

THIRD MAKABEES

CHAPTER 1

Now *Ptolemaios* the Father-lover learned from those who returned, that the regions which he had controlled had been seized by Antiochos. So he transmitted a message to all his forces, both infantry and cavalry, and took with him his sister Arsinoe, and set out to the region near Raphiah, where Antiochos' party was encamped. **2** But a certain Theodotos, determined to carry out the plot he had devised, took with him the best of the Ptolemaic weapons which had been previously issued to him, and crossed over by night to Ptolemaios' tent, intending to kill him single-handedly and thereby put an end to the war.

3 But Dositheos, said to be *the son* of Drimulos, a Judean by race but who later changed his customs and apostatized from the decrees of *the fathers*, had led the king away and arranged that a certain insignificant *man* should sleep in the tent; and so it happened that this man incurred the chastisement meant for *Ptolemaios*.

4 But when a bitter fight resulted, and matters were turning out rather in favor of Antiochos, Arsinoe went to the forces with pity and tears, her locks all disheveled. She exhorted them to defend both themselves and their children and women bravely, making-a-profession that she would give them each two minas of gold if they were victorious. **5** And so it happened, that the rivals were routed in the action, but many captives were also taken.

6 Now that he had foiled the plot, *Ptolemaios* decided to visit the neighboring cities in order to exhort them. **7** But by doing this, and by endowing their sacred-precincts with gifts, he strengthened the morale of his subjects. **8** But since the Judeans had sent some of their body-of-seniors and their elders to greet him, and to bring him gifts of welcome, and to congratulate him on what had happened, he was all the more eager to visit them as soon as possible.

9 Now he arrived in Jerusalem, and offered sacrifice to the greatest God and made thank-offerings and did what was fitting for the place. Then he entered the place and was impressed by its excellence and its good-appearance, **10** but he also marveled at the good-order of the temple, *and* took counsel on entering into the inner-sanctum.

11 But they said, that this was not permitted, because not even members of their own nation were allowed to enter, nor *even* all of the priests, *but* instead only the chief-priest who was pre-eminent over all—and he only once a year. But *the king* was by no means persuaded. **12** Even after the law had been publicly read to him, he did not cease to maintain that he ought to enter, saying, "Even if those *men* are deprived of this honor, I ought not to be."

13 And he inquired, why, when he entered every other sacred-precinct, no one there had stopped him.

14 And someone declared thoughtlessly that it was wrong to take that as a portent.

15 "But since this has happened," he declared, "why should not I at least enter, whether they will it or not?"

16 But the priests in all their vestments prostrated themselves and entreated the greatest God to aid in the present situation and to avert the violence of this evil design, and they filled the temple with shouting and tears; **17** those who remained behind in the city were agitated *and* hurried out, supposing that something uncertain was occurring.

18 Also virgins, who had been secluded in their chambers, rushed out with their mothers, and sprinkled their hair with dust *and* ashes,¹ filling the streets with both moaning and groaning. **19** Now even those women who had recently been arrayed for marriage, abandoned bridal chambers which had been prepared for wedded union; and neglecting shame, they flocked together throughout the city in a disorderly rush.

20 But mothers and nurses abandoned even newborn children here and there, some in houses but some in the streets; and without a backward look they crowded together at the most high temple. **21** But various were the supplications of those gathered there because of what *the king* was unsacredly plotting.

22 Also, the boldest citizens refused to tolerate the completion of his plans and the fulfillment of his intended purpose. **23** But they shouted to their compatriots to take *their* weapons and to come-to-their-end bravely for the law of their fathers, creating a considerable disturbance in the place; but being barely restrained by the seniors and the elders,² they resorted to supplicating themselves with the same posture as the others.

24 And indeed the multitude, as before, was making petitions, **25** while the elders near the king tried in various ways to change his arrogant *mind* from the plan which he had conceived. **26** But he, in his arrogance, took heed of nothing, and began now to approach, determined to bring the aforesaid plan to a conclusion. **27** Therefore, when those who were around him observed this, they

¹ [1:18] other ancient authorities add

² [1:23] other ancient authorities "priests"

turned, together with our people, to call upon him who has all mighty to defend them in the present trouble *and* not to overlook this unlawful and arrogant action.

28 Now the continuous and vehement concerted cry of the crowds³ resulted in an immense uproar; **29** for it seemed that not only the humans, *but* instead, even the walls and the whole ground around echoed, because everyone at that time⁴ preferred death rather than the profanation of the place.

CHAPTER 2

Therefore, indeed the chief-priest Simon, facing the inner-sanctum, bending his knees and extending his hands with calm dignity, made the following entreaty:⁵

2 "Lord, Lord, king of the heavens, and master of all creation, holy among the holy-ones, monarch, almighty, give attention to us who are suffering grievously from an unsacred and profane *man*, puffed up in his audacity and potency. **3** For you, the creator of all things and having might over the whole *world*, are a righteous powerful *one*, and you judge those who have done anything in outrageousness and wantonness.

