

8. Nego is a variation of Nabu, the Secretary of Education for the Chaldean pantheon. Nabu was the god of wisdom and education.
9. The system Ashpenaz intends to utilize in brainwashing these Hebrew boys is education. He plans to indoctrinate them into the culture of Chaldea.
10. The Jews today are very bigoted and rightly so. No other race in human history can hope to measure up to the accomplishments of the Jewish people.
11. However, these young men were bigoted because of several very legitimate reasons:

They were God’s chosen people, the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, thus they knew they were racially superior to the Chaldeans.

From Codex I of the Mosaic Law, known as the Ten Commandments, the Jews were imputed a heritage which was culturally superior to Chaldeans.

From Codex II of the Mosaic Law, the Jews had been imputed a system of worship which was spiritually superior to the Chaldeans, i.e., grace orientation.

From Codex III of the Mosaic Law, the Jews had been imputed a system of law which was politically superior to the Chaldeans, i.e., the laws of divine establishment.

12. Ashpenaz hoped that within three years he could indoctrinate the young men into the society, the culture, the religion, and the politics of Chaldea.
13. His goal was to transform them mentally from being Hebrews to becoming Chaldeans.
14. If he were successful, after three years, they would be ready to fill the appointments Nebuchadnezzar had in mind for them.
15. Ashpenaz has now kicked off his indoctrination program: He has announced to them their daily diet and assigned to them their noms de guerre.
16. As he suspected, Daniel was indeed the leader of the young hostages. And Daniel makes his first courageous stand for doctrine in verse 8.

Daniel 1:8 “But Daniel made up his mind [שׂוּם (sum): “to consider and then to determine.”] that he would not defile himself with the king’s choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.”

1. Note the spiritual maturity of Daniel. Many teenagers are rebellious. They reject certain standards set down by parents because they say they are being dictated to by society.
2. If they are permitted to do as they wish, they immediately comply with the standards which the trend setters have determined are currently cool.
3. At one moment they claim they cannot be dictated to by society while the next minute, they are. The reality is that they want to choose to which segment of society they will submit: the one of least resistance.
4. We learn from verse 15 that only these four young men chose to reject the king's diet. The other 46 did as they were told without any effort to do otherwise.
5. Verse 8 says Daniel "made up his mind." The Hebrew word is the Qal stem of the verb, שׁוּם (*sum*): "to consider and then to determine." This was Daniel's very first test and his decision sent the message that he would not cooperate with Chaldean practices. Here is a synopsis of his decision:

The problem of whether Daniel and his companions should eat the food provided by the king was a supreme test of their fidelity to the law and probably served the practical purpose of separating Daniel and his three companions from the other captives who apparently could compromise in this matter. His decision also demonstrates Daniel's understanding that God had brought Israel into captivity because of their failure to observe the Law. Daniel's handling of this problem sets the spiritual tone for the entire book.

The command of the king, that the young men should be fed with the food and wine from the king's table, was to Daniel and his friends a test of their fidelity to the Lord and His law, ... but the reason of their rejection of it was that the heathen at their feasts offered up in sacrifice to their gods a part of the food and the drink, and thus consecrated their meals by a religious rite; whereby not only he who participated in the worship of idols, but the meat and the wine as a whole were the meat and the wine of an idol sacrifice, partaking of which, according to the saying of the apostle is the same as sacrificing to devils (Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:20–21.)

(End J422-01. See J422-02 for continuation of study on p. 14.)



Daniel's handling of this difficult situation reflects his good judgment and common sense. Instead of inviting punishment by rebellion, he courteously requests of the prince of the eunuchs that he might be excused from eating food which would defile his conscience (see 1 Corinthians 10:21). (38)

Daniel did not object to the heathen names given to them nor to their education which involved the learning of the heathen, including their religious views. This was not in direct conflict with the Jewish Law. (39)¹

PRINCIPLE: Have flexibility in the nonessentials, but inflexibility in the essentials.

6. The verb, שׁוּם (*sum*): “to consider and then to determine,” came to mean the process one goes through when he considers a situation and then decides. He analyzes the facts, relates them to his frame of reference, and then reaches a conclusion.
7. The way he does this is to call up doctrines from his soul's memory center, place them out on the table of the soul, and determine what is there and then decide what needs to be considered.
8. Daniel's conclusion was that if he ate the king's diet, he would “defile himself.”
9. Just what was it that Nebuchadnezzar was asking these boys to eat?

