

The Story of Daniel--Episode 1

Characters: *Ash (penaz--Storyteller--read by adult)*
Q (questioner)
Daniel
Shadrach
Meshach
Abednego
Chorus (4 people)

Needed: Name tags
Propeller hat (Q)
Shawl (*Daniel*)
Poster of the Temple (*Temple*)
Chains (*Chorus*)

(Ash & Q at front at start. Chorus stands behind Ash & Q until needed. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stand off to side, ready to enter.)

Ash: My name is Ash-pen-az. I am the Chief of Staff of Nebuchadnezzar (*Neb-u-kud-NEZ-er*), the King of Babylon.

Q: What's a "Babylon?"

Ash: "Babylon" is not a "What"--it's a "WHERE." Babylon is a powerful country, just east of the land that was once known as the Land of Israel.

Q: Was ONCE known as the "Land of Israel?" Isn't it STILL known as the LAND OF ISRAEL?

Asp: NO! Israel is no more!! Toward the end of the reign of King Solomon, things started to go wrong. King Solomon knew God's laws, but thought that they didn't apply to him. So he went off and did his own thing!

Q: Did God destroy Israel?

Ash: Not exactly. When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam (*ree-hoe-BOE-um*) became king. He was worse than his father, and managed to tick-off 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel. These 10 tribes decided to form their own kingdom.

(Members of Chorus split into two groups.)

So now God's Chosen People were divided, with the Kingdom of Israel to the north, and the Kingdom of Judah to the south.

Q: But these kingdoms still exist, right?

Ash: Wrong! Oh--God allowed these kingdoms to limp along for several hundred years, hoping that they would get their act together, hoping that they would decide to be faithful to him. He also sent prophets--

Q: What are "Prophets?"

Ash: Prophets are people, sent by God, to deliver his message.

Q: The kings listened didn't they?

Ash: Unfortunately, no. There were a FEW kings who listened to the prophets, who encouraged their people to keep the covenant that they had made with their God, but these kings were few and far between. So--for the most part--the people of Israel, like King Solomon, did whatever they wanted to do. Finally, God couldn't protect them anymore. Without God's protection, the Assyrians destroyed the northern kingdom--

(Chorus pantomimes "destroying" to the right of Ash)

--and a few years later, MY king, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, destroyed the southern kingdom.

(Chorus pantomimes "destroying" to the left of Ash)

He burned the City of Jerusalem, and destroyed the Temple built by King Solomon.

(Chorus knocks over poster of the Temple)

Q: Wow!

Ash: He made prisoners of the people of Judah--

(one member of Chorus puts other member(s) in chains and leads them away)

--and forced them to move to Babylon to serve him as slaves. But then the king gave me a special task. He asked me to look at all of the Jewish people he'd captured--and pick out a few who were smart, and strong--and train them to serve him at his court.

I picked four men:

Shadrach (*Shadrach* steps forward)

Meshach (*Meshach* steps forward)

Abednego (*Abednego* steps forward)

--and Daniel (*Daniel* steps forward)

Daniel: Unlike many of our countrymen, the four of us kept the covenant with our God.

Shadrach: And believe me, this wasn't always easy!

Meshach: We were taken to King Nebuchadnezzar's palace. We were taught how to serve the king----

Abednego: We were given an education. We were taught how to speak the language of the people of Babylon--

Daniel:--and we were to be given the same food that King Nebuchadnezzar ate.

(Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego recoil in horror!)

Q: What's the problem? Eating the same food as the king sounds like a pretty good deal!

Daniel: As a part of our covenant, God gave us instructions that would help us to stay healthy. Some of these instructions told us what food to eat--and more importantly, what food NOT to eat. So we asked Ashpenaz if we could eat our OWN food--the food that God told us to eat.

Shadrach: (excited) Lots of fruit and vegetables!

(Daniel and friends get excited)

Ash: (*Frantically trying to quiet them*) Shhhhhh!! NO!!! If the King finds out that you're not eating the special food he's offering you, he will get angry. And King Nebuchadnezzar does HORRIBLE things to people when he's angry! He'll do horrible things to you--and he'll do horrible things to ME!

Meshach: How about if we make a deal, Ash—old friend, old pal: *(puts arm around Ash)* let us eat our own food for a little while—how about for 10 days?

Abednego: After 10 days, see how we look. Compare us to the young men who have been eating the King's food. Decide for yourself if we look as strong and healthy as they do!

Ash: *(to audience)* This sounded like a reasonable plan. So, for 10 days, Daniel and his friends ate nothing but vegetables and water. And on the 11th day, I compared them to the other young men.

(Daniel and friends stand tall and strong, flexing muscles. Chorus stands slumped over and looks pathetic.)

