

Nebuchadnezzar's Golden Image and the Fiery Furnace (Tishri [October] 595–Adar [March] 594 BC)**Daniel 3****The Golden Image**

1 King Nebuchadnezzar had a golden statue made. It was ninety feet tall and nine feet wide. He erected it on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

2 Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent out a summons to assemble the satraps, prefects, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the other authorities of the province to attend the dedication of the statue that he had erected.

3 So the satraps, prefects, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the other provincial authorities assembled for the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had erected. They were standing in front of the statue that Nebuchadnezzar had erected.

4 Then the herald made a loud proclamation: "To you, O peoples, nations, and language groups, the following command is given:

5 When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, trigon, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music, you must bow down and pay homage to the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has erected.

6 Whoever does not bow down and pay homage will immediately be thrown into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire!"

7 Therefore when they all heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, trigon, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations, and language groups began bowing down and paying homage to the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had erected.

Daniel's Friends Refuse to Worship

8 Now at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought malicious accusations against the Jews.

9 They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever!

10 You have issued an edict, O king, that everyone must bow down and pay homage to the golden statue when they hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, trigon, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music.

11 And whoever does not bow down and pay homage must be thrown into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.

12 But there are Jewish men whom you appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—and these men have not shown proper respect to you, O king. They don't serve your gods and they don't pay homage to the golden statue that you have erected."

Nebuchadnezzar Confronts Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in a fit of rage demanded that they bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego before him. So they brought them before the king.

14 Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you don't serve my gods and that you don't pay homage to the golden statue that I erected?"

15 Now if you are ready, when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, trigon, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music, you must bow down and pay homage to the statue that I had made. If you don't pay homage to it, you will immediately be thrown into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire. Now, who is that god who can rescue you from my power?"

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to King Nebuchadnezzar, "We do not need to give you a reply concerning this.

17 If our God whom we are serving exists, he is able to rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and he will rescue us, O king, from your power as well.

18 But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we don't serve your gods, and we will not pay homage to the golden statue that you have erected."

The Fiery Furnace

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with rage, and his disposition changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He gave orders to heat the furnace seven times hotter than it was normally heated.

20 He ordered strong soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire.

21 So those men were tied up while still wearing their cloaks, trousers, turbans, and other clothes, and were thrown into the furnace of blazing fire.

22 But since the king's command was so urgent, and the furnace was so excessively hot, the men who escorted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were killed by the leaping flames.

23 But those three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell into the furnace of blazing fire while still securely bound.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was startled and quickly got up. He said to his ministers, "Wasn't it three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied to the king, "For sure, O king."

25 He answered, "But I see four men, untied and walking around in the midst of the fire! No harm has come to them! And the appearance of the fourth is like that of a god!"

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar approached the door of the furnace of blazing fire. He called out, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the most high God, come out! Come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego emerged from the fire.

27 Once the satraps, prefects, governors, and ministers of the king had gathered around, they saw that those men were physically

unharmd by the fire. The hair of their heads was not singed, nor were their trousers damaged. Not even the smell of fire was to be found on them!

Nebuchadnezzar Honors God

28 Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, “Praised be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent forth his angel and has rescued his servants who trusted in him, ignoring the edict of the king and giving up their bodies rather than serve or pay homage to any god other than their God!

29 I hereby decree that any people, nation, or language group that blasphemes the god of Shadrach, Meshach, or Abednego will be dismembered and his home reduced to rubble! For there exists no other god who can deliver in this way.”

30 Then Nebuchadnezzar 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 The LORD spoke to Jeremiah early in the reign of Josiah’s son, King Zedekiah of Judah.

2 The LORD told me, “Make a yoke out of leather straps and wooden crossbars and put it on your neck.

3 Use it to send messages to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon. Send them through the envoys who have come to Jerusalem to King Zedekiah of Judah.

4 Charge them to give their masters a message from me. Tell them, ‘The LORD God of Israel who rules over all says to give your masters this message.

5 “I made the earth and the people and animals on it by my mighty power and great strength, and I give it to whomever I see fit.

6 I have at this time placed all these nations of yours under the power of my servant, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. I have even made all the wild animals subject to him.

7 All nations must serve him and his son and grandson until the time comes for his own nation to fall. Then many nations and great kings will in turn subjugate Babylon.

8 But suppose a nation or a kingdom will not be subject to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Suppose it will not submit to the yoke of servitude to him. I, the LORD, affirm that I will punish that nation. I will use the king of Babylon to punish it with war, starvation, and disease until I have destroyed it.

9 So do not listen to your prophets or to those who claim to predict the future by divination, by dreams, by consulting the dead, or by practicing magic. They keep telling you, ‘You do not need to be subject to the king of Babylon.’

