

Another Day Older and Deeper in Babylon:

Stories from the Lives of Daniel and the Exiles

By Rev. Elana Keppel Levy
2020

Daniel Play

Cast of Characters

- Judith: Purveyor of Fine News
- Sera: Perseverant Patron
- Abigail: Resident Skeptic
- Ziha: Famer of the King's Lands
- Akkub: Erstwhile Levite, Current Ditch Digger
- Isaac: Builder of Bricks
- Deborah: Freelance Busybody
- Daniel: Courtier, Wise Guy, Truth Teller
- Mushi: Best of the Bessies

Judith: *(comes from stage right to center holding a large rock)* Extra, extra! Read all about it! King Nebuchadnezzar's reign of terror continues. Israelites forced to leave home and live in Babylon.

Sera: *(enters from stage left)*

Judith: Extra, extra!

Sera: *(goes to Judith)* The news, thank goodness!

Judith: I've got all the news that's fit to carve, hot off the chisel – the weightiest of world affairs, truly hard-hitting reporting!

Sera: Oh, wonderful. Thank you! *(hands Judith a small silver rock)*

Judith: *(bites the rock)* Much obliged!

Sera: Wait a minute...

Judith: What is it?

Sera: I, umm...well...

Judith: Spit it out, Sera!

Sera: *(a little bit loudly)* I don't know how to read! *(covers mouth in exaggerated embarrassment)*

Judith: You don't know how to read? *(Sera shakes her head)*. You don't know how to read?!
Sera, I've been selling you the "Babylonian Gazette" every day for 10 years now!

Sera: Well, when I first got to Babylon, I was really scared and overwhelmed. There had been so much violence and bloodshed – I didn't know how I would make a new life for myself.

Judith: Hard times.

Sera: I got kind of lost in the city and somebody yelled, "have you been living under a rock?" So I looked at the newspaper and I figured...when in Rome (I mean, when in Babylon) and I started building my house out of the Babylon Gazette: one daily at a time.

Judith: You did that for 10 years? Your house must be huge!

Sera: Well, a rolling stone gathers no moss. Anyhow, after it had been going on for a few years, it got to be a habit and, well, I just didn't want to rock the boat!

Judith: ANYway...haven't you ever wondered what the newspaper says?

Sera: You know what? It never occurred to me, but now that you mention it – what does it say?

Judith: Well, Nebuchadnezzar conquered the Assyrian empire and took over Mesopotamia.

Sera: (*trying to figure out what is means*) Mesopotamia? Mesopotamia? Medium hippopotamus?

Judith: No, the land where we live – between the two rivers, the Babylonian Empire. (*Sera nods vaguely*). Nebuchadnezzar fought every empire around and conquered the kingdom of Judah along the way.

Sera: Ooh, yeah. I was there for that.

Judith: And destroyed the temple.

Sera: Yuh-huh.

Judith: And exiled the people.

Sera: Right, that was me, that was us. Wait, have you been reporting the same ten year old news every day?

Judith: Well, you're the only one who buys the paper, so...

(*Judith and Sera exit. Enter Deborah, Isaac, and Akkub from the left. Enter Abigail, and Ziha from the right.*)

Akkub: This long working day / has come to an end / It's nice to be here / with strangers and friends. / My hands they are tired, / my back it is beat / Does Isaac, perhaps, / have some food I could eat? (*raises eyebrows and looks longingly at Isaac*)

Isaac: Okay, Akkub, you're in luck. I did manage to save a few from lunch. (*Isaac gives nuts to Akkub*)

Akkub: What wonderful gifts / Tree fruits just for me / I'm sure I'll be glad / when they reach my tum-my!

Ziha: What.is.happening.right.now?

Deborah: What? Oh, that's just Akkub. (*takes Ziha aside*) See, he was a Levite in the Temple. His job was to read and sing all the psalms of praise. Well, he spent so many years talking in verse that he forgot how to speak normally.

Ziha: So, he *always* talks like that? (*to Akkub*) Props on the commitment, bro! (*goes in for a fist-bump. Akkub looks at it with confusion.*)

Akkub: Your words are so strange / confusing my ears. / Your fist comes at me / but I'm not feeling fears!

Isaac: (*to Ziha*) Hi, I'm Isaac! Let me introduce you to everybody. That's Abigail, who I guess you already know, and Akkub, who you just met. This is Deborah and I'm Isaac.

