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GROUP STUDY GUIDE

The Exiled Prophet, Part 1: Introduction to the Book of Daniel

TEACHING SUMMARY

The book of Daniel addresses life under foreign power and offers hope amid persecution. This introduction considers when its parts were written, who contributed to them, and the audience they served. The teaching emphasizes God's authority above the powers of the world.

It distinguishes the writing of individual portions from their later compilation. The Talmud attributes compilation to the Great Assembly. The teaching presents this tradition as consistent with an early setting, while acknowledging that many modern scholars favor a second-century date.

The teaching disputes arguments from silence and arguments that assume accurate prediction could not occur. It discusses Ezekiel's references to Daniel and favors identifying that figure with the biblical prophet. These points are presented as part of its case for an earlier date.

Its linguistic and historical arguments emphasize Hebrew and Aramaic, limited Greek influence, and familiarity with Babylonian customs. The comparison of royal dating systems explains how Daniel and Jeremiah can describe the same event with different regnal years.

Daniel is identified as the likely author of chapters 8 through 12, where he speaks in the first person. The teaching allows either his authorship of the whole book or contributions by other Babylonian Jews. Its conclusion favors composition near the sixth or fifth century B.C.E.

The likely audience consisted of Jews in Babylon or recently returned from it, facing uncertainty and opposition. Accounts of God's care and sovereignty would encourage them to remain faithful. The series invites present-day believers to learn from that setting and its lessons.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The introduction explores date, authorship, and audience.
- The writing of individual portions is distinguished from compilation.
- The Talmud connects compilation with the Great Assembly.
- The teaching acknowledges but disputes the common second-century dating.
- It challenges arguments based on silence or rejection of predictive prophecy.
- Ezekiel's references form part of its case for an early Daniel.
- Language and Babylonian customs are used as supporting evidence.
- Different royal dating systems help explain a one-year discrepancy.
- Daniel likely wrote chapters 8–12, while other contributors remain possible.
- The book encourages exiles facing political uncertainty and persecution.

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK

Basic

1. The book's central figure is the prophet _____.
2. The Talmud attributes compilation to the Great _____.
3. The book contains both Hebrew and _____.
4. The teaching discusses references to Daniel in the book of _____.
5. The intended audience likely included Jews living in _____.
6. The teaching emphasizes that _____ is ultimately in charge of the world.

Challenging

1. The late-third-century critic discussed in the teaching is _____.
2. The teaching favors composition near the sixth or _____ century B.C.E.
3. Daniel explicitly speaks as the author in chapters _____ through 12.
4. The book compared with Daniel when discussing regnal-year differences is _____.
5. The teaching explains a discrepancy of _____ year between dating systems.
6. The struggles of returning Jews are described in Ezra and _____.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does the teaching distinguish composition of individual parts from compilation of the book?
2. What objections does it raise against the arguments for a second-century date?
3. How does it use Ezekiel's references in its discussion of Daniel's date?
4. What linguistic and historical details does it offer in support of an early Babylonian setting?
5. Why does it leave room for more than one contributor to the book?
6. How would Daniel's stories encourage the audience described in the teaching?

ANSWER KEY – GROUP GUIDE

Basic

1. Daniel
2. Assembly
3. Aramaic
4. Ezekiel
5. Babylon
6. God

Challenging

1. Porphyry
2. fifth
3. 8
4. Jeremiah
5. one
6. Nehemiah