Ash: *(look surprised)* Hmmm! Will you look at that! *(to audience—indicating Daniel and his friends)* Do you think that these young men look strong and healthy?

(Hopefully, audience will say "Yes.")

Ash: Do you think that they should be allowed to continue eating the food that God told them to eat?

(Again, hopefully audience will say "Yes.")

Ash: Then so be it!! I hereby decree that Daniel and his friends may eat whatever they choose!

Daniel: And so it was! Because we were strong and healthy, and because God had given us the gift of wisdom, we were given important positions in King Nebuchadnezzar's court. And all the while we were at the King's court, we were allowed to secretly eat the food that God instructed us to eat.

Q: WHOA!! Please tell me that there's more to this story! I mean: "Daniel and his friends are allowed to eat vegetables" isn't exactly an exciting page-turner!!

Daniel: Oh no!! This is just the FIRST episode. The story gets much more exciting! Stick around and see!

Story of Daniel--Episode 2

Characters: Tutu (*Storyteller--read by adult*)
Q (*questioner*)
King Neb(*uchadnezzar*)
Shadrach
Meshach --(*text black when speaking together*)
Abednego
Chorus (4 people)

Needed: Name tags
Crown (*King Neb*)
Propeller hat (Q)
Angel puppet (*Abednego*)
Musical instruments (*Chorus*)

(Tutu & Q at front at start. Chorus stands behind Tutu & Q until needed. King Neb, Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego stand off to side, ready to enter.)

Tutu: Greetings, honored visitors to the kingdom of Babylon. My name is----
“U-bara-tutu.”

Q: Never would have guessed that! Do you mind if I call you “Tutu?”

Tutu: Why would you want to do that?

Q: Because tutus are pretty, and fun, and fluffy.

Tutu: I am neither pretty, nor fun--and I’m certainly not fluffy. I am the Executioner to the Royal Court of King Nebuchadnezzar.

Q: The Executioner? As in, you EXECUTE?

Tutu: Yes, That’s what an “executioner” does! When someone greatly displeases the King of Babylon or breaks one of his laws, I carry out the King’s orders to punish the person, or even to put him to---

Q: (*plugs ears*) La La La!!! STOP!! I understand! No--actually, I DON’T understand!! How can King Nebuchadnezzar be so cruel?

Tutu: From what I have heard, the Kingdom of Babylon is VERY different than the world in which you live. In Babylon, the King has absolute power. His laws and orders must be followed EXACTLY. To disobey the king means that you will probably be put to---

Q: (*plugs ears again*) YES! I get it! But--considering all this-- why would anyone possibly consider disobeying the King’s laws?

Tutu: Sometimes they DO disobey. And even though the penalty is so harsh, they have very good reasons for doing so.

Q: Give me an example!

Tutu: All right--here's a good one: King Nebuchadnezzar built a statue. It was made of solid gold--

Chorus: OOOOOOOO!

Tutu: --it was shiny---

Chorus: AAAAAAAA!

Tutu: --and it was 90 feet tall.

Chorus: WOW!!

Q: Impressive!

Tutu: King Nebuchadnezzar thought so as well. He was VERY proud of his statue. So he called all of the important people from all over his kingdom and told them:

King Neb: I have created a FABULOUS golden statue!! It is so fabulous, that I want ALL of you--all of the most Important People in the Kingdom--to fall to your knees and worship this statue whenever you hear music played. If you do not bow down, you will be thrown into my Fiery Furnace.

Q: Oh boy--

Tutu: All the Important People of the Kingdom were gathered around the statue. Daniel had been called out to the country on official business, so he wasn't able to attend. But his friends--since they were "Important"--were there. Then, the music started--

(Chorus starts playing instruments)

As commanded, everyone fell to their knees before the statue. Everyone except Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

King Neb: Hmmm--I see that a few of you are still STANDING before my statue. Perhaps you didn't hear the music?

(Chorus plays music again)

King Neb: Hmmmm--these young men are STILL standing. Perhaps they didn't hear my order (*speak VERY loud*) THAT ALL MUST FALL DOWN ON THEIR KNEES AND WORSHIP THE STATUE WHEN THEY HEAR THE MUSIC OR THEY WILL BE THROWN INTO MY FIERY FURNACE.

(*Chorus plays again*)

(*angry*) Okay guys--what's your deal? Why do you not bow down and worship the statue as I commanded?

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: We will never bow down to your statue. We worship only the true God of our Fathers.

King Neb: (*angrier*) Do you think that the One True God that you worship will be able to save you from my Fiery Furnace?

Shadrach: Throw us into the Furnace. God may save us---or he may not. It's God's choice.

