

## 24.01 Three Hebrews in Fiery Furnace (Daniel 3; 4:1–3)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] Brackets indicate a remark to the teacher that will not be read aloud; they also show answers to questions.

### Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials. Please give credit to the sources of pictures. Likenesses of characters might change with the variety of pictures. Hopefully, this isn’t too confusing to young minds.

**Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach:** Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print on colorful cardstock and cut apart.

- *statue*: an image made from stone or metal or even clay to represent a person or animal. Sometimes people worship these statues. For example, in some churches there are statues of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the stone is worn down because people kiss or touch parts of the statues.
- *herald*: one who makes announcements for the king
- *furnace*: You are acquainted with the furnace at your house that heats your house. The furnace in today’s story was probably for melting metals. That means the fire in it would be extremely hot.<sup>1</sup>
- *bound*: to be tied up with ropes or chains
- *singed*: slightly burned. Hair, when singed, almost burns up, curling and stinking.

### Scripture: (ESV)

Daniel 3:1 King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. 2 Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 3 Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 4 And the herald proclaimed aloud, “You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, 5 that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. 6 And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace.” 7 Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

8 Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. 9 They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! 10 You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. 11 And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. 12 There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? 15 Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?”

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. 20 And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21 Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. 22 Because the king’s order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.” 25 He answered and said, “But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.”

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!” Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. 27 And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. 28 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king’s command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything 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 rescue in this way.” 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

4:1 King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you! 2 It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me. 3 How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation.

### **Introduction/Review:**

King Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful king of the earth. He conquered all the land from Babylon to Egypt. [Locate.] He destroyed God’s city, Jerusalem, just as the prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, had prophesied.

Eighteen years before the fall of Jerusalem, Daniel had interpreted a dream of Nebuchadnezzar’s that established him as the greatest of kings to come. Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold on a statue made up of other less-valuable metals. Because he recalled the dream and interpreted it correctly, Daniel and his three friends—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—were given important positions in the government.

### **Story:**

#### *Nebuchadnezzar’s gold statue*

✓Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar got to thinking about how much power he had, about all the land he had conquered, about his beautiful Babylon. Perhaps he wanted to build a monument to his great country or to his own greatness. The Bible doesn’t give a reason, but it does tell us he built a huge statue 90 feet tall and nine feet wide. That’s as tall as a ten-story building and as wide as this ceiling is tall! This statue was covered with gold and was in a valley<sup>2</sup> ✓near the city of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar called his government officials<sup>3</sup> to come to the dedication of this colossal statue. When all

these leaders arrived, ✓they no doubt looked with wonder and awe at that huge statue. Then they heard an important announcement: “Hear ye! Hear ye!” announced the herald. “You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace.”<sup>3</sup>

Oh! Oh! What was Nebuchadnezzar commanding? To worship the big statue when the people heard the music. Is this a good thing for a God-fearer to do? [No.] Why not? Which commandments does it break? [You shall have no other gods before me; you shall not make for yourself a graven image.] Could believers in the one true God obey King Nebuchadnezzar’s command? [No.] Were any believers in the one true God among the government officials? [Yes.] Who were they? [Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.]

### ***Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s refusal to bow***

Well, everybody who heard the instruments playing did as Nebuchadnezzar commanded: they bowed down to worship the golden image. All the people—except Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. We do not read about Daniel in this Scripture passage, but ✓we think he might have been somewhere other than in Babylon at this time, for he surely would not have bowed either.

✓Perhaps the king would never have known about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s not bowing to the statue, but some of the Chaldeans tattled because they wanted to harm these three good men. “O king, live for ever!” they said. “You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. Certain Jews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, pay no heed to you, O king; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up.”

✓“What!?” shouted Nebuchadnezzar. “They do not obey my law?! Bring them to me!”

When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego appeared before Nebuchadnezzar, he asked, “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship my golden image? Now, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good; I’ll give you a second chance to worship my statue. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. What god can deliver you out of my hands?”

[Teacher, act as if addressing the king.] Nebuchadnezzar, you shouldn’t have asked that last question, for you are dealing with the one, true, all-powerful God here.

Listen to the answer of brave Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If it be His will, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of your hand. But if not—if God doesn’t deliver us—be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up.”

Hallelujah for some brave souls who love God more than their own lives! Many people throughout the history of the world have been like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Many of them died because they would not worship other gods. But what outcome did God have for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?

### ***Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s “consequences”***

The courageous answer of these brave young men only infuriated King Nebuchadnezzar all the more. “Heat this furnace seven times hotter than usual!” he ordered. “Bind these men. You strong men from my army, you throw them into the furnace!”

It was done as the king commanded. But the furnace was so hot that the heat slew the strong soldiers who cast our brave friends into the furnace. What happened to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?

Let’s find out by looking at Nebuchadnezzar’s face. Pretend my face is Nebuchadnezzar’s. [Teacher, open eyes wide, looking increasingly more astonished and frightened.] Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and

frightened. He quickly stood to his feet and asked, “Didn’t we throw three men bound into the fire?”

The king’s men answered, “True, O king.”