Ziha: Nice to meet everybody. I'm Ziha. I'm a farmer on the king's lands.

Deborah: What's that like?

Ziha: Oh, it is the worst. The soil's all different, I still don't know how to grow these medium hippopotamus crops –

Abigail: (*interrupting*) Mesopotamian – it's Mesopotamian!

Ziha: Okay, (*very slowly*) Mesopotamian crops. The ground floods and the king eats up everything I plant and taxes me on top of that!

Isaac: You think you've got it bad? I'm a builder and Nebuchadnezzar just will not stop ordering building projects: walls, roads, museums, temples!

Akkub: So many idols / my heart it does ache. / Do they make you build temples / for gods that are fake?

Isaac: No, don't worry, Akkub. I'm strictly on road detail. Day in, day out, bricks, bricks, and more bricks. Digging the mud, packing it in the hot, hot heat, and then shoving it into the mold, out of the mold, into the street, repeat repeat.

Abigail: That doesn't sound too bad to me...

Isaac: Did you know that he stamps boasts on every brick: “I am Nebuchadnezzar – Greatest Guy Ever – Shining Brighter Than the Sunshine in a Cloudless Sky.” And it’s starting to get really personal.

Abigail: It doesn’t sound that personal to me.

Isaac: Oh no? The last time old Nebby sent a new brick mold to the camp, it said “Nebuchadnezzar is More Fun than a Thousand New Years’ – And Isaac the Builder is Dumber than a Doddering Donkey.”

Deborah: Ouch.

Akkub: Oh, children of God / your tales they do move. / But my lot is sad / The stain won’t remove. / I work on canals / to water the field. / With shovel in hand / wayward water to wield. / Today at my job / I dug much too deep / - the waterway crashed / crushing pipes in a heap. / The west side of town / for water got mud / instead of my pay / I must now live on cud!

Isaac: They’re gonna make you pay for the whole thing? (*Akkub nods sadly. Isaac takes a beat.*) Want another pistachio, buddy? (*Akkub nods a bit more hopefully. Isaac gives him a pistachio and a hug.*)

Deborah: I miss the temple. I wanna go home and back to the time when we were our own country and had our own leader (*sad nods all around*)

(*Muffled yelling sounds from off-stage*)

Daniel: (*runs on-stage*) Yowza. That guy.

Abigail: Daniel! It’s so good to see you. Do you have any stories from the palace?

Isaac: Yes! We’re dying for another “Nebuchadnezzar’s so crazy” story.

Daniel: Yeah, you guys look like you’ve had a pretty rough day. Let’s sit around the campfire, and I’ll tell you a story. (*Everyone sits around the campfire. Abigail lights it.*) Submitted for the approval of the midnight society, I give you “The Tale of the Wobbly Statue.”

Ziha: (*raises her hand*) Ooh! Ooh! Ooh! I wanna be Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel: What do you mean you wanna be Nebuchadnezzar?! That guy’s the worst!

Ziha: No, no...I don’t wanna be like him. You tell the story and I’ll pretend to be him.

Isaac, Deborah, and Abigail: (*ad-lib*) That sounds like fun, we’ve never done that before, etc.

Daniel: Okay, let's try it that way. (*Ziha takes a scarf from her neck and ties it around her head to be like a crown*) What are you doing there....ohhhh!

Abigail: Ooh, snazzy!

(*Ziha goes to stage right to sit on the throne as king.*)

Daniel (*narrates to the congregation and the exiles*): So, we begin. About eight years ago, Nebuchadnezzar had terrible dreams – dreams so bad that his spirit was restless in his body, tapping and tapping at him. He couldn't get back to sleep that night – he couldn't think about anything else that day.

Ziha: (*as Nebuchadnezzar, speaks to the congregation*) What is this bad dream nonsense?! As the greatest human being who has ever been born or ever will be born I am too good for nightmares. It must be the gods – yes, they loved me and made me better than everyone else. They must be trying to tell me something. Magicians! Enchanters! Sorcerers! Chaldeans! (*to Daniel with a totally different demeanor*) Is that right?

Daniel: Yes, that's exactly what I was going to tell you to say – he summoned them all in.

Ziha: (*as Nebuchadnezzar*) I dreamed such a dream – a most undreamy, uncreamy, can't believe-y bad dream. It's woodpeckering in my brain and you must stop it. Make me know what it means.

