

INTRODUCTION TO DANIEL

This book is called, in the Vulgate Latin version, “the Prophecy of Daniel”; and in the Syriac and Arabic versions “the Prophecy of Daniel the Prophet”. This Daniel was of the children of Judah, that were carried captive into Babylon with Jehoiakim; and was of princely blood, if not of the royal seed, as appears from, (^{200B}Daniel 1:3,5). Josephus^{f1} is express for it, that he was of the kindred and family of Zedekiah: and Saadiah Gaon^{f2} says he was of the seed of Hezekiah, and so fulfilled the prophecy in (^{220B-2}Kings 20:18). As to what the author of the “Lives of the Prophets”, ascribed to Epiphanius, says^{f3}, that he was born in upper Bethabara, not far from Jerusalem, it is not to be depended on; or that his father’s name was Sabaam, according to a tradition mentioned by the true Epiphanius^{f4}. The Jews^{f5} would have it that this book was not written by Daniel himself, but by the men of the great synagogue; though it is evident, from the book itself, that Daniel is the writer of it, as from (^{200C}Daniel 7:1,2,28 ^{200C}Daniel 8:1,15,27 ^{200C}Daniel 9:2 ^{200C}Daniel 10:2 ^{200C}Daniel 12:5). That he wrote books, which were received, read, and believed by the Jews as of God, is affirmed by Josephus^{f6}; and the Jews in general acknowledge that this book was written by the influence of the Holy Spirit, but not by prophecy; they, without any foundation, distinguishing between the Holy Spirit and prophecy. And so Maimonides says^{f7}, it is the general consent of their nation, that this book is among the holy writings, but not among the Prophets; nor will they allow Daniel to be a prophet: the reasons they give are frivolous; what seems to have induced them to degrade him is the manifest prophecy of the time of the Messiah’s coming in this book, which sometimes they are obliged to own is fixed in it. They tell us a story of Jonathan ben Uzziel, that having finished his paraphrase of the Prophets, thought to have wrote one on the Hagiographa, or holy writings, among which they place the book of Daniel; but was forbid by “Bath Kol”, or a voice from heaven, giving this as a reason, because that in it is contained the end of the Messiah^{f8}, the precise time of his coming; and the gloss on the passage adds, by way of explanation,

“in the book of Daniel;”

though elsewhere they would have it, that after it was made known to Daniel, it was taken away from him. For so, they say^{f9}, there are two men

to whom the end was revealed, and afterwards it was hidden from them; and these are they, Jacob and Daniel: from Daniel, according to (~~27234~~ Daniel 12:4), “but thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book etc.”, from Jacob, (~~0400~~ Genesis 49:1), “that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days”. Yet the prophecy of Daniel was so clear, with respect to the time of the Messiah’s coming, that one of their Rabbins, who lived about fifty years before the coming of Christ, asserted that the time of the Messiah, as signified by Daniel, could not be deferred longer than those fifty years^{f10}; and a most glaring prophecy it is, and sufficient to denominate Daniel a prophet, as well as many more contained in this book. And, after all, Maimonides himself owns, that he, and the other writers of the Hagiographa, or holy writings, may be called prophets in general. And Aben Ezra observes of Daniel, in his preface, that he delivered out prophecies of things now past, and of things to come; yea, he expressly calls him a prophet on (~~2017~~ Daniel 1:17). And Jacchiades, another of their commentators on this book, says that he attained to the highest degree of prophecy. To which may be added the testimony of Josephus^{f11}, who says he was one of the greatest prophets, and to be preferred to others; since he not only predicted things future, but fixed the time when they should come to pass. And, above all, and what should satisfy us Christians, he is expressly called a prophet by our Lord, (~~0915~~ Matthew 24:15). There are no other authentic writings of Daniel, which bear his name; the stories of Susannah, and of Bel and the Dragon, which make the “thirteenth” and “fourteenth” chapters in the Greek of Theodotion, and in the Vulgate Latin version, are apocryphal and spurious. The Oriental writers make Daniel the author of a volume, entitled, “Principles relating to the Explanation of Dreams”. And there is another book in the king of France’s library, with this title, “Odmath-al-mantoul ân Daniel al-nabi”; which contains predictions of the Prophet Daniel, received by tradition from him. This is a book which abounds with falsities, forged by the Mahometans, and founded on the real prophecies of Daniel^{f12}. This book, written by him, is partly historical, relating facts in which he was concerned; and partly prophetic, of things that should happen from his time to the end of the world, and especially of the Messiah and his kingdom; and it is written partly in Hebrew, and partly in Chaldee. This great man, as he was both in nature and grace, in religion and politics, lived throughout the captivity, but does not seem ever to have returned into Judea; but continued in the courts of the kings of the Medes and Persians, to take care of the affairs of his people the Jews. Where he died, and was buried, is not certain. Some

say in Babylon; and others, which is more likely, at Susa on the Tigris, where he was in the third year of Cyrus, (~~2700~~ Daniel 10:1,4). So says Abulfeda^{f13}; with which agrees the account of Benjamin of Tudela^{f14}.

CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION TO DANIEL 1.

This chapter begins with an account of the first captivity of the Jews, in the times of Jehoiakim; of which captivity Daniel was one, and it is mentioned on his account, (^{<2008>}Daniel 1:1,2), who, with others, were selected by the order of the king of Babylon, to be educated in the learning of the Chaldeans, and to be maintained at his expense, in order to be his ministers, (^{<2008>}Daniel 1:3-7), but Daniel and his three companions refused the king's meat and wine, lest they should be defiled; in which they were indulged by their governor, after trial being made, that they were fairer and fatter for it, (^{<2008>}Daniel 1:8-16), and, at the end of the time appointed, they appeared to have a large share of knowledge, wisdom, and learning; upon which they were taken into the king's court and service, (^{<2017>}Daniel 1:17-20), and the chapter is concluded with observing the long continuation of Daniel here, even to the first year of Cyrus, (^{<2021>}Daniel 1:21)

Ver. 1. *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah*, etc.] At the close of it, and at the beginning of the fourth, which was the first of Nebuchadnezzar, (^{<2501>}Jeremiah 25:1). Jerusalem seems to have been taken twice in his time, and two captivities in it: the first was in the third or fourth year of his reign; when humbling himself, he was restored to his kingdom, though he became a tributary to the king of Babylon; Daniel and his companions, who were carried captive with him, were retained as hostages; but after three years he rebelled, but it was not until his eleventh year that Nebuchadnezzar came against him again, took him, and bound him, in order to carry him to Babylon, but he died by the way; (see ^{<2240>}2 Kings 24:1,2 ^{<4805>}2 Chronicles 36:5,6), some, as Jarchi and Saadiah Gaon, make this to be the third year of his rebellion, and the last of his reign; they suppose that he was conquered by the king of Babylon, and became subject to him in the fifth year of his reign; that he served him three years, and rebelled against him three years: at the end of which

came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it; with his army, and took it; and the same way it is accounted for in the Jewish chronicle^{f15} according to Bishop Usher^{f16}, this was in the year of the

world 3398 A.M., and before Christ 607 or 606; according to Mr. Bedford^{f17}, 605.

Ver. 2. *The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand*, etc.] And the city of Jerusalem too, or he could not have took the king, and so the Syriac version renders it,

and the Lord delivered it into his hands, and Jehoiakim, etc.: this was from the Lord, because of his sins, and the sins of his ancestors, and of his people; or otherwise the king of Babylon could not have taken the city, nor him, because of the great power of the Jews, as Jacchiades observes:

with part of the vessels of the house of God; not all of them; for some, as Saadiah says, were hid by Josiah and Jeremiah, which is not to be depended on; however, certain it is that all were not carried away, because we read of some of the vessels of the temple being carried away afterwards, in Jeconiah's time, (^{<12243>}2 Kings 24:13), and still there were some left, as the pillars, sea, bases, and other vessels, which were to be carried away, and were carried away by the king of Babylon, in Zedekiah's time, (^{<2079>}Jeremiah 27:19-22 ^{<2527>}Jeremiah 52:17-20):

which he carried into the land of Shinar, to the house of his god; which Jarchi understands both of the men that were carried captive, and the vessels that were taken out of the temple; but the latter seem only to be intended, since of men Jehoiakim is only spoken of before; and it does not appear he was ever carried into Babylon; but it is certain the vessels of the temple were carried thither; which is meant by the land of Shinar, where Babylon stood, and where the tower of Babel was built, (^{<0100>}Genesis 10:2), the same, as Grotius thinks, with the Singara of Pliny^{f18} and Ptolemy^{f19}. So the Targum of Onkelos, on (^{<0100>}Genesis 10:10-12), interprets the land of Shinar the land of Babylon; likewise the Jerusalem Targum on (^{<0100>}Genesis 10:10), and the Targum of Jonathan on (^{<0110>}Genesis 11:2 ^{<2311>}Isaiah 11:11) (^{<3511>}Zechariah 5:11), only on (^{<0100>}Genesis 10:10), he paraphrases it the land of Pontus. So Hestiaeus^{f20} an ancient Phoenician writer, calls Shinar Sennaar of Babylonia. It seems to have its name from *r* [*n*, which signifies to "shake out"; because from hence the men of the flood, as Saadiah says, or the builders of Babel, were shook out by the Lord, and were scattered over the face of the earth. And as the tower of Babel itself, very probably, was built for idolatrous worship, for which reason the Lord was so displeased with the builders of it; so in this same place, or near it, now

