

Was Daniel a Eunuch?

Commentary for February 15, 2020 — Some Question Daniel Was a Eunuch

Two nearly identical passages predicted eunuchs would be sent to Babylon as described in the Book of Daniel. These two passages tell of a future prophecy from YHWH through a Prophet to a King of Judah:

“Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah,

‘Hear the word of YHWH of hosts: Behold, the days come, that all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, says YHWH.

And of your sons that shall issue from you, which you shall beget, [1] shall they take away; and [2] they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.’”

• *2 Kings 20:16–18 and Isaiah 39:5–7*

Hezekiah’s descendants who survived the capture of Jerusalem were taken to Babylon. Several of the young men were castrated and made eunuchs. Daniel was perhaps a grandson or great-grandson, or a grandnephew or great-grandnephew of Hezekiah. He was certainly from a noble family:

“For thus says YHWH unto the eunuchs that [1] keep my sabbaths, and [2] choose the things that please me, and [3] take hold of my covenant;

Even unto them will I give in my house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting [eonian, and age-lasting] name that shall not be cut off.”

• *Isaiah 56:4–5*

Fulfillment in the Book of Daniel

Daniel was in the first group of eunuchs to go to Babylon. About 100 years after Hezekiah and Isaiah, Jehoiakim was King of Judah and another siege of Jerusalem was made:

“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand ...

And the king [Nebuchadnezzar] spoke unto Ashpenaz the master [or chief] of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of [1] the children of Israel, and of [2] the king’s seed, and of [3] the princes;

Children in whom was no blemish [before they were made eunuchs!], but well favored, and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.”

• *Daniel 1:1–4*

These children were with the first exiles from Judah. Ashpenaz is **“master of his eunuchs.”** He is called **“master of the eunuchs”** in Daniel 1:3, 1:7–11, and 1:18, presumably the same man, meaning that he was in charge of the eunuchs in the Babylonian royal household. Some

think the title meant Ashpenaz alone was a eunuch, but this is unlikely. These eunuchs lived according to the commands of Isaiah 56: 4–5.

Confirmation in the Book of Jeremiah

During the years of Babylonian invasion, Isaiah's prophecies were further fulfilled during Jeremiah's prophetic ministry:

"After that Jeconiah the king, and the queen, and the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and the carpenters, and the smiths, were departed from Jerusalem ..."

• **Jeremiah 29:2**

Jeconiah (also named Jehoiachin) was the second to last king of Judah. He was the son of Jehoiakim. Jeremiah tells us more about eunuchs taken to Babylon. The underlined phrases mean that **"the princes of Jerusalem" = "the eunuchs"** because there is no "and" separating them from other people listed:

**"[1] The princes of Judah, and
[2] the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and
[3] the priests, and
[4] all the people of the land,
which passed between the parts of the calf."**

• **Jeremiah 34:19**

The prophet Ezekiel, a younger contemporary of Jeremiah, was probably made captive in the second attack on Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24: 10–16); while Daniel was taken to Babylon about eight years previously (compare 2 Kings 24: 1 and Daniel 1: 1–4).

Conclusion

It is safe to conclude that God through Isaiah prophesied the princes of Jerusalem were made eunuchs and were to have a unique place among the Babylonians. Isaiah prophesied they would be blessed at Babylon if they were faithful to YHWH. The four (and there were probably others) were likely castrated before they left for Babylon. This was one of many punishments upon Judah for disobeying God by the king, the nobles, and by the common people of Judah. All was orchestrated by Him as told in the prophecies of Isaiah and other prophets. The eunuchs were part of God's exile of the people of Judah.

Daniel and his associates served Babylon and the people of Judah. Daniel was one of the librarians (later chief librarian) in the court of Nebuchadnezzar at Babylon. The nature of Daniel's work brought him into contact with all types of literature that existed at the time, including works rescued from the Temple at Jerusalem. He likely had a role in preserving the sacred texts of God comprising most of our Old Testament today.¹

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¹ Ernest L. Martin, *Restoring the Original Bible*, chap. 12, "[The Old Testament Periods of Canonization](#)."