VI. Details of Chaldean Idolatry

1. Central to Mesopotamian religious practice was the belief that mankind was created to serve the gods.
2. As a result, the deity was cared for, fed, and clothed by its subjects.
3. The temple staff included the Chief Priest. Those who ran the temple business were called the Scribes.
4. When an image or idol was made to represent one of the gods, the Chaldeans believed the deity was present in that idol.
5. When the army went off to war, the idols were taken with it and it was believed the god was absent until the idols returned with the troops.

¹ John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 38–39.

6. Cheap clay replicas of the idols were owned by almost every household. (Yard Ishtars)
7. The temple images were made of wood-covered garments plated gold. They were adorned with chest armor and crowned with tiaras.
8. These images were constructed in special woodshops and had to undergo an elaborate and highly secret ritual of consecration which endowed them with “life.”
9. The idol stood on a pedestal in the cella, the inner part of the pantheon. Here the god lived with its family and was served, like the king, in courtly fashion.
10. The idol was fed in a ceremonial manner accompanied by music.
11. When the god was eating, he was hidden from human view by linen curtains surrounding the idol and its table.
12. When the meals were done, the curtains were removed and the remains were sent to the king for his consumption.
13. What the king did not eat was distributed among the pantheon’s administrators and personnel.
14. It was this food, recently sacrificed to the idols of the Chaldean pantheon, on which Daniel and his fellow Jewish hostages were being invited to dine.
16. Daniel personally considered the menu to be polluted.

Daniel 1:8 Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile [גַּא'אֵל (*ga'al*)] himself with the king’s choice of food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself. (NASB)

17. The Hebrew verb, גַּא'אֵל (*ga'al*) means to pollute, stain, or make impure from which Daniel sought permission to abstain. It refers to ceremonial pollution.
18. His abstinence was the result of being well-trained by his parents regarding the Levitical dietary laws.
19. He had learned from his parents that when they brought a sacrifice to the Temple, it was in response to the mandates of the God they worshipped.
20. Also, to make a sacrifice to God was an indication that you not only follow Him, but also agree with His policies, doctrines, and plan.
21. Daniel further knew how heathen cultures sacrificed animals to their false gods. He knew the doctrine which was discussed at length by Paul in:

1 Corinthians 10:18 Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?

v. 19 What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?

v. 20 No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.

v. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

v. 22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we? (NASB)

22. Consequently, if the boys eat the sacrifice, they are saying that they approve of what the altar represents. This is exactly what Nebuchadnezzar and Ashpenaz have in mind.
23. When the Chaldeans take these sacrifices to their pantheon, it is an act of worship. Daniel understood these people were, in reality, worshipping demons.
24. Both Daniel and Paul know that the idols are nothing and the sacrifices are nothing. They are inanimate objects. What gives them meaning is the value the degenerate minds of the Chaldeans grant them.
25. And wherever degenerate minds build idols and worship them, demons are permitted by our Lord to gather.
26. To eat of the king's menu is to make a public testimony that you agree with the sacrifice.
27. Fifty healthy young boys are very hungry and they are being offered a meal prepared by the royal quartermaster corps. Peer pressure is a powerful influence for one to ignore the details and then eat the forbidden fruit.

PRINCIPLE: It takes the courage which comes from Christian integrity for young people to do the right thing and ignore peer pressure.

28. This may appear to be a small thing. All the boys know that there is nothing to the idol or the sacrifices. Nobody in Chaldea knows about the details of the Mosaic Law. So why make a big deal over this?
29. The big deal is this: When you place yourself under a religious system you are identified with something that belongs to Satan.

30. Daniel chose to place doctrine first and let God take care of the details. He said, “No!” to the notion of eating food sacrificed to idols. He then negotiated a workable alternative with Ashpenaz’s steward.

PRINCIPLE: Every time you knowingly reject a biblical mandate in order to assuage your fears, you are in a frantic search for happiness. You will not find it!

