

Education and Religion in Jerusalem and Babylon, Viewed through the Prism of the Book of Daniel

Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru

*Professor PhD. Dr. Habil. 'Timotheus' Brethren Theological Institute of Bucharest, Romania
Dr_ionicarotaru@yahoo.com*

ABSTRACT: In this study we will analyze some key aspects of Jewish education as well as education in the Babylonian schools. This analysis is made in the light of the experiences related in the book of the prophet Daniel. Each type of school (Jerusalem or Babylon) had its own specifics and it is important to highlight which are the key elements of each. Daniel was an interesting character who went through both the Hebrew school and the Babylonian school. Regarding the school curriculum, it must be said that in the respective Jewish schools they studied the *Law*, in order to know all the laws, then they learned their *history*, the sacred history, about the way God guided them everywhere throughout their lives. Then they learned *poetry*, because poetry was a poem, an epic that conveyed the victory, the glory, the history of the people and the divine interventions in their lives and history. Fourthly, they studied *music*. They did not have many subjects, they only had four, but these four included a very wide range of information, and the school that Daniel attended included these elements, and in addition he also learned the Aramaic language, a language of universal circulation in those times, similar to the English language in our times. In the Babylonian School the *study of languages, mathematics, astronomy, business* were top fields of Babylonian science. But the Babylonian schools also had a negative side. Thus, starting from astronomy, the Babylonians created another science, namely astrology, which for them was a true science, and it could be called differently such as: futurology, riddle, astrology, zodiac, etc. Daniel, whether he liked it or not, faced this type of practice in Babylon.

KEYWORDS: education, religion, Jerusalem, Babylon, symbol

1. Introduction

When we look at the performance that a man reaches, we cannot but look at the way he was formed, the education that he followed, the schools that he attended or the people who guided and shaped him. Daniel's confrontation with the society of his time and especially with the place and the people who lived where he was taken into captivity is also seen through this confrontation of ideas and through this confrontation of school and educational performance. We are basically dealing with two schools here, the school in Jerusalem and the school in Babylon.

2. The school in Jerusalem and the school in Babylon

Daniel arrives in Babylon at the age of about 20, going through a basic education system until then, but in Babylon he passes to another stage of his schooling, and at the end of his studies he ends up being noticed with some exceptional results. The superiority of his results together with a special vision of life coordinates his actions.

We always meet people who ask where to take their children to school, which would be the most suitable school to send them to and depending on the material possibilities, people send them where they think is the best school. There are also two education systems, secular schools and religious schools. We will make a small presentation in the scriptural light of secular schools compared to religious schools.

3. Aspects of the Hebrew School

Education begins before the classic element called *school*, the formative element. Education begins at the age of 3 when the three-year-old child, in a special ceremony, is taught to perform the first ritual religious

act, namely the wearing of the *kippah*. It is the first act, but it teaches the child so well, having such a great penetrating force that these children value the wearing of the kippah more than anything, a very great respect for God. A friend told me that he saw in Israel some kindergarten children, some tots, who were playing football with their kippah on their heads, and one of them was very close to the goal and in a position to score, but his kippah fell off his head. Although he could score, the child stopped and put his kippah back on his head. What did the Jews convey through such an act of wearing the kippah? They conveyed a special respect and a priority of religion, of the relationship with God, always putting God first, as we read in the Holy Scriptures: In the beginning God (*Genesis* 1:1).

The second element of Jewish education is the *book*, the child being taught to read. Thus, between the ages of 5 and 7, a child had to learn to read and then read the *Torah*, that is the *Holy Scriptures*, from *Genesis* to *Deuteronomy*. At the age of 7, he had to finish the *Torah*. This is considered the second important element, which is why the Jews were the first people in the history of world civilization to eradicate illiteracy, before the Greeks, before the Romans, before any other nation. Around 100-120 BC the Jews of the Hasmonean kingdom said that they no longer had a man who could not read. At present, as they are secular, religious, it does not matter, the statistics of the world say so: the people who read the most are the Jews, they are also the people who gave the most Nobel laureates. The appreciation for the book is something that should be learned from them and passed on even today to people who no longer value the book and others do not even know how to read. There are people today with great material possibilities and yet they do not know how to read. Perhaps a return to Jewish education would be needed, in which everyone can read, read with pleasure and cherish the book.

The third thing about education is that the Jews are the people of one book, the Book of Books, the *Holy Scriptures*.