stood an idol's temple, where the king of Babylon, and the inhabitants thereof, worshipped, here called "the house of his gods",^{f21}, as it may be rendered; for the Babylonians worshipped more gods than one; there were Rach, Shach and Nego, from whom Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, are supposed to have their names given them by the Chaldeans, (^{<2000>}Daniel 1:7). Rach is thought to be the sun, whose priests were called Rachiophantae, observers of the sun; Shach, to which Sheshach is referred by some, (^{<2544>}Jeremiah 51:41), for which a feast was kept once a year for five days, when servants had the rule and government of their masters; and Nego either was worshipped for the sun, or some star, so called from its brightness. Venus was also had in veneration with the Babylonians, whom they called Mylitta; in whose temple many acts of uncleanness and filthiness were committed, as Herodotus^{f22} relates. And, besides these, there were Merodach, Nebo, and Bel; of which (see ^{<2340>}Isaiah 46:1 ^{<2510>}Jeremiah 50:2), the latter seems to have been their chief deity, and who was called Jupiter Belus; and with whom were the goddesses Juno and Rhea. And in the city of Babylon stood the temple of Bel, or Jupiter Belus, which was extant in the times of Herodotus, and of which he gives an account^{f23}, and is this:

"the temple of Jupiter Belus had gates of brass; it was four hundred and forty yards on every side, and was foursquare. In the midst of the temple was a solid tower, two hundred and twenty yards in length and breadth; upon which another temple was placed, and so on to eight. The going up them was without, in a winding about each tower; as you went up, in the middle, there was a room, and seats to rest on. In the last tower was a large temple, in which was a large bed splendidly furnished, and a table of gold set by it; but there was no statue there; nor did any man lie there in the night; only one woman, a native of the place, whom the god chose from among them all, as the Chaldean priests of this deity say."

Diodorus Siculus says^{f24} it was of an extraordinary height, where the Chaldeans made observations on the stars, and could take an exact view of the rise and setting of them; it was all made of brick and bitumen, at great cost and expense. Here the vessels of the sanctuary were brought by Nebuchadnezzar, to the praise and glory of his idols, as Jarchi and Jacchiades observe; to whom he imputed the victory he had obtained over the Jews. Even these

he brought into the treasure house of his god; very probably this was the chapel Herodotus^{f25} speaks of, where was a large golden statue of Jupiter sitting, and a large golden table by it, and a golden throne and steps, reckoned by the Chaldeans at eight hundred talents of gold. And Diodorus Siculus^{f26} relates that there were three golden statues, of Jupiter, Juno, and Rhea. That of Jupiter was as one standing on his feet, and, as it were, walking, was forty feet in length, and weighed a thousand Babylonian talents (computed three millions and a half of our money). That of Rhea was of the same weight, sitting upon a throne of gold, and two lions standing at her knees; and near to them serpents of a prodigious size, made of silver, which weighed thirty talents. That of Juno was a standing statue, weighing eight hundred talents; in her right hand she held the head of a serpent, and in her left a sceptre set with precious stones; and there was a golden table, common to them all, forty feet long, fifteen broad, and of the weight of fifty talents. Moreover, there were two bowls of thirty talents, and as many censers of three hundred talents, and three cups of gold; that which was dedicated to Jupiter weighed a thousand two hundred Babylonian talents, and the other six hundred. Here all the rich things dedicated to their god were laid up, and here the king of Babylon brought the treasures and rich vessels he took out of the temple of Jerusalem; and to this agrees the testimony of Berosus^{f27}, who says, that with the spoils of war Nebuchadnezzar took from the Jews and neighbouring nations, he adorned the temple of Belus. The riches of this temple, according to historians, are supposed to be above one and twenty millions sterling^{f28}, even of those only which Diodorus Siculus gives an account of, as above.

Ver. 3. *And the king spake unto Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs*, etc.] That is, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon spake to this officer of his, whose name was Ashpenaz; which, according to Saadiah, signifies a man of an angry countenance; but Hillerus^{f29} derives it from the Arabic word <Arabic> “schaphan”, as designing one that excels in wit and understanding; for which reason he might have the command of the eunuchs, many of which the eastern princes had about them, particularly to wait upon their women, or to educate youth, as the Turks have now; though, as R. Jeshuah in Aben Ezra observes, the word signifies ministers, and may intend the king’s nobles and courtiers, his ministers of state; and so this Ashpenaz may be considered as his prime minister, to whom he gave orders,

that he should bring certain of the children of Israel; whom he had taken and brought captive to Babylon, and were disposed of in some part or another of the city and country; and out of these it was his will that some should be selected and brought to his court:

and of the king's seed, and of the princes: or, “even^{f30} of the king's seed, and of the princes”; not any of the children of Israel, but such as were of the blood royal, or of the king of Judah's family, or some way related to it; or, however, that were of princely birth, the children of persons of the first rank, as the word^{f31} may signify; or of nobles and dukes, as Jarchi interprets it.

