

# DANIEL

## Introduction

### **The book**

*What we read today in the book of Daniel is a complex work, set aside by itself in the Old Testament.*

*Beginning with the language in which the book is written: some chapters are written imitating the classic Hebrew; other in Aramaic, and others in Greek.*

*The distribution of forms and themes does not coincide with the division of languages.*

### **Data**

*We could date the book between the years 167 and 164 B.C.*

*It is impossible to decide if all the legendary materials belonged since the beginning to Daniel or if it had been gathered around the hero. In any case, the Babylonian ambiance is fictitious; the author does not show special interest in the historical precision in these writings.*

### **Apocalypses**

*The book of Daniel is a book all by itself in the Old Testament.*

*It has not entered as a prophetic book; it is part of the "writings," a looser and more welcoming concept. But in the Greek and Latin bibles and in Christian tradition, Daniel is one of the four major prophets.*

*The apocalyptic literature is heir to prophecy.*

*Apocalypses is presented as a revelation of God, made to a chosen person, about history and its unraveling. It is intended for the community during a time of crisis, to re-ignite hope.*

*God is the one who reveals, but through dreams and prophetic visions. The visions are explained by an angel.*

*The theme is history and its unraveling.*

*It is a past history that arrives to the present and that through the genre's fiction presents as future events, foretold by the seer.*

*It is about the definitive and universal establishment of the kingdom by the Lord of History.*

*The style uses allegory as basic procedure.*

*Pseudonymia: the author, faithful to the fiction of foretelling history, has to attribute his work to a great figure of the past. It seems that our author has chosen one of the personages quoted by Ezekiel.*

## DANIEL'S HISTORY

### Daniel in the Babylonian court

**1** <sup>1</sup>In the third year of Jehoiakim's reign as king of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon besieged Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>The Lord delivered into his hands King Jehoiakim of Judah, and some of the vessels from the temple of God as well. These he carried off to the land of Shinar and placed in the treasure house of his god.

<sup>3</sup>King Nebuchadnezzar ordered his chief eunuch Ashpenaz to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility: <sup>4</sup>young men without physical defect, handsome, intelligent and wise, well-informed, quick to learn and understand, and suitable for service in the king's palace. They were to be taught the language

and literature of the Chaldeans. <sup>5</sup>They were allotted a daily portion of food and wine from the king's table and were to be trained for three years, after which they were to enter the king's service.

<sup>6</sup>Among these were young men of Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

<sup>17</sup>To these four youths God gave wisdom and proficiency in literature, and to Daniel the gift of interpreting visions and dreams.

<sup>18</sup>At the end of the period set by the king for the youths' training, the chief eunuch presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>19</sup>The king talked with them and found none to equal Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. These four became members of the king's court. <sup>20</sup>In any matter of wisdom and discernment about which the king consulted, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

## The dream of Nebuchadnezzar

**2** <sup>1</sup>In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, he had a series of troubling dreams which rendered him sleepless. <sup>2</sup>The king summoned magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and Chaldean diviners to interpret his dreams. When they arrived and stood in his presence, <sup>3</sup>the king said:

—I had a terrible dream and I want to know its meaning.

<sup>4</sup>The Chaldeans answered in Aramaic:

—Live forever, O King! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give you its meaning.

<sup>5</sup>But the king replied:

—You have to tell me the dream and interpret it, too. That is my decision. If you won't do it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses razed to the ground. <sup>6</sup>But if you can tell me the dream and its meaning, I will give you presents and reward you with great honor.

<sup>10</sup>The Chaldeans exclaimed:

—No one on earth can do what your majesty asks. Never has any king, however great and mighty, asked such a thing of any magician, enchanter or diviner. <sup>11</sup>What the king demands is too difficult. No one can tell him that except the gods who do not live among mortals.

<sup>12</sup>This made the king so furious that he ordered all the wise men of Babylon executed. <sup>13</sup>Upon issuance of the decree to put the wise men to death, a search was also made for Daniel and his companions to have them killed. <sup>24</sup>After this Daniel went to Arioch, the commander appointed by the king to execute the wise men of Babylon. Daniel said to him:

—Do not execute the wise men yet. Bring me to the king, and I will interpret his dreams.

<sup>25</sup>At once Arioch took Daniel to the king and said:

—Here is a man found among the Judean captives who says he can interpret the king's dream.

