DANIEL 1

Setting the Standard

Daniel 1 — A Deep Dive

> *But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.*
> DANIEL 1:8

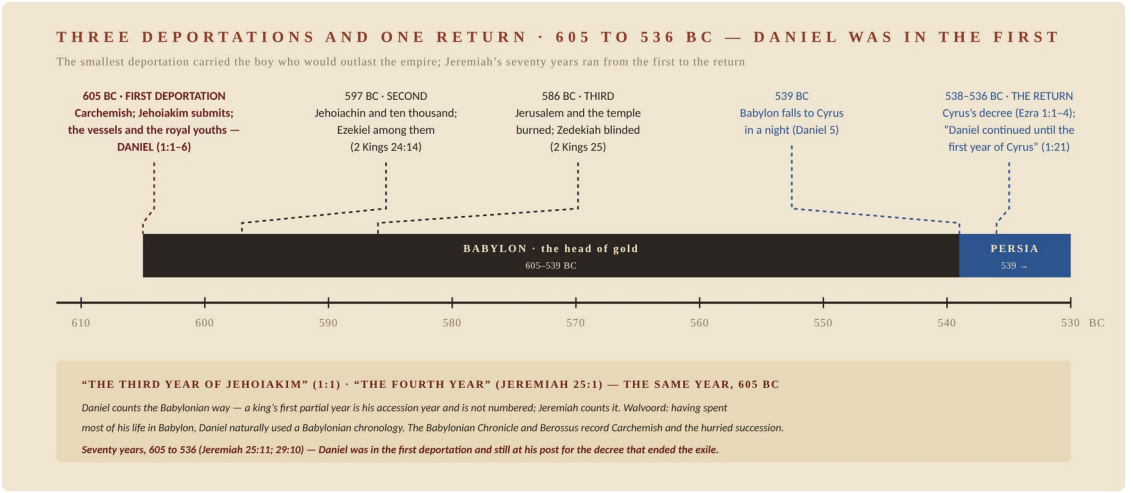
A SMITH FOR CHRIST STUDY · THREE VOICES: TSARFATI · MACARTHUR · GUZIK

Where the story stands

1. The year is 605 B.C.

2. Nebuchadnezzar, crown prince of Babylon, has just broken Egypt at Carchemish and swept south through Syria to the gates of Jerusalem; his father Nabopolassar dies while he is in the field and he rides home to take the throne.

3. On the way he takes Jehoiakim's submission, some of the temple vessels, and a handful of the best young men of Judah's royal and noble houses.



The Lord Gave

DANIEL 1:1

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

AMIR TSARFATI

Tsarfati begins where the book begins, with Israel disciplined, not defeated. The Lord gave Judah into Babylon's hand because Judah had given itself to Babylon's gods for generations; the exile is covenant, not chance (Deuteronomy 28).

JOHN MACARTHUR

"The Lord gave." MacArthur calls those two words the key to the book and to every chapter in it.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik handles the dating: Daniel's "third year" and Jeremiah's "fourth" are the same 605 B.C., Babylonian and Judean reckoning respectively, Walvoord: having spent most of his life in Babylon, Daniel naturally…

THE ORIGINAL **VAYYITTEN ADONAI · "THE LORD GAVE"**

The Lord Gave

HOW TO MAKE A BABYLONIAN · FOUR TOOLS, AND THE NAMES — DANIEL 1:3–7

Not the sword but the school. Take the best, and in three years a conquered people produces its own loyal servants.

SEPARATION v. 3	EDUCATION v. 4	DIET v. 5	IDENTITY v. 7
Far from home, family, temple and sabbath — the old world out of reach	"the literature and language of the Chaldeans" — a new worldview, daily	The king's choice food and wine — dependence on his table, his provision	New names after Babylon's gods — answer to Bel long enough and you are Bel's

THE HEBREW NAME			THE BABYLONIAN NAME	
Daniel	*God is my judge*	→	**Belteshazzar**	*Bel, protect his life*
Hananiah	*Yahweh is gracious*	→	**Shadrach**	*likely tied to Aku, the moon-god*
Mishael	*Who is what God is?*	→	**Meshach**	*Who is what Aku is?*
Azariah	*Yahweh has helped*	→	**Abed-nego**	*servant of Nebo*

Every Hebrew name honored God; every new name honored a god of Babylon. They answered to the names — and never became what the names meant.

Daniel Made Up His Mind

DANIEL 1:8

But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.

