

## Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men

*This part of the document consists of three sections from the Greek version of the Bible or Septuagint (LXX) which are inserted in the Book of Daniel between 3.23 and 3.24: The Prayer of Azariah (vss. 1-22), details about the furnace (vss. 23-27) and the Song of the Three Young Men (vss. 27-68).*

### Prayer of Azariah, vss. 1-22

**(Vs. 1): And they walked about in the midst of the flames singing hymns to God and blessing the Lord..**

While this verse is in the RSV as well as the English translation of the Septuagint, it is not listed as vs.1, hence the parentheses.

**Vs. 2: Then Azariah stood and offered this prayer; in the midst of the fire he opened his mouth and said:**

The verb for “stood” is *susistemi*, literally as to stand together. Here we have Azariah whom we could take as the leader of the three and special confidant of Daniel. Presumably upon having been cast into the furnace—and they “fell bound” into it, 3.23—the fire instantly dissolved their bonds after which they sat down. You wouldn’t expect them to act so leisurely, as if they were out for a walk and decided to sit down on a bench. After having assessed their situation while sitting down comfortably and realizing that they weren’t burnt as soon as they had been unceremoniously tossed into the furnace whereas those who had just cast them turned into ash, Azariah “offered this prayer,” the verb *proseuchomai* being prefaced with the preposition *pros* indicative of direction towards-which.

*En meso* for “in the midst of” or being right in the center of the fire serves to emphasize the intensity of the heat as well as the fact that the three young men were preserved from it. So within this centered-ness Azariah “opens his mouth” which follows the offering (*pros-*) of his prayer. Actually both occur at once though there is a sequence, if you will. It is put this way in order to introduce his prayer which now follows through vs. 22. Nothing is said of the other two youths although they certainly didn’t just sit there but joined in.

**Vs. 3: "Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our fathers, and worthy of praise; and your name is glorified forever.**

*Eulogetos* or “blessed” which, both as adjective and the verb from which it is derived, is found frequently between vss 27 and 68. *Eu-* applies to an adverb and is more suggestive of the how-ness of what is being expressed (*Iego* being the root, to say; *logos* is derived from it).

“God of our fathers” has special meaning in the context of being in exile or having been taken captive by the Babylonians. It is an implicit recognition that the Jews’ collective heritage must be preserved and eventually restored. Note mention of the “name” or *onoma* of the Lord which serves as focal point to keep worship of him alive in an environment populated by a myriad of gods and other divinities.

**Vs. 4: For you are just in all that you have done to us, and all your works are true and your ways right, and all your judgments are truth.**

Azariah is acting as spokesman for his two compatriots but more importantly for Israel as a whole which has been led away into exile. Chances are that there are some Israelites who have been taken captive by other powers. In addition to them we have the remnant left behind when King Nebuchadnezzar had invaded Israel, the forgotten ones, if you will.

Note the three adjectives and one noun: just, true, right and truth or *dikaios*, *alethinos*, *euthus* (straight, direct) and *aletheia*. They modify: have done, works, ways and judgments. Certainly the three youths were aware of this and that they were a kind of symbolic burnt offering for Israel although Daniel was not a part of it. This was not his fate; rather, he is to receive further visions.

**Vs. 5: You have executed true judgments in all that you have brought upon us and upon Jerusalem, the holy city of our fathers, for in truth and justice you have brought all this upon us because of our sins.**

“Just in all that you have done” reads literally as “you have made judgments of truth,” *krima* being a decision as well as sentence. *Epago* is the verb here, to bring upon (*epi-*), this same word used as a preposition with regard to “Jerusalem:” i.e., two “upons.” By focusing upon Jerusalem, Azariah has in mind the siege, capture and subsequent exile from the country’s capitol and center of worship. Certainly he must be thinking of that

remnant noted in the previous verse, perhaps being a bit ambivalent as to how they were doing and what they were doing.

*Epiago* is used a second time with regard to what Azariah had just listed, all done in “truth and justice,” *aletheia* and *krisis*. “Our” collective sins have brought about this exile, not just those of Azariah nor his two companions in the furnace. However, if asked privately, he would say that many of the Israelites exiled in Babylon, certainly himself, the other two and Daniel, had made out quite well. Despite his position, it pales in comparison with being in Jerusalem.

