

3 MACCABEES

CHAPTER 1

Now Philopater learned of them that came back that Antiochus had made himself master of the places which belonged to himself, and given charge to all his footmen and horsemen, and took with him his sister Arsinoe, and marched out unto the parts of Raphis, where Antiochus and his forces pitched. ²And a certain Theodotus, intending to accomplish his design, took with him the bravest of the arms which had been before committed to his trust by Ptolemy, and crossed by night unto the tent of Ptolemy, to kill him by himself, and thus to end the war. ³But Dositheus, called the son of Drimulus, by birth a Jew, who afterward a renegade from the laws and customs of his country, conveyed Ptolemy away, and made a certain obscure man to lie down in his stead in the tent. It befel this man to receive the fate which was meant for the other. ⁴A fierce battle then took place; and the men of Antiochus prevailing, Arsinoe continually went up and down the ranks, and with hair dishevelled, with tears and entreaties, begged the soldiers to fight manfully for themselves, their children, and their wives; and promised that if they proved conquerors, she would give them two minas of gold apiece. ⁵It thus fell out that their enemies were defeated in hand to hand encounter, and many of them were taken prisoners also. ⁶Having vanquished this attempt, the king then decided to proceed to the neighbouring cities, and encourage them. ⁷By so doing, and by distributing gifts to their temples, he inspired his subjects with confidence.

⁸The Jews also sent some of their council and of their elders to him. The greetings, guestgifts, and congratulations on the past, bestowed by them, filled him with the greater eagerness to visit the city. ⁹Having arrived at Jerusalem, and sacrificed, and offered thank offerings to the Greatest God, and done whatsoever else was suitable to the sanctity of the place, and entered the inner court, ¹⁰he was so struck with the exact magnificence of the temple, that he conceived the purpose of entering the sanctuary itself. ¹¹And when they told him that this was not permitted, none of the nation, no, nor even the priests in general, but only the supreme high priest of all, and he only once a year, being permitted to go in, he would by no means give way. ¹²Then they read the law to him; but he persisted in obtruding himself, exclaiming that he ought to be permitted: and saying, Be it that they were deprived of this honour, I ought not to be. ¹³And he put the question, Why, when he entered all temples none of the priests that were present forbade him? ¹⁴He was thoughtlessly answered by one, That he did wrong to boast of this. ¹⁵Well; since I have done this, said he, be the cause what it may, shall I not enter with or without your consent? ¹⁶And when the priests fell down in their sacred vestments imploring the Greatest God to come and help in time of need, and to avert the violence of the fierce transgressor, and when they filled the temple with lamentations and tears, ¹⁷then those that had been left

behind in the city were affrighted, and rushed forth, uncertain of the event. ¹⁸Virgins, which had been shut up within their chambers, came out with their mothers, scattering dust and ashes on their heads, and filling the streets with outcries. ¹⁹Women, but newly separated off, left their bridal chambers, left the reserve that befitted them, and ran about the city in a disorderly manner. ²⁰New born babes were forsaken by the mothers and nurses that waited upon them; some here, some there, in houses, or in fields; these now, with an ardour which could not be checked, swarmed into the Most high temple. ²¹Various were the prayers offered up by them that assembled in this place, by reason of the unholy attempt of the king. ²²Along with these were certain of the citizens, who took courage, and would not submit to his obstinacy, and his intention of carrying out his purpose. ²³Calling out to arms, and to die bravely in defence of the law of their fathers, they created a great uproar in the place, and were with difficulty brought back by the aged and the elders to the station of prayer, which they had occupied before. ²⁴During this time the multitude kept on praying. ²⁵The elders which surrounded the king strove in many ways to divert his haughty mind from the design that he had formed. ²⁶He, in his hardened mood, insensible to all persuasion, was going onwards, with the view of carrying out this design. ²⁷Yet even his own officers, when they saw this, joined with the Jews in an appeal to Him which hath all power, to aid in the present crisis, and not wink at such overweening lawlessness. ²⁸Such was the frequency and the vehemence of the cry of the assembled crowd, that an indescribable noise ensued. ²⁹Not the men only, the very walls and floor seemed to sound forth; all things preferring dissolution rather than to see the place defiled.

