

# DANIEL AND THE ONE TRUE GOD

CHC 2017

## SCENE 1 – NAMING THE CAPTIVES

**Music:** Welcome March – People’s Liberation - Celebratory – important.

**LIGHTS:** (begin with darkness. Gradually one light shines on King Nebuchadnezzar and 5 men, then one light on 5 men standing on the other side)

**CURTAINS:** (closed – so the stage can be set for scene 2)

**Stage:** In front of curtains, on right side of the stage, King Nebuchadnezzar stands talking to Arioch and the 4 other captives (in plain clothes). Ashpenaz stands on the left side of the stage with Daniel and his 3 friends in plain clothes.

**LIGHTS:** focused on the King and Arioch who are greeting 4 other captives (the magician, astrologer, Chaldean and sorcerer.

MUSIC: fades

ASHPENAZ: *(as the other captives are given new names, Ashpenaz quietly gives last minute advice)* Look smart. Stand tall. Show proper respect. The king will only keep the best.

*(all four men stand taller)*

KING: Arioch, give these captives, proper Babylonian names.

ARIOCH: *(Speaks to each one in turn and places a Babylonian necklace on them)* You will be Marmoth *(the magician)*. To you I give the name Samaz *(the sorcerer)*. Chancellor *(the Chaldean)* and Akkud *(the astrologer)*. *(They all move off the stage and out the right door as they receive their necklace)*

KING: *(when the first 4 captives are gone)* Ashpenaz, bring me the chosen young eunuchs from Judah

ASHPENAZ: *(gives the 4 men a ‘reminder’ look and marches them towards the king. He bows deeply and the 4 men give a Jewish bow)* Oh great King Nebuchadnezzar. May you live forever! These men are of royal lineage and gifted in wisdom. *(as he introduces them, he directs each one to stand before the King.)* May I present Daniel, Hananiah, Michael and Azariah.

KING: *(Looks each one over carefully)* Are you willing and capable of learning the language and literature of the Chaldeans?

*(the 4 men nod)*

KING: *(speaking proudly and firmly)* This will require three years of intense learning and discipline. If you do well and pass the Chaldean exams, you will be awarded the great privilege of serving me in this mighty kingdom that I have built. Is this a privilege you wish to gain?

4 FRIENDS: *(in succession)* Yes, my Lord

KING: Good! Do not disappoint me! Ashpenaz – give them some respectful Babylonian names.

ASHPENAZ: *(places a Babylonian necklace on each one as he names them.) (to Daniel)* To you I give the distinguished name, Belshazzar. *(to Hananiah)* to you – Shadrach. *(to Mishael)* To you – Meshach. *(to Azariah)* To you – Abed-nego.

**MUSIC:** Welcome March - celebratory.

*(They do a Jewish bow to the king and walk off the stage to the right door as they receive their necklace. Then the king and Arioch and Ashpenaz leave through right door as well)*

**LIGHTS:** fade out.

## SCENE 2 – NEB’S TABLE

**CURTAINS:** open

**LIGHTS:** on stage

**Stage:** A long table with regal settings. The four friends are sitting along one side facing the audience with the four other captives. All are now wearing their Babylonian clothes and necklaces. Ashpenaz and the Steward are at the side ready to walk on stage. The Steward carries a large roast beef with delicious looking potatoes and vegetables all around.

**MUSIC:** fades

ASHPENAZ: *(very graciously)* King Nebuchadnezzar has decreed that you will all be given a **daily provision** of the king’s delicacies and **the very wine** which he drinks. My Steward here will attend to your personal needs. If you are lacking anything, you may make requests to him.

STEWARD: *(sets the food on the table)* Eat and enjoy, that you might serve the king with all your strength and a sharp mind. Nintu - the god of air and agriculture - has blessed this food to your good health.

FOUR OTHER CAPTIVES: *(eagerly begin to help themselves)*

MAGICIAN: Did he say *daily* provision?

CHALDEAN: I like this school!

ASTROLOGER: Captivity isn’t so bad!

SORCERER: *(seems very impressed with the idol)* Nintu has blessed the food! We will become powerful!

DANIEL: *(Can’t believe what he has just heard. Rises from chair and follows Ashpenaz)* Ashpenaz, may I please have a word with you?

ASHPENAZ: *(stops and turns around, and the steward who is standing ready to serve, looks over)* Certainly, Belshazzar.

DANIEL: *(very respectfully)* Please know, my Lord Ashpenaz, that our Jewish laws forbid us to eat meat that has been offered to other gods. We only worship one God. I beg you to allow us to refrain from defiling ourselves.

ASHPENAZ: *(shakes his head very kindly, but rather worried)* "I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. If he sees your faces looking worse than the young men who are your *age (nods his head towards the other captives)*, you will endanger **my head** before the king." *(He leaves the stage, but the Steward stays)*

DANIEL: *(approaches the steward)* Do you think we could do a ten day test? Give us just vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then examine our appearance and the appearance of the young men who eat the king's meat and make your decision."

STEWARD: *(looks over at the table, where Daniel's friends still sit with nothing on their plates)* And who chooses to be part of this unpleasant test?

3 FRIENDS: *(all nod and eagerly raise their hands)* We do.

ASTROLOGER: Certainly not I.

SORCERER: Not when this food has been blessed **by Nintu!** She is the mother of all gods.

MAGICIAN: We're very thankful for this food!

CHALDEAN: *(chuckles and helps himself to more)* We'll gladly take their share.

STEWARD: *(turns back to Daniel)* I'll agree to a ten day test – but no more than that. We'll see how it goes.

DANIEL: *(Jewish bow)* Thank you.

**LIGHTS FADE OUT**

**CURTAINS: close**

NARRATION: And at the end of the ten days, Daniel and his 3 friends appeared better and healthier looking than all the young men who ate the king's delicacies. So the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables. God gave these four young men knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. When the king interviewed them, none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm.

## **SCENE 3 – THE IMAGE DREAM**

**MUSIC:** Sleep Relax Sounds and THEN Canta and Fugue in D Miner - A strange lullaby with scary parts 😊

**CURTAINS:** open

STAGE: The royal bed with the king fast asleep in his pyjamas and night cap. A royal lion (stuffy) sits above the head of the bed (maybe on a bookshelf). The king is having scary dreams and twitching noticeably in his bed

**LIGHTS:** Only a dim light on the king's bed

**POWER POINT:** An animated projection of the image of Nebuchadnezzar, hit by the stone and crushed to powder. This will turn off as soon as the King wakes up.

**MUSIC:** fades as king wakes up

**KING:** *(Snorts, growls and then wakes up yelling fearfully, and clutches his stuffed lion. He sits up in bed looking terrified. He yells out)* Ashpenaz!! Ashpenaz!!

**ASHPENAZ:** *( comes stumbling in with a candle in his hand)* What is it, my Lord? What is wrong? Do you need your blood pressure herbs?

**KING:** *(realizes he is still clutching the stuffy, and tries to discreetly put the lion back in place and mutters)* I'm not sure why this thing falls on top of me in the middle of the night! *(yells)* I just had the worst nightmare ever! I must know the meaning of this dream.

