

GREEK APPENDIX to DANIEL

¹*When King Astyages was laid to rest with his ancestors, Cyrus the Persian succeeded to his kingdom.*

²*Daniel was a companion of the king, and was the most honoured of all his friends.*

³*Now the Babylonians had an idol called Bel, and every day they provided for it twelve bushels of choice flour and forty sheep and six measures of wine. ⁴The king revered it and went every day to worship it. But Daniel worshipped his own God.*

So the king said to him, "Why do you not worship Bel?" ⁵He answered, "Because I do not revere idols made with hands, but the living God, who created heaven and earth and has dominion over all living creatures."

⁶*The king said to him, "Do you not think that Bel is a living god? Do you not see how much he eats and drinks every day?" ⁷And Daniel laughed, and said, "Do not be deceived, O king, for this thing is only clay inside and bronze outside, and it never ate or drank anything."*

⁸*Then the king was angry and called the priests of Bel and said to them, "If you do not tell me who is eating these provisions, you shall die. ⁹But if you prove that Bel is eating them, Daniel shall die, because he has spoken blasphemy against Bel." Daniel said to the king, "Let it be done as you have said."*

For an introduction to these stories from the Greek versions of Daniel see the Introduction pages 89-90. We are following the order found in the 'Theodotion' Version which places this material after chapter 12 (in his Latin Vulgate Version Jerome puts Susanna after chapters 12 and then concludes with the story of Bel and the Snake).

The scene is located during the reign of King Cyrus (see Daniel 1:21; 10:1), who defeated Astyages, king of Media, in 550.

The Old Greek Version has quite a different introduction:

From the prophecy of Habakkuk, son of Joshua, of the tribe of Levi. There was a certain man, a priest, whose name was Daniel, son of Abal, a companion of the king of Babylon.

It speaks of Daniel as 'a priest', and does not identify the king. The story itself is for the most part the same in both Greek versions. It shows Daniel as still faithful to the God of his people right through to the end of his life.

Bel is one name for the Babylonian god, Marduk (see Jeremiah 50:2; Isaiah 46:1).

In his Preface to Daniel Jerome spoke of the story of Bel as a fable. He classified the story of the Snake in the same way.

The main aim of this and the following story about the Snake is to ridicule idol-worship.

The destruction of the Babylonian idol echoes the following declaration found in the Jeremiah scroll in which God threatens to punish Babylon for the violence done to Judah:

King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon has devoured me, he has crushed me; he has made me an empty vessel, he has swallowed me like a monster; he has filled his belly with my delicacies, he has spewed me out. May my torn flesh be avenged on Babylon," the inhabitants of Zion shall say. "May my blood be avenged on the inhabitants of Chaldea," Jerusalem shall say ...

I will punish Bel in Babylon, and make him disgorge what he has swallowed. The nations shall no longer stream to him; the wall of Babylon has fallen.

– Jeremiah 51:34-35, 44

The Old Greek Version has the king destroy the temple. Here in the Theodotion Version it is Daniel. It was actually Xerxes I (486-465BC), not Cyrus, who plundered the temple and melted down the idol.

¹⁰Now there were seventy priests of Bel, besides their wives and children. So the king went with Daniel into the temple of Bel. ¹¹The priests of Bel said, "See, we are now going outside; you yourself, O king, set out the food and prepare the wine, and shut the door and seal it with your signet. ¹²When you return in the morning, if you do not find that Bel has eaten it all, we will die; otherwise Daniel will, who is telling lies about us." ¹³They were unconcerned, for beneath the table they had made a hidden entrance, through which they used to go in regularly and consume the provisions. ¹⁴After they had gone out, the king set out the food for Bel. Then Daniel ordered his servants to bring ashes, and they scattered them throughout the whole temple in the presence of the king alone. Then they went out, shut the door and sealed it with the king's signet, and departed. ¹⁵During the night the priests came as usual, with their wives and children, and they ate and drank everything.

¹⁶Early in the morning the king rose and came, and Daniel with him. ¹⁷The king said, "Are the seals unbroken, Daniel?" He answered, "They are unbroken, O king." ¹⁸and shouted in a loud voice, "You are great, O Bel, and in you there is no deceit at all!" ¹⁹But Daniel laughed and restrained the king from going in. "Look at the floor," he said, "and notice whose footprints these are." ²⁰The king said, "I see the footprints of men and women and children." ²¹Then the king was enraged, and he arrested the priests and their wives and children. They showed him the secret doors through which they used to enter to consume what was on the table.