CHAPTER 2

Now it was that the high priest Simon bowed his knees over against the holy place, and spread forth his hands in reverent fashion, and uttered the following supplication: ²O LORD, Lord, King of the heavens, and Ruler of the whole creation, Holy among the holy, sole Governor, Almighty, give ear unto us who are oppressed by a wicked and profane one, which exulteth in his confidence and strength. ³It is Thou, the Creator of all, the Lord of the universe, that art a righteous Governor, and judgest all those that act with pride and insolence. ⁴It was Thou that didst destroy the former workers of unrighteousness, among whom were the giants, which trusted in their own strength and hardihood, by covering them with a measureless flood. ⁵It was Thou that didst make the Sodomites, those workers of exceeding iniquity, men notorious for their vices, an example to after generations, when Thou didst consume them with fire and brimstone. ⁶Thou didst make known thy power when Thou causedst the bold Pharaoh, the enslaver of Thy people, to pass through the ordeal of many and divers inflictions. ⁷And Thou rolledst the depths of the sea over him, when he made pursuit with chariots, and with a multitude of followers, and gavest a safe passage unto those that put their

trust in Thee, the Lord of the whole creation. ⁸These saw and felt the works of Thine hands, and praised Thee, the Almighty. ⁹Thou, O King, when Thou createdst the illimitable and measureless earth, didst choose out this city: Thou didst make this place sacred to Thy name, albeit Thou needest nothing: Thou didst glorify it with Thine illustrious presence, after establishing it to the glory of Thy great and honourable name. ¹⁰And Thou didst promise, out of love toward the house of Israel, that should we fall away from thee, and become afflicted, and then come into this house, and pray, Thou wouldst hear our prayer. ¹¹Verily Thou art faithful and true. ¹²And seeing Thou didst often aid our fathers when they were hard pressed, and in low estate, and deliveredst them out of great dangers, ¹³see now, holy King, how through our many and great sins we are borne down, and made subject to our enemies, and are become weak and powerless. ¹⁴We being in this low condition, this bold and profane man seeketh to dishonour this Thy holy place, consecrated out of the earth unto the name of Thy Majesty. ¹⁵Thy dwelling place, the heaven of heavens, is indeed unapproachable to men. ¹⁶But since it seemed good to Thee to manifest thy glory among Thy people Israel, Thou didst sanctify this place. ¹⁷Punish us not by the uncleanness of their men, neither chastise us by means of their profanity; lest the lawless ones boast in their rage, and say, ¹⁸We have trodden upon the holy house, as houses that are idolatrous are trodden upon. ¹⁹Blot out our iniquities, and do away our errors, and shew forth Thy tender mercy in this hour. ²⁰Let Thy mercies speedily prevent us. Grant us peace, that them that are cast down and broken hearted may praise Thee with their mouth.

²¹At that time God, Which seeth all things, Who is beyond all Holy among the holy, heard that prayer, so suitable; and scourged the man greatly uplifted with scorn and insolence. ²²Shaking him to and fro, as a reed is shaken with the wind, He cast him upon the pavement powerless, with limbs palsied; by a righteous judgment deprived of the faculty of speech. ²³His friends and bodyguards, beholding the swift recompense that had suddenly overtaken him, struck with exceeding terror, and fearing that he would die, speedily removed him. ²⁴When in course of time he had come to himself, this severe check caused no repentance in him, but he departed with bitter threatenings.

²⁵He proceeded to Egypt, grew worse in wickedness through his aforementioned companions in wine, who were lost to all goodness; ²⁶and not being satisfied with countless acts of impiety, his audacity so increased that he raised evil reports there, and many of his friends, watching his purpose attentively, joined in furthering his will. ²⁷His purpose was to inflict a public stigma upon our race; wherefore he erected a pillar at the porch of the tower, and caused the following inscription to be graven thereon: ²⁸That entrance to their own temple was to be refused to all those that would not sacrifice; that all the Jews were to be enrolled among the common people; that they that resisted were to be forcibly seized, and put to death; ²⁹that they that were thus enrolled, were to be marked upon their persons by the ivy leaf symbol of Dionysus, and to be set apart with these limited rights. ³⁰To do away with the

appearance of hating them all, he had it written beneath, that if any of them should elect to enter the community of them that were initiated in the rights, these should have equal rights with the Alexandrians.

