

Daniel 2:1-23

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Daniel 2:1-2 - "And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king."

Daniel and his companions are grouped with the wise men of the court, but were probably still undergoing training.

The Magicians

In the pagan society of Babylon the "wise men" were "Magi" - magicians, astrologers, sorcerers and "Chaldeans." Chaldeans simply meant someone from Chaldea or Babylon. But the word also began to be used in the Ancient Near East to mean experts in the supernatural arts of Babylon in general, which had been practiced as far back as Babel.

These categories loosely align with the biblical practitioners of forbidden arts -

"Pharaoh also summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the magicians of Egypt, and they also did the same things by their magic arts" (**Exodus 7:11**). But they could not replicate the plague of gnats: "This is the finger of God," they said to Pharaoh (**Exodus 8:19**).

Enchanters are those who use incantations or spells to influence events or people.

Sorcerers or wizards made use of familiar spirits, and the help of demons.

Witches - **Exodus 22:18** – "You shall not tolerate a sorceress/ or witch to live."

Necromancers consulted the dead, in order to get knowledge of future things.

Astrologers in the Bible are those who study the stars and celestial bodies to predict the future or gain insight into human affairs.

- **Deuteronomy 18:10-12** : "Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, practices divination or conjury, interprets omens, practices sorcery, casts spells, consults a medium or spiritist, or inquires of the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD."

In the days of Messiah, witchcraft and soothsaying will be eliminated, as well as idolatry both outward and inward (**Micah 5:12-14**).

- **Micah 5:12-14** - "And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no more soothsayers: Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands. And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee: so will I destroy thy cities (or "enemies" as in the Targum)."

The rabbis were agreed that Chapter 5 of Micah foresees the times of Messiah, who would be born in Bethlehem.

And thus we see an outburst of demonic activity when Christ begins His ministry, and His mastery over the demons, casting them out and freeing people from bondage to them. Jesus - beginning with his temptation in the wilderness by Satan - and then with his disciples "cut off" occult practices and demonic possession from the land as predicted by Micah.

In the Book of Acts we see many burning their books of magic when they are converted:

- **Acts 19:19** - "Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver."

Daniel in his victory over the pagan sorcerers points of Jesus and His victory over Satan and his demons - completed at the cross. (The same thing was foreshadowed by Moses' and Aaron's confrontation with the magicians of Egypt.)

Because of his God-given superior skill at dream interpretation, like Joseph before him in Egypt, **Genesis 40** and **41:17-41**, Daniel became head of the school of seers, and his teachings probably influenced Zoroastrianism and the Persian Magi, who were looking for the Messiah before the birth of Jesus and followed the star to find Him.

An Impossible Request

Daniel 2:4-6 - "Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriac, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honor: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof."

Syriac was Aramaic, and the next few chapters are written in that language rather than Hebrew.

Describing and then interpreting the king's dream was not like making a guess during a TV game show like Jeopardy. If you get it wrong, you would be cut into pieces, your home reduced to rubble and your family made homeless.

The wise men protested:

Daniel 2:10-11 - "The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

"not with flesh" - and yet, Jesus is Immanuel, God with us (**Matthew 1:23**), Who not only revealed this dream, but stood with Daniel's three companions and protected them in the fiery furnace (**Daniel 3**).

That angered the king, so he condemned them all to death. Since Daniel and his friends were numbered among the wise men in training, they were going to die, too.

Daniel 2:16 - "Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation."

He didn't know the dream or the interpretation yet, though. But he trusted God to get them out of this dire situation.

(To me, this is similar to Esther daring to enter the presence of King Ahasuerus).

Then Daniel huddled with his three companions, and they had a serious prayer meeting:

Daniel 2:17-18 - "Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon."

Their prayers are not recorded, only God's answer.

Daniel 2:19 - "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven."

Daniels Thanksgiving

Daniel 2:20-23 - "Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter."

"wisdom" = *ḥākmâ* - both practical wisdom and occult knowledge, whether skill to judge and rule or understanding of nature and human psychology; enlightenment and insight

into events or mysteries; or discerning the meaning of Torah.

"might" = *g^ebûrâ* - power, the ability to act and carry through what wisdom reveals

"he changeth the times and the seasons" - God is the power that set the trajectory of the earth around the sun, tilted so we have seasons, turning to change night to day and back again.

"he removeth kings, and setteth up kings" - Humans think they are in control of events. Kings like Nebuchadnezzar consider themselves to be the supreme power. But God controls history. No matter how the winds of politics blow, God allows rulers, governors and presidents to arise, and then also dismisses them.

In fact,

"The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the watercourses: He turns it whithersoever He will" (**Proverbs 21:1**).

"He revealeth the deep and secret things" - In this case, the king's dream. But more importantly, he uncovers the wickedness in our own hearts, which gives us the opportunity to repent.

"and the light dwelleth with him." - He is light itself, and the Father of lights; and the gives us the light of the glorious Gospel; and also Christ, the Light of the world, the sun of righteousness.

R. Aba Serungia (Bereshit Rabba, sect. 1. fol. 1, 3.), mentioning this passage, "and the light dwelleth with him", adds, this is the King Messiah, as it is said, "Arise, shine":

- **Isaiah 60:1** - "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee."

In answer to the question, "What is the name of the Messiah?" (in Echa Rabbati, fol. 50. 2.) this is said, His name is Light, as it is said, "and the light dwelleth with him" - quoting this passage in Daniel.

- **John 8:12** - "I am the light of the world..."

The insight God gave Daniel was a foreshadowing of Jesus' discernment:

Jesus and Nathanael

- **John 1:45-51** - "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of

him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

- **John 4:29** - "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"

Don't Try This at Home

"Rav H̥isda said: 'A dream not interpreted is like a letter not read'" (Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 55a). That's true so long as it's your own private interpretation. But some Charismatics have launched into interpreting other people's dreams, mistaking their own fleshly musings with God's spiritual insight.

In case we might be tempted by Daniel's example to try our hand at some dream interpretation on our own, there are some troubling warnings from Deuteronomy:

- **Deuteronomy 18:20** - "But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die."

... and from Jeremiah:

- **Jeremiah 23:32** - "Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD."

Next time, we'll take a look at the rest of the chapter and the content of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its meaning.