**LESSON II**

**Daniel: A Life of Unwavering Obedience and Trust**

**1:8-21**

**Men’s Ministry**

**INTRODUCTION**

Up until now, Daniel has described the circumstances that he and 3 other Judean exiles experienced in Babylon but has not characterized their relationship to God. This section does that. It describes them as faithful followers of the Lord. From the 1st day in Nebuchadnezzar’s court, their commitment to God dictated their actions. Beginning immediately, they sought alternatives to eating the king’s food and drinking his wine and God honored them by granting them grace with the officials to avoid the king’s food and wine (1:8-16); and, by giving them great learning and skill enabling them to be well prepared for service in the king’s court and administration (1:16-20).

The Bible presents a long tradition of people demonstrating themselves faithful to God under difficult circumstances with many moving from their homeland and serving him in foreign countries. These characters include Abraham (Gen 11:10-25:18), Joseph (Gen 37-50), Moses (Exod 3-4), David (I Sam 27), Ruth (Ruth 1), Ezekiel (Ezek 1:1), Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, and the 12 Apostles (Acts-Revelation). Daniel 1:8-21 places Daniel and his three companions in this group of faithful people. They prove they are part of the remnant of God’s people who serve and worship Him regardless of their circumstances.

**V 8-9:***But*[*Daniel*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=01840)[*made*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=07760)*up his*[*mind*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=03820)*that he would not*[*defile*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=01351)*himself with the*[*king's*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=04428)[*choice*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=06598)[*food*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=06598)*or with the*[*wine*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=03196)[*which*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=04960)*he*[*drank*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=04960)*; so he*[*sought*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=01245) *permission from the*[*commander*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=08269)*of the*[*officials*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=05631)*that he might not*[*defile*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=01351) *himself.****9****Now*[*God*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=0430)[*granted*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=05414)[*Daniel*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=01840)[*favor*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=02617)*and*[*compassion*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=07356)*in the*[*sight*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=06440) *of the*[*commander*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=08269)*of the*[*officials*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=05631)

V 8: Daniel and his colleagues demonstrate their allegiance to God at the outset. Nebuchadnezzar had ordered that all the young people taken captive from Jerusalem eat the king’s food and drink. “*But Daniel* [*made*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=07760)*up his*[*mind*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=03820)*that he would not*[*defile*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=01351)*himself with the king’s choice food or with the wine which he drank”.*

The word “defile” occurs ten times in the OT and can mean someone or something that does not qualify for a particular religious purpose; or, that has been used for a bad purpose; or, that has come into contact with blood. The word describes men excluded from the priesthood (Ezra 2:6); those who misused God’s name and table (Mal 1:7,12); rulers who misused their hands to oppress and kill (Is 59:3); priests who misused their office for personal gain (Neh 13:29); and blood that stained skin or garments (Nu 31:19; Is 63:3).

Daniel and his 3 companions are immediately confronted with the problem of compromising in the matter of eating the king’s food. No doubt, the king’s food was intended to be generous and indicated his favor. However, Daniel “purposed in his heart” not to defile himself with food (Is 42:25; 47:7; 57:1; Mal 2:2). KEY: He decided well in advance before he tasted the food and became tempted by it not to be defiled by it.

Daniel does not state why the food and drink would be defiling to him. Some suggest that the king’s food had been offered to idols or that it was unclean according to some aspect of Moses’ teaching or that simply it came from an oppressive king. But perhaps the best reason was that Daniel did not want to credit the king (over his God) for his and his three companions’ success. I.e., Daniel and his friends were in a program of education and training for service. Their minds and bodies were being nourished and provided for by the king. If they prospered, then to whom should they attribute their development and success? Answer: the Babylonian king. Thus, by refusing to eat the king’s food, they were able to demonstrate it was not the king who was responsible for their remarkable physical appearance and intellectual development but the Lord.

Very importantly, Daniel did not want to use his position for personal gain. As the book proceeds, he seeks nothing for himself in return for his service (2:21-49; 5:17) and he always credits God with his successes (2:17-23, 27-28; 5:17-23; 6:21-22).

As the book continues, it’s clear that Daniel wanted to do more than just survive. He also desired to make the Lord known to his captors. His asking the chief of the officials for permission not to defile himself makes this point very clear since it shows his obedience to the Lord. He knows that his actions and his witness must be consistent.

V 9: This verse summarizes the close relationship Daniel had with the Lord: “*Now God granted* [*Daniel*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=01840)[*favor*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=02617)*and compassion in the*[*sight*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=06440) *of the*[*commander*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=08269)*of the officials.”* Both favor and compassion appear in Ex 34:6-7, one of the best known summaries of God’s gracious character in the OT. Here, God grants both of these to Daniel. “Favor” (*hesed;* covenant kindness) includes the ideas of loyalty, kindness, enduring love and mercy. The second term, “compassion” (*rahamim*), refers to tender love and sympathy, e.g., from a mother (I Ki 3:26) or father (Hos 11:8). Here, the Lord is extending deep, tender, fatherly/motherly, compassion/sympathy to Daniel. How did he do it? By sovereignly preparing the heart of the commander of the officials and the warden (v 11) to accept Daniel’s request.

