

Chapter 3

²⁴ They walked in the midst of the flames, singing to God and praising the Lord. ²⁵ Azariah stood up in the midst of the fire and prayed aloud:

²⁶ Blessed and worthy of praise are you, O Lord God of our fathers! your name is glorious forever!

²⁷ Justice is in all that you do; your acts are faultless, your ways are right, your judgments always true.

• ²⁸ You have indeed given a just sentence in bringing evil upon us and upon Jerusalem, the Holy City of our fathers. You have acted in accordance with truth and justice, as punishment for our sins.

²⁹ For we have sinned and acted perversely by deserting you. We have sinned gravely in everything and have not listened to your commandments. ³⁰ We have not observed them, and we have not fulfilled everything you commanded us for our good.

³¹ All the evils you have brought upon us, all that you have done to us, you have done according to your just sentence.

³² You have given us into the hands of our enemies, lawless people, the worst of the impious, into the hands of an unjust king, the most perverse in all the world.

³³ And today, we cannot even open our mouths; shame and humiliation have overcome those who serve and worship you.

³⁴ Do not abandon us forever, do not reject your Covenant for your name's sake.

³⁵ Do not withdraw your mercy from us, for the sake of Abraham, your friend, of Isaac, your servant, of Israel, your holy one, ³⁶ to whom you promised to multiply their race as the stars of heaven and the sand on the shore of the sea.

³⁷ Lord, see, we have become the least among the nations in all the world, and we are humiliated because of our sins.

³⁸ At this time, we no longer have a king, or prophet, or leader. We cannot offer you holocausts, sacrifices, offerings, or incense. We have no place to present to you the first fruits of our crops, and so obtain your favour.

³⁹ But at least when we present ourselves with a contrite soul and humbled spirit may we then be acceptable to you, ⁴⁰ more than by offerings of rams and calves as holocausts, and of thousands of fat lambs.

May this sacrifice of ours today obtain for us your favour, for we know that those who trust in you shall never be disappointed.

⁴¹ And now, we serve you with our whole heart, we fear you and we seek your face. ⁴² Do not leave us in our humiliation, but treat us according to your kindness and your great mercy. ⁴³ Free us, in keeping with your wonders, and give us the glory of your name, Lord.

⁴⁴ Let those who maltreat your servants be confounded, may they be covered with shame and deprived of all their power. Crush their strength, ⁴⁵ and let them know that you alone are God and Lord, glorious over all the earth."

⁴⁶ The king's servants who had thrown them into the furnace did not stop kindling the fire with oil, tar, tow and vine shoots, ⁴⁷ so that the flames rose up to about twenty-five meters above the furnace, ⁴⁸ and, extending out, burnt the Chaldeans who were standing around.

⁴⁹ But the angel of the Lord came down into the furnace beside Azariah and his companions; he drove the flames of the fire outside the furnace, and blew upon them, ⁵⁰ in the middle of the furnace, a coolness, like that of wind and dew, so that the fire did not touch them or cause them pain or trouble them.

⁵¹ Then the three began singing together, glorifying and blessing God within the furnace, and saying;

⁵² "Blessed are you, Lord, God of our fathers, be praised and exalted forever. Blessed is your holy and glorious name, celebrated and exalted forever.

⁵³ Blessed are you in the temple of your sacred glory; your praises are sung for ever.

⁵⁴ Blessed are you, on the throne of your kingdom; honoured and glorified for ever.

⁵⁵ Blessed are you, who fathom the depths, who are enthroned on the cherubim; praised and exalted for ever.

⁵⁶ Blessed are you, in the firmament of heaven; praised and glorified for ever.

⁵⁷ All the works of the Lord, bless him, praise him, exalt him for ever.

⁵⁸ Angels of the Lord, bless him, praise and glorify him for ever.

⁵⁹ Heavens, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him for ever.

⁶⁰ All the waters above the heavens, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him for ever.

⁶¹ All the powers of the Lord, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him for ever.

⁶² Sun and moon, praise and exalt him for ever. ⁶³ Stars of heaven, praise and exalt him for ever.

⁶⁴ Rain and dew, praise and exalt him for ever. ⁶⁵ All winds, praise and exalt him for ever.

⁶⁶ Fire and heat, praise and exalt him for ever. ⁶⁷ Cold and heat, praise and exalt him for ever.

⁶⁸ Dew and frost, praise and exalt him for ever. ⁶⁹ Ice and cold, praise and exalt him for ever.

⁷⁰ Frost and snow, praise and exalt him for ever. ⁷¹ Days and nights, praise and exalt him for ever.

⁷² Light and darkness, praise and exalt him for ever. ⁷³ Lightning and clouds, praise and exalt him for ever.

