



by John B. Henry



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Arguing with God

A play for women and men of all seasons, *Arguing with God* explores the universal question of why we exist, the eternal conflict between power and justice, and the chronic folly of believing in a “chosen people.” The unstarry-eyed drama draws on Old Testament characters and stories to entertain, jolt and reflect on the nature of the human condition. *Arguing with God* invites the audience to choose between competing advocates for what makes life worth living.



About the AUTHOR

The playwright is the son of an Episcopal minister and a devout Christian mother. John Henry read the Bible cover to cover every year growing up. A half century later, when he reread it, he found himself shocked by the violence of the Old Testament. *Arguing with God* is his interpretation of the books of Moses and their relevance to America’s role in the world.

Creative **TEAM & CAST**

for the Stone Hill Theatrical Foundation

premiere performance,

June 5, 2016:

Director: Rick Davis

Costume & Props Director: Paula Hughes

Costume Assistant: Sonja Taylor

Drama Poo Bah: Richard Squires

Sculptor: Joan Danziger

Humorists: Richard Rymland, Travis Brown

Moral Stylist: Tuck Grinnell

Moral Philosopher: Bruce Fein

Literary Philosopher: Francisco Prado

Augustinian: John Kiser

Stage Consultant: Cooby Greenway

Photography & Video: Ray Boc

Video & Editing: Mark Cooley

Judaic Advisors: Mark Breslaw & Allan Brownfeld

Hebraic Advisor: Ed Luttwak

Social Media: Max Mohr



Singer: Pat Nicklin

Jester: Sam Lewis

Yahweh: Travis Brown

Adam & Ghost of Adam: Bill Marmon

Eve & Ghost of Eve: Mary Sherman Willis

Noah & Ghost of Noah: Peter Stenner

Noah's Family: Maeve Ciuba, Oliver & Hugh Davidson,

Evelyn & Nate White

Joan & Ghost of Joan: Gail Kitch

Abraham & Ghost of Abraham: Bill Nitze

Sarah & Ghost of Sarah: Faith Lewis

Isaac & Ghost of Isaac: Maeve Ciuba

Circumciser-in-Chief: Bob Randolph
Moses & Ghost of Moses: Hugh Hill
Samuel: Joe Baldacchino
King Saul: Ed Hughes
Amalekite King & Ghost: Peter Stenner
Young David: Max Blumenthal
King David: Colin Davies
Goliath: Casey Eitner
Michal: Wendy Garner
Bathsheba: Gay Barclay
Ghosts of David's Children: Maeve Ciuba, Oliver & Hugh Davidson,
 Evelyn & Nate White
King Solomon: John Lesinski
Pharaoh: Wolfgang Schaefer
Daughter of Pharaoh: Dorothy McGhee
Hittite Wife: Deverell Pedersen
Ghost of First Born: Oliver Davidson
Attendant: John Jacquemin
Notary: Horton Beebe-Center
Sign Master: Sandra Read
House of Israel & Ghost/Levi Group/Philistines: (1) Joe Baldacchino
 (2) John Jacquemin (3) Bill Marmon (4) Bill Nitze (5) Wolfgang Schaefer
 (6) Peter Stenner (7) Casey Eitner (8) Walter Nicklin (9) Bart Ciuba
 (10) Jack Schore (11) John Lesinski (12) Ed Hughes (13) Hugh Hill
 (14) Max Blumenthal (15) Colin Davies (16) Horton Beebe-Center
 (17) Andre Lang (18) Bob Randolph (19) Chris Manion
 (20) John Kiser (21) Robert Kozak (22) Nate White
 (23) Oliver Davidson (24) Hugh Davidson
Women of Israel: (1) Louisa Preston (2) Nina Herrick
 (3) Deverell Pedersen (4) Molly McCartney (5) Gay Barclay
 (6) Dorothy McGhee (7) Mary Sherman Willis (8) Wendy Garner
 (9) Gail Kitch (10) Faith Lewis (11) Anne Pallie
 (12) Susan Rappaport (13) Elizabeth Lee (14) Nina Randolph
 (15) Joanne Ivancic (16) Evelyn White

SCENE I: EVE & ADAM

JESTER: (below) In the beginning, the paradise of the first man and woman fell into discord over Power and Justice. Let's listen in on the conflict.

ADAM: (below) Be quiet, my Darling, while I thank God for making the Garden of Eden perfect.

EVE: (below) I have something to say to him too. Making *me* out of your rib made *you* a star. And me only a sideshow.

GOD: POWER! OBEDIENCE! That's what I'm about! If you accept that, we'll get along.

EVE: Truth! Justice! That's what I'm about! We've got a problem.
(God laughs loudly)

ADAM: Women should be seen and not heard.

EVE: Stop insulting me. I'm standing up for my rights.

GOD: (points to tree) Take heed! This is the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

EVE: Why did you make it?

ADAM: Be quiet.

EVE: If we don't ask questions, we won't learn anything.

GOD: You shall not eat the fruit from this tree. Am I clear?

EVE: By what authority can you tell me what not to eat?

GOD: God's authority. There is no other.

EVE: That's not an answer. Why do I have Reason? An edict doesn't justify itself.

GOD: My edicts do! Thinking is dangerous.

EVE: Like it or not, you created me with unalienable rights!

GOD: Rights? I don't do rights.

EVE: But I do. I must arm myself with the power of knowledge.

GOD: Stop your insolence. Who do you think you are? Some kind of Old Testament Rabble Rouser? I just created creation. Get with the program. (storms out)

ADAM: We've got a good thing going. Why anger Him?

EVE: I won't be treated like a child.

ADAM: I just want to have a Good Time.

EVE: Having a Good Time without Truth and Justice is unacceptable. He doesn't answer my questions. He just keeps repeating himself.

