

Nebuchadnezzar's Golden Image and the Fiery Furnace (Tishri [October] 595–Adar [March] 594 BC)

Daniel 3

The Golden Image

1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made a statue of gold. Its height *was* sixty cubits *and* its width *was* six cubits; he set it up in the valley of Dura in the province of Babylon.

2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent *directions* to assemble the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all of the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the statue that Nebuchadnezzar the king *had* set up.

3 Then the satraps, the prefects, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the province *were* assembled for the dedication of the statue that Nebuchadnezzar the king *had* set up, and *were* standing before the statue that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

4 Then the herald proclaimed aloud, "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations and people of all languages,

5 *that* at the time that you hear the sound of the horn, the flute, *the* lyre, *the* trigon, *the* harp, *the* drum and all kinds of music, you must fall down and you must worship the statue of gold that Nebuchadnezzar the king *has* set up.

6 And whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown immediately into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire."

7 Therefore, at that time, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, the flute, *the* lyre, *the* trigon, *the* harp and all kinds of music, all the peoples, the nations and people of all languages *were* falling down *and* were worshipping the statue of gold that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

Daniel's Friends Refuse to Worship

8 Therefore at this time *some* astrologers came forward and they denounced the Jews.

9 They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king, "O king, may *you* live forever!

10 You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, the flute, *the* lyre, *the* trigon, *the* harp and *the* drum and all kinds of music, he shall fall down and shall worship the statue of gold.

11 And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be thrown into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire.

12 *However* there are Judean men whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—these men, O king, pay you no heed *and were* not serving your god, and the statue of gold that you set up they are not worshipping."

Nebuchadnezzar Confronts Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar said in rage and anger to bring in Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego; then they brought in these men before the king.

14 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "*Is it true*, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, *that* you are not serving my god, and *you are* not worshipping the statue of gold that I have set up?

15 Now if you are ready so that when you hear the sound of the horn, the flute, the lyre, *the* trigon, *the* harp and *the* drum and all kinds of music, you fall down and you worship the statue that I have made, *that will be good*. But if you do not worship it, immediately you will be thrown into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire, and who is the god who will rescue you from my hands?"

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego answered and said to the king, Nebuchadnezzar, "We have no need on this matter to present a defense to you.

17 If it is so, our God, whom we serve, is able to rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire. And from your hand, O king, let him rescue us.

18 And if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, and the statue of gold that you have set up we will not worship."

The Fiery Furnace

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with anger and the image of his face was changed toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, so *he* ordered and said to heat up the one furnace seven times what was usual to heat *it* up.

20 And he commanded the strongest men of the guards who *were* in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and to throw *them* into the furnace of blazing fire.

21 Then these men were bound with their garments, their trousers and their turbans and their *other* clothing, and they were thrown into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire.

22 Therefore because the word of the king was severe and the furnace was exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed these men who lifted up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

23 But these men, the three of them, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, fell down into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire, *and they were* bound.

24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and he rose up in haste *and* he asked, saying to his advisers, "*Did* we not throw three men, bound, into the midst of the fire? They answered, saying to the king, "Certainly, O king!"

25 He answered, saying, “Look, I see four men unbound walking in the midst of the fire and there is no damage to them, and the appearance of the fourth *man* resembles the son of a god.”

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar approached the door of the furnace of blazing fire, *and* he called out, saying, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come here!”

27 And the satraps, the prefects, the governors and the advisors of the king *were* assembling, *and* they saw these men, that the fire had no power over their bodies, and the hair of their heads was not singed, and their garments were not harmed, and the smell of fire did not come from them.

Nebuchadnezzar Honors God

28 Nebuchadnezzar responded, saying, “Blessed be their God, *the God* of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who sent his angel and rescued his servants who trusted in him, and the command of the king they disobeyed, and they gave their bodies so that they *did* not serve and *did* not worship any god except their God.

29 And from me is set forth a decree that any people, nation, or language that *may* utter criticism against their God—*the God* of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—will be broken into pieces and their house will be made like ruins. For there is not another God who is able to rescue like this *God*.”

30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

Jeremiah Urges Submission to Babylon (Ab [August] 594 BC)

Jeremiah 27

Jeremiah Warns the Nations to Submit to and Serve Nebuchadnezzar

1 In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, saying—
2 thus said Yahweh to me—“Make for yourself fetters and yokes and put them on your neck,

3 and send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Tyre, and to the king of Sidon in *the* hand of *the* envoys who have come to Jerusalem, to Zedekiah, the king of Judah.

4 And you must command them for their masters, saying, ‘Thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, this you shall say to your masters:

5 “I have made the earth with humankind and animals that *are* on the face of the earth by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and I give it to whomever is right in my eyes.

6 And now I myself have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and also the animals of the field I have given to him to serve him.

7 And all the nations will serve him, and his son, and his grandson, until the coming of the time of his own land. Then many nations and great kings will let him work.