<sup>26</sup>The king asked Daniel, who had been named Beltheshazzar:

—Can you tell me what my dream was and what it means?

<sup>27</sup>Daniel answered:

—No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can interpret the king's dream. <sup>28</sup>But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the future. I will tell you the dream and visions you had.

<sup>29</sup>As you lay in bed, O King, your thoughts turned to the future, and he who reveals mysteries showed you what is to happen. <sup>30</sup>This mystery has been revealed to me not because I am wiser than anybody else but so that you may know what it means and what went on in your mind.

<sup>31</sup>In your vision you saw a statue—very large, very bright, terrible to look at. <sup>32</sup>Its head was of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, <sup>33</sup>its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. <sup>34</sup>As you watched, a rock cut from a mountain but not by human hands, struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay, smashing them. <sup>35</sup>All at once the iron, clay, bronze, silver and gold crumbled into pieces as fine as chaff

on the threshing floor in summer. The wind swept them off and not a trace was left. But the rock that struck the statue became a great mountain that filled the whole earth.

<sup>36</sup>That was the dream. Now the interpretation. <sup>37</sup>You, O king, are king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given dominion, strength, power and glory, <sup>38</sup>and into whose hand he has placed humankind, the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, making you ruler over them. You are that head of gold.

<sup>39</sup>After you, another kingdom inferior to yours will rise. Then a third kingdom of bronze will rule the whole world. <sup>40</sup>Last shall be a fourth kingdom strong as iron and just as iron breaks and crushes everything else, so will it break and smash all the others. <sup>41</sup>The partly-clay and partly-iron feet and toes mean that it will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron, just as you saw iron mixed with clay. <sup>42</sup>And as the toes were partly iron and partly clay, the kingdom will be partly strong and partly weak. <sup>43</sup>Just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, the people will be a mixture but will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

<sup>44</sup>In the time of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom never to be destroyed or delivered up to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and put an end to them. And it will endure forever. <sup>45</sup>This is the meaning of your vision of a rock cut from a mountain not by human hands, the rock which struck the statue and broke into pieces the iron, bronze, clay, silver and gold. The great God has shown the king what will happen in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation reliable.

<sup>46</sup>King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and ordered that oblation and incense be offered to him.

<sup>47</sup>The king said to Daniel:

—Surely your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings and the revealer of mysteries. That is why you were able to reveal this mystery.

<sup>48</sup>The king gave Daniel a high position and showered gifts on him. He made him governor of the entire province of Babylon and in charge of all its wise men. <sup>49</sup>At Daniel's request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators of the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the king's court.

## The golden statue

**3** <sup>1</sup>King Nebuchadnezzar had a golden statue, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, erected on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

<sup>3</sup>All those summoned came together for the dedication and stood before the statue set up by King Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>4</sup>There a herald proclaimed aloud:

—Nations and peoples of every language, you are hereby commanded <sup>5</sup>to fall down and worship the golden statue as soon as you hear the music played on the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all other instruments. <sup>6</sup>Whoever fails to do this will at once be thrown into a burning furnace.

<sup>8</sup>It was then that Chaldean diviners came to the king accusing the Jews. <sup>9</sup>They said to King Nebuchadnezzar:

—Live forever, O king! <sup>10</sup>You issued a decree that upon hearing the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and other musical instruments, everyone must fall down and worship the golden statue, <sup>11</sup>and whoever failed to do so was to be thrown into a burning furnace. <sup>12</sup>There are some Jews, those whom you appointed administrators of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who gave no heed to your order. They would not serve your gods or worship the golden image you set up.

<sup>16</sup>Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego answered:

—King Nebuchadnezzar, we need not defend ourselves before you on this matter. <sup>17</sup>If you order us to be thrown into the furnace, the God we serve will rescue us. <sup>18</sup>But even if he won't, we would like you to know, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden statue you have set up.

<sup>19</sup>Nebuchadnezzar's face reddened with fury as he looked at Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual <sup>20</sup>and commanded some of his strongest soldiers to bind Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the burning furnace.

<sup>21</sup>At once they were bound and thrown into the furnace, with their hats, shoes and garments on, <sup>22</sup>for the king's order was very urgent. So fierce was the fire in the furnace that it devoured even the men who threw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into it. <sup>23</sup>The three, bound fast, fell into the midst of the blazing furnace.

