

Historical Fiction



Level 4

The Courageous Three

In the Time of King Nebuchadnezzar and the Jews...

“What shall we do?” Hannah heard the anxious wail of her mother, Ana Kanaan. “We can’t bow down to the idol the king has built, it is written in the Ten Commandments!” Dov Kanaan, Hannah’s Papa, hushed his wife quietly.

“Do not worry, Ana, I’m sure we’ll think of something,” he glanced over at the supposedly sleeping Hannah. Her slim figure lay on a pallet on the floor. Her dark brown hair lay in masses about her tanned face. He turned back to Ana. She was weeping quietly, thinking of her only daughter, three sons, Hannaniah, Azariah, and Mishael, and nephew, Daniel. Hannah thought quickly over what had happened that day.

She had eaten breakfast, and then gone out to feed the sheep. When she had returned, she had found Mama wringing her hands, with Papa holding her close to him. Hannah had asked what was wrong, and found the King Nebuchadnezzar, the great king that had taken her family captive, had sent out a proclamation that everyone, even the Jews, were to bow down to an idol he had built himself. She had watched the Babylonians and Jewish slaves build it. It was a golden statue, whose height was sixty cubits tall and six cubits wide. But even though it was breathtaking, Hannah only scorned it. It was only a statue that the Babylonians worshiped. It couldn’t save them, but her God, her people’s God, was almighty, and could do everything. She had never doubted that God would take them back to Israel and always prayed every day. But then she had heard the proclamation, ‘ You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that when you hear the sound of horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be

The writer has created a fictional story on top of the facts from a biblical story. Those facts have been skillfully incorporated to make the story richer.



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cast into the burning fiery furnace.’ Hannah had pondered all the rest of the day what they should do, for she knew well that she and her family would never bow down to an image. She now decided to tell her plan to her parents.

“Mama, Papa?” she asked, so softly that her mother and father barely heard her.

“Hannah? Aren’t you supposed to be asleep?” asked Ana, rising up quickly, and hurrying toward her daughter.

“Yes, Mama dear. But I know what we should do,” she said a little louder.

“Tell us, Hannah,” Papa urged, knowing his daughter to be quite smart when they got into scrapes.

“Let us hide in Zephon’s cellar. It has two openings, one in his shop and another that opens right in front of the image!” she cried, but quite softly so that no one outside would hear.

“That’s a brilliant idea!” Dov jumped up and hugged Hannah. “You’ve saved us, child!”

“Oh, I am proud of my daughter,” Ana murmured, stroking Hannah’s hair. Hannah bowed her head modestly.

“I need to go to bed,” she said and slipped under her thin coverlet that lay askew on her pallet. Soon her eyes closed and her breathing very softly. Dov and Ana smiled at each other across the small table.

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The next morning, Hannah woke as the first soft rays of sunlight filled the little mud brick house. Hannah rubbed her eyes sleepily.

“Morning, Mama.” She greeted Mama drowsily, who was singing in her sweet voice while cooking the small breakfast for her family.

“Good-morning, Hannah. How did you sleep?” Mama asked, and then, without waiting for an answer, said briskly, “Comb your hair and then put your head-scarf on.” Hannah did as her mother in-

This story does a good job of incorporating text and dialogue.



structed her. She combed her long brown locks and pinned her pale pink scarf about her head. She then smoothed her purple-red dress with its pale pink sash.

“Mama, have you and Papa...” she started to say, but Mama interrupted.

“Feed the sheep, please, breakfast will be afterwards.”

Hannah did as she was told. Mama soon heard giggling from the small pen behind the house.

Mama glanced at the three little bundles hidden under the table. They were still there. Her face relaxed for only a moment.

“Ana! Come!” the voice of Dov shouted. Ana rushed out the doorway, making her hip-length brown braid and white head-scarf fly in the air.

“What is it, Dov?” she asked, finding Dov standing over a dead lamb.

“I want you to cook this lamb very quickly, and then wrap it up and put it in one of the you-know-what’s,” he said, nodding toward the house ever so slightly.

“All right, but, why?” Ana asked.

