



JUDITH  
C.H.H. Parry

Dramatis Personae

Manasseh, King of Israel  
Meshullemeth, his wife  
His Children  
Judith  
High Priest of Moloch  
Messenger of Holofernes

Chorus of Worshippers and Priests of Moloch, Inhabitants of Jerusalem, Assyrian Soldiers,  
Watchmen

ACT 1

Scene I - MOLOCH.

In the valley of Hinnom; the image of the god surrounded by Priests and Worshippers.

Chorus of Worshippers  
Hail, Moloch! Hail, awful god!  
Before whose frown the nations tremble.  
To thee we bring fresh offerings,  
To thee in dread amazement,  
With trembling limbs and head bowed low we come.

Thy mouth a ruddy furnace glows,  
Of roaring flame thy breath;  
The smoke curls black about thy brow,  
The awful pledge of Death!  
With arms outspread and open hand  
Thou awaitest the offspring of our land.  
Hear us! Hear us!

Thy rites are set,  
Thy priests are met,  
For good or ill  
Unfold thy will.  
Inspire us with thy fire divine  
And make us wholly thine!

Manasseh

Draw near and worship, O my people!

Your god makes known his dread command.  
Behold his priests, the bearers of his word, at hand.  
A noble sacrifice they claim,  
That he his dreaded wrath may spare.  
His favour may ye gladly share,  
Nor grudge your dearest to his flame.

Terrors surround him: earthquake and tempest.  
Deadly his breath is: plague and desolation.  
He turneth the day into darkness; he blotteth the sun out of heaven,  
And marreth the beauty of men with fell disease.

Chorus of Worshippers

Have mercy, dread Moloch; destroy us not!  
O lay aside thy terrors and withhold thine anger;  
Behold us with favour,  
Look kindly on thy faithful worshippers.

High Priest

Hear ye the word of your god!  
No holocausts nor blood of senseless beasts he needs.  
Nor offspring of the common herd of men;  
None but those may enter into union with the god,  
Within whose veins flows the blood of your King.

Worshippers

Hail! thou are highly favoured, King!  
Our god hath spoken and declared his will;  
We hail his choice with joy.

Manasseh

My children Moloch's!  
How should that be?  
O, mighty one, have pity,  
Spare him at least  
Who, hereafter enthroned,  
O'er Judah should hold sway.

Worshippers

The god demands  
The children of the King;  
His priests proclaim it,  
Who shall deny him?  
No other sacrifice avails!

Manasseh

No other sacrifice!

O bitter doom!  
Must I part from them, my life's joy,  
Who at my knees so often played,  
In whose dear eyes were looks of love!  
Is it thus I must condemn them, mine own dear innocents?  
Is Moloch wroth with me:  
Wherein have I angered him,  
That thus his hand should smite me  
And take my loved ones from me?  
What dread my soul possesses!  
What helpless fear and anguish!

Priests  
In vain thou seekest to keep them,  
The god will not forego them,  
His rites must be performed,  
The sacrifice accomplished;  
Beware his wrath!  
His fury awaketh.  
Shall Israel perish?

Manasseh  
O horror! despair!  
How shall I turn to meet them?

Worshippers  
Bring now the children!  
Haste ye! delay not!  
It is the god's decree,  
He by his priests hath spoken.  
His wrath and terrors will be put away.  
And visit us no more with pestilence and famine.

High Priest  
Harken, O King!  
The god thine offspring claims  
For Israel's good and thine.

We, his commands obeying,  
Seek now thy palace,  
And thence with solemn festal rites  
Thy children here will bring.  
The god will take them to himself, and Jerusalem in his great might  
Henceforth secure shall stand.

Worshippers  
Hail, Moloch, hail!  
Thy dread commands with trembling joy we hear!  
Protect us! In thee alone we put our trust;

Thy favour is our comfort, thy power alone our stay.  
All hail, great Moloch, god of flame!  
Thy solemn rites shall be performed!

Scene II - THE CHILDREN

In the Palace of the King, Meshullemeth and the King's Children.

Children

O mother, tell us once again  
The story of our people:  
How God brought Israel forth  
From Egypt's bonds of old,  
And lead them to this land.

Meshullemeth

My children, He is Israel's God no more!  
His courts are desolate and still,  
His altars are profaned;  
His people seek Him not.

Children

Yet are there some that still serve Him,  
And trust in His love and mercy,  
And, if we entreat Him, will He not pardon  
For the sake of our fathers, whom He so loved.

