

INTRODUCTION AND TRANSLATION OF JACOB OF SERUGH, MEMRA 36 ON DANIEL AND HANANIAH

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INTRODUCTION TO MEMRA 36

In the annals of early Christian Syriac homiletics, few voices carry the poetic intensity, theological force, and spiritual daring of Mar Jacob of Sarug (c. 451–521 CE). Among his vast corpus of *memre* – metrical homilies composed in exquisite verse – his *Memra on Daniel and the Three Children* (*Memra 36*) stands out as a soaring meditation on faith, martyrdom, divine sovereignty, and apocalyptic mystery. In this work, Mar Jacob turns his gaze to the biblical story found in Daniel 3, drawing from it a narrative not merely of resistance but of spiritual triumph – a cosmic drama enacted in the furnace of Babylon, where three exiled youths become icons of truth before a world engulfed by idolatry.

The homily begins not with historical exposition, but with theological awe. Before the drama of Nebuchadnezzar and the statue unfolds, Mar Jacob opens with a hymn of praise to the inexpressible glory of God—a glory so great that neither angels nor nature, nor even the entire created order, can speak it adequately. “Even if all of creation makes noise to glorify,” he writes, “it would indeed be deceiving since it could not be what it is worthy [of doing].” In this doxological overture, Mar Jacob situates the narrative of Daniel not as mere moral tale or political resistance, but as a revelation of the unsearchable majesty of the God who governs all things, from flame to sea, and from kings to exiles.

This cosmic framing sets the stage for the homily’s true focus: the contest between Truth and Error, between idolatry and faith, and between the visible power of empire and the hidden power of God. Babylon is not merely a city – it is the symbolic heart of a world given over to delusion. Nebuchadnezzar’s golden statue, towering in the plain of Dura, becomes the ultimate icon of counterfeit divinity, fashioned in the likeness of human ambition and demonic deceit. Mar Jacob spares

no imagery in his condemnation: the statue is “mute,” “cast and hollow,” “more idle... than all else.” It is possessed not of divinity but of Beelzebub and Legion.

Yet even in the midst of this great apostasy, Mar Jacob introduces the shining counter-image: the Three Children – Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael – who stand “like three day-springs” against the night of paganism. Throughout the *memra*, the trio are adorned with a host of poetic epithets: they are suns, cedars, fortresses, springs, pearls, vine-shoots. More than simply resistors, they are theological symbols – icons and embodiments of (a) the faithful remnant, (b) ascetical purity, and (c) Christ-like courage. They not only defy the king’s command; they transfigure the fire into a dwelling-place of praise – a monastery of flame.

The fire becomes the central paradox of the homily. It is at once a symbol of judgment and a sanctuary of love, an agent of divine wrath against idolatry and a servant to the holy ones. Outside the furnace, it rages and harms like a lion; inside, it is peaceful and harmless like innocent sheep. The children, far from being consumed, are freed. Their bonds are loosed, their garments remain unsinged, and their praises are magnified. In one of the most stirring moments of the homily, Mar Jacob declares: “The flame embraced them but did not injure.” The furnace, intended as a site of execution, becomes instead a site of revelation – a temple not built by hands, in which a fourth figure walks among them like “the Son of God.”

This appearance of the Fourth – divine, radiant, and unconsumed – marks a Christological climax. Though never explicitly named, the language and imagery point unmistakably to a pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ. He is the One who joins the faithful in suffering, who commands the elements, who walks freely in the fire, and who ultimately vindicates His servants before the nations. He is the very reason that the Children do not rush to exit the furnace when summoned: “They were quiet – but the king hastened to bring them out; / but because the company of the Watcher was delightful, they were not in a hurry.” The place of punishment had become a place of rejoicing on account of the One who had joined them inside the blazing furnace.

Indeed, one of the striking features of this homily is its eschatological envisioning. The furnace is not only historical – it is typological. It becomes an image of the Final Judgment, in which fire will reveal the truth of every soul, consuming the impure and glorifying the faithful – a Scriptural image based on 1 Corinthians 3:13. The Three Children are shown as the forerunners of the righteous at the end of time, and their trial is a prefiguration of the refining judgment through which the Kingdom is revealed. As Mar Jacob says: “That same [fire] which protects, shall be there at the end, / that all of creation should know the mystery of that Coming.”

Moreover, Mar Jacob harnesses the power of spiritual typology. The children become types of monastics, martyrs, apostles, and even Christ Himself. The furnace becomes the monastery, the judgment seat, and the bridal chamber. The imagery of the wedding banquet and bridal language is especially bold – Mar Jacob describes the children as “bridegrooms of fire,” entering the furnace like a wedding chamber,

joined by the Spirit as their best man. Such images draw together martyrdom and union with God, conveying an intimacy that transcends suffering.¹

But perhaps the most unexpected reversal in the homily lies in the figure of Nebuchadnezzar himself. The tyrant who forged a god and commanded its worship becomes, by the end, an unintentional prophet. Witnessing the miracle, he calls forth the children, praises their God, and even proclaims a decree in His honor. Mar Jacob casts this turn not as true conversion but as divine irony—Truth has “ensnared the Chaldean” and made him preach against his own idolatry. The preacher becomes the preached to; the persecutor becomes the voice of proclamation.

The homily concludes in triumph. The assemblies that had once gathered to worship the statue now depart bearing the name of God. The Three Children – once captives – are celebrated, crowned, and even venerated. Satan, who labored to gather the world for his feast, now mourns like a shamed bridegroom whose celebration has been seized by another. “Evil began,” Mar Jacob declares, “but the Lord finished wisely.”

Mar Jacob’s rhetorical artistry deserves special notice. The *memra* is built upon vivid parallelism and cascading metaphor. Lines echo and build upon one another, sometimes climbing in a triplet structure (“three suns,” “three censers,” “three springs”), other times contrasting opposites (inside vs. outside the fire, the proud king vs. the humble youths, the voiceless idol vs. the praising children). These devices are not ornamental; they create a rhythmic theology, one where repetition inscribes the spiritual reality into the hearer’s memory.

This homily also reflects Mar Jacob’s deep theological engagement with the nature of divine power. He presents God as One who works not through brute force but through reversal and surprise. The feast of Satan becomes the triumph of God. The fire of death becomes the womb of life. The idolatrous king becomes an evangelist. In each of these movements, Mar Jacob invites the reader to recognize the subversive logic of divine grace – a grace that outwits evil and uses even its instruments for the purposes of glory.

¹ This bridal chamber imagery is not incidental. It draws from a profound and distinctive motif in Syriac Christianity, where the Bridal Chamber of Light represents the eschatological union between God and the soul, and between Christ and the Church. As Sebastian Brock has shown, the bridal chamber (*gnōnā*) is a frequent metaphor in Syriac liturgical texts—used to denote Paradise, the Kingdom, and the eschatological wedding union of the soul with Christ. It appears dozens of times across the liturgies of both East and West Syriac traditions, in prayers for the departed, baptismal hymns, and doxologies. Furthermore, in the East Syrian liturgy, the Church is presented as the Bride of Christ, with her betrothal occurring at the Jordan (Epiphany) and her wedding consummated eschatologically in the heavenly bridal chamber. Baptism, Eucharist, and martyrdom all function as anticipatory entrances into this bridal mystery. See Sebastian Brock, “The Bridal Chamber of Light: A Distinctive Feature of the Syriac Liturgical Tradition,” in *The Harp* 18 (2005): 179–192; Jacob Vellian, “The Church as Bride in the East Syrian Liturgy,” in *Studia Liturgica* 2, 1 (1978): 59–64. In the case of the *memra*, the bridal imagery signals that the Three Children, like martyrs and ascetics, are entering into nuptial union with the divine – crossing into that place of consummate intimacy prepared for the elect. For Mar Jacob, the fire is no longer a place of trial but a sanctuary of divine communion.

