

# The Adventures of Daniel and Friends

## Part 1

God's miraculous care, protection, leading, guidance, and help in difficult circumstances! Based on the true adventures of God's children during the time of the Babylonian Empire, as recorded in Daniel 1-3.

### Chapter 1

#### Captured by Babylon

*605 BC, Babylon*

*BANG! BANG! BANG!*

Young Daniel stirred sleepily.

*BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!*

Daniel yawned and opened an eye.

*Who could be at the door at this time of the morning?*

*BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!*  
*BANG!*

"Open up this door or we'll batter it down!"

Suddenly Daniel was wide awake with his heart thumping.

*Babylonians! What do they want with us?*





Downstairs he could hear the bolts to the front door being opened, then more voices, followed by the tramp of soldiers' feet, first in the front entrance, then on the stairs, and stopping outside his bedroom door.

"Oh, God, please protect us," was all Daniel could pray before the door was kicked open and a Babylonian soldier peered in.

"He's in here," the soldier yelled. Three more soldiers strode into his bedroom, followed by a burly sergeant, who ordered Daniel to get out of bed.

Seeing it was useless to resist, Daniel got out of bed and stood before the gaze of the Babylonian invaders.

*I should be feeling scared, but I'm not. The God whom I love must be helping me, so why should I be afraid?*

"Excuse me, sir," Daniel said to one of the men,

"but what do you want with us? We have done nothing wrong. Why do you break into our house before dawn?"

"On the orders of the great King Nebuchadnezzar II, King of Babylon and of the whole world."

"He will rule only as long as the God of Israel allows him to," Daniel said with a smile.

At this, one of the soldiers raised his hand to smite Daniel, but the sergeant stopped him.

"No. I like this boy. He has *courage*. Just the kind we're looking for. Take him."

"Take him?" said Daniel's mother, who had pushed her way into the room. "Please! He is hardly more than a child!"

"I have my orders. You have five minutes to help your boy get ready. Make sure he has good sandals. It's a long march to Babylon,

well over a thousand kilometers!"

As Daniel was hustled outside and marched down the Jerusalem streets, his mother's parting words still rang in his ears. "My son, the Lord our God will *always* be with you. Keep His commandments and His ways that we have taught you. Pray always, my son. Remember to *pray*."

Soon they came to a central square where the Babylonian army was assembling, ready for the long march back to Babylon. Daniel was led over to join the rest of the Hebrew captives.

"Take good care of this one," said the sergeant as he handed Daniel over to the captain of the prison guards. "He's a nobleman's son."

Suddenly Daniel heard familiar voices calling him, "Daniel! Daniel! Over here."

"Hananiah? ... Mishael? ... Azariah? So they captured you too!"

"Ask if we can travel together," said Hananiah.

"Can we?" Daniel asked the captain. "The four of us are old friends, you see."

"Hmm ... Well, all right then. I cannot see any harm in that. But if I catch you young fellows misbehaving, I'll put a rod to your backs, you hear?"

The captain of the prison guards need not have worried. The Hebrew children behaved on the journey better than most children he had ever seen. Despite the hardships of the long march, they behaved more like responsible young men, remaining a positive encouragement to their fellow prisoners.

"I wish our Babylon brats could be half as well-behaved as you boys have



been,” the captain joked to them as they camped for the night near the end of their journey.

“They would be if they worshipped the same God,” said Daniel with a grin.

“If I were you, I’d watch your talk about your God,” said the captain, lowering his voice. “We too are a very religious people. In Babylon we worship many great gods, and your Hebrew God isn’t one of them. So, if you want to stay out of trouble and keep your young heads fastened to your shoulders, I’d forget talking about your God. Besides, He didn’t stop us from carrying away the treasures from the temple in Jerusalem, did He? And from carrying *you* away as slaves.”

So saying, the captain walked off into the dark to check on other prisoners.