Deborah: (*jumps up, as a Chaldean, run over to the Nebuchadnezzar area and bows to Ziha*) O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will reveal its meaning to you.

Isaac: (*jumps up, as a magician, runs over to the Nebuchadnezzar area and bows to Ziha*) Yes, tell us!

Abigail: (*jumps up, as an enchanter, runs to the Nebuchadnezzar area and salutes*) On the job!

Daniel: But the king wouldn't tell them his dream.

Ziha: (*as Nebuchadnezzar*) This is a public decree: if you do not tell me both the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins.

Isaac: (*to Abigail*) Well, that escalated quickly.

Abigail: No kidding!

Ziha: (*glaring at Isaac and Abigail; as Nebuchadnezzar*) But if you tell me the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. I will give you horsies and candies *and* a weekly column in the Babylonian Post.

Abigail: (*as an enchanter*) Nebuchadnezzar, sir, we can't really do it 'til we hear the dream first.

Ziha: (*as Nebuchadnezzar; stands angrily*) I know for a fact that you're just stalling for time, but the first rule of my kingdom...(*dark, serious tone*) is no backsies. I made a public decree and so you know the verdict if you defy me. You're all conspiring against me – some magicians you are. You got together and agreed to tell me lies and lead me around by the nose so you could get what you want. Well...you're not the king – I am. Tell me, tell me, tell me, tell me! (*crosses arms with a harumph*)

Deborah (*as a Chaldean; bowing*): O king, there is no one on earth who can reveal what you are demanding. I'm a Chaldean – I can look at the stars and tell you if mercury is rising, but you gotta give me something!

Isaac: (*as a magician*) No king, however great and powerful – did I mention yet how great and lovely and powerful you are? So mighty, so amazing. But no king has ever asked such a thing of their magicians or enchanters or Chaldeans. I mean, I'm a magician: with hints and tools I can enscribe magical lines and draw out the wisdom of the universe from the gods, but, ya know, you gotta give me something!

Abigail (*as an enchanter*): Nebuchadnezzar, sir, I can call on the spirits of the dead and hear the secrets of their many eyes and lives (pretty cool, huh?). All this I can do with the blessing of the gods that I worship, but the thing that you are asking is too difficult. No one can reveal both the dream AND its interpretation except the gods and, well, they don't live here with us on earth. You can't just knock on the door and expect them to do what we want them to.

Daniel: Because of this the king flew into a violent rage.

Ziha: (*as Nebuchadnezzar*) You're supposed to be the wisest, greatest sages and wizards and whatever you are in the whole world. I'm the greatest ruler who has ever been. How dare you insult the gods by disappointing me. That's it! All wise men in all the land shall be destroyed! ...AND I MEAN KILLED!

(*Deborah, Abigail, and Isaac run over to Daniel*)

Deborah: (*as a Chaldean*) Daniel, you must help! The king...umm... who is totally fine and not at all nuts...wants to kill all of the wise men in the land!

Abigail: (*as an enchanter*) And I'm pretty sure the king considers *you* one of the wise men.

Isaac: (*as a magician*) So please help!

Daniel: So then I went to find Arioch, the king's chief executioner. (*pause*) Psst, Akkub, you be Arioch.

Akkub: (*as Arioch*) I'm ready to help, / but not young as a whelp.

Daniel: So I said to Arioch: what's with this decree? I mean, with all due respect, etc., etc. – what gives? Even for Nebuchadnezzar this seems pretty harsh and urgent.

Akkub (*as Arioch*) The king had a dream / as dark as 'twas scary / the meaning he seeks / he's in quite a hurry. / The dream he won't tell / perhaps just as well. / All this killing is making me worry.

Daniel: So I went back to my friends and told them that we should pray to the God of heaven for compassion and mercy so that what is hidden might be revealed to us and so that we wouldn't all be killed by that nutball Nebuchadnezzar. We all prayed. (*to Deborah, Abigail, Isaac, and Akkub*) C'mon, pray! (*they all pray for a moment*). And the dream was revealed to me in a vision of the night.

Deborah, Abigail, Isaac, and Akkub: Huzzah!

Daniel: And then I prayed, "Blessed be the name of God from age to age, for wisdom and power belong to God. God changes times and seasons, deposes kings and sets up kings. God gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. God reveals deep and hidden things; God knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with God. To you, O God of my ancestors, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and power, and have now revealed to me what we asked of you." Amen.