Based on these principles, let us use our imagination to return to the Jerusalem of 600-620 BC, Daniel's childhood. We do not have very clear documents about what schools were in those days, but we do know that the schools of the prophets existed. The prophet was first and foremost a professor, a teacher, who either set up a school where his residence was or was an itinerant and went to several settlements and taught various lessons, having clear examples in this case (Samuel, Nathan, Elijah) who went to different centers and there in those centers they gathered the young people and taught them. Commentators say that the prophet Jeremiah was one of Daniel's teachers, who came to Babylon, and this is evident in Daniel's special respect for Jeremiah, given that Daniel's deportation to Babylon took place about in the middle of Jeremiah's prophetic activity. The prophet Jeremiah wrote most of the valuable works after Daniel left for Babylon, and Daniel had in Babylon everything that Jeremiah wrote after he went into captivity in Babylon. Daniel was very interested in the writings of the prophet Jeremiah, which he had received from home after leaving for Babylon and which Daniel read and cherished properly.

Regarding the school curriculum, it must be said that in the respective Jewish schools they studied the *Law*, in order to know all the laws, then they learned their *history*, the sacred history, about the way God guided them everywhere throughout their lives. Then they learned *poetry*, because poetry was poems, epic sagas that conveyed the victory, the glory, the history of the people and the divine interventions in their lives and history. Fourthly, they studied *music*. They did not have many subjects, they only had four, but these four included a very wide range of information, and the school that Daniel attended included these elements, and in addition he also learned the Aramaic language, a language of universal circulation in those times, similar to the English language in our times. Daniel studied Aramaic in Jerusalem because at the time of his selection to attend the University of Babylon, he could not enter the university and complete it in 3 years if he did not know the language. In our current education system when a foreigner comes, with the desire to study at a certain university, he has to stay a year to learn the language, but in Daniel's case, he will go directly to classes because he already knew the language. Daniel spoke Hebrew and Aramaic, and his book is written partly in Hebrew and partly in Aramaic, in his desire to communicate with people from different cultures and countries. If in Jerusalem, because the Jews had a monotheistic religion, the emphasis was on one book, in Babylon things were quite different.

4. Aspects of the Babylonian education

From all points of view, Babylon was the world's elite at the time. From an educational point of view, the most famous universities in the world were located in Babylon. They also had an old educational tradition, because they had accumulated all the Sumerian and Akkadian teachings and in those days they were in the third stage, namely the Aramaic culture. And for this reason the schools of Babylon were primarily schools of languages. Even today, if you go to Jerusalem, first you learn Akkadian, Aramaic, Arabic, Latin and Greek, which is done for 2-3 years in a row and only after you have mastered these languages perfectly are you allowed to study the sacred texts. This also happened in Babylon, where Daniel was initiated into the Chaldean languages and writings. Why? Because many documents remained from the Sumerians and Akkadians, the third and the second millennium, they were valuable and important and in order for them to be read it was necessary to know those languages, to know the language in which those documents were written. Some documents were written in cuneiforms. The cuneiforms had six or seven hundred signs. So to know six or seven hundred signs, to understand them very well, to read and comment on these things was not easy at all, being a very burdensome job. Then the Babylonians were very good at mathematics, they being the first mathematicians of the world. From them we have the square root, the cubic root, the decimal system and the hexadecimal system, along with certain mathematical formulas.

Generally, when someone goes to a prestigious university, he is asked what he wants to study. When Daniel went to university, he certainly did not enroll in astrology courses, but perhaps in astronomy and celestial mechanics, which was a real specialization even then. The Babylonians could accurately specify a solar eclipse and had in their textbooks some eclipses presented long before they appeared, specified in all details, namely: on the date and day, at the time of ... was to be an eclipse. It is difficult to imagine how much mathematics, astronomy, and celestial mechanics they knew at that time, 600 years BC, to be able to calculate so accurately about the occurrence of an eclipse. They were very good at commercial dealings, what is called business today. They created the system of receipts, registers, loans, a very well developed financial system. This is how a state can develop if it has a very well developed financial system also from the point of view of papers and documents. Thus the study of languages, mathematics, astronomy, business were top fields of Babylonian science. We do not know exactly what courses Daniel took at the University of Babylon, but it is possible that he also took those, because without this knowledge it was very difficult to lead an empire in his later capacity as First Minister of the empire.