For a moment, the four Hebrew children sat gazing

into the campfire. Then Mishael muttered, “Why *did* God allow this to happen to us?”

“I don’t know,” Daniel replied. “But you know what I was thinking? How do you think Joseph felt when he was carried away captive as a slave into Egypt? And how did Jochebed feel when her baby, Moses, was taken from their family to live in the Pharaoh’s palace? It must have been so very hard for them. They had to have faith that God had not forsaken them. But now, when we think of Moses and Joseph, what is the main thing we think of? We think of how God used them. Even though the tests were great, it was worth it, because God did so many mighty works through them.”

“That’s right,” said Mishael, “We don’t see it now, but it could be that the Lord has something in store for us.”

“I believe it,” said Azariah.

“Me too,” said Hananiah.

“Even though the way seems dark right now, Lord,” Daniel prayed, “we trust that You are here beside us, leading us every step of the way. As You inspired King David to express 400 years ago, ‘When my father and my mother cannot be with me, then the *Lord* will take care of me.’<sup>1</sup> We’re *Your* children, Lord, and we know that You will be with us, and that You are always ready to help us during times of trouble.<sup>2</sup> Protect us from the men of Babylon, the influences of their false religions and ways. Help us to be true to *Your* ways no matter how we may have to suffer for it. Help us to be as shining lights in the midst of this dark and foreign land.”

The four boys then sang the twenty-third Psalm together, with some of the

other captives joining in. After this, with their spirits comforted, they curled up beside the glowing campfire and drifted into sleep.



There it was. *Babylon!* The first sight of the huge city took young Daniel’s breath away. Its double walls seemed to dwarf the surrounding countryside. As the prisoners were herded through the main gate and into the actual city, Daniel was overwhelmed by the size and magnificence of the buildings and temples, many of which were still under construction. The walls were inlaid with colored bricks, as well as with the faces of dragons, lions, and bulls. The top of the wall was so wide that chariots with full teams of horses could race each other along the top.



“As you can see,” said one of the Babylonian guards, “our great King Nebuchadnezzar has as many ideas for building projects as a dog has fleas. For instance, that great golden temple up ahead is being built for Marduk, the god who first built our city. And over there, to the northwest of the royal palace, are the Hanging Gardens. The king was concerned that one of his foreign wives might be missing the scenery of her home country, so he’s having this made for her as a little surprise. Thousands of slaves have been working on the building of that one. As you can see, there’s plenty of work for you to do here in Babylon!”

Daniel and his three friends looked with pity at the vast teams of foreign slaves toiling under the sweltering sun. Like them, these men had been captured by the Babylonians during their conquests

and brought to Babylon to help make the city into the greatest ever built by man.

After marching a couple of kilometers into the city, they reached a detention center where the prisoners were to be held while waiting to be divided and sent to their work assignments.

“What do you think they’ll do with *us*?” asked Azariah, wondering if he’d be strong enough to carry huge stones to the top of the Hanging Gardens.

“I don’t know,” Daniel replied, “but I do know that God is with us, and that we have ...”

“Hey! You four boys are to follow me,” the captain of the guard suddenly ordered.

“Where are you taking us?” Daniel asked.

“You’ll see.”

It looked as if they were heading for the construction

site of the Hanging Gardens, but to their surprise they were directed to the beautiful arched boulevard leading directly to the king’s palace.

“It looks like your God is with you after all,” said the captain, as he left them at the main gate.

The palace guards then escorted the boys into one of the outer buildings of the palace complex and brought them before a finely dressed Babylonian officer.

“Greetings,” he said, in a high-pitched voice. “I am Ashpenaz, master of the king’s eunuchs. King Nebuchadnezzar has decreed that any captives of the children of Israel who are of noble birth should be considered for training for positions in the king’s court. However, only the cleverest and strongest can pass our tests. Please sit at these tables. The examinations will begin immediately.”

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah took their seats and were given parchments and writing instruments. They wondered at the nature of the test questions and what would be the consequences should they fail.

