

OR HAMIDBAR

SPIRITUAL JUDAISM IN THE DESERT

Daniel: Piety, Politics and Prophecy, Part 2

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2: 1-3 In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream; his spirit was agitated, yet he was overcome by sleep. The king ordered the magicians, exorcists, sorcerers, and Chaldeans to be summoned in order to tell the king what he had dreamed. They came and stood before the king, and the king said to them, “I have had a dream and I am full of anxiety to know what I have dreamed.”

וַיְדַבְּרוּ הַכַּשְׂדִּים לְמֶלֶךְ אַרְמִיָּת מֶלֶכָא לְעֵלְמִין חַיִּי אָמַר חֲלָמָא (לְעַבְדִּיר) וּפְשָׂרָא נְחוּאָ:

4-6 The Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic, “O king, live forever! Relate the dream to your servants, and we will tell its meaning.”

The king said in reply to the Chaldeans, “I hereby decree: If you will not make the dream and its meaning known to me, you shall be torn limb from limb and your houses confiscated. But if you tell the dream and its meaning, you shall receive from me gifts, presents, and great honor; therefore, tell me the dream and its meaning.”

7-9 Once again they answered, “Let the king relate the dream to his servants, and we will tell its meaning.” The king said in reply, “It is clear to me that you are playing for time, since you see that I have decreed that if you do not make the dream known to me, there is but one verdict for you. You have conspired to tell me something false and fraudulent until circumstances change; so relate the dream to me, and I will then know that you can tell its meaning.”

10-12 The Chaldeans said in reply to the king, “There is no one on earth who can satisfy the king’s demand, for great king or ruler—none has ever asked such a thing of any magician, exorcist, or Chaldean. The thing asked by the king is difficult; there is **no one** who can tell it to the king except the gods whose abode is not among mortals.”

Whereupon the king flew into a violent rage, and gave an order to do away with all the wise men of Babylon.

וּמִלְתָּא דִּי-מֶלֶכָה שְׂאֵל יְקִירָה וְאַחֲרָן לָא אִיתֵי דִי יְחֻנְיָה קְדָם מֶלֶכָא לְהוּן אֱלֹהֵין דִּי מְדַרְהוֹן עִם-בְּשָׂרָא לָא אִיתוּהִי:

Midrash Tanchuma, Miketz 2:4

And there is none other (*aharan*) (Dan. 2:11). It should have been written “there is no Aaron” (*aharon*). While the Temple stood, a man could go to one of Aaron’s descendants to consult the Urim and Thummin for answers to their questions, but now there is no Temple and no Urim and Thummin to consult.

13-15 The decree condemning the wise men to death was issued. Daniel and his companions were about to be put to death when Daniel remonstrated with Arioch, the captain of the royal guard who had set out to put the wise men of Babylon to death.

He spoke up and said to Arioch, the royal officer, “Why is the decree of the king so urgent?”

Thereupon Arioch informed Daniel of the matter.

16-18 So Daniel went to ask the king for time, that he might tell the meaning to the king.

Then Daniel went to his house and informed his companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, of the matter, that they might implore the God of Heaven for help regarding this mystery, so that Daniel and his colleagues would not be put to death together with the other wise men of Babylon.

19 The mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision; **then Daniel blessed the God of Heaven.**

Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed, Part 2 45:3

Similarly Daniel declares that he had a dream; although he sees an angel and hears his word, he speaks of the event as of a dream: even when he had received the information [concerning the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar], he speaks of it in the following manner--"Then was the secret revealed to Daniel in a night vision (Dan. 2:19). On other occasions it is said, "He wrote down the dream" "I saw in the visions by night," etc.; "And the visions of my head confused me" (Dan. 7:1, 2, 15); "I was surprised at the vision, and none noticed it" (ibid. 8:27). There is no doubt that this is one degree below that form of prophecy to which the words, "In a dream I will speak to him," are applied. For this reason the nation desired to place the book of Daniel among the Hagiographa, and not among the Prophets.