8 “But it will be *that* the nation or kingdom that will not serve him, Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put his neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, I will punish that nation with the sword, and with the famine, and with the plague,” declares Yahweh, “until I have destroyed it with my hand.

9 And you, you must not listen to your prophets, and to your diviners, and to your dreamers, and to your interpreters of signs, and to your sorcerers who are saying, ‘You will not serve the king of Babylon.’

10 For they *are* prophesying to you a lie, so that you *will be* removed from your land, and I will drive you away, and you will perish.

11 But the nation that will bring its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and will serve him, yet will I leave it on its land,” declares Yahweh, “and they will till it, and they will live in it.” ”

Jeremiah Warns Zedekiah to Submit to Babylon and Not to Listen to False Prophets

12 And I spoke words like these to Zedekiah, the king of Judah, saying, “Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live.

13 Why should you die—you and your people—by the sword, by the famine, and by the plague, as Yahweh has spoken concerning the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon?

14 And you must not listen to the words of the prophets who are speaking to you, saying, ‘You must not serve the king of Babylon,’ for they *are* prophesying a lie to you.

15 For I have not sent them,” declares Yahweh, “but they *are* prophesying in my name falsely, so that I will drive them away. And you will perish—you and the prophets who are prophesying to you.”

Jeremiah Warns the Priests and all the People to Ignore the False Prophets

16 Then I spoke to the priests and to all this people, saying, “Thus says Yahweh, ‘You must not listen to the words of your prophets who are prophesying to you, saying, “Look, the vessels of the house of Yahweh *are* about to be quickly brought back from Babylon”, for they *are* prophesying a lie to you.

17 And you must not listen to them; serve the king of Babylon and live. Why should this city become a site of ruins?

18 But if they *are* prophets, and if there is with them the word of Yahweh, let them please plead with Yahweh of hosts, that the

vessels that are left over in the temple of Yahweh, and the house of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem, must not go *to* Babylon.’
 19 For thus says Yahweh of hosts concerning the pillars, and concerning the sea, and concerning the stands, and concerning the rest of the vessels that are left in this city,
 20 which Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, did not take when he deported Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, from Jerusalem *to* Babylon, along with all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem.
 21 For thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that are left *in* the house of Yahweh, and *in* the house of the king of Judah, and *in* Jerusalem:
 22 ‘They will be brought *to* Babylon, and there they will stay until the day of my attending to them,’ declares Yahweh. ‘Then I will bring them up and restore them to this place.’”

Conflict between Jeremiah and Hananiah (Ab [August] 594 BC)

Jeremiah 28

Hananiah’s False Prophecy

1 And it was in that *same* year, at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, the king of Judah, in the fourth year, in the fifth month, that Hananiah, the son of Azzur, the prophet who *was* from Gibeon, said to me in the house of Yahweh before the eyes of the priests and all the people, saying,
 2 “Thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, ‘I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon.
 3 Within two years I *will* bring back to this place all the vessels of the house of Yahweh which Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon took away from this place and brought *to* Babylon.
 4 And Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, and all the exiles from Judah who went *to* Babylon, I *will* bring back to this place,’ declares Yahweh, ‘For I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.’”

Jeremiah’s Response to Hananiah

5 Then Jeremiah the prophet said to Hananiah the prophet before the eyes of the priests and before the eyes of all the people who were standing in the house of Yahweh,
 6 and Jeremiah the prophet said, “Amen! May Yahweh do so; may Yahweh fulfill your words that you have prophesied, to bring back the vessels of the house of Yahweh and all the exiles from Babylon to this place.
 7 Nevertheless listen please *to* this word that I *am* speaking in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people,
 8 The prophets who were before me and before you from ancient *times* prophesied against many countries and against great kingdoms of war, and of disaster, and of plague.
 9 The prophet who prophesies peace, at the coming of the word of the prophet, will become known *as* the prophet that Yahweh has truly sent.”

Hananiah’s Symbolic Act

10 Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from the neck of Jeremiah the prophet and broke it.
 11 Then Hananiah said before the eyes of all the people, saying, “Thus says Yahweh, ‘This is how I will break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, within two years, from the neck of all the nations.’” And Jeremiah the prophet went on his way.

Jeremiah Denounces Hananiah

12 And the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah after Hananiah the prophet broke the yoke from the neck of Jeremiah the prophet, saying,
 13 “Go, and you must say to Hananiah, saying, ‘Thus says Yahweh, “You have broken yoke bars of wood, but you have made in place of them yoke bars of iron.”
 14 For thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, “I have put a yoke of iron on the neck of all these nations, to serve Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and they will serve him, and I have even given the animals of the open field to him.” ‘”
 15 Then Jeremiah the prophet said to Hananiah the prophet, “Please listen, Hananiah, Yahweh has not sent you, and you have made this people trust in a lie.
 16 Therefore thus says Yahweh, ‘Look, I *am* going to send you from the face of the earth. This year you *will* die because you have spoken rebellion against Yahweh.’”
 17 And Hananiah the prophet died in that *same* year in the seventh month [*two months later*].