“But I see four men with no ropes on them, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are not hurt. The fourth man looks like the son of God!” Then, moving nearer to the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar called, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come here!”

Out the three young men walked, perfectly fine—no hair singed, no clothes burned or even scorched, not even the smell of smoke on their clothes. The only thing different from when they had been thrown into the furnace was that the ropes that had bound them were burned up without burning them.

### ***The king’s new decree***

All the king’s officials saw that God had wonderfully saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The king himself blessed God: “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him. They yielded their bodies so that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God. Therefore, I decree that every people, nation, and language that speak anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be punished because there is no other god who is able to deliver like this. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, I will give you greater positions of authority in Babylon.”

Then the king made some wonderful statements about the Lord, our God. Listen to them. “I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me. How great are His signs, How mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And His dominion is from generation to generation.”

Let us also give praise to the most-high God of heaven and earth. [Pray and praise Almighty God.]

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<sup>1</sup>“The word here rendered ‘furnace’ . . . may be applied to any species of furnace, or large oven. . . . Any furnace for burning lime . . . or for burning bricks . . . or for smelting ore, would correspond with the meaning of the word. . . . [It was probably] a closed place, in which the intensity of the fire could be greatly increased” (*Barnes Notes on the Bible*, [Daniel 3:6 Commentaries: "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire." \(biblehub.com\)](#)).

<sup>2</sup>An interesting note for the teacher is the following: “The Jews have a notion that this was the valley in the land of Shinar where the tower of Babel was built; and observe, that . . . they said, ‘let us make us a name’, (**Genesis 11:4**). . . . [I]t is said, (Daniel 3:1) , ‘King Nebuchadnezzar made an image, &c. and set it up’ . . . ‘in the valley , , , spoken of in (Genesis 11:2, 9); what therefore they could not do, he attempted to do” ([Daniel 3:1 - Bible Verse Meaning and Commentary \(biblestudytools.com\)](#)).

<sup>3</sup>The KJV calls these people *princes, governors, captains, judges, treasurers, counselors, sheriffs, all rulers of the provinces*.

### **Lessons from this lesson:**

- We see Jesus:  
He was there in the furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and protected them from the fire!
- Courage: Stand for Jesus even if you are threatened.
- Trust: Trust God to give you grace to do right. Leave the results, even difficult ones, to Him.

### **Activities:**

- Play dough: furnace; rope

- Snack: Cheetos<sup>®</sup> and/or hot Cheetos<sup>®</sup>
- Have children show the following facial expressions as you suggest the incident:  
The three brave men as they speak to Nebuchadnezzar. [calm, serious]  
Nebuchadnezzar as he listens to the three brave men say they will not worship the statue [angry]  
Nebuchadnezzar as he sees the four unbound men in the furnace [astonished, frightened]  
The three brave men as they are with Jesus in the furnace [happy]
- When this author was a child, her Sunday School teacher taught this little jingle as a memory aid for the names of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego: “Shake the bed, make the bed, and to bed we go.”
- Sing these two songs:

(1) “Fourth Man in the Fire” (They Wouldn’t Bend; They Wouldn’t Bow; They Wouldn’t Burn.)”

It will be easier for students to sing just the chorus (song sheet is found at the end of this lesson).

The lyrics to the whole song are found here for reference if you choose to listen to the Statler Brothers sing it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UmDpqWuhuXc>.

“Fourth Man” by Arthur Smith

Here is a story from the Good Book we know  
A story ‘bout a miracle that happened long ago  
We hope that you’ll take courage when temptation you meet  
There’s somebody watchin’ you who’s strong when you’re weak.

Chorus:

They wouldn’t bend. They held onto the will of God so we are told  
They wouldn’t bow. They would not bow their knees to the idol made of gold  
They wouldn’t burn. They were protected by the fourth man in the fire  
They wouldn’t bend, they wouldn’t bow. They wouldn’t burn.

Now the prophet Daniel tells about three men who walked with God  
Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego before the wicked king they stood  
And the King commanded them bound and thrown in the firey furnace that day.  
But the fire was so hot that the men were slain. That forced them on their way.  
Now when the three were cast in and the King rose up to witness this awful fate  
He began to tremble at what he saw, and in astonished tones he spake.

Did we not cast three men bound into the midst a’ that fire?  
For lo, I see four men unhurt, unbound and walkin’ down there  
There’s Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego in the firey coals they trod  
And the form of the fourth man that I see is like the Son of God.

(2) “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego” (“Three Good Men Lived Very Long Ago . . .”) as found in *Salvation Songs for Children #4*, p. 77, published by Child Evangelism Fellowship

“Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego” by Hugh Mitchell

Three good men lived very long ago, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego;  
To an idol they would never bow, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.  
To a fiery furnace they were therefore cast; Nebuchadnezzar thought they'd never last;  
But God was there, He'd never let them go, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

- Do a short study of the musical instruments listed four times in this chapter. Commentator Albert Barnes admonishes: “It would not be practicable to determine with precision what kind of instruments of music are denoted by the words used in this verse. They were, doubtless, in many respects different from those which are in use now, though they may have belonged to the same general class, and may have been constructed on substantially the same principles” ([Daniel 3:5 Commentaries: that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. \(biblehub.com\)](#)). (See pictures at the end of this lesson.) In the list below the first word is from KJV and the second, ESV.