**Vs. 6: For we have sinfully and lawlessly departed from you and have sinned in all things and have not obeyed your commandments;**

The adverb “sinfully” is the verb *hamartano* (to sin, to fail in one’s purpose of intent). “Lawlessly” is rendered as “committed iniquity” or the verbs *anomeo* (alpha privative) and *aphistemi* (to stand apart). Although the Torah is not mentioned, certainly that is the chief focus and is present by way of intent. The preface to *aphistemi* (*apo*, from) is used also as a preposition, “*apo* you.”

“Obeyed” is the verb *akoueo* (to listen to) which means the Israelites turned a deaf ear—most likely in a gradual way once ensconced in Babylon—and turned their hearing to alien gods and divinities.

**Vs. 7: we have not observed them or done them, as you have commanded us that it might go well with us.**

This verse forms part of vs. 7 in the LXX.

*Suntereo* means “have (not) observed” or literally, “have not kept with (*sun-*)” and is used with *entello*, literally as “to enjoin in (*en-*).” If the Israelites had done this either at home or now in captivity or in Babylon, things would have turned out differently, the adverb *eu* being used for “well” (cf. vs. 3).

**Vs. 8: So all that you have brought upon us, and all that you have done to us, you have done in true judgment.**

*Epago* means “have brought upon” as in vs. 5 which here the Lord did in a “judgement” (*krisis*, cf. vs. 5). It is “true” or *alethinos*, cf. vs. 4. Azariah and his two companions know this—certainly Daniel as well—yet the Israelites in Babylon do not, or at least most of them.

**Vs. 9: you have given us into the hands of lawless enemies, most hateful rebels, and to an unjust king, the most wicked in all the world.**

Objectively, a negative statement but understandable. However, it is to King Nebuchadnezzar’s credit that he restored the three and respected Daniel, especially in the next chapter (Four) after having interpreted the dream of a tree which led to Nebuchadnezzar becoming a beast of the field. Fortunately for those in the furnace, the king couldn’t hear them due to the roaring of the fire.

The enemies who are “lawless” (*anomos*, alpha privative) can be taken as the Babylonians who do not follow the law or Torah. This makes them “rebels” or *apostates*, a term applicable to runaway slaves or deserters. *Exhistos* or “most hateful” derives from *ethros*, “enemy.” And so the Babylonians are considered as those who have run amok as enemies with no hope of improvement.

*Poneros* means “(most) wicked” and connotes worthlessness. They are such in the whole “world” or *ge*, a term often applicable to land in the sense of soil.

**Vs. 10: And now we cannot open our mouths; shame and disgrace have befallen your servants and worshipers.**

Not opening of one’s mouth, of course, pertains to worship of the Lord, most likely done in common or in a liturgical format. The Greek reads literally “the mouth of ours” or a collective mouth, one belonging to Israel in which everyone had a share.

*Aischune* and *oneidos* or “shame and disgrace,” the latter involving reproach and censure. *Sebomai* is a verb used for “worshipers” which also can imply having a sense of shame but one tinged with reverence compared to the more disgraceful *aischune*.

**Vs. 11: For your name's sake do not give us up utterly, and do not break your covenant,**

Throughout all this one wonders how many Israelites (if any, in fact) were aware that the three youths had been cast alive into the furnace. Chances are that Daniel kept it as quiet as possible.

*Paradidomai* means “give up” or to hand over or beside (*para-*), intimating betrayal. It is used with the phrase *eis telos* (‘utterly’) or literally, “into the end.”

Two words prefaced with the preposition *dia* or “through:” *diaskedannumi* (‘break’ or to disperse through) and *diatheke* (‘covenant’ or to place-through).

**Vs. 12: and do not withdraw your mercy from us for the sake of Abraham your beloved and for the sake of Isaac your servant and Israel your holy one,**

*Apostrepho* is the verb for “withdraw” meaning more to turn away from (*apo-*) and used with regard to divine *heleos*, “mercy” which is equivalent to the Hebrew *chesed* first noted in Dan 1.9.

