

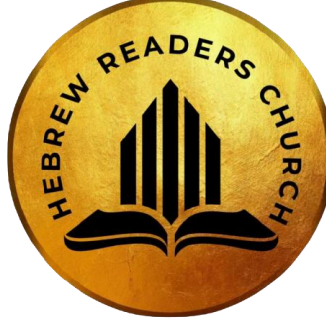
# The Book of Third Maccabees

## **Ptolemy IV Philopator's victory at Raphia**

**1** From people returning from the scene Philopator received the news of Antiochus' capture of the places which had been under his control. He then put out orders to all his infantry and cavalry forces and moved on, taking his sister Arsinoe along with him, to the territory around Raphia where Antiochus' army was camped. **2** But a certain Theodotus decided to carry out a scheme he had in mind, so he took some of the very best of Ptolemy's soldiers who had previously been placed in his charge and went across by night to Ptolemy's tent intending to kill him single-handedly and end the war at a stroke. **3** However, one Dositheos, called the son of Drimylus, who was a Jew by birth but later had renounced Law and abandoned his ancestral beliefs, removed Ptolemy and had a poor unknown fellow sleep in his tent bed instead, and he of course suffered the fate intended for Ptolemy. **4** A violent battle ensued, and when the tide ran in favor of Antiochus, Arsinoe traversed the ranks and, wailing and in tears, with her braided hair hanging loose, begged them to take courage and rally not just for their own sake but for the sake of their wives and children; she even promised to give each one of them, if they won, two minae of gold. **5** The outcome was that the enemy was destroyed in the combat and many also were taken prisoner.

## **Ptolemy visits Jerusalem and determines to enter the Temple**

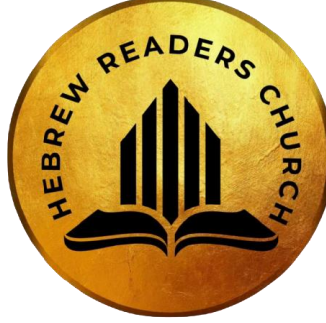
**6** With the plot against him thwarted, Ptolemy now decided to visit the neighboring cities and offer them encouragement. **7** When he had done this and distributed gifts to their shrines, he made his subjects feel secure. **8** When the Jews sent a delegation of the council and the elders to greet him and offer him friendly gifts and congratulate him on his achievements, he was all the more eager to visit them as soon as possible. **9** So he came to Jerusalem, where he sacrificed to Alahayim the Greatest and put up thank offerings observing to some extent the proprieties of the place. When he entered the sacred place he was struck by its immaculate and dignified appearance **10** and, marveling at the orderliness of the Temple, asked himself thoughtfully whether he should go into the sanctuary. **11** They told him that this was quite improper since not even the Jewish people



themselves were allowed in nor indeed any and every priest but only the high priest, who was the chief of all, and he only once a year. However, he was not at all convinced. **12** Even after the Law had been read out to him he persistently affirmed that he must enter and said, “Even if they are deprived of this honor, I must not be.” **13** He then asked why it was that when he entered every other shrine nobody present stopped him. **14** All too hastily somebody said that it was wrong to speak of this as if it were a marvel. **15** “Even so,” he said, “why should I not enter in my case whether they want me to or not?” **16** Then the priests in all their vestments prostrated themselves and entreated Almighty Alahayim to help them in their present difficulty and make their assailant change his mind, and they filled the Temple with loud cries and tears.