- (1) cornet/horn: possibly a ram's horn; one commentator says it was a "far-sounding tuba."
- (2) flute/pipe: whistle-like flute
- (3) harp/lyre: small harp
- (4) sackbut/trigon: a triangular four stringed instrument invented by the Syrians
- (5) psaltery/harp: a triangular stringed instrument with unspecified number of strings
- (6) dulcimer/bagpipe: an instrument played by striking brass wires with little sticks; some say it was a bagpipe

The repeated naming of these instruments (as well as the repetition of the positions of the officials) is intriguing. "Regarding the musical instruments listed, again, the writer seems to be relaying that this was, for the time, an extraordinarily-sized orchestra with an unusual variety of instruments. . . . It is noteworthy that these instruments were crafted in different regions of the then conquered region. The rendering of the music was potentially a 'tintamarre,' or confusion of instruments, which sounded more like the noise of war than music" ([literary device - What is the purpose of the long and repetitious lists in Daniel 3? - Biblical Hermeneutics Stack Exchange](#)).

- Play a card-matching game. Download and print from [Free, Printable Three In the Fire Match Game on Sunday School Zone](#).
- Watch a 4+-minute, well-done cartoon video, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego," at [Bible Stories for the Young : Stories \(biblestoriesonline.com\)](#). (Click on "Stories" and scroll halfway down the page.)
- Review questions: (Game: Print the black and white clipart musical instruments found at the end of this lesson. Back with flocked paper or paper towel. Cut out together the two harps and two pipes, but cut out the other instruments singly. A student who answers a question correctly may place an instrument on the flannel board.)
  1. Tell two things about the statue Nebuchadnezzar built. [90 feet tall; 9 feet wide; gold; built in a valley near Babylon.]
  2. What were all the people to do when they heard the musical instruments? [Fall down and worship the statue.]
  3. Who were the three men who did not worship the statue? [Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.]
  4. What did the three brave men say to show their loyalty to the one true God? ["Whether or not God saves us, we will not worship the statue."]
  5. How do we know the furnace was extremely hot? [The king ordered it to be seven times hotter than usual; the soldiers who threw the men in were slain by the heat.]
  6. Describe the three brave men when they came out of the furnace. [Ropes were burned; they had no burns; clothes didn't smell like smoke; nothing was even singed.]
  7. What new decree did Nebuchadnezzar make? [No one could talk against the Most High God.]

### Memory Verse[s]: (ESV)

- Daniel 3:16–18: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

### Handwork:

- Choose one of the two coloring pages found at the end of the lesson. Print and have students color.
- Or have older students do the flame puzzle. (The answer is *Meshach*.)
- Or older students may fold on slashed lines and cut on solid lines (not line 9-10) and black areas (last page below) to form four connected paper men in the fire.

