

Daniel 3:25

I have heard it said that Yeshua was present with the three men in the fiery furnace. To what degree might this be true?

The three Jews: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were thrown into the fiery furnace for not worshipping the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had erected. So serious was the fire, and so obstinate were they to his demand, that the crematory was heated seven times more than normal (Daniel 3:19). The three faithful Jews were bound so that they could not escape (Daniel 3:21), and as they were thrown in, some of the soldiers guarding them were actually killed by flames coming out of the oven (Daniel 3:23). As they are cast into the fire, King Nebuchadnezzar makes some startling observations.

“Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to his high officials, ‘Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?’ They replied to the king, ‘Certainly, O king.’ He said, ‘Look! I see four men loosed *and* walking *about* in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of *the* gods!’” (NASU).

It is not difficult at all to see how a supernatural being saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego from certain doom in the furnace. Jewish Bible translations render v. 25 with either “the fourth looks like a divine being” (NJPS) or “the appearance of the fourth [one] is like an angel’s” (ATS). But what is specifically meant by the Aramaic clause *l’var-Elahin*? The Septuagint translators could not agree, with one LXX version rendering it *angelou Theou* or “angel of God,” and then another with *huiō Theou* or “son of God.”

Older English translations like the KJV employ “Son of God,” and hence various interpreters have concluded that not just any supernatural being was present with the three faithful Jews in the fiery furnace—but that it was a pre-Incarnate manifestation of Yeshua the Messiah. Most modern English translations today render *l’var-Elahin* in Daniel 3:25 as “like a son of the gods” (i.e., RSV, NASU, NIV, HCSB) or “the appearance of a god” (NRSV). It is often translated this way not necessarily to discount Yeshua as the Son of God, but rather to consider the vantage point of the person who made this declaration: the pagan King Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar would have thought of any supernatural being as just another deity, because it is not until the narrative of Daniel 4 that he had his significant encounter with the One True God.

When he saw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego saved from the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar would have had no comprehension of a Messiah to come, or any Savior/Redeemer figure prophesied to rescue Israel as seen in the Tanach. King Nebuchadnezzar was simply a person in history who witnessed God’s deliverance in action. Based on his statements, it is not incorrect to conclude that this *bar-Elahin* was in fact a pre-Incarnate manifestation of *the Son of God*, Yeshua the Messiah. Yet when this took place, the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, armed with nothing more than his pagan theology, would not have understood this.