



The Death of Nebuchadnezzar (Part 20)

Daniel had become one of Nebuchadnezzar's trusted advisors during the ruler's 45 year tenure and was thrust into a further position of power due to his ability to interpret dreams. Nebuchadnezzar woke up from one of his dreams frightened, having seen himself in the dream living like a farm animal, eating grass from the field and having lost the ability to reason. He asked Daniel for an interpretation. Daniel told him that he would soon be descending into an animal-like existence and that the only way to prevent the demise of his mental health was to give tzedaka (charity).

Nebuchadnezzar opened up his store houses and for a year gave charity to those who needed it most, the recently-exiled Jews. As the year progressed, he grew resentful and stopped giving the charity, as his mental health had shown no deterioration. The storerooms were closed to the public. Nebuchadnezzar immediately started acting like an animal and had to be removed from the throne. He remained in this state for seven years. During this interim period, his son Amel-Marduk ruled in his place. After seven years, Nebuchadnezzar emerged from his state and found his son sitting on his throne. He immediately threw his son in jail.

Until Nebuchadnezzar's death, his son remained imprisoned. After his father's death, the advisors begged Amel-Marduk to take up his rightful position, which he refused until he was shown proof of his father's death. The advisors proceeded to exhume the body, which they then repeatedly stabbed. Amel-Marduk became a peaceful king for the next 23 years.

His first royal decree was to release his fellow inmate Yechonya, the king of Judea who had been imprisoned 10 years prior to the destruction of the Temple. Yechonya had been allowed conjugal visits while in jail and he had fathered a son called Shaltiel, meaning "I have asked G-d". Shaltiel's son was Zerubavel, who would eventually lead the people back to Judea.

The next king of Babylon was Belshazzar. He was perhaps the son of Nebuchadnezzar's daughter, though the line of succession is historically unclear. Belshazzar would be the last king of Babylon and his actions would doom his kingdom to its ultimate fate. Decades previously, while Nebuchadnezzar had been busy destroying Jerusalem and building the famed Hanging Gardens of Babylon, trouble had been brewing in the south of the Empire. The Persians and the Medes were jointly working their way north and were gearing up for an ultimate showdown with the Babylonians.

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