**10***and the*[*commander*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=08269)*of the officials said to*[*Daniel*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=01840)*, "I am*[*afraid*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=03372)*of my lord the king, who appointed your food and your*[*drink*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=04960)*; for*[*why*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=04100)*should he*[*see*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=07200)*your*[*faces*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=06440) *looking more haggard*[*than*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=04480)*the*[*youths*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=03206)[*who*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=0834)*are your own*[*age*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=01524)*? Then you would make me*[*forfeit*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=02325)*my*[*head*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=07218)*to the*[*king*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=04428)*."*

The proof of God’s covenant kindness and compassion develops in three stages over the next few verses.

The 1st stage includes a conversation with the man in charge of their care. While sympathetic with Daniel’s concerns, the chief of the officials knows that the king will hold him personally responsible if the four Judean boys look worse than the other candidates. He says that granting the request could cost him his life (“*forfeit my head to the king*”). Life was “cheap” under Nebuchadnezzar and he did not want to be caught changing the king’s orders in regard to the diet of the Judean exiles. “*faces looking more haggard*” means looking worse compared to the other exiles, i.e., looking pale or thinner than the others.

**V 11-14:** *But*[*Daniel*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=01840)[*said*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=0559)*to the*[*overseer*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=04453)(lower official; e.g., a warden) *whom the*  [*commander*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=08269)*of the*[*officials*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=05631)*had*[*appointed*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=04487)[*over*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=05921) *Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and* [*Azariah*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=05838)*,****12***[*"Please*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=04994)[*test*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=05254)*your*[*servants*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=05650) *for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink.* ***13****Then let our appearance be observed in your*[*presence*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=06440)*and the appearance of the youths who are eating the*[*king's*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=04428)[*choice*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=06598)[*food*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=06598)*; and*[*deal*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=06213)*with your*[*servants*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=05650)*according to*[*what*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=03512)*you*[*see*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=07200)*.* ***14.*** *So he*[*listened*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=08085) *to them in*[*this*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=02088)[*matter*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=01697)*and*[*tested*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=05254)*them for ten days.”*

The 2nd stage requires a way to avoid the consequences that the chief official fears. Daniel shows his wisdom by appealing to and suggesting a plan to the warden (KJV: “Melzar”; *Hamelsar*, Hebrew) who serves the chief official and is in charge of the day-to-day care of the 4 Hebrews. This plan does not insult the king, endanger the chief official or the warden, or compromise him or his friends’ convictions. Daniel makes certain to protect everyone involved in the plan. This plan also will show the chief official (if he knew about it) and the warden that God watches over his servants. All four exiles will participate in the plan. There will be a time limit of ten days, so this is a test and not a final solution. A ten-day trial is a reasonable period of time to test a diet and would not entail much risk of incurring the anger of the king. After ten days, the warden will decide if this has been a wise plan to follow. If he sees that the four Hebrew exiles are thinner or paler than the other exiles, he can stop the trial and reinstate the king’s diet and nothing would be lost.

The word Daniel chooses for food (“vegetables to eat”; “pulse” KJV) comes from the Hebrew word for seed, so the food is derived from seeds and/or contains seeds. It was food limited to that which grows out of the ground. It describes food made from grain. In other passages in the OT, it is used in the context of planting and harvesting (Gen 8:22; 26:12; Is 17:11). The point is not to try to figure out what type of “health” food they ate, but that they will eat and drink what God supplies. By stating that this is how they will avoid defilement, they are showing the warden that the God they serve can provide what they need through the most basic sustenance. Daniel also indirectly invites God to protect his name by protecting them. This plan of Daniel gives us the first look at the wisdom Daniel possesses.

**V 15-16:** *At the*[*end*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=07117)*of 10*[*days*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=03117)*their*[*appearance*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=04758)[*seemed*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=07200)[*better*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=02896)*and*

*they were*[*fatter*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=01277)[*than*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=04480)[*all*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=03605)*the*[*youths*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=03206)[*who*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=0834)*had been eating the king’s choice food.****16****So the warden* [*continued*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=01961)*to*[*withhold*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=05375)*their*[*choice*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=06598)[*food*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=06598)*and the*[*wine*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=03196)*they were to*[*drink*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=04960)*, and*[*kept*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=05414)[*giving*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=05414)*them*[*vegetables*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=02235)*.*

**The 3rd and final stage of the proof of God’s covenant kindness/loyal love and compassion/sympathy towards Daniel is that Daniel’s plan succeeds, i.e., the warden agrees (“*he listened to them in this matter*” v 14). And “*at the end of 10 days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king’s choice food.*” The fact that “*their appearance seemed better and they were fatter*” is important because it was one of the chief qualifications of their job (1:4). Therefore, the warden let the four continue eating and drinking vegetables and water. Some, but not all scholars consider this result to be miraculous. God, certainly, was involved in their care and blessed them but no supernatural act of God is required here.**