³¹Some of them that were over the city, therefore, abhorring any approach unto the city of piety, unhesitating gave in to the king, and expected to derive some great honour from a future connection with him. ³²A nobler spirit, however, prompted the majority the cling to their religious observances, and by paying money that they might live unmolested, these sought to escape the enrollment: ³³cheerfully looking forward to future aid, they abhorred their own apostates, considering them to be national foes, and debarring them from the common usages of social intercourse.

CHAPTER 3

On discovering this, so incensed was the wicked king, that he no longer confined his rage to the Jews in Alexandria. Laying his hand more heavily upon them that lived in the country, he gave commandment that they should speedily be collected into one place, and most cruelly deprived of their lives. ²While this was going on, an invidious rumour was uttered abroad by men who had banded together to injure the Jewish race. The purport of their charge was, that the Jews kept them away from the ordinances of the law. ³Now, while the Jews ever maintained a feeling of unswerving loyalty toward the king, ⁴yet, as they worshipped God, and observed His law, they made certain distinctions, and avoided certain things. Hence some persons held them in odium; ⁵although, as they adorned their conversation with works of righteousness, they had established themselves in the good opinion of the world. ⁶What all the rest of mankind said, was, however, made of no account by the strangers; ⁷who said much of the exclusiveness of the Jews with regard to their worship and meats; they alleged that they were men unsociable, hostile to the king's interests, refusing to associate with him or his troops. By this way of speaking, they brought much odium upon them. ⁸Nor was this unexpected uproar and sudden conflux of people unobserved by the Greeks who lived in the city, concerning men who had never harmed them: yet to aid them was not in their power, since all was oppression around; but they encouraged the Jews by sympathizing with them in their troubles, and expected a favourable turn of affairs: ⁹He that knoweth all things, will not, *said they*, disregard so great a people. ¹⁰Some of the neighbours, friends, and fellow dealers of the Jews, even called them privily to an interview, pledged them their assistance, and promised to do their very utmost for them.

¹¹Now the king, elated with his prosperous fortune, and not regarding the superior power of God, but thinking to persevere in his present purpose, wrote the following letter to the prejudice of the Jews: ¹²King Ptolemy Philpater, to the commanders and soldiers in Egypt, and in all places, health and happiness! ¹³I am right well; and so, too, are my affairs. ¹⁴Since our Asiatic campaign, the particulars of which ye know, and which by the aid of

the gods, not lightly given, and by our own vigour, hath been brought to a successful issue according to our expectation, ¹⁵we resolved, not with strength of spear, but with gentleness and much humanity, as it were to nurse the inhabitants of Ceolesyria and Phoenicia, and to be their willing benefactors. ¹⁶So, having bestowed considerable sums of money upon the temples of the several cities, we proceeded even as far as Jerusalem; and went up to honour the temple of these wretched beings who never cease from their folly. ¹⁷To outward appearance they received us willingly; but belied that appearance by their deeds. When we were eager to enter their temple, and to honour it with the most beautiful and exquisite gifts, ¹⁸they were so carried away by their old arrogance, as to forbid us the entrance; while we, out of our forbearance toward all men, refrained from exercising our power upon them. ¹⁹And thus, exhibiting their enmity against us, they alone among the nations lift up their heads against kings and benefactors, as men unwilling to submit to any thing reasonable. ²⁰We then, having endeavoured to make allowance for the madness of these persons, and on our victorious return treating all people in Egypt courteously, acted in a manner which was befitting. ²¹Accordingly, bearing no ill will against their kinsmen *at Jerusalem*, but rather remembering our connection with them, and the numerous matter with sincere heart from a remote period entrusted to them, we wished to venture a total alteration of their state, by bestowing upon them the rights of citizens of Alexandria, and to admit them to the everlasting rites of our solemnities. ²²All of this, however, they have taken in a very different spirit. With their innate malignity, they have spurned the fair offer; and constantly inclining to evil, ²³have rejected the inestimable rights. Not only so, but by using speech, and by refraining from speech, they abhor the few among them who are heartily disposed toward us; ever deeming that their ignoble course of proceeding will force us to do away with our reform. ²⁴Having then, received certain proofs that these *Jews* bear us every sort of ill will, we must look forward to the possibility of some sudden tumult among ourselves, when these impious men may turn traitors and barbarous enemies. ²⁵As soon, therefore, as the contents of this letter become known unto you, in that same hour we command those Jews that dwell among you, with wives and children, to be sent unto us, vilified and abused, in chains of iron, to undergo a death cruel and ignominious, suitable to men disaffected. ²⁶For by the punishment of them in one body we perceive that we have found the only means of establishing our affairs for the future on a firm and satisfactory basis. ²⁷Whosoever shall shield a Jew, whether it be an old man, child, or suckling, shall with his whole house be tortured to death. ²⁸Whosoever shall inform against the Jews, besides receiving the property of the person charged, shall be presented with two thousand drachmae from the royal treasury, shall be made free, and shall be crowned. ²⁹What place soever shall shelter a Jew, shall, when he is hunted forth, be put under the ban of fire, and be for ever rendered useless to every to every living being for all time to come.