Deborah, Abigail, Isaac, and Akkub: Amen!

Daniel: So I told Arioch: Do not kill all of the wise men of Babylon including, but not only, me! Don't destroy these people for no reason at all – let me back in to see the king.

Akkub: (*as Arioch, takes Daniel over to Ziha as Nebuchadnezzar*) This man I have found / a captive from Judah/ I think he's the one / to bring news so good-a.

Isaac (*to Abigail*): Well, they can't all be good – he's making these rhymes up off the top of his head. (*to Akkub*) Good effort, my friend! (*Akkub bows his head slightly, but is pleased*)

Ziha: (*as Nebuchadnezzar*): My trusted servant who is lesser than me in every possible way – you who I call Belteshazzar because, undeniably, my gods are better than your single, puny god. (*pause*) Whaddya got? Are you able to tell me that dream that I have seen and its interpretation?

Daniel: No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or diviners can tell you your dream and its interpretation, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries and my God has revealed your dream to me. (*to Abigail, Isaac, and Akkub*) So I told him all about his dream. That there was this great statue with a golden head and it was huge and terrifying! But even though its head was golden, its chest and arms were silver, its belly and thighs were bronze, its legs were iron, and its feet were mixed iron and clay. The further down you went, the weaker it got. And there was a stone that wasn't cut by human hands and it struck the statue at the feet and everything smashed all to pieces and

blew away in the wind until not even the littlest bit could be found. But the stone that had struck the statue – it became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

Ziha: (*as herself*) What does that mean?

Daniel: Nebuchadnezzar is the head of the statue – God gave him power and might and glory and lots of control over other people and animals and everything. But the statue won't stand forever – its foundation is weak and its ways are wicked. The stone that strikes the statue is the kingdom that the God of heaven will set up – a kingdom that will never be destroyed, never be left to another people. It will stand forever.

Abigail: What did he say when you told him the interpretation?

Daniel: I kid you not, he fell on his face and worshiped me and called people to make grain offerings and burn incense to me.

Isaac: Seriously?

Deborah: Wow, this guy just doesn't get it.

Daniel: And then he promoted me...even though I told him his kingdom would crumble.

Ziha: Maybe he stopped listening after the "you are the golden head" bit.

Daniel: Yeah, that was my guess. Because as soon – as soon as that was over, you all remember what he did?

Deborah: Wait...it's coming back to me. Didn't he make an enormous golden statue of himself a few years ago?

Daniel: Yep.

Deborah: And that was *after* this dream in which his oh, so sacred goldenness was crushed to pieces?

Daniel: Yep.

Deborah: (*blink*) Okay, I get to be Nebuchadnezzar this time. (*takes crown from Ziha and wraps it around her head in a different way; Ziha makes a "hey, that's my scarf!" face; Deborah takes her seat on the throne and speaks as Nebuchadnezzar*) I, Nebuchadnezzar, require a statue – one so enormous that you could see it from miles around – one of finest gold that glitters and sparkles and reminds everyone of how amazing I am and also that if they cross me I will squish them like ants. Bwa-ha-ha!

Isaac: I think you're enjoying this a little too much.

Deborah: *(as Nebuchadnezzar; to Isaac)* Silence, underling. Take this down! It shall be sixty cubits high and 6 cubits wide and it will be in the plain of Dura in Babylon

Akkub: The math I have done / the numbers alarm / with just one stiff breeze/ all below come to harm!

Abigail: Yeah, Akkub, that does not sound structurally sound to me at all.

Isaac: Timber!!!! *(Isaac makes a crashing sound)*

Deborah *(as Nebuchadnezzar)*: Foolish peasants! Build! Build! *(Akkub, Abigail, and Isaac go back to their seats by the fire)*

Daniel: So, King Nebuchadnezzar sent for the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasures, the justices, the magistrates...

Ziha: The notary publics, the taxidermists, the marine biologists *(stops when she realizes everyone is staring at her)*. What? Were we not just naming every possible job under the sun?

Daniel: No! Now where was I...*(under his breath a little)* justices, magistrates *(regular volume)* Oh yeah! And all the officials of the provinces – Nebuchadnezzar called them to assemble and come dedicate this statue.

Deborah: *(as Nebuchadnezzar)* I command all peoples, all nations, all languages, everything that has breath and can bow and grovel. When you hear the sound of *(takes deep breath and speaks quickly)* the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, AND the entire musical ensemble.