“Well, dear friends,” whispered Daniel, “we can only do our best, and then God will have to do the rest.”

The grueling examinations went on for days. Not only were they tested scholastically, but their physical and mental health were also examined. Some of the questions were easy and some were difficult. However, as they asked God to give the right answers, they could feel His wisdom leading them.

At the end of the examinations, they anxiously awaited Ashpenaz’ announcement of the results.



“Well, boys, I have to admit, those responsible for training you have done a wonderful job. You have all made excellent grades!”

“God be praised!” said Daniel and his friends.

“However,” continued Ashpenaz, “these tests are only the beginning. Now you will be given three years of special training. During this time, you will learn our Babylonian language and literature while you study under our wise men. And of course, you will also be instructed in the ways of *our* religion. After that, the king himself will choose those whom he feels are best qualified to be in his court.”

Ashpenaz then showed them to a comfortable dormitory which they would be sharing with some of the Babylonian boys who had also been chosen for the training program. He also introduced them to Melzar, a court

official who would be directly responsible for their care.

“Oh, one more thing,” Ashpenaz announced before leaving. “To help you feel more at home in Babylon, I have given you each a Babylonian name. Hananiah, you shall be called Shadrach; Mishaël will be called Meshach; Azariah will be called Abednego; and you, Daniel, will be named Belteshazzar.”



From now on in this story, the four boys will be referred to by the names we are most familiar with: Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. However, Daniel will occasionally be called Belteshazzar when he is addressed by the Babylonians.

That night, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego gathered at one end of the dormitory and sang psalms and, in spite of a few Babylonian boys snickering at them, thanked God for already working on their behalf.

Before sleep, Daniel knelt before the open window to pray. Above the silhouettes of strange heathen temples, the moon shone serene, the same moon that he loved to gaze at as he knelt before his bedroom window in Jerusalem.

He thought about his parents and how much he missed them. He prayed that they were not overly worried about him, and that the Lord would help him not to think about his parents too much, but to trust the Lord to comfort their hearts about his being taken from them.

*If they only knew the amazing things that God is doing for us,* he thought.

How often he had remembered his mother’s parting words to him, “My son, the Lord our God will *always* be with you!” And how true it was. Even though he was now far away from home in a strange and pagan land, he could feel the Lord as close to him as ever.

“O God,” Daniel prayed, “thank You for helping us make it this far. Help us pass the tests that lie ahead and stay faithful to You.”

## Chapter 2

### The Great Food Test

When Daniel and his three friends entered the dining hall the next morning, in front of them lay a lavish spread



of expensive foods and delicious sweets and dainties. They had never seen so much food at one time on one table, and this was only breakfast.

“You may eat all you want,” said Melzar, gesturing towards the table. “Compliments of the king himself. He has ordered that from now on you should *all* be fed with food from his very own table.”

The rest of the youths who were part of the training program ran to their places and began to dig in. At first, they were too busy eating to notice that the four Hebrew boys were sitting in their places with their heads bowed.

“What do you think?” Daniel asked after they had finished praying for guidance in this situation.

“Well, I *am* hungry, and the food looks tempting,” said Meshach. “But if

we eat these Babylonian foods, we’ll be breaking the commandments that God gave us through Moses.”

“I agree,” said Shadrach. “If we eat everything the Babylonians eat and do everything the Babylonians do, it will not be long before we’ll *be* Babylonians. We committed ourselves to live by the laws of our God, so we should obey and do so no matter what the cost.”

“Yes,” said Abednego, “if we stand by God, He will surely stand by us.”

Just then Melzar, having noticed that the boys were not eating, came over to inquire.

“Is something wrong? Are you not hungry? Eat up, before all the finest dainties are gone. Here, why don’t you try these oysters stewed in pig’s blood? Delightful! They were sanctified by our great god Marduk only this morning...”

“Excuse me, sir,” said Daniel, “but could we have a word in private?”