³⁰Such was the purport of the king's letter.

CHAPTER 4

Wheresoever this decree was received, the people kept up a revelry of joy and shouting; as if their long-pent-up, hardened hatred, were now to shew itself openly. ²The Jews suffered great throes of sorrow, and wept much; while their hearts, all things around being lamentable, were set on fire as they bewailed the sudden destruction that was decreed against them. ³What home, or city, or place at all inhabited, or what streets were there, which their condition did not fill with wailing and lamentation? ⁴They were sent out unanimously by the generals in the several cities, with such stern and pitiless feeling, that the exceptional nature of the infliction moved even some of their enemies. These, influenced by sentiments of common humanity, and reflecting upon the uncertain issue of life, shed tears at this their miserable expulsion. ⁵A multitude of hoary-haired men, were driven along with halting bending feet, urged onward by the impulse of a violent, shameless force to quick speed. ⁶Girls who had entered the bridal chamber quite lately, to enjoy the partnership of marriage, exchanged pleasure for misery; and with dust scattered upon their myrrh-anointed heads, were hurried along unveiled, and, in the midst of outlandish insults, set up with one accord a lamentable cry in place of the marriage hymn. ⁷Bound, and exposed to public gaze, they were hurried violently on board ship. ⁸The husbands of these, in the prime of their youthful vigour, instead of crowns wore halters round their necks; instead of feasting and youthfully mirth, spent the residue of their nuptial days in wailings, and saw only the grave at hand. ⁹They were dragged along by unyielding chains, like wild beasts: of these, some had their necks thrust into the benches of the rowers; while the feet of others were inclosed in hard fetters. ¹⁰The planks of the deck above them barred out the light, and shut out the day on every side, that they might be treated like traitors during the whole voyage. ¹¹They were conveyed accordingly in this vessel, and at the end of it arrived at Schedia. The king had ordered them to be cast into the vast hippodrome, which was built before the city. This place was well adapted by its situation to expose them to the gaze of all comers into the city. Thus they could hold no communication with his forces; nay, were deemed unworthy of any civilised accommodation. ¹²When this was done, the king, hearing that their brethren in the city often went out and lamented the melancholy distress of these victims, ¹³was full of rage, and commanded that they should be carefully subjected to the same (and not one whit milder) treatment. ¹⁴The whole nation was now to be enrolled. Every individual was to be specified by name; not for that hard servitude of labour which we have a little before mentioned, but that he might expose them to the aforementioned tortures; and finally, in the short space of a day, might extirpate them by his cruelties. ¹⁵The enrolling of these men was carried on cruelly, zealously, assiduously, from the rising up of the sun unto the going down thereof, and was not brought to an end in forty days. ¹⁶The king was filled with great and constant joy, and celebrated banquets before the temple idols. His erring heart, far from the truth, and his profane mouth, gave glory to idols, deaf and incapable

of speaking or aiding, and uttered unworthy speech against the Greatest God. ¹⁷At the end of the aforementioned interval of time, the registrars brought word to the king that the multitude of the Jews was too great for enrollment, ¹⁸inasmuch as there were many still left in the land, of whom some were in inhabited houses, and others were scattered about in various places; so that all the commanders in Egypt were not sufficient for the work. ¹⁹The king threatened them, and charged them with taking bribes, in order to contrive the escape of the *Jews*: but was clearly convinced of the truth of what had been said. ²⁰They said, and proved, that paper and pens had failed them for the carrying out of their purpose. ²¹Now this was the active interference of the unconquerable Providence, which assisted the Jews from heaven.