Meshullemeth

Alas! my children, great cause hath He for anger.  
His temples have they defiled;  
His word have they contemned;  
The deeds that He did for them have they forgotten.  
And requited His love with scorn.

Yet once again will I tell to you  
The old familiar story,  
So, when I pass away,  
Ye too may tell unto your children  
The loving kindness of our God.

Long since in Egypt's plenteous land  
Our fathers were oppressed;  
But God, whose chosen folk they were,  
Smote those who long enslaved them there,  
And all their woes redressed.

The Red Sea stayed them not at all,  
Nor depths of liquid green;  
On either hand a mighty wall

Of waters clear rose high at His call,  
And they passed through between.

In deserts wild they wandered long,  
They sinned and went astray;  
But yet His arm to help was strong,  
He pardoned them, though they did wrong,  
And brought them on their way.

At last to this good land they came,  
With fruitful plenty blest;  
Here glorious men won endless fame,  
Here God made holy Zion's name,  
And here He gave them rest.

Children  
O may we ne'er forget what He hath done,  
Nor prove unmindful of His love,  
That, like the constant sun,  
On Israel hath shone,  
And sent down blessings from above.

Priests  
Great Queen, the King calls for his children,  
Their presence he awaits  
Where throng the hosts of Israel,  
In worship lowly bowed before their god.  
Moloch awaits you! Come!

Meshullemeth  
What mean ye, ominous messengers?  
Too well your emblems I know:  
Ye are of the priesthood of that monstrous deity  
Whose roaring throat devours our people's offspring.

Priests  
We are the ministers of that dread god  
Before whose might all Israel trembles.  
The god demands a sacrifice,  
The King wills that his children witness it,  
And they must come anon.

Children  
Let us obey our father's word,  
No ill can come to us when he is nigh.  
He loves us well, and we will trust ourselves to him  
And to our God, who never faileth them that look to Him.

Meshullemeth

Alas, my children! My heart is full of fear for you!  
May the God of our fathers watch over you  
And bring you safely to my arms again.

Priests

Behold, thou helper of Israel!  
Behold, O flame-breathing Moloch!  
Thy priests thy dread will obey.  
Right worthy sacrifice to thee we bring.

Judith

Lady! thou Queen of Israel! Lift up thine head! Forget thou not that the Eternal dwelleth in the heavens!

Though into the valley of the shadow of death our helpless feet have wandered, though we should fall into the gaping jaws of hell, yet shall we not fear, nor shall our spirits be moved. For He will not fail us; He forsaketh not them that seek Him, nor shall He leave those who in His word have trusted to find no rest but in the grave.

The strength of Israel is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. Hath He not said? shall not He make it good? When He hath spoken doth it not come to pass? Thus saith the Lord who created thee, O Jacob, He that formed thee, O Israel:

Fear not! for I have called thee, thou art Mine! When thou passeth through the waters I will be with thee; though thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned.

For I am the Lord thy God; The Holy One; thy Saviour!

Scene III - THE SACRIFICE

In the Valley of Hinnom, the image of the god flaming. Manasseh and Worshippers assembled. Priests approach, leading the King's Children.

Priests

Moloch! Moloch! give ear!

Manasseh

My people, see, the holy children come,  
Greet them with joyous songs;  
And raise your voices to the mighty lord  
Who takes their stainless sweetness to himself.  
He alone is god!

Worshippers

Crown we the stainless victims  
With flowers and garlands meet,  
With graceful dance their path attend  
And music soft and sweet!  
Moloch, Israel's god and king,  
Accepts the sacrifice we bring!

Priests

Moloch! Moloch! give ear!

Manasseh

His holy priests, with grave and solemn rites,  
Meet them in circling row;  
And raise their hands towards that awful form,  
From whose dread will our ills and blessings flow.  
He alone is lord!

Priests

Moloch! Moloch! give ear!

Worshippers

Lead them with gentle steps and slow,  
And low-breathed reverent song,  
Where waits the altar of our god,  
To whom their souls belong.  
Moloch, Israel's god and king,  
Accepts the sacrifice we bring.

Manasseh

O awful god, behold our utmost gift:  
What can we offer more?  
What most we cherish we yield to thee,  
To thee we yield our dearest heart's delight.  
To thee we bring our children,  
At thy command we offer them;  
Behold thy suppliants and receive our prayer.

Priests

Moloch! Moloch! give ear!

Worshippers

Place them aloft in his right hand,  
Where bright the flame doth glow.  
That when it wraps them in its flood  
Their souls to him may go.  
Hail, great god! all hail!

Priests

Moloch! Moloch! give ear!