Melzar agreed, and Daniel, Shadrach, and Melzar walked together to the other side of the dining hall.

“What?” said Melzar, after Daniel had explained their request. “No one has ever even dreamed of doing such a thing. Come with me, Daniel. I will take you to see Ashpenaz.”

Ashpenaz especially liked Daniel. For years he had overseen the training of many young men, but none had behaved as well as Daniel and his three Hebrew friends.

*After some time of retraining, they will make excellent Babylonians,* he had been pondering when Melzar and Daniel were shown in.

“Ah, Belteshazzar,” he said, “I was just thinking of you. Tell me, are you excited about your upcoming studies? Do you and your friends have everything you need?”

“Oh yes indeed, sir. Thank you for how kind you have been to us. You have given us the best of everything, and now even food from the king’s table. However, our Hebrew laws forbid us to eat these kinds of foods. So ... we hope that you won’t be offended if we ask you to just serve us plain food and water.”

Ashpenaz fell into thoughtful silence. He could not help but admire the young Hebrew’s conviction. If Daniel’s religion had anything to do with what a fine person he had grown up to be, then there must be something good about it, even if some of its rules did seem odd to a Babylonian.



“Belteshazzar,” Ashpenaz said after a while, “I would be happy to grant your request if I could. But what will happen when King Nebuchadnezzar sees that you four boys don’t look as strong and healthy as the rest of the students and discovers that I’ve disobeyed his royal command? I’d lose my head, and you wouldn’t want *that* to happen, would you? So, I’m sure that your God won’t mind if you concede a little. Now please go back and try eating the king’s food for a few days. Perchance you’ll soon develop a taste for it.”

Daniel returned with Melzar to the dining hall and sat down beside Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were still sitting in front of their empty plates. Some of the other boys were taunting them. “What’s wrong with

the king’s food? Is it not good enough for you? What kind of god do you serve that won’t let you eat from a king’s table?”

These Babylonian boys knew that they were competing with Daniel and his friends for a position in the king’s court. They were already jealous of them and took every opportunity to belittle them. However, Daniel and his friends pitied the Babylonian boys and prayed for them. They knew that the godly way in which they had been raised in Jerusalem was better than the idol worship that these boys had been raised with in Babylon.

Then an idea flashed into Daniel’s mind that would solve their diet problem, and at the same time, it would be a witness to these heathen boys of the power of the one true God.

The room fell silent as Daniel stood up.

“Melzar, I propose a test. My friends and I will eat and drink nothing but grains, pulses, and water for ten days. At the end of that time, you yourself can be the judge of who looks healthier—us or these other young men. If we appear healthier, then let us eat our own food. But if they are healthier than us, then we will eat yours.”

Melzar consented, happy for a solution that would put an end to the matter.

“So let the trial begin,” he announced.

From day one of the ten-day trial period, Melzar carefully watched the four Hebrew boys to see any signs of their health weakening.

*No one can keep up with our rigorous schedule of study and exercise on a diet of grains, pulses, and water,* he thought. *Those poor boys and even their God are going to be put to shame.*

However, to his astonishment, instead of getting weaker, the four boys looked stronger by the day. Not only did they *look* stronger, they *were* stronger. They could run faster, jump higher, throw further, and after engaging in such sports they still had plenty of energy, while the others were huffing and puffing for breath. They were still alert during the evening study classes, while the other boys were having trouble staying awake.

Not only that, but some of the Babylonian boys were starting to report sick with stomachaches and other ailments. Others began to look pudgy and white-faced, and some had begun to complain of toothaches.



By the end of the ten days there was no question as to who were the winners. It was easy to see that it was the four Hebrew boys with the bright eyes, cheery smiles, and rosy cheeks!



The great city of Babylon had everything that the world could offer. There was every type of worldly vice and pleasure. The four boys regarded such challenges as an opportunity to stand up for their beliefs and be loyal to their God. Often, during times of temptation, memorized scripture would come to their minds. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path”<sup>3</sup> was one of their favorite scriptures.