10 Do not listen to them, because their prophecies are lies. Listening to them will only cause you to be taken far away from your native land. I will drive you out of your country and you will die in exile.

11 Things will go better for the nation that submits to the yoke of servitude to the king of Babylon and is subject to him. I will leave that nation in its native land. Its people can continue to farm it and live in it. I, the LORD, affirm it!”

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

12 I told King Zedekiah of Judah the same thing. I said, “Submit to the yoke of servitude to the king of Babylon. Be subject to him and his people. Then you will continue to live.

13 There is no reason why you and your people should die in war or from starvation or disease! That’s what the LORD says will happen to any nation that will not be subject to the king of Babylon.

14 Do not listen to the prophets who are telling you that you do not need to serve the king of Babylon. For they are prophesying lies to you.

15 For I, the LORD, affirm that I did not send them. They are prophesying lies to you. If you listen to them, I will drive you and the prophets who are prophesying lies out of the land and you will all die in exile.”

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

16 I also told the priests and all the people, “The LORD says, ‘Do not listen to what your prophets are saying. They are prophesying to you that the valuable articles taken from the LORD’s temple will be brought back from Babylon very soon. But they are prophesying a lie to you.

17 Do not listen to them. Be subject to the king of Babylon. Then you will continue to live. Why should this city be made a pile of rubble?’”

18 I also told them, “If they are really prophets and the LORD is speaking to them, let them pray earnestly to the LORD who rules over all. Let them plead with him not to let the valuable articles that are still left in the LORD’s temple, in the royal palace, and in Jerusalem be taken away to Babylon.

19 For the LORD who rules over all has already spoken about the two bronze pillars, the large bronze basin called ‘The Sea,’ and the movable bronze stands. He has already spoken about the rest of the valuable articles that are left in this city.

20 He has already spoken about these things that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon did not take away when he carried Jehoiakim’s

son King Jeconiah of Judah and the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem away as captives.

21 Indeed, the LORD God of Israel who rules over all has already spoken about the valuable articles that are left in the LORD's temple, in the royal palace of Judah, and in Jerusalem.

22 He has said, 'They will be carried off to Babylon. They will remain there until it is time for me to show consideration for them again. Then I will bring them back and restore them to this place.' I, the LORD, affirm this!"

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

Jeremiah 28

Hananiah's False Prophecy

1 The following events occurred in that same year, early in the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah. To be more precise, it was the fifth month of the fourth year of his reign. The prophet Hananiah son of Azzur, who was from Gibeon, spoke to Jeremiah in the LORD's temple in the presence of the priests and all the people.

2 "The LORD God of Israel who rules over all says, 'I will break the yoke of servitude to the king of Babylon.

3 Before two years are over, I will bring back to this place everything that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon took from it and carried away to Babylon.

4 I will also bring back to this place Jehoiakim's son King Jeconiah of Judah and all the exiles who were taken to Babylon.' Indeed, the LORD affirms, 'I will break the yoke of servitude to the king of Babylon.'"

Jeremiah's Response to Hananiah

5 Then the prophet Jeremiah responded to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the LORD's temple.

6 The prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! May the LORD do all this! May the LORD make your prophecy come true! May he bring back to this place from Babylon all the valuable articles taken from the LORD's temple and the people who were carried into exile.

7 But listen to what I say to you and to all these people.

8 From earliest times, the prophets who preceded you and me invariably prophesied war, disaster, and plagues against many countries and great kingdoms.

9 So if a prophet prophesied peace and prosperity, it was only known that the LORD truly sent him when what he prophesied came true."

Hananiah's Symbolic Act

10 The prophet Hananiah then took the yoke off the prophet Jeremiah's neck and broke it.

11 Then he spoke up in the presence of all the people. "The LORD says, 'In the same way I will break the yoke of servitude of all the nations to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon before two years are over.'" After he heard this, the prophet Jeremiah departed and went on his way.

Jeremiah Denounces Hananiah

12 But shortly after the prophet Hananiah had broken the yoke off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, the LORD spoke to Jeremiah.

13 "Go and tell Hananiah that the LORD says, 'You have indeed broken the wooden yoke. But you have only succeeded in replacing it with an iron one!

14 For the LORD God of Israel who rules over all says, "I have put an irresistible yoke of servitude on all these nations so they will serve King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. And they will indeed serve him. I have even given him control over the wild animals.'"

15 Then the prophet Jeremiah told the prophet Hananiah, "Listen, Hananiah! The LORD did not send you! You are making these people trust in a lie!

16 So the LORD says, 'I will most assuredly remove you from the face of the earth. You will die this very year because you have counseled rebellion against the LORD.'"

17 In the seventh month of that very same year [2 months later] the prophet Hananiah died.

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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 ἑνδεκάτου ἔτους 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.