ADAM: All I want is *pleasure*.

EVE: Do we exist only to eat, fornicate, sleep and die? Surely we have more meaning than that.

ADAM: Stop lecturing me. You sound like a moral philosopher.

EVE: God gave us no reason not to eat the apple.

ADAM: It isn't worth the risk.

EVE: We must be masters of our fate. (eats apple) It's delicious. Have a bite my darling.

ADAM: Now that you've taken the risk, what I do won't count. (eats apple)

EVE: Now we're captains of our souls.

GOD: (on his throne, in a cloud of smoke) You **DISOBEYED** me! Get out! Get out!

ADAM: For how long?

GOD: As a concession to the shortness of your life, how about **FOREVER!**

ADAM: Forever is a long time.

EVE: You have no right to punish us.

GOD: You're out of here!

EVE: The secret of happiness is freedom.

GOD: You're fired!

EVE: And the secret of freedom is a brave heart. (shouts) You don't scare **ME**.

GOD: You and your likes will be burned as witches and stoned to death unless you do as you're told!

EVE: Men will be tyrants. We women have to fight for Justice.

GOD: There is no **JUSTICE** without **ORDER**.

EVE: **JUSTICE** is the first casualty of your **ORDER**. You'll never understand that because your job depends on believing the opposite. (exits, followed by a terrified ADAM)

GOD: I made those two pay the supreme price for **DISOBEDIENCE**. I know what's best for people. I'll put the fear of Me in them!

SCENE II: JOAN & NOAH

1. KILLING THE WORLD

JESTER: (below) Eve's and Adam's descendants were equally disobedient. But hope springs eternal. Following trial and error,

God creates a new chosen people by destroying the old. The Creator becomes the Destroyer.

GOD: Noah, DISOBEDIENCE has run wild. Eve—that shrew—was a horrible example.

NOAH: Worse than a migraine?

GOD: She had a lot of lip. She constantly harped about equality and JUSTICE. She made a cult out of reason.

JOAN: That's male chauvinism on steroids! Isn't it possible Eve was right and you were wrong?

GOD: No. Let me be clear: God's never wrong. Don't try to play that WOMAN CARD on ME.

JOAN: And don't YOU play the MAN CARD on ME. If you lighten up, I won't talk so much about TRUTH.

NOAH: You threw the dice by giving Eve and Adam free will. And you lost. The way things are going, you might as well throw in the towel and kill them all.

GOD: That's the most intelligent thing I've heard you say. Just kill every living thing on earth. (Genesis 6:6) Perfect, I'll god smack them.

NOAH: Except for me and my family, of course.

JOAN: I can't believe what I'm hearing. Have you no humanity? That's wickedness incarnate.

NOAH: Hush woman! Can't you see I'm negotiating? Let me make a deal with him. Being killed isn't my idea of a Good Time. (turns to God) Let's save a few animals. Evolution takes centuries.

GOD: That's right. Go and build an ark.

NOAH: An ark?

GOD: I'm going to drown every living thing. Save a few.

NOAH: How are you going to do that?

GOD: I'm going to melt the polar icecaps. (pause, pointing at Noah) Just look over your shoulder.

NOAH: Oh my God, the ocean is rising!

GOD: Climate change! After this, the survivors of the flood will tremble at the thought of DISOBEDIENCE.

2. JOAN'S COVENANT

NOAH: Well, it's done. How do you feel? You've destroyed the world.

JOAN: I'm nauseated. All those dead toddlers on the beach in pink tennis shoes. Only a few days before, they were nursing at the bosoms of their loving mothers.

GOD: (slow) How you do go on.

JOAN: Here's a sample of your gruesome handiwork.

ATTENDANT: (enters, drowned little girl in arms) I found her along with her drowned mother, father and twin sister.

GOD: It's just collateral damage. You're sentimental. Go now and replenish the earth!

JOAN: You got to be kidding. You want ME to create more kids for YOU to kill?

GOD: Would you reconsider if I agree not to kill your seed?

JOAN: Yes, but only with a written covenant.

GOD: Are you trying to trump me?

JOAN: You can't live with us and you certainly can't live without us. I have all the leverage. Without ME, you'll have no more chosen people.

GOD: Won't you take my word? I mean, it is, as they say, the "Word of God."

JOAN: I live by the motto "Trust but verify." (hands document up)
Get me a notary!

GOD: You've mastered the art of the deal. (pause) Where do I sign?

NOTARY: (enters from SL rock): Right here! (notarizes covenant with blow torch)

SCENE III: ABRAHAM

1. COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

JESTER: Time passed and people multiplied, but their nature didn't change. Once again, God is confounded. His experiment with Joan and Noah *shipwrecked*. Their descendants are as incorrigible as Eve's and Adam's. So God returns to the drawing board for a third chosen people. This time he singles out Abraham.

GOD: I'm going to try another chosen people experiment. This time with YOU. This time there will be limitless opportunities for wealth, power and fame.

ABRAHAM: How can I speak for anyone but myself? No one elected

me. Are you giving me the authority to be a dictator?

GOD: Absolutely.

ABRAHAM: If this be treason to Justice, I'll make the most of it.
What are the terms and conditions?

GOD: I'll make your seed fertile. I'll give you land where thou art a stranger. (Genesis 15:5)

ABRAHAM: There's a vision! But it could be misconstrued as aggression.

GOD: Your seed will occupy the land that stretches from the Nile to the Euphrates.

ABRAHAM: That's a lot of land for a lot of seed.

GOD: I'll take this land from the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Rephaims, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, the Jebusites and the Perizzites. (Genesis 15:18-21)

ABRAHAM: ...*the plebiscites, the parasites...* Wow!