Mar Jacob composed his homilies within a richly liturgical and deeply symbolic spiritual tradition. The Syriac Christian imagination was shaped primarily by a vision of the cosmos saturated with divine meaning. In this vision, fire becomes both trial and sanctuary, exile becomes vocation, and suffering becomes a pathway to union with God. The story of the Three Children was not simply remembered – it was relived in liturgy, in fasting, in monastic life, and in the daily resistance to compromise. Mar Jacob's homily emerges from this ethos, where poetry becomes theology, and theology becomes an act of worship. His audience would not have needed to be told that they, too, were standing before idols. In hearing this *memra*, they were invited to stand firm against the idols of the world and to praise the Creator. Their resistance to the world's expectations was itself a liturgical act. Like the Children, their refusal to bow down became a form of doxology, while their prayer life became a sacrifice of praise offered in the furnace of faith.

Lastly, we must not overlook the profound devotional and ascetical tone of the work. Mar Jacob's longing to speak rightly of the children, his self-effacing recognition that his tongue cannot do justice to their praise, reveals not only poetic humility but a kind of mystical participation. He does not only narrate; he worships. He does not only describe the fire; he enters it. And in this way, the homily itself becomes a liturgical event. It is not only for instruction, but for transformation.

Memra 36 is, therefore, not simply a sermon. It is a rich tapestry of theology, poetry, liturgy, and spiritual instruction. It is a drama of resistance and divine deliverance, a meditation on holiness and judgment, a mystical participation in the suffering and redemption of the Chosen People of God, and a celebration of God's triumph through the faithful few.

With the full English translation of *Memra 36* now available, the academic field is newly equipped to engage in deeper comparative studies across linguistic, liturgical, and poetic traditions. This homily is not merely a theological artifact—it is a crucial witness to the shared symbolic vocabulary and spiritual imagination of Late Antiquity. As a previous article of mine had suggested, there are compelling reasons to explore the influence of Mar Jacob on Romanos the Melodist, whose *kontakion* on the Three Children echoes distinct themes and metaphors found in this *memra*.² It was demonstrated that specific motifs – such as the incense imagery, the architectural and vegetal triadic metaphors, and the transformation of the furnace into a bridal chamber – likely passed from Jacob's Syriac verses into Romanos' Greek compositions. With the entire *memra* now rendered in English, scholars of Syriac and Byzantine Christianity can more fully examine how theological ideas, poetic forms, and ascetical motifs moved between cultures and languages.³ This translation offers

² Demetrios Alibertis, "East Meets East in the Chaldean Furnace: A Comparative Analysis of Romanos' Hymns and Jacob of Serugh's Homily on the Three Children," in *The Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 18 (2018): 24–41.

³ This trend of comparative study began gaining momentum in the early 1980s through the work of scholars such as William Petersen and Sebastian Brock, who helped illuminate literary and theological exchanges between Syriac and Byzantine Christian traditions. See: William L. Petersen, "The Dependence of Romanos the Melodist upon the Syriac Ephrem: Its Importance for the Origin of the *Kontakion*," *Vigiliae*

a bridge between the Syriac East and the Byzantine world, enabling renewed dialogue between their liturgical poetics and their respective visions of sanctity, resistance, and divine presence. It is an invitation to expand the scope of Late Antique Studies by recognizing how profoundly intertwined these worlds were—not only historically, but imaginatively and theologically.

TRANSLATION

The Inexpressible Glory of God

1. O Great Treasure in which we find every precious thing,
grant me each day the wealth of Your word, that I may profit by it.
2. O Precious Treasure Who gives wealth to whomever encounters it,
the needy one encountered You – that he might be enriched by You, though unworthy.
3. O Storehouse of blessings Who is filled with good things for the poor,
open to me – I will enter to collect great wealth from You.
4. O Rich One, Who distributes His treasures upon the deprived ones,
I am deprived – fill me richly with your teaching.
5. Our Lord, Your sun rises in grace over the unbelievers;
Your rain falls upon the iniquitous who are unworthy [of it].
6. In that goodness, that shows mercy to the evil ones and sinners,
By it, extend to me the wealth of Your word that I profit through it.
7. You do not withhold, my Lord, the sun and rain from pagans;
to me, who has never denied You, grant me Your word – even though I am wrong.
8. And no pagan is worthy of your mercies, on this account;
You, my Lord, are worthy, to give freely to those who are deprived.
9. Give me [words] to speak concerning You,
that in every mouth, your glory will be intensified through your songs.
10. The good ones and evil ones both speak of your deed extensively;
from all the mouths you will be spoken of – you will not be fathomed.
11. Even if stones and wood and the entire world could speak,
they are unable to sing Your glory as it [truly] is.
12. Even if heaven and earth praise instead of lips,
the marvel of Your story is beyond them to be told.
13. Sea and air, if they sang for You in their praises,
it would be as silence concerning the greatness of Your glory,
14. Even if all of nature spoke richly,
Your discourse surpasses [both] the speakers and the silent ones.

Christianae 39, 2 (1985): 171–87; Sebastian P. Brock, ““From Ephrem to Romanos,” *Studia Patristica* 20, ed. E.A. Livingstone (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 1989), 139–151; Manolis Papoutsakis, Manolis Papoutsakis, “The Making of a Syriac Fable: From Ephrem to Romanos,” *Le Muséon* 120, no. 1–2 (2007): 29–75.

15. Even if all of creation makes noise to glorify,
It would indeed be deceiving since it could not be what it is worthy [of doing].
16. If the elements clap [their] hands to praise [You],
[their praise] turns to slander because they are not able to [praise You].
17. Thousands upon thousands of heavenly ones in their songs,
and myriads upon myriads of sons of light in their praises.
18. The ardent assemblies of the house of Gabriel in their good reports,
and the ranks of fiery beings of the house of Michael in their words.
19. The bands of fire and the arrays of spirit in their forms;
the armies of flame according their orders.
20. The yoked cherubim in great trembling of their responses;
the fearful Seraphim with the desirous voices of their proclaiming *Holy*.
21. Though all these never cease to glorify [You],
the glory of them all is not suitable for You, for what You [truly] are.

The Supremacy of God Over Creation

22. And the one who longs to glorify – what can he do,
when in his trembling, he cannot reach the greatness of Your glory?
23. What is better – that a man should glorify [You] even though he is not able?
Or that he fall silent, perceiving his inability?
24. It befits love that it speak to You clearly,
for though it is unable to, it never ceases to praise You.
25. Love does not wish to set bounds when it praises;
it longs to ponder deeply when it loves so much.
26. Who does justice to the *Great Power* who holds the worlds?
Who treats adequately the *Mighty One*, who is able to carry creation?
27. The earth is His hand span, the sea is His handful and heaven is His nod;
the worlds are suspended by Him, and if He does not nod the handiworks shake,
28. It is the *Powerful One* who carries the earth, which carries you;
it [= the earth] is not the carrier, for He Himself carries it by His great power.
29. If He did not desire it, not even the sun would have light;
He makes it shine – and should He abandon it, its rays would disappear.
30. Even fire would not have the power to burn, if He does not command it;
nor would the waters drown the one who plunges into them.
31. As the Creator of all, He gives warmth to the fire,
light to the sun, and imparts wetness to the waters.
32. For if He does not will it, the waters would never suffocate,
and if He does not nod, there would be no burning to the flame.
33. Indeed, He gave even the elements their share:
to the sea that it will drown, to the fire that it will burn, and to the earth that
it will carry.
34. Wherever He wills, the elements forsake their properties,
so that every person may know that His power governs creation.