*The text in italics is originally written in Greek. Azariah's "Penitential Prayer" is written following the style and with the thematic of Psalm 51, that you can read in the book of Psalms in this Bible. And the "Canticle of the Three Youth" gets its inspiration from Psalms 136 and 148 that can also be read in the book of Psalms.*

### **Azariah's penitential prayer**

<sup>24</sup>*They walked in the midst of the flames, singing to God and praising the Lord.*

<sup>25</sup>*Azariah stood up in the midst of the fire and prayed aloud:*

<sup>26</sup>*Blessed and worthy of praise are you,*

*O Lord God of our fathers!*

*your name is glorious forever!*

### **Canticle of the three youth**

<sup>49</sup>*But the angel of the Lord came down into the furnace beside Azariah and his companions; he drove the flames of the fire outside the furnace, and blew upon them, <sup>50</sup>in the middle of the furnace, a coolness like that of wind and dew, so that the fire did not touch them or cause them pain or trouble them.*

<sup>51</sup>*Then the three began singing together, glorifying and blessing God within the furnace, and saying:*

<sup>52</sup>*—Blessed are you, Lord, God of our fathers,*

*be praised and exalted for ever.*

*Blessed is your holy and glorious name,*

*celebrated and exalted for ever.*

### **Confession of Nebuchadnezzar**

<sup>91</sup>Then King Nebuchadnezzar suddenly rose up in great amazement and asked his counselors:

—Did we not throw three men bound into the fire?

They answered:

—Certainly.

<sup>92</sup>The king said:

—But I can see four men walking about freely through the fire without suffering any harm, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.

<sup>93</sup>Nebuchadnezzar approached the mouth of the blazing furnace and said:

—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come here.

So they came out from the midst of the fire.

<sup>94</sup>The officials, prefects, governors and counselors of the king drew near to examine them: the fire had no effect on their bodies, their hair was not singed, their trousers were not burned, and they did not even have the smell of smoke.

<sup>95</sup>Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed:

—Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who sent his angel to free his servants who, trusting in him, disobeyed the king's order and preferred to give their bodies to the fire rather than serve and worship any other god but their God.

<sup>96</sup>I give this command, therefore: From every race, nation and language, anyone who speaks irreverently of the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego shall be cut into pieces and his house shall be destroyed, for there is no other god who can save like this.

<sup>97</sup>And the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

## The banquet of Belshazzar

<sup>5</sup><sup>1</sup>King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for his nobles, a thousand of them attended and he drank wine with them. <sup>2</sup>Under the influence of wine, he ordered that the gold and silver vessels his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem be brought in so that he and his nobles, his wives and concubines might drink from them. <sup>3</sup>The gold and silver vessels taken from God's temple were brought in, and the king and his nobles, his wives and concubines drank from them. <sup>4</sup>While they drank wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze and iron, of wood and stone.

<sup>5</sup>Suddenly a man's fingers appeared opposite the lampstand and wrote on the plastered wall of the king's palace. Watching the hand as it wrote, the king turned pale. <sup>6</sup>So terrified was he that his knees knocked and his legs gave way.

<sup>7</sup>He shouted, calling for his enchanters and Chaldean diviners:

—Whoever reads this writing and tells me its meaning will be clothed in purple, wear a gold chain around his neck, and be made the third highest ruler in my kingdom.

<sup>8</sup>All the king's wise men came, but none <sup>9</sup>could read the writing or tell its meaning. <sup>9</sup>King Belshazzar became very frightened and his face grew even more pale. His nobles were likewise terrified and confused.

<sup>10</sup>Hearing the troubled voices of the king and his nobles, the queen entered the banquet hall and said:

—Live forever, O king! Do not be alarmed and become pale. <sup>11</sup>In your kingdom is a man who has the spirit of the holy gods. He was found to have discernment and god-like wisdom during your father's lifetime. He was in fact appointed chief of the magicians, enchanters and diviners by your father King Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>12</sup>This man Daniel, whom the king called Beltheshazzar, knew how to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel and he will tell you what the writing means.

<sup>13</sup>Daniel was brought in and questioned by the king.

