

Naturopathic Doctor: Is the 'Daniel Fast' Biblical?

This is a very profound question that is rarely (if ever) asked. Let's dive in to see if we can determine the answer:

First let's set up the back story. Jehoiakim was still king of Judah when Daniel and others were taken captive by the king of Babylon in 605 B.C. During Daniel's first years in Babylon, things did not get better back in Judah. Daniel and his friends watched as many other Jews eventually joined them in this foreign city.

Meanwhile, Daniel and the Jewish captives in Babylon had to make the best of their new lives. Daniel and other young men were chosen to live at the palace and be educated. Nebuchadnezzar had conquered many nations besides Judah, and he was gathering the best brains from all of them to be trained as helpers in his government. The king planned a three-year course of study for these young men.

Daniel had the opportunity to acquire the best possible education of the day. The Babylonians had knowledge of math and astronomy, as well as medicine. Chemistry and metallurgy were established sciences of Daniel's time; theology and philosophy would also have been included.

The man in charge of the students gave them Babylonian names. "Daniel" was Hebrew for "my judge is God". His new name, "Belteshazzar" meant "protect his life" and honored a Babylonian god. He ordered for them what he thought was the very best of food and drink. The food and wine assigned to the young men from the king's table were probably very rich, luxurious, rare foods that only the wealthy could afford.

But the problem with the king's food and wine was that it had all been involved in worship ceremonies to heathen idols, and

anyone who ate it was honoring the idol. Also, God had given the Hebrews strict laws about food. Pork and some other kinds of meat were not to be used at all, and when cattle or sheep were killed, the blood was to be carefully drained from them. These rules were not followed in Babylon. Daniel felt he would be defiled if he did not keep God's laws.

The man in charge of the young scholars considered Daniel's refusal to eat the king's food. However, the man was afraid to disobey the king. What if he gave the Hebrew boys some other kind of food, and then they were not so strong and handsome as the rest of the students? Then the king might be angry and cut off the head of the man who disobeyed him.

Daniel suggested a 10-day test. The Hebrew boys would eat vegetables and drink water instead of sharing the king's food and wine. The man agreed to try it. If the boys became weaker in 10 days, then he would insist they eat what the king ordered. The test proved that the Hebrew's diet was best, so it was continued.

God wanted these Hebrew boys to be His witnesses in Babylon. He helped them become the best of the students. To Daniel, He gave a special ability to understand the messages that He sometimes gave in dreams. The king himself gave the final examination at the end of the three years of training. He found that the Hebrew boys not only were the best of the students, but they also were even wiser than the great scholars of Babylon. Daniel stayed in Babylon the rest of his life. He grew to be an old man in Babylon.

Daniel knew that his body was a gift from God. He wanted to take care of it and follow God's instructions. The New Testament does not contain specific food commands. Still, the principal of caring for the bodies that God gave us makes sense. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 talks about the fact that our body is a temple for Holy Spirit. We are to honor God with our bodies.

Therefore, Daniel's decision not to defile his body, but to instead consume health giving foods, was permanent, not temporary. Hence, we determine the answer to our article's title question: There is not a biblically derived "Daniel fast." Instead, there is a biblically described courageous decision by a young man to eat life-giving foods on a permanent basis, even if it cost his life. {eoa}

Mark Sherwood, *naturopathic doctor, is on a mission to help you achieve wellness in every area of your life. Dr. Mark and his wife, Michele L. Neil-Sherwood, D.O., have a successful medical practice, the Functional Medical Institute; have a television and radio program; and provide resources, including their Amazon bestseller, The Quest for Wellness; nutrition plans; fitness instructional videos and helpful mental and emotional steps to provide relief from stress and to help people form better habits, so they can live well.*

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