This is the first and only reference to the prophet Abraham, Isaac and Israel in either Daniel or the apocryphal text who here is identified as the Lord’s “beloved” or *agapao*, the verb from which *agape* is derived. This, of course, is the well known equivalent to the Hebrew *chesed*, both considered as untranslatable. As for this title, refer to 2Chron 20.7: “and give it (the land of Canaan) forever to the descendants of Abraham, your friend” (the participle *’ahav* which often means to love in the sense of long after)? As for Israel, that is Jacob who is not just *hagios* “your” (the Lord’s) “holy one.”

**Vs. 13: to whom you promised to make their descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as the sand on the shore of the sea.**

The LXX has the verb *laleo* (to speak) instead of “promised.”

*Plethuno* means “to make as many” and commonly refers to making full up as a number, here referring to Gen 15.5: “Look toward heaven and number the stars if you able to number them.” This is very crucial in Israel’s pre-history, for the next verse continues with “And he believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness.”

**Vs. 14: For we, O Lord, have become fewer than any nation, and are brought low this day in all the world because of our sins.**

In contrast to the promise made to Abraham where his descendants will be more numerous than the stars of heaven and sand of the seashore, Azariah laments that we...Israel...has become few than any “nation” or *ethnos*. *Tapeios* is the adjective for “brought low” which connotes having become weak and dejected. Note that Azariah ascribes “this day” to such dejection, that is, from the day when Jerusalem fell to King Nebuchadnezzar until the present moment, that day having a larger connotation than one of the twenty-four hour variety. *Ge* is the noun for “world” (cf. vs. 9).

**Vs. 15: And at this time there is no prince, or prophet, or leader, no burnt offering, or sacrifice, or oblation, or incense, no place to make an offering before you or to find mercy.**

This verse brings out into the open what had been suspected since Azariah had begun his prayer, a lament for past failings which brought about the ruin of Jerusalem and its temple, the center of Israel’s worship. All the elements that contributed to it have vanished. Into that vacuum come the Babylonian gods. What stands out from this list is the word “place” or *topos* which is equivalent to the Hebrew *maqom* which connotes habitation. Without such a *topos/maqom* there is no temple and hence, no altar, the chief means by which the Israelites had sought divine “mercy” (*heleos*, cf. vs. 12). Thus while living in the relative safety and comfort of Babylon, the exiles, at least in Azariah’s mind, are not unlike the remnant left behind after King Nebuchadnezzar laid waste to Jerusalem.

**Vs. 16: Yet with a contrite heart and a humble spirit may we be accepted, as though it were with burnt offerings of rams and bulls and with tens of thousands of fat lambs;**

*Psuche* is the noun for “heart,” commonly translated as soul which here is “contrite” or *suntribo*, literally as rubbed together (*sun-*).

*Pneuma* is the noun for “spirit” which Azariah hopes (along with *psuche*) will be “accepted,” *prosdechomai* implying being accepted hospitably, *pros-* signifying direction towards-which. The noun *tapeinosis* or humility translates as “humble.” Because vs. 15 says there are no elements for sacrifice, Azariah hopes these two constituent parts of the human person will be more acceptable, i.e., will be ‘*pros-*’ for the Lord.

**Vs. 17: such may our sacrifice be in your sight this day, and may we wholly follow you, for there will be no shame for those who trust in you.**

So when Azariah speaks of “our sacrifice,” he and his two companions are actually it, that is, being place in the

furnace for that purpose. Now he knew first hand what this experience was like, the only occasion when a human being was a living sacrifice but without being killed. The only other person who came close to this was Isaac on Mount Moriah when Abraham was about to offer him (cf. Gn 22.9+).

The verb *ekteleo* is used for “wholly follow you” which literally means to accomplish, to bring to an end (*telos* prefaced with the preposition *ek*, from).

The preposition *epi* or “upon” is used for “in you”...“upon you.”

**Vs. 18: And now with all our hearts we follow you, we fear you and seek your face.**

*Kardia* is the noun for “heart,” the singular being used to signify the oneness of those who seek the Lord. This heart will “follow” the Lord, *exakoloutheo*, which intimates following in the sense of a sequence of events which are done in proper order. The preposition *ex-* or “from” is prefaced to the verbal root, “to follow from,” as it were, a more close following.