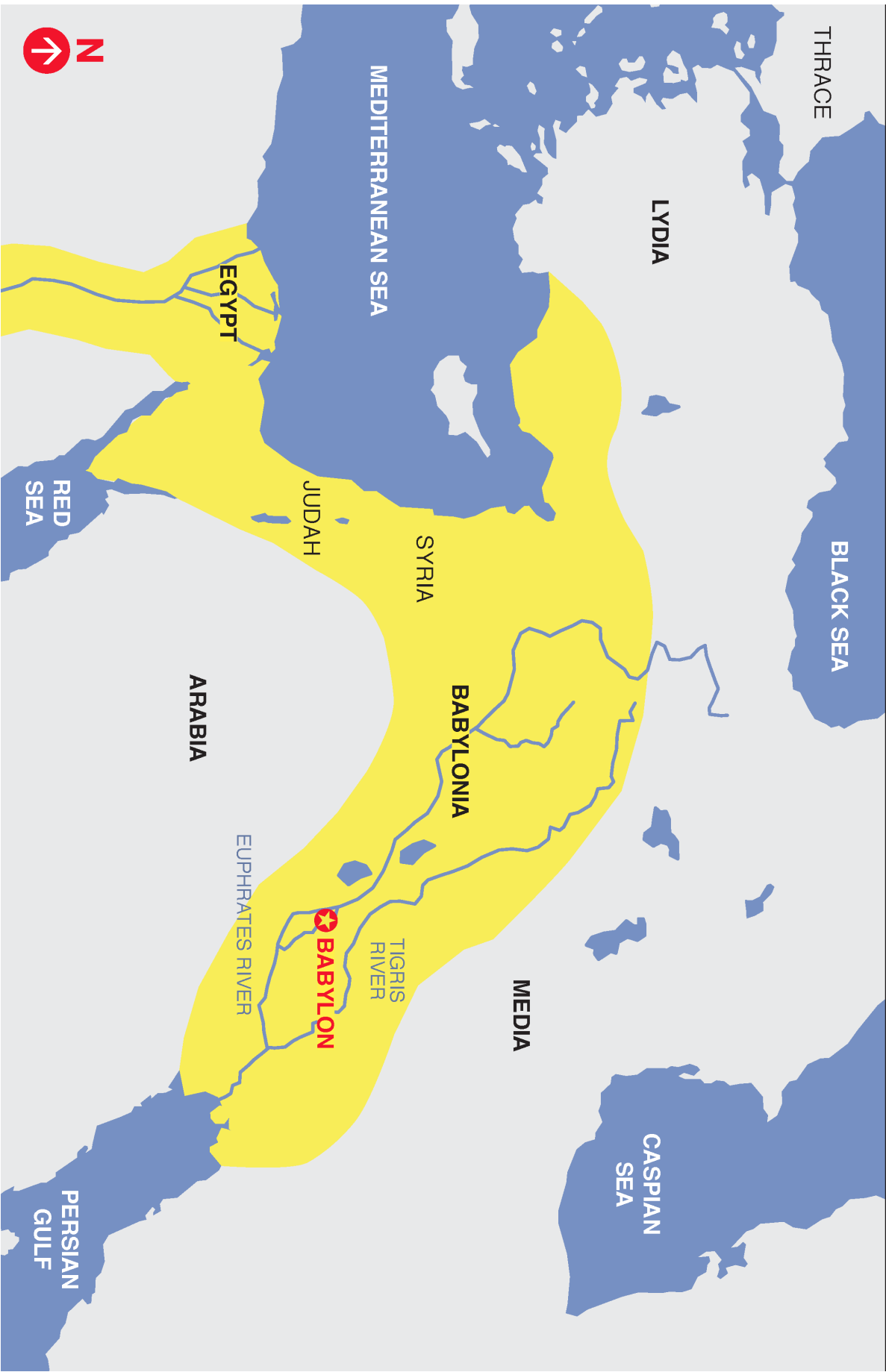
**statue**

**herald**

**furnace**

**bound**

**singed**



# THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE 6-7TH CENTURY B.C.

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# Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (Daniel 2)



**Head of Gold**

**ASSYRIO-BABYLONISH MONARCHY  
THE LION**

(Nebuchadnezzar - Belchassar)

671 - 538 B.C.

**Breast and Arms of Silver**

**MEDO - PERSIAN EMPIRE  
THE BEAR**

(Cyrus and Darius)

538 - 331 B.C.

**Belly and Thighs of Brass**

**GRECO - MACEDONIAN KINGDOM  
THE LEOPARD**

(Alexander the Great)

331 - 160 B.C.

**Legs of Iron**

**THE GREAT ROMAN EMPIRE  
THE DRAGON**

(under the Caesars)

160 B.C. - 395 A.D.

**Feet and Toes - Part Iron and Part Clay**

**KINGDOMS OF THE (10) TOES**

1. Italy	496	6. Portugal	1138
2. France	752	7. Prussia	1139
3. England	803	8. Austria	1159
4. Belgium	806	9. Spain	1179
5. Holland	922	10. Greece	1829

496 - 1829 A.D.



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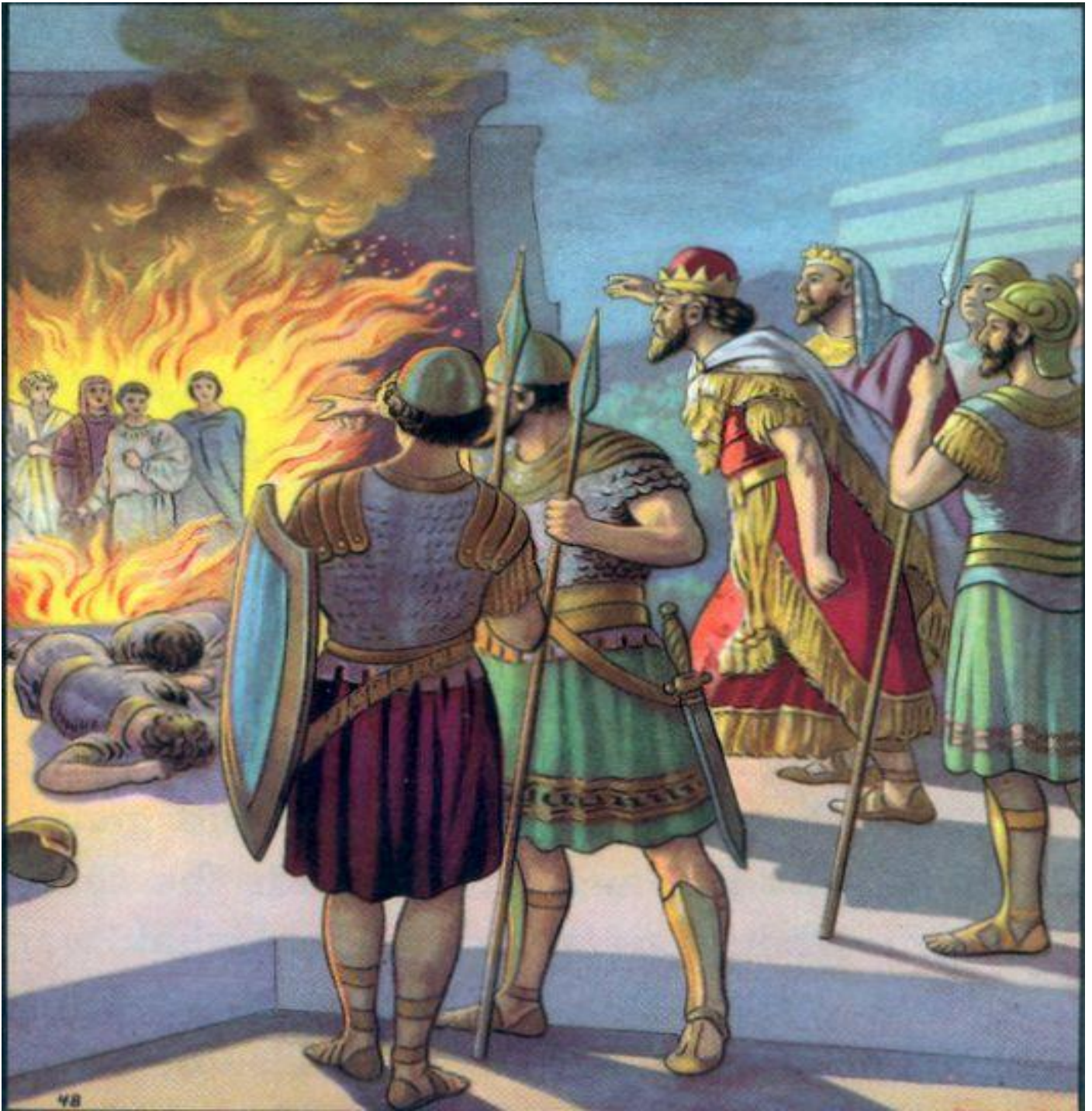