AMIR TSARFATI

Tsarfati calls verse 8 the hinge of the whole book of Daniel: a teenager in exile, with every reason to go along, decides in his heart before the first meal that he belongs to the God of Israel. He stresses…

JOHN MACARTHUR

MacArthur reads the verse as the model of conviction: Daniel did not react to pressure; he had already decided. "Made up his mind" is the difference between the believer who falls and the believer who stands,…

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik gives the three reasons for the refusal, the law, the idols, the covenant meal, and then Spurgeon: "Be ready for a bad name; be willing to be called a bigot." But he balances it: Daniel was not needlessly offensive.

THE ORIGINAL **VAYYASEM DANIYYEL AL-LIBBO · "DANIEL MADE UP HIS MIND"**

Daniel Made Up His Mind

WHERE DANIEL DREW THE LINE · DANIEL 1:8 — WHAT HE ACCEPTED, WHAT HE REFUSED, AND HOW

He could not control the name or the curriculum; he drew the line where obedience to God was at stake — and he drew it with courtesy

WHAT HE ACCEPTED

A Babylonian name
Belteshazzar — the king's to give, not a matter of sin (v. 7)

The literature and language of the Chaldeans
the whole pagan curriculum, for three years (vv. 4–5)

Service at a pagan king's court
ruler of the province, chief of the wise men (2:48)

WHAT HE REFUSED — AND WHY

The king's choice food and wine
"that he would not defile himself" (v. 8)

1 · not kosher
the law of clean and unclean (Leviticus 11)

2 · offered to Babylon's gods first
to eat it was to share the table of idols (1 Corinthians 10:21)

3 · the king's table was a covenant meal
Baldwin: to share a meal was to commit to friendship

HOW HE HELD IT · vv. 8–14

SETTLED IT FIRST — *"set it upon his heart" before the plate arrived* → **ASKED** — *sought permission — did not demand (v. 8)* → **DID NOT ARGUE** — *when the commander was afraid (v. 10)* → **FOUND THE RIGHT MAN** — *the overseer under him (v. 11)* → **PROPOSED A TEST** — *ten days, measurable, safe for him (vv. 12–13)*

Wisdom "peaceable, gentle, reasonable" (James 3:17). Spurgeon: "Be ready for a bad name; be willing to be called a bigot" — but Daniel was never needlessly offensive.

Test Your Servants for Ten Days

DANIEL 1:11

But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,

AMIR TSARFATI

Tsarfati stays on the method. Daniel did not demand, picket or preach; he offered a test that protected the official and left room for God to prove Himself, a God who says “test Me now in this” (Malachi 3, verse 10).

JOHN MACARTHUR

MacArthur draws the principle plainly: no one loses by obeying God, even when obedience looks like a loss. The test was fair, the result was God’s, and the vindication was visible, the kind the world can inspect.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik commends the creativity: Daniel found the man who could say yes, made the test short, made it measurable, and made it safe for him. He notes that the result came from God and not from the vegetables, it…

THE ORIGINAL **NAS-NA ET-AVADEKHA · “PLEASE TEST YOUR SERVANTS”**

Test Your Servants for Ten Days

GOD GAVE · NATHAN, THREE TIMES — THE VERB THAT RUNS THE CHAPTER

Babylon took, trained, fed and renamed. The text says God gave. Three gifts, and then the king's own verdict.

"THE LORD GAVE" v. 2	"GOD GRANTED" v. 9	"GOD GAVE THEM" v. 17
Jehoiakim and the vessels into Nebuchadnezzar's hand	*favor and compassion before the commander*	*knowledge, intelligence, wisdom — and visions and dreams*
Judah fell on schedule, for its own sin (Leviticus 26; Jeremiah 25). Babylon did not win; God handed over.	Before Daniel asked. Chesed and rachamim in a pagan official — God went ahead (Proverbs 16:7).	Three years of Chaldean learning did not make them wise; God did. Verse 17 is the door to chapter 2.

"TEN TIMES BETTER" · v. 20 — THE VERDICT WAS BABYLON'S

The king examined them himself and found none like them — ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers in his realm. Excellence is a witness: the believer who does the king's work better than the king's own men has a platform he did not ask for (Proverbs 22:29; 1 Peter 2:12).

Ten Times Better

DANIEL 1:17

As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams.

AMIR TSARFATI

Tsarfati reads verse 17 as the gift that makes the book: Daniel's understanding of visions and dreams is why there is a Daniel 2, 7, 8, 9 and 12, and why Israel has a calendar for the end of the age. He draws…

JOHN MACARTHUR

MacArthur notes the source of the brilliance: God gave it. The four were not merely gifted; they were equipped by the One who had set them apart, and the equipment showed.