**ASHPENAZ:** Yes, my Lord. As soon as the sun rises I'll assemble your wise men...

**KING:** *(frantic)* No. No. I must hear the meaning now! Call the magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, Chaldeans... call them all. Now!!

**ASHPENAZ:** As you wish, my Lord. But, here, take a few of these. Doctor's orders remember! *(he hands the King some herbs which Nebuchadnezzar reluctantly takes, he then turns and leaves and goes to the right side stage door. It's in darkness and he enters in)*

**KING:** *(lies back in bed and strokes his lion)* That was such a vivid dream! I remember every detail! It must have been a vision from **the gods!** *(he sits up)* Maybe even from... **Marduk** himself? I must know what it was about! I must ensure those wise men don't just make up some clever interpretation ... *(he ponders the matter and begins to smile)* Ah... I know what I'll say to them!

**ASHPENAZ:** *(leads a weary, stumbling crew in their pyjamas to the king's bed - the magician, the astrologer, the sorcerer and a Chaldean plus Arioch with his sword and shield)*

**CHALDEAN:** *(eager to help)* O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation.

**KING:** Oh no..no..no! Not so quick! I have decided that **you** must **first tell me what my dream was**...then give me the interpretation! And if you can't do that, *(very dramatically, swinging his arm )* you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap.

*(They all look at one another fearfully in astonishment. They are all awake now)*

**KING:** *(chuckles to himself and speaks very graciously)* However, if you tell me the dream **and** its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards, and great honor! *(back to being demanding)* Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation!"

**MAGICIAN:** *(Fearfully and pleading)* Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will gladly give its interpretation."

**KING:** *(very accusatory)* Hah! You're just trying to buy yourself some time. If you do not make known the dream to me, there is only one decree for you! For you have agreed to speak lying words before me to buy yourselves more time. Therefore **tell me the dream now**, and I shall **know** that you can give me its interpretation."

**SORCERER:** *(very fearfully pleading)* There is not a man on earth who can tell the king what his dream was; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean. Only **the gods** could do such a thing, and they don't dwell with men.

KING: *(sits up in bed furious)* That's it! I'm done with you wise men! If you can't tell me what my dream was – I highly doubt you know the interpretation either!! You're all a bunch of liars! Ashpenaz, take off their heads – every last one of them. Of what use are such liars to me!

ASHPENAZ: But my Lord the King...

KING: No arguing or I'll have your head mounted on that wall *(pointing)* as well.

ASHPENAZ: *(shaking in fear so that the bottle of pills starts trembling in his hands)*

KING: Begin this purge immediately! What use do I have of wise men who can't even tell me what my dream was in the first place? Liars! Liars! Liars! *(grabs his lion and throws it against the wall almost hitting the fearfully retreating magicians etc., now being arrested by Ashpenaz) and led off the stage and out the right side door)* **That's all you are!**

MUSIC: Sprach Zarathustra op 30 Prelude (Start it at 30 seconds - needs to be at the climax)

**CURTAINS:** CLOSE TO SET UP FOR SCENE 4

**LIGHTS:** toward the left side – Daniel and Arioch

*(While Arioch and Daniel communicate at the left side door, the king continues to pace back and forth on stage in front of curtains erratically)*

MUSIC: *fades*

ARIOCH: *(with a sword, knocks on the left side door and Daniel answers)* Belshazzar, I have bad news...VERY BAD NEWS! I am sorry to tell you this, but you are under arrest. King Nebuchadnezzar wants all the wise men killed tonight. Wake your friends and follow me.

Daniel: *(greatly concerned)* Why is this decree from the king so...so hasty? What have we done,...or **not** done?

ARIOCH: The king had a terrible dream. He refuses to tell anyone what the dream was about. Instead he has required his wise men to tell him both **the dream** and **the interpretation**. As this is an impossible demand, which no one can fulfil, he has commanded that all his wise men be killed.

DANIEL: *(calmly)* Such a thing is impossible for men, but not for God.

ARIOCH: *(taken aback. Looks at Daniel skeptically)* Are you saying that **your God** can fulfil this request?

DANIEL: May I be given time to pray and ask for His wisdom?

ARIOCH: I will beg the King immediately. Perhaps he will give you time.

*(Arioch marches onto the stage, leaving Daniel standing by the door. He approaches the raving King on his own)*

ARIOCH: *(bows)* My Lord the King. One of your wise men has requested that he be given time to pray to his God and ask for a revelation of your dream.

KING: *(mocking)* Ah...clever! Very clever! He just wants more time! What's he planning to do? Make up stories? Escape?!

ARIOCH: Please my Lord, O King. He may be able to give you the interpretation you seek.

KING: *(scoffing)* Very well then. Tell him to go and **pray to his God!** *(threateningly)* But do not expect me to remain **this patient** forever! I will only grant a small measure of time!

ARIOCH: *(backing away respectfully)* Yes, my Lord. I will go tell him right away!

**CURTAINS** *(close as Arioch hurries to where Daniel stands by the door)*

ARIOCH: The king has agreed to give you time. Hurry now, at any moment he may change his mind!

## SCENE 4 – DREAM REVEALED TO DANIEL

**MUSIC:** Suite No. 1 in G Major BWV 10071. Prelude - peaceful

**CURTAINS:** OPEN

**LIGHTS OFF** – only candle light

STAGE: 4 cots on stage. A large window with shutters is facing the audience. Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are on stage, ready to go to bed for the night – but looking very worried. Hananiah is reading a scroll in bed. Candles are lighting up the room. Daniel comes out of left door and walks onto the stage. Arioch is standing guard with weapons on the left side of the stage.

Mishael: *(nervously)* How did it go? Are our lives still in danger?

Azariah: Did King Nebuchadnezzar grant us time to pray?

*(all the friends await the answer expectantly. Hananiah puts down his scroll)*

Daniel: *(very relieved)* Yes! The king has agreed to let us pray to the God of Heaven. But if God doesn't choose to reveal this mystery to us, we'll be dead men – along with all the other wise men of Babylon. Let us all beseech our God tonight for wisdom and mercy!

Hananiah: *(gets out of bed)* Yes. Let us all plead for God's mercy!

*(All four men go to the window and open the shutters wide. They kneel down and quietly pray individually)*

**MUSIC:** Suite No. 1 in G Major BWV 10071. Prelude music plays while they pray, then lie down in bed to go to sleep

Daniel: Good night, my friends. May the good Lord bless us with wisdom tonight.

*(they all reply with good night and blow out the candles)*

**LIGHTS** - Just one light shining on Daniel

**MUSIC:** soft music continues to play. It will fade out just before Daniel begins to thank God.

*Hananiah snores. Mishael and Azariah toss and turn. Daniel twitches violently and at last sits up in great alarm, breathing heavily. He looks around on his sleeping friends and then stands up and walks to the front of the stage. There, standing in front of the curtains, he prays out loud with great thankfulness.*

**CURTAINS:** close - so stage can be set up for Scene 5

**LIGHT:** follows Daniel to the front of the stage

**LIGHTS :** follows Daniel Daniel: *(very thankful)* **Blessed** be the name of God **forever and ever!** For wisdom and might **are His**. He changes the **times** and **the seasons**; He **removes kings** and **raises up kings**; He **gives wisdom** to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. I **thank You** and **praise You**, O God of my fathers; You have made known to me what the king requires!