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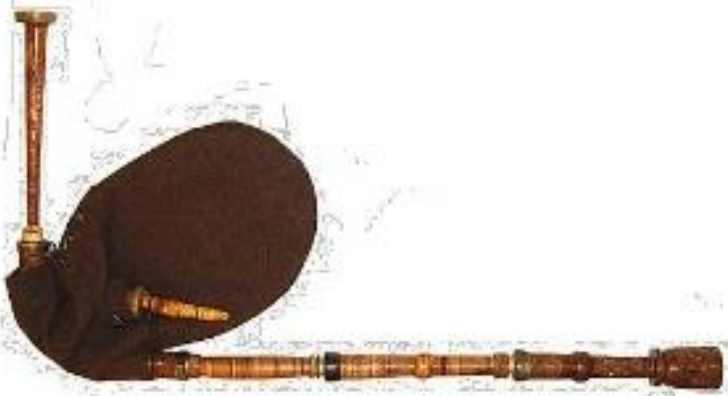
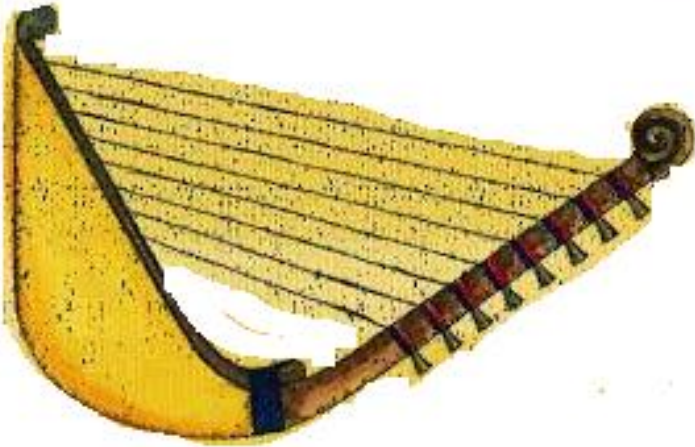