Judith

Stay your hideous mockeries!  
Too long your monstrous idol has been a curse to Israel!  
Thou weak and faithless King,  
Deserted of God,  
How art thou abased,  
How fallen low;

Thy high and Kingly office  
Degraded and shamed,  
The charge of God's people  
Disgraced and defamed!  
For this empty idol  
Thad maddens you with fear;  
To this will you sacrifice  
All that you most hold dear?

Now shall the Lord Jehovah visit you,  
The Lord ye have forsaken;  
Now shall He smite you with a rod of iron.  
The host of Assur shall be your scourge,  
And lay Jerusalem in the dust.

The sound of arms is in the air,  
The gleam of swords and spears is flashing in the sun.  
They come! they come! and will not spare, Till the vengeance of the Lord of Hosts be done.

The God whom your fathers worshipped,  
Jehovah, shall fight against you;  
And ye have none to help you  
Nor answer your prayer,  
But this black, hideous mass of stone  
That ye yourselves have carven.  
Call to your Moloch!

Hurl in your children!  
Cut yourselves and howl,  
He shall not hear!  
Tear your hair and wail!  
He shall not perceive it.  
His worshippers shall perish,  
His priests shall be slain;  
And they that trust in him  
Shall call upon his name in vain!

People  
Who is this that railleth at Moloch?  
Jehovah is gone, His terrors are nought;  
None e'er beheld His semblance;  
His temples are empty,  
His courts are deserted,  
And them that serve Him shall Moloch devour.

Cast her in the furnace!  
She hath defied great Moloch!  
Let her be sacrificed!

Messenger

O King, give ear!

From Zion's hills a sight is seen!

A host of warriors winding down the ways;

They fill the valleys far and near,

Like waters of a sweeping flood.

Behind them all the land is waste.

The people fly from them, and none withstand them.

All Israel is scattered on the hills

As a flock whose shepherd slumbers.

Manasseh

Fear not, my people;

Your god his power shall now make plain!

The fierceness of his flame shall consume them,

And ye shall look for them in vain!

Finale - THE COMING OF THE ASSYRIANS

Worshippers of Moloch

The host of Assur is like a swarm of locusts; the land may not be seen for the multitude of them.

The wrath of Moloch is like a mighty whirlwind; he shall but breathe on them and they shall be no more.

Judith

Jerusalem was loved of the Lord as a spouse is loved of her husband. But she betrayed Him, and now shall the vengeance of her God be accomplished.

Priests of Moloch

Moloch, Moloch, hear us now,

Who should deliver us but thou?

See, with bended knees we bow;

Hear they helpless worshippers!

Worshippers

Have we not unceasing sought thee?

Have we not all honour wrought thee?

Have we not our offspring brought thee?

Hear thy helpless worshippers.

Here in Hinnom's awful vale,

Where the sun on high looks pale,

Where our hearts with terror fail;

Hear thy helpless worshippers!

Priests and Worshippers

Rise in might and scatter our foes,

Wither them in mortal throes,

By thy breath of flame that glows,

Help thy faithful worshippers!

### Assyrian Soldiers

The heroes of Assur are like a host of lions,  
They faint not, they falter not, though thousands  
of foes withstand them.

Their spears are like the stars of heaven,  
Their swords are like a sunlit flood,  
Their shields are like the ocean waves,  
That cannot be numbered nor withstood;  
Their shout is "Victory!"

### People

Fly! Fly!

The host of Assur is come on us  
They sweep our warriors before them.

Is Moloch dumb?

Will he not smite them?

He slumbers,

His priests must waken him!

### Assyrians

Slay them! slay them!

Smite them hip and thigh!

Pursue them! destroy them!

Hurl them from on high!

### People

What cry is rising from our homes?

What shout of horror and of pain?

What flame goes roaring up to heaven?

What crash of walls, what din resounds?

That shakes the earth and darkens the air

And fills our souls with uttermost despair.

Moloch! Moloch! hear us now!

Who should deliver us but thou?

Despair! he heedeth not!

In vain we cry to him.

We fall, we die,

No help comes nigh.

Death only mocks

Our piteous cry.

Jerusalem, that was Queen of the nations, is brought low;

Her glory is gone.

Her children are captives, and her heroes slain.

Thus hath he Lord her God required her iniquities!

