

healthy as the others, the King might very well kill me!" (And he probably was right - as you will see later in the story. You didn't want to get King Nebuchadnezzar mad!)

Daniel had a plan.

"Let my friends and me eat what God has commanded us to eat. Give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. After 10 days, compare us with the others who have eaten the king's food, and see for yourself who looks healthier."

And so that is what they did.

Sure enough, after 10 days, Daniel and his friends were healthier and stronger than the ones who had eaten the royal food. From then on Daniel and his friends were allowed to follow God and eat what God had commanded.

But God had other plans for Daniel and his friends.

The training for the four friends began, and God gave them great success in everything they did. He also gave Daniel a special gift. Daniel could tell the meaning of dreams. Daniel and his friends were faithful to God - and God did the rest.

After three years of training, all the Israelites were brought before King Nebuchadnezzar. No matter what question the king asked, or what problem he devised, the four friends knew ten times more than anyone in the whole kingdom.

And so Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were appointed to the king's royal court.

It was all God's doing. God had put them there for a reason. He was about to show the greatest King in the whole world who the REAL King is.

God was getting ready to do some amazing things.



20 LARGE PEPPERONI PIZZAS TO GO, PLEASE

(But First things First...)

(Part 2)

By Paul Dallgas-Frey

King Nebuchadnezzar ...

... had a very long, hard-to-spell name!

He also happened to be a rich and mighty king.

He was the King of Babylon, and a long, long time ago, his kingdom was the greatest in all the world. But King Nebuchadnezzar wanted more. You always want more when all you want are things. And so King Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem, the holy city of Israel.

The King of Israel was in trouble.

He had forgotten how all the good things he had came from God. He forgot how God had given his people the land they were living in. And so he made silly wooden and metal statues, and thanked them instead. Like they had anything to do with all the good that happened! So God didn't help the King of Israel when the King of Babylon attacked. God left the king's wooden and metal statues to help him. They weren't any help at all.

King Nebuchadnezzar's army surrounded Jerusalem and captured it. They stole gold and silver treasures from God's temple, they captured many people, and took them all to Babylon.

One of the Israelites who was taken to Babylon was a strong young man named Daniel.

Daniel wasn't like the king of Israel. Daniel loved God, and did his best to obey him in everything he did.

So it happened that King Nebuchadnezzar ordered his chief official, a man named Ashpenaz, to choose the brightest and best young men of the Israelites. They had to be smart and strong and handsome to be worthy enough to serve the King.

Ashpenaz carefully made his choices. He had to choose well - you didn't want to displease the king! He chose the best young men from all of the captured Israelites, including Daniel, and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

Now it was Ashpenaz's job to teach these young men to read and write in Babylonian, and to make sure that they were fit and strong. King Nebuchadnezzar ordered that every day the young men were to eat the same food as the royal court.

And that was a problem for Daniel.

God had told the Israelites what they should eat to keep them healthy and well - after all, who would know better what makes our bodies work the best than the one who made them. But King Nebuchadnezzar didn't follow God's laws. And since he was a mighty and wealthy king, he could eat whatever he wanted to.

Imagine you were a rich and powerful king.

Maybe you would have pepperoni pizza with pop and ice cream every day. It sounds good. But it wouldn't be too good for you. Most of the time, too much of a good thing, isn't a good thing.

That's probably how it was with King Nebuchadnezzar. (Of course, they didn't have pizza and pop and ice cream back then. Just think, you can have something that once not even kings could have!)

But Daniel had made up his mind he was going to obey God no matter what. He wasn't going to eat the King's food. He was only going to eat what God had commanded. So God was with Daniel. When Daniel asked Ashpenaz to help him, God made Ashpenaz listen.

But Ashpenaz was afraid. He said to Daniel, "The King has ordered what you are to eat. If you don't look as strong and