האם דניאל הוא יהויכין?

אבנר רמו

Similarly to other, Michael A. Knibb is of the opinion that a significant part of the Book of Daniel (in particular chapters 7-12) represents its writer's reactions and interpretations of themes that appear in other books of the Bible. Sometimes the handling of these topics is even associated with the "borrowing" of figures of speech from the primary texts (1). Shalom M. Paul thinks that the first chapter of the Book of Daniel "shares a remarkable stage by stage correlation with a letter from Mari sent to Shibtu, the wife of king Zimrilin, describing the procedure of induction into court service" (2). However, I will try to show here that some of the details appearing in the first chapter of the Book of Daniel also relate to those that are found in other biblical texts.

The Book of Daniel begins with:

בשנת שלוש למלכות יהויקים מלך-יהודה-בא נבוכדנאצר מלך-בבל ירושלם, ויצר עליה.

"**In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Jerusalem, and besieged it**" (Dan 1:1).

Similar information is given in verse 2 Ki 24:1. However, according to Babylonian records Jerusalem was visited for the first time by King Nebuchadnezzar II only in 597 BC (the 8th year to his reign). At that time on the throne of Judah set the eight (or eighteen?) year old Jehoiachin (2 Ch 36:9 or 2 Ki 24:8).

The Book of Kings tells us:

ויבא נבכדנאצר מלך-בבל על-העיר; ועבדיו צרים עליה
ויצא יהויכין מלך-יהודה על-מלך בבל, הוא ואמו ועבדיו ושריו וסריסיו; ויקח אתו מלך בבל, בשנת שמנה למלכו.

"**And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to the city, while his servants were besieging it.**
And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers; and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign" (2 Ki 24:11-12; see also: Jer 29:2; 2 Ch 36:10).

The fact that Jehoiachin was exiled with his mother (and not with his wife) suggests that at that time he was indeed a young person (see also: 2 Ki 24:15; Jer 22:26). We should also pay attention to the fact that while we are told that his father - Jehoiakim (2 Ch 36:6; but not 2 Ki 24:1-6), and his uncle - Zedekiah (2 Ki 25:7) were bound in fetters, we are not told whether Jehoiachin was even detained.

In the Book of Daniel we hear that the Babylonian king ordered his chief eunuch to bring from Jerusalem some good, healthy, and bright youngsters "of the royal seed" so that they could:

לעמד בהיכל המלך; וללמדם ספר, ולשון כשדים.

"**Stand in the king's palace; and that he should teach them the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans**" (Dan 1:4).

ויהי בהם מבני יהודה-דניאל חנניה מישאל ועזריה.

"**Now among these were, of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah**" (Dan 1:6).

We may wonder if some or all of them were "of the royal seed."

The writer of the Book of Daniel also tells us:

וימן להם המלך דבר-יום ביומו, מפת-בג המלך ומיין משתיו,

"And the king appointed for them a daily portion of the king's food, and of the wine which he drank" (Dan 1:5).

Similarly we read about Jehoiachin:

וארחתו, ארחת תמיד נתנה-לו מאת המלך-דבר-יום ביומו: כל ימי חיו.

"And for his allowance, there was a continual allowance given him of the king, every day a portion, all the days of his life And for his allowance, there was a continual allowance given him of the king, every day a portion, all the days of his life" (2 Ki 25:30; Jer 52:34).

It is quite remarkable that the writers of the Books of Kings and Jeremiah considered this information important enough as to be the final statement in these books. Furthermore, the similarity to the information found in Dan 1:5 where we also find the wording: **דבר-יום ביומו** - "**every day a portion**" suggests the possibility that Jehoiachin, under another name, is one of the young persons mentioned in Dan 1:6.

The similarity does not end here. Years later, another Babylonian king - **בלשאצר** - "**Belshazzar**" raised the status of Daniel: **עלוהי, די-להוא שליט תלתא במלכותא** - "**concerning him, that he should rule as one of three in the kingdom**" (Dan 5:29).

Yet we also read that thirty seven years after Jehoiachin was exiled, **אויל מרדך מלך בבל** - "**Evil-merodach king of Babylon**": **ויתן את-כסאו, מעל כסא המלכים אשר אתו בבבל** - "**And he set his** [Jehoiachim's] **throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon**" (2 Ki 25:28; Jer 52:32).

We also read in the first chapter of the Book of Daniel:

וישם להם שר הסריסים שמות; וישם לדניאל בלטשאצר, ולחנניה שדרך, ולמישאל מישך, ולעזריה עבד נגו.

"**And the chief of the officers gave names unto them: unto Daniel he gave the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abed-nego**" (Dan 1:7).

***Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego*. By Simeon Solomon, 1863.**

It has been suggested that the name **עבד נגו** (*a'ved nego*) is an (intentional?) error of: "*a'ved Nabu*" - "servant of (the god) Nabu), or of: "*a'ved Nergal*" - "servant of (the god) Nergal." However, these names also suggest that the Hebrew name of this youngster should have been **עבדיה** (*o'vadiah*) - "servant of God" rather then **עזריה** (*a'zariah*) - "helper of God." It should also be noted that the name **עזריה** - "**Azariah**" which appears five times in the Massoretic version of the Book of Daniel (Dan 1:6, 7, 11, 19; 2:17) was not found in the fragmented Daniel manuscripts of Qumran. In line 5 of fragment 1 of 4QDan[a] we read: "**ע[ומן[שאל וע]** " and it is generally believed that here the last letter **ע** (a') is the beginning of the name **עזריה** - "**Azariah**" as appears in verse Dan 1:19 (3), but it could also be the first letter of the name **עבדיה** (*o'vadiah*).

According to the Chronicler among the descendants of king Jehoiakim were: **חנניה** (*khananiah*) - "**Hananiah**" (1 Ch 3:19), and **עבדיה** (*o'vadiah*) - "**Obadiah**" (1 Ch 3:21). We also find among the descendants of this king the name: **שאלתיאל** (*shealtiel*) - "**Shealtiel**" (1 Ch 3:17), and this name could have been (deliberately?) corrupted in the Book of Daniel to: **מישאל** (*mishael*) - "**Mishael**" (Dan 1:6, 7, 11, 19; 2:17). The fact that these are also the names of the three (out of four) youngsters mentioned in Dan 1:6, suggests that indeed these young men may have been considered to be "of the royal seed."

Frequently Mesopotamian names that appear in the Bible have a suffix or a prefix of **אסר** (*asar*) or **אצר** (*atsar*). We read about **תגלת פלאסר** - "**Tiglath-pileser**" (2 Ki 15:29; 16:10; 1 Ki 5:6; 2

Ki 28:20), **שלמנאסר** - "**Shalmaneser**" (2 Ki 17:3; 18:9), **אסר-חדן** - "**Esarhaddon**" (2 Ki 19:37; Is 37:38; Ezr 4:2), **נבכדנאצר** - "**Nebuchadnezzar**" (2 Ki 24:1), or **נרגל שראצר** - "**Nergal-sarezer**" (Jer 39:3, 13). It is likely that **אסר** (*asar*) and **אצר** (*atsar*) are the same term and that in its transliteration the Hebrew scribes had difficulty in differentiating between the sibilants **ס** (s) and **צ** (ts).

In the Chronicler's list of King Jehoiakim's descendants we also find the names: **שנאצר** (*shenatsar*) - "**Shenazzar**" (1 Ch 3:18), and **יכניה אסר** (*yechaniah asir*) which was translated to English as "**Jeconiah - [the same is] Assir**" (1 Ch 3:17). The Greek translator wrote here: "Iechonia-asir." The name: **יכניה** (*yechaniah*) is one of the variants of the name **יהויכין** (*yehoyachin*) - "**Jehoiachin**" (e.g. Jer 27:20), and the name: **יכניה אסר** (*yechoniah asir*), or more likely: **יכניה אצר** (*yechoniah atsar*) seems to be a "Babylization" of his Hebrew name.

In the Chronicler's list of King Jehoiakim's descendants we also find the name **זרבבל** - (*zerubavel*) - "**Zerubbabel**" (1 Ch 3:19). The writer of the Book of Haggai tells us about **זרבבל בן-שאלתיאל פחת יהודה** - "**Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah**" (Hag 1:1, 14; 2:2), who was a contemporary of King Darius. The writer of the Book of Ezra also refers to a person with such a name who lived in the days of King Cyrus (Ezr 3:2, 8). It appears that the writer of the Book of Ezra also refers to him as: **ששבצר הנשיא ליהודה** - "**Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah**" (Ezr 1:8; see also: Ezr 1:11; 5:14, 16).

Whether **ששבצר** (*sheshbatsar*) is another spelling of **ששבאצר** (*sheshbatsar*) or a variant of **ששאצר** (*sheshatsar*), it appears that the use of the suffix **אצר** (*atsar*) was part of a (literary?) technique of substituting a Hebrew name for a foreign one. The example of **יכניה אסר** (*yechoniah asir*), suggests that the transformation of a Hebrew name to a foreign one may have been carried out through an intermediary stage of just attaching the suffix **אצר** (*atsar*) to the Hebrew name, while in its final form the Hebrew prefix of the name was replaced by some other letters.