### INTERMISSION

## Intermezzo - MANASSEH'S REPENTANCE IN CAPTIVITY IN BABYLON

Manasseh

I will bear the indignation of God; because I have sinned against Him.  
The Lord hath sore corrected me, but He hath not given me over unto death.  
I will wait for the salvation of God; for He will hear and deliver me.  
He shall bring me forth into the light, and I shall behold His righteousness.  
Then will I praise Him all the days of my life; even as the heavens do praise Him, whose glory shall be for evermore.

## ACT 2

### Scene I - THE RETURN OF MANASSEH

The Jews in desolate Jerusalem  
Wail, wail ye solitary people!  
Your land is wasted;  
Gone are your heroes,  
Your women are widows,  
Your children are slain.  
No more the vine its clusters bears,  
No more the cornfields shine with grain;  
In far-off lands our King a captive mourns,  
And calls on Israel's God in vain.

Wail, wail ye solitary people!  
Jerusalem the holy  
Lieth in ashes;  
The walls are broken,  
The roofs are gone!  
Where children played reigns silence unbroken.  
The streets where they wandered with grass are o'ergrown;  
Deserted are the well-loved homes of men,  
The courts of God are still and lone!

Meshullemeth

The Lord is long suffering and merciful; He keepeth not His anger for ever.  
He looked on our affliction and pain, and hath forgiven us all our sins.  
Even now, unto your mourning city, He bringeth home your king.  
No more the voice of the oppressor shall ye fear;  
No more a shameful tribute shall ye pay.  
The Lord Himself will fight for you; His arm shall overthrow your enemies;  
And Jerusalem from her stain shall be cleansed,  
And shine as a bride in the morning of her bridal.  
Your streets again shall echo with your children's voices,  
Your folds shall be full again with your bleating flocks;  
Your fields shall also stand so thick with ripening corn  
That they shall laugh and sing.

Chorus of Jews

Our King is come again from distant lands,  
Where he has long been held in bitter bondage;  
With joyful song let us greet him, and thank our God,  
Who answers thus our hope and trust in Him.

Manasseh

Behold how great is the mercy of our God towards them that seek Him. He hath brought us  
again to the land the He gave to our forefathers.  
When we rebelled against the word of the Lord, and contemned the counsel of the Most High,  
He brought down our hearts with heaviness; we fell, and there was none to help us.  
Then cried we unto the Lord in our trouble, and He delivered us from our distresses.

Meshullemeth

He brought us out of the darkness and out of the shadow of death.  
He breaketh the gates of brass, and smiteth the bars of iron asunder.

Judith

O that men would therefor praise the Lord for His goodness, and declare the wonders that He  
doeth for the children of men.

Judith, Meshullemeth, and Manasseh

That they would offer unto Him the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and tell out His works with  
gladness.

## Scene II - THE MESSAGE OF HOLOFERNES

Messenger

Hear ye the words of the captain of the great King, whose power o'ershadows the world!  
Let not your King with subtle words deceive you, nor the God ye have trusted in mislead you to  
your hurt.  
To Assur's lord ye shall bow; to him your tribute is due.  
From him ye may yet find mercy; or, if ye offend him, death.  
In three days if ye yield your city ye shall find grace and favour;  
But if the third day be o'er-passed, and still ye reject his offers, then will he smite and spare not.  
Your city shall be razed to the ground, no stone thereof shall stand upon another.  
The mountains shall be drunken with your blood, the fields shall be full of your dead bodies, your  
footsteps nowhere shall be found.  
Thus saith the chieftain who leads the great King's armies; none of his words shall be in vain.

Chorus of Jews

Woe, Woe!  
Our city's walls are broken,  
The gates are shattered,  
Nor shields nor spears have we  
Nor men to wield them.  
The enemy triumpheth,  
And there is none to help us.  
Doth the God of Israel sleep?

Or hath He cast us off for ever?  
Will He be no more entreated?

Judith

Let us give thanks unto the Lord our God., Who trieth us as He hath tried our fathers. These things He surely does to prove us, for He hath power to defend us, even to-day, if it please Him. His power standeth not in multitude, nor in the might of men's hands. His arm alone can bring us salvation, His righteousness sustain us. Hear me now, and I will do a thing which shall go throughout all generations to the glory of the God of Israel.

Ye shall stand this night at the gate, and I will go forth with my maiden, and within those days that ye are summoned to yield your city our God shall visit Israel by my hand.

I pray thee, O God of my fathers, thou God of the inheritance of Israel, hear thou my prayer! Thou art the God of the afflicted, the helper of the oppressed, the protector of the forlorn, the Saviour of them that are without hope.

We pray Thee to make every nation and tribe acknowledge that thou art the God of all power and might, and that there is none that protecteth Thy people but Thou.