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ענה דניאל ואמר להוא שמה די-אלהא מברך ועד-עלמא ועד-עלמא די חכמתא וגבורתא די לה-היא:

Daniel spoke up and said: "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power are His.

Siddur, Kaddish

יהא שמה רבא מברך לעלם ולעלמי עלמיא

May His great Name be blessed forever and for all eternity.

21-23

He changes times and seasons, Removes kings and installs kings; He gives the wise their wisdom And knowledge to those who know. He reveals deep and hidden things, **Knows what is in the darkness**, And light dwells with Him. I acknowledge and praise You, O God of my fathers, You who have given me wisdom and power, For now You have let me know what we asked of You; You have let us know what concerns the king."

Mahzor Yom Kippur

יודע מה בסתרי השנה.

He knows the mysteries of darkness;

24-25 Thereupon Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to do away with the wise men of Babylon; he came and said to him as follows, "Do not do away with the wise men of Babylon; bring me to the king and I will tell the king the meaning!"

So Arioch rushed Daniel into the king's presence and said to him, "I have found among the exiles of Judah a man who can make the meaning known to the king!"

26-28 The king said in reply to Daniel (who was called Belteshazzar), "Can you really make known to me the dream that I saw and its meaning?"

Daniel answered the king and said, "The mystery about which the king has inquired—wise men, exorcists, magicians, and diviners cannot tell to the king. But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what is to be at the end of days.

This is your dream and the vision that entered your mind in bed:

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29-30 O king, the thoughts that came to your mind in your bed are about future events; He who reveals mysteries has let you know what is to happen. Not because my wisdom is greater than that of other creatures has this mystery been revealed to me, but in order that the meaning should be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind.

31-33 “O king, as you looked on, there appeared a great statue. This statue, which was huge and its brightness surpassing, stood before you, and its appearance was awesome. The head of that statue was of fine gold; its breast and arms were of silver; its belly and thighs, of bronze; its legs were of iron, and its feet part iron and part clay.

34-35 As you looked on, a stone was hewn out, not by hands, and struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. All at once, the iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold were crushed, and became like chaff of the threshing floors of summer; a wind carried them off until no trace of them was left. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

36-38 “Such was the dream, and we will now tell the king its meaning. You, O king—king of kings, to whom the God of Heaven has given kingdom, power, might, and glory; into whose hands He has given men, wild beasts, and the fowl of heaven, wherever they may dwell; and to whom He has given dominion over them all—you are the head of gold.

39-But another kingdom will arise after you, inferior to yours; then yet a third kingdom, of bronze, which will rule over the whole earth.

But the fourth kingdom will be as strong as iron; just as iron crushes and shatters everything—and like iron that smashes—so will it crush and smash all these.

You saw the feet and the toes, part potter’s clay and part iron; that means it will be a divided kingdom; it will have only some of the stability of iron, inasmuch as you saw iron mixed with common clay. And the toes were part iron and part clay; that [means] the kingdom will be in part strong and in part brittle. You saw iron mixed with common clay; that means: they shall intermingle with the offspring of men, but shall not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay.

44-45 And in the time of those kings, the God of Heaven will establish a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, a kingdom that shall not be transferred to another people. It will crush and wipe out all these kingdoms, but shall itself last forever—just as you saw how a stone was hewn from the mountain, not by hands, and crushed the iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold. The great God has made known to the king what will happen in the future. The dream is sure and its interpretation reliable.”

46-47 Then King Nebuchadnezzar prostrated himself and paid homage to Daniel and ordered that a meal offering and pleasing offerings be made to him. The king said in reply to Daniel, “Truly your God must be the God of gods and Lord of kings and the revealer of mysteries to have enabled you to reveal this mystery.”

48-49 The king then elevated Daniel and gave him very many gifts, and made him governor of the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect of all the wise men of Babylon.

At Daniel’s request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to administer the province of Babylon; while Daniel himself was at the king’s court.