

important event occurred. Nebuchadnezzar himself used this form of divination in determining whether to attack Jerusalem (Ezek. 21:21).

In verses 5 and 8 the NIV quotes Nebuchadnezzar as saying, "this is what I have firmly decided." Here the KJV, following the Vulgate and the Septuagint, says "the thing is gone from me," a rendering that has led many readers to think that Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten his dream. Careful examination of the original Aramaic supports the idea expressed by the NIV rendering. *Milleta* means "word," "statement," or "command." *'Azd'a* occurs nowhere else in the Bible and for a long time its meaning could only be guessed. It is now generally thought that it does not mean "has gone," but is a Persian loan word meaning "firm." A literal translation of Nebuchadnezzar's words would be "the command from me is firm."

The king's demand that the "wise men" interpret his dream without first being informed of its content might seem like the arbitrary action of a tyrant. Yet in view of the circumstances it can be easily understood. Probably there had been other times when Nebuchadnezzar had asked his Chaldeans to interpret a dream. A clever man can easily think of a dozen possible meanings for any symbolic or unusual dream. When a "wise man" heard the content of one of the king's dreams it would not be difficult for him to think of a suggested interpretation that would flatter the king and might result in a valuable gift or a special honor (cf. Dan. 2:48). If Nebuchadnezzar had previously heard many clever interpretations of dreams, some of them including predictions that proved to be wrong, he may have become suspicious and therefore have decided to test the ability of the "wise men" by demanding not only that they interpret the dream, but that they first tell him what the dream had been. If so this order was not simply the arbitrary action of a tyrant, but rather a decision made by one who felt that he had been deceived too often. When the king found that the Chaldeans were unwilling to attempt to meet this challenge of their claim to great wisdom, he was furious and commanded that they all be destroyed.