Daniel: *(walks quietly over to where Arioch is standing on left side of stage. The 3 friends straggle out sleepily from behind the curtain to join them)* There is good news, Arioch! My God has revealed the dream! Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; take me before the king, and I will tell the king the interpretation.

Arioch: *(looks very relieved!)* That is good news indeed. Let us go right away to the king.

**MUSIC:** Sprach Zarathustra op 30 Prelude (start it at 30 seconds)

## **SCENE 5 – DANIEL’S INTERPRETATION**

**CURTAINS:** open

**STAGE:** *(King on his throne. Ashpenaz and the steward are standing next to him)*

**LIGHTS:** on the king.

Arioch: *(marching in with Daniel and three friends. They bow as they get close to the king)* My Lord, o king, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation.

**MUSIC:** fades

King: Are you able to make known to me **the dream which I have seen, and** its interpretation?"

Daniel: The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king.

King *(sits up and starts to look enraged)*

Daniel: *(quickly)* **BUT** there is **a God in heaven** who reveals secrets, and **He has made known** to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days.

King: *(sits back and listens with interest)*

Daniel: O king, thoughts came to your mind while you were on your bed, about what would come to pass in the future. *(at this the king nods in great surprise)* He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be. This secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but in order that you may understand the interpretation and know the thoughts of your heart.

**KING:** *(leaning forward with great interest. Everyone else in the room is interested to hear as well)*

**POWER POINT PROJECTOR:** *(as Daniel speaks – there is a video clip of the statue – first the image, then with the stone cut out of the mountain and hitting it, etc.)*

**DANIEL:** *( Daniel relays dream dramatically, pointing to the projected image as he speaks. The king nods in excitement as Daniel relays the dream to him)* You, O king, saw a great image! This great image stood before you; and its form was awesome. It's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet and broke them in pieces. Then the whole image was crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors and the wind carried it away so that no trace of it was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

**KING:** Yes, Yes! This is what I saw! What does it mean? What is it about?

**DANIEL:** *(acts this out dramatically as he speaks)* God has shown me the interpretation. (points) You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power and glory. He has given men, beasts and birds into your hand, and made you ruler over them all. You are this head of gold.

**KING:** *(is looking prouder and prouder to this point- but not so happy about what follows)*Yes, Yes.

**DANIEL:** But after you will arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, just as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything and crushes, this kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. Just as you saw the feet and toes, partly of clay and partly of iron, this kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it. So the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile.

**King:** *(listening carefully in bewilderment – he becomes astonished and fearful in the next part of the speech. All others are just as interested.)* But why was the whole magnificent image destroyed by such a little stone? What does this mean for my mighty kingdom?

**Daniel:** *(very animated and excited )* The little stone is God's intervention in the kingdom of men! In the days of these kings (points to the image) the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. As you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold - the great God has made known to you, oh king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure."

POWERPOINT OFF

**KING:** *(to the great astonishment of everyone standing on stage, the king falls down on his knees with his face to the floor before Daniel. Then still on his knees, he sits up and commands:)* Present an offering and incense to this man! Truly your God is the God of gods, the king of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret.

**KING:** *(stands up)* Belshazzar, you are promoted as ruler over the whole province of Babylon. You will be the chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon! Ashpenaz bring a treasure box of gifts for this man! You know, that one that I had set aside – well, give it to this man!

**ASHPENAZ:** *(bows to the king, ducks around the corner and comes back with an overflowing treasure box of jewelry and gifts which he gives to Daniel – very heavy!.)*

DANIEL: Thank you, my Lord. The God I serve is the one true God. *(he gestures towards his 3 friends)*. My 3 friends – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – also serve the One True God – the King of Kings.

KING: *(looks towards the friends)* If these men also serve your God, then set them over the affairs of the province of Babylon. You shall **all** be rulers in my kingdom.

*(Ashpenaz proudly escorts them off the stage and through right front door.)*

**LIGHTS** : out

**CURTAINS**: close

**MUSIC**: Fantasy and Fugue on the Theme B A C H - THREATENING

## **SCENE 6 – THE FIERY FURNACE**

(\*\*\*3 people who can play musical instruments, 4 WISE MEN, 3 FRIENDS, ARIOCH AND ASHPENAZ , SOLDIER 1 AND SOLDIER 2, STEWARD?, KING. Angel sneaks in and hides near where the fiery furnace will appear)

**LIGHTS**: on the king in front of curtains

**CURTAINS**: CLOSED

*(The king is standing to the left side, in front of the curtains with Arioch and Ashpenaz)*

**MUSIC**: fades as King speaks

KING: *(proudly and with self-importance)* Gather together all the officials of the provinces. Today is the dedication to the golden statue – *golden from head to toe* - which I have made and set up in Dura. EVERYONE must be present to bow down to my image, when the music plays. *(he then leaves and goes into the left stage door. Arioch and Ashpenaz speak on stage and then walk slowly to the right front door.)*

ASHPENAZ: *(feeling distress)* I fear for the King. The God of gods revealed that King Nebuchadnezzar was only the head of gold...

ARIOCH: *(shaking his head in agreement)* And he has made the whole statue of gold!

ASHPENAZ: And commanded everyone to worship it!

**CURTAINS**: OPEN

**POWERPOINT**: LARGE GOLDEN STATUTE

*(Reaching the right side door, Arioch and Ashpenaz enter. A moment later they lead out the 3 people with musical instruments – **WHO ARE PLAYING A TUNE AS THEY MARCH OUT**, 4 wise men, the steward and the 3 friends (following last). Everyone marches cheerfully onto the stage, except the 3 friends, and Arioch and Ashpenaz (who look very serious). 4 wise men make a point of putting themselves behind the 3 friends).*

STEWARD: *(very loud, regal and authoritative)* To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, this day. When you hear the music, you shall fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast *immediately* into the midst of a *(make it sound terrible)* **burning fiery furnace!**

*(Everyone looks at one another with a measure of alarm...especially the 3 friends)*

**MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS PLAY** Monteverdi: L'Orfeo, favola in musica, SV 318: Toccata by London Cornett & Sackbut Ensemble

*(Everyone except the 3 friends bow down. The 4 wise men bow but keep their heads up to watch the 3 friends – and point out the 3 friends disrespect for the law, to one another. No one else notices)*

**MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS STOP** *(Everyone stands up straight)*

STEWARD: Thank you for your patronage to the great image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. You may all go back to your homes. Come again and worship any time you like. The King will be very pleased to see proper homage given to such a worthy statute! *(he looks up at the statute in admiration)* It is very much like our handsome and honourable king, isn't it?