CHAPTER 5

Then he called Hermon, which had charge of the elephants. Full of rage, altogether fixed in his furious design, ²he commanded him, with a quantity of unmixed wine and handfuls of incense infused, to drug the elephants early on the following day. These five hundred elephants, when infuriated by the copious draughts of frankincense, were to be led up to the execution of death upon the Jews. ³The king, after issuing these commands, went to his feasting, and gathered together all those of his friends and of the army who hated the Jews the most. ⁴The master of the elephants, Hermon, fulfilled his commission punctually. ⁵The underlings appointed for the service went out about eventide, and bound the hands of the miserable victims, and took other precautions for their security at night, thinking that the whole race would perish together. ⁶The nations believed the Jews to be destitute of all protection; for chains fettered them about. ⁷They invoked the Almighty Lord, and ceaselessly besought with tears their merciful God and Father, Ruler of all, Lord of every power, ⁸to overthrow the evil purpose which was gone out against them, and to deliver them by extraordinary manifestation from that death which was in store for them. ⁹Their litany so earnest went up to heaven. ¹⁰Then Hermon, who had filled his merciless elephants with copious draughts of mingled wine and frankincense, came early to the palace, to certify the king thereof. ¹¹He, however, which hath sent His good creature sleep from all time, by night or by day, thus gratifying whom He willeth, diffused a portion thereof *now* upon the king. ¹²By this sweet and profound influence of the Lord he was held fast, and thus his unjust purpose was quite frustrated, and his unflinching resolve greatly falsified. ¹³But the Jews, having escaped the hour which had been fixed, praised their holy God, and again prayed Him Who is easily reconciled to display the power of His powerful hand to the overweening nations. ¹⁴The middle of the tenth hour had well nigh arrived, when the master bidder, seeing the guest that were bidden collected, came and shook the king. ¹⁵He gained his attention with difficulty, and hinting that the meal time was passing, he talked the matter over with him. ¹⁶The king listened to this, and then turning aside to his

potations, commanded the guests to sit down before him. ¹⁷This done, he asked them to enjoy themselves, and to indulge in mirth at this somewhat late hour of the banquet. ¹⁸Conversation grew on, and the king sent for Hermon, and enquired of him with fierce denunciations, wherefore the Jews had been suffered to outlive that day. ¹⁹Hermon explained that he had done his bidding over night; and in this he was confirmed by his friends. ²⁰The king, then, with a barbarity exceeding that of Phalaris, said, that they might thank his sleep of that day. Lose no time, and make ready the elephants against to morrow, as you did before, for the destruction of these accursed Jews. ²¹When the king said this, the company present were glad, and approved; and then each man went to his own home. ²²Nor did they employ the night in sleep, so much as in contriving cruel mockeries for those deemed miserable. ²³The morning cock had just crowed, and Hermon, having harnessed the brutes, was stimulating them in the great colonnade. ²⁴The city crowds were collected together to see the hideous spectacle, and waited impatiently for the dawn. ²⁵The Jews, breathless with momentary suspense, spread forth their hands, and prayed the Greatest God, in mournful strains, again to help them speedily. ²⁶The sun's rays were not shed abroad, and the king was waiting for his friends, when Hermon came to him, calling him out, and saying that his desires could now be realised. ²⁷The king, receiving him, was astonished at his unwonted exit; and overwhelmed with a spirit of oblivion about every thing, enquired the object of this earnest preparation. ²⁸But this was the working of that Almighty God, which had made him forget all his purpose. ²⁹Hermon, and his friends, pointed out the preparation of the animals: They are ready, O king, at thine own strict injunction. ³⁰The king was filled with fierce anger at these words; for, by the providence of God regarding these things, his mind had become entirely confused. He looked hard at Hermon, and then threatened him as follows: ³¹Your parents, or your children, were they here, they should furnished a large repast to these wild beasts; not these innocent Jews, which have loyally served me and my forefathers. ³²Had it not been for familiar friendship, and the claims of your office, your life should have gone for theirs. ³³Hermon, being threatened in this unexpected and alarming manner, was troubled in visage, and downcast of countenance. ³⁴The friends also stole out one by one, and dismissed the assembled multitudes to their occupations. ³⁵The Jews, having heard of these events, praised the glorious God and King of kings, because they had obtained this help also from him. ³⁶Now the king arranged another banquet after the same manner, and proclaimed an invitation to mirth. ³⁷And he summoned Hermon to his presence, and said, with threats, How oft, O wretch, must I repeat my commands unto thee about these same persons? ³⁸Once more, arm the elephants against the morrow for the utter destruction of the Jews. ³⁹His kinsmen, that reclined with him, wondered at his *instability*, and thus expressed themselves: ⁴⁰O king, how long dost thou make trial of us, as of men bereft of reason? This is the third time that thou hast commanded their destruction. When the thing is to be done, thou changest thy mind, and recallest thine instructions. ⁴¹For this cause the