“Please just do it. You may tell Hannah also, but you must hurry,” Dov said, picking up the lamb and carrying it to the house. Ana followed and pulled out a scrap of papyrus out of her pocket. On it was written, “Hannah, we are going to the place you suggested last night. We are taking food and clothing, and a few other needed items. We leave four hours till noon. Be ready.” When Mama entered the house, Hannah was already rolling up her pallet and blanket. She smiled at Mama. Mama slipped the scrap of paper into Hannah’s hand. Hannah studied the paper, then nodded her head after flinging the paper into the kitchen fire.

“I will be ready, Mama. Never fear,” was all she said.



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Two and a half hours later, Mama, Papa, and Hannah stood in the small yard in front of their house, each holding a bundle.

“Well, let’s go,” Mama said, trying to sound brave, but her voice quivered.

“Yes, come,” Papa said. And started for the small road going to the city. Hannah and Mama followed so slowly that Papa had to stop and urge them on. The city of Babylon was not but a half mile down the road, so Dov, Ana, and Hannah passed through the walls of the city quite soon after they left their home. The city was swarming with people since today was the day that everyone was to bow down to the image. Dov and his family wove their way to Zephon’s bread shop. When they entered the building, Zephon looked up in surprise.

“Good-morning, Dov, Ana, and Hannah. What brings you here?” Zephon studied the group. Dov’s hair was so dark that it was almost black, but it had gray and white streaks in it. He had a small, pointed beard on his tanned face. His navy blue tunic covered a very dark robe tied with an off-white sash. He had a brown band on his brow, which at times held an off-white headdress in place. Ana was a stout woman, with a long, brown braid covered with a white scarf. Her dress was a light blue with a white sash. Hannah’s clothing consisted of a pale pink scarf and a sash, a wine colored dress. Her dark brown hair was braided down her back.

“We...um, well, we’d like to hide in your cellar,” Dov whispered.

“Hide? IN MY CELLAR?” cried Zephon, thinking the Kanaans crazy. “What for?” he asked.

“Why, so we don’t have to bow down to the idol, of course!” Dov laughed.

“You’re daft. Absolutely daft. But, I’ll let you,” Zephon agreed, being a fellow Jew. “Come,” he said, leading the Kanaans to his cellar.

“Are Hannaniah, Azariah, Mishael, and Daniel going to hide with you?” Zephon asked.



“Dov!” Ana cried out, her eyes widening. “Our sons, our nephew, what shall we do?”

“Oh no!” Hannah moaned.

“No, Zephon, they are not,” Dov finally said quietly. “They will have to think for themselves. Before I forget, won’t you hide with us?”

“Personally, I think you and your family are crazy. I really would like to hide, too, Dov. But I wouldn’t want to be caught, if you were. No, I’m bowing down.” Zephon decided, slowly.

“Please, Zephon. Think, you’ll be worshiping an idol, not the true God. You’ll be breaking a commandment,” Dov pleaded, one last time. “Please.”

“No, now hurry; it’s almost time for me to close up my shop. Go,” Zephon said hurriedly. Dov climbed down the ladder leading into the cellar. Ana and Hannah followed him, and Zephon shut the trapdoor.

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“Your bundle has the candles, Dov,” Mama whispered, as the three rummaged through their bundles, looking for candles.

“No, it doesn’t, Ana,” Dov whispered back.

“Hannah?” asked Mama.

“Well...no...wait! Yes, I do have them,” Hannah answered excitedly. She held the five white candles up triumphantly.

“Good. Now, Dov, please light one of them. We need to save them as long as we can.” Mama told Papa. Papa lit one of them, and the room filled with a little glow.

“Look at all of that bread!” Hannah exclaimed.

“Yes, now, where’s that other trapdoor?” asked Papa impatiently.



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“Right...there,” Hannah pointed over a ways off at little engraving on the ceiling, with steps going up to it.

“You’ve got good eyes, Hannah,” Mama smiled, and then walked toward the steps.

“Thank you,” Hannah blushed. They were soon gathered right under the engraving, and they pushed ever so slightly at it. It opened a crack. They could see the golden image gleaming in the sunlight, and people gathering around it. Hannah drew in a sharp breath.

“Mama, Papa, there’s Hannaniah, Azariah, and Mishael, right in front of us, but where in the world is Daniel?” she whispered softly.