Ver. 4. *Children in whom was no blemish*, etc.] Not mere children, but young men of fifteen or twenty years of age; about which age Daniel is by Aben Ezra supposed to be when he was carried captive; and less than this be cannot well be thought to be, since, in a few years after, he was put into posts of the greatest eminence and importance: such were ordered to be selected that had no deformity or defect in any parts of their body, or wanted any, as an eye, or a hand, etc.; or, “in whom was not anything”^{f32}; vicious or immoral, or scandalous in their character:

but well favoured; of a good complexion, a ruddy countenance, and a healthful look. So Curtius^{f33} says, that, in all barbarous or uncivilized countries, the stateliness and size of the body is had in great veneration; nor do they think any capable of great services or actions, to whom nature has not vouchsafed to give a beautiful form and aspect. And Aristotle^{f34} says it was reported, that, in Ethiopia, civil offices of government or magistracy were distributed according to the bulk or beauty of men, the largeness and tallness of their bodies, or the comeliness of them; and not only among them, but this has always been the custom of the eastern nations, to choose such for their principal officers, or to wait on princes and great personages, and continues to this day. Sir Paul Ricaut^{f35} observes,

“that the youths that are designed for the great offices of the Turkish empire must be of admirable features and pleasing looks, well shaped in their bodies, and without any defects of nature; for it is conceived that a corrupt and sordid soul can scarce inhabit in a serene and ingenious aspect; and (says he) I have observed not only in the seraglio, but also in the courts of great men, their personal attendants have been of comely lusty youths well habited, deporting

themselves with singular modesty and respect in the presence of their masters: so that when a pascha, aga, spahee, travels, he is always attended with a comely equipage, followed by flourishing youths, well clothed, and mounted in great numbers; that one may guess at the greatness of this empire by the retinue, pomp, and number of servants, which accompany persons of quality in their journeys.”

And no doubt Nebuchadnezzar had some of these ends in view, in ordering such persons to be selected and brought up at his expense; that they might be both for service and usefulness, and for his grandeur and glory.

And skillful in all wisdom: in the wisdom of the Jews, or had a liberal education according to the custom of their country; or were young men of good capacities, capable of being instructed, and of improving themselves in all kind of wisdom:

and cunning in knowledge; or “knowing knowledge”^{f36}; having a large share of the knowledge of their own country, customs, and laws, civil and religious: and understanding science; the liberal arts and sciences; or however were persons of a good genius, and of retentive memories; young men of capacity, diligence, industry, and application, and of great docility, and so very promising to make great and useful men:

and such as had ability in them to stand in the king’s palace; not only strength of body, which was requisite to a long waiting there, as sometimes they were obliged to do; but strength of mind, courage, and undauntedness, to stand before the king and his nobles, without showing a rustic fear, and timidity of mind:

and whom they might teach the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans; or, “the book and language of the Chaldeans”^{f37}; book for books; such as contained their literature, history, and philosophy, mathematics, the knowledge of the stars, in which they excelled, as well as architecture and military skill; and it was necessary they should learn the Chaldean language, which differed from the Hebrew chiefly in dialect and pronunciation, that they might be able to read those books of science, and to speak with a good accent, and readily, before the king and his nobles; or rather the sense is, that they might understand the Chaldean language, the manner of reading, writing, and pronouncing it *rps*, translated “learning”, may signify the letters of the language, the Scripture or manner of writing,

as Saadiah and Aben Ezra interpret it; which must be first learned in any language, in order to attain the knowledge of it; so it seems to be used in (^{<239D>}Isaiah 19:12). “I am not learned, or know not a book or letters” (see ^{<B7E>}John 7:15) and **װ״ל**, translated “tongue”, may signify the rules, idioms, and properties of the language; the nature, genius, and dialect of it, and signification of the words and phrases used in it to be learned, so as to be thorough masters of it, understand it, speak it, and pronounce it well. But here a difficulty arises, since the form and character of the letters of the Chaldee and Hebrew languages now in use are the same; it may seem unnecessary that Hebrew youths should be put to school to learn the Chaldean letters and language, though the dialect and idioms of the two languages might in some things differ; but let it be observed, that it might be, and it is not improbable, that the letters of the Chaldean language were not the same then as they are now; and Hottinger^{f38} expressly says, that the ancient Chaldee character is not known; not to say anything of the difference of the Hebrew letters then from what they are now, which some have surmised: besides, it is a clear case that the Chaldee and Syriac languages are the same, as appears from (^{<27B>}Daniel 2:4), where the Chaldeans are said to speak to the king in Syriac; and yet, what follows is no other than Chaldee, their mother tongue, in which it was most proper and agreeable to speak to the king: and as it is the opinion of many learned men now that these languages are the same, so it was the sense of the ancient Jews. Says R. Samuel Bar Nachman^{f39}, let not the Syriac language be mean in thine eyes, or lightly esteemed by thee; for in the law, in the prophets, and in the Hagiographa, the holy blessed God has imparted honour to it; in the law, (^{<034>}Genesis 31:47), in the prophets, (^{<240B>}Jeremiah 10:11), in the Hagiographa, (^{<27B>}Daniel 2:4-8:1) in all which places it is the Chaldee language that is used; and that which was spoken in Babylon, the head of the Chaldean empire, is called the Syriac; for Cyrus, when he took that city, ordered a proclamation to be made, by men skilled, **συριστι**, in the Syriac language, that the inhabitants should keep within doors, and that those that were found without should be slain^{f40}; which orders were published in that language, that they might be universally understood, being the language of the common people. So Herodotus, speaking of the Assyrians, says^{f41}, these by the Greeks are called Syrians, and by the barbarians Assyrians, among whom were the Chaldeans: and, as Strabo observes^{f42}, the same language or dialect was used by those without Euphrates, and by those within; that is, by the Syrians, strictly so called, and by the Babylonians or Chaldeans: and elsewhere^{f43}, the name of Syrians