²²Therefore the king put them to death, and gave Bel over to Daniel, who destroyed it and its temple.

²³Now in that place there was a great snake, which the Babylonians revered. ²⁴The king said to Daniel, "You cannot deny that this is a living god; so worship him." ²⁵Daniel said, "I worship the Lord my God, for he is the living God. ²⁶But give me permission, O king, and I will kill the snake without sword or club." The king said, "I give you permission." ²⁷Then Daniel took pitch, fat, and hair, and boiled them together and made cakes, which he fed to the snake. The snake ate them, and burst open. Then Daniel said, "See what you have been worshiping!"

²⁸When the Babylonians heard about it, they were very indignant and conspired against the king, saying, "The king has become a Jew; he has destroyed Bel, and killed the snake, and slaughtered the priests." ²⁹Going to the king, they said, "Hand Daniel over to us, or else we will kill you and your household." ³⁰The king saw that they were pressing him hard, and under compulsion he handed Daniel over to them. ³¹They threw Daniel into the lions' den, and he was there for six days. ³²There were seven lions in the den, and every day they had been given two human bodies and two sheep; but now they were given nothing, so that they would devour Daniel.

The second story (verses 23-27) concerns a sacred Snake. Like the story of Bel it ridicules idol worship. Bel is shown not to be a god because it cannot eat. The Snake shows it is not a god by its inability to discern what to eat!

The third story (verses 29-42) has Daniel in a lion pit (compare Daniel 6).

The story of Habakkuk (verses 33-39) appears to be a later addition to the account of Daniel in the lion's pit. The prophet Habakkuk carried out his ministry in the years 605-590, before the destruction of Jerusalem (587), and fifty years before Cyrus entered Babylon (539).

Verse 36 appears to draw on Ezekiel 8:3.

The king rejoices at Daniel's miraculous deliverance, praises Daniel's God and casts into the lion pit those who were opposed to Daniel.

³³Now the prophet Habakkuk was in Judea; he had made a stew and had broken bread into a bowl, and was going into the field to take it to the reapers. ³⁴But the angel of the Lord said to Habakkuk, "Take the food that you have to Babylon, to Daniel, in the lions' den." ³⁵Habakkuk said, "Sir, I have never seen Babylon, and I know nothing about the den." ³⁶Then the angel of the Lord took him by the crown of his head and carried him by his hair; with the speed of the wind he set him down in Babylon, right over the den. ³⁷Then Habakkuk shouted, "Daniel, Daniel! Take the food that God has sent you." ³⁸Daniel said, "You have remembered me, O God, and have not forsaken those who love you." ³⁹So Daniel got up and ate. And the angel of God immediately returned Habakkuk to his own place.

⁴⁰On the seventh day the king came to mourn for Daniel. When he came to the den he looked in, and there sat Daniel! ⁴¹The king shouted with a loud voice, "You are great, O Lord, the God of Daniel, and there is no other besides you!" ⁴²Then he pulled Daniel out, and threw into the den those who had attempted his destruction, and they were instantly eaten before his eyes.

¹There was a man living in Babylon whose name was Joakim. ²He married the daughter of Hilkiah, named Susanna, a very beautiful woman and one who feared the Lord. ³Her parents were righteous, and had trained their daughter according to the law of Moses. ⁴Joakim was very rich, and had a fine garden adjoining his house; the Jews used to come to him because he was the most honoured of them all.

⁵That year two elders from the people were appointed as judges. Concerning them the Lord had said: "Wickedness came forth from Babylon, from elders who were judges, who were supposed to govern the people." ⁶These men were frequently at Joakim's house, and all who had a case to be tried came to them there.

⁷When the people left at noon, Susanna would go into her husband's garden to walk. ⁸Every day the two elders used to see her, going in and walking about, and they began to lust for her. ⁹They suppressed their consciences and turned away their eyes from looking to Heaven or remembering their duty to administer justice. ¹⁰Both were overwhelmed with passion for her, but they did not tell each other of their distress, ¹¹for they were ashamed to disclose their lustful desire to seduce her. ¹²Day after day they watched eagerly to see her. ¹³One day they said to each other, "Let us go home, for it is time for lunch." So they both left and parted from each other. ¹⁴But turning back, they met again; and when each pressed the other for the reason, they confessed their lust. Then together they arranged for a time when they could find her alone.

The story of Susanna is placed before chapter 1 in the Greek 'Theodotion' Version. In Jerome's Latin Vulgate Version it is placed immediately after chapter 12 and before the story of Bel and the Snake. Both stories are found only in Greek, though it is likely they rely on a Semitic original.