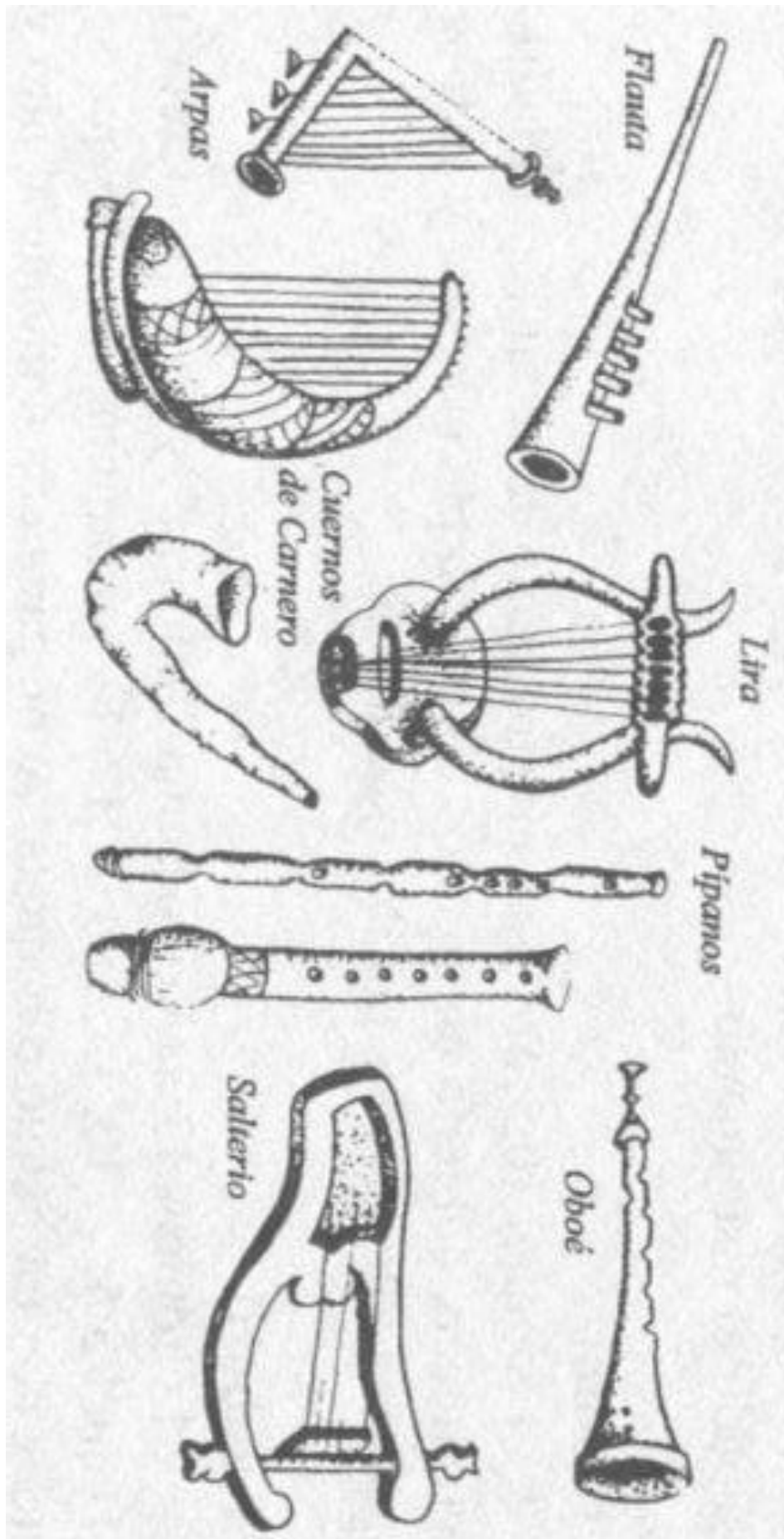
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"Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came forth of the midst of the fire."—Dan. iii. 26.