*(Everyone agrees. While everyone else files off towards the left stage door, WITH THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS PLAYING A TUNE, the 4 wise men gleefully run towards the right stage door.*

**POWERPOINT:** off

*(The King and Arioch & Asphenaz and 2 soldiers come out from the left side door to walk onto the stage.)*

KING: And how did the dedication go, this morning? Was everyone present?

ARIOCH: Yes, my Lord. It was a very good turnout.

ASHPENAZ: The music played. The officials bowed...

*(The 4 wise men also come out the left side door in a rush. The king turns around when he hears them coming, and they meet the king in the middle of the stage and bow lavishly towards him)*

CHALDEAN: *(with very important news)* O king, live forever! You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the music, shall fall down and worship the golden image.

ASTROLOGER: *(interrupting)* and whoever does **not fall down** and worship shall be cast into the **midst of a burning fiery furnace!**

KING: Of course, of course! I made the decree this morning!

*(Everyone nods knowingly. As the message is relayed, the king looks bewilderedly at each one as they speak, and becomes more and more furious as the report is told)*

CHALDEAN: But, O King, there are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon:

MAGICIAN: *(speaks fiercely)* Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego!

ASTROLOGER: (*nods*) These men, O king, have not paid due regard to you!

CHALDEAN: (*with a very tell-tale voice*) They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up."

KING: (*to Arioch and Ashpenaz. So angry he is shaking*) Bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego...at once!

(*Arioch and Ashpenaz bow to the king and quickly run off to the left stage door. They call out Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego! Quickly they bring them to the king, holding on to their arms.*)

KING: (*angry...but save full rage for next line*) Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?

3 FRIENDS:(*Look down at the ground*)

KING: (*somewhat graciously*) I will give you a second chance. We will play the music again. If you bow down and worship the image I have made, – good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. (*very taunting*) And **who** is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

KING (*becomes angrier and angrier as the three friends speak, and Arioch and Ashpenaz look at each other fearfully*)

MESHACH: (*speaking respectfully but firmly*) O Nebuchadnezzar, there is no need for you to give us a second chance in this matter.

ABEDNEGO. (*confidently*) Our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king.

SHADRACH: But even if He doesn't deliver us, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods.

MESHACH: Nor will we worship the golden image which you have set up."

KING: (*full rage – shaking so badly he can hardly get the words out. Speaks to Arioch*) Heat that furnace seven times hotter than ever before!

ASHPENAZ: (*tries to hand the king some herbs, but the King throws them against the wall*)

KING: (*turns to soldiers*) Bind these men in their clothing and throw them into that fire!

**MUSIC:** Fantasy and Fugue on the Theme B A C H - THREATENING

(*Soldiers come over and quickly and furiously yank off the 3 friend's belts and tie up their arms and hands to their bodies. 4 Wise men fold arms and look like they are about to enjoy some entertainment*)

**POWERPOINT:** FIERY FURNACE

**MUSIC:** sound of a RAGING FIRE

SOLDIERS: It's so hot!! (*Push the 3 friends towards the fiery furnace. As they get close, they are overcome by the terrible heat. As they push the 3 friends in, they collapse and fall on the ground. The three friends walk around. Angel appears in the furnace and loosens their ties. The King and everyone else looks on with great amazement and fear*)

**MUSIC:** fades out

KING: *(looking very astonished to Ashpenaz)* Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?

ARIOCH AND ASHPENAZ: True, O king.

KING: But look! *(he points)* I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

KING: *(walks towards furnace, shielding himself from the heat)* Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here.

ANGEL: *(sneaks away)*

3 FRIENDS: *(Walk out. Instantly they are surrounded by everyone checking them over)*

ARIOCH: The fire has had no effect on these men!

ASHPENAZ: Not even a hair on their heads is singed!

MAGICIAN: Or their garments burnt!

CHALDEAN: They don't even smell like fire!

SORCERER: *(looks like he is studying to copy the experiment)* What kind of **strange** magic is this?

MAGICIAN: Nothing that I can do!

KING: *(turns and talks to audience, in humility and awe)* Blessed be the God of *(points to them)* Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have altered the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!

*(Everyone on stage, stops checking the 3 friends over and stands facing the audience to listen to the king's decree. The 4 wise men look at one another sheepishly and fearfully as the king makes this decree)*

KING: *(loudly and firmly)* Hereby I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this.

KING: *(turns and looks at 3 friends)* Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, you have been promoted in the province of Babylon.

**MUSIC:** Welcome Song -marching music, as everyone exits the stage to the LEFT, with the King in the lead and 3 friends following after.

POWERPOINT OFF

LIGHTS: OUT

CURTAINS CLOSE

## SCENE 7 – THE TREE DREAM

STAGE: Nebuchadnezzar's bedroom. Nebuchadnezzar has his nightgown and cap on and his lion tucked under his arm. Comes out the right side door and walks slowly to the stage and in front of the curtains (giving time for stage to be set up)

**LIGHT** – just one on Nebuchadnezzar

KING: (*very happy. Speaks to audience and pats his lion*) It's been a good day, Leo my lion. Queen Amyitis is so very, very impressed with the marvelous hanging gardens I have designed and built. She says they really do remind her of the Persian mountains she grew up in. Ah... everything is going so well! There have never been such incredible gardens created by anyone else. People will come from all over the world to marvel at my work.

**CURTAINS:** open

KING: (*happy sigh as he climbs into bed and sets the lion on the bookshelf.*) Marduk has blessed me greatly with his wisdom and his might (*puts his arms up to the idol in the corner*). Thank you, Marduk.

**LIGHTS:** dim

**MUSIC:** Sleep Relax Sounds and THEN Canta and Fugue in D Minor -Happy lullaby that becomes scary.

POWERPOINT: (THE MIGHTY TREE – goes off as soon as king wakes up)

KING: (*begins to snore, then twitch, then sits up in bed in a panic – terrified. Grabs for Leo the lion*) Ashpenaz!! Ashpenaz!! (*thinks twice and quickly puts Leo back in place before Ashpenaz enters the room*)

ASHPENAZ: (*comes running in, dishevelled with his PJs on*) Yes, my Lord. What is it, my Lord?

KING: I saw another dream!! A *terrifying* dream! A dream from the gods!

ASHPENAZ: Shall I call for Belshazzar?

**MUSIC:** fades

KING: (*he pauses for a moment, proudly*) No. No...no...no. I'm sure this dream is from Marduk ...the god of wisdom – who has blessed me greatly. Let's call for the magicians, astrologers...

ASHPENAZ: (*a little wearily*) Chaldeans and sorcerers?

KING: Yes, Yes. Bring in all the wise men of Babylon. I will be *very kind* and tell them the dream this time. They only need to give me the interpretation.

ASHPENAZ: (*bowing and backing away*) As you wish, O King.

ASHPENAZ: (*goes to the right side of stage door – opens it to find all the wise men standing there, yawning and stretching*) Magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans and sorcerers, King Nebuchadnezzar has dreamed a dream. He requires you to give him the interpretation.

Magician: (*fearfully*) Another dream?