Command the gates of the city to be opened unto me, that I may for forth and accomplish those things wherof we have spoken.

Chorus of People

The God of our fathers give thee favour and accomplish thine enterprise to the glory of Israel. So shall His Name be exalted, and Jerusalem in His strength shall find safety.

Scene III - THE EXPLOIT OF JUDITH

The walls of Jerusalem. Night. Manasseh and the Watchmen looking toward the camp of the Assyrians.

Watchmen

See ye the camp fires of the host of Assur:

Doth any stir?

Hear ye the measured pacing of their watchmen:

Doth any cry?

The night is still, the stars look down from Heaven,  
God watcheth o'er His people.

Manasseh

Jerusalem is a city

Held in the hand of God,

He brought our people from far

And planted them herein.

Though wasted now by war

And ruined for her sin.

Yet will He look on her in pity

And raise her from the sod.

### Watchmen

Look where the darkness deepens close beside the hills:  
Is any flash of arms?  
Look where the mountain's outline standeth out against the sky:  
Is any form of man?  
The night is still, the stars look down from Heaven,  
God watcheth o'er His people.

### Manasseh

When Israel transgressed  
And wandered from God's way,  
He left them to fall before their foes  
And broke their rebel pride.  
But chastened now by woes  
They seek once more their Guide;  
He fails not the oppressed,  
His arm shall be their stay!

### Watchmen

See where the pathway windeth deep along the valley:  
Doth any come?  
See where it leadeth close below the walls of the city:  
Who draweth nigh?  
The night doth pass, the sun's light groweth eastward,  
God succoureth His people!

### Judith

Ho! ye upon the walls! Open unto me! The Lord hath worked wonders by my hand, and brought to nought the enemies of His people.  
Take now this head, and hang it on the highest place before your walls; and as soon as the morning shall appear and the sun come forth upon the earth, take ye every man his weapons and go forth from the city.  
And when the Assyrians shall go to the tent of Holofernes, and shall find nought but his dead body, fear shall fall upon them; and they shall flee before you through all the coasts of Israel, and ye shall smite them with the edge of the sword till there be not one of them left.

### Chorus of Jews

Arise, O Israel! smite ye your enemies, for the Lord hath delivered them into your hands!  
He shall dip His foot in the blood of His enemies,  
He shall dash them in pieces like a vessel of clay.  
By the breath of His mouth shall they be consumed,  
In the fire of His fury shall they melt away.

### Manasseh

God breaketh the battle. From the midst of mine enemies hath He delivered me, and out of the hands of them that persecuted me.  
Assur came out of the mountains of the north; he came with ten thousands of his army. The multitude thereof stopped the torrents, his horsemen covered the hills.

He boasted that he would burn up all my borders and dash the suckling children against the ground. But the Almighty Lord hath disappointed him and overthrown him by a woman's hand. The mighty one did not fall by the young men; neither did the sons of the Titans smite him. Judith, the daughter of Merari, weakened him by the beauty of her countenance. She put off the garments of her widowhood for them that were oppressed in Zion. Her sandals ravished his eyes, her beauty took his mind prisoner. The falchion passed through his neck. Then my afflicted shouted; my weak ones cried aloud for joy. Our foes were astonished; they lifted up their voices. The sons of the damsels pierced them through; they perished by the battle of the Lord.

#### Finale - JUDITH and CHORUS

Judith

I will sing unto the Lord a new song.

O Lord, Thou art glorious, wonderful in strength. Thou art clothed with majesty and honour. Let all creatures serve Thee. Thou spakest, and they were made; Thou didst send forth Thy Spirit and created them; there is none that can resist Thy voice.

The mountains shall be moved from their foundations in the waters; the rocks shall melt like wax at Thy presence. The foundations of the earth shall shake. They shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, when the Lord is come to execute judgment.

Yet is He merciful to them that seek Him; and they that trust Him shall be even as Mount Zion, which may not be removed, but standeth fast for ever.

For even as the mountains stand about Jerusalem, so standeth the Lord about His people from this time forth for evermore.

Break forth, break forth into singing, for the Lord hath delivered His people Israel!

Chorus

Put off, O Jerusalem, the garment of thy mourning, put on the comeliness of glory that cometh of God for ever.

For He will show thy brightness unto every nation under heaven. Thy name shall be called the peace of righteousness, the glory of God's worship.

He bringeth thy people, exalted with glory, rejoicing in the remembrance of God.

And He shall lead Israel with joy in the light of His glory, with mercy and righteousness that cometh from Him.