We have already read that Daniel's "Babylonian" name was **בלטשאצר** (*beltshatsar*) - "**Belteshazzar**" and we may wonder whether the transformation from his Hebrew name also passed through an intermediary such as: **דניאל אצר** (*Daniel atsar*).

In the Book of Chronicles we find the names **אלזבד** - "**Elzabad**" (1 Ch 12:13; 26:7) and **יהוזבד** - "**Jehozabad**" (1 Ch 26:4; 2 Ch 17:18; 24:26). The Hebrew meaning of both names is identical. The same also applies to the pairs: **אליקים** - "**Eliakim**" and **יהויקים** - "**Jehoiakim**" (2 Ki 23:34; 2 Ch 36:4), **אלנתן** - "**Elnathan**" (Ezr 8:16) and **יהונתן** - "**Jehonathan**" (Neh 12:18), **אלעדה** - "**Eleadah**" (1 Ch 7:20) and **יהועדה** - "**Jehoaddah**" (1 Ch 8:36). These pairs indicate that the incorporation of God's name in human names can be done by adding the prefix of: **אל** (*el*) or of **יהו** (*yeho*). However, we do not find in the Bible the name **אליכין** (*elyachin*) the expected counterpart of the name **יהויכין** - "**Jehoiachin**."

In the Books of Jeremiah and Nehemiah we find the name **חננאל** - "**Hananel**" (Jer 31:37; Neh 3:1; 12:39). We also find in these books the name **חנניה** - "**Hananiah**" (Jer 28:1, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17; 37:12; Neh 3:8, 30; 7:2; 10:24; 12:12, 41). Both names mean: "God is gracious." In

the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah we encounter the name **עזראל** - "**Azarel**" (Ezr 10:41; Neh 11:13; 12:36), and in these books we also find the name: **עזריה** - "**Azariah**" (Ezr 7:1, 3; Neh 3:23, 24; 7:7; 8:7; 10:3; 12:33). Both names mean "God helps." In these pair-names, God was inserted as a suffix.

The name **דניאל** - "**Daniel**" is mentioned multiple times in the Books of Ezekiel, Daniel, Ezra, Nahemiah, and Chronicles. God appears in this name as a suffix, however, the counterpart name **דנייה** or **דניה** - "**Daniah**" is not found in the Bible. Yet, we find similar sounding names: **יכניה** - "**Jeconiah**" (Jer 28:4; 29:2; Est 2:6; 1 Ch 3:16), and **כניהו** - "**Coniah**" (Jer 22:24, 28; 37:1). As indicated in these verses these names are also variants of the name: **יהויכין** - "**Jehoiachin**." Furthermore, although we find in the Bible several versions of Jehoiachin's name, **יכנאל** - "**iachinel**" or **כניאל** - "**kaniel**" are not among them. It is therefore possible that **כניה** "**kniah**" is a **ד** (d) - **כ** (k) substitution of the "missing" name **דניה** - "**Daniah**."

If this suggestion is correct then **דניה אצר** (*daniah atsar*) could have been the intermediate stage that led to the final given name of Daniel: **בלטשאצר** (*beltshatsar*) - "**Belteshazzar**."

It is not known whether the name: Belteshazzar has a concrete meaning, and if so, it is not certain what the exact meaning of this name is. It was suggested that its prefix is the name of the god "Bell" while its suffix **אצר** (*atsar*) means: "protector." Fragment 3 (line 9) of the Dead Sea scroll 4QDan[a] reads: **ואמר לדניאל די שמה בלטשאצר** - "**and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar**" and this is the exact text that we find in verse Dan 2:26 of the Massoretic version of this book (3). It should also be noted that the Greek translators spell the given name of Daniel as:"Baltasar" and that "Baltasar" is also their spelling of the name of King **בלשאצר** (or **בלאשצר**) - "**Belshazzar.**"

It is therefore, suggested that in the Book of Daniel, the description of the main character **דניאל** - "**Daniel**" is not only similar to that of **יהויכין** - "**Jehoiachin**" but also that his name is apparently a (deliberate?) distortion of the name of the deposed child-king.

Such a reliance of the writer of the Book of Daniel on words, expressions, and themes that appear in other biblical texts is not unique and as was pointed by Knibb it is a repeated pattern throughout the Book of Daniel (1).

Some scholars wonder why (relatively) many (eight) manuscripts of a small biblical book, such as Daniel, which has been composed only recently (~165 BC), had surfaced in Qumran. The fact that Daniel is also mentioned in seven other non-biblical Qumran manuscripts is a further evidence for the importance of this figure to the Qumran community. I suggest that if Daniel is indeed a disguised name of Jehoiachin, then he was the only surviving member of the Davidian dynasty, and therefore the forebear of the future Messiah, a central theological entity prevailing in Qumran.

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