The Babylonian schools also had a negative side. Thus, starting from astronomy, the Babylonians created another science, namely astrology, because they said that what happens on Earth between us humans, happens first in Heaven, and between Heaven and Earth there is a correspondent, and they said that if they get to know how to read the sky they will also know what will happen on Earth in the future, and at the beginning of the year, on the first or second day of the year, they had a council of all the gods in which they established what would happen in every month of the year ahead. For them, this was a true science, and it could be called futurology, riddle, astrology, zodiac, etc. Among the methods used was the starry sky, the study of the liver, especially from sacrificial animals, studying it according to certain patterns, the study of birds in the sky, namely how birds fly and in what direction. The life events that occurred were interpreted, or oil was put in a bowl of water, and depending on how the oil was spread, they drew various conclusions and gave explanations in such a way that no matter what happened, the predictions seemed to fit. From them, the zodiac and riddles remain to this day. There were also certain people, a mystics of some kind, who said that they had the ability to communicate with the gods, and they told them all kinds of information for the earthlings. Daniel, whether he liked it or not, faced this type of practice in Babylon. If we protect a child from negative information, so that he does not know it, he is not prepared for life, because at some point he will still face it and finding out the very fact that he was protected from it, and that could make him very interested in those things and could captivate him so much that he stays with them. God's program is as it is written in the Bible:

“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:” (*Deuteronomy* 30:19). “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” (1 *Thessalonians* 5:21). This in the desire to know them all, in order to be able to appreciate them logically, intelligently, observing what is wrong with a certain thing, why one theory or another is logical or not, they must be analyzed logically, and the pupil, the student will be directed to think in a logical way, so that he can find the correct solution and the authentic values.

5. Jerusalem and Babylon, two capitals with symbol status

Even if Babylon no longer exists today and Jerusalem is a small city compared to the great metropolises of the world, but when we discuss their value as a symbol we do not refer to size, population or money, but to ideology, to the ideas that come out and that are propagated in the name of those cities. Jerusalem is the city God has chosen to set up His temple there. After leaving Egypt and after an unstable period of about three or four hundred years, the period of the Judges, God chose Jerusalem to be a temple. Jerusalem means *the city of peace* and the Temple built around 960 BC being the only Temple in Jerusalem that represented Yahweh and said that their God is not in the Temple, because the temple cannot comprehend Him. All the temples in the pagan world said that the temple was the dwelling of their god. Their god lived there in that temple and came to him with food, drink, clothes, all sorts of things necessary for the care of a god, who was considered something more important than the king. The Jews, on the other hand, said that their God does not dwell in the Temple, because He is so great that the heavens of heaven cannot comprehend Him, but His presence, something that tells us that He is there, consists in His presence in the Temple and it was called *Shekinah*. Thus, Jerusalem was the center where God's presence was there and where this one God wanted to be known to all. Many conflicts had to pass, for the Jews to get rid of the temptation to look at other gods and just in the time of Daniel, the last reform of King Josiah (2 *Kings* 23:4-24) was the destruction of any other altar, any other temple dedicated to another god or deity, and not even another temple dedicated to Yahweh, apart from the one originally built, considering that God is unique and the center of worship is also unique. The Israelite idea in this regard was one God, one temple, one place of worship, Jerusalem. The God of the Jews was called the God of all peoples, while the Babylonians had a different attitude, believing that their deities were theirs alone and that Jews were not allowed to worship the Babylonian deities, Marduk and others ... lest others should benefit from the benefits of their deities. The mentality of the pagan culture of that time was our city, our god, while the Jews said that their Divinity was not only for them, but for all, of all peoples, for anyone who wished to worship Him. Anyone who wants to worship Him and is willing to follow His rules will be accepted by God. Anyone who prayed in the direction of Jerusalem was to be listened to, because the direction represented obedience, appreciation, and meant that you had already taken a first step toward God. Jerusalem was the seat of a God represented by two very clear things: the *law* that was placed in the Ark (*Exodus* 25:15-16; 40:20; Staples 1962, 3:72), that is, a very well-defined system of laws, and *grace* or *mercy*, which was above on the lid (*Exodus* 40:20), because in the temple for any man who recognized that he was sinful and came to God in the Temple, confessing his sins, God assured him of forgiveness, this fact highlighted the fact that God was a just God, fair, with laws and ordinances, but also a good God who forgives you, and the end point was on the last day of the religious year, the day of *Yom Kippur*, which was considered the day of judgment when God checked whether for all the sins you confessed that you had committed and sacrificed for them, really corresponded to reality. Have you sinned so many times, prayed so many times, and sacrificed to be forgiven? This is exactly what Daniel said, by the name he bore, God is my judge. I must go to *Yom Kippur*, the day of judgment, the day of atonement, before God, to receive the assurance of divine forgiveness. When a temple was destroyed, pagan cultures believed that the deity to whom the temple was dedicated was also defeated. Daniel in Babylon presented God not as a loser but as a victor among the Babylonians, and Daniel succeeded in doing so. Daniel's God did not lose His power, and the people who worshiped Him became His slaves. The Greeks said that the gods were on the side of the strong and came to believe that the gods of some were stronger than the gods of others, there was no concept that the divinity, the gods were also with the weak to protect them, while