GOD: I'll out the "ites." Might makes right.

ABRAHAM: We'll be fighting forever. We'll have an unlimited supply of enemies.

GOD: Don't worry. I'll drive the resisters into the sea!

ABRAHAM: Chosen people stand taller and see farther than the non-chosen.

GOD: You're an exceptional people. You're an indispensable nation.

ABRAHAM: I follow the arrow of your logic. So you've given us the touch of providence?

GOD: That's right. I've entrusted mankind's destiny in your keeping. World order depends on you.

HOUSE OF ISRAEL: (singing and marching) Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword: His truth is marching on. Gory, Gory, Hallelujah! Gory, Gory, Hallelujah! His truth is marching on.

ABRAHAM: Our army sings from your hymn sheet.

GOD: My truth marches on. I kill...I wound...I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh.

(Deuteronomy 32.39-42.)

ABRAHAM: We come. We see. We conquer.

GOD: That's right, it's simple: You give me OBEDIENCE, I give you

unheard-of POWER.

ABRAHAM: That's a great trade. We'll live forever by the sword.

GOD: Forget soft power. I prefer shock and awe. Rule by fear.

ABRAHAM: Is there anything more I have to do?

GOD: Yes, the sons of Israel can't marry the daughters of unchosen people.

ABRAHAM: Why not?

GOD: I wasn't born yesterday. I've learned my lesson with Eve. Females charm their husbands. Before long chosen men will worship the gods of their women rather than ME.

ABRAHAM: I won't quarrel with that.

GOD: Every son shall be circumcised on his eighth day.

ABRAHAM: Boy—that certainly will make us exceptional. We'll have lots of skin in the game.

GOD: OBEY or be cut off from Israel. Take his foreskin NOW!

CHIEF CIRCUMCISER: This won't take long with my sharp knife. Dammit, hold still.

SARAH: (enters quickly) Please be careful. I'm his wife! And he has a lot more sowing to do!

2. KILLING THE RIGHTEOUS

JESTER: I hope you didn't miss it—the House of Israel sang “Gory, Gory, Hallelujah!”—not “Glory, Glory, Hallelujah!” But the covenant gave the chosen people the power to argue with God.

GOD: I've decided to destroy Sodom. (Genesis 18:23-32)

ABRAHAM: Why?

GOD: The city has gone wild with sin.

ABRAHAM: What sin?

GOD: Gambling! Alcohol! And women!

ABRAHAM: Is it sinful to have fun?

GOD: You betcha. I'm a jealous God. It detracts from ME.

ABRAHAM: But how can you be judge, jury, prosecutor and executioner at the same time?

GOD: That's the best definition of God I've ever heard.

ABRAHAM: If you're not careful, you'll be hated.

GOD: My covenant with Joan only says I can't kill everyone.

ABRAHAM: Isn't it UNJUST to slay the innocent with the guilty?

GOD: Joan's covenant didn't prohibit UNJUST killings.

ABRAHAM: If there are 50 innocent, wilt thou not spare the city?

GOD: If I find 50, I'll stay my hand.

ABRAHAM: What if there are 5 less than 50, wilt thou also destroy the city for lack of 5?

GOD: If I find 45, I'll not destroy Sodom.

ABRAHAM: What if there are 40?

GOD: I'll not destroy it for 40's sake.

ABRAHAM: How about 30?

GOD: I'll not destroy it if I find 30.

ABRAHAM: What if there are 20?

GOD: That's it! Not a single sake more! You get 20.

ABRAHAM: Better risk the guilty getting off than punishing the innocent. What if 10 innocents are found in the city?

GOD: Oh, all right. I'll not destroy it for 10's sake, but that's my bottom line. (Abraham leaves) (pause) This deal's meaningless. I decide between guilt and innocence. And to my way of thinking, the Not-yet Guilty are as guilty as the guilty. So I'll destroy them all.

3. KILLING ONLY SON

JESTER: Abraham stopped arguing with God and became the pliable instrument of his will. But his wife Sarah could not remain silent when God ordered her child's execution.

GOD: Abraham, I'm giving you an opportunity to prove your OBEDIENCE. Take your only son Isaac to the mountain and sacrifice him as a burnt offering to ME.

ABRAHAM: Anything to please you. I'm good at following orders. (Abraham walks down to join Isaac at altar)

SARAH: (enters) I inherited Eve's and Joan's playbook. I don't tremble before God. I was steeled by the agony of child birth at 90—in case you forgot that!

ABRAHAM: Come here Isaac. Lie down. Open your tunic. Look me in the eye. (Abraham quickly lays Isaac on altar & pulls out knife.)

ISAAC: Please Dad, don't kill me!

SARAH: In the name of God, have you gone mad?

ABRAHAM: Exactly, it's in the name of God.
SARAH: Didn't you plead for the innocent in Sodom?
ABRAHAM: Yes, I did.
SARAH: Now you'll do anything to curry God's favor. Even the unjust killing of your own blood. (pause) Yahweh, if you order Abraham to murder my child, you'll unleash every mother's wrath to the end of time.
GOD: Not another Woman Card! I thought I was done with Eve and Joan! Motherly cackles won't save Isaac. He will be saved by Abraham's blind Obedience.
SARAH: No, he'll be saved by me! (*Begins to exit, SL ground level, her arms wrapped protectively around ISAAC*) Let this be a lesson to you Isaac: It's better to Disobey and be Just than to Obey and be Unjust. Listen to your mother: When you have a son, tell him about today and have his son tell his son, and his son tell his son, and... (*continuing and trailing off as they exit*)

SCENE IV: MOSES

I. TEN COMMANDMENTS

JESTER: (ground) Time passes. The chosen people were enslaved in Egypt for 400 years. Moses leads their Exodus, but feels pangs of conscience over God's murderous ways.
MOSES: Why did you harden the heart of Pharaoh? The 1st plague killed 10,000. The 7th killed 300,000. Then you killed 500,000 firstborn Egyptian sons. (S. Wells: Drunk With Blood)
GOD: He was off his rocker. Pharaoh thought he was god.
MOSES: And he headed the world's mightiest army. Why did you force him to resist?
GOD: I wanted to show him who's Boss.
MOSES: Like smashing a hornet's nest so you could attack the angry hornets?
GOD: You got it.
MOSES: There's no justification for killing except self-defense.
GOD: You call it slaughter. I call it management style.
MOSES: Have you no sense of decency?
GOD: It's all about winning. My ratings are soaring. So get over it!