Chaldean: (*worried*) Has he told you what this dream is about?

ASHPENAZ: No, but he will tell all of you about the dream this time. He only requires the interpretation.

Sorcerer: (*very confident*) We will have the answers this time. We have all been sacrificing **to Marduk - the god of wisdom.**

(*Ashpenaz nods doubtfully. He leads the group to the King's bedroom*)

**LIGHTS:** out

**CURTAINS:** close

**MUSIC:** The Four Seasons, Summer Vivaldi - ominous – ends when the lights come on, (First crescendo is at 19 sec., the second at 48 sec)

## **SCENE 8 – THE TREE INTERPRETATION**

(*King's bedroom. All is quiet and dark until the king yells out*)

KING: What is wrong with the wise men of Babylon! I even told you the dream this time!! Out with you – all of you. Liars! Fools! Send me Belshazzar!

**CURTAINS:** open

**LIGHTS:** on

**MUSIC:** fades

(*Ashpenaz, Arioch and Daniel stand in front of the king in his bedroom. Ashpenaz quietly hands the king his pills and the king accepts*)

KING: (*very animated, and pacing around the stage as he explains this dream to Daniel*) Belshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you, explain to me the visions of my dream. This is what I saw.

KING: (*he uses his hands to demonstrate*) I saw a tree in the middle of the earth, and it grew all the way up to heaven and became strong. It was loaded with fruit. The beasts of the field found shade under it. The birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches. And everyone ate from it.

KING: (*he pauses and looks at the audience with a worried expression*) And then I saw a...a... holy one, coming down from heaven. He cried out: 'Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, Strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, and the birds from its branches. But leave the stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the grass. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, And let... **him...** (*he says this in a questioning way to the audience*)**HIM...** graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth. Let **his** heart be changed from that of a man, Let him be given the heart of a beast, And let seven times pass over **him.**

*(Daniel starts to look worried. As the meaning comes to him, he is very distressed. Arioch and Ashpenaz start looking from one to the other with concern)*

KING: *(with perplexity and astonishment)* And then the holy one said, 'This decision is so that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.'

KING: *(he pauses dramatically and looks at Daniel with bewilderment. He can see that Daniel is upset, so he speaks in a worried fashion)* So this was my dream. What is the interpretation? None of my other wise men could tell me. But I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you.

DANIEL: *(finds a chair to sit down in. Looks like he is about to be sick. Ashpenaz brings him a drink of water. Arioch begins to fan him)*

KING: *(very worried)* Belshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you.

DANIEL: *(with dread)* My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you!

KING: For those who hate me? *(he looks very worried)* What is **the meaning** of this dream?

DANIEL: *(stands up, and looks very sad as he describes this message)* O King, the tree that you saw, which grew up to heaven and became strong, in which was food for all...**is you**.

**POWER POINT PROJECTOR:** the vision of the tree

KING: Me? *(he asks proudly)* Ah, I am this great tree? *(then the unpleasant implications begin to dawn on him.)*

DANIEL: Yes, O king, your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth.

KING: *(timidly)* But I am to be... *chopped...* down?

DANIEL: *(speaking very kindly)* You saw a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, and let him graze with the beasts of the field.

KING: *(nods fearfully)*

DANIEL: This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, You will be driven from men to dwell with the beasts of the field, and eat grass like oxen. And seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men.

**KING AND ASHPENAZ AND ARIOCH:** *look astonished and dismayed at each other.*

KING: This cannot be...

DANIEL: However, as they gave the command to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be certainly be given back to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules.

**POWER POINT PROJECTOR:** off

KING: A beast...eating grass?? *(he looks over at Leo the Lion)* Me?

**DANIEL:** *(pacing back and forth and thinking hard)* O king, let my advice be acceptable to you. If you break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, perhaps you may stall the fulfilment of this dream.

**KING:** Show mercy to the poor? But I am in the middle of building the finest gardens in the world. I can't divert funds to lazy beggars who won't work! *(shakes his head in dismay and disbelief)* When has a man ever become an ox? This sounds impossible to me. Eat grass? Why, this is a preposterous interpretation...

**MUSIC:** Barber Adagio for Stlings op. 11a - sad, building in climax

**DANIEL, ARIOCH AND ASHPENAZ** look at the king sadly.

**LIGHTS:** fade out

**CURTAINS:** close (BIG CHANGES MADE TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR – NAILS, HAIR, NO ROBE, LEASH)

**LIGHT:** BEHIND CURTAIN.

**Booming voice of GOD:** King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! Your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses."

**NEBUCHADNEZZAR:** Silhouette behind curtain. Shakes, screams and morphes into a beast.

**ASHPENAZ:** What's happening? Are you alright? Let me get you some herbs! Ouch! Ouch! You bit me!

## SCENE 9 – NEB THE BEAST

**STAGE:** Curtains remain closed while set up for scene 10 takes place. Grass in pots on stage in front of curtain.

**LIGHTS:** focused on right side door and stage

**ARIOCH:** *(From the side right door, she walks across the stage in front of the curtain calling out in an uncertain voice)* "Make way for the King" *(She goes out the left side door)*

**ASHPENAZ:** *(Then Ashpenaz comes out leading the King by a leash, who is crawling on all fours, with wild feathery hair, long claws, munching any grass he can find. He looks at the audience with a distant, animal look in his eyes.)* Make way for the King.

**MUSIC:** fades as Steward begins to talk

**STEWARD:** *(coming the other way – stops to speak to Ashpenaz – is terribly astonished)* Is this the King? What has happened?

**ASHPENAZ:** *(stops to talk, while Nebuchadnezzar strains against the leash to reach some grass)* The king has been transformed into a beast, just as Belshazzar said he would, a year ago.

**STEWARD:** That was the tree dream?

**ASHPENAZ:** *(nods)* Yes, the tree dream, which turned into a beast. The dream that none of us thought was possible

**STEWARD:** It just happened all of a sudden?

**ASHPENAZ:** Just yesterday, the King was showing me the waterfall atop his latest garden. He had just finished saying to me, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" And immediately a voice came from heaven saying, "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! Your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses."

**STEWARD:** *(visibly shaken)* How long is seven times?

**ASHPENAZ:** I'm not certain ... *(he pauses and looks grimly at the Steward)* I guess we will find out! In the meantime, *(he pulls on the leash and Nebuchadnezzar follows, still munching on grass)* guard duty will be outside...in the pasture.

**STEWARD:** *(watching the way the king is munching on the grass)* And I suppose, the five-course dinners may no longer be required?

**ASHPENAZ:** *(watching the way the king is munching on the grass)* Only... the salad

**LIGHTS:** OUT

**MUSIC:** Symphony No. 2 in D Major op 36 11 - PLODDING

**LIGHTS:** On Nebuchadnezzar – hair is longer

**ASHPENAZ:** *(still holding onto the king in the pasture. He looks older)*

**MUSIC:** stops when Arioch speaks up.

**ARIOCH:** *(comes walking up the stairs. He looks older too)* Ashpenaz, the scribes have sent me to advise you, that the king has been out here in the pasture for seven years, TODAY!