35. In the depths of the sea, Jonah sank – yet they [= the waters] did not drown him;
and within the flames of Hananiah's house, they were not burned.
36. Without the command, the waters could not drown;
and without the nod, the fire was not permitted to burn.
37. He showed how His power reigned within the furnace,
so that even the flame never transgressed His command.

The Statue, the Furnace, and the Test of Faith

38. On this sign of wonder that was in Babel,
I shall now speak of to the one who listens prudently:
39. Concerning that statue which the king made in his madness,
and concerning that feast which all of creation perceived.
40. Regarding the athletes – how they faithfully endured against Error,
and regarding the furnace – how it was heated by the iniquitous ones.
41. About that fire which bowed in love before the fasting ones,
and about the descent of the Fourth one into the flame.
42. Of the victory which snatched the truth from the liars,
and of righteousness – how wise are its deeds.
43. This is the prelude to the *memra* which I have begun to tell;
let him who loves it not grow weary of its simple words.

The Glorious Virtues of the Three Children

44. The beloved youths compelled me to speak of their praises,
but my speech is inadequate to reach the height of their conduct.
45. Concerning Hananiah and Azariah and Mishael,
love compelled me to speak – but I am unable.
46. In whatever way my wretched tongue has strength,
let it now speak of their contests and crowns.
47. They are standing in fire – how can I approach their beauty?
Their companion is a Watcher – how can I draw near their story?
48. Three suns who shone forth at that time from the furnace,
and the darkened land of Babel was illumined by them.
49. Three censers whose choice scent spread out in the universe,
and the air was pleased by the attractive fragrance of their aromas.
50. Three cedars which grew strong in the thickness of the blaze,
and the desolate nation sat in their shade.
51. Three fortresses which Truth built amongst the captors,
through whom all the captives of the house of Abraham rebelled.
52. Three city walls defended the whole exiled community
from that Error which rebelled from the captors.
53. Three springs which sprung forth in the dry places of the region,
and the world drank a sweet drink from them and was satisfied.

54. Three rivers which gushed forth amongst the Chaldeans,
and instead of water, their teaching overflowed amongst the erring ones.
55. Three chosen pearls – [for whom] the Fourth,
plunged into the fire and brought them up in beauty.
56. Three precious seals which the blaze carved,
and lo – they were shining, set in the crown of the king.
57. Three captains of the host who alone marched out
against the myriads of the Assyrians and destroyed them.
58. Three children who raised up a standard of faith,
and all of Error that threatened, was defeated by them.
59. These beautiful ones, who are not recognized in their appearance,
by what manner shall I depict [them] when my colors are not beautiful?
60. These ones who were neighbours to the fire yet were not scorched –
who is able to lift up their image and not be rebuked?
61. These ones who dwelled with fire but were not burned,
and trampled over the fiery coals of the flame yet were not scorched –
62. I will draw from the reading the sequence of the story which I have set up,
lest the order of my speech be burdened by lengthy discourse.

The Madness of the King and the Rise of the Idol

63. Nebuchadnezzar, in his madness, made a statue –
to gather the nations by force for its worship.
64. He imagined that he would fashion a great god –
one exalted and raised above all the gods of the earth.
65. For the mighty king, who was unmatched in all the world,
needed a great god to be fashioned for him.
66. It is shameful that the great king should worship a feeble statue;
let it, then, be a great image – by which he will be honored.
67. Error decreed that it should prevail in a region that was not its own,
and grew in madness so as to seize the worship of the world through the
great statue.
68. It forged little idols and filled the whole world [with them];
but this did not suffice for it – so it made a statue full of abominations.
69. It was diligent [to] forge one famous god,
beside whose height, all the gods were pygmies.
70. It appointed devils to serve the lesser idols,
but to that statue, it invited Legion to dwell within.
71. Error gave the common demons to the small idols,
but by that great [statue], mighty *Beelzebub* was roused.
72. The king knew that he had subdued all the kings of the earth,
and the wretch imagined that even his god would be like himself.
73. “Let it be greater than all the gods of the entire world –
I may spend a bit, but I will make my god greater than the others.

74. I do not have any regard for the expenses which will be required for it –
[with] added cubits, it shall seize the heights and acquire a name.
75. It shall surpass its companions in breadth and height;
the greater it becomes, the more its name will shine across the lands.”
76. The king fashioned the statue of gold as he had devised,
and he set it up in the plain of Dura for the people to worship.
77. He forgot the dream that God had shown him,
and the interpretation that was spoken [to him] by Daniel.
78. It overpassed his mind that there is a God,
and he made for himself a worthless idol by which he would stray.
79. How that freedom – a great laughter – went so far astray,
that it gave the title *god* to the statue that it would be deceived by it.
80. The king – like one to whom the whole world was subject –
made a forged idol and worshipped it without discernment.
81. He forgot the God who gave him a diadem and strength,
and to the work of his hands, he lowered his crown and scorned God.
82. The Chaldean made the height of the statue sixty cubits,
and its breadth six – and he held a feast for his new statue.
83. The tower of mockery was completed by his craftsmen,
and the land was shaken by the great image which Babel had made.

The Feast of Idolatry

84. The king commanded to gather all the peoples
for the great feast of that great god he had made.
85. The command went forth, stirring the world and its inhabitants,
and he gathered all the peoples, and brought [them] to the feast in great
astonishment.
86. The regions and dominions were invited,
the chiefs of the land, the governors and their provinces.
87. Villages, cities and towns assembled together –
multitudes of people, rulers, and the whole world.
88. From every region they were gathered to the land of Babel,
to rejoice in that feast of the king – for they had been invited.
89. Creation clamored, the roads swarmed, the nations arrived,
and Babel was filled [with] the powers of the peoples who had assembled
there.
90. Satan went out with the command of the great king,
and he gathered the world and set it within that defiled feast.
91. The king commanded, the Evil one incited, the world behaved childishly;
here and there, the feast of the statue gained renown.
92. It was a banquet – Evil was its bridegroom, Error was its bride,
and her servants [are] all the devils – those of the left hand.
93. The evil spirits began to stomp the ground in dance there,
that they might all rejoice with Satan who was the bridegroom.

94. All the deceitful spirits were invited,
that they would honor the bride – Error – at her wedding feast.
95. The bands of demons called to one another for the great feast,
to rejoice there with idolatry that had multiplied!
96. *Beelzebub* rejoiced greatly, Legion leapt for joy, the demons were merry,
but the king was troubled to serve the defiled assembly.
97. Error was adorned and beckoned all to commit harlotry with her,
but Righteousness veiled its face until the end [of the feast].

