

## Daniel 1:1-21

**Daniel 1:8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.**

In our first study we contemplated the profound and multiple losses suffered by Daniel and his friends. He had lost home and country and family and innocence and freedom, and his manhood leading to his placement in the king's pet program of leadership development for his realm. An insight into the atmosphere in which Daniel found himself is offered by Nehemiah, the cupbearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes, with his confession on the occasion when he shared with the king his burden for Jerusalem, "Now I had never been sad in his presence before." The court of the kings so elevated the status of these men that they all believed that to enter their presence was such a privilege that any emotion other than unmitigated gratefulness and joy would be an insult to the king. Daniel's resolve to "not defile himself" with the king's delicacies or with his wine would have come off as insubordination in any normal circumstance. It would have been

seen as insulting to the king to reject his lavish generosity for he was sharing with these foreigners the food from his own table. Common sense would suggest that Daniel's request was thoughtful rather than immediate and that he and his friends might very well have been sick rather than well at the time the request was made. The glowing description of the health and status of the young men drafted into the program might be another example of the irony of the stories in Daniel, for how well would young men look coming out of the ravages of war, the atrocities of death, the extremes of a thousand mile march and the horror of forced castration?

Life changing purpose of heart usually comes out of our troubles. Daniel was likely ill and the richness of the fare that they were fed was likely turning everyone's stomach. Daniel presumably would have needed some time to be noticed and appreciated by Ashpenaz. All of this suggests that Daniel came to the conviction that a change of diet was needed not only as a matter of faith but also of practical necessity. The vegetables that they were to eat still would have come out of the king's kitchen and most likely were not prepared as Kosher food. Daniel's request was a

compromise in this respect but was no doubt, the best that he could do.

You have to be impressed by the tone of the conversation between Daniel and the authorities. Notice the difference between what happens in a circumstance where there is a power struggle vs. the experience of a team that seeks to work together to solve a problem. Problem solving is a rational and cooperative exercise. Power struggles are divisive and counter-productive. Daniel was able to avoid being perceived as a threat to Ashpenaz while he made a proposal that on its face was radical and dangerous. Ashpenaz made this point when he expressed his fear of the king and reluctance to in any way reject what the king had provided. But Daniel appealed to the purpose behind the king's provision and followed up with a proposed trial and promise. The trial was for 10 days, an insignificant period in a 3 year program. Ashpenaz now had nothing to lose and no doubt was confident that Daniel's diet would fail. The results were decisive. Daniel was vindicated and He and his friends excelled. God's hand was seen throughout the experience suggesting that Daniel and friends had been leaning on God during trouble rather than blaming Him for those troubles.