4 "You destroyed those who in the past committed unrighteous *deeds*, among whom were even giants who trusted in their bodily-strength and audacity, whom you destroyed by bringing on them an immeasurable flood.⁶ **5** With fire and sulfur *you* incinerated the Sodomites (*who were* working arrogance, after they became utterly-clear with *their evils*),⁷ after you appointed *them* to be a public-show to the *ones who are coming-to-be-upon the earth in the future*. **6** You made the great might of your power known by inflicting many and varied retributions on the audacious Pharaoh who had enslaved your people—of the Holy-one of Israel. **7** And when he pursued them with chariots and a multitude of troops,⁸ you flooded-over him in *the depth* of a sea, but safely carried through the ones who had put their faith in you, *the one* who has power over the whole creation. **8** And when they had seen *the works* of your hands, they praised you, the Almighty.

9 "You, O King, when you had created the boundless and immeasurable earth, chose this city and made this place holy for your name, though you have no need of anything; and when you had glorified it by your magnificent manifestation, you made it a firm foundation for *the* glory of your great and honored name. **10** And because you love the house of Israel, you made-a-profession that, if we should turn back *from our way* and constraint should overtake us, you would listen to our entreaty when we come to this place *and* beg. **11** And truly, you are faithful and true.

12 "But frequently when our fathers suffered-tribulation you helped them in their humiliation, and rescued them from great evils. **13** But see now, O Holy King, that because of our many and great sins we are crushed with suffering, and subjected to our enemies, and overtaken by a lack of power. **14** But in our downfall, this audacious and profane *man* undertakes to violate the holy place on the earth dedicated to your glorious name. **15** For indeed your dwelling-place is the heaven of heaven, unapproachable by humans. **16** Instead, because you graciously bestowed your glory on your people Israel, you made this place holy.

17 "Do not punish us for the uncleanness committed by these *men*, nor call us to account for this profanation, otherwise the unlawful-ones will boast in their fury and rejoice-exceedingly in *the* arrogance of their tongue, saying, **18** "We trampled-down the house of the holification as the houses of the objects-of-wrath are being trampled-down."

19 "Wipe away our sins and disperse our errors, and reveal your mercy at this hour. **20** Quickly let your pities overtake us, and put praises in the mouth of the *ones* who have fell-down and have been crushed in their soul, after you *have* given us peace."

21 At this, God (the Spectator of all things, and First-Father of all, holy among holy-ones), having heard the lawful supplication, scoured the *man* who had exalted himself in outrageousness and audacity. **22** He shook him to and fro as a reed *is shaken* by the wind, so that he lay helpless on the ground and, besides being paralyzed in his limbs, was unable even to speak, since he was smitten⁹ by a righteous judgment. **23** Then both his friends and bodyguards, seeing the severe punishment which had overtaken him, and fearing that he would lose his life, quickly dragged him out, struck with astonishment in their exceedingly great fear. **24** But after a time he recovered, *and* though he had been punished, he by no means had a change-of-tune, but went away uttering bitter threats.

25 Now he arrived in Egypt, and increased in his evilness, abetted by the previously-mentioned drinking-companions and comrades, who were severed to everything righteous. **26** He was not content with his uncounted licentious deeds, instead he even continued with such audacity that he framed ill-reports in the various regions; and many of his friends, intently observing the king's purpose, themselves also followed his will. **27** He proposed to inflict public disgrace on the nation; *and* on the courtyard tower, he stood-up a monument with this inscription:

³ [1:28] other ancient authorities "vehement cry of the assembled crowds"

⁴ [1:29] other ancient authorities omit "at that time"

⁵ [2:1] other ancient authorities omit "Then the chief-priest Simon...entreaty"

⁶ literally "water"

⁷ [2:5] other ancient authorities "who were secret in their evils"

⁸ literally "crowds"

⁹ [2:22] other ancient authorities "pierced"

28 None of those who do not sacrifice shall enter their temples, but all of the Judeans shall be subjected to a registration involving poll tax and to the status of domestics. But those who speak against this are to be taken by force *and* their lives discharged; **29** those who are registered are also to have the ivy-leaf symbol of Dionysus branded on their body by fire, and they shall be reduced to their former limited status.

30 But in order that he might not appear to be an enemy of all, he inscribed below:

But if any of them prefer to join those who have been initiated into the mysteries, they shall have equal citizenship with the Alexandreians.

31 Therefore, indeed *some* with an obvious abhorrence of the price to be exacted for maintaining the religion of their city, readily gave themselves up, since they expected to enhance their good-repute by their future association with the king. **32** But the majority acted firmly with a noble soul and did not abandon their religion; also, by paying money in exchange for life, they, without anxiety, attempted to rescue themselves from the registration. **33** They also remained resolutely hopeful of obtaining help; and they abhorred those who separated themselves from them, considering them to be enemies of the nation, and depriving them of association and mutual help.