The Universal Apostasy

98. The great king made a great assembly for sin,
and he assembled the whole habitable earth to it to defile [it].
99. And when all the peoples from every region had assembled to it,
and all the rulers of every district entered and filled her,
100. The herald went out and cried with might and said in madness,
“We command you, O peoples, nations, and rulers,
101. Whenever you hear the sound of the trumpet and the sound of the pipe,
fall down and worship the golden statue of gold the king has set up!
102. And whosoever does not worship shall be cast into the furnace of fire!”
And the assemblies heard [the sound] and fell down and worshipped just as
they were commanded.
103. The spirit of falsehood blew there vigorously,
and made the world which was assembled [there] to bow down before the
statue.
104. The impiety of paganism gushed forth like a flood,
and swept away the assembly, to suffocate [it] in its overflow.
105. Sin went forth like a tempest over the peoples of the earth,
and they all fell away from their own God.
106. Like a whirlwind, Error went out amongst the assemblies,
and through her, they bowed before that statue full of folly.
107. Satan cast a great snare upon the whole world,
and by the net, he gathered it to be strangled before the statue.
108. A vast plain, a defiled land, and a fearsome king –
and the sound of the command exhorted the assemblies into paganism.
109. Satan swelled with pride, and the face of idolatry was revealed;
but the cause of truth ceased and became silent as though it had never been.
110. The faith of the house of God was kept hidden and silenced,
and Error rejoiced greatly for she seized the world through the new statue.
111. Truth was plundered and its elect were seized by the wicked,
and the faction of Error boasted of victory.
112. The statue seized the worship of the nations and gathered it to itself,
and the earth ceased from [its] confession of faith.

113. Nebuchadnezzar plundered the God who gave him power,
and because He was patient with him in subduing the earth, he thought he
had prevailed over Him.
114. It did not suffice him to seize His people from the lands;
but he also sought to steal their worship from them.
115. And when the spirit of Error entered into humankind,
it caused them to bow down before the statues in supplication.
116. And the faction of idolatry rose mightily,
and creation was taken captive by the worship of the newly-made statue.
117. And the minds of humankind were darkened,
and there was no ray of faith in their thoughts.
118. And Babel thundered in the festal assembly of the demons who had gathered
to it;
and the region trembled at the gathering of the evil spirits invited to it.
119. There was no report of faith in any of the regions,
nor a single mouth that chanted praise to [the true] God.
120. No tongue among the people of the earth confessed the Lord,
nor a mind that perceived that He was present among the erring.

Three Pillars of Faith Amid Babylon's Darkness

121. While darkness [covered] all of Babel through its worship of the statue,
three lights suddenly sprang forth and illumined the region.
122. And when that night of paganism veiled the earth,
three spheres of light encountered it – and it was consumed.
123. Three stars in the gloomy evening of idolatry –
they rose suddenly and light spread forth, reclaiming creation.
124. The night bent over to cover the whole world,
but three day-springs rose against it and consumed its darkness.
125. Three grains of salt, alone among the flavorless –
yet because they were chosen, the whole world was seasoned through them.
126. The whole world tottered [and] fell to worship the statues,
but three pillars arose [and] carried it that it would not be weakened.
127. Among the fallen who bowed before the statue,
the steadfast arose and established a faction of faith.
128. There they unveiled the face – truth that had been hidden,
and gave it an occasion to show itself for it had been concealed.
129. The love of God was enflamed within their minds,
and they ridiculed the fire decreed by the wicked one.
130. The love of the Lord mocked the flame,
For it [burns] warmer than it [= the flame] for the steadfast ones.
131. The high wall of faith was breached and collapsing,
[but] three laborers arose and rebuilt it with diligence.
132. Among all the assembled of the nation within Babel,
three alone did not bow down and worship as commanded.

133. Then jealousy was given room to act,
[but] truth as well to reveal its beauty to the many.
134. The Chaldeans drew near the Babylonians to speak –
slanderers who threatened the Hebrews.
135. “Shedrach, Meishach and Abednago have scorned your command –
sons of the exiles, whom you exalted above the nobles.
136. The whole world honored the command of your power,
but these alone have scorned you, O king – and have disdained your god!
137. All the nations have bowed down and worshipped the new statue,
but these alone have scorned your command.
138. As much as you have greatly honored them above their peers,
so have they magnified their dishonor of you among the assemblies.
139. It would have been a feast unmatched in all the world,
had these not scorned you in it before the masses.
140. The sons of the Hebrews made a blemish in the great assembly,
for all saw that they did not obey your command.
141. These whom you exalted and raised to honor from among the many,
instead of the honor rightly due from them, they repaid you with disgrace.
142. They who were captives, yet by your will became lords of the land;
[and] in your great feast, they returned to you the opposite of the good re-
ward [you gave].
143. The lowly, lifted to high estate – behold they mock your rule!
And before the assemblies that fill Babel, they have made you a laugh-
ingstock.”

The King’s Wrath and the Interrogation

144. Then, the king heard [these things], and his fury was kindled;
and his anger rose like smoke against the fair ones.
145. He heard that his great god had been insulted before the assemblies,
and the mighty one burned with zeal to destroy [those] who had wronged him.
146. His love was bound to that wondrous vision he had fashioned,
and because it was dishonored, he was stirred to bitterly injure [the children].
147. The king commanded and the accusers brought forth
the bold young children who were not alarmed by the [royal] power.
148. For they leaned upon divine trust,
so they scorned the wrath of the king who summoned them.
149. Their gaze was fixed on God Who does not change –
and, thus, they did not fear that king for whom there is no tomorrow.
150. They looked in secret to the Creator, who grants the diadem to rulers,
and for this reason, they did not fear the mighty one.
151. The zeal of their thoughts became enflamed with the love of the Lord,
and because of it, they scorned that flame that had been kindled.
152. They knew [that] time is ever changing,
but trusted that the Lord of the ages would not change.

153. The steadfast came forward to give defense before the liar,
and the king began to ask them with fury.
154. “Tell me Sheidrach, Meishach and Abednego –
is the report I have heard now true, or is it false?
155. Did you worship my god as your companions [did] – or did you not?
Did you hear my command – or did you not? They all answered...

The Children’s Bold Confession

156. The steadfast youths replied, “The report is just as you have heard;
the one who told you [these things] did not lie on our behalf.
157. The god that is cast and hollow – we do not call [upon]!
It is a desolate idol – it is not God! Do not be deceived by it!
158. It is indeed made by hands, for even its craftsmen bear witness with us [con-
cerning this],
for they forged it by your diligence and your command.
159. Look to the jewelers who made it – learn from them!
For it has no heart, no movements, no perception.
160. Ask them: how many hammers struck its head,
and it gave no sign – no word to the one who struck it?
161. It has no heart, no knowledge, and no understanding;
it perceives nothing, sees nothing, hears nothing.
162. The dead are better than it – for they lived, if only for a time;
[but] this has never lived, nor died, as you have believed.
163. It is more idle, more worthless, more mute and emptier than all else.
And what now does it profit its worshippers, as you have claimed?”

The King’s Challenge and the Idol’s Vanity

164. The king said, “O wretched ones! How dare you?
Even as I listen, you openly dishonor my god!
165. It was not enough that you disdained my command,
but you also dare to dishonor [him] before me!
166. My god is great and his height declares his greatness,
and his choice gold proclaims his beauty before all.
167. The new statue, that does not even have filth near it –
what reason have you to refuse to worship him?
168. What king has made a god so great as this?
Where is another statue that can be compared to it?
169. What does it lack that it should be insulted or dishonored by you?
Does it require height or is its craftsmanship not beautiful?
170. Its stature is lofty, its gold is splendid, and its appearance glorious –
so why have you dared to boldly dishonor it now?”