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24.01

# The Fourth Man in the Fire Chorus

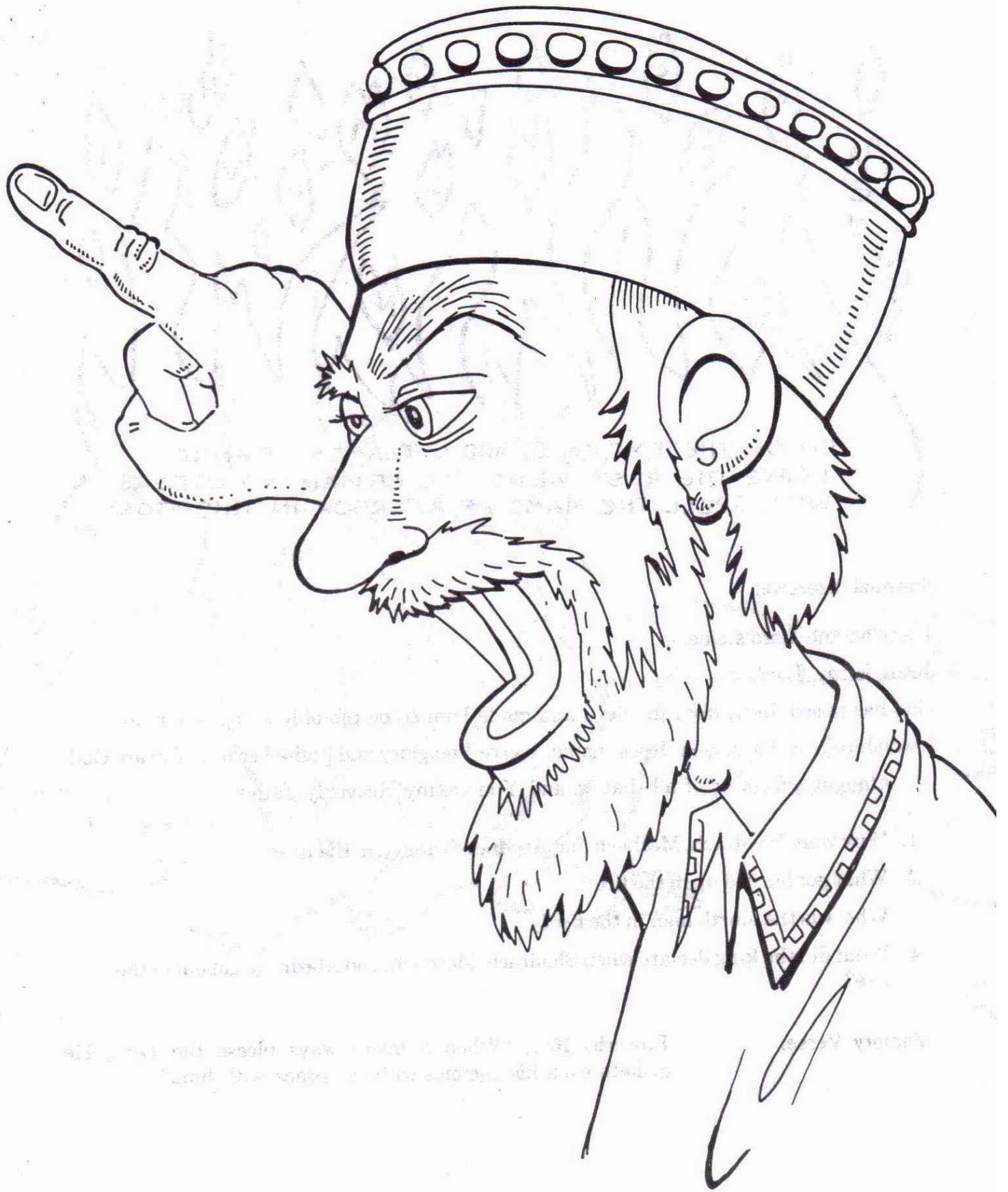
Arthur Smith

They would - n't bend. They held un-to the will of God, so we are told. They would - n't

3  
bow. They would - n't bow their knees to the i - dol made of gold. They would - n't

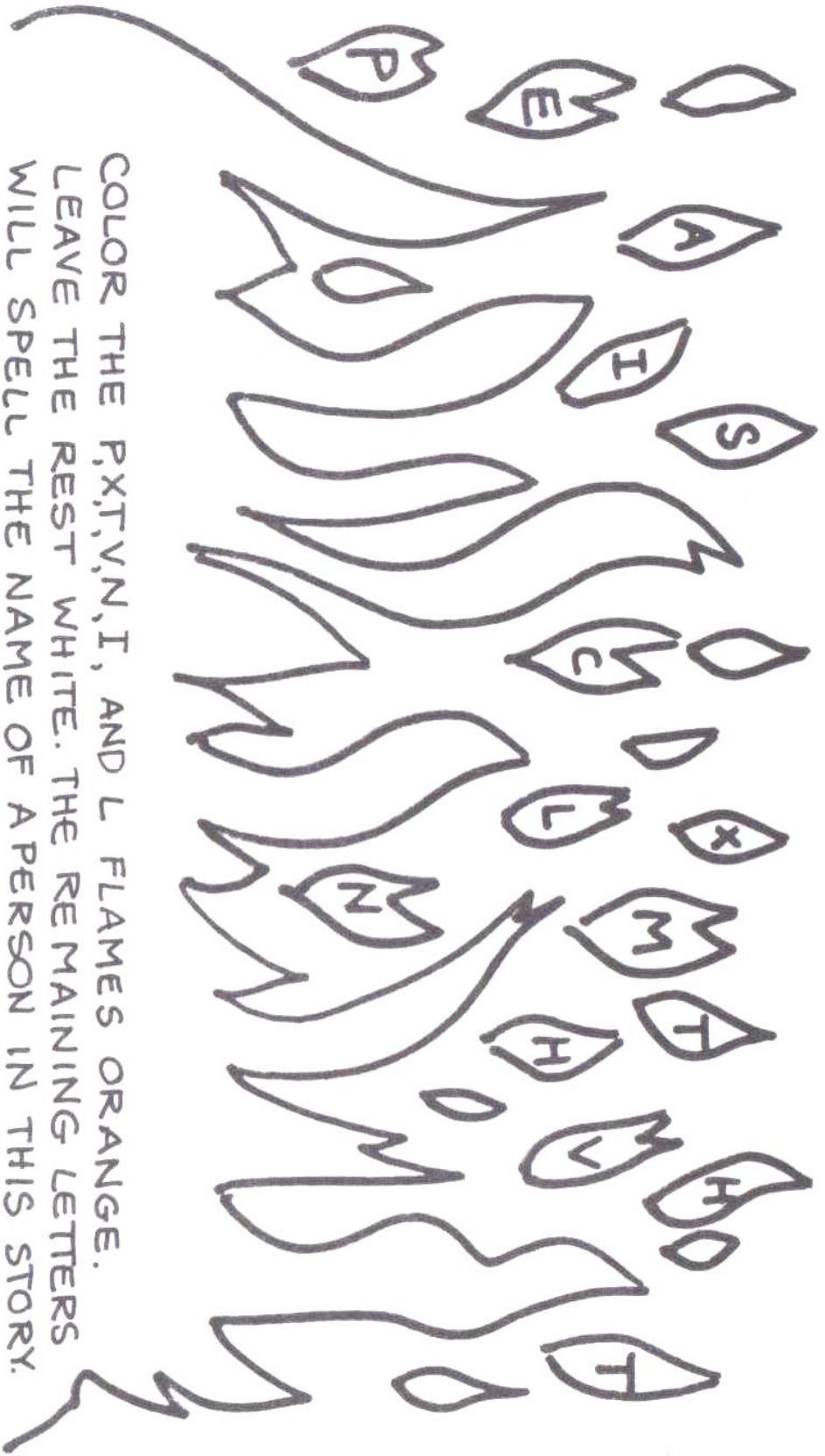
5  
burn. They were pro - tect - ed by the fourth Man in the fire. They would - n't