CHAPTER 3

And when the impious *king* comprehended this situation, he became so full of ire, that not only was he very angered against those *Judeans* who lived in Alexandria, *but* instead was even more oppressive toward those in the countryside; and he ordered that all *of them* should promptly be gathered into one place, and be discharged of their lives by the most evil means.

2 While these matters were being arranged, a hostile declaration was circulated against the *Judean* race by *some* humans who united with one mind in their evil-doing *against them*, a pretext being given by a report that the *Judeans* hindered them from the observance of their customs.

3 But the Judeans continued to maintain goodwill and unswerving faithfulness toward the kings; **4** but because they revered God and conducted themselves by his law, they kept their separateness with respect to foods. For this reason, they appeared to be at enmity to some; **5** but since they ornamented their lifestyle with the good-conduct of upright humans, they were established in good-repute with everyone.

6 Therefore, indeed the foreigners paid no heed to the good-conduct which the *Judeans* showed to their *own* race, which was common talk among all; **7** but they gossiped about the differences in bowing-down and foods, asserting, that these humans were loyal neither to the king nor to his powerful *men*, but were hostile and greatly opposed to his affairs. So they attached no ordinary reproach to them.

8 Now nothing unrighteous was done to the Hellenes in the city in any way. *But* when they saw an unexpected tumult around these *Judean* humans and tumultuous-crowds which were suddenly forming, they were indeed not strong enough to help them, for they lived under tyranny. But being grieved at the situation, they attempted to console them and expected that matters would change; **9** for such a large community should not be left *to its fate* when it had committed no offense. **10** But already even some of both their neighbors and friends and business associates had taken some of the *Judeans* aside privately *and* were pledging to protect them and to exert more earnest efforts for their assistance.

11 Therefore, indeed *the king*, boastful of his present good-fortune, and not considering the might of the greatest God, but assuming that he would persevere constantly in his same counsel, wrote this letter against them:

12 King Ptolemaios the Father-lover,

To his generals and soldiers in Egypt and all its regions, greetings and good health:

13 Now I myself and our *state* affairs are faring well. **14** When our expedition took place in Asia, as you yourselves know, it was brought to conclusion, according to plan, by the gods' deliberate alliance with us in battle. **15** We considered that we should not lead the nations inhabiting Coelesyria and Phoinike by the power of the spear, but should cherish them with care and great humaneness, gladly treating them well. **16** And when we had granted very great revenues to temples in the cities, we came to Jerusalem also, *and* went up to honor the temple of those guilty *people*, who never cease from their ignorance.

17 Now they indeed accepted our presence by speech, but insincerely by deed, because when we proposed to enter their inner-sanctum and honor it with remarkable and most beautiful votive-offerings, **18** they were carried away by their traditional conceit, *and* excluded us from entering; *but* they were spared the exercise of our prowess because of *the* humaneness which we have toward all humans.

19 But by maintaining their manifest ill-will toward us, they become the only *people* among *all* the nations who hold their heads high in defiance of kings and their own benefactors, *and* are unwilling to regard any action as sincere.

20 But we, when we arrived in Egypt victorious, accommodated ourselves to their ignorance and did as was proper, since we treat all of the nations with humaneness. **21** But among other things, we made known to everyone our amnesty toward their fellow-tribesmen here, both because of their alliance with us and the tens of thousands of affairs liberally entrusted to them from *the* beginning; and we ventured to make a change, by deciding *both* to deem them worthy of Alexandreian citizenship and to make them participants in our regular consecrated rites.¹⁰

22 But in their innate malice, they took this in a contrary disposition, *and* disdained what is good. But since they incline constantly to what is base, **23** they not only spurn the priceless citizenship, *but* instead also both by speech and by silence they abominate those few among them who are sincerely disposed toward us; in every situation, in accordance with their infamous way of life, they secretly suspect that we may soon alter our affairs.

24 For this reason, also being fully convinced by these indications that they are ill-disposed toward us in every way, we have taken precautions so that, if a sudden disorder later arises against us, we shall not have these impious *people* behind our backs as traitors and barbarous foes.

25 We have given orders that, as soon as this letter arrives, you are to send to us those who live among you, together with their women and children, with outrageous and cruel treatment, *and* bound securely with iron fetters, to suffer a sure and shameful murder which befits hostile *individuals*. **26** For when all of these have been chastised, we are sure that, for the remaining time, the affairs will be established for ourselves in good order and in the best state.

27 But those who may shelter any of the Judeans, whether seniors or infants or *even* sucklings, will be beaten to death with the most disgraceful torments, together with their entire families. **28** But any who wish to give information will receive the property of those who incur the punishment, and *also* two thousand drachmas from the royal silver, and will be crowned with the *crown of freedom*. **29** But every place detected sheltering a Judean is to be made inaccessible and burned with fire, and shall become useless for all time to any mortal creature.

30 And indeed, the letter was written in the above form.

CHAPTER 4

Now in every *place* where this ordinance arrived, a feast at public expense was arranged for the nations with shouts and joy, as if the inveterate enmity which had long ago been in their minds was now made evident with outspokenness. **2** But *among* the Judeans, there was unceasing mourning, and *the* most-lamentable tearful cries;¹¹ everywhere their heart was on fire by groanings, because of the unexpected destruction which had suddenly been determined for them. **3** What district or city, or what habitable place at all, or what streets were not filled with beatings-of-the-breast *in lamentation* and moanings for them?

4 For the generals in the several cities sent them off, all together, with such a pitiless soul of bitterness, that at the sight of their unusual punishments, even some of their enemies, perceiving the common object of mercy before their eyes, calculated the uncertainty of their lifestyle, shedding tears at the most-miserable expulsion of *these people*.

5 For a multitude of gray-headed old *men*, sluggish, bent-over on *their* feet, was being led away, forced to march at a swift pace by the violence with which they were driven in such a shameful manner.

6 But young-girls who had recently entered the bridal chamber to share a married lifestyle, exchanged delight for moanings, and their myrrh-perfumed hair sprinkled with dust, but were led *away* in an unveiled-manner, raising with-one-accord a dirge instead of a wedding-hymn, as they were torn by the cruel-treatment of foreigners.¹² **7** But enchained and in public view they were violently dragged along as far as the place of embarkation of the boat.

8 Also, their husbands, in the prime of youth, their necks encircled with nooses instead of crowns, spent the remaining days of their marriage-festival in a dirge instead of good-cheer and youthful recreation, seeing the Netherworld already lying at their feet. **9** But they were brought on board like beasts, driven under the constraint of iron-bonds; indeed some were nailed at the neck to the benches of the boats, but others had their feet secured by unbreakable shackles; **10** and in addition, they were confined under a solid deck, so that, with their eyes in

¹⁰ [3:21] other ancient authorities "partners of our regular priests"

¹¹ literally "cries with tears"

¹² [4:6] other ancient authorities "as though torn by foreign whelps"

total darkness, they would undergo treatment befitting traitors during the whole voyage back.

11 Now when these *people* had been led to the place called Schedia, and the coasting-voyage was concluded as the king had decreed, he ordered that they should be encamped in the hippodrome. *This building* had been built with a monstrous perimeter wall in front of the city, and it was well-suited to make them an obvious spectacle to everyone coming back into the city and to those going out from there into the country, so that they could neither communicate with the *king's* forces, nor in any way claim to be inside the enclosures of *the city*.

12 Now when this had happened, *the king*, hearing, that those who were of the same-nation as *the Judeans* from the city frequently went out secretly to bitterly-lament the infamous misery of their brothers, 13 became very-angry, and ordered, that these *people* be dealt with in precisely the same fashion as the others, not omitting *even* one detail of their punishment.

14 Now the entire tribe was to be registered individually, not for the hard labor which has been briefly mentioned before, but to be twisted with the torments which he had transmitted in his message, *and* at the end, to be eliminated in a space¹³ of a single day. 15 Therefore, indeed the registration of these *people* was conducted with bitter haste and ambitious¹⁴ intensity from *the* rising of *the* sun until its setting, coming to the end after forty days *but* still uncompleted.

16 But the king was greatly and continually filled with joy, organizing drinking-parties in honor of all his idols, with a heart¹⁵ alienated from the truth and with a profane mouth, indeed praising things which are mute and are not able to utter *anything* or to help *anyone*, but uttering improper *words* against the greatest God.

17 But after the previously-mentioned interval of time, the scribes brought *word* to the king that they were no longer able to take the registration of the Judeans because of their immense multitude, 18 though most of them were still in the country, indeed some still residing in their homes, but some even at the place;¹⁶ the task was impossible for all the generals in Egypt.

19 But after he had threatened them severely, charging that they had been bribed to contrive a means of escape, he was clearly convinced about the matter 20 when they said and proved that even the paper and the pens which they used for writing had already given out. 21 But this was a work of *the* unconquerable foresight of him who was aiding the Judeans from *the* heaven.

CHAPTER 5

Then the king, completely inflexible, was packed with heavy anger and ire. *So* he summoned Hermon, keeper of the elephants, 2 *and* directed him to drug all the elephants on the following day, which were 500 in number, with large handfuls of frankincense and plenty of undiluted wine, and to drive them in, made savage by the lavish abundance of drink, so that the Judeans might meet their doom. 3 Indeed, when he had given these orders, he returned to his feasting, together with those of his friends and of the army who especially had enmity toward the Judeans. 4 But Hermon, the elephant-chief, proceeded punctually to carry out what he was ordered.

5 Also, the public-servants to them went out in the evening *and* bound the hands of the wretched people and would machinate for their continued security through the night, supposing that the whole tribe would experience its final destruction. 6 But the *other* nations supposed that the Judeans were destitute without any shelter, because in their bonds they were forcibly confined on every side. 7 But with tears and a voice hard to silence, they all called upon the Almighty Lord and Ruler of all power, their merciful God and Father, beseeching 8 that he avert the unsacred counsel against them, and, in a magnificent appearance, rescue them from the doom which was now prepared for them. 9 Therefore, indeed their entreaty ascended fervently into the heaven.

10 But Hermon, when he had made the unmerciful elephants drink until they had been filled with the large abundance of the wine and satiated with the frankincense, presented himself at the courtyard early in the morning to bring a message to the king concerning these *preparations*. 11 But *the Lord* sent upon the king a portion of sleep, that beautiful creation which from the time of *the first* age, night and day, is bestowed by him who grants it to whomever he wants. 12 And by the operation of the Master he was overcome by a sleep so sweet and deep from evening until the ninth hour¹⁷ that indeed he quite failed in his lawless purpose, but was greatly frustrated in his inflexible reasoning.

13 Also the Judeans, since they had escaped the previously-signified hour, praised their holy God and again implored him who is easily-reconciled to show the might of his great-powerful hand to *the* arrogant nations.

14 But now, since it was nearly *the* middle of *the* tenth hour, the person who was in charge of the invitations, seeing that the guests were together, approached the king *and* poked him. 15 And when he had with difficulty roused him, he

pointed-out that the time¹⁸ of the banquet was already slipping by, *and* he gave him an account of these *matters*.

16 The king rationalized this, and *then* returned into the drinking party, directing those who were present for the meal to recline opposite him. 17 And when this was done, he urged them to give themselves over to feasting *and* to make *the* present¹⁹ portion of the meal in gladness by celebrating all the more.

18 But after the party had been going on for some time, the king summoned Hermon *and* with sharp threats demanded to know why the Judeans had been allowed to survive through the present day. 19 But he pointed-out that while it was still night he had completely carried out the order given him, and his friends further testified *about* this. 20 *The king*, possessed by a savagery worse than that of Phalaris, said that *the Judeans* had *the* favor of today's sleep, "but," he added, "tomorrow without delay, prepare the elephants in the same way for the elimination of the unlawful Judeans!"

21 Now when the king had spoken this, all of those who were present, being filled with joy, gave their approval with one accord, *and* all of *them* went to their own homes. 22 And they did not so much employ the duration²⁰ of the night in sleep as in machinating all sorts of derision for those whom they supposed were miserable. 23 But soon a cock crowed²¹ early in the morning, and Hermon, having fully-equipped the beasts, began to move them along in the great colonnade.

24 Now the multitudes of the city had been gathered-together for this most pitiful spectacle, waiting for the morning with haste. 25 But the Judeans, at their last breath—since *the* time had run out—stretched their hands into the heaven and, with a most-tearful supplication and moanful strains, implored the greatest God to help them again at once.

26 *But* the rays of *the* sun were not yet shed abroad, and, while the king was waiting for his friends, Hermon arrived *and* called him to come out, pointing-out that what the king desired was ready for action. 27 But *the king* had been completely overcome by ignorance. *So* when *the king* received *the report* and was astonished by the unlawful invitation to come out, he inquired what the reason was that this event had been completed *for him* with *such* haste. 28 But this was the working of God who is master over all things, *for he* had implanted in the king's mind a forgetfulness of the things he had *previously* machinated.

29 Hermon and all the friends pointed-out that the beasts and the forces were ready, "O king,"²² according to your fervent purpose."

And now when King Ptolemaios had determined, by the instigation of divine providence, to show compassion to the Judean race and was eager to release them for the future and took counsel with the men of repute about him, his friends and grantees grew angry and took it sore amiss.

And a man of distinction among them, one who had even been brought up with the King, Hermon by name, made bold to say, "Your majesty, was it not for this purpose that you originally fashioned this entire enterprise against them? Take and read what you yourself previously wrote concerning them. This decree, that you do not now recognize, you originally issued against them, because you determined that they should not become naturally hostile to us and come to oppose us by entering into an agreement with our enemies behind our back. And now, you endeavor to overturn it. Not so, your majesty. Let us speedily carry out the vote passed against them; and by bringing the elephants upon them, let us fulfill the original purpose designed against them by you."²³

30 But at these *words* he was filled with heavy ire, because by the foresight of God his whole mind had been deranged concerning these matters; *and*, with a threatening look, he spoke, 31 "If your parents or boys were present, I would have prepared them to be a plentiful feast for the savage beasts instead of the Judeans, who give me no ground for complaint and have exhibited to an extraordinary degree a full and firm loyalty to my ancestors. 32 *In fact* you would have been deprived of your life instead of these, if it were not for an affection *arising* from our common nurture and your usefulness."

33 So Hermon suffered an unexpected *and* dangerous threat, and his vision wavered and his face fell. 34 But one by one the *king's* friends sullenly slipped away *and* he²⁴ released the gathered *people* to their own occupations.