**Vs. 19: Do not put us to shame, but deal with us in your forbearance and in your abundant mercy.**

*Kataischuno* means “do (not) put to shame.” Note the frequent reference to shame in Azariah’s prayer, *aischune* being found last in vs. 17.

The common verb *poieo* (to do, to make) translates as “deal.”

*Epieikeia* means “forbearance” which alternately translates as reasonableness or equity.

*Heleos* or “mercy” (cf. vs. 15) is “abundant” or literally, “according to the multitude of your mercy.” *Kata* is the preposition here (along with *epieikeia*) which intimates according to a given plan of action which has been conceived beforehand.

**Vs. 20: Deliver us in accordance with your marvelous works and give glory to your name, O Lord! Let all who do harm to your servants be put to shame;**

*Exaireo* means “deliver” or literally to take from (*ex-*) and is used with the preposition *kata* (cf. previous verse) concerning “marvelous works,” *thaumasia*.

*Endeiknumi* means “do harm” or more accurately, with the adjective *kakos* (evil) and literally means to show used with the verb *entrepo*, to turn in (*en-*).

**Vs. 21: let them be disgraced and deprived of all power and dominion, and let their strength be broken.**

*Kataischuno* is used for both “be disgraced and deprived,” the former noted last in vs. 19, yet another reference to shame. Here it is used with reference to *dunasteia* which stands here for both “power and dominion” in the sense of rule.

*Entribo* means “be broken” or literally, to wear away by rubbing, the preposition *en-* or “in” suggestive of vigorous action (cf. vs. 16 for *suntribo*). It is used with reference to (physical) “strength,” *ischus*.

**Vs. 22: Let them know that you are the Lord, the only God, glorious over the whole world.”**

As with the “them” of the previous verse, here it refers to those who are doing harm to the Lord’s servants (cf. vs. 20) or those oppressing them throughout Babylon. However, the book of Daniel mentions no explicit persecution of his fellow exiles. Actually, accent generally is on the positive side.

Azariah’s concluding words in the fiery furnace parallel the sentiment of Daniel after his dream which concludes the book bearing his name or Chapter Twelve. The whole purpose of Israel’s defeat, exile and hopefully her restoration, is to glorify God, that is, to make him “glorious” throughout the entire “world” or *oikoumene*. The adjective here is *endoxos* where the preposition *en* (in) serves to intensify its meaning. The noun refers not so much to the earth as a whole but its inhabited and therefore civilized parts. The preposition *epi* or “upon” is used for “over” signifying penetration by divine glory...*doxa*...in or *en* this inhabited realm.

#### Details about the furnaces, vss. 23-27

**Vs. 23: Now the king's servants who threw them in did not cease feeding the furnace fires with naphtha, pitch, tow, and brush.**

The preposition *kai* is used for “now” which normally means “and,” showing the close connection of the preceding verses with the situation at hand.

*Huperetes* is the noun for “servant” which literally means an under-rower and used with the verb *dialeipo*, “did (not) cease” or literally, to leave an interval (*dia-* being the preposition, ‘through’).

**Vs. 24: And the flame streamed out above the furnace forty-nine cubits,**  
*Phlox* or “stream” in the sense of a flash of fire.

**Vs. 25: and it broke through and burned those of the Chaldeans whom it caught about the furnace.**  
*Enpuroo* or “burned” meaning a burning in (*en-*), a total consumption of the Chaldeans. In Dan 3.26 King Nebuchadnezzar “came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace.” While this may indicate that he was on the side of the furnace, there were men on top who had been stoking the fire.

**Vs. 26: But the angel of the Lord came down into the furnace to be with Azariah and his companions, and drove the fiery flame out of the furnace,**  
*Aggelos* or “angel” seems to be that mysterious fourth person within the furnace. “But I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods” [Dan 3.25].  
The preposition *peri* here means “with” and usually translates as “around,” that is, around Azariah and his companions. Compare this driving out of the *phlox* (cf. vs. 24) with all four being in the fire. Perhaps this angel/son of the gods effected this at the very moment King Nebuchadnezzar had the three youths cast into the furnace.