reached from Babylon to Sinus Issicus; and, formerly, from thence to the Euxine sea. Now it is certain that the form and character of the letters in the Syriac language are very different from the Hebrew, and difficult to be learned, and might be those which these Hebrew youths were to be taught at school, as well as the rudiments of it; and it is as evident that the language of the Jews, and that of the Syrians, Chaldeans, and Babylonians, were so different, that the common people of the former did not understand the language of the latter when spoke, as appears from (¹²⁸³⁶2 Kings 18:26 ²³⁶¹-Isaiah 36:11) so that there was an apparent necessity for the one to be taught the language of the other, in order to understand it.

Ver. 5. *And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat,* etc.] Every day a portion was ordered them, from the king's table, of the richest dainties he himself ate of; which was done not only as an act of royal munificence and generosity, and in respect of their birth and breeding; but also as a bait and snare to allure and entice them, to make them in love with the country and condition in which they were, and to forget their own; as well also in order to preserve their well favoured look and good complexion, and fit them for their study of language and literature; which might be hindered for want of the necessaries of life, or by living on gross and coarse food:

and of the wine which he drank; which, as it was of various sorts, so of the best and most excellent; and which, moderately drank, conduces to the health of the body, and cheerfulness of the mind; and which are both useful to forward learned studies:

so nourishing them three years; this was the time fixed for their acquiring the learning and language of the Chaldeans; during which they were to be provided for from the king's table, and at his expense, as above; which term of time was judged sufficient for their learning everything necessary to qualify them for the king's service; and in which time it might be thought they would forget their own country, customs, religion, and language, and be inured to the place and persons where they were, and be satisfied and easy with their condition and circumstances:

that at the end thereof they might stand before the king; that is, at the end of three years they might be presented to the king for his examination and approbation, and be appointed to what service he should think fit; and particularly that they might be in his court, and minister to him in what post it should be his pleasure to place them. Some in Aben Ezra, and which he

himself inclines to, read and interpret it, “that some of them might stand before the king”; such as he should choose out of them, that were most accomplished and most fit for his service; so Jacchiades.

Ver. 6. *Now among these were of the children of Judea*, etc.] Among those youths that were selected from the rest, and brought up in the above manner, and for the above purposes, who were of the tribe of Judah, and very likely of the house of David, and of royal descent, were the four following persons:

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; who are particularly mentioned, because they were the most famous and renowned of them, and are concerned in the subsequent history and account of facts: their names are expressive and significant: Daniel signifies “God is my Judge”; Hananiah may be interpreted “God is gracious to me”; Mishael is by some thought to be the same as Michael, “he who is God”, or “as God”; and by others, “asked of God”, by his mother, as Samuel was by Hannah, so Saadiah interprets it; and Azariah may be explained, “God is my help”, or “helps me”.

Ver. 7. *Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names*, etc.] Other names, Chaldee names, according to the names of the gods of that country, for honour and glory, as Saadiah observes; which was done either to make them more acceptable to the court and courtiers of the king of Babylon; and to show that they were his servants, and naturalized subjects; and chiefly to cause them to forget the names their fathers gave them, and out of hatred to them, having all of them in them the names of the true God, El or Jah; and, most of all, that they might forget the God of their fathers, whose names they bore. This prince of the eunuchs seems to be the same with the master of the eunuchs, Ashpenaz, before mentioned, so Jacchiades; but some take him to be another person: what he did in changing the names of these four Hebrew youths was not his own idea and by his own authority, but by the order of the king; (²⁷⁵²Daniel 5:12):

for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; which signifies “Bel hath hid and treasured”; or Bel’s treasurer, or the keeper of his treasures; (see ²⁷⁰²Daniel 1:2). Bel was the chief idol of the Chaldeans, (²⁷⁰¹Isaiah 46:1), and Daniel was named according to him, as Nebuchadnezzar himself says, (²⁷⁰⁸Daniel 4:8) and differs but in one letter from the name of a successor of his, Belshazzar, (²⁷⁰¹Daniel 5:1), hence Daniel is thought by Broughton, and others, to be the Belesis of Diolorus Siculus: or it may be

