Title: The meaning of the Aramaic word 'azdā' in the context of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2

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Abstract:

Diverse viewpoints regarding the issue of whether or not King Nebuchadnezzar forgot his dream in Dan 2:5, 8 still exist. The debate on this issue is focused on the correct understanding of the Aramaic word 'azdā'. Although the translation of the word 'azdā' has been clarified by modern research, the popular notion that King Nebuchadnezzar forgot his dream still prevails. This is probably because implications of the term 'azdā' on Nebuchadnezzar’s dream have never been extensively addressed for ordinary readers of the Bible. Moreover, the proper exegesis of the text (Dan 2:5, 8) has not been applied in dealing with this problem.

This study, in addition to being linguistic in character, is exegetical. On the linguistic level, the occurrence and usage of the term 'azdā' in the Aramaic Papyri, in the Ancient Versions of the Bible, and in the modern English translations are considered. The discussion clarifies the correct meaning of the term semantically.

On the exegetical level, the word 'azdā' is studied in the whole context of the study in Dan 2, particularly its implications on Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. For example, Nebuchadnezzar’s feeling of insecurity and his conjecture of conspiracy among his wise men in connection with the agitating contents of the dream are addressed.
The linguistic evidence presented in this study results in a more accurate meaning of the term ‘azdā’, which is found to have no verbal meaning at all. The evidence further dismisses the translation, “to go away,” or “to depart.”

In the contextual study of Dan 2:5,8, having established the correct meaning of ‘azdā’ semantically, it is found that King Nebuchadnezzar wanted to know the dream and its interpretation not because he totally and completely forgot it, but because he wanted to recall the particulars of the dream. Moreover, he wanted to conceal it to avoid a twisting of the interpretation. He concealed the dream because he conjectured that there would be a conspiracy among his wise men to topple his kingdom.

A contextual study of Dan 2:5, when placed in parallel with Dan 2:8 and Dan 3:15, shows that the king spoke about the pronouncement of his decree and not a declaration of a forgotten dream. Similar expressions in Dan 6:12 and Dan 9:23 also refer to the pronouncements of decrees.

This study might serve as a starting point for a future study regarding the details of King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. Although the king did not forget the dream itself, he might have forgotten some details of the dreams.