



# The Mar Thoma Church Diocese of North America & Europe Christian Education Forum

## Lenten Meditations

### UNDEFINED LIFE

#### Daniel 1: 1-21

The book of Daniel contains six stories, that recommend a 'lifestyle for the diaspora'. It can be seen as stories of resistance to cultural and spiritual assimilation of a minority by a dominant foreign power.

#### Resistance against enslaving forces

In this text we read about the captivity of king Jehoiachin by Nebuchadnezzar who took not only the king but the temple elements as well. And followed by that a selection is made from among vibrant, young, handsome, intelligent Jews of royal and noble families without blemish. They are chosen with specific plan and they are selected for specialized training in Babylonian language and culture. The king is keen to change all their ways of life. Their names are changed into Babylonian names. Name changing is a prominent biblical sign of dependent status. Secondly the king orders to change their language and culture through special training for three years. During this period they had to be fed on royal food too. One's language is the basis of culture and identity. And throughout biblical history control of food is symbolic of power. Moreover a banquet suggests celebration of a joyful occasion, which is in contrast to a mourning occasion. The resistance to food by Daniel is a symbolic denial of king's implicit claim to be the sole provider.

#### Reclaiming of life values

Through the resistance of Daniel to the king's attempts to establish power, three things are emphasized: First, the sovereignty of God secondly, resistance to attempt to wash away their identity and culture and thirdly, resistance to attempt to alter their own life style and values.

Christian faith demands nonconformity with the world even in the daily life style. Daniel's resistance is a powerful reminder for us to search within ourselves the aspects in our life, which we ought to resist for the sake of living out the gospel. For Daniel food was one of the symbols of resistance to domination and assimilation to the culture and ways of dominant powers. Christian life is a life of resistance to the forces of money power, luxury arising out of unjust distribution of resources. As Christians we have to ask the question-what are the food and drink that the modern emperors offering us today? The global marketing forces are persuading people to buy things that are not necessities. Contemporary advertisements and marketing is directed toward changing peoples' habits, to buy products that will become necessities and they can't simply live without.

**Prayer:** Lord, help us to lead a life of resistance to both the dominating power structures and the enslaving forces, as true and faithful followers of you. Amen.

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*"But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way." - Daniel 1:8*