he had this name given him from “beltis” or “baaltis”^{f44}, a queen and goddess of the Babylonians, and may be compounded of that and “azer”:

and to Hananiah of Shadrach; which some interpret a “tender pap”, or “breast”: others, the “king’s messenger”, or “the messenger the sun”. The word “rach” signifies a “king” with the Chaldeans, as it did with the Egyptians, as may be observed in the word “abrec”, the king’s father, in (^{<044B>}Genesis 41:43) and is used by them of the sun, the prince of planets, whom they worshipped: others, “the inspiration of the sun”, their idol. Hillerus^{f45} explains it of fire, the object of their adoration:

and to Mishael of Meshach; or; “of Shach”, which was a name of a god or goddess of the Chaldeans, they worshipped; at the celebration of whose feast they were when Babylon was taken by Cyrus:

and to Azariah of Abednego; or “a servant, or worshipper of Nego”. The word signifies “shining brightness”: which some understand of fire worshipped by them; others of the bright planet Venus; and others of Lucifer, or the morning star. Saadiah takes it to be the same with Nebo, by a change of a letter, which was a god of the Chaldeans; (see ^{<230E>}Isaiah 46:1).

Ver. 8. *But Daniel purposed in his heart*, etc.] It being proposed to him to be brought up in the manner before described, he revolved it in his mind; he well weighed it, and considered it with himself, and came to a resolution about it. This is to be understood of him, not to the exclusion of his three companions, who were of the same mind with him, as appears by what follows; but perhaps it was first thought of by him; at least he first moved it to them, to which they consented; and because he was the principal in this affair, it is ascribed to him as his purpose and resolution:

that he would not defile himself with the portion the king’s meat; by eating of it; partly because it might consist of what was forbidden by the law of Moses, as the flesh of unclean creatures, particularly swine, and fat and blood, and so defile himself in a ceremonial sense; and partly because, though it might be food in itself lawful to be eaten, yet part of it being first offered to their idol “Bel”, as was usual, and the whole blessed in his name, it would have been against his conscience, and a defiling of that, to eat of things offered to, or blessed in the name of, an idol:

nor with the wine which he drank; which was as unlawful as his food; being a libation to his gods, as Aben Ezra observes; otherwise wine was not

forbidden; nor was it disused by Daniel, when he could partake of it in his own way, (^{270B}Daniel 10:3):

therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself; he did not, in a surly, still, and obstinate manner, refuse the meat and drink brought; but prudently made it a request, and modestly proposed it to the prince of the eunuchs, that had the care and charge of him and his companions; and who also joined with him in this humble suit, as appears by what follows.

Ver. 9. *Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.*] Even before this request was made; as he gave to Joseph favour in the sight of Potiphar, and of the keeper of the prison; for whatever favour is shown to good men by bad men is from the Lord; for though Daniel's ingenuity, the goodness of his temper, and his modest behaviour, his excellent natural parts, and other accomplishments, might be a means of ingratiating him into the favour of this officer; yet all would have been insufficient to recommend him to him, or to overcome his prejudices on account of religion, if the Lord had not wrought upon his heart to show kindness and tenderness to him; which appeared not only by his past usage of him; but, when he presented his supplication to him, he did not put on a stern countenance, and answer him roughly, and threaten him if he did not comply with the king's orders; but in a mild and gentle manner, as follows:

Ver. 10. *And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king,* etc.] This he said, not as refusing and denying the request of Daniel; but as hesitating about it, divided in his own mind, between love and tenderness to Daniel, and fear of the king: it is as if he should say, I could freely out of respect to you grant you your request; were it not for duty to my lord the king, reverence of him, and especially fear of his wrath and displeasure: who hath appointed your meat and your drink; has ordered it himself, both the quality and quantity, both what and how much; whose will is his law, and cannot be resisted, but must be obeyed; and though I should indulge you in this matter, and it may be concealed for a while, yet it cannot be always a secret, your countenance will betray it:

for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? than the other Jewish youths that were selected at the same time, and brought up in the same manner, and for the same ends. Some^{f46} render it, "than the children of your captivity"; who were taken and

brought captive to Babylon when they were; but the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions, render it, “than those of the same age”^{f47}; their contemporaries, that were born about the same time, and brought up together in the same way: or, than those of your own nation? as some^{f48} translate it: and now, when they should be presented together to the king, the difference would be observable; Daniel and his companions would appear of a pale complexion, of thin and meagre looks, and dark dismal countenances, like persons angry, fretful, and troubled; as the word signifies^{f49}; when their contemporaries would appear fat and plump, cheerful and pleasant; which would naturally lead into an inquiry of the reason of this difference:

then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king; I shall commit a trespass, of which I shall be found guilty, and be condemned to die, and lose my head for it; and now, as if he should say, I leave it with you; can you desire me to expose myself to so much danger? I would willingly grant your favor, but my life is at stake.