MOSES: What are those stones for?
GOD: I've put my 10 non-negotiable commandments on 2 tablets.
MOSES: Don't binding covenants require the knowing consent of both parties?
GOD: Not in my legal system.
MOSES: An ultimatum isn't a covenant.
GOD: In my universe, it is. Listen carefully. All my commandments are equal, but some are more equal than others. If the first two are strictly honored, I'll give wiggle room for the others. After all, you're only human.
MOSES: What's the first?
GOD: "I am the Lord thy God...Thou shalt have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20: 2, 3)
MOSES: Ok, so what's the second?
GOD: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image."
MOSES: You flunk Hebrew for redundancy. The second just repeats the first.
GOD: Stop interrupting me. I talk. YOU listen.
MOSES: I'm sorry.
GOD: Here's the rest: "I am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and the fourth generation of them that hate me." (Exodus 20: 3, 4, 5)
MOSES: I've got two problems with that. Don't talk about jealousy. It doesn't become you. And guilt by association turns people against you.
GOD: I like my power arbitrary. Here are my sermons in stone: the first tablet with my first 2 commandments. (hands to Moses) And the second tablet with the 8 lesser commandments. (hands to Moses)
MOSES: (walking away) I'm unhappy with the way things are. But at least he likes stone.

2. KILLING CHOSEN PEOPLE

JESTER: The chosen people quickly learn they're fodder for God's killing fields.
MOSES: (breaks tablets) Israelites are worshipping a golden calf.
GOD: Take thy sword and go throughout the camp and slay your brother, your companion, and your neighbor. (Exodus 32:27) (Levi Group swing swords, House of Israel fall, death music)

MOSES: Get ahold of yourself. It's one thing to kill Egyptians. It's another thing to kill your chosen people.

GOD: My wrath waxes hot against my stiff-necked people. Honor ME.

MOSES: Why don't we have trials?

GOD: God doesn't do trials.

MOSES: We don't even know who's guilty.

GOD: The Not-yet-Guilty are as guilty as the guilty. The jaws of POWER can devour any one at any time.

MOSES: You're setting a terrible precedent.

GOD: No. It's a wonderful precedent. Don't forget: I'm the only eye in the sky.

MOSES: Some future ruler with some future technology may kill suspected evildoers without accusation or trial based on secret and speculative evidence.

GOD: That's the price of ORDER. I don't do due process.

MOSES: What harm did the chosen people do by worshipping another god?

GOD: They harmed ME. It's all about ME. It's GOD or nothing!

MOSES: Since when is insulting your vanity a capital crime?

GOD: I've had it with chosen people. I'll kill every last one of them! (Exodus 32:12).

MOSES: (serious) I beseech thee, turn from thy fierce wrath and repent this evil. (Exodus 32:12)

GOD: I'm the Decider-in-Chief! The law is what I say it is.

MOSES: Don't you have any love for your chosen people?

GOD: What's love got to do with it?

MOSES: Kill me instead.

GOD: No.

MOSES: Your chosen people will be influenced more by example than force.

GOD: Not a chance!

MOSES: Like humans, you have free will. YOU can change.

GOD: Why should I? I hate sitting around talking. I like going out and doing Big Things. That's the way you get pyramids and monuments.

MOSES: But...but you must change.

GOD: I'll send a plague against them. (Exodus 32:35)

MOSES: How many more will you kill?

GOD: I'm not saying.

ATTENDANT: (enters) Another 1,000 have died.

MOSES: Will you stop now?

GOD: A provisional cease-fire is the best I'll do.

MOSES: 40 years in the desert is a long time. I need a change of scenery. When do I enter the Promised Land?

GOD: How about never? Put "never" in your calendar.

MOSES: You're angry. You can't stand me arguing. But how can I win an argument if no defense is allowed?

GOD: You can't. Now, go smite yourself. Be grateful I let you live.

(Moses exits) Reason is my greatest enemy. Believers should tear the eyes out of their reason. I learned my lesson with Moses. I'll make all my other prophets completely submissive.

SCENE V: SAMUEL & SAUL

I. METHOD IN MADNESS

JESTER: God goes through three kings and is dissatisfied with each. Let's start with Saul.

SAMUEL: As you commanded, I crowned Saul.

GOD: The Ammonites are acting up again. Have Saul slay them.

SAMUEL: Don't you think we should negotiate?

GOD: No. They understand only force.

SAMUEL: The Amalekites have also been uppity. What shall we do with them?

GOD: Utterly destroy all they have and spare them not: slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. (1 Samuel 15:3)

SAMUEL: Won't that give us enough land?

GOD: No. You'll be doing a lot of sowing. You'll need more. Have Saul smite the Philistines and the Moabites. The first shall stay first.

SAMUEL: And the last shall stay last. I'm so grateful you put me on earth with a detailed job description. (Saul enters; Sheep & oxen on ground)

SAUL: I've done Yahweh's will. I destroyed the Amalekites.

