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not shew the interpretation of the thing:

Genesis 41:15 (Parallel theme): And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.

Daniel 5:8 (Kingdom): Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof.