



## 70 Years – Lessons from Daniel

By Rev. Pat Frame

The book of Daniel is set in Babylon, the nation ruled by Nebuchadnezzar. The first exile to Babylon happened in 606 BCE when the Babylonians took the royal family, court officials and the temple vessels into captivity. Among those taken into exile at that time were four young men – Daniel and his three friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. The requirement was that they were to be “*young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans.*” (Daniel 1:4) From this we can assume that Daniel and his friends were gifted young men. From the outset they showed themselves to be young men who were prepared to make a stand for their beliefs. They did not want to break the Jewish dietary laws and so asked if they could follow a vegetarian diet for 10 days and then be compared with those on the Babylonian diet. Of course at the end of those 10 days “*their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the King’s delicacies*” (Daniel 1:15). Not only that, but “*in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm.*” (Daniel 1:20). They were certainly a good advertisement for eating food not dedicated (sacrificed) to idols! God undoubtedly honoured them in their stance of being faithful to His law.



We begin to get a glimpse of Daniel’s personal relationship with the Lord in chapter 2. The King had had a dream which no-one could interpret. Daniel’s life was in danger, as was the life of his friends. Daniel asked the King for time to get the interpretation. Then Daniel went home and shared this issue with his three friends “*that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon*” (Daniel 2:18). And Daniel was able to give the correct interpretation to the King, resulting in his promotion to ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon and the promotion of his friends.

One day, in the first year of King Darius’ reign, Daniel was having his ‘quiet time’ and reading through the scroll of Jeremiah the prophet. Something jumped out at him as he read. He understood that Jeremiah prophesied that the exile (the desolations of Jerusalem) would last 70 years (Jeremiah 20:10). Daniel did a quick calculation and realised that the time was NOW. And his response was to set his face toward the Lord to pray and supplicate, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. He did

not just sit back and watch what would happen. He did not call all his friends and say 'hey – have you seen what Jeremiah says?' – he immediately fell on his face before the Lord.

Daniel's prayer is often used to teach on the principles of intercession, and rightly so, but we can learn even more when we realise the context is God's deliverance of His people from Babylonian exile. And how blessed we are that the prayer is recorded for us in Daniel 9.

In his prayer, Daniel firstly repented on behalf of the Jewish people. He understood that the people were in exile because of their unfaithfulness (Daniel 9:7, 11). He also recognised that the Jewish people themselves needed to repent and turn back to the Lord.

Daniel then petitioned the Lord that, according to His righteousness, He would turn His anger and fury away from Jerusalem.

A key here is that Daniel recognised that he could approach the Lord because of His mercy, not because of his or Israel's righteous deeds. He petitioned the Lord - to hear, to forgive, to listen, to act and not to delay. He asked the Lord to do this for His own sake (reminiscent of Ezekiel 36) because Jerusalem and the Jewish people are called by His name.

What can we learn from Daniel's prayer for *aliyah* today?

- We are seeing God fulfilling prophecies made hundreds of years ago - this is happening in our time. Our response, I believe, should be as Daniel's, one of prayer and of standing together with God's purposes.
- Pray that the Jewish people will have revelation from God that they are in exile because of their unfaithfulness and that they will repent and turn back to their God.
- Pray that God will bring them back to Israel for the sake of His Holy Name (Ezekiel 36).
- Pray that the Lord will hear, forgive, listen, act and not delay!
- Give the Lord no rest until He establishes Jerusalem as a praise in the earth (Isaiah 62:7).

We can rejoice that the Lord's time to favour Zion is in our day and age.