SAMUEL: (sound of sheep & oxen) But I hear the sounds of sheep

and oxen.

SAUL: I spared a few. What's wrong with having a feast? It's the perfect thing to do after a good bloodletting.

SAMUEL: But Yahweh told you to destroy everything.

SAUL: Isn't 99% good enough?

SAMUEL: Eve and Adam learned the hard way. Just as you will.

SAUL: Learned what?

SAMUEL: Never trouble trouble or trouble will trouble you.

SAUL: What does that mean?

SAMUEL: Yahweh's a drill sergeant! He has zero tolerance for disobedience!

SAUL: But I followed the spirit of his command.

SAMUEL: With him only the letter counts.

SAUL: I accomplished his objective by other means.

SAMUEL: Thinking will get you nowhere with God. What makes you think this is about thinking?

SAUL: Is Yahweh mad?

SAMUEL: No, he's fuming. He'll smite you. Bring me the king of the Amalekites. (Saul brings king, leaves). Saul defied Yahweh. He shouldn't have spared you. But I'll do as Yahweh commanded.

KING OF AMALEKITES: Wasn't it enough to slay every Amalekite but one?

SAMUEL: It's God's will you die. (1 Samuel 15:33) Don't worry, you'll feel light-headed only for a moment. (beheads & walks around with head)

HOUSE OF ISRAEL: (sings) *I Don't Like Him, God Said, So Off, Off With His Head.*

GOD: I gave the Hebrew people free will. But when they DISOBEY, I'm infuriated.

SAMUEL: So what are you going to do about it?

GOD: (glee) I've got a new way to godsmack them.

ATTENDANT: (enters, reads letter) The Philistines just killed 34,000 of our soldiers in the last skirmish.

GOD: That's my new retribution technique. I can't think of a better way to humiliate my chosen people.

SAMUEL: I can't either. I always agree with what you do and say.

GOD: I'll give Israel's enemies superior force until I'm OBEYED.

SAMUEL: How do you decide whether you kill directly or through enemies?

GOD: I won't answer that. The more arbitrary, the more fear. I like to call it my Madman Theory.

2. DAVID KILLS GOLIATH

JESTER: Overthrowing kings is a tricky business. Let's see how David and Yahweh bring about regime change and kill Saul.

GOLIATH: Why battle as an army? Choose a man and let him come down. If he kills me, we will be your servants. But if I kill him, you will be ours. Give me a man to fight. (House of Israel opens space in middle, David emerges & stands next to Saul.)

DAVID: Who's this uncircumcised Philistine that defies Yahweh?

SAUL: You can't fight him: You're young and inexperienced. He's a giant. He looks invincible.

DAVID: Let the dice fly high.

SAUL: May God be with you. (David descends, picks up stones, puts in his bag, sling in right hand)

GOLIATH: I'll kill you! Everyone will see that Dagon is greater than your god. *I'm DAGON'S TERMINATOR!* Come to me. Come to me.

DAVID: I'm *YAHWEH'S TERMINATOR!* I'll strike long-range. Then I'll cut off your head. And all will see Yahweh's POWER. (slings stone, Goliath falls)

HOUSE OF ISRAEL: (David takes Goliath's sword & cuts off head) (sing) *I Don't Like Him, God Said, So Off, Off With His Head.* (David walks off with head, Philistines flee)

3. ATTEMPTED MURDER

SAUL: I follow Yahweh's example. I'm jealous and crave unlimited power. He embedded these vices in my DNA. I scheme to rid myself of David.

DAVID: (enters with head; Michal, House of Israel & Israelite Women enter) Here is the head of Goliath.

MICHAL: Father, I'd like to marry David.

SAUL: David, I'll give you my daughter.

MICHAL: But father, David can't afford a dowry.

SAUL: If David leads our army against the Philistines and returns with a hundred foreskins, that'll be his dowry. (1 Samuel 18:25)

DAVID: I do as you command. (David exits, Saul & Michal walk upstairs)

JESTER: Six months pass. A triumphal David returns with 200 foreskins of murdered Philistines. Their children are now fatherless and their wives are now penniless.

ISRAELITE WOMEN: (sing) “Saul hath slain his thousands & David his ten thousands.”

SAUL: Upon what meat doth this our David feed that he is grown so great?

DAVID: Here are 200 foreskins. (Throws bag at feet) (1 Samuel 18:27)

SAUL: That’s twice the revenge I sought.

MICHAL: Oh father, now we can marry.

SAUL: You left a boy and return a man. Michal’s yours now. (Saul gives Michal to David)

DAVID: She’s my trophy wife. (exit with Michal)

ISRAELITE WOMEN: (sing) “Saul hath slain his thousands & David his ten thousands.”

SAUL: (alone, furious) The Women of Israel attribute to David tens of thousands and to me only thousands. The danger is not to see the danger. In a contest for kingship, there’s no second place. I must find another way to kill David. (Exit)

GHOST OF MOSES: (Entering) Saul apes you in ruthlessly seeking absolute POWER.

GOD: Excuse me. Have we met before?

GHOST OF MOSES: I’m the Ghost of Moses.

GOD: That figures. You can’t question God. I am everything and you are only what I allow you to be.

GHOST OF MOSES: I thought you chose me as your prophet to tell the Truth.

GOD: Wrong again. You’re my prophet to do my will—not yours!

GHOST OF MOSES: When I signed up, I didn’t give up protesting injustice.

GOD: Really?

GHOST OF MOSES: Man, when perfected, is the best of animals. But when separated from Justice, he’s the worst of all.

GOD: You were always an outlier. (pause) I’m furious with Isaac.

GHOST OF MOSES: What did he do?

GOD: He told his son Jacob that I ordered Abraham to kill him.

GHOST OF MOSES: Of course. What did you expect?
GOD: I classified that information Top Secret. It's a bad leak. Now Jacob never stops arguing with me.
GHOST OF MOSES: Telling truth to power is the great prophetic tradition of the Hebrew people. That's what Jacob's doing. If you weren't so murderous, we wouldn't have so much to argue about.
GOD: I never agreed to permit argument with ME.
GHOST OF MOSES: But Israel means wrestling with God.
GOD: Professional wrestling isn't serious. It's just entertainment.
GHOST OF MOSES: What are you going to do about Saul's plan to kill David?
GOD: I honor warriors—not thinkers.
GHOST OF MOSES: But both Saul and David are warriors.
GOD: David's the best warrior the world has ever seen. I'll kill Saul to protect David. Only David can expand Israel to 60,000 square miles.
GHOST OF MOSES: How will you kill Saul?
GOD: I'll have the Philistine special ops do the dirty deed.

SCENE VI: DAVID

1. CORRUPTED SOUL

HOUSE OF ISRAEL: (singing and drums) I have read a fiery gospel writ in burnished rows of steel: "As ye deal with my contemners, so with you my grace shall deal". Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel. Since God is marching on. Gory, Gory, Hallelujah! Gory, Gory, Hallelujah! Gory, Gory, Hallelujah! Since God is marching on."

ATTENDANT: (enters holding head) The Philistines ambushed Saul.

HOUSE OF ISRAEL: *I Don't Like Him, God Said, So Off, Off With His Head.*

DAVID: (on throne) Now I'm King. And as your Commander-in-Chief, my foremost duty is to keep you safe. It's part of God's unwritten covenant.

HOUSE OF ISRAEL: That's exactly what we want. (House of Israel & attendant leave)

DAVID: We're an empire, and I create my own reality. And while others try to come to grips with my reality, I smash the world to pieces

again. Creative destruction—that's what I call it. Behold, we're the greatest nation on earth. Without us, the world would feel alone.

GHOST OF EVE: Graveyards are full of indispensable men.

GOD: Land! Houses! David, go take them. Smite the Moabites. Put half to death and keep the other half as your servants. (2 Samuel 8:2)

DAVID: If coveting war is a sin, I'm the most sinning man in history. Peace is dull and war's in my genes. I am a master in the trade of blood. (softly) Including that of women and children.

GHOST OF EVE: I can tell you've never suckled a baby. Only a savage would kill mothers and infants. Where's the glory in that?

DAVID: We must slaughter the unchosen to give the Chosen space to live.

GHOST OF EVE: Even if JUSTICE be damned?

DAVID: Yes! We few, we happy few, we band of warriors must dominate if we are to play our part in the great work of liberating and uplifting mankind.

GHOST OF EVE: Your drive for domination and your thirst for fame are unquenchable.

DAVID: Yes. History's greatest sculptor will make me live for eternity.

GHOST OF EVE: You're the scourge of motherhood. (exit)

DAVID: (alone, looks down, into the crowd below) I'm smitten by that beautiful woman! To gratify my appetites, I'll even kill her husband if she has one. Sex is the reward for power, wealth, and fame. (attendant enters) Bring that woman to ME. (attendant leaves) Some things in life are more compelling than beautiful women. I just keep forgetting what they are. (attendant returns with Bathsheba) I have my eyes on you.

BATHSHEBA: I am Bathsheba.

DAVID: You take my breath away. You're irresistible.

BATHSHEBA: But I resist if you're trying to seduce me.

DAVID: I can give you fame and *a great wardrobe*.

BATHSHEBA: Calling sex affection doesn't make it so.

DAVID: Sleep with me.

BATHSHEBA: I'm a child of Eve. Talk about TRUTH and I'll listen.

DAVID: NO. TRUTH takes too long.

BATHSHEBA: Talk about JUSTICE and I'll listen.

DAVID: NO. JUSTICE is in the eye of the beholder.

BATHSHEBA: Talk about gentleness and chivalry and I'll listen.

DAVID: You've got to be kidding.

BATHSHEBA: You've obviously used up all your charm on God.
DAVID: Aren't you clever?
BATHSHEBA: Do you respect Uriah the Hittite?
DAVID: He's one of my ablest soldiers.
BATHSHEBA: (shouts) He's my husband.
DAVID: That's unfortunate.
BATHSHEBA: Doesn't that dampen your ardor?
DAVID: No.
BATHSHEBA: Where's your sense of loyalty? Don't you have any?
DAVID: NO!
BATHSHEBA: What about your 12 wives?
DAVID: What about them?
BATHSHEBA: Don't you care about being unfaithful?
DAVID: NO! They're a dime a dozen.
BATHSHEBA: Your wives should fear you. (sarcastic) Thank you for a wonderful evening. But this wasn't it. (tries to walk away)
DAVID: (grabs her) I don't think you understand: the foreplay is over.
BATHSHEBA: How can you break God's commandment against adultery?
DAVID: Moses should never have accepted that commandment.
BATHSHEBA: But he did.
DAVID: When I get time, I'll ask God to repeal it.
BATHSHEBA: I can't sleep with someone I don't love.
DAVID: Love's a secondhand emotion.
BATHSHEBA: You're a beast. NO isn't maybe. What is it about NO you don't understand?
DAVID: In a man's world, that's YES.
BATHSHEBA: NO! (resists) NO! (bites) NO! (kicks) NO!
DAVID: Get in the chariot bitch!! (pushes off stage for rape, flare, thunder)

2. DIVINE PUNISHMENT

GOD: David: You broke my commandments.
DAVID: But I conquered vast and rich lands for your chosen nation.
GOD: Yes. I'll spare you, but vengeance must be paid: I'll kill your seed. (2 Samuel 12:11,13)
ATTENDANT: (enters) I've bad tidings my King. (presents dead baby in crib) I've bad tidings my King. (presents stretcher bearing 1st

dead son) I've bad tidings my King. (presents stretcher bearing dead daughter) I've bad tidings my King. (presents stretcher bearing 2nd dead son)

DAVID: As I followed your example, now you follow mine.

GOD: I'm not done. I'll kill more with three days of pestilence.

ATTENDANT: (runs in & shouts) 70,000 Israelites are dead.
(2 Samuel 24:15) (exit)

GHOST OF MOSES: I see you're drenched in blood again. On Mount Sinai, you killed 3,000 for worshipping the Golden Calf. Now your revenge is 70,000. What standard of JUSTICE are you using?

GOD: Ah, God's standard of course. Don't worry about it.

GHOST OF EVE: "Thou shall not kill" is a mockery. Your chosen people live in a blood-stained dystopia. Someday another self-anointed chosen people will exterminate millions.

GOD: So now you're clairvoyant. Where's your crystal ball?

GHOST OF EVE: Don't unchosen people have heads, eyes, ears, arms, hands, legs and feelings just as the chosen people do?

WOMEN OF ISRAEL: (1) Aren't the unchosen fed with the same food? (2) Hurt with the same spears? (3) Afflicted by the same diseases? (4) Healed by the same treatments? (5) Warmed by the same summer (6) And cooled by the same winter? (ALL) As the chosen are?

GHOST OF EVE: If you prick them, do they not bleed?

WOMEN OF ISRAEL: (1) And if you wrong them, will they not revenge? (2) The villainy the chosen teach the unchosen, they will execute and with more villainy than their instruction.

GHOST OF EVE: You've been forewarned.

HOUSE OF ISRAEL: (the familiar march starts up again) GOD has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat. He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment-seat. Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! Be jubilant, my feet! Our God is marching on. Gory, Gory, Hallelujah! Gory, Gory, Hallelujah! Gory, Gory, Hallelujah! Our God is marching on.

SCENE VII: SOLOMON

JESTER: As you've seen, Yahweh's signature is regime change. Two kings down, one to go.

BATHSHEBA: When you die, your son by another wife will murder me and our son Solomon. You promised you'd make Solomon king. Now be a man and do it!

JESTER: David does what he's told and Solomon succeeds him on the throne.

DAVID: (lies sick in bed) Power, wealth, fame and women. That's what a good life is about. Before I die, I want to settle all the family business: Bring down to the grave with blood those who crossed me.

SOLOMON: A wise man doesn't quarrel with his benefactor.

DAVID: As Yahweh is a jealous God.

SOLOMON: You were a jealous king. You followed his example. I love you dad. Like you, I can't resist women. (DAVID dies, Bathsheba cries & exits) Now everything falls on me. (descends below) (Pharaoh & daughter enter) Welcome Pharaoh.

PHARAOH: I've witnessed the gigantic growth of your population and power. I worry you may abuse your astonishing strength.

SOLOMON: God has brought us to our present position of power for a great purpose. But father stopped Israel at your border.

PHARAOH: Will you do the same?

SOLOMON: If you want things to stay as they are, you must do something for ME.

PHARAOH: How about if I give you Gazara for a non-aggression pact?

SOLOMON: That's not enough.

PHARAOH: Ok, I'll break Egyptian tradition and give you my favorite daughter in marriage. (joins hands)

SOLOMON: Now you're talking. She's lovely. I won't annex Egypt to the Promised Land.

PHARAOH: Let's drink to our non-aggression pact. (touch cups) (exit)

SOLOMON: You'll make me the happiest man in the world.

EGYPTIAN PRINCESS: That's what you say to all your 700 wives. I'll bet you've never told the truth to any. In your eyes, we're nothing but sex objects. Flattery won't get you anywhere with ME.

SOLOMON: Let's have a good time. After all, love makes the world go round. (Priest enters with Golden Calf)

EGYPTIAN PRINCESS: You just confirmed all my dark suspicions about you. You married me for diplomacy, not love. I wish justice

excited you as much as sex.

SOLOMON: What do you want?

EGYPTIAN PRINCESS: I want a temple for my Golden Calf.

SOLOMON: It's yours. (Princess exits & attendant removes image)

(Hittite wife enters)

HITTITE WIFE: Where have you been?

SOLOMON: I must keep a constant eye on my 12,000 horsemen and 1,400 chariots. Last night I had a nightmare about a military coup.

(pause) What do you want?

HITTITE WIFE: It's degrading to be one of 700 trophies.

SOLOMON: Do you have a better alternative?

HITTITE WIFE: You're uninterested in my intellect and my sense of justice.

SOLOMON: Keeping power takes all my time.

HITTITE WIFE: You've no interest in treating me as a peer.

SOLOMON: What do you expect? You came from Adam's rib.

HITTITE WIFE: You must build temples for my sun goddess and storm god to show me respect.

SOLOMON: (attendant brings images) Can't your gods live in the same temple?

HITTITE WIFE: And sully their reputations?

SOLOMON: I thought cohabiting was fashionable.

HITTITE WIFE: I don't have time to teach you fashion.

SOLOMON: Ok, I'll submit to your demand. (Hittite wife leaves) I should've stopped at a dozen wives like dad.

GOD: (threatening music) Your heart is no longer perfect with the God of Israel.

SOLOMON: You're wrong.

GOD: You built a temple to the god Milcom.

SOLOMON: Only for my Ammonite wife. It was a stroke of genius. It improved relations with the people of Ammon.

GOD: You built a temple for Ashtoreth and Baal.

SOLOMON: I did at the request of my Canaanite wife. Another diplomatic stroke. A special place of worship is appreciated when her people visit.