**ASHPENAZ:** Seven long years!

**ARIOCH:** *(Drops snake on stage without audience seeing her do it)*

**NEBUCHADNEZZAR:** *(freaks out at the snake. Ashpenaz has to kill the snake with his sword. Then he pats the king to calm him down and offers him some herbs.)*

**KING:** *(stops munching on the grass and looks up with great interest at the audience. Suddenly an intelligent light shines in his eyes ☺ He stands shakily on his two legs and spits the grass out of his mouth. Both guards look on with joy and fascination. The king looks at his long feathery hair and nails. He begins to think this all through)* I'm... a **beast...** just as the Most High God said I would become. Belshazzar's God is able to humble those who are proud. Belshazzar's God is truly the **King of heaven.**

**KING:** *(looks up to heaven, humbly and prays)* I praise you, the Most High God, the King of Heaven, for your kingdom is from generation to generation. In your sight all the inhabitants of the earth are as nothing; You do according to Your will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain your hand or question what you have done.

KING: *(turns to his guards)* You are faithful guards, to have looked after me all the while I have been a beast. You will be promoted and given many gifts! *(pats his head apologetically and looks at his long feathery hair in disbelief)* So, ah...perhaps we should arrange for a little trim... *(looks at his nails)* and maybe a pedicure? *(there's a pause and he looks up hopefully)* Any chance we could have a 5-course... dinner tonight? *(Looks embarrassed and mumbles)* Maybe just 4-course... I'm not so fond of salad anymore.

LIGHTS: OFF

## INTERMISSION

MUSIC: Crown Imperial – Belshazzar song - party music begins

### SCENE 10 – BELTESHAZZAR'S PARTY

*(A party scene with plastic goblets (that look like glass) and a big pitcher of wine. A tray to the side hold silver and gold goblets. Belteshazzar and Ashpenaz are on stage with Wife and Lady and Steward. MOTHER is behind the left side door. 7 branched lampstand over near wall.)*

MUSIC: quieter - in order to hear narration and then fades out when narration is done.

NARRATION: In time Nebuchadnezzar died and his son Nabonidus succeeded him as king. While Nabonidus was away on a mission, his son, Belteshazzar, became the coregent of Babylon. Daniel continued on as a wise man, and during this time was given visions from God about the future kingdoms of the world, leading up to the greatest kingdom of all, when Jesus Christ will return to rule this earth for God. One night Belteshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of a thousand.

CURTAINS: OPEN

BELTESHAZZAR: *(quite drunk. Throws away his plastic goblet)* This is the royal palace! Enough of these trashy goblets ! Ashpenaz, bring out the vessels of gold and silver.

STEWARD: *(comes running on to the stage – very fearful and anxious)* I have news for my Lord the King. Very important news!

BELTESHAZZAR – Bring the VESSELS that we captured from Jerusalem! Save the news for tomorrow.

ASHPENAZ: *(horrificed)* The Jewish vessels? But, my Lord, the Jewish vessels were used in temple service. We may anger their god.

BELTESHAZZAR: *(swaggers)* Marduk is mightier than any Jewish gods. Ashpenaz get the vessels now!

*(Ashpenaz leaves to get vessels)*

STEWARD: *(anxious)* Important news, my Lord.

BELTESHAZZAR: *(threateningly)* What news is so important that you two would dare to interrupt my party?

ASHPENAZ: *(brings the vessels to the party. The drunken king and guests grab the vessels and ASHPENAZ fills them with wine. He looks very concerned and unsure of what he is doing)*

WIFE: *(looking at the goblet)* Oh, aren't these pretty! Why haven't we used them before? *(Ashpenaz only fills it up halfway – she notices disdainfully)* I'll have a full glass, thank you!

ASHPENAZ: *(nods distractedly and fills and gives her the goblet)*

LADY: *(flirtatiously holding out her hand for a goblet)* **Full** for me too, please.

STEWARD: *(quite worried)* The Medes and Persians surround the city! The watchmen say they are closing in on us.

BELTESHAZZAR: Ha! Let them get as close as they like. They will never penetrate these walls!

WIFE: *(flippantly)* They will only wear themselves out! Babylon is undefeatable!

LADY: We can worry about them another day. Tonight we are having a party!

BELTESHAZZAR: *(offers a toast)* To Anu – the god of the highest heaven

*(all join in the toast except Steward and Ashpenaz)*

WIFE: To Marduk – the god of wisdom

*(all join in and guzzle the wine)*

LADY: *(flirtatiously to Belteshazzar)* to Ishtar – the goddess of love!

*(all join and drink and look even more drunken)*

**POWER POINT PROJECTOR:** *(Picture of a man's hand writing on the wall)*

**MUSIC:** Night on Bald Mountain

LADY: *(first to see. She screams and drops her cup. She points)* What is... that? What is that on the wall?

*(Everyone turns to look and is terrified)*

BELTESHAZZAR: *(legs begin to tremble, knees knock against one another. He struggles to speak)*

WIFE: *(fearfully)* It's the hand of a god! What is it writing?

LADY: It's an evil spirit! It's going to reach out and crush us! *(They continue to huddle and shake and look terrified throughout this scene)*

BELTESHAZZAR: *(stammering fearfully as he can't take his eyes off the hand. He calls out in a high-pitched voice)* As...as...tro...logers... , Chal....de...de....ans, so...othsay...ers.

STEWARD: I'll bring your wise men! *(he runs to right stage door. Opens it, and there are the four men standing there ready)* Quickly!!

*(They all come and stand before the king with very worried expressions)*

**MUSIC:** *fades out*

BELTESHAZZAR: *(a little more in control but still stammering)* Whoever reads this writing..., and tells me its...its... interpretation, shall be clothed with scar...scar...let and have a chain of gold around...around.... his neck; and he shall...shall be the third ru...ler in the king...dom."

*(There is a long minute of silence as the 3 wise men squint and stare at the writing and whisper to one another and shake their heads thoughtfully and stroke their beards...etc. The sorcerer tries especially hard, even praying silently to his god. Finally the astrologer steps forward)*

ASTROLOGER: *(very apologetically)* Oh King, live forever. We have never seen this writing before...we cannot read it, or make known to the king the interpretation.

BELTESHAZZAR: *(very troubled and yelling)* You do not know this writing? None of you can tell me what this is about? How can this be?

MOTHER: *(opens door and walks slowly onto stage. She is very calm and wise)*

BELTESHAZZAR: *(looks relieved and surprised)* MOTHER!

MOTHER: O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts trouble you. There is a man in your kingdom who has the Spirit of the Holy God. In the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and King Nebuchadnezzar your father-**your father the king**-made him chief of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers.

*(3 wise men hang heads at the mention of this. Steward and Ashpenaz nod in agreement)*

MOTHER: This man, Daniel, was elevated above the others, inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in him. Your father named him Belshazzar. NOW let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation."

BELTESHAZZAR: Bring this Daniel!