⁷⁴ Earth, praise and exalt him for ever.
⁷⁵ Mountains and hills, praise and exalt him for ever.
⁷⁶ Everything that sprouts on the earth, praise and exalt him for ever.
⁷⁷ Springs of water, praise and exalt him for ever. ⁷⁸ Seas and rivers, praise and exalt him for ever.
⁷⁹ Whales and fishes, praise and exalt him for ever. ⁸⁰ All the birds of heaven, praise and exalt him for ever.
⁸¹ Animals, wild and tame, praise and exalt him for ever.
⁸² All people on earth, praise and exalt him for ever.
⁸³ Israel, praise and exalt him for ever.
⁸⁴ Priests of the Lord, praise and exalt him for ever. ⁸⁵ Servants of the Lord, praise and exalt him for ever.
⁸⁶ Spirits and souls of the just, praise and exalt him for ever.
⁸⁷ Those who are holy and humble of heart, praise and exalt him for ever.
⁸⁸ Ananiah, Azariah, Mishael, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him for ever. For he has taken us out from the netherworld, he has saved us from the hands of death, freed us from the furnace of burning flames and rescued us from the midst of the fire.
⁸⁹ Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy is everlasting.
⁹⁰ All who worship the Lord, bless the God of gods; praise and acknowledge him, for his mercy is everlasting.”
⁹¹ Then king Nebuchadnezzar suddenly rose up in great amazement and asked his counsellors, “Did we not throw three men bound into the fire?” They answered, “Certainly.” ⁹² The king said, “But I can see four men walking about freely through the fire, without suffering any harm; and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”
⁹³ Nebuchadnezzar approached the mouth of the blazing furnace and said, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come here.” So they came out from the midst of the fire.
⁹⁴ The officials, prefects, governors and counsellors of the king drew near to examine them: the fire had no effect on their bodies; their hair was not singed; their garments were not burned; and they did not even have the smell of smoke.
⁹⁵ Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who sent his angel to free his servants. who, trusting in him, disobeyed the king’s order; and preferred to give their bodies to the fire rather than serve and worship any other god but their God.
⁹⁶ I give this command, therefore: From every race, nation and language, anyone who speaks irreverently of the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego shall be cut into pieces and his house shall be destroyed, for there is no other god who can save like this.”
⁹⁷ And the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and insanity

⁹⁸ Nebuchadnezzar, the king: to all peoples, all nations on the earth, whatever be their language: Peace.
⁹⁹ It pleases me to make known to you the signs and wonders the Most High God has done in me.
¹⁰⁰ How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders!
 His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, his dominion lasts for all generations.

Chapter 13

The story of Susanna

• ¹ There lived in Babylon a man named Joakim, ² who was married to a very beautiful, God-fearing woman, Susanna, Hilkiah’s daughter, ³ whose pious parents had trained her in the law of Moses. ⁴ A very rich man and greatly respected by all the Jews, Joakim was frequently visited by the Jews in his house adjoining a garden.

⁵ That year, two elders of the people were appointed judges, in whom this word of the Lord became true, “Wickedness has come forth from Babylon, through the elders appointed judges, who were supposed to govern the people.” ⁶ These men frequented Joakim’s house, and all who had legal disputes used to come to them.

⁷ After the people had left at noon, Susanna would go into her husband’s garden for a walk. ⁸ The two old men began to lust for her as they watched her enter the garden every day. ⁹ Forgetting the demands of justice and virtue, their lust grew all the more, as they made no effort to turn their eyes to heaven. ¹⁰ Although both were possessed of the same passion for her, they concealed that from each other, ¹¹ for they were ashamed to reveal their lustful desire. ¹² But they continued watching her, day after day.

¹³ One day, before lunch, they parted, saying to each other, “Let us go home for it is meal time. So off they went, in different directions. ¹⁴ But both turned back; and coming face to face again, each was obliged to explain his action and admit his lust. They agreed to wait for an opportunity to meet her alone.

¹⁵ One day, as they were waiting for an opportune time, Susanna entered the garden, as usual, with only two maids. She decided to bathe, for it was a hot day. ¹⁶ Nobody else was there, except the two elders watching her, from where they had hidden themselves.

¹⁷ She said to the maids, “Bring me oil and ointments, and shut the garden doors while I bathe.” ¹⁸ Unaware of the elders hidden inside the garden, the two maids did as ordered, shutting the doors and leaving by the side entrance to the house, to fetch what she had asked for.

¹⁹ When the maids had left, the two elders hurried to her and said, ²⁰ “Look, the garden doors are shut and no one sees us. We desire to possess you. ²¹ If you refuse to give in, we will testify that you sent your maids away, for there was a young man here with you.”

