

Daniel and Friends Refuse the King's Food

Four young Hebrew captives in Babylon choose obedience to God over royal delicacies, and God honors their faithfulness with wisdom and health.

Daniel 1:1-21

CHARACTERS: Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Nebuchadnezzar, Ashpenaz

THEMES: Faithfulness, Obedience, God's provision, Integrity, Wisdom

IN THE THIRD year of King Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon besieged Jerusalem. The Lord delivered Jehoiakim into his hand, and Nebuchadnezzar carried off vessels from God's temple to Babylon, placing them in the treasury of his god.

The king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in young men from Israel's royal family and nobility—young men without physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. They were to be taught the language and literature of the Babylonians for three years, after which they would enter the king's service.

Among these were four young men from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. The chief official gave them Babylonian names—Daniel became Belteshazzar, Hananiah became Shadrach, Mishael became Meshach, and Azariah became Abednego. They could take away their Hebrew names, but they could not take away their Hebrew faith.

The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from his own table. But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine. This was not mere dietary preference—the food had likely been

offered to idols, and eating it would compromise their covenant with God. Daniel asked permission not to defile himself.

God caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, but he was afraid: 'I fear my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men? The king would then have my head!'

Daniel proposed a test: 'Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food.'

The official agreed. At the end of ten days, Daniel and his friends looked healthier and better nourished than all the young men who ate the royal food. God honored their faithfulness—they did not need the king's delicacies when they had the King of Heaven's blessing.

God gave these four young men knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. Daniel could also understand visions and dreams of all kinds. At the end of three years, when they were presented to Nebuchadnezzar, he found none equal to Daniel and his friends. In every matter of wisdom and understanding, they were ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

Their story began in exile, stripped of home and family, but they chose to honor God. And God honored them.