STEWARD: I will go immediately. *(he walks to the left, opens the door and Daniel is standing there)* Please come at once to see the King. There is a fearful vision. None of the wise men have been able to interpret its meaning.

Daniel *(looking much older)* and Steward come on stage and bow before the king

BELTESHAZZAR: *(still in a worried voice)* Are you that Daniel who is one of the captives whom my father the king brought from Judah?

DANIEL: *(bows and nods)* I am.

BELTESHAZZAR: I have heard of you, that the Spirit of God is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you.

DANIEL: *(says nothing, keeps head down)* *(3 wise men also look down in embarrassment)*

BELTESHAZZAR: Now the wise men have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not give the interpretation. And I have heard of you, that you can give

interpretations. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."

DANIEL: Keep the gifts for yourself, and give your rewards to someone else; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known the interpretation.

*(Everyone looks at each other in surprise that Daniel should not want gifts and rewards. Wife and Lady continue to hold on to one another in fear)*

DANIEL: O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty. All peoples, nations, and languages trembled before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men. But you his son, Belteshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. *(he points towards the Jewish vessels and is very upset about this)* They have brought the vessels of **His** house before you, and you have all drunk wine from them. And you have praised the idols which do not see or hear or know. The true God who holds **your breath** in His **hand**, you have not glorified. These fingers of the hand were sent from this **one true God**, and this is the writing that was written. *(Daniel points to the letters)* MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

*(Everyone is now looking back at the writing)*

DANIEL: *(pointing)* This is the interpretation. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

**POWER POINT PROJECTOR:** off

**MUSIC:** Night on Bald Mountain (LOW AND FEARFUL, MARCHING)

STEWARD & ASHPENAZ: *(Immediately jump up in concern and flee down the aisle)*

STEWARD: *(In great alarm)* You check the gates, I'll check the walls

*(Everyone else looks very concerned and worried. Belshazzar doesn't seem to believe the interpretation)*

BELTESHAZZAR: Give this man a robe of purple and put a chain of gold around his neck. He shall be the third ruler in the kingdom!

**MUSIC:** (LOUDER)

*(Back doors burst open and in march 2 Persian soldiers with swords. They run up to the front and kill Belteshazzar with lots of sound effect and screaming and lead away all the others out the right side door)*

**MUSIC:** CROWD PANIC STRICKEN

**LIGHTS:** out

**CURTAINS:** CLOSE (SET UP FOR NEXT SCENE)

**MUSIC:** Fades out so Narrator can be heard

**NARRATION:** That very night Belteshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. Cyrus the Persian took Babylon, and handed the kingdom to Darius the Mede.

## **SCENE 11 – SATRAP’S SCHEME**

*(On stage in front of closed curtains are the Governor 1 and Satrap 1 and Satrap 2)*

Satrap 1: *(very proudly)* Yes, yes, I have also been chosen to be a Satrap! It is a great honour to be elevated over the provinces!

Satrap 2: *(asking the Governor):* Is it true that king Darius plans to set you and 2 other governor officials over all 120 satraps?

Satrap 1: I heard that he plans to make that old Jew, Daniel, one of the governors?

Governor 1: *(looking around secretively, so no one will hear him)* No, no, the plan is far worse than that. King Darius plans to set that old Jew over **all** of us! Daniel may be set over the whole realm!!

Satrap 1: We can't let this happen. Babylon can't be governed by a Jew!!

Governor 1: *(very sneaky)* This calls for diligent investigation. Let's all do our part to find if there are any allegations against this Daniel, that we can bring to Darius. I'll search Nebuchadnezzar's records.

Satrap 2: I'll talk to the other satraps – every single one! Perhaps they will remember some inappropriate behaviour from Daniel in the past.

Satrap 1: *(gloating)* I'll visit the prison house. Maybe the old queen will remember some past misdeeds ... *(thinks of an even better idea!)* or some of the wise men of Babylon may know a few things...heh, heh.

*(Satraps go out through stage door on right, and Governor leaves stage door on left.)*

**MUSIC:** NIGHT ON BALD MOUNTAIN - minute 3 – at staccato part - building in intensity

*(Satraps and governor come out opposite doors to what they went in, and back onto stage. They look rather deflated except Satrap 1, who has a little smirk)*

**MUSIC:** fades out

Governor: *(looking all around secretively again...worried he may be overheard)* So, what did you find out? Anything from the other satraps?

Satrap 2: No. Nothing.

Governor: *(shaking his head in dismay)* I didn't discover anything in the records either. Just praise, praise and more praise for Daniel. *(turns to Satrap 1)* What about the prison house?

Satrap 1: Not a thing...no one could remember anything Daniel did wrong. However..., the sorcerer gave me a brilliant idea!

*(They both turn to him with great interest, saying: What? What is it?)*

Satrap 1: *(rubs hands together with glee)* So, it turns out that this old Jew **always** prays in front of an open window...**every** single day...**3 times a day!** If we were to convince Darius to make a new law...

Satrap 2: *(gets it!)* That no one can pray to anyone...except, except...

Satrap 1: *(steals his idea back)* Except for Darius the King...!

Governor: Then Daniel will be forced to break the Law!

Satrap 2: But will he be bold enough to pray with his window open? Maybe he will just pray somewhere else.

Governor: *(thinking it through carefully)* True...Why would he be so stupid as to pray in the open?

Satrap 1 *(defending his idea)* But, but, the sorcerer says Daniel is very, very consistent! To pray somewhere else would be to demonstrate he is afraid of this new law!

Governor: Ah yes! It's very possible he may feel that to change his actions would show a lack of faith in his God's ability to save...This might work!

Satrap 2: So what will be the punishment for disobeying? The fiery furnace?

Satrap 1: No, no, no...The magician told me that the Jewish god can save out of fiery furnaces!! We need something else...

Satrap 2: Hanging? Impaling? Drowning?

Governor: *(strikes his hands together)* I know! The den of lions! It's Darius' favourite punishment – one he is likely to go along with!

*(They all love their plan)* Wonderful! This is perfect!

Satrap 2: So who will present the plan to the king?

*(Governor and Satrap 1 look at each other – then both spontaneously point to Satrap 2)* You!

Satrap 2: *(not thrilled)* Me...but it's your plan...

Satrap 1: Your negotiation skills are second to no one. Quick, let's take this to the king!

**MUSIC: Barber Adagio for Strings op. 11a**

*(They all run and enter the right side door)*

## SCENE 12 – DARIUS FOILED

**CURTAINS:** OPEN

*(King's remembering to bow) "King throne room. Darius is sitting on the throne, enjoying a cup of wine)*

*(all three together come through left side door, with a scroll and large pen tucked under the Governor's arm, excited but in control, barely ,* **Darius, live forever!**

**MUSIC:** fades

Darius: Good afternoon men. What is it you wish to ask of me, today?

Satrap 1: *(begins a little shakily and becomes more convincing as he goes on)* In honour of you as our new ruler and a very, mighty, wise king, all the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.

Darius: *(absorbs the information thoughtfully)* This is quite a noble request. It may be a good way to establish my reign.

*(They all nod dramatically.)*

Satrap 2: All to honour your remarkable kingship, my Lord.