GOD: You built a sanctuary for the god Chemosh.

SOLOMON: For my Moabite wife to create good will among her people.
GOD: Listen, this isn't about diplomacy! This is about ME! You've scorned my two most important commandments. Your non-Hebrew wives turned you away from ME. Abraham, Moses, Saul and David committed sins but NEVER, NEVER did they forsake ME for other gods.
SOLOMON: Conquering vast territories creates problems. It's tricky keeping the peace.
GOD: You failed! I'm the only peace that matters!
SOLOMON: Our occupation isn't stable. We aren't winning the hearts and minds of the people. They prefer their own rule even when it's worse.
GOD: So what.
SOLOMON: Force doesn't work. It only subdues for a moment. How can I rule a nation that I must keep conquering again and again?
GOD: You killed your way into this problem.
SOLOMON: But we can't kill our way out. We are slipping on all the blood we have shed.
GOD: Stop whining. You broke your covenant with ME. I've summoned your enemies. The Promised Land is going down. A withered nation you will be.
SOLOMON: (alone) Yahweh's sword giveth and now it taketh. We fed our hearts on his vision and our hearts have grown brutal from the fare.
JESTER: First you fought in self-defense. Then you fought in defense of allies. Then you invented allies to defend. And now you fight only for the sake of fighting.

SCENE VIII: JUSTICE VS POWER

JESTER: All history hath but one page. Chosen people build empires pursuing the folly of limitless POWER and unchained ambitions.
GHOST OF MOSES: Why did you shrink Israel from 60,000 square miles to 6,000? What in the world got into you?
GOD: Can you believe it? After bribing them with cities and towns that others built, they DISOBEYED me!
GHOST OF MOSES: Because you treated them as mindless slaves.
GOD: I'm ending my experiment with the chosen people.
GHOST OF MOSES: What?
GOD: I'm sending the Babylonian empire in to take ALL of the land

of Israel.

GHOST OF MOSES: But where will the Israelites live?

GOD: In exile!

GHOST OF MOSES: And where will you go?

GOD: It's too early to say. But I'm out of here.

GHOST OF MOSES: You failed three times. First with Adam. Then with Noah. And now with Abraham. If you're so great, why did things turn out so badly?

GOD: It's all their fault. They've no one to blame but themselves.

GHOST OF MOSES: You had the power to change your character and influence by example and chose not to. YOU must be held accountable! (gesturing to ghosts who step forward above) Let's ask them.

GHOST OF EVE: We did nothing wrong. You condemned mankind for a single innocent act that harmed no one.

GHOST OF ADAM: (with EVE) All we did was eat an apple!

GHOST OF JOAN: Your flood was the worst mass murder in history.

GHOST OF ABRAHAM: You inflicted collective punishment on Sodom.

GHOST OF ISAAC: Why did you tell dad to kill me?

GHOST OF MOSES: Look. Look. It's one of the 500,000 Egyptian first-born sons.

GHOST OF FIRST BORN: You murdered me before I was weaned from my mother's breast.

GHOST OF AMALEKITE KING: (left stone) You wiped us out! Every man, woman, child, ox, sheep, camel and ass. (1 Samuel 15:3)

GHOSTS OF HOUSE OF ISRAEL: (left stone) (1) You murdered 3,000 Israelites for worshiping the golden calf (2) and another 1,000 with three days of pestilence. (Exodus 32:28) (ALL) And 70,000 innocents for David's vices. (2 Samuel 24:15)

GHOST OF MOSES: You murdered 25 million people in 155 mass slaughters. (S. Wells: Drunk With Blood)

GOD: I have an idea: Let's ask the audience to choose between YOU and ME.

GHOST OF MOSES: That's fine with me. Let's have them decide why they exist.

GOD: I used violence to prevent greater violence. Without OBEDIENCE to ME, there would have been a war of all against all.

GHOST OF MOSES: So it seems we now agree that chosen people are a scourge to mankind. People live for power, money, fame, sex and security.

GOD: That's right. That's why my ORDER is the only thing that will work.

GHOST OF MOSES: But there can be no JUSTICE with limitless POWER.

GOD: There's no alternative to ME. It's like thinking you can reverse the force of gravity.

GHOST OF MOSES: You're wrong! Limitless POWER never works. It must be diffused and fragmented. Checked and balanced. Ambition must be pitted against ambition. Then no one can command the POWER to oppress the nonchosen.

GOD: You're dreaming. That combination of wisdom and character is very rare. It will appear far less frequently than Halley's Comet. People will never make the intellectual and moral investment necessary for such a system. It's just not sustainable.

GHOST OF MOSES: Seeking JUSTICE is its own reward. The most splendid of sepulchers is where a person's inspiration remains eternal in the minds of the living and those yet to be born, there on the right occasion to stir women and men to seek JUSTICE, and to cast a light that will outshine all the heavenly stars as daylight dot a lamp.

GOD: This argument is over. I'm God. You're not. (turning to audience) What's it going to be? Moses or ME? JUSTICE or ORDER? His way or Yahweh!

GHOST OF ADAM: Don't forget me. I don't care about JUSTICE! And I certainly don't like OBEDIENCE. Life's too short! I just want to have FUN. Vote for me!

Attendant gives GOD, GHOSTS OF MOSES & ADAM signs: ORDER, JUSTICE & FUN. They come forward.

JESTER: Now we vote. ORDER, JUSTICE or FUN. All those who prefer ORDER raise your hands! (counts & shouts #) All those who prefer JUSTICE raise your hands! (counts & shouts #) All those who prefer FUN raise your hands! (counts & shouts #) And the winner is..... Now go and vote with the rest of your life!

(Orthodox wedding song, as tape plays, CURTAIN CALL)

THE END