the God preached by the Jews was God of the strong, but also of the weak and oppressed by various needs. A unique but comprehensive God. No pagan deity or god had the characteristics of the God of the Jews Who was good and just, forgiving, and Who had been waiting patiently for man for a long time. This God chose Jerusalem to represent Him, chose the Jews as His people, which did not fulfil their duty and mission very well, then continued with the Christians, who even today for Christians Jerusalem is still a center of Christendom. Rome is the center of Catholics, but for all Christians, Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants who want to go to the most special place in the Christian world, all are heading to Jerusalem, in the Holy Land. There is the tomb of Jesus, there is the place of Jesus' resurrection, there are so many things that encourage believers, remaining a center of monotheism but also a symbol of true religion.

Babylon was essentially the empire of a city, because the city of Babylon and a few cities around it were the core of the entire state, and a city to be able to create an empire had to be very important. The city of Babylon has its starting point in Babel, the first city built by the people after the Flood, respectively by Nimrod and all his associates. Babel means *confusion*, because while they were building the tower, God intervened and confused their tongues, so that people would get into confusion and conflict, and then the people would scatter and take care of their affairs. The name of the tower remained Babel, meaning *confusion*, a name that bothered them later and they ended up changing the name because it didn't sound too nice, giving it the name from the Semitic *Bab-Ilu* or *Bab ilani* = *gate of the gods*. Why? Because their very high tower had a temple at the top, the place where, according to their conviction, the gods descended and transmitted their message to the high priest, and the priest descended from the temple to the people and communicated the message received from the gods to the people. What was *Bab-Ilu* or *Bab ilani*? - the gate where the gods come and communicate with us. Thus, the city of Babylon has two meanings, Babel - *confusion*, from which derives the word Babylon and *Bab-Ilu* or *Bab ilani* - the gate where the gods come and communicate with us. Thus, Babylon played an important role throughout history, often built and destroyed, but of all the ancient phases, we have none left, because over those ancient phases, the city was rebuilt under Nebuchadnezzar II (Nebuchadnezzar) (Nabucodonosor II, In Hebrew: נְבוּכַדְנֶצְרַר *Nəbūkadneššar* (Nebucadnetar); In Greek: *Ναβουχοδονόσωρ* (Nabucodonosor), son of Nabopolassar, a neo-Babylonian king who ruled from 605-562 BC. (Wikipedia 2020, Nabucodonosor II), so big, huge and strong, that it is difficult to put everything aside to see below, as it was before. What exists as evidence, from an archaeological point of view, exists only from the ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's city, What is known is that when Nebuchadnezzar came to power in 605 BC (Sack 2010, 2), the city had a square shape with a side about 6 km, which is about what ancient Jerusalem looks like today, and when King Nebuchadnezzar ended his reign the city of Babylon measured about 16 km of wall, because the city experienced a great expansion and development, being built a lot, and the Euphrates was contained inside the city, with a majestic bridge built over it, connecting the two neighborhoods of the city, the old and the newly built, bridge from which Jeremiah's messenger read the book, tied it to a stone, and threw it in the water saying that so Babylon will be thrown away, and will no longer be found as that scroll was thrown into the waters of Babylon: "The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah into Babylon in the fourth year of his reign. And *this* Seraiah was a quiet prince. So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, *even* all these words that are written against Babylon. And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words; Then shalt thou say, O LORD, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate forever. And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, *that* thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates" (*Jeremiah* 51: 59-63).

The archaeological data we have, because the data of Herodotus were not very accurate, tell us that the city of Nebuchadnezzar had in principle three large palaces. In the Northernmost part was the summer palace, built by him, then immediately outside the old city, but built in the area of the new city was the central palace. The third was the administrative palace that was located inside the walls of the old city, a palace that included a very large space and where a hall was found about

60 meters long, 20 meters wide, and probably also 20 meters high, probably it would have been the throne room and it is believed that King Belshazzar's feast took place there. (1000 guests + I don't know how many) who couldn't fit in a smaller room.