The Children's Rebuke of the Powerless Idol

171. The young children replied, "You are worthy of laughter O great king –
for the mute image is greater than you, who possesses reason!
172. Let him avenge his own dishonor, if he is God –
and by his judgement, let him shatter those who do not worship him.
173. Let him declare what he desires should be done to him;
Let him be asked, 'should a man worship him – or not?'
174. If one worships and honors him, let him benefit him with something;
but if one scorns and dishonors him, let him inflict him [with harm].
175. Learn from him what he says to you about us!
Does he now love us – or hate us for hating him?
176. Cease, O king! Let him threaten us, if indeed he is endowed with senses!
And if he has no none – [then] in vain you desire him!
177. He neither hates nor loves us. Why do you care?
Friends and foes – both are the same to him, for he is without reason.
178. And if he is as empty and mute as we have said,
why should anyone labor for him or worship him, as you say?"

The King's Final Threat

179. The king said, "That is enough children! You have scorned my kingdom!
And without restraint, you speak boldly to me.
180. If you now desire [to live], accept my command!
Do my will and worship my god that I may glorify you!
181. But if you refuse to fulfill all my commands,
you shall be cast into the fire – and you shall not be delivered from my
hands!
182. Behold, the furnace stands ready for the one who disobeys me!
The fire is enkindled – and it threatens whoever treats me with contempt!
183. If you are ready, then worship my god as I have said –
but if [you will] not, I know that I shall consume you in the blaze!
184. And if my god is dishonored, then who is your God,
who has the power to deliver you from the flames?
185. Go! Call upon Him and make an appointment with Him in the furnace!
And if He is able, let Him come and deliver your lives.
186. Mine was dishonored – so I send you to the furnace!
Let yours come and contend with the flame!
187. Who is He that can come and help you?
Call Him! If He is true, He will come to you in the fire."

The Children Entrust the Battle to God

188. Then the servants of the Lord answered him in a loud voice,
"Henceforth, the matter is no longer ours to discuss with you.

189. Until now, we knew what we ought to say to you,
but from this point on, the matter surpasses our replying to you.
190. From this moment, the battle is the Lord's – He will contend!
And He will show you His power in the fire, just as you demanded of Him.
191. We have no need to answer you further –
the fire and the Lord shall speak to you on our behalf!
192. Whether or not our God is able to deliver us –
it is for you to learn from that fire once you cast us in!
193. He delivers us from you, O king – even without your knowing it,
and from the fire you shall come to know His power.
194. And so, O king, you will truly know,
that we will not worship the golden statue you have set up.
195. And there is no way that we will bow to your desolate god –
for your statue is empty, and all who take refuge in it are [likewise] empty!"

The King's Rage and the Blazing Furnace

196. Then the king was consumed with intense jealousy,
and he became incensed bitterly with raging fury.
197. And he was filled [with] wrath like a basilisk when disturbed,
and moved about like a dragon when provoked to fury.
198. And his rage surged, and the color of his face was changed;
and his beauty was darkened by the corruption of his thoughts.
199. Truth struck him like the noonday sun, beneath which a blossom withers;
righteousness dimmed his beauty – for he had contended with it.
200. He was exalted and puffed up, but because his word was scorned, he faded
away;
and wrath burst forth upon the steadfast ones, to destroy them.
201. The king was puffed up, for he held his command above God –
but the sons of the exile treated his word contemptuously, and in that very
moment, he perished.
202. He imagined himself in heaven, while [all others were beneath] on the earth;
and from that height, he gazed down on them through his authority.
203. But three entered in – children of the exile – and they mocked him;
they scorned him before all the assemblies, and he became a laughingstock.
204. And the king saw [this] and his wickedness overtook his mind;
and his face grew troubled with wrath, and his beauty faded.
205. He was provoked far more than a lion whose prey has slipped away;
He commanded that the furnace be stoked sevenfold.
206. He heaped fuel upon that fire without measure,
that its flame might overpower and kill whoever fell into it.
207. Just as he was burned in fury, so he kindled the furnace;
and just as wrath filled him, so he filled it with flame.

The Children Led to the Fire

208. The youths stood between the furnace and the king –
the one was enflamed with wrath, and the other [with] fire.
209. Wrath in the king, and the fire in the furnace.
The Babylonian raged, and the blaze roared – could such a thing be?
210. The little children stood like lambs among a pack of wolves;
from every side, the spear pressed upon the soul.
211. The Lord lay hidden, while the king [stood] revealed, commanding through
threats;
God remained unseen, but the king raged on, multiplying his threats.
212. Trust was distant, but judgment's decree stood near at the gate;
yet love hovered above, like a mediator, ready to declare its own [things].
213. The king reigns, death is dreadful, but the Lord is beloved;
the fire roars, yet love stands firm that it will not grow weak.
214. True love is not glorious except in death –
for a friend is known in trial and not in comfort.
215. The beloved youths weighed the love of the Lord in fire,
and the fervor of that love conquered the flame that was kindled.
216. The king commanded the lamb-like infants to be bound,
and wolves surged forward to destroy the innocent ones.
217. In that hour when the Chaldean issued the decree of judgement,
the struggle was wondrous – before both people and angels.
218. In the contest, the three stood alone among the many,
while the assemblies of the nations raged against them vigorously.
219. When swiftly the king's command bore down,
to bind the children who had transgressed his command.
220. When they were seized by the Babylonian for destruction,
he seized one, bound another, and fettered the other.
221. They suffered indignities from those afar and nearby;
and everyone rebuked those who had insulted the great king.
222. And while they were dragged by foreigners and citizens,
they went to become food for the fire within the furnace.
223. Even their friends turned against them for the king's sake,
and their loved ones reproached them [saying]: 'Why do they treat him with
contempt?'

The Homilist's Reverent Pause

224. The beloved youths of the house of Hananiah have prepared a banquet,
and now they demand me to share in their joy – mystically.
225. The censor of their love spread out and imbued me with their good scent,
for the whole earth is filled by it.
226. In the fervent heat of love, I longed to speak of their victories,
but wonder overtook [me], and I ceased from telling the story.

227. In the midst of the discourse, discernment rose up and gave me silence,
that I might not speak beyond what my tongue [can bear].
228. Up to the gate of the flame, the story is clear –
but how shall I continue to speak of it from within?
229. Into the waves of fire their praises entered – and were concealed;
but the discourse remains outside, standing like one frail.
230. Of what is known, the word ought to speak;
but of what lies hidden in the story – silence is beautiful.
231. If I had a mouth of fire, perhaps I would speak;
or a tongue of flame – then I would not be afraid.
232. If I were able, I would tread upon the burning coals of the furnace –
that I may go in and return to recount their victories!
233. I grew fearful, weakened, diminished, and shaken by the story;
but daring love does not cease from [telling] their story.
234. Love left me and entered the fire – for it is not consumed –
to marvel there, to be pleased, and to delight in the fiery ones.
235. Therefore, O noble ones, let us now listen with love –
for even the tongue of love speaks of the beautiful ones.
236. Speech [itself] rebels against both speaker and hearer;
[but] love speaks and though it falls short, it is not blamed!
237. [Love] marvelled at the youths when they contended with the flame,
and the blaze within the furnace was conquered by them.
238. When the young children bound the fire through great love,
it bowed before them and loosed them from their bonds.
239. While bathing in the sea of fire that did not burn,
the flame embraced them but did not injure.
240. When the young children stood in the furnace to offer praise,
then they made it, through their songs, the dwelling place of the solitaries.
241. And while the Watcher flew high, he descended at the voice of their joyous
shouts,
and he mingled with them to praise in great love.
242. While the choir was gathered in the fire to praise,
then the fourth one was made a guide to the fair assembly.
243. [And] sounds of praise went out from within the furnace,
pure, coherent, and full of wonder to their listeners.
244. While the voice of praise thundered from within the furnace,
the sound of the fire mingled in the praise of the three.