'Joakim' [Ιωακίμ] is from the Hebrew יְהוָה יִקְיָם meaning 'YHWH will establish'. Hilkiah [Χελκίου] is from the Hebrew הַלְקִיָּהוּ meaning 'YHWH is my portion'. Susanna [Σουσάννα] is from the Hebrew שׁוֹשַׁן, meaning 'lily' (see Song of Songs 2:1, 2, 16; 4:5; 6:2-3; 7:3; in the New Testament see Luke 8:3). It is an Egyptian loanword.

Other Jewish heroines in stories from the same period are also spoken of as 'beautiful and fearing the Lord' (verse 2; see Judith 8:7-8; Esther 2:7; 15:13).

'Garden' (verse 4, παράδεισος, paradise) is a loanword from Old Persian (see Genesis 2:8; Song of Songs 4:13).

Verses 1-5 appear to be an expansion of the more abrupt opening in the Old Greek Version.

Verses 5-14 introduce two elders who were appointed judges. Their names are not given. We hear of their lusting after the beautiful and righteous Susanna, and their planning to seduce her.

The bathing scene (verses 15-18) is absent from the Old Greek Version, as are verses 20-21 and 24-27.

For verses 15-27 in the Theodotion Version, the Old Greek simply reads:

Together they approached her and tried to force her. The Jewess said to them: "I know if I do this thing, it will be my death, and if I don't do it, I will not escape your hands. But it is better for me not to do it and so fall into your hands than sin in the Lord's sight".

According to Deuteronomy 22:24, if the woman does not cry out she is presumed to consent, and so is to be stoned.

¹⁵Once, while they were watching for an opportune day, she went in as before with only two maids, and wished to bathe in the garden, for it was a hot day. ¹⁶No one was there except the two elders, who had hidden themselves and were watching her. ¹⁷She said to her maids, "Bring me olive oil and ointments, and shut the garden doors so that I can bathe." ¹⁸They did as she told them: they shut the doors of the garden and went out by the side doors to bring what they had been commanded; they did not see the elders, because they were hiding.

¹⁹When the maids had gone out, the two elders got up and ran to her. ²⁰They said, "Look, the garden doors are shut, and no one can see us. We are burning with desire for you; so give your consent, and lie with us. ²¹If you refuse, we will testify against you that a young man was with you, and this was why you sent your maids away."

²²Susanna groaned and said, "I am completely trapped. For if I do this, it will mean death for me; if I do not, I cannot escape your hands. ²³I choose not to do it; I will fall into your hands, rather than sin in the sight of the Lord." ²⁴Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and the two elders shouted against her. ²⁵And one of them ran and opened the garden doors.

²⁶When the people in the house heard the shouting in the garden, they rushed in at the side door to see what had happened to her. ²⁷And when the elders told their story, the servants felt very much ashamed, for nothing like this had ever been said about Susanna.

Susanna is condemned to death

²⁸The next day, when the people gathered at the house of her husband Joakim, the two elders came, full of their wicked plot to have Susanna put to death. In the presence of the people they said,

²⁹“Send for Susanna daughter of Hilkiah, the wife of Joakim.” ³⁰So they sent for her. And she came with her parents, her children, and all her relatives.

³¹Now Susanna was a woman of great refinement and beautiful in appearance.

³²As she was veiled, the scoundrels ordered her to be unveiled, so that they might feast their eyes on her beauty.

³³Those who were with her and all who saw her were weeping.

³⁴Then the two elders stood up before the people and laid their hands on her head.

³⁵Through her tears she looked up toward Heaven, for her heart trusted in the Lord. ³⁶The elders said, “While we were walking in the garden alone, this woman came in with two maids, shut the garden doors, and dismissed the maids. ³⁷Then a young man, who was hiding there, came to her and lay with her. ³⁸We were in a corner of the garden, and when we saw this wickedness we ran to them. ³⁹Although we saw them embracing, we could not hold the man, because he was stronger than we, and he opened the doors and got away. ⁴⁰We did, however, seize this woman and asked who the young man was, ⁴¹but she would not tell us. These things we testify.”

Because they were elders of the people and judges, the assembly believed them and condemned her to death.

It is likely that the Old Greek Version by ‘uncovered’ means ‘stripped naked’, as this was part of the punishment for adultery (see Ezekiel 16:37-39).

For the gesture of laying their hands on their head (verse 34) see Leviticus 24:14.

Because of their position they were considered above suspicion, and therefore were not cross examined, as the law required (see Deuteronomy 19:15-20).