Ver. 11. *Then said Daniel to Melzar*, etc.] The prince of the eunuchs, having put off Daniel with the above answer, seems to have left him; or, however, Daniel, finding he could not obtain of him what he sought for, applies to Melzar, a subordinate officer, whom he hoped to find more pliable; and it may be that Ashpenaz might suggest it to him to apply to this person, and signify that if he could prevail upon him to give him other food instead of the king’s; who might be under a temptation from profit, being a meaner officer; he for his part would wink at it, so be it he came not into any danger himself; however, be it as it will, Daniel did apply to this man, whose name was Melzar, for so most take it to be the proper name of a man; which, according to Hillerus^{f50}, signifies one “in full splendour”. Josephus calls^{f51} him Aschanes; though some think it is the name of an office, as a steward, or the like; but whether it is expressive of his name, or his office, he is described as one

whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; to give them their food at proper time.

Ver. 12. *Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days*, &c.] Here Daniel manifestly includes his companions, and makes his request for himself and them; desiring that they might be tried ten days with different sort of food and drink, and see whether any alteration would be made in them for the worse; which was a proper time for such a trial; for in that time it might be

reasonably supposed that their food, if it had any bad effect on them, would appear. Saadiah makes these ten days to be the days between the first day of the year and the day of atonement; but without any foundation:

and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink; instead of the king's meat, pulse, beans, pease, vetches, lentiles, rice, millet, and the like. The word^{f52} used signifies anything sown, all kinds of roots, herbs, and fruits; and, instead of wine, water; meat and drink, it may be thought, that persons of such birth and education had not been used to; and yet they preferred these to the king's dainties, by eating and drinking of which their consciences would be in danger of being defiled.

Ver. 13. *Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee*, etc.] And be thoroughly examined, whether any alteration is made therein for the worse:

and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat; who were either Chaldean youths brought up in this manner; or rather young men of the Jews, who were not so scrupulous as Daniel and his companions, and made no objection to eating the king's food; let their countenances and ours be compared together:

and as thou seest deal with thy servants: if there is no difference, or we are not the worse for abstaining from the king's meat, then grant us our request, and continue to indulge us in this manner; but, if otherwise, do as thou wilt. Daniel, no doubt, in putting the matter on this issue, as it should turn out at the end of ten days, had a revelation or assurance from God how it would be, or he would never have ventured to put it to such a trial.

Ver. 14. *So he consented to them in all this matter*, etc.] Or, "hearkened to them"^{f53}; being convinced that it was a very reasonable request, and the matter was fairly put; and especially as he saw, if it succeeded to their wish, it would be to his profit; since the meat and drink of these four persons would be his perquisite, and fetch him money; pulse and water being to be obtained at an easy rate:

and proved them ten days; tried the experiment, by giving them pulse and water only during this time, in order to see how it would agree with them; and whether any visible alteration could be discerned in their countenances, so as to bring him or his master into suspicion and danger.

Ver. 15. *And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer, and fatter in flesh,* etc.] At the time fixed for the trial of them, when they came to be examined, they appeared to be of a better complexion, and a more healthful look, and even plumper and fatter, with good solid flesh, and not swelled up as persons in a dropsy:

than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat: who appeared at the same time, and were compared with them, being under the care of the same persons: now this was owing to the blessing of divine Providence, as Jacchiades observes; for, how healthful soever pulse may be, or the several things designed by it, particularly rice, of which Aben Ezra on the place gives great encomiums, as very salutary and nourishing, and a purifier of the blood; yet neither that, nor any of the things before mentioned, tend to make persons fat in flesh, as these were.

Ver. 16. *Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat,* etc.] To himself, as the Syriac version adds; he took and carried it to his own family, and made use of it himself; and the portion of four such young gentlemen, maintained at the king's expense, and who had their provision from his table, must be, especially in the course of three years, of great advantage to this man and his family; for this was continued, as the word signifies, and may be rendered, "and Melzar was taking away etc."^{f54}; so he did from time to time; and thus, by serving the Lord's people, he served himself:

and the wine that they should drink; which he also took for his own use:

and gave them pulse; to eat, and water to drink, as the Syriac version adds, and which they desired; when he found this agreed so well with them, and he could safely do it without exposing himself to danger, and being to his profit and advantage.

Ver. 17. *As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom,* etc.] As they prospered in their bodies, they succeeded in their studies, and improved in their minds, and became great proficient in all kind of lawful and useful knowledge; not owing so much to their own sagacity and diligence, and the goodness and ability of their teachers, as to the blessing of God on their instructions and studies; for, as all natural, so all acquired parts are to be ascribed to God; and which these were favoured with by him in a very great manner, to answer some purposes of his. This is to be understood, not of magic art, vain

philosophy, judicial astrology, to which the Chaldeans were addicted; but of learning and wisdom, laudable and useful, both in things natural and political; for these men, who scrupled eating and drinking what came from the king's table, would never indulge themselves in the study of vain, curious, and unlawful knowledge; much less would God have blessed the study of such things, and still less be said to give them knowledge and skill therein:

and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams; besides knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom, in languages and sciences, in common with the other young men; he had the honour of seeing very remarkable visions of future things, and of interpreting dreams; and this not by rules of art, such as the Oneirocritics use, but by the gift of God; of which many singular instances follow in this book.