A Marvel Equal to the Parting of the Red Sea

245. Divinity made there in great Babel a great deed,
just as in Egypt of great renown.
246. And truly, this is the pretext for the assembly that is there –
that the nations might come and to see the marvel of His works!

247. Then, in Egypt, the sea was divided before the Hebrews,
but within Babel, the gate of fire is before the Hebrews.
248. Perhaps for this [reason] He delivered them into captivity from within Zion –
that through them, the great Babel might learn that there is a God!
249. Just as in the sea, He [also] did a marvel within the furnace,
that we may learn how the Lord rules over creation.
250. He gave a lesson in the sea to one region,
and [also gave a lesson] to this other one in the glowing fire which raged.
251. Perhaps Babel had not learned of the sea which was divided,
so He came and divided fire within it, and it marvelled at His deeds.
252. He draws forth a camp in the fiery seas as though on dry land,
and like a bridal chamber, He made the young children enter the flame.
253. The lesson – both here and beyond – is being sought,
for without powers and miracles, they would not enter.
254. In two regions which were gaining force in idolatry,
He made signs and astonished them that they would listen to Him.
255. In these two fertile regions of the soothsayers and the Chaldeans,
He swiftly cast fear by the powerful [signs] which He made.
256. To Pharaoh the sea, and to the Babylonian the flame,
that it [= the sea] would devour the one [= Pharaoh], while the great vision would amaze the other [= Nebuchadnezzar].
257. He cast the shackles into the sea and allowed it to stand still,
and, thus, muzzled its mouth, but set free the fire that it would shine brightly.
258. There, the sea swallowed the Egyptians and the nation was delivered,
but [here] the fire guards the young children and consumes the slanderers.
259. He saved His own but those who are not His own, He delivered to death,
so that a lesson is established through chastisement.
260. The flame killed the slanderers,
just like the sea which suffocated Pharaoh who was boastful.
261. He Himself worked power both here and beyond,
through that wisdom whose mistress owns all things.
262. The house of captives fell into the furnace to be destroyed,
but the hidden power received them to protect them.
263. And the assemblies of the nations and the governors accompanied them,
in great trembling, up to the gate of the flame.
264. The king enshrined, and buried, and returned as he hoped,
and shattered hope as if with the dead ones who entered into destruction.
265. They laid them in the grave of fire and shut the gates,
that the flame might consume them in place of worms.
266. The Babylonians bound the living ones and buried them as though they were dead,
in great *Sheol* which is filled with kindled fire.
267. They invoked the destroyer to destroy them as they entered –
not by worms, but rather by fire would they be devoured.

268. And when the dead ones entered the dreadful grave of flame,
the gates of the blaze's great abode of the dead were shut.
269. Deliverance appeared in a place that is devoid of deliverance,
and it besprinkled the new resurrection there – and gladdened them.
270. The Lord, who is near to those who call upon Him, received them –
for He answers all and never forsakes the one who loves Him.
271. When the companions stood up in that great distant place outside of the gate,
the Companion of Truth entered with them into the contest.
272. The traders passed through the great crossing of fire,
and the Good Companion did not forsake them on the path of dread.
273. Their loved ones distanced themselves as liars,
but the Lord, like a faithful one, entered the fire with them.
274. In the hour when friends and brothers became strangers,
One loving one, who is unchanging, received them.
275. Everyone distanced themselves, but He remains God to His beloved –
for He is not bound by time to neglect the one who loves Him.

The Fire's Twofold Nature

276. It is admirable to say that while they stood within the furnace –
bridegrooms of fire who entered the bridal chamber of the flame.
277. Like the best man at the wedding banquet, the Spirit entered –
and in the flame, He fashioned a crown and adorned them.
278. The fire is bound but they are loosed to walk –
and on every side, there was no affliction from the flame.
279. A new vision: A flame sprinkled,
from within its womb, moist dew on their persons.
280. A Watcher of the fire who stood in the midst – between it and them,
and the servant, His companion, feared and honored Him.
281. It unloosed the ones bound and guarded the bodies, for they were holy –
it bowed, it worshipped, it feared, it fled on account of the steadfast ones.
282. The fragrance of the fast of the ascetical ones spread and it was overcome,
[so as] to honor the brilliant bodies that they would not be blemished.
283. It [= the fragrance] spread out and went out against the Chaldeans and the
slanderers,
in great power, to destroy them in the conflagration.
284. A marvellous discourse! Outside it roars like a lion,
but within, it is like innocent sheep to the guileless ones.
285. To the Babylonians, [it was] a hawk that snatches shamelessly;
but to the Jews, a dove that stands graciously.
286. Within the furnace, it seemed that it grew cold,
but outside, it displayed its power – how much it burned.
287. The youths received dew in double measure within the furnace,
and cast upon the Babylonians burning coals to overcome them.

288. With the fasting ones, it keeps fast wisely,
but with regard to the gluttons, its throat is wide open to devour them.
289. It pays homage to the Lord's servants, pleasantly [and] in love;
[but] the worshippers of idols burn bitterly by it.
290. It pays homage to the chaste ones, but draws its spear against the lascivious
ones;
it kills and protects for its discernment comes from God.
291. Within, the furnace [is] bound by the yoke of humility;
but outside, it is loosed and dismissive in power.
292. Within, [it is] like a maid – it worships, honours, and kisses the feet;
but outside, [she is] like a mistress – it beats, lays waste, and smites to de-
struction.
293. Moreover, it pressed the fire to devour the slanderers,
that they may fall into the pit they dug – as it is written.
294. It delights to bring ruin to the Chaldeans,
for even the signs of the Zodiac are scorned through it – for they hold no truth.
295. It was meet for the fire to have completely devoured [them];
and it is right that it rise up to increase protection for the ones who were
guarded.
296. Where it shields, it showed divine power,
but where it consumes, its own nature was made known.
297. Within, it is known that it has a Lord and governs it;
outside, its unchanging power is revealed and continues.
298. An astonishing vision was seen within the furnace –
a figure of fire, which the blaze does not draw near.
299. Pure gold entered the fire showing its beauty,
and from it, a great crown was [forged] for the faith.
300. A new vision was beheld in Babel:
a tent of fire, beneath which the children stand.
301. A great stream of flame within the furnace –
in which that the three young children bathed, uninjured.

The Fire as an Image of the Future Judgement and the Furnace as a Place of Solitude

302. A great mystery was made known to us in that furnace –
how the perfected ones passed through fire to the kingdom.
303. For in Babel, the fire which examines was revealed to us –
how it guards and how it devours the ones who enter it.
304. That same [fire] which protects, shall be there at the end,
that all of creation should know the mystery of that *Coming*.
305. Behold in these children, [the image of] all the elect of the righteous ones!
And the [image of] sinners in these [= accusers] whom the flame devours!
306. The king's feast is like the appearance of the Son of God,
and Satan is like that statue which deceives the nations.

