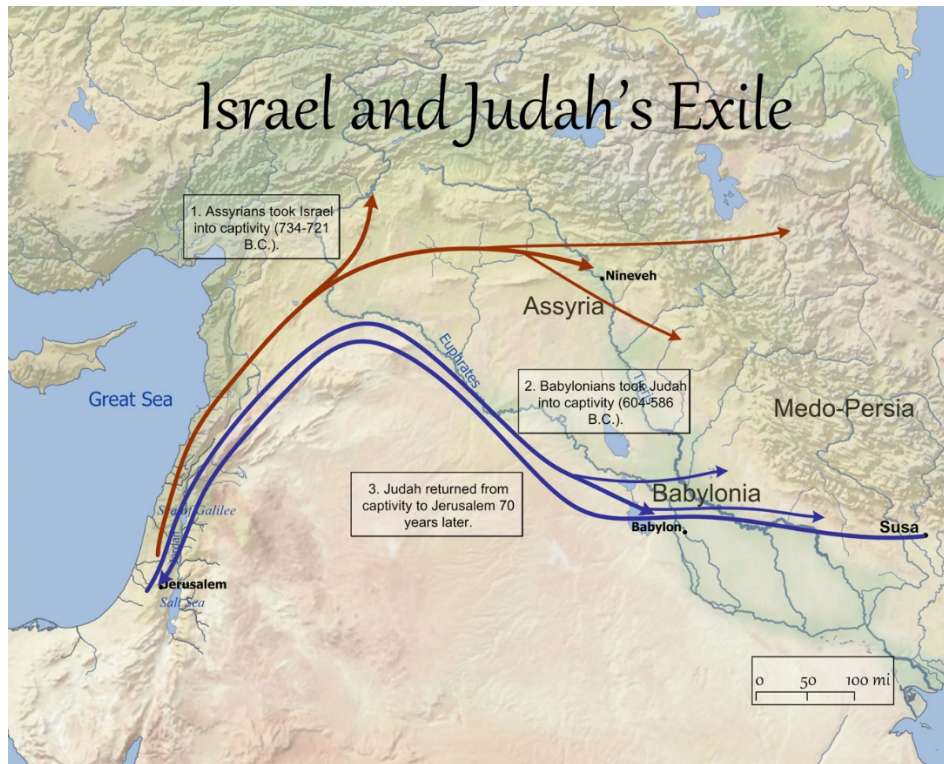


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## Lesson 1: Introduction and Chapter 1 – A Tale of Two Countries

In order to begin digging into the book of Daniel, we must first lay aside our shovels and take a brief tour through Israel's history.

Day 1: How far Israel had fallen since the glory days of kings David and Solomon! By the time that Daniel's story begins, the kingdom had been torn into two separate nations for over three hundred years. The northern part of the kingdom, called Israel, had been defeated and occupied by foreign invaders a century prior to Daniel's birth. The southern kingdom, called Judah, hung on longer, but they were a nation under constant threat of siege and capture. During that tumultuous time, Daniel was born into a noble Judean family.

1. Read about Manasseh in 2 Kings 21:1-18. After a brief two-year reign by Manasseh's son, Amon, Josiah takes over as king of Judah. Read about his life in 2 Kings 22 and 23. Compare and Contrast the reigns of the two different kings.

Day 2: Unfortunately, the reforms of Josiah do not prove to be long-lasting, and two of Josiah's sons, Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim follow in the footsteps of their great-grandfather, Manasseh. 2 Kings 23:37 says of Jehoiakim, "And he did evil in the eyes of the Lord, just as his fathers had done."

1. Read through the words of Moses to his fellow Israelites during the Exodus in Deuteronomy 4:1-40
  - a. What positive promises did God make and on what conditions did He make those promises?
  - b. What negative consequences did God promise, and for what behavior?

- c. What further hope does the Lord offer to the Israelites, even after they have wandered away from the God of Abraham, Jacob and Moses (vv.29-31)?
- d. Which cycle of history do you think the Israelites are in as Daniel's story begins during the reign of Jehoiakim?

Day 3: We've finally arrived at the opening pages of Daniel's story! Now the digging can begin. Daniel opens his story with a siege of Jerusalem by the most powerful man in the region, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Although the kingdom of Judah's total collapse would not happen for another nearly twenty years, Daniel and a small group of Israelite nobles were taken as captive by Nebuchadnezzar, along with temple articles, back to Babylon.

1. What adjectives are used to describe Daniel and his friends in Daniel 1:1-7?
2. The prophet Ezekiel likewise speaks of Daniel in Ezekiel 14:12-20 and Ezekiel 28:3. What qualities was Daniel known for?

Day 4: The Dilemma. In the darkness of a foreign land with foreign customs, treated well but ripped from the company of his family, Daniel encounters his first test. The culture of Babylonia was cosmopolitan and worldly. The city of Babylon especially was renowned for its architectural beauty, its strong emphasis on a highly educated class of powerful men, and an urbane atmosphere that simply added the gods of conquered peoples into their own religious pantheon. Babylon, much like many of the great cosmopolitan cities throughout history, was a place of "anything goes", except for the one thing that marked devout Jews as special: a belief in a singular, all-powerful God, beholden to no man, demanding of total worship and glory. Such a man was Daniel.

1. Babylonian royal feasts were legendary affairs, dedicated to whatever particular god tickled the king's fancy that day. Wine flowed endlessly, and a parade of meat and other delicacies that had been dedicated to idols were brought for the court to enjoy. Daniel, as a young man in training to assume a place of power in the elite class of educated men, was obligated to participate in these lavish feasts.  
Read Daniel 1:3-8.
  - a. What was Daniel's response to this requirement?
  - b. Have you ever been in a situation where you are told or pressured to do something that violates your conscience? What did you do?
2. Because of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, Christians are no longer bound to the dietary laws that Daniel strived to honor. But the New Testament is not silent on the subject of obedience to authorities and conflict between man's law and God's commands to the believer.
  - a. Read Romans 13:1-7. How are we to behave towards those in power over us?
  - b. But this submission to authorities is not without limitations. Read Acts 5:12-42. What does Peter and the apostles say in response to the high priest and the Sadducees, when they demand that he disobey the command of God to share the Good News of Jesus the Messiah (v. 29)?
  - c. Can you think of a situation in which a Christian would have to obey God rather than man's orders?

Day 5: Read Daniel 1:8-21.

1. In Matthew 10:16, Jesus shares some advice with his disciples as he sends them off to begin their ministry amongst the people. He warns them, "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves." Can you think you think of how Daniel's actions in this chapter might be an example of following this biblical advice?
2. How did God reward Daniel and his friends for their faithfulness?
3. Has God ever blessed you for your faithfulness during a time when it would have been easy to do wrong in order to fit in with others?