Regarding the temples in Babylon, a discovered tablet tells us that in Babylon there were about 54 large temples, about 250 small temples and about 1000 altars on the streets (something like the way we have the crosses today). Such a large number of large and small temples and altars is not found in any other city, not even the Greeks had so many. As a city, Nineveh was about 10 km on one side, and Babylon was 16, and Imperial Rome was 8-10 km, and Athens was only 6 km of walls, making Babylon the largest city in antiquity, no other being bigger (Bryce 2016, 33-39). Nineveh had about 34 temples in number. In Babylon presenting these things, it appears that the main objective was religion, probably hence their open attitude towards other deities, to accept them. The Babylonians created a religious system that was to be passed on to other people. The Babylonian religious system was that of structuring into three spheres, namely: the sphere of local gods, smaller gods but also many, the sphere of celestial gods, solar, sun, moon, stars and the sphere of very tall and very old gods which in fact during Nebuchadnezzar's reign, of the neo-Babylonian empire (Bryce 2016, 72-91), the Babylonians had nothing to do with, namely: An (the supreme god), Enlil (the god of heaven), Enki (the creator of the first humans, the one who helped people learn). In the Babylonian religion, the young gods make a kind of revolt against the great gods, whom they dethrone and send somewhere ... and then take the lead. Marduk (Sack 2010, 4) is such a young god who kills Tiamat, tears him apart and makes the heaven and earth from his body, so in the Babylonian conception Marduk, a young god who defeated the old gods, becomes a creative god, who created heaven and the earth and he becomes the god of Babylon. In honor of Marduk a huge complex is being built, and in the middle of this complex was a huge tower called **Etemenanki** (In Sumerian: *É.TEMEN.AN.KI* = *the temple of the creation of heaven and earth*). Some of the new research identifies it with the Tower of Babel. On the tablet found in Babylon in 1911 by Robert Koldewey (1855-1925) from the "Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft", the English researcher Andrew George recently identified a ziggurat composed of 7 steps, the last step being the temple at the top. The ensemble has a square shape, with a side of 90/90 m, a height of 91 m, built of burnt clay bricks, cemented together by bitumen. The tower lasted unexpectedly for a long time, so that in the time of Alexander the Great, who also conquered Babylon, this tower still had half its original height. Alexander the Great intended the reconstruction of the tower, ordering its complete demolition, but the project was not realized, due to the death of the Emperor in 323 BC. (Wikipedia 2019, Etemenanki) and at the top of this tower was the Temple of Marduk, a god who actually had over 50 names, Marduk was one of them, he had over 50 of names, but all these were not real names, true, the real name was secret, and this name was known to no one but the high priest, who was also the king of Babylon. The Babylonians believed that when the high priest climbed the Etemenanchi tower at the Temple of Marduk and uttered the real name of the god, he answered any problem, which the high priest, in turn, communicated to the people. This was the Babylonian mentality and religion.

Conclusion

The prophet Isaiah wrote: "And it shall be as the chased roe, and as a sheep that no man taketh up: they shall every man turn to his own people, and flee every one into his own land." (*Isaiah* 13:14) the prophecy about Babylon and Babylon the glory of kings ... how did you fall from heaven bright star ...: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *How* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." (*Isaiah* 14:12-14). The presentation begins with Lucifer's desire to become equal with God is conveyed to Babylon in his desire to achieve something. In ancient times, all peoples viewed Babylon as a holy city. Only one king, Sennacherib, will

destroy it in 589 BC, and Esarhaddon, his son, will immediately proceed to rebuild the city, saying that his father did a horrible thing because he bound himself to a holy city and destroyed it.

Nebuchadnezzar declares so: “The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” (*Daniel* 4:30). Babylon has been regarded since antiquity with great respect, with great admiration, as a religious center par excellence. Why? Because he represented the religion of the devil: pride, ego, power, the desire to be equal with God. The spirit of pride, of ego of Babylon contradicts the spirit of Jerusalem, the city of peace, the city of worship. The two cities have representative value (Doukhan 2013, 18). Jesus calls Jerusalem His city, and the devil calls Babylon his city, so for this reason only Babylon is the one who will destroy Jerusalem, and a second destruction was made by another city that in the Bible is also called Babylon but in the end, the spirit of Jerusalem, the city of peace, will triumph.

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