feeling of expectation causeth tumult in the city: it swarmeth with factions; and is continually on the point of being plundered. ⁴²The king, just like another Phalaris, a prey to thoughtlessness, made no account of the changes which his own mind had undergone, issuing in the deliverance of the Jews. He swore a fruitless oath, and determined forthwith to send them to Hades, crushed by the knees and feet of the elephants. ⁴³He would also invade Judah, and level the towns thereof with fire and the sword; and destroy that temple which the nations might not enter, and prevent sacrifices ever after from being offered up there. ⁴⁴Joyfully his friends brake up, together with his kinsmen; and, trusting in his determination, arranged their forces in guard at the most convenient places of the city. ⁴⁵And the master of the elephants urged the beasts into an almost maniacal state, drenched them with incense and wine, and decked them with frightful instruments. ⁴⁶About early morning, when the city was now filled with an immense number of people at the hippodrome, he entered the palace, and called the king unto the business in hand. ⁴⁷The king's heart teemed with impious rage; and he rushed forthwith the mass, along with the elephants. With feelings unsoftened, and eyes pitiless, he longed to gaze at the hard and wretched doom of the aforementioned Jews. ⁴⁸But the *Jews*, when the elephants went out at the gate, followed by the armed force; and when they saw the dust raised by the throng, and heard the loud cries of the crowd, ⁴⁹thought that they had come to the last moments of their lives, unto the end of that which they had trembling expected. They gave way, therefore, to lamentations and moanings: they kissed each other: those nearest of kin to each other hung about one another's necks: fathers about their sons, mothers their daughters: other women held their infants to their breasts, which drew what seemed their last milk. ⁵⁰Nevertheless, when they reflected upon the succour before granted them from heaven, they prostrated themselves with one accord; removed even the sucking children from the breast, and ⁵¹sent up an exceeding great cry, entreating the Lord of all power to reveal Himself, and have mercy upon those who now lay at the gates of Hades.

CHAPTER 6

And Eleazar, an illustrious priest of the country, which had attained to length of days, and whose life had been adorned with virtue, caused the presbyters which were about him to cease to cry out to the holy God, and prayed thus: ²O King, mighty in power, Most High, Almighty God, Who orderest the whole creation with thy tender mercy, ³look upon the seed of Abraham, upon the children of the sanctified Jacob, Thy sanctified inheritance, O Father, *which is now being wrongfully destroyed as strangers in a strange land.* ⁴Thou destroyedst Pharaoh, with his host of chariots, when the lord of this same Egypt was uplifted with lawless hardihood and loud sounding tongue. Shedding the beams of Thy mercy upon the race of Israel, Thou overwhelmedst him with his proud army. ⁵When Sennacherib, the

grievous king of the Assyrians, glorying in his countless hosts, had subdued the whole land with his spear, and was lifting him up against Thy holy city, with boastings grievous to be heard, Thou, O Lord, didst utterly destroy him, and shew forth Thy might unto many nations. ⁶When the three friends in the land of Babylon of their own will exposed their lives to the fire rather than serve vain things, Thou didst send a dewy coolness through the fiery furnace, and bring the fire upon all their adversaries. ⁷It was Thou who, when Daniel was hurled, through slander and envy, as a prey unto lions down below, didst bring him back again unhurt to light. ⁸When Jonah was pining away in the belly of the sea-bred monster, Thou didst look upon him, O Father, and recover him to the sight of his own. ⁹And now, O Thou that hatest insolence; Thou that aboundest in mercy; Thou that art the protector of all things; appear speedily unto the race of Israel, who are insulted by abhorred, lawless nations. ¹⁰If our life during our exile hath been stained with iniquity, deliver us from the hand of the enemy, and destroy us, O Lord, by the death which Thou preferrest. ¹¹Let not the vain minded congratulate vain idols at the destruction of Thy beloved, saying, Neither did their God deliver them', ¹²Thou Who art All powerful and Almighty, O Eternal One, behold! have mercy upon us who are being withdrawn from life, like traitors, by the unreasoning insolence of lawless men. ¹³Let the nations cower before Thine invincible might to day, O glorious One, Who hast all power to save the race of Jacob. ¹⁴The whole band of infants and their parents with tears beseech Thee. ¹⁵Let it be shewed unto all the nations that Thou art with us, O Lord, and hast not turned thy face away from us; but as Thou saidst that Thou wouldest not forget them even in the land of their enemies, so do thou fulfil this saying, O Lord.

¹⁶Now at the time that Eleazar had ended his prayer, the king came along to the hippodrome, with the wild beasts, and with his tumultuous power. ¹⁷When the Jews saw this, they uttered a loud cry to heaven, so that the valleys adjacent resounded, and caused an irrepressible lamentation throughout the army. ¹⁸Then the all-glorious, all-powerful, and true God, displayed His holy countenance, and opened the gates of heaven, from whence two angels, dreadful of form, came down, and were visible to all but the Jews. ¹⁹And they stood over against, and filled the enemies' host with confusion and cowardice; and bound them with immoveable fetters. ²⁰And a cold shudder came over the person of the king, and oblivion palsied the vehemence of his spirit. ²¹They turned back the animals upon the armed forces which followed upon them; and the animals trod them down, and destroyed them. ²²The king's wrath was changed into compassion; and he wept at his own machinations. ²³For when he heard the cry, and saw them all on the verge of destruction, with tears he angrily threatened his friends, saying, ²⁴Ye have governed amiss, and have exceeded tyrants in cruelty; and me your benefactor have ye laboured to deprive at once of my dominion and my life, by privily devising measures injurious to the kingdom. ²⁵Who hath gathered here, unreasonably removing each from his home, those, who, in faithfulness to us, had held the strongholds of the country? ²⁶Who hath thus

consigned to unmerited punishments those who in good will toward us from the beginning have in all things surpassed all nations, and who often have engaged in the most dangerous undertakings? ²⁷Loose, loose the unjust bonds; and send to their homes in peace, and deprecate what hath been done. ²⁸Release the sons of the almighty living God of heaven, Who from our forefathers' time till now hath granted a glorious and uninterrupted prosperity to our affairs. ²⁹These things he said: and they, released the same moment, having now escaped death, praised God their holy Saviour.

³⁰The king then departed to the city, and called the overseer of his revenues unto him, and bade him provide a seven days' quantity of wine and all else requisite for feasting for the Jews. He decided that they should keep a gladsome festival of deliverance in the very place wherein they expected to meet with their destruction. ³¹Then they which before were despised and nigh unto Hades, yea, rather advanced into it, partook of the cup of salvation, in stead of the grievous and lamentable death. Full of exultation, they parted out the place intended for their fall and burial into banqueting booths. ³²Ceasing their miserable strains of woe, they took up the subject of their fatherland, hymning in praise God their wonderworking Saviour. All groans, all wailing, were laid aside: they formed dances in token of serene joy. ³³So also the king collected a number of guests for the occasion, and returned unceasing thanks with much magnificence for the unexpected deliverance afforded him. ³⁴Those that had marked them out as for death, and for carrion, and had enrolled them with joy, howled aloud, and were clothed with shame, and had the fire of their rage ingloriously put out. ³⁵But the Jews, as we have just said, instituted a dance, and them gave themselves up to feasting, glad thanksgivings, and psalms. ³⁶They made a public ordinance to commemorate these things for generations to come, as long as they should be sojourners. Thus they established these days as days of mirth, not for the purpose of drinking or luxury, but because God had saved them. ³⁷They requested the king to send them back to their homes. ³⁸They were being enrolled from the twenty fifth of Pachon unto the fourth of Epiphi, a period of forty days: the measures taken for their destruction lasted from the fifth of Epiphi till the seventh, that is, three days. ³⁹The Ruler over all did during this time manifest forth His mercy gloriously, and did deliver them all together unharmed. ⁴⁰They feasted upon the king's provision up to the fourteenth day, and then asked to be sent away. ⁴¹The king commended them, and wrote the subjoined epistle, of magnanimous import for them, to the commanders of every city.