35 Also the Judeans, on hearing *what* the king *had said*, praised the splendid Lord God, King of the kings, since this also was his help which they had received. 36 But the king reconvened the party in the same manner *and* summoned *the guests* to return to their gladness.

37 But after summoning Hermon, he spoke with threats, "Now how many times, you poor wretch, must I give you orders about these things? 38 Fully-equip the elephants even now once more for the elimination of the Judeans tomorrow!"

39 But the relatives who were at table with him, marveling at his instability of mind, remonstrated as follows: 40 "O king, how long will you put us to the test,

¹⁸ literally "season"

¹⁹ [5:17] other ancient authorities "untimely"

²⁰ literally "time"

²¹ literally "shouted"

²² [5:29] other ancient authorities "pointed to the beasts and the armed forces, saying, "They are ready, O king"

²³ [5:29] Lucianic add

²⁴ [5:34] other ancient authorities add

¹³ literally "season"

¹⁴ literally "love-of-honor"

¹⁵ literally "diaphragm"

¹⁶ [4:18] other ancient authorities "on the way"

¹⁷ [5:12] other ancient authorities add

as though we are idiots,²⁵ ordering now for a third time that they be eliminated, and again revoking your decree in the matter?²⁶ **41** As a result the city is in a tumult because of its expectation; it is now multiplying with conspiracies, and *also* in constant danger of being plundered.”

42 At this the king, a Phalaris in everything *and* filled with unreasonableness, took no account of the changes of his soul which had come about within him for the protection of the Judeans, *and* he firmly swore an irrevocable oath that he would indeed send them to *the* Netherworld without delay, tormented by the knees and feet of the beasts, **43** but would *also* make an expedition against Judah *and* rapidly level it to the ground with fire and spear, *and*, by burning to the ground *the* inner-sanctum inaccessible to him,²⁷ would quickly render it destitute of those who offered a sacrifice there for all time. **44** Then the friends and relatives departed with excessive-joy; *and they*, trusting in his ordinance, posted the forces at the places in the city most-convenient for keeping guard.

45 Now when the elephant-chief had brought the beasts virtually to a state of madness, so to speak, by the very fragrant drinks of wine mixed with frankincense *and* had been ornamented with fearsome equipment, **46** he entered at about dawn into the courtyard—the city now being filled with uncountable multitudes entering into the hippodrome—*and* urged the king on to the matter at hand. **47** But he, when he had filled his impious heart²⁸ with a heavy anger, rushed out in full mass *along* with the beasts, wishing to behold, with an invulnerable heart and with *the* pupils of *his own* eyes, the toilsome and miserable destruction of the previously-mentioned *people*.

48 But when the Judeans saw the dust raised by the elephants going out around a gate and by the following armed force, as well as by the trampling of the multitude, and perceived the deep-roaring commotion, **49** they thought that this was their last moment of *their* lifetime, the end of their most-miserable expectation. And giving way to pity and moanings they tenderly-kissed each other, embracing relatives *and* falling upon their necks—parents *and* boys, and mothers *and* daughters, but others with newborn *children*, with babies at their breasts who were drawing their last milk.

50 But instead of this, when they considered the help which they had received before from *the* heaven, they hurled themselves *on the ground* with one accord, even separating the infants from their breasts, **51** *and* cried out in a very great voice, imploring the Ruler over every power to manifest himself and have pity on them, as they now stood at *the* gates of *the* Netherworld.

CHAPTER 6

Now a certain Eleazar, a man famous among the priests²⁹ of the country, who, on account of his age, had been allotted *the* right of being the eldest, and for all of his lifetime had been ornamented with excellence, restrained the elders around him from calling on the holy God, *and* prayed as follows:

2 “King of great-might, Almighty God Most-High, piloting the whole creation with pity, **3** look upon *the* seed of Abraham, O Father, upon children of *the* made-holy Jacob, a people of your made-holy portion who are unrighteously perishing as strangers in a strange land. **4** Pharaoh with his multiplication of chariots, the former ruler of this Egypt, elevated with lawless audacity and a boasting tongue, you caused to perish together with his arrogant army by drowning them in the sea, manifesting *the* light of your mercy on *the* race of Israel.

5 “Sennacherib exulting in his innumerable forces, oppressive king of the Assyrians, who had taken the entire land under his hand by *the* spear and was soaring against your holy city, uttering burdensome *words* with boasting and audacity, you, O Master, shattered, clearly showing your might to many nations.

6 “The three comrades in Babelia who had voluntarily given their souls into a fire so as not to venerate the vain-things, you rescued unharmed, even to a hair, bedewing *the* extremely-fiery furnace *and* turning a flame against all their opponents.

7 “Daniel, who through the slanders of envy was hurled down into *the* earth to lions as food for beasts, you led up to *the* light unharmed.

8 “Also Jonah, wasting away in a belly of a sea-monster, you, Father, watched over *and* restored³⁰ unharmed to his entire house.

9 “And now, you who hate outrage, all-merciful and protector of everything, reveal yourself quickly to those of the race of Israel³¹—who are being outraged by abominating and lawless nations. **10** But if our lifestyles have become entangled in impieties in our exile, rescue us from *the* hand of *our* enemies, *and* let us perish, Master, by whatever doom you have chosen. **11** Do not let the vain-minded bless their vanities at the perdition of your beloved *people*, by saying, ‘Not *even* their god has rescued them.’

12 “But you, O Perpetual-One, who have all prowess and power, watch over us now *and* have mercy on us, who by the irrational outrage of lawless *deeds* are

being discharged out of our life in the manner of traitors. **13** But let nations cower today before your unconquerable power, O Honored-One, who have power to bring salvation to *the* race of Jacob. **14** The entire multitude of the infants and their parents entreat you with tears. **15** Let it be shown to all nations that you are with us, O Lord, and have not turned your face from us; instead exactly as you have spoken, ‘I did not disregard them, even when they were in the land of their enemies,’ so accomplish it, O Lord.”

16 But just as Eleazar was ending the prayer, the king arrived at the hippodrome with the beasts and all the insolence of his force. **17** And when the Judeans saw this, they shouted-out into *the* heaven, so that even the nearby gorges resounded with them *and* brought an uncontrollable fright upon all of the army.

18 Then the most-glorious, almighty, and true God revealed his holy face *and* opened the heavenly gates, from which two glorious messengers of fearful-aspect descended, visible to all except the Judeans. **19** And they withstood the force of their opponents and filled them with confusion and terror, and bound them with immovable shackles. **20** And even the king’s body began to shudder, and he received a forgetfulness of his sullen audacity. **21** And the beasts turned back upon the armed forces which were following them, and began trampling and destroying them.

22 And the king’s anger was turned to pity and tears because of the things which he had devised beforehand. **23** For when he heard the shouting and perceived all of them fallen headlong to their perdition, he shed-tears and with anger threatened his friends, saying, **24** “You are committing treason and surpassing tyrants in cruelty; *and even* me, your benefactor, you are now attempting to discharge of the government and the spirit by secretly machinating acts which are not for the collective-benefit of the kingdom. **25** Who has driven from their homes those who, in faith, have kept our country’s strongholds, *and* irrationally gathered every one of them here? **26** Who is it who has so unprincipally encompassed with torments those who from *the* beginning differed from all nations in their goodwill toward us and often have willingly accepted the worst of dangers among humans? **27** Release, release their unrighteous bonds! Send them back to their *homes* in peace, begging pardon for your former actions!³² **28** Release the sons of the almighty living God of heaven, who from *the time of* our ancestors until now has granted an unimpeded stability to our affairs with glory.” **29** Therefore, these indeed were the things which he said; but the Judeans, immediately released, blest their holy savior God, since they had just escaped the death.

30 Next, the king, when he had returned to the city, summoned the official in charge of the revenues *and* directed him to provide the Judeans with both wines and everything else needed for a festival of seven days, judging that they should celebrate their salvation with all gladness in that same place in which they supposed that they would meet their destruction.

31 Then, those who were disgracefully treated and near to the Netherworld, or rather, were advancing into it, arranged for a banquet to *celebrate their* salvation instead of a bitter and most-mournful doom; and full of delight, they apportioned to the celebrants the place which had *originally* been prepared for their fall and burial. **32** But they stopped their most-lamentable dirges *and* took up a song of their fathers, praising the Savior and Wonder-Working God.³³ Putting an end to both all wailing and shrieking, they arranged choruses as a sign of peaceful gladness.

33 But likewise the king, after convening a drinking-party to celebrate these events, also in turn made confession into *the* heaven unceasingly *and* magnificently for *the* unexpected rescue which he³⁴ had experienced. **34** Those who had previously thought that *the Judeans* would meet destruction and be eaten by the birds, and had registered them with joy, groaned as they themselves were overcome by disgrace, and their fire-breathing recklessness was ignominiously³⁵ quenched.

35 Also, the Judeans, as we have said before, arranged the aforementioned choral group *and* passed the time in feasting to the accompaniment of cheerful confession and psalms. **36** And when they had ordained a common designation for their entire sojourning for generations *to come*, they instituted the observance of the aforesaid days as a festival, not for drinking and gluttony, but because of *the* salvation which had come to them through God. **37** But they petitioned the king, requesting for the release from *their back* to their own *homes*.

38 Now their registration was carried out from the twenty-fifth of Pachon to the fourth of Epiphi, for forty days; but their perdition was set from the fifth to the seventh of Epiphi, *the* three days **39** on which the Lord of everything most-gloriously revealed his mercy and rescued them all together *and* unharmed. **40** But they feasted, being provided with everything by the king, until the fourteenth day, on which also they made the petition for their release from there. **41** Now the

²⁵ literally “are without reason”

²⁶ [5:40] other ancient authorities “when the matter is in hand”

²⁷ [5:43] Correction / Greek “to us”

²⁸ literally “diaphragm”

²⁹ [6:1] A “Judeans”

³⁰ [6:8] other ancient authorities “rescued and restored” / others “mercifully restored”

³¹ [6:9] other ancient authorities “to the holy-ones of Israel”

³² [6:27] other ancient authorities “revoking your former commands”

³³ [6:32] other ancient authorities “praising Israel and the wonder-working God”; or “praising Israel’s Savior, the wonder-working God”

³⁴ [6:33] other ancient authorities “they”

³⁵ [6:34] other ancient authorities “completely”

king consented to this *and* wrote the subjoined letter for them to the generals in the cities, magnanimously expressing his earnestness:

23 Blessed is the Deliverer of Israel, always throughout all the times! Let it be.

CHAPTER 7

King Ptolemaios *the* Father-lover to the generals throughout Egypt and all who are appointed over *his* affairs, greetings and good-health:

2 Now we ourselves and our children are also enjoying good-health, the great God guiding our affairs exactly as we prefer. **3** Certain of our friends, frequently urging us with maliciousness, persuaded us to gather together the Judeans of the kingdom in a body *and* to chastise them with monstrous punishments as insurgents; **4** *for* they declared that our affairs would never be firmly established until this was accomplished, because of the ill-will that these *people* had toward all the nations. **5** They also led them down with harsh-treatment in bonds as bondmen, or rather as traitors; *and*, girding themselves with a cruelty more-savage than *the* law of *the* Skythians, they tried without any investigation or examination to do away with them.

6 But we very severely threatened them for these *acts*, *and* in accordance with the gentleness which we have toward all humans, we barely spared their lives. And since we have come to know that the God of heaven surely defends the Judeans, being an auxiliary for them through everything like a father does for his sons, **7** and since we have carefully-reasoned that, being our friends, they have had a firm goodwill toward us and our ancestors, we have rightly released them of every incrimination of whatever kind. **8** And we have ordered everyone to each return to their own *homes*, with no one in any place³⁶ doing them harm at all, nor reproaching them in regards to the account which has happened.

9 For all of you should know, that, if we devise any wicked *action* against them or cause them any grief at all, we always shall have, not a human, *but* instead the Master over every power, *the* Most-High God, in everything *and* inescapably, opposing such affairs with vengeance. Farewell.

10 Now on receiving this letter, *the* Judeans did not straightaway hasten to make their departure, instead they made a demand to the king, that, at their own *hands*, those of the race of the Judeans who had willfully transgressed against the holy God and the law of God should receive the chastisement which they deserved. **11** They *declared*, that those, who for the belly's sake had transgressed the divine ordinances, would never be favorably disposed toward the king's affairs.

12 Now *the* king, accepting and urging the truth of what they said, gave them amnesty in everything in order that they, without royal authority and supervision, might, with outspokenness, exterminate those in every place of his kingdom who had transgressed the law of God.

13 Then their priests applauded him in fitting manner, and all the multitude cried-out, "Praise Yahweh!" and departed with joy.

14 Also, on the road, any of those of their same race whom they fell across, who had become stained, they chastised and did away with as a publicly-shameful example. **15** Now in that day, they did away with more than 300 men; and they celebrated *the* day with gladness *and* with joy, since they had brought *the* profane-*men* into their hands. **16** But those who had held fast to God even to death *and* had received the full enjoyment from salvation, began their departure from the city, crowned with all sorts of very fragrant flowers, with gladness and shouts of praise, and giving-thanks with all kinds of melodious hymns, to the God of their fathers, the perpetual Savior³⁷ of Israel.

17 Now when they had arrived at Ptolemais, named "rose-bearing" because of a characteristic of the place, the fleet waited for them for seven days, in accordance with *the* common counsel. **18** There they made a brining-salvation drinking party; *for* the king, out of a good-soul, had provided everything to them for their journey until all of them each arrived at their own houses. **19** But when they had all landed in peace with appropriate confession, there they likewise also decided to celebrate these days cheerfully *which had been spent* during the time of their sojourning. **20** And after inscribing them as consecrated on a monument *and* dedicating a place of prayer at the site of the festival, they departed unharmed, free, *and* overjoyed, since at the king's command they had, all of them, been brought safely by both earth and sea and river into their own *homes*.

21 And they had greater authority among their enemies, with glory and fear; *and* they did not have their belongings violently taken from them by anyone. **22** And all of them recovered all of their property, in accordance with the registration, so that those who had any of it restored it to them with great fear.³⁸ So the Greatest God perfectly did great *things* for their salvation.

³⁶ [7:8] other ancient authorities "way"

³⁷ [7:16] other ancient authorities "the holy Savior" / others "the holy one"

³⁸ [7:22] other ancient authorities "with a very large supplement"