307. By fire it is revealed that the statue is not God –
likewise, at the final judgment, Satan shall be cast into the fire.
308. The glorious bodies which were not defiled in desirable things,
the fire cherished when they crossed over it to God.
309. In that dreadful passage which is wholly filled with fire,
as it did to the three, so shall it act [again].
310. In that furnace, hidden things came forth to be revealed –
and brought light through those who became the cause for the praising of
that *Coming*.
311. The youths stood in fire in great marvel,
while the Hidden Power shielded them from harm.
312. Their faith had become the vessel of their lives,
and they tread upon the great abyss of fire, yet were not singed.
313. O how beautiful is the voice of praise to the Lord when it is uttered
by the fair ones who were confined in the fire.
314. The lovers of truth entered and found a quiet dwelling place;
and on account that it was pure, they began singing spiritually.
315. They rejoiced in that quiet dwelling place which had accommodated them,
for they hated the great Babel which had shattered them.
316. The *single ones* encountered a cell which suited them,
and they attentively stood upon the service without interruption.
317. That labour within the furnace was more desirable to them,
than all the clamour of Babel which was agitating.
318. They found a monastery and encountered in it a spiritual being,
and perhaps they sought never to get out from it.
319. A pure house, filled with fire – loftier than iniquity;
[with] the flame guarding over its gates from harmful things.

The Praises That Shamed the Statue and the Evil Spirits

320. The sound of the praise-singers went out from the fire,
and the assemblies thronged to behold the new vision.
321. The statue was scorned and Nebuchadnezzar was put to shame –
and all the nations clamoured at the sign of the marvel which was seen.
322. Error made a great assembly from the peoples of the earth,
but the faith of God's household bore away the crown.
323. The Lord awoke – though He was not asleep – when He was mocked,
and overthrew the crown of Error which was possessed in the earth.
324. The demons were shamed, and the assembly of devils dispersed
by the power which appeared out of the furnace against their ranks.
325. Legion veiled his head and fled like a thief,
for he saw that the statue was exposed through the wonder that had occurred.
326. Satan saw that whatsoever he had built, Truth had uprooted;
and he was agitated to howl on account of his camp which was shaken.

327. And while the Contentious One was speaking,
trembling seized him and his servants, while terrified.
328. “With what had happened here, I jumped backward,
for another one took all my toil, that He might be praised through it.
329. For the feast of the idol, I assembled the nations, but did not know
that through them, this end would befall me.
330. From now on, the feast is the Lord’s – not ours!
For behold, the statue lies abandoned, and He is glorified in the furnace!
331. Like a bride, I betrothed all of creation to the statue,
but when the hour came for the banquet, another entered and stood [in its place].
332. I prepared a bridal chamber here, so that she would enter,
but behold, righteousness dwelled [there] instead, and she was overthrown.
333. The bride I brought from the house of the nations – so that she may be foolish with me –
Truth seized her; and behold, it sanctified her so she would not look at me.
334. The expense of the whole banquet was mine – but the bride of another;
I sowed yet the entire harvest went to God.
335. And look, when the hand was about to reach the mouth, my banquet failed,
and the expense of my preparations – that were precious – vanquished.
336. Behold, by the time my work reached completion so that everyone would
have turned towards paganism,
who drew out three pure ones from the crowd for me?
337. Behold, all the devils were gathering to seize the earth –
who summoned the fourth one to scatter them?
338. Behold, the demons were radiant in the great assembly that took place –
from whence did Truth enter upon them and sadden them?
339. Now it seems to me I became a laborer for Truth,
that I may gather for Him the nations of the earth to convert them.
340. When did I ever do a good thing, or am doing so,
that I now have become a pretext for Truth which – behold – is triumphant?
341. I assembled the world to make a feast for idolatry,
but Truth seized the entire feast and made it its own.
342. If only they would give me the wage for my labor, I would depart;
for [though] I toiled with them, I left my work empty-handed.
343. I will take [my] shame and reproach and run away like one shamed,
for the affair did not unfold as I wished according to my evil desire.”

Error and Satan Are Overthrown

344. Satan was ashamed by the marvel wrought by divinity,
and Truth was made to triumph, for a faction of faith would arise.
345. The rulers assembled and stood near the furnace,
while the sound of praise ascended to the Lord from the multitude.

346. The entire host of the left hand was ashamed and cast down,
but a diadem was forged for the right, and its face was unveiled.
347. Error began to lament over the new statue,
as a widow [weeps] for her beloved one when death has seized him.
348. “My beloved son, born of a vow, what can I do for you?
For I was prepared to rejoice on your feast day, but I am undone.
349. The king forged you a great idol – the chief of its kind,
yet I am unable to defy the Lord Who has exposed your deceit.
350. See, I boasted of you more than all the idols of the earth,
for look, I gave you more height and breadth than [any of] them!
351. From choice gold I forged you with diligence,
and to your feast I brought all the nations and hosts of the earth.
352. And though you have other kin – whom I bore –
you I cherished above them all, for I greatly rejoiced in you.
353. Yet it brought upon me a power [that] exposed falsehood;
Behold, I am ruined and cast down such that I cannot rejoice in you.
354. For the house of Hananiah has overpowered me and made known to all,
that I am nothing, and you are disgraced, and my joy has ended!
355. The crown of your feast is in the hand of the Fourth,
for He took it from you and set it upon the three in the fire.”

The Pure Ones Season the World

356. Error was thoroughly shamed, [along] with Satan,
in the great feast to which the whole world had been gathered.
357. By the pure salt that the king had carried away from Zion,
all of Babel was seasoned for it lacked all savor.
358. Leavened bread he carried off from Jerusalem which he joined to it,
and through it, the entire mass was perfumed, for it had grown tasteless.
359. The chosen plant he cut from Jerusalem as he passed by,
and he planted it in fire – but its branches shaded the lands.
360. Three branches from that forest of the house of Abraham,
he transplanted in the furnace, and his land was satiated by their fruits.
361. Three chosen vine-shoots were placed in the field of fire,
which he had gathered from that vine-sprout which Moses had grown.
362. And Babel was filled [with] the new wine of instruction,
and it cast off of it the corrupt dregs that existed in it.

The King Beholds the Fourth

363. The king beheld a wondrous vision inside the furnace;
the mighty one – growing terrified – trembled and quaked, and was seized by
dread.
364. He gazed at the youths whom the blaze was encircling;
and they stood unafraid and at peace in it [= the furnace].

365. He heard their voices from within the fire, how pleasing [they were],
and he was terrified and astonished at the marvels that occurred.
366. He saw in the furnace a fourth alongside the fair youths,
and he was startled, and he trembled, shook, and was dismayed by fright.
367. Great terror fell upon him suddenly,
at the vision of the Watcher who appeared to them in the furnace.
368. The king began to question, in great astonishment,
to the magistrates, nobles and lords who were assembled [there]:
369. “Was it not three men who were cast into the furnace?
These ones answered, “Yes my Lord, O king! It is so.”
370. The king said, “Behold! I see four in the fire!
From where was one added that I am unaware of?”
371. The fire not only did not devour what we desired,
but even added an extra [one] which we did not seek.
372. The fire that devours without limit whoever is cast into it –
Behold, I see it truly gives birth! What can I say?
373. We cast three [of them in] and they were bound – just as you saw.
But behold! I see four who are unbound, walking [freely]!”
374. If the fire guarded the three and they were not destroyed,
how then does it give another one, unless it gave birth?
375. Who has ever heard such a thing – that a blaze gives birth?
This now is [a] new [wonder] that has occurred here in our fire!
376. Wondrous, majestic, and comely is the appearance of the fourth;
and if the fire did not beget Him, [then] He is from God.
377. Truly, His appearance resembles the Son of God;
for His radiance is greater than that of the fire – behold, He stands within it!
378. He resembles the sun, and the fire surrounds Him as though it is a shade;
and the light of His countenance is brighter than the flame.
379. Behold, from His rays, the fire also shines,
for His brilliance subdues the exceeding brightness of the blaze.
380. See, I gaze as He walks amongst the burning coals;
the fire is afraid of Him for it is constrained to retreat.
381. Either He is the Lord of this fire, and it is afraid of Him,
or, He is set by its Lord to command it into submission.”