7  
bend, they would - n't bow, they would - n't burn.



Nebuchadnezzar Orders the Execution

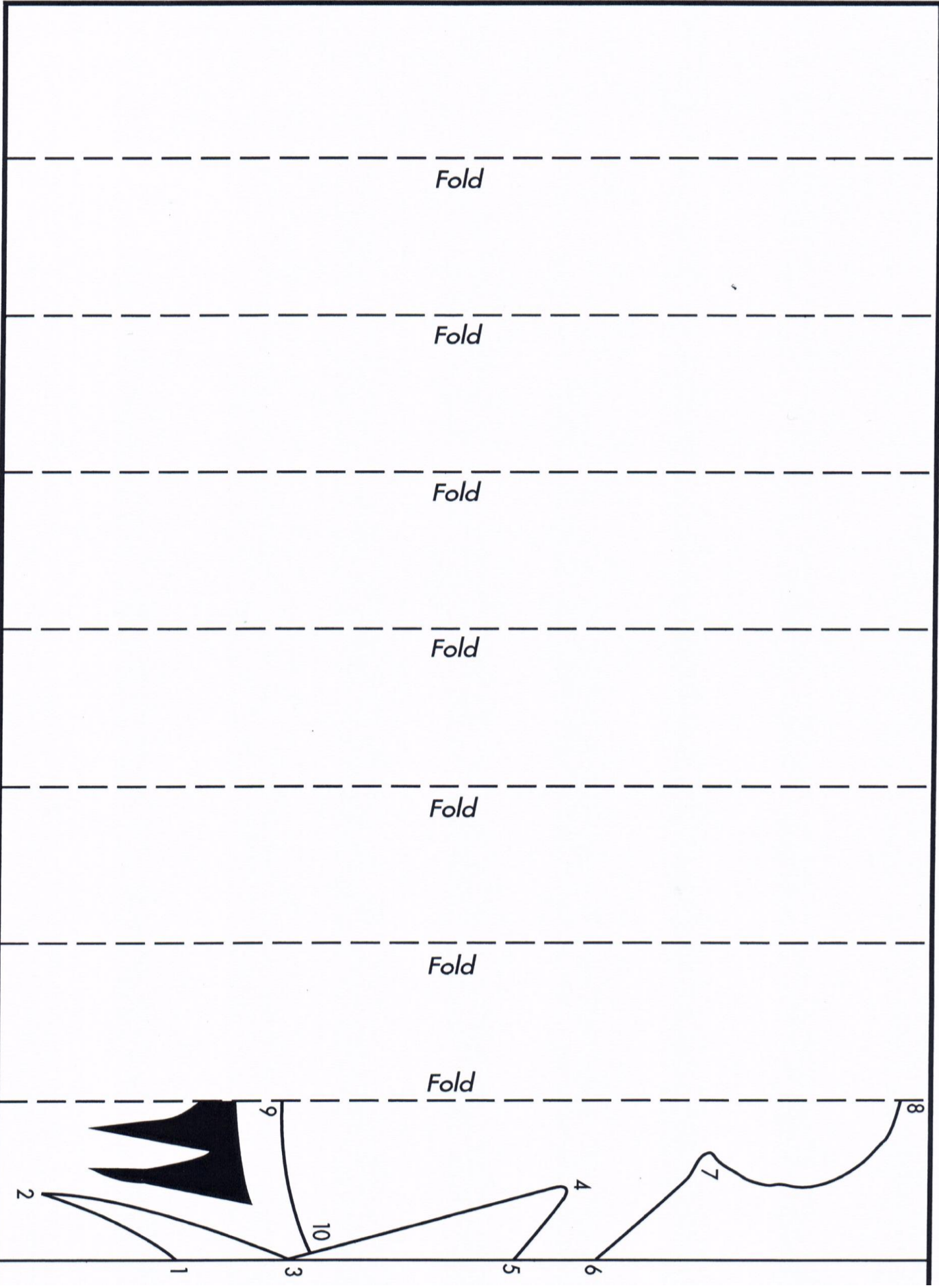
COLOR THE P, X, T, Y, N, I, AND L FLAMES ORANGE.  
LEAVE THE REST WHITE. THE REMAINING LETTERS  
WILL SPELL THE NAME OF A PERSON IN THIS STORY.



**God protects  
Daniel's friends  
in a furnace.**

Daniel 3:1-30





Unknown source