**Vs. 27: and made the midst of the furnace like a moist whistling wind, so that the fire did not touch them at all or hurt or trouble them.**

*Mesos* or “midst” (cf. vs. 2 with regard to the fire) which became like a “wind” or *pneuma* (cf. vs. 16) both “most and whistling,” *drosos* and *diasurizo*. The first is an adjective meaning tender or pure; the second is a verb meaning to make as whistling sound, thereby suggesting a kind of breeziness.  
*Lupeo* means “hurt” in the sense harass or annoy, and *parenochleo* means “trouble” which consists of the verbal root for an unruly crowd (*ochlos*) prefaced with the preposition *para-*, beside or around. Thus this angel/son of the gods made the furnace exactly opposite of what it was intended for.

### Song of the Three Young Men, vss. 28-68

Now that Azariah has concluded his prayer made alone but certainly with his two companions in mind and more importantly, the Israelites for whom he had interceded, all three youths join in a chorus of praise. They do so with “one mouth” or literally, “from one mouth.” [vs. 28]. A word which occurs throughout this song is *eulogeo* or “blessed,” the verb *lego* (cf. vs. 3) prefaced with *eu-* which generally is an adverb. Vss. 28 through 34 apply to the Lord himself whereas vss. 35 through 67 apply to various created beings both animate and inanimate. The last two verses (67 and 68) are the only times the three youths speak of divine “mercy” or *heleos* (cf. vs. 19).

Vs. 28: Then the three, as with one mouth, praised and glorified and blessed God in the furnace, saying:  
Vs. 29: "Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our fathers, and to be praised and highly exalted for ever;  
Vs. 30: And blessed is your glorious, holy name and to be highly praised and highly exalted for ever;  
Vs. 31: Blessed are you in the temple of your holy glory and to be extolled and highly glorified for ever.  
Vs. 32: Blessed are you, who sit upon cherubim and look upon the deeps and to be praised and highly exalted for ever.  
Vs. 33: Blessed are you upon the throne of your kingdom and to be extolled and highly exalted for ever.  
Vs. 34: Blessed are you in the firmament of heaven and to be sung and glorified for ever.  
Vs. 35: "Bless the Lord, all works of the Lord, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 36: Bless the Lord, you heavens, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 37: Bless the Lord, you angels of the Lord, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 38: Bless the Lord, all waters above the heaven, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 39: Bless the Lord, all powers, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 40: Bless the Lord, sun and moon, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.

Vs. 41: Bless the Lord, stars of heaven, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 42: Bless the Lord, all rain and dew, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 43: Bless the Lord, all winds, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 44: Bless the Lord, fire and heat, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 45: Bless the Lord, winter cold and summer heat, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 46: Bless the Lord, dews and snows, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 47: Bless the Lord, nights and days, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 48: Bless the Lord, light and darkness, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 49: Bless the Lord, ice and cold, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 50: Bless the Lord, frosts and snows, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 51: Bless the Lord, lightnings and clouds, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 52: Let the earth bless the Lord; let it sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 53: Bless the Lord, mountains and hills, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 54: Bless the Lord, all things that grow on the earth, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 55: Bless the Lord, you springs, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 56: Bless the Lord, seas and rivers, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 57: Bless the Lord, you whales and all creatures that move in the waters, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 58: Bless the Lord, all birds of the air, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 59: Bless the Lord, all beasts and cattle, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 60: Bless the Lord, you sons of men, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 61: Bless the Lord, O Israel, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 62: Bless the Lord, you priests of the Lord, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 63: Bless the Lord, you servants of the Lord, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 64: Bless the Lord, spirits and souls of the righteous, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 65: Bless the Lord, you who are holy and humble in heart, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever.  
Vs. 66: Bless the Lord, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever; for he has rescued us from Hades and saved us from the hand of death, and delivered us from the midst of the burning fiery furnace; from the midst of the fire he has delivered us.  
Vs. 67: Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures for ever.  
Vs. 68: Bless him, all who worship the Lord, the God of gods, sing praise to him and give thanks to him, for his mercy endures for ever."