**V 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.*

**Daniel now begins a summation that will close this chapter. At this juncture, three years have elapsed, the four young Judeans (less than 20 years old) have completed their Babylonian education. In addition to their natural intelligence and their careful dedication to their studies, once again, Daniel states that God has given them his grace (“*God gave them*”; i.e., he favored them, cf. 1:9). God gave them success in the training that 1:4 describes, i.e., the king “*ordered him (Ashpenaz) to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans*.” NOTE: although they had learned Babylonian culture and value system, which often stood in conflict with the values of Judaism, God’s grace included discernment in order to enable them to distinguish right from wrong. Additionally, Daniel adds that God specifically gave to him ability to understand “*all kinds of visions and dreams*”. Chapter 2 will demonstrate this ability. This is not a foolish boast on Daniel’s part but an actual fact necessary to understand his role as a prophet in the chapters that follow. In this regard, Daniel differed from his other Hebrew exiles. This ability to interpret visions and dreams pertained primarily to the dreams and visions of others.**

**Daniel is a major prophet although unlike the others (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) who wrote extensively on various themes and oftentimes confronted the sins of the Israelites, he wrote (as we will see) on the broad expanse of Hebrew and Gentile future world history unlike any of the other major prophets, i.e., see Daniel 2, 7, 8, 9, 10-12.**

**V 18-20:** *Then at the*[*end*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=07117)*of days which the king had specified for presenting them, the*[*commander*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=08269)*of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar.* ***19****The*[*king*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=04428)[*talked*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=01696)*with them, and out of them*[*all*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=03605)*not one was*[*found*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=04672)*like*[*Daniel*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=01840)*,*[*Hananiah*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=02608)*, [Mishael](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=04332" \o "Strong's Number: 04332) and*[*Azariah*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=05838)*; so they entered the king’s personal service.****20****As for every matter of*[*wisdom*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=02451) *and understanding about*[*which*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=0834)*the*[*king*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=04428)[*consulted*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=01245)*them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm.*

When the 3-year period of preparation for Nebuchadnezzar’s court is completed, the commander of the officials presents the four Judean exiles to the king for a personal interview. There is no mention to the king at this time of their special diet. Perhaps the warden kept the potentially explosive information from the commander of the officials; we don’t know.

Nonetheless, the four Judean exiles are the elite of their class (1:19). Under Nebuchadnezzar’s searching questions, they were found to be *ten times better (*literally “10 hands” or 10 times wiser than the other Hebrew exiles) *than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm.*

Their conversation with the king sets them apart from all the other exiles at this time and also throughout the book. We should understand that their straight forward character and honesty, as well as their deep insight into the real meaning of their studies must have stood in sharp contrast to the wise men of the king’s court, who more often were sly and cunning than wise. So as a result of their dedicated pursuit of their studies, in God’s providence, he gave excellent advisors to Nebuchadnezzar during the time that he acted as the instrument of punishment of his children Israel (Jer 25:1-14). In addition, through Daniel’s experiences and those of the other three Hebrew exiles, God has shown believers down through the ages that he is trustworthy and that it is possible for believers to remain faithful to him even when away from home and under the hardest of circumstances.

**V 21** *And*[*Daniel*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=01840)[*continued*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=01961)[*until*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=05704)*the*[*first*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=0259)[*year*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=08141)*of*[*Cyrus*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=03566)*the*[*king*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs/?t=nas&ll=h&sn=04428)*.*

Daniel will outlive the Babylonian empire which ended in 539 BC. Babylonian records contain nearly 3000 names of scribes that lived during the Babylonian empire and several are mentioned living as long as Daniel. Scholars suggest that the absence of his companions tells us that Daniel outlived their lives. This cannot be said with certainty. Though Daniel never outlived his love for Jerusalem, he never went home.

**Lessons from Daniel 1:1-21**

1. God may sovereignly send/place you in a difficult situation to share the gospel. How should you respond? What should we think?
2. Be prepared to recognize the challenges non-Christian circumstances throw at you to lead you away from trusting the Lord (e.g., isolation, indoctrination, assimilation, confusion 1:6-7
3. Determine early in your life or difficult circumstances that you will not compromise your convictions and commitments to God
4. Trust God to honor your devotion and faithfulness to him
5. The Lord preserves and protects the righteous during suffering.
6. The Lord is sovereign over the nation of Israel and acted providentially concerning them. The same is true for us.
7. Godly, faithful parents often are the source of godly, faithful children. “*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it*.” (Prov 22:6)
8. God is sovereign over where he places his servants. We have to trust him, depend upon him, grow spiritually, and excel for him wherever he places us.