Abigail: Some of those were definitely not real instruments.

Isaac: Yeah, who's ever heard of a "drum"? *(everyone stares at Isaac for a moment)*

Deborah: *(as Nebuchadnezzar)* When you hear this sweet, sweet music, you will fall down and worship my golden statue. And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire.

Ziha: Okay, Daniel, this is crazy. Who would be that arrogant and thoughtless? Who would be willing to kill so many of their own subjects for following their faith?

Daniel, Abigail, Isaac, Deborah, and Akkub: *(look at each other and then at Ziha)* Nebuchadnezzar!

Akkub: *(quickly after the previous line)* What did I tell yer!

Daniel: But we who won't bow down to idols were saved from the scorching of the fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar threw Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael into the furnace and left them there. They were not burned and they were pulled out unharmed. And Nebuchadnezzar was shocked – he said:

Deborah: (*as Nebuchadnezzar*) Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! You sent your angel and delivered your servants who trusted in you. They disobeyed the king's command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. Therefore I make a decree: any people, nation, or language that utters blasphemy against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins for there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.

Abigail: So...he never revoked the decree that forced people to worship his statue and then just made another one that called for the death of more people? I mean, not that I want people to blaspheme the one, true God, but eep.

Isaac: This guy still does not get it. No matter how powerful God is, it just seems like things will never get better. Nebuchadnezzar just does whatever he wants.

Daniel: Or does he? I've got one more story to share with you before we should really all be getting to bed. This one's called "Mooooovin' on over." A couple of years after that, wouldn't you know it, Nebuchadnezzar had another dream.

Isaac: (*grabs the crown from Deborah, places it on his head in a new way, and wraps a blanket around his shoulders at the throne*) My turn! I, Nebuchadnezzar, am really freaked out this time, you guys! There I was, minding my business in my paltry 630,000 square foot palace, wrapped in silks from the far east, hints of frankincense from the horn of Africa wafting into my bed chamber, while the most talented musicians in the land plinked out original melodies on harps and lyres to lull me to sleep.

Deborah: Geez, and they thought I was overdoing it...

Isaac: (*as Nebuchadnezzar*) Despite my many, oh so greatly deserved comforts, I had such a bad dream and it scared me so much. I didn't like it at all so I called in all the wise men to make the bad thoughts go away. See, it was their job to tell me how the dream meant I'm wonderful and good things will always happen to me. Mm-hmm. (*nods*)

Ziha: Ooh, I feel like we've heard this before.

Daniel: So Nebuchadnezzar called in the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the diviners, but he actually told them the dream this time.

Abigail (*running to throne area, bowing as an enchanter*) Nebuchadnezzar, sir, I've done every enchantment I can think of, but no dice, no interpretation...this time. I mean, Nebuchadnezzar, sir, that I'll surely have one next time.

Daniel: Then I came into the room. (*Daniel goes to the throne area*)

Isaac: (*as Nebuchadnezzar*) Belteshazzar, Belty, help me out!

Daniel: (*sighs when he hears that name*) O king, you know I don't care for that name.

Isaac: (*as Nebuchadnezzar*) Nonsense! Now, I may be shaking in my boots, but I seem to remember that you have the spirit of the holy gods in you and no mystery is too hard for you. So, here's my dream: there was this tree and it was the center of the whole earth and so tall, just fabulously tall. It grew so big and strong that its height reached into heaven and you could see it from any part of the whole earth. I really liked this part of the dream. It had lush, green leaves and all kinds of fruit for everybody. Even animals found shade under it, birds made their little homes in its branches and all the stuff that was alive was fed. But then there was this creature it was...not like anything I've ever seen before. It was holy and it was a watcher.

Akkub: (*as holy watcher; holding up a foam sun-dial wrist-watch*) Watches I offer / for him or for her / don't miss this fire sale / 'twill pass in a blur.

Deborah: Umm, what just happened?

Daniel: No, Akkub, not a watch salesman – a watcher. It's a kind of angel that helps teach humanity what is good and righteous on the earth. You remember angels, messengers of God. Yeah?

Ziha: It looks like he's switching gears.

Deborah: (*to Ziha*) Yeah, just give him a minute.

Akkub: (*as holy watcher*) So cut down the tree / and chop off its branch / strip off its foliage / send fruit to the ranch.

Ziha: To the ranch?