Meshach: But either way, it'll be clear to you and all of your people--

Abednego: --that we would rather die than worship your gods!

King Neb: (*furious*) THAT'S IT!! Into the furnace you go!

Tutu: My King ordered the soldiers to fire-up the furnace, to make it SEVEN TIMES hotter than normal. Then I gave the order to throw these three young men into the fire.

Q: That's terrible!

Tutu: I was very sad. These were three fine, wonderful men!! But the King was NOT to be disobeyed!!

(*Chorus uses arms to form "furnace" around three men. Abednego holds angel puppet*)

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego: (*Happily praying together, while in "furnace"*)
Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our ancestors,
praiseworthy and exalted above all forever;
And blessed is your holy and glorious name,
praiseworthy and exalted above all for all ages.

King Neb: (*rubs eyes, shakes head in disbelief*) What in the world--I can't believe this! They are completely unharmed, even though they are standing

in the middle of my Fiery Furnace. They appear to be happy and they are praying to their God. And what's this?

(Looks closer) Didn't I have THREE men thrown into the furnace? Then why do I see FOUR men standing there?

Q: Four men? Who is that fourth man? Is it an ANGEL?

Tutu: That could very well be!! King Nebuchadnezzar was so astonished that he now ordered that the men be taken OUT of the furnace

(Chorus moves away from men) When they came out of the furnace, the mysterious fourth man disappeared. *(Abednego hides angel puppet)*

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were completely unharmed. Not singed, not sooty, not sweaty--and all were amazed.

Chorus: OOOOOO! AAAAAAAAAA!

King Neb: Praise be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!! He sent an angel to save them.

Q: I TOLD you it was an ANGEL!!

Tutu: Shhhh!! Listen:

King Neb: From now on, no one is allowed to say ANYTHING bad about the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's Fathers--or they will have ME to answer to!!

Q: And did the people of Babylon obey the king?

Tutu: Well, if they didn't, King Nebuchadnezzar would order ME to deal with them!

Q: Good point. And THIS is the end of the story?

Tutu: Oh no--we have our one final, and MOST EXCITING chapter. Stick around!

Story of Daniel--Episode 3

Characters: Sam (*Storyteller--read by adult*)
Q (*questioner*)
King Darius
Daniel
Chorus (4 people)

Needed: Name tags
Propeller hat (Q)
Shawl (*Daniel*)
Crown (*King Darius*)
Lion Masks (*Chorus*)

(Sam & Q at front at start. Chorus stands behind Sam & Q until needed. King Darius & Daniel stand off to side, ready to enter.)

Sam: My name is "Sam."

Q: Your name is "Sam?"

Sam: Yes--Sam I am!

Q: Well, Sam-I-Am--that doesn't sound like a Babylonian name?

Sam: It's not!! I was brought to this country because I have special training. I was brought here to help take care of the King's lions. The King is VERY proud of his lions!

Q: That would be King Nebuchadnezzar, right?

Sam: Oh no!! There have been two kings since King Neb ruled this country. King Neb died, another king took over--he didn't last very long—and then my boss, King Darius (*King Darius steps forward*) took over.

Q: Are Daniel and his friends still living in Babylon?

Sam: Oh yes!! The Kings of Babylon think that Daniel and his friends are REMARKABLE! The God of their Fathers has blessed them with wisdom and compassion--and so, by now, they have been given so much responsibility that they help the King rule the country!

Q: And what do the people of Babylon think about having these "outsiders" order them around and tell them what to do?

Sam: To be perfectly honest, the Babylonian officials are VERY unhappy about this!! They spend a lot of time trying to figure out how to get rid of these men--especially Daniel.

(Daniel steps forward)

They REALLY want to get rid of Daniel. But he is such a good and honorable man, they can't find anything to use against him. But—then the officials notice that Daniel prays to God every day. And this gives them a horrible, awful idea!

Q: What is this idea?

Sam: They went to King Darius and said:

Chorus: *(speaking together)* Oh Great King Darius!! You are all powerful. You must issue a law that--for 30 days--no one in the kingdom can pray to anyone--human or divine--except to you, oh Mighty King!!

Sam: *(aside, to Q)* Now we're getting to the part of the story that concerns ME:

Chorus: Sign this order so that it is irrevocable--

Q: Irrevocable?

Sam: That means that it must be followed, that there are no "take-backs."

Q: Got it.

Chorus: --and anyone who breaks this law will be thrown into your den of lions.

Sam: Of course Daniel knew this law, but--as we know--nothing will stop him from praying to God.

(Daniel kneels to pray)

So he went to his room, as he always did, and prayed to God in secret. But the Babylonian officials were spying at him through an open window.