²² Susanna moaned, “Whatever I do, I am trapped. If I give in to your de sire, it will be death for me; if I refuse, I won’t escape your persecution. ²³ I would rather be persecuted than sin in the eyes of the Lord.”

²⁴ Susanna shrieked, but the old men shouted, putting the blame on her. ²⁵ One of them ran and opened the garden doors. ²⁶ Hearing the noise in the garden, the household servants rushed in by the side entrance, to see what was happening. ²⁷ They were taken aback when they heard the elders’ accusation, for never had anything like this been said of Susanna.

²⁸ The next day, a meeting was held at Joakim’s house. The two elders arrived, vindictively determined to have Susanna sentenced to death. ²⁹ They ordered, before all the people, “Send for Susanna, Hilkiyah’s daughter and Joakim’s wife.” ³⁰ They sent for her, and she came with her parents, children and all her relatives.

³¹ Susanna was a very refined and beautiful woman. ³² She had her veil on, but the wicked elders ordered her to uncover her face, for them to feast on her beauty. ³³ Her family and friends, and all who saw her, wept.

³⁴ The two elders stood up and laid their hands upon her head. ³⁵ Completely trusting in the Lord, she raised her tearful eyes to heaven.

³⁶ The elders started making their accusation, “We were taking a walk in the garden when this woman came in with two maids. She ordered them to shut the garden doors and dismissed them. ³⁷ Then a young man came out of hiding and lay with her. ³⁸ We were in a corner of the garden, and we saw this crime from there. We ran to them, ³⁹ and caught them in the act of embracing. We were unable to take hold of the man. He was too strong for us. He made a dash for the door, opened it and ran off. ⁴⁰ But we were able to seize this woman. We asked her who the young man was, ⁴¹ but she refused to tell us. This is our statement, and we testify to its truth.”

The assembly took their word, since they were elders and judges of the people. Susanna was condemned to death. ⁴² She cried aloud, “Eternal God, nothing is hidden from you; you know all things before they come to be. ⁴³ You know that these men have testified falsely against me. Would you let me die, though I am not guilty of all their malicious charges?”

⁴⁴ The Lord heard her, ⁴⁵ and as she was being led to her execution, God aroused the holy spirit residing in a young lad named Daniel. ⁴⁶ He shouted, “I will have no part in the death of this woman!”

⁴⁷ Those present turned to him, “What did you say?” they all asked.

⁴⁸ Standing in their midst, he said to them, “Have you become fools, you Israelites, to condemn a daughter of Israel without due process and in the absence of clear evidence? ⁴⁹ Return to court, for those men have testified falsely against her.”

⁵⁰ Hurriedly they returned, and the elders said to Daniel, “Come and sit with us, for you also possess the gifts bestowed by God upon the elders.”

⁵¹ Daniel said to the people, “Separate these two from one another and I will examine each of them.”

⁵² When the two elders were separated from each other, Daniel called one of them and said, “How wicked you have grown with age. Your sins of earlier days have piled up against you, and now is the time of reckoning. ⁵³ Remember how you have passed unjust sentences, condemning the innocent and freeing the guilty, although the Lord has said ‘The innocent and the just should not be put to death.’ ⁵⁴ Now, if you really witnessed the crime, under what tree did you see them do it?”

⁵⁵ The elder answered, “Under a mastic tree.”

Daniel said, “Your lie will cost you your head. You will be cut in two, as soon as the Lord’s angel receives your sentence from God.”

⁵⁶ Putting the first one aside, Daniel called the other elder and said to him, “You offspring of Canaan and not of Judah, you have long allowed yourself to be perverted by lust. ⁵⁷ This is how you have dealt with the daughters of Israel, who, out of fear, have yielded to you. But here is a daughter of Judah who would not tolerate your wickedness. ⁵⁸ Tell me then, under what tree did you catch them committing the crime?”

The answer came, “Under an oak.”

⁵⁹ “Your lie has also cost you your head,” Daniel said. “God’s angel waits to cut you both in two.”

⁶⁰ The whole assembly shouted and blessed God, for helping those who hope in him. ⁶¹ They turned against the two elders who, through Daniel’s efforts, had been convicted by their own mouths. In accordance with Moses’ law, the penalty the two elders had intended to impose upon their neighbour was inflicted upon them.

⁶² They were sentenced to death. Thus was the life of an innocent woman spared that day.

⁶³ Hilkiyah and his wife praised God, for the justice given Susanna, and so did Joakim, her husband, and all her relatives, for she was not found guilty of any shameful deed. ⁶⁴ Daniel was greatly esteemed by the people from that day onward.

Chapter 14

Daniel and the priests of Bel

¹ When king Astyages died, Cyrus, the Persian, ascended the throne. ² Daniel was very close to the king, who held him in higher esteem than any of his other friends.