Governor: *(passing the scroll and large pen to the king)* Now, O king, if you don't mind signing the scroll right *here (he points it out)* to establish the decree, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter."

Darius: *(signs the scroll)* Have the messengers take the new decree throughout the kingdom.

**CURTAINS:** CLOSE (TO SET UP FOR SCENE 11)

**MUSIC:** Moonlight Sonata

*(3 hurry off stage, with a wink and grin to the audience – go through RIGHT door. In a second, 2 messengers come out with printed decree and loudly repeat it over and over to audience as they head towards the back and go out the doors)*

MESSANGER 1: No one may pray to any god OR man, except the king

MESSANGER 2: For thirty days. Or you'll be thrown into the lion's den

## SCENE 13 – DANIEL PRAYS

*(Daniel's bedroom. Window facing audience with shutters closed. Daniel and Servant 2 are standing in Daniel's room looking at the window. 2 Satraps and the governor sneak out the right stage door and hide behind a bush where they can see the window)*

**MUSIC:** fades as Servant 2 speaks

Servant 2: *(pleading)* Daniel, this is not worth your life! Surely your God will hear you from behind the shutters.

Daniel: My God will hear me from the deepest dungeon or from the depths of the sea. But I pray towards Jerusalem (*he gestures toward the window*) – the city God loves – the place He chose to put His name. To change the way I pray to my God, because of this *foolish* decree, would be to give in to fear. If God decides to give me over to the lions, may it bring glory to His Name that I will give my life to Him. However, the God I serve delivered my three friends from the hottest fire – He certainly has power to deliver from the hungriest lions!

Servant 2: You have faith and determination that I lack. (*pulls a cloth over his head as he says this*) I would simply just pray under my bedsheets!

Daniel: (*opens the windows wide and kneels down in front and clasps his hands in prayer*)

(*3 men excitedly pointing and conferring silently with each other. They jump up and run towards the right door, where the king is walking through with his two soldiers.*)

Satrap 2: O King, have you not signed a decree that every man who petitions any god or man within thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?

Darius: The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter.

Governor: (*points towards Daniel's window where Daniel is still praying*) Well...it seems that *Daniel*, who is one of the captives from Judah, does not show due regard for you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed, but continues to make his petition three times a day."

Darius: (*crestfallen, greatly dismayed with himself*) Oh...of course. How could I make such a decree? Daniel is devoted to his God! What was I thinking? There must be a loophole somewhere...I have to change such a foolish decree!

Satrap 2: (*trying to be submissive but with a hard edge the king does not appreciate*) May I remind you, O king, that it is **the law** of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed."

Darius: (*looks at the Governor*) Is this certain? Nothing may be changed?

Governor: (*straightfaced and solemn*) This is absolutely certain, O King! It is a very noble decree that you signed. Daniel is simply in direct violation of **your Law**. Such a rebel deserves to be punished. He is not a man to be trusted.

Darius: (*fed up with these men*) I trust no one more, than I trust Daniel! He stays faithful to those he serves, regardless of the consequences! (*sadly to his soldiers*) Bring Daniel to me.

(*Soldiers go and kindly arrest Daniel from his bedroom. Daniel submits and comes before the king*)

Daniel: (*bows to king sadly*)

Darius: (*apologetically*) Daniel, your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you."

**MUSIC:** The Rite of Spring Part 1 – scary

**CURTAINS:** CLOSE

(*They all march Daniel out through the right stage door. The Governor and satraps following triumphantly behind – maybe with a 'thumbs up' sign to the audience*)

**LIGHTS:** fade out

## SCENE 14 – THE LION’S DEN

**CURTAINS: OPEN**

*(Lion’s den. 5 kids in lions costumes, looking very hungry and fierce. A big stone set up on one side of the stage)*

**LIGHTS:** only one in the den

*(King and soldiers bring Daniel to the stage from the left side door. They roll the stone aside and push Daniel in. The 3 men are gazing on with barely concealed delight)*

Darius: *(so apologetically and emotionally)* Your God, Daniel – He will deliver you!

*(The stone is rolled back by the soldiers and Darius grimly presses his ring into a seal on the rock)*

*(The lions come all around Daniel to sniff him, but can’t open their mouths. Daniel prays to God)*

**Music:** scary, fades out

**LIGHTS:** fade off of the den, and follow Darius.

*Darius (will pace all around the audience. Eventually, Daniel will reach out and pat one of the lions, who will eventually cuddle up beside him purring. Then the lions and Daniel will all go to sleep )*

Servant 1: *(bringing food to the king)* Your dinner, O King?

Darius: *(tragically)* I cannot eat tonight. I have no appetite at all! Not while Daniel is in that den.

*(Servant nods and bows understandingly and goes back in through right door)*

Servant 2: *(comes in with a musical instrument)* My Lord, would you like some calming music?

Darius: No, no, thank you. I prefer to be left alone till the morning.

**MUSIC:** In Paradisum

**LIGHTS:** *(become brighter . Rooster crows. King stops pacing)*

Darius: Servants! Soldiers! Morning has come. We will go and release Daniel.

*(Darius presses on ahead with soldiers, while servants follow behind)*

Servant 1: *(turning to audience with a sad shrug)* Nothing will be left of Daniel by now. He’s been in that den for hours!

Servant 2: *(also speaking to the audience)* He would have been killed within the first few minutes. Those lions are starving for food. They don’t waste any time.

Servant 1: The king will be so devastated when Daniel doesn’t answer him. He didn’t sleep at all last night!

*(Soldiers roll away the stone. All the lions are laying stretched out asleep. They look up lazily as the stone is moved. The 3 men have crept out from the left door and are hiding behind a bush to see what will happen. They look a little scared and one of them has his son with him)*

**MUSIC:** fades out here

Darius: *(with a lamentable voice)* Daniel, servant of the living God, has **your God**, whom you serve **constantly**, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

Daniel: *(loudly and cheerfully)* O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you."

Darius: *(very triumphantly)* Your God has saved you! He is **the God** of gods. Bring Daniel out of that den!

*(Soldiers throw in ropes and Daniel is pulled out. Lions start pacing hungrily and looking fierce again)*

Darius: *(looks over and sees the 3 frightened men and little boy peeking over the bushes)* Grab those men and cast them into the den of lions!

*(Soldiers grab the frightened men and boy and throw them kicking and screaming into the lion's den. Immediately the lions pounce on them and bite their necks and begin to munch)*

### **CURTAINS CLOSE**

**LIGHTS** : off stage. One light on King Darius in front of the curtains.

Darius: *(making a proclamation)* To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, And steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, And His dominion shall endure to the end. He delivers and rescues, And He works signs and wonders In heaven and on earth, Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

**MUSIC** plays : Pomp and Circumstance or Le Nos de Figaro - triumphant

**CURTAINS OPEN** - All characters on stage to bow.

END WITH A DANIEL SONG FROM THE PLAY CHARACTERS? PERHAPS A 10 MINUTE TALK ON DANIEL'S PROPHECY?