“Oh, where can that boy be?” Mama whispered anxiously. “He sometimes trusts too much in God.”

“You can never trust too much in God, Ana,” Dov said softly. Suddenly, they all heard the sound of many instruments. The three held their breath. Everyone, from man to child, bowed down to the image, except three. They were tall, dark haired young men, dressed like princes, and standing very straight. They made no sign to bow to the idol. Hannah’s eyes widened, and she stifled a cry. These three men were her brothers!

“God help them,” Mama softly said, wanting to run and pull her sons down.

“YOU THREE THERE! YES, YOU THREE THERE! COME HERE!” the Kanaans heard shouted. Ana and Hannah hid their faces. Hannaniah, Azariah, and Mishael stepped slowly, but did not flinch when they were shouted at. Hannah knew, after turning her head toward them, that they were braver than any other men there, even braver than themselves, who were hiding. ‘And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the burning fiery furnace.’ Hannah suddenly remembered the terrible words. Her brothers, her dear, loving brothers, were being led away to be thrown into the fiery furnace. Hannah didn’t know how long they waited in the dark, damp cellar. But about an

Be careful to read and correct your work. Look for small errors such as verb agreement or misspelling.



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hour and a half later, she felt a cool wind on her face, and realized in terror that the door had blown up.

Hannah jumped to hear someone shouting the words:

“Hey! Who are you? You didn’t bow down. Off with you, to the fiery furnace.” Hannah looked up into the face of an officer. She was pulled up violently, but she did not cry out in pain. She walked calmly and bravely with her parents to the furnace, which was quite near the palace. As they were shoved to the ground beside the furnace, they heard the harsh voice of King Nebuchadnezzar.

“Why did you bring them here? Why? You stupid men, didn’t I tell you not to bring them here?”

“Well, sire, we were given orders to fling them into the fiery furnace, if they didn’t bow down. So...”

“Enough!” King Nebuchadnezzar cried. “The Jews’ God is the God that saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! They weren’t even burnt! Why, there was even an angel with them!”

“Papa? Mama? Hannah?” came a soft, strong voice. Hannah looked up, into the face of a handsome, dark-eyed man. Hannah jumped up, and hugged him.

“God was certainly with you, Hannaniah,” She whispered in his ear.

“That he was, little sister!” was his only response.

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comments

“Can’t you hug your brothers?” Hannah heard two teasing voices behind her. She laughed.

“Certainly,” she answered, hugging both of her other brothers.

“Sons, you’re safe!” Mama said, holding back her tears.

“You are too, Mama and Papa,” Hannaniah laughed.

“So these brave young men are your sons, are they?” asked a booming voice. All eyes turned on a tall, but stout, black-haired, black-bearded elderly man. He wore much gold on his neck, head, fingers, and around his waist.

“Yes, sire, they are our sons,” Papa said bravely.

“They’re quite good looking lads, as well as strong,” King Nebuchadnezzar commented politely.

“That’s a pretty girl you’ve got there, too.”

Hannah’s eyes strayed to the short stone wall to her left. She heard the patter of sandals on a stone path. Soon, a brown-haired, tanned teenager burst into view, running toward the Kanaans.

“Daniel!” Hannah laughed, “where were you?”

“I was...,” Daniel started, hugging Hannah.

“Family?” broke in the king.

“Yes, he’s my...um...cousin,” Hannah said, nervously.

“Ah...the bravest and wisest men in all Babylon are related to the...”

“Kanaans,” Papa said.

“Kanaans,” the king said softly.

“Your... majesty?” Hannah asked slowly.



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“Yes, girl?” asked King Nebuchadnezzar.

“Her name’s Hannah, sire,” Daniel informed him.

“Pretty name, Hannah.”

“Sire, what are you going to do with the...um...image.” Hannah asked.

“Ah, maybe melt it,” the king said, smiling gently at her.

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King Nebuchadnezzar sent the whole family, Dov to Hannah, back to their home on horses. Hannah had the time of her life riding her pure white steed. When the family reached their house, Papa opened the few books of the Bible they had. He read to the whole family:

“Thou shall not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or the water under the earth...” Hannah smiled.