### **The rush of the outraged citizenry to the Temple**

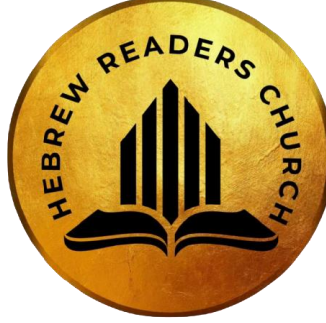
**17** The people who were left in the city hurried out in disarray, reckoning that something mysterious was going on. **18** Even the young women who had been confined to their chambers rushed out with their mothers, and they took dust and covered their hair with it and filled the streets with cries of grief and moans. **19** Those recently married left the chambers where the marriage bed had been prepared and, heedless of the modesty appropriate to their station, ran about in disorder in the city. **20** The mothers and nurses in charge of the youngest child left them here and there, in houses or in the streets, and, abandoning all caution, thronged to the most glorious Temple. **21** Many and varied were the prayers of those who gathered there because of the king’s sacrilegious designs. **22** At the same time the bolder spirits among the citizens would not endure the pressure he was exerting to gain his own ends or his determination to carry through his project **23** and sounding a call to take up arms with all haste and to die bravely for the Law of their fathers, they caused a great disturbance in the place. Only with difficulty were they dissuaded by the elders, and they joined them in the posture of prayer. **24** Meanwhile the multitude went on with their prayers as previously. **25** But the elders close to the king tried in many ways to divert his mind from the scheme he had so arrogantly conceived. **26** With great boldness he dismissed every plea however, and, bent on achieving his declared purpose, was already moving forward. **27** When those around him saw what was happening they joined our own people in calling on him who is all powerful to help them in their present extremity and not overlook this insolent act of lawlessness. **28** The combined shouts of the crowd, ceaseless and vehement, caused an indescribable uproar. **29** It seemed as if not only the people but the very walls and the whole pavement cried out, so much at that moment did they all prefer death to the profanation of the Temple.



### **The prayer of Simon the High Priest**

**2** **1** The high priest, Simon, knelt in homage in front of the sanctuary and holding out his hands with due reverence, he prayed. **2** “AHAYAH, AHAYAH, king of heaven, ruler of all creation, holy among the holy ones, sovereign, conqueror of all, pay heed to us who are sorely vexed by a wicked and corrupt man, reckless in his effrontery and might. **3** For you who created all things and govern the whole world are a just ruler and condemn all who act insolently and arrogantly. **4** You destroyed men for their wicked deeds in the past, among them giants relying on their own strength and self-confidence, upon whom you brought an immeasurable flood of water. **5** When the inhabitants of Sodom acted insolently and became notorious for their crimes you burned them up with fire and brimstone and made them an example to later generations. **6** You tested the proud Pharaoh, who enslaved your holy people Israel, with many different punishments and made known to him your mighty power. **7** When he pursued with chariots a great host of people, you overwhelmed him in the depths of the sea and brought safely thorough those who believed on you, the ruler of all creation. **8** When they saw the works of your hand they praised you, conqueror of all. **9** You, king, when you created the boundless and measureless earth, chose this city and sanctified this Temple for your name, though you lack nothing at all, and you glorified it by a splendid manifestation and established it to the glory of your great and honorable name. **10** And in your love for the house of Israel you promised that, if ever we should turn away or distress overtake us, and we came to this holy place to pray, you would hear our prayer. **11** And you are surely faithful and true to your word. **12** Seeing that often when our forefathers were afflicted you helped them in their humiliation and rescued them from great ills, **13** so look now, holy king, when we are oppressed and subjected to our enemies on account of your many serious sins and are weak and resourceless. **14** In our calamity this arrogant and corrupt man sets out to violate the holy place which is dedicated on earth to the name of your glory. **15** But since you sanctified this holy place because you took pleasure in your glory among your people Israel, **17** do not punish us by the uncleanness of these men, nor censure us by their corruption, lest the lawless ones boast in their wrath or exult in the insolence of their tongue, saying, **18** ‘We have trodden down the house of the sanctuary as the houses of the abominations are trodden down.’ **19** Wipe out our sins and disperse of our offenses and show your pity at this moment. **20** Let your mercies speedily overtake us, and let praises fill the mouths of those who are fallen and crushed in their souls, and grant us peace.”

### **Alahayim’s punishment of Ptolemy and the king’s vengeful**

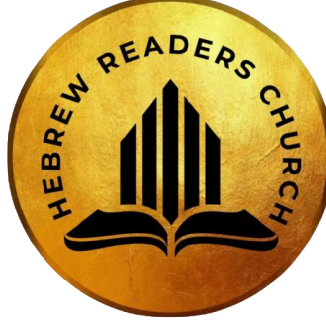


### **response.**

**21** Then the Alahayim who beholds all, the supremely holy father among the holy, heard the prayer of supplication offered in the regular form and scourged the one who was greatly exalted by his own insolence and effrontery, **22** tossing him to and fro like a reed on the wind until he fell impotent to the ground, with his limbs paralyzed and unable to speak, completely overpowered by a righteous judgment. **23** When his friends and members of his bodyguard saw how severe was the chastisement that overtook him, they were afraid he might die, and smitten with extreme alarm, they pulled him out. **24** However, punished though he had been, when he recovered shortly after he was by no means contrite but went away with bitter threats. **25** Thereafter, on his arrival in Egypt, he became even more extravagant in his wickedness through his aforementioned boon companions and friends, complete strangers to everything that was just, **26** and not only was he not satisfied with his innumerable excesses, he even reached such a pitch of arrogance as to concoct slanderous reports in these regions. Many of his friends watched the king's procedure intently and themselves fell into line with his wishes. **27** His aim was to bring disgrace upon the nation publicly. Accordingly, he erected pillar on the tower at the palace and inscribed on it, **28** "That none of those who did not sacrifice should be permitted to enter their temples, and that all Jews should be required to enroll in the census and be reduced to the condition of slaves, and that any who spoke against it should be taken by force and put to death, **29** that those who were enrolled should be registered according to their former restricted status. **30** But so as not to appear to be an enemy to them all he added, "But if any of them prefer to join those who are initiated in the mysteries, they would be on the same footing as the citizens of Alexandria." **31** Some who objected strongly to the price the city had to pay for the practice of its religion surrendered gladly, expecting to participate in some prestige that would come from association with the king. **32** But most resisted with gallantry of spirit and did not abandon their religious practice, but they gave their money as a ransom for their life and fearlessly sought to save themselves from the enrollment. **33** They persisted in the hope that they would obtain relief and despised those who left their ranks, judging them to be enemies of the nation and depriving them of any part in community life and service.

### **The Jews in society**

- 3 1** On receiving word of this, the impious king was so enraged he was not angry only with those who lived in Alexandria but was even more bitterly opposed to those in the country and ordered that all of them should be assembled with haste in one spot and put to death in the most violent way.

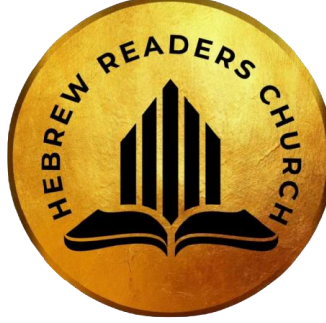


**2** While this was being organized, a malicious rumor was noised abroad against the Jewish nation by men who conspired to harm them and grasped an opportunity that arose to represent them as hindering them from observance of their laws. **3** The Jews, however steadily maintained their goodwill toward the kings and their unwavering loyalty. **4** But reverencing Alahayim and conducting themselves according to his Law, they kept themselves apart in the matter of food, and for this reason they appeared hateful to some. **5** They adorned their community life with the excellent practice of righteousness and so established a good reputation among all men. **6** But of this excellent practice, which as common talk everywhere regarding the Jewish nation, the foreigners took no account whatever. **7** Instead they talked incessantly about how different they were in regard to worship and food, asserting that they did not fulfill their contracted oblations either to the king or the armed forces but were hostile and very unsympathetic to his interests. So it was no small charge they fastened on them. **8** When the Greeks in the city, who were in no way wronged by them, noticed the unexpected tumult around these people, and the unforeseen concourses taking place, they were unable to help, for they lived under a tyranny, but they did give them encouragement and felt sorry for them, and they assumed that the things would change for the better. **9** Surely a community so the large that had done no wrong could not be left to such a fate. **10** Some of their neighbors and friends and business associates took some Jews aside secretly and pledged to support them and make every effort to assist them.

#### **Ptolemy's decree that all Jews in his kingdom be arrested**

**11** The king, priding himself on his present prosperity and with no regard for the power of the Almighty Alahayim, and supposing that he could persist forever with the same scheme, wrote the following letter against the Jews: **12** "King Ptolemy Philopater, to his generals in Egypt and elsewhere, greeting and good health. **13** I myself am in good health and our affairs are prospering. **14** Our expedition in Asia of which you yourselves are aware, having been brought, as we expected, to its successful conclusion with the deliberate help of the alahayims, **15** we thought we would foster the inhabitants of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia, not by force of arms, but by kindness and great benevolence, conferring benefits on them willingly. **16** And having allotted very large revenues to the temples in various cities, we proceeded also to Jerusalem, having gone up to do honor to the Temple of this accursed people who never desist from their folly. **17** Outwardly they seemed to welcome our presence, but in fact their welcome was insincere, for when we desired to enter their shrine and to honor it with resplendent and beautiful offerings, **18** carried away by their ancient pride, they stopped us from going in, but because of the benevolence we practice

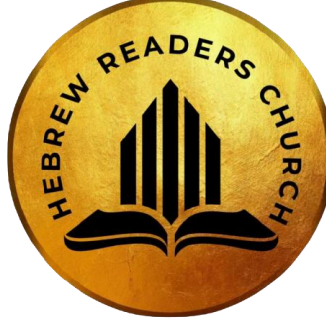




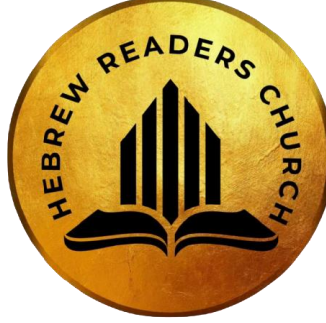
toward all men they were left untouched by our might. **19** But they plainly exhibited their hostility to us and, the only ones among all peoples who offer masterly resistance to kings and their own benefactors, they refused to accept anything as genuine. **20** For our part we accommodated ourselves to their folly, and returning victoriously to Egypt, we met all nations with benevolence: we have acted rightly. **21** Similarly, we made known to all our readiness to forgive the Jews' fellow countrymen, because of their alliance with us and the many affairs that had been entrusted to them from of old, and we boldly decided to introduce a change, declaring them worthy of Alexandrian citizenship and allowing them to participate in our regular religious rites. **22** But they misinterpreted us and in their innate feelings of hostility rejected this good offer. **23** Inclining as they always do toward the mean and petty, they not only rejected the invaluable citizenship, but also by their silence as well as by their words they show contempt for the few among them who are properly disposed to us, constantly nursing the secret hop that with their disgraceful conduct we would quickly alter our policy. **24** Accordingly, we have adequate proof of our conviction that these people are in every way hostile to us, and noting in advance that if ever a sudden disturbance should be stirred up against us later on, we would have these impious people behind our backs as traitors and barbarous enemies, **25** we have decreed that the very moment this letter reaches you, you shall dispatch to us those who reside among you, together with their women and children, committing atrocities against them and binding them fast all over in iron chains, to meet a desperate and ignominious death as befits traitorous foes. **26** For we believe that when they are all punished together, our government will be perfectly established forever in the most secure and healthy condition. **27** Whoever shelters any Jew, from the old to the child and even to the infant at the breast, shall with all his household be done to a violent death with the most horrible torture. **28** Whoever wishes may act as an informer, and he shall receive the estate of the person who is sentenced to punishment as well as two thousand dracmas from the royal treasury and shall also be rewarded with freedom. **29** Any place where a Jew is detected under any kind of shelter shall be made out of bounds and burned with fire shall become altogether useless for every mortal creature for all time." **30** Such was the form of the letter that was written.

#### **The deportation of the Jews and their imprisonment at Alexandria**

- 4** **1** In every place where the decree reached, a feast was arranged for the heathen at the public expense with noisy celebrations and gladness, with the hatred which had long before become inveterate in their hearts now being given open expression. **2** But among the Jews there was incessant



grief and cries of lamentation with tears, and their hearts were all aflame as they groaned and bewailed the unexpected destruction so suddenly decreed against them. **3** What district or city or town or village with any inhabitants at all or what streets were not filled with lamentation and wailing for them? **4** For with such vindictive and pitiless spirit were they sent away, all of them together, by the generals of the various cities, that even some of their enemies, confronted with their extraordinary suffering, and perceiving the people's pity for them and reflecting on life's strange vicissitudes, were moved to tears at their wretched expulsion. **5** For there was taken away a large company of old men, their heads covered with gray, and though their feet were sluggish and crooked from age, they were having to force themselves to a brisk pace under the altogether shameless and relentless driving. **6** The young women who had but recently entered the bridal chamber for the society of married life exchanged their joy for wailing, and, with their perfume-drenched locks covered in dust, they were carried away unveiled and all joined in singing a dirge instead of a wedding hymn, as if torn asunder by the brutal mangling of the heathen. **7** And in full view of everybody they were forcibly dragged along