31. Daniel and his three friends passed this test. Human viewpoint may view it as a minor detail and a bit legalistic. However, their ability to stand fast for doctrine in these so-called minor exams are what provided them the momentum to pass the major exams later on.
32. For Shádrach, Méshach, and Abéd-nego, their challenge was to survive Nebuchadnezzar’s “burning fiery furnace” which they did in Daniel 3:19–30.
33. Daniel’s challenge was to survive incarceration by Darīus the Mede who put him into a den of lions. Daniel was able to survive this encounter with the help of an angel who, according to Daniel 6:22, “shut the lions’ mouths.
34. Momentum in the Christian way of life develops when the believer habitually makes good decisions from a position of doctrinal power.
35. When the major test hits, believers with Christian integrity will, from an inventory of doctrinal absolutes, begin to execute biblical problem-solving devices.
36. When you know the Word of God is equal to any challenge, then you have no problem putting it to the test.
37. Daniel stood fast with doctrine, offering an alternative solution to Ashpenaz and his steward, and then take responsibility for the decision.
38. Since Daniel is convinced that God will stand behind those who stand fast behind His Word, he has no fear of proposing a doctrinal solution and taking full responsibility for its results.
39. Confidence in the Word produced courage toward life and circumstances.
40. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah had great courage in their decisions to reject the king’s menu and begin a series of victories which preserved their exploits in biblical applications forever.

Daniel 1:9 Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials (Ashpenaz),

Daniel 1:10 And the commander of the officials [מֶלְצָר (Meltzar)] said to Daniel, “I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king.”

v. 11 But Daniel said to the Meltzar, whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, and Azariah,

v. 12 “Please test your servants for ten days and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink.

v. 13 “Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king’s choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see.” (NASB)

1. It would appear to the casual observer that Daniel has placed himself in a precarious position where if his proposal does not work, he and his three friends will be forced to eat the forbidden food.
2. In reality, this is a no-brainer. Daniel’s rationale is that since (a) doctrine works, and (b) God takes care of the details then (c) why sweat it, just do it!
3. We can see in verse 15 that the 46 others rejected truth in favor of a hot meal.

Daniel 1:15 “At the end of the 10 days, the fours’ appearance seemed better and they were fatter (had a more healthy appearance) than all the youths who had been eating the king’s choice food.” (NASB)

4. These 46 were losers and are never heard from again.
5. However, the vegetable diet appealed to the four heroes and their complexions showed it immediately. So much so that the Meltzar allowed them to stay on their special diet.
6. Daniel and his three fellow heroes are winners through doctrine as can be seen beginning in:

Daniel 1:16 So the Melzar continued to withhold their choice food and wine they were to drink and kept giving them vegetables.

Daniel 1:17 And for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams. (NASB)

1. Daniel's bold stand for truth was rewarded when the Melzar allowed the four to continue their diet.
2. God honors those who submit to His Word and allow Him to take care of the details.
3. **Note:** God gave the four the ability to rapidly advance in the various academic subjects in which they were taught.
4. He also imputes to Daniel the gift of prophet along with the rare ability to interpret dreams.
5. This "Faith-Rest Quartet" submitted to the Mosaic Dietary Code and honored the prohibition against participating, even by appearance, in cultic idolatry.
6. Their health was improved by the good diet and their standing before Chaldean officials was enhanced by the Plan of God, as can be seen at the end of the three-year training period:

Daniel 1:18 Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them [3 years; see v. 5], the commander of the officials [Ashpenaz] presented them before Nebuchadnezzar.

v. 19 The king talked with them and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, so they entered the king's personal service.

1. Because these young men passed the first test, they were able to consistently pass other tests.
2. The Book of Daniel is a chronicle demonstrating the power and dynamics of the Faith-Rest Drill, the objectivity of grace orientation to life, and the divine protection of those who maintain integrity under pressure.
3. God had provided them doctrine and they chose to store it in their souls which they all had the courage to apply under pressure:

PRINCIPLE: Once you honestly believe that God stands behind His Word, you will have the confidence to utilize it under pressure.

PRINCIPLE: Confidence in the Word of God produces courage toward life and circumstances.

PRINCIPLE: When you genuinely believe that doctrine is the most important thing in life is when you take control of your life.