CHAPTER 7

King Ptolemy Philopater unto all the commanders throughout Egypt, and unto all that are set over affairs, joy and strength. ²We, too, and our children are well; and God hath directed our affairs as we wish. ³Certain of our friends did of malice vehemently urge us to punish the Jews of our realm

in a body, with the infliction of a monstrous punishment. ⁴They pretended that our affairs would never be in such a good state till this took place. Such, they said, was the hatred borne by the Jews unto other people. ⁵They brought them fettered in grievous chains as slaves, nay, as traitors. Without enquiry or examination they endeavoured to annihilate them. They buckled themselves with a savage cruelty, worse than Scythian custom. ⁶For this cause we severely threatened them; yet, with the clemency we are wont to extend unto all men, we at length permitted them to live. Finding that the God of heaven cast a shield of protection over the Jews, so as to preserve them, and that he fought for them as a father ever fighteth for his sons; ⁷and taking into consideration their constancy and faithfulness toward us, and toward our ancestors, we have, as we ought, acquitted them of every sort of charge. ⁸And we have dismissed them unto their several homes; bidding all men everywhere to do them no wrong, or unrighteously revile them about the past. ⁹For know ye, that should we conceive any evil design against, or in any manner aggrieve them, we shall ever have as our opposite, not man, but the highest God, the Ruler of all might. From him there will be no escape, as the avenger of such deeds. Fare ye well.

¹⁰When they received this letter, they were not forward to depart forthwith. They petitioned the king to be allowed to inflict fitting punishment upon those of their race that had willingly transgressed the holy God, and the law of God. ¹¹They alleged that the men who had for their bellies' sake transgressed the ordinances of God, would never be faithful to the interests of the king. ¹²The king admitted the truth of this reasoning, and commended them. ¹³Their priests, then, as was most meet, saluted him with good wishes, and all the people echoed with the Alleluia. They then joyfully departed. ¹⁴Then they punished and destroyed with ignominy every polluted Jew that fell in their way; ¹⁵slaying thus, in that day, above three hundred men, and esteeming this destruction of the wicked a season of joy. ¹⁶They themselves having held fast their God unto death, and having enjoyed a full deliverance, departed from the city garlanded with sweet flowered wreaths of every kind. Uttering exclamations of joy, with songs of praise, and melodious hymns, they thanked the God of their fathers, the eternal Saviour of Israel.

¹⁷Having arrived at Ptolemais, called from the feature of that district Rosebearing, where the fleet, according to the general wish, waited for them seven days, ¹⁸they partook of a banquet of deliverance; for the king generously granted them severally the means of securing a return home. ¹⁹They accordingly brought back in peace, while they gave utterance to becoming thanks; and they determined to keep these days during their sojourn as days of joyfulness. ²⁰These they registered as sacred upon a pillar, when they had dedicated the place of their festivity to be one of prayer. They departed unharmed, free, abundant in joy, preserved by the king's commandment, by land, by sea, and by river, each to his own home. ²¹They had more weight than before among their enemies; and were honoured and feared, and none in any way robbed them of their goods. ²²Every man received back his own, according to inventory; those that had obtained their goods, giving them up

with the greatest terror. For the greatest God wrought with perfectness wonders for their salvation. ²³Blessed be the Redeemer of Israel unto everlasting. Amen.