DAVID GUZIK

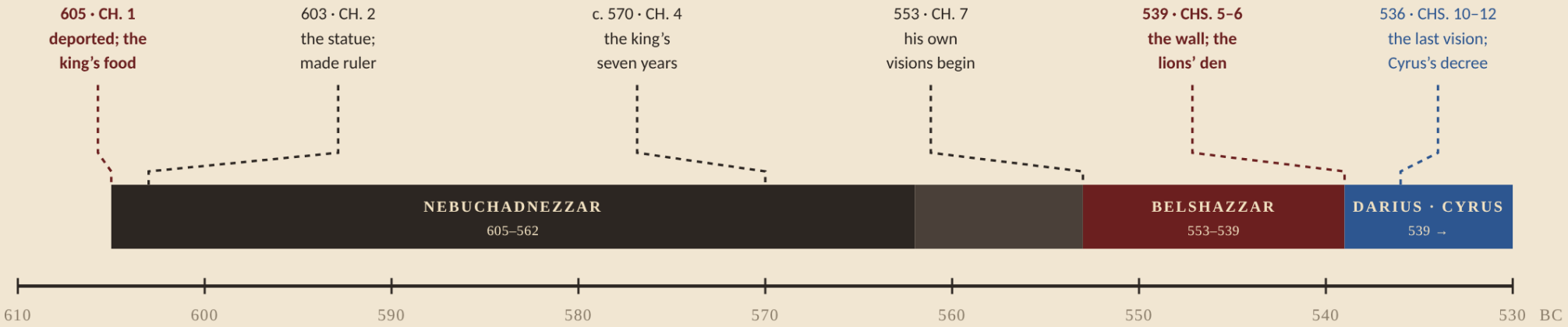
Guzik counts the three gifts, Judah to Babylon, favor to Daniel, wisdom to the four, and observes that Babylon's program did not make them wise; God did. He quotes John 17, verses 15 to 16 for the posture: in Babylon, not of Babylon.

THE ORIGINAL **NATAN LAHEM HA-ELOHIM · "GOD GAVE THEM"**

Ten Times Better

IN BABYLON, NOT OF BABYLON · "DANIEL CONTINUED UNTIL THE FIRST YEAR OF CYRUS" (1:21)

The boy who settled his heart over a plate of food at about fifteen was still at his post at about eighty-five, under the fourth king and the second empire



"I DO NOT ASK YOU TO TAKE THEM OUT OF THE WORLD … THEY ARE NOT OF THE WORLD" — JOHN 17:15–16

Daniel served four kings and two empires with excellence and never bowed to either. He outlasted Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon and its fall, and saw the decree that sent his people home (Ezra 1:1–4). Faithful in a very little thing — a plate of food — and faithful in much (Luke 16:10). Faithfulness outlives empires.

What to carry from this chapter

1

“The Lord gave” is the key to the book.

Judah did not fall to Babylon’s strength; it was handed over, on schedule, for its own sin, exactly as Isaiah had warned Hezekiah (2 Kings 20, verse 18)

2

Gave is the spine of the chapter.

Nathan three times: Judah to Babylon (verse 2), favor to Daniel (verse 9), wisdom to the four (verse 17).

3

Babylon’s strategy was the school, not the sword.

Separation, education, diet, identity, four tools to make a Babylonian out of a Hebrew in three years.

4

The decision was made before the plate arrived.

“Daniel set it upon his heart” (verse 8).

More to carry

5

He drew the line where it mattered, and only there.

The name and the books he accepted; the king's table, unclean, offered to idols, a covenant meal, he refused.

6

Favor came before the request.

"God granted Daniel favor" (verse 9) before Daniel asked.

7

The test was wise, not just brave.

The right man, ten days, measurable, safe for the overseer, and a result no diet explains.

8

Daniel outlasted the empire.

"Until the first year of Cyrus" (verse 21): the boy of the first deportation saw the decree that ended the exile.

Talk it through

1. “The Lord gave.” What hard season are you reading as Babylon’s strength when Scripture would have you read it as God’s hand, and how does that change the way you carry it?

2. Separation, education, diet, identity. Which of Babylon’s four tools is working on you right now, what you are far from, what you are being taught, what you are fed, what you are called, and which one is quietly winning?

3. Daniel accepted the name and the books and refused the food. Where are you fighting a battle you cannot win over something that is not sin, and where are you not fighting the one that is?

CLOSING

The Lord gave Judah into Babylon's hand, and four boys were carried to Shinar with the vessels. Babylon gave them its books, its table and its gods' names; one of them set it upon his heart before the first meal, and God gave him favor, gave him wisdom, and kept him at his post until the empire that took him was gone.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study, reflection journal and film: see the Daniel study page.