Daniel: Well...scattered. But he's doing pretty well so far.

Akkub: (*as holy watcher*) Let animals flee / and birds from above / Leave stump in the ground / with fearsome iron glove. / And he will be bathed / with dew from the sky / with mind of a beast / his time will pass by. The watchers decree / what mortals should know: / The Most High still reigns / o'er mortals below.

Daniel, Deborah, Isaac, Abigail and Ziha: (*light applause and ad lib*) Ooh, impressive, very nice.

Isaac: (*as Nebuchadnezzar*) This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest of the great in all of my greatness, have had. Now, come on Belteshazzar. Come on, Belty. Tell me the dream because I know you've got some wild foreign god spirit in you.

Daniel: (*to Deborah, Abigail, Akkub, and Ziha*): I don't need to tell you that I was seriously freaking out because God had told me what the dream meant and I knew that Nebuchadnezzar was not going to like it. But I was shaking in my boots so much that Nebuchadnezzar could tell.

Isaac: (*as Nebuchadnezzar*) Belty-boy, don't let this dream or its interpretation scare you so bad. Just tell me what it is.

Daniel: My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you, and its interpretation for your enemies!

Isaac: (*as Nebuchadnezzar*) Enough stalling – let's get to the meat!

Daniel: The tree that you saw that was so large and strong – that was so high in the air and visible from all around, with so many green leaves and plentiful fruit that everyone could eat and animals could live there and birds had nests –

Isaac: (*as Nebuchadnezzar*) Yes, I love that tree.

Daniel: It's you, O king! You're the tree and you have grown so great and strong that your greatness reaches to the ends of the earth. But that part with the holy watcher –

Isaac: (*as Nebuchadnezzar, leans in*) Yeah?

Daniel: Where the watcher said, "cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the ground with a band of iron and bronze in the grass of the field –

Isaac: (*as Nebuchadnezzar, leans in more; everyone else leans in, too*) Yeah?

Daniel: And he said let him be bathed with the dew of heaven, and let his lot be with the animals of the field, until seven times pass over him –

Isaac: (*as Nebuchadnezzar, leans in more – basically doubled over at this point*) Yeah?

Daniel: (*deep inhale, deep exhale*) This is a decree of the Most High God that has come upon my lord the king: You shall be driven away from human society, and your dwelling shall be with the wild animals. (*everyone is literally taken aback/leans back as far as they can with eyes wide open in shock*) You shall be made to eat grass like oxen, you shall be bathed with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, until you have learned that the Most High has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals, and gives it to whom God will. Your kingdom shall be re-established for you from the time that you learn that Heaven is sovereign.

Isaac: (*as Nebuchadnezzar; blankly*) What?

Daniel: O king, may my counsel be acceptable to you: stop doing so many horrible things – atone with righteousness, honesty – seek justice and think about what’s good for other people and not just you. Remember how many poor people there are in your kingdom: people who are hurting – people that you could help. You are in a position to be merciful so be merciful. Then your happiness and prosperity and security will be extended. Then you will know peace.

Deborah: You actually said that to the king? You’ve got guts... (*everyone nods*)

Daniel: Ya’ll know that God is good, right? Well, twelve whole months passed and God was giving Nebuchadnezzar the chance to change and to grow. But one day he was strolling along on the roof of his palace.

Isaac: (*as Nebuchadnezzar*) Would you check out how magnificent Babylon is? When I came to power it was crumbling and forgotten – no kind of tribute to the greatness and power that is Babylon or our awesome legacy past and future. With millions of bricks, I have built up its streets and walls; with unstoppable troops, I have conquered all the peoples around; with unshakable faith in the gods, I have held back the forces of chaos. Why, I’ve worked so hard, soon they’ll call us the land of the gargantuan hippopotamus. So some people are starving? That’s their problem! So people are sold into debt slavery? Who cares? My greatness is here by my mighty power and for my glorious majesty.

Daniel: While the words were still in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven.

Akkub: (*as holy watcher, standing behind Isaac*) Nebuchadnezzar / to you I now say / your kingdom is seized / your throne gone away. / From comp’ny of men / and from women, too / You’ll live in the field / and grass you shall chew! / Times will pass o’er you / you’ve so much to learn / so wise up, you fool / don’t make me be stern! / The Most High above / is bigger, it’s true/ you’re only a king / because God lets you.