(Chorus "spies" on Daniel)

Q: On no!

Sam: Oh yes. Daniel was arrested

(Chorus "arrests" Daniel and takes him over to King Darius.)

Chorus: Oh Great and Powerful King Darius--we saw this Daniel-person praying to his God in secret.

King Darius: Daniel, is this true?

Daniel: Yes, King Darius, it is.

King Darius: And are you aware of the law that forbids you--for 30 days from praying to anyone except me?

Daniel: Yes, King Darius, I am.

King Darius: And are you aware that the punishment for disobeying this law is to be thrown into the lions' den?

Daniel: Yes, King Darius, I do.

King Darius: *(frustrated)* Then why would you disobey this law?

Daniel: Because nothing, not even the threat of being thrown into a lions' den, could keep me from praying to God.

King Darius: *(to Chorus)* OOOOH!! I understand!! That's a mighty good reason to disobey the law. It's really a stupid law, anyhow!! Daniel, we're sorry that we've taken up so much of your time. You're free to go. Have a nice day!

(Daniel starts to leave, but Chorus stops him from doing so.)

Chorus: *(again speaking together)* Not so fast! King Darius, that law was signed by you and is irrevocable.

Q: *(aside to Sam)* No "take-backs?"

Chorus: Daniel MUST pay the penalty!

King Darius: But Daniel is a good man--and my friend--

Chorus: That doesn't matter! A law's a law.

Sam: King Darius was REALLY upset. He was upset because Daniel's a good and honorable man. And he was upset because he was tricked into signing that stupid law. But he didn't want to anger the Babylonian officials.

Q: They were pretty scary dudes, huh?

Sam: In ancient times, if a king angered his officials, they would revolt and get rid of him.

Q: So the answer is "yes."

Sam: So King Darius felt that he had no choice but to throw Daniel into the lions' den. I was ordered NOT to feed the lions for days and days so that they would be really MEAN--and HUNGRY. And Daniel was thrown into the lions' den.

(Chorus "throws" Daniel into the den. Daniel kneels on floor. Chorus pulls out lion masks and kneels around Daniel.)

A stone was rolled over the entrance to the den. That night, King Darius didn't sleep a wink.

Q: *(sarcastically)* Poor baby!

Sam: He loved Daniel--

Q: This is one HECK of a way to show it!

Sam: --and he didn't want him to be harmed. Early the next day, he ran to the den and called out:

King Darius: *(calls out)* Daniel--please tell me that the God that you obey so faithfully has saved you?

Sam: --and to King Darius's relief, Daniel answered back:

Daniel: Yes, King Darius, I'm perfectly fine!! God sent an angel to close the lions' mouths. They've been as sweet and gentle as pussy cats all night.

Sam: King Darius praised the one True God and ordered that the stone be rolled away and Daniel pulled unharmed from the den of hungry lions. The Babylonian officials were NOT so lucky--King Darius made certain that they were punished harshly for tricking him!

Q: And everyone who was good was saved!! And Daniel and his friends and all of the rest of God's Chosen People lived happily ever after in the country of Babylon!!

Sam: Not everyone was happy in Babylon. Many of God's Chosen People longed to return to the Promised Land. And while in exile in Babylon, many of them--not just Daniel and his friends--remained faithful to God. God sent another wave of prophets to His people. This time, rather than words of warning, they spoke words of HOPE:

Chorus (*speaking together as prophets*) “The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.”

Sam: These prophecies encouraged the Jewish people. Their faith in God was strengthened. They changed their attitude toward their exile. They began to look on it not so much as a punishment, but as a way to remind them of God’s covenant and to bring them closer to God.

In the year 539 BCE, the mighty Kingdom of Babylon was conquered by the Persians. King Cyrus, the Persian king, released the Jewish people from captivity and encouraged them to return to their homeland. He even helped them rebuild their temple!

So after 70 years in exile, God’s Chosen People left Babylon and for the second time--crossed over the River Jordan into the land promised to them by God.

Q: And NOW--FINALLY--they live “Happily Ever After!”

Sam: Unfortunately, no such luck! The Jewish people were repeatedly conquered and forced to live under oppressive governments. God’s Chosen People longed for a mighty warrior who would save them, a savior who would lead them to freedom. The prophets told of a Messiah who would come to lead his people to freedom. For centuries, the Jews waited.

Q: Did the mighty warrior ever appear?

Sam: The Messiah DID appear, but not as a mighty warrior. He arrived as a tiny, helpless baby. (*to audience*) Do you know the name of this baby?

Q: And we’ll hear more about him when we talk about the New Testament?

Sam: That we will, Q, that we will.