—Are you Daniel, one of the exiles my father brought from Judah? <sup>14</sup>I have heard that you have the spirit of the gods, that you have insight and extraordinary wisdom. <sup>15</sup>Wise men and enchanters were brought here, but none of them could read this writing and tell its meaning. <sup>16</sup>I have heard that you can interpret dreams and solve problems. If you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will be clothed in purple, wear a gold chain around your neck, and be appointed third in rank in my kingdom.

<sup>17</sup>Daniel replied:

—You may keep your gifts or give them to someone else. Just the same I will read and interpret the writing for you.

<sup>24</sup>So he sent the hand that wrote the inscription <sup>25</sup>which read MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN. And these words mean: <sup>26</sup>MENE, God has numbered the days of your reign and put an end to it; <sup>27</sup>TEKEL, you have been weighed on the scales and found wanting; <sup>28</sup>PARSIN, your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and the Persians.

<sup>29</sup>On Belshazzar's order, Daniel was clothed in purple, given a gold chain to wear around his neck, and proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

<sup>30</sup>That very night, however, the Chaldean king Belshazzar was slain.

**6** <sup>1</sup>Darius the Mede, at the age of sixty-two, took over the kingdom.

## Daniel In the lion's den

<sup>2</sup>Darius appointed one hundred and twenty satraps throughout the whole kingdom. They were made accountable to three administrators, one of whom was Daniel. This was to ensure that no loss or harm should come to the king. <sup>3</sup>Because of the extraordinary spirit residing in him, Daniel excelled above all the other administrators and satraps, so that the king planned to give him authority over the entire kingdom.

<sup>4</sup>This provoked envy among the administrators and satraps, who tried to find grounds for filing charges against Daniel as regard his performance of official duties. But he was so trustworthy that neither corruption nor negligence could be found in him. <sup>5</sup>Finally the men decided: 'We will never find any grounds for charges against this man Daniel except in something that has to do with the law of his God.'

<sup>11</sup>There the men spying on him found Daniel kneeling in prayer and asking God for help. <sup>12</sup>So they went to the king and reminded him about the prohibition:

—O king, did you not publish a decree that anyone who prays or makes petition to any god or man except to you would be thrown into the lions' den?

The king answered:

—Yes, and the decree stands, in accordance with Medo-Persian laws which cannot be altered or annulled.

<sup>13</sup>Then they said:

—But the Jewish exile Daniel pays no attention to you and to your decree. Three times a day he still prays to some god other than you.

<sup>14</sup>Greatly aggrieved at what he heard, the king decided to help Daniel. He made every effort till sundown to save him.

<sup>15</sup>But the men kept coming to him and insisting:

—Remember, O king, that under the Medo-Persian laws every decree or prohibition issued by the king is irrevocable.

<sup>16</sup>The king, therefore, could not help giving the order that Daniel be brought and thrown into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel:

—May your God, whom you serve faithfully, save you.

<sup>17</sup>A stone was placed at the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with that of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might remain unchanged. <sup>18</sup>Then the king returned to his palace and spent a sleepless night, refusing food and entertainment. <sup>19</sup>Very early next morning, he rose and hurried to the lions' den. <sup>20</sup>As he came near he called in an anguished voice:

—Daniel, servant of the living God, did your God whom you serve faithfully save you from the lions?

<sup>21</sup>Daniel answered:

—Live forever, O king! <sup>22</sup>My God sent his angel who closed the lions' mouths so that they did not hurt me. God did that because I am innocent in his sight. Neither have I wronged you, O king.

<sup>23</sup>The king felt very glad and ordered Daniel released from the lions' den. No wound was found on him for he had trusted in his God. <sup>24</sup>At the king's order, the men who had accused Daniel were thrown into the lions' den, together with their wives and children. No sooner had they reached the floor of the den than the lions lunged at them and tore them to pieces.

<sup>25</sup>King Darius wrote to the nations, to peoples of every language:

—'Peace to you all! <sup>26</sup>I decree that throughout my kingdom people should reverence and fear the God of Daniel.

For he is the living God,  
and forever he endures;  
his kingdom will not be crushed,  
his dominion will never cease.

<sup>27</sup>He rescues and he delivers;  
he performs signs and wonders  
And he came to Daniel's rescue  
saving him from the lions' tooth and claw.'

<sup>28</sup>Daniel greatly prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.