The Children are Called Forth

382. The king approached the furnace in great astonishment,
and he stood at the entrance, and lifted his voice saying:
383. “Shedrach, Meishach and Abednego, come forth from the fire!
Your Lord is true, and the hope of your hearts is true.
384. Come out servants of the Lord! Come forth from the flame!
Yours is the victory – Behold, we are defeated!
385. It was revealed to it that your God alone is true;
the statue is disgraced – along with its ministers and worshippers.

386. All idols are ruins and useless,
for in your Lord alone is [found] the power to deliver!
387. It has been made known that there is no God besides Him,
for the whole world is His, the fire is His, and He is its Lord.
388. The statue was disgraced, and the feast of Error was laid bare;
let the name and praise be Yours from henceforth and forevermore.
389. Sons of the exiles, go! Come forth from the blaze!
The faction of idols has surrendered for they were not true.
390. Come, O athletes, by whom the blaze was conquered!
Take the victory and come forth from there in haste!
391. Servants of the Lord, who despised their lives for the sake of His love,
come forth, now, O victorious ones whose praises have triumphed!”

The Children Delay Coming out of the Fire

392. The praise of the Lord was there in great wonder,
And was declared by the king in great marvel.
393. And every person was silent while they marvelled over the wonder,
and he listened to hear what they would say inside the furnace.
394. They were quiet – but the king hastened to bring them out;
but because the company of the Watcher was delightful, they were not in a hurry.
395. They trod on the fire and mingled their love with the Angel,
and coming forth from the fire was an afterthought.
396. The king hastened to bring them out from inside the fire,
but they pressed forth within the furnace on account of the great marvel.
397. They remained in the fire, that the whole world would become acquainted
[with the miracle],
so that the region would embrace the faith of the House of God.
398. And just as these things were spoken of by the victorious ones,
they stood amidst the burning coals of the blaze:
399. “Let this be an occasion for all the gods to be tried in it;
and whoever is true, let him emerge and declare his power through the fire.
400. If one claims that his god holds power within him,
let him enter here – he shall either be triumphant or vanquished.
401. The teaching within the fire is beautiful,
for the Hidden Power proclaimed it openly [in the flame].
402. The assemblies were shaken and lifted up [their] voices with force,
“The Lord is one – the One of whom the youths speak about.

The Children Exit the Furnace in Glory

403. The children came forth from the furnace, radiant [in appearance];
They are crowns of gold burnished by the blaze.

404. The lords and rulers thronged around,
and they drew near and saw the sign of praise in the Great Power.
405. They saw the youths – how the blaze had not approached them,
nor had it harmed their bodies or garments.
406. Even their wide trousers were unscathed amidst the fiery coals;
and the odour of the fire into which they were cast did not cling to them.
407. And the hair of their head was not singed by the flame –
[they appeared] like one who emerges from a banquet, satiated with good things.
408. The countenance of their faces was beautiful, delightful and serene;
and the appearance of their persons was comely, and aglow [with] brightness.
409. The king embraced, the nobles kissed, the assemblies bowed;
and the lords honored [them] in love while marvelling [at the sight].
410. Like a cluster of three first-ripe grapes,
each one was offered to be kissed [in reverence].
411. The Babylonians beheld the first-fruits and seized them –
[those] which the king had plucked from that vine of flame.
412. Sweet fruits from within the furnace filled with fire,
the king carried and proclaimed before the assemblies saying.

The King Declares the Glory of God

413. The king began to say to the assemblies in astonishment:
“Blessed is the God of Shedrach, Meishach and Abednego!
414. He who sent the Watcher and delivered His servants from the fiery coals,
for they held fast His love and spurned the king and his decree.
415. According to their trust, so did he deal with them and delivered them;
and as they stood firm in it, He saved them from the conflagration,
416. Saying: “There is no other Lord besides Him,
in whom there is such power to rescue those who call upon Him.
417. Behold, a God beside whom no other god stands,
for His is the crown, His is the name, and His is the might.
418. Behold, from Him proceeds the rule of every realm,
and [He is] the Head who grants dominion to all rulers.
419. This is the Lord – all lords are beneath Him;
There is no ruler [other than Him] for He has no rival in divinity.
420. This is the Power who carries the worlds by His might,
and by His hidden gesture, creation hangs and is led.
421. He commanded the fire – what substance will not obey Him?
The blaze is fearful by Him – who then would scorn Him?
422. In His name the earth shall reside, for He is its very Lord;
and all the nations shall call upon His name from henceforth and forevermore.
423. And from this point forward, behold, I Nebuchdnezzar decree,
that whosoever shall blaspheme against the God of Shedrach and Meishach,

424. I shall cut off their limbs without remorse and cast [them];
furthermore, their houses will, indeed, become spoils.
425. For no other god can redeem in such a way,
and no power can deliver but His alone.
426. This one they shall, in truth, call Lord, just as He is,
For every dominion that is named, is claimed [from Him].
427. He shall not be blasphemed, nor dishonored, nor mocked;
He shall not be blamed, nor shall a person disdain Him except he be dead!
428. He is Lord, He is king, [He is] also God;
[He is] the Mighty Power, Lord of creation, and the Great Being.
429. All the people and lands shall be inscribed to Him,
and no one shall call another God but Him alone.”

The King Becomes a Preacher

430. Wisely did Truth ensnare that Chaldean,
and yoked him in the yoke of learning, though he did not want [this].
431. The feast the king had made for his statue, so as to be triumphant,
the Lord captured and made it His own, and He was praised through it.
432. The great king became a teacher for the great assembly,
for there was none there who was suited to instruct in such a manner.
433. The king preaches – and who will [dare] not listen to the lesson?
For he will send after them by threat and rebuke!
434. With teaching, he placed compulsion and sent [it];
[by] truth and sword the king teaches – who would not fear?
435. Truth seized the king to its side, that it would speak through him;
for the assembly was great, and if not for the king, it would not obey.
436. He would not instruct without threat in his teaching,
so that he could seize the truth from either fear or love.
437. The fire was like a teacher to him, and he learned from it;
and was enlightened by the instruction and began to teach.
438. Wise is his speech and fearful is his sword – who will disdain it?
For he used both instruction and punishment.
439. The wisdom of the Lord constrained him to declare, when necessary,
to his own assembly, for it would not listen to any other save Him.
440. For had a mere man spoken there, who would listen to him?
And for this reason, the king arose, instead of an orator, to speak.
441. And he summoned the nations and bore witness to those gathered –
calling on the nations that had been invited.
442. That creation might worship the God of the youths,
and speak no name of God but His [alone].
443. And the assemblies listened and praised the Victorious One alongside him;
for the fire answered Him, the king recognized Him, and the nations learned
[of] Him.

444. That ending did not resemble the beginning;
Evil began but the Lord finished wisely.
445. They had assembled from all regions for the feast of the statue,
yet they departed bearing the name of God with their provisions.
446. The fair ones conquered, Truth prevailed, and Satan failed;
Blessed is He who delivered His servants from the flame.