³ The Babylonians had an idol called Bel, to which twelve bushels of fine flour, forty sheep, and six measures of wine were offered daily. ⁴ The king took part in this cult and worshiped the idol every day. Daniel, on the other hand, worshiped only his own God. ⁵ And the king asked him, "Why don't you worship Bel?"

Daniel answered, "I worship no manmade idols, but only the living God, who made heaven and earth, and rules over all peoples." ⁶ The king asked, "Don't you think Bel is a living god? Don't you see how much he eats and drinks every day?"

⁷ Daniel laughed. "Do not be deceived, O king. This is only clay inside and bronze outside. It never ate or drank anything." ⁸ Enraged, the king called his priests and said to them, "If you will not tell me who consumes all these offerings, you will all die. ⁹ But if you can show that Bel consumes them, it is Daniel who will die, for blaspheming." Daniel said to the king, "Let it be as you say."

¹⁰ There were seventy priests of Bel, besides their wives and children; together, with Daniel, the king went to Bel's temple. ¹¹ The priests said to the king, "See, we are going outside. We will leave you here inside, O king, to set out the food and prepare the wine. Then you can leave them, shut the door and seal it with your ring. ¹² You will return in the morning, and if you find that Bel has not eaten the food and drunk the wine, we are ready to be executed. But if the reverse happens, Daniel must die for telling lies and slandering us."

¹³ They were confident, for they had made a secret entrance under the table, through which they used to come in, to consume the food and wine offerings. ¹⁴ When the priests had left, the king set the food before Bel, while Daniel ordered his servants to scatter ashes all over the temple floor. Then they left after shutting the door and sealing it with the king's ring. ¹⁵ That night the priests and their wives and children came and, as usual, ate and drank the offerings.

¹⁶ Early the next morning, the king returned to the temple with Daniel. ¹⁷ "Are the seals unbroken, Daniel?" the king asked. Daniel answered, "They are unbroken, O king." ¹⁸ Opening the door, the king looked at the table, then exclaimed, "You are indeed great, O Bel. There is no deception in you."

¹⁹ Daniel laughed, and, restraining the king from entering, he said, "But look at the floor and see whose footprints these are." ²⁰ The king said, "I see footprints of men, women and children."

²¹ Enraged, the king ordered the priests and their wives and children to be seized. They were compelled to show him the secret door through which they used to enter to consume the offerings on the table. ²² They were put to death on orders of the king. And Bel was handed over to Daniel, who destroyed the idol and its temple.

Daniel and the dragon

²³ In Babylon there was a big dragon which was also worshiped. ²⁴ "Look," said the king to Daniel, "this is alive, not made of bronze. Would you deny that this is a living god? Worship it."

²⁵ Daniel replied, "I will worship no one but the Lord my God, for he alone is the living God. With your permission, O king, I will slay this dragon without sword or club." ²⁶ The king answered, "You have my permission."

²⁷ Then Daniel took some pitch, fat and hair, and boiled them together. He made them into cakes which he fed to the dragon. And the dragon burst after eating them. Daniel said to the king, "Now look at what happened to the thing you worship." ²⁸ The Babylonians became angry upon hearing of this. "Our king has become a Jew," they said. "He destroyed Bel, killed the dragon and put the priests to death." ²⁹ They went to the king and said, "Hand Daniel over to us or we will kill you and your family!" ³⁰ The king was forced to hand Daniel over to the people.

³¹ Daniel was thrown into the lions' den, where he stayed for six days. ³² In the den were seven lions, which were fed daily with two human bodies and two sheep. This food was withheld from them, to make sure that they would devour Daniel.

³³ Now in Judea was a prophet named Habakkuk. He had put some bread and stew in a basket, and was about to take them to the reapers in the field ³⁴ when an angel of the Lord appeared and said to him, "Take that lunch to Daniel, in the lion's den at Babylon."

³⁵ Habakkuk said, "Sir, I have never been to Babylon nor have I seen the lions' den." ³⁶ The angel then took him by the crown of his head, carried him by his hair; and soon, they were alighting above the lion's den in Babylon. ³⁷ "Daniel, Daniel," cried, Habakkuk, "take this lunch God has sent you."

³⁸ Daniel gave thanks to God, saying, "You have remembered me, O God, and have not forsaken those who love you." ³⁹ Daniel ate, and the Lord's angel returned Habakkuk to his own place.

⁴⁰ On the seventh day, the king came to the lions' den to mourn for Daniel. He looked inside and saw Daniel sitting there. ⁴¹ The king cried aloud, "How great you are, O Lord God of Daniel! Surely there is no other God but you!" ⁴² He took Daniel out and threw into the den those who tried to destroy him. They were at once devoured before his eyes.