Ver. 18. *Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in*, etc.] That is, at the end of three years; which was the time appointed for their education, and when they were to be brought before the king for his examination and approbation:

then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar; even all the young men that were taken from among the children of Israel and Judah, as well as the four children before and after mentioned, appears by what follows. This was done by Asphenaz, and not Melzar.

Ver. 19. *And the king communed with them*, etc.] He asked them several questions upon the several articles of literature in which they had been educated, to try and see what proficiency they had made; he discoursed with them on various topics of learning, that he might be able to form a judgment of them, and of their capacities, and what employments under him they would be most fit for, and capable of. This shows that the king was a man of learning and good sense, as well as prudence, to be capable of taking such a step as this:

and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; for their learning and knowledge: after the king had gone through the examination of all the youths, these four appeared to be the greatest proficients, and were accordingly taken notice of and distinguished:

therefore stood they before the king; ministered unto him, became his servants, and even came to be of his privy council, especially Daniel; (see ~~1029~~ Proverbs 22:29).

Ver. 20. *And in all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king inquired of them,* etc.] At the time of their examination before him, when he put questions to them, which they gave a ready, pertinent, and solid answer to: and afterwards, when he had occasion to consult them on any affair,

he found them ten times, or ten hands^{f55} better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm; than all the magi and sophies, the enchanters, diviners, soothsayers, and such who pretended to judicial astrology, and to judge of and foretell things by the position of the stars; these young men were able to give more pertinent answers to questions put to them, and better advice and counsel when asked of them, than all the persons before described, throughout the king's dominions.

Ver. 21. *And Daniel continued,* etc.] In Babylon, and at court there, and in the favour of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors:

even unto the first year of King Cyrus: by whom Babylon was taken, and when the seventy years' captivity of the Jews were at an end; which time Daniel was there, for the sake of observing which this is mentioned: not that Daniel died in the first year of Cyrus; or went from Babylon with the rest of the Jews to Jerusalem upon the proclamation of Cyrus, as Jacchiades thinks; for we hear of him at the river Hiddekel, in the third year of Cyrus, (~~2700s~~ Daniel 10:1,4), but he was till this time in the court of the kings of Babylon; and afterwards in the courts of the kings of Media and Persia; for when it is said he was there, it does not so much intend his being there as the state and condition in which he was there; namely, as a favourite and prime minister; for he is said to prosper in the reign of Darius and Cyrus, (~~2763s~~ Daniel 6:28). This is that Cyrus who was prophesied of by name, near two hundred years before he was born, by the Prophet Isaiah, (~~2340s~~ Isaiah 44:28 45:1), which were sure prophecies, and to be depended upon; and had their exact accomplishment in him. Heathen writers report many things, as presages and predictions of his future greatness; they tell us some dreams, which his grandfather Astyages had concerning his daughter Mandane, the mother of Cyrus; which the interpreters of dreams in those days explained of a future son of hers, that was to be lord of all Asia^{f56}: and Megasthenes^{f57} relates a prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar, who before his death foretold to the Babylonians that a calamity should befall them, which neither his progenitor Belus nor Queen Beltis could avert; which was, that a Persian mule should bring them under subjection,

assisted by a Mede; which is understood of Cyrus, who was a Medo Persian; his father was Cambyses king of Persia, and his mother Mandane was daughter of Astyages king of Media; and he, with Darius the Mede, or however with his army, conquered Babylon: and he is also supposed to be the mule in the Pythian oracle that should be king of the Medes; by which Croesus was deceived, who concluded a mule would never be a king; and therefore, as his kingdom was safe till there was such an one, it must be for ever so^{f58}. The birth, parentage, and education of this prince, together with his victories, and particularly his taking of Babylon, are recorded by Xenophon in his history, in great agreement with this book of Daniel. Plutarch says^{f59} that Cyrus, or Coresh, as his name is in Hebrew, in the Persian tongue signifies the sun; and the name of the sun, Cheres, is pretty near in sound to it in the Hebrew tongue; and of the same signification and derivation with Cyrus, or Coresh, seems to be Carshena, one of the seven princes of Persia. Cyrus is remarkably famous for the edict he published in favour of the Jews, giving them liberty to go to their own land, and rebuild their temple, (~~1500~~Ezra 1:1-3), according to Cicero^{f60}, out of Dionysius the Persian, he lived to be seventy years of age; and died after a reign of seven years, according to Xenophon^{f61}; and of nine years, according to Ptolemy's canon; the one reckoning from the time he became sole monarch of the empire; the other from his reigning in partnership with his uncle Cyaxares, or Darius the Mede.