The scriptures that they could remember by heart, they wrote onto parchments, and read together from them as often as they could.

They also prayed together three times a day. And as they were faithful to obey the guidance God gave them, then He was faithful to uphold and protect their hearts and spirits from negative influences. God gave them guidance by speaking to them directly through visions and dreams that Daniel explained due to his having a gift to interpret them.

And so, the three years of testing and training passed, and Ashpenaz announced that they should get dressed in their finest robes. The time had come for them to be presented before the king.

Naturally, they all felt nervous as they waited for their turn to be summoned into the great throne room. Shadrach even felt as though his mind had gone blank.

“I feel like everything I’ve learned has been erased,” he said.

“Let us not fear,” said Daniel. “If it’s God’s plan for us to be in the court and we can influence the king with the ways of the true God, then God Himself will give us wisdom and courage, just as He has done these past years. And I’m sure our parents have continued to pray for us, as we have for them.”



“Belteshazzar! Shadrach! Meshach! Abednego!” the king’s herald announced. “King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon and of all the world, summons you this day to stand before him.”

With a whispered prayer, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped into the great throne room, the largest and most lavishly

decorated room the boys had ever seen. Colossal pillars of white marble supported a giant golden roof covered with intricate carvings of ivory and silver.

Along the walls hung magnificent woven tapestries depicting exploits of past Babylonian kings and conquests. On the far side of the room, covered with precious jewels and stones, was the king’s throne. It was raised on a golden platform, and on both sides stood ivory idols of Babylonian gods. They seemed to glare down at the four Hebrew boys as if to say, “This kingdom is *ours*. How dare you intrude upon it.”

Here and there, muttering together, stood groups of colorfully dressed magicians, seers, astrologers, and holy men. These were the king’s “wise



men,” whom he kept on hand as advisers or to perform enchantments.

As Ashpenaz led the four children of Israel up the long, red velvet carpet towards the king’s throne, the whispering ceased, as the wise men stared curiously at the young Hebrews.

“GET OUT,” Nebuchadnezzar suddenly shouted at his wise men. “I wish to talk to these young men alone.”

The wise men scurried out, knowing how unpredictable and dangerous the king’s temper could be.

“Wise men? *Pah!* Every king should have good advisers, and I’ve been cursed with a crew of crackpots and man pleasers,

full of meaningless proverbs and cheap conjurers’ tricks. Ashpenaz, I’ve been counting on your training program to raise up new blood.”

“I trust that you will not be disappointed, O King. These four Hebrew boys are the last ones left for you to interview.”

“Very well, let them approach.”

Normally, the fearful experience for anyone standing in the presence of the king of Babylon was accompanied by their much bowing and trembling. However, as Ashpenaz watched the king commune with the four boys, he was impressed at how natural they seemed. Rather than showing fear of the king, they were outgoing towards

him, showing interest in him and sympathy for his heavy responsibilities.

As the four boys answered the king’s questions, Ashpenaz oftentimes could overhear the king exclaiming, “Really? I never knew that!” or, “Why has nobody else ever told me such?” or “Great thunderbolts! You’re *right*.”

After an hour or so of lively and deep discussion, the king was ready to make his decision.

“I have chosen these four—Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—to serve as my advisers. You are to be commended, Ashpenaz, for your excellent training program.”

“There is none to equal them, O King.”

Then the king’s wise men were ushered back in, and the king announced that from now on these four young men would be serving with them.

“But wisdom comes with age, O King,” the chief magician tried to advise him. “These youths are hardly more than mere striplings.”

“I care not about their age,” said the king. “In all matters of wisdom and understanding, I have found them ten times superior to all of YOU.”

*(To be continued.)*

**Footnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 27:10, *paraphrased*

<sup>2</sup> See Psalm 46:1.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 119:105