Daniel: Immediately the sentence was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven away from human society.

(*Isaac goes off to stage left, puts a cow pattern blanket over his back, and gets on his hands and knees where Mushi is grazing*)

Mushi (*to Isaac*): (*in a sing-song way*) Moo-OOO-ooo! How now, brown cow? I’ve never seen you before. What’s your name? (*Isaac stares at her confused and scared*) Welcome to grassville – where life is your salad bowl!

Daniel: He ate grass like oxen.

Mushi: This is some of the best grass I have ever tasted – it’s locally sourced, organic, so crisp, so juicy! You’ve just gotta try it.

Daniel: And Nebuchadnezzar’s body was bathed with the dew of heaven.

Mushi: *(opens and stands under an umbrella)* Holy cow, new guy! Don’t you even have enough sense to come in out of the rain? I give up...I’m headed for greener pastures. Moo-moo, sir! *(with the rhythm of “good day, sir”)*

(Mushi exits. The rest of the cast comes over to Isaac.)

Deborah: Now that you’re an ox, there’s so much you can do to help us out! Who’s got a spare yoke? We gotta get this guy on the Oregon trail!

Ziha: *(singing, to the tune of a Rudolf-themed Christmas carol)* O, great king, with eyes so bright? Won’t you pull my plow tonight?

Abigail: Nebuchadnezzar, sir, here’s your bell *(puts cow bell around his neck)*

Ziha: No more killing people. Bad, Nebby. Be a good Nebby – strong and gentle. *(Pets his head)*

Isaac: *(as Nebuchadnezzar)* oooooop.

Daniel: What’s happening right now?

Abigail: *(shrugs)* Search me.

Isaac: *(as Nebuchadnezzar)* oooooz.

Ziha: Is he...?

Deborah: Oh, bless his heart. He doesn’t even know how to moo properly!

Isaac: *(as Nebuchadnezzar)* oooooob?

(as Daniel continues the story, the rest of the cast surround Isaac in front of him to help dress him in the wig and claws)

Daniel: Yes, he lived out in the field, eating grass like the oxen until seven times passed over him. He was away from people for so long that his hair grew as long as eagles’ feathers and his nails became like birds’ claws. *(Daniel and everyone step back to reveal Nebuchadnezzar)*

Isaac: *(as Nebuchadnezzar)* When that period was over and my nails were almost as long as Pastor Elana’s, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me. *(Isaac stands)* I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored the one who lives

forever. For God's sovereignty is an everlasting sovereignty and God's kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and God does what God wills with the host of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. There is no one who can stay God's hand or say to God, "What are you doing?"

Ziha: That prayer was sounding pretty good in the beginning, but it's kinda starting to sound like he's saying God is just unpredictable and unstoppable and doesn't really care about people.

Isaac: (*as Nebuchadnezzar, removes wig and nails*) When my reason returned to me, my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom.

Abigail: I'm sorry, did he say, "for the glory of my kingdom"?

Isaac: (*as Nebuchadnezzar*) The lowly counselors and lords who serve me sought me out and I was re-established over my kingdom, and even more greatness was added to the greatness I had before. Even I had thought that would be impossible!

Deborah: Who's this prayer honoring, God or Nebuchadnezzar?

Isaac: (*as Nebuchadnezzar*) Now I, the great Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all God's works are truth, and God's ways are justice; and God is able to bring low those who walk in pride.

Daniel: He said all of that. I'm not sure if even he knew which parts were true and which parts were fanning the flames of his ego.

Akkub: So what have we learned / of God that is true? / If this guy's a jerk / pre- and post-moo.....ing.

(*Everyone groans*)

Isaac: (*to Akkub*) You can't win 'em all, friend.

Abigail: We're not alone.

Isaac: What?

Abigail: However hard it is to be here, however powerful and violent Nebuchadnezzar is, he's not God. We're not alone even though it seems like we're defeated. We're not done because God is with us. It doesn't matter if Nebuchadnezzar thinks he has all the power in the world.

Ziha: In an instant, God can turn him into a cow for goodness sake.

Deborah: We might not have the temple, we might not have our own government, but we have
God: God's love and teaching, and our community of faith.

(The rest of the cast comes in and lines up for the bow.)

Daniel: We stand together for what is right and we trust that God will bring us through.

All: For all God's works are truth, and God's ways are justice; and God is able to bring low those
who walk in pride. *(bow)* Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Amen.