Chronological Notes

- 1) A Possible Historical Setting for Daniel 3.¹
- A) Unlike most of the major sections of Daniel, chapter 3 contains no chronological notice for the setting of the events it relates.² However, a careful investigation into the book of Jeremiah and into the surviving chronicles of Nebuchadnezzar's reign suggests a date of late December 594 or January 593 BC for the convocation to dedicate the golden statue.³
- B) The Babylonian Chronicle states that a rebellion took place in Babylon from the month of Kislev (December 15, 595–January 12, 594) to the month of Tebeth (January 13–February 11, 594) in the tenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign.⁴ Nebuchadnezzar suppressed the rebellion and also purged his army of those he suspected of supporting the uprising.⁵ At the end of that year (the Babylonian year ended on April 11, 594), Nebuchadnezzar made a trip to his western provinces to collect tribute from his vassals.⁶ This trip was probably to enforce his authority in light of the rebellion that he recently suppressed. Moreover, he returned to those western provinces with his army in the month of Kislev the next year (December 4, 594–January 1, 593).⁷
- C) Early in Zedekiah's fourth year as king of Judah (which corresponds to the last six months of Nebuchadnezzar's eleventh year and the first six months of his twelfth year),⁸ Zedekiah made a trip to Babylon (Jer 51:59–64). Zedekiah's trip most likely took place upon the return of Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon, perhaps in late Kislev 594 (late December 594) or more likely in Tebeth 593 (January 593). Zedekiah probably was asked to make this trip to profess his loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar. However, it appears to have had the opposite effect, since later that year, before the end of month of Shebat (February 1–March 1, 593),⁹ Zedekiah, having returned to Jerusalem, plotted with emissaries from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar, even though Jeremiah advised against this rebellion (Jer 27:1–22).
- D) This sequence of events would yield a date of late December 594 or January 593 for Zedekiah's trip to Babylon and his return. The convocation in Daniel 3 is a likely setting for the destination of Zedekiah's trip, since the trip probably was for the purpose of ensuring his loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah would have been one of a number of vassals who were brought to Babylon to demonstrate their loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar by worshiping the huge statue he erected. Most commentators believe that the presupposition in the narrative of Daniel 3 is that willingness to bow down to the golden image was equated with loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar.¹⁰

¹ Sourced from Andrew E. Steinmann, "Daniel," *Concordia Commentary*, (Concordia Publishing House, 2008), 167–170. The footnotes that follow are also from Steinmann.

² Both the Old Greek and Theodotion prefix the words ἑτοῦς ὀκτωκαιδεκάτου to the start of 3:1 to indicate that the convocation took place in Nebuchadnezzar's "eighteenth year." However, these words probably are a secondary addition based on Jer 52:29.

³ The specific chronicle is preserved on tablet BM 21946. See Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings*, 66–75. The identification of the chronological sequence that includes the convocation was first proposed by Shea, "Daniel 3," *AUSS* 20.1 (Spring 1982): 29–52. It has been favored by Dyer, "The Musical Instruments in Daniel 3," 426–27. Goldingay, *Daniel*, 69, notes Shea's work without comment. However, Miller, *Daniel*, 112, n. 24, and Collins, *Daniel*, 183, n. 47, reject this identification first proposed by Shea. Miller states that the events probably occurred earlier in Nebuchadnezzar's reign, and Collins calls the identification "unwarranted," but neither Miller nor Collins gives any reason for his position. More controversial and much less certain is Shea's identification of three officials of Nebuchadnezzar listed on a clay prism as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Shea, "Daniel 3," 37–41, 46–50).

⁴ BM 21946, reverse, line 21 (Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings*, 72–73).

⁵ BM 21946, reverse, line 22 (Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings*, 72–73).

⁶ BM 21946, reverse, lines 23–24 (Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings*, 72–73).

⁷ BM 21946, reverse, line 25 (Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings*, 74–75).

⁸ Official years of Judean kings were reckoned as beginning in the fall with the beginning of the month of Tishri. Thus Zedekiah's fourth year began on 1 Tishri 594 (October 6, 594), six months after the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's eleventh year on 1 Nisan 594 (April 12, 594).

⁹ Jer 28:1 dates the false prophet Hananiah's prophecy recorded in Jeremiah 28 to the fifth month (Shebat) of the same year as the events recorded in Jeremiah 27.

¹⁰ Commentators who believe this include Archer, "Daniel," 50; Baldwin, *Daniel*, 99; Collins, *Daniel*, 183; Goldingay, *Daniel*, 73; Gowan, *Daniel*, 65; Leupold, *Daniel*, 135; Lucas, *Daniel*, 93; Miller, *Daniel*, 112; Montgomery, *Daniel*, 195; Walvoord, *Daniel*, 82; Young, *Daniel*, 88.