She was condemned to death in accordance with the law (see Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22-23; and Ezekiel 16:38-40; in the Newer Testament see John 8:5).

Susanna was introduced as ‘one who fears the Lord’(1:2); that is to say, one who recognises her dependence upon God, worships God, and humbly looks to God in her need. We see this in her prayer (verses 42-43).

The Lord, who hears the cry of the poor, hears her prayer (verse 44), and raises up ‘the holy spirit’ of a young boy named Daniel (verse 45). This is why the Greek ‘Theodotion’ Version places this scene before chapter one. Daniel [Δανιηλ] is from the Hebrew דָּנִיֵּאל, and means ‘my judge is ’El’. It is not difficult to see why a story about God’s righteous judgment was attached to his name.

Verses 46-47 and 49-50 are not found in the Old Greek.

Verse 51 in the Old Greek Version states:

Daniel said to them: ‘Now, separate them from me some distance from one another in order that I may discredit them.’ When they had been separated, Daniel said to the congregation, “Now don’t take into consideration that these are elders, saying ‘They would not lie’”

Daniel’s certainty that the elders are guilty came, not from cross examination, but from divine inspiration (see verse 45).

⁴²Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and said, “O eternal God, you know what is secret and are aware of all things before they come to be; ⁴³you know that these men have given false evidence against me. And now I am to die, though I have done none of the wicked things that they have charged against me!”

⁴⁴The Lord heard her cry. ⁴⁵Just as she was being led off to execution, God stirred up the holy spirit of a young lad named Daniel, ⁴⁶and he shouted with a loud voice, “I want no part in shedding this woman’s blood!”

⁴⁷All the people turned to him and asked, “What is this you are saying?” ⁴⁸Taking his stand among them he said, “Are you such fools, O Israelites, as to condemn a daughter of Israel without examination and without learning the facts? ⁴⁹Return to court, for these men have given false evidence against her.”

⁵⁰So all the people hurried back. And the rest of the elders said to him, “Come, sit among us and inform us, for God has given you the standing of an elder.” ⁵¹Daniel said to them, “Separate them far from each other, and I will examine them.”

⁵²When they were separated from each other, he summoned one of them and said to him, "You old relic of wicked days, your sins have now come home, which you have committed in the past, ⁵³pronouncing unjust judgments, condemning the innocent and acquitting the guilty, though the Lord said, 'You shall not put an innocent and righteous person to death.'⁵⁴Now then, if you really saw this woman, tell me this: Under what tree did you see them being intimate with each other?" He answered, "Under a mastic tree."⁵⁵And Daniel said, "Very well! This lie has cost you your head, for the angel of God has received the sentence from God and will immediately cut you in two."

⁵⁶Then, putting him to one side, he ordered them to bring the other. And he said to him, "You offspring of Canaan and not of Judah, beauty has beguiled you and lust has perverted your heart. ⁵⁷This is how you have been treating the daughters of Israel, and they were intimate with you through fear; but a daughter of Judah would not tolerate your wickedness. ⁵⁸Now then, tell me: Under what tree did you catch them being intimate with each other?" He answered, "Under an evergreen oak."⁵⁹Daniel said to him, "Very well! This lie has cost you also your head, for the angel of God is waiting with his sword to split you in two, so as to destroy you both."

⁶⁰Then the whole assembly raised a great shout and blessed God, who saves those who hope in him. ⁶¹And they took action against the two elders, because out of their own mouths Daniel had convicted them of bearing false witness; they did to them as they had wickedly planned to do to their neighbor. ⁶²Acting in accordance with the law of Moses, they put them to death. Thus innocent blood was spared that day.

⁶³Hilkiah and his wife praised God for their daughter Susanna, and so did her husband Joakim and all her relatives, because she was found innocent of a shameful deed. ⁶⁴And from that day onward Daniel had a great reputation among the people.

The first elder-judge declares that he saw Susanna and the young man having sexual relations under a mastic tree [σχινοϛ, verse 54]. There is a pun in the punishment (verse 55), where the word 'cut' [σχισει] echoes the word for a mastic tree. We can thank the Greek translator for this.

The second elder-judge identifies the tree as an 'oak' [πρινοϛ]. Once again there is a pun in the punishment (verse 59) where the word 'split' [πρισαι] echoes the word for oak.

The 'law of Moses' that they were following is expressed in Deuteronomy 19:18-21.

In the epilogue (verses 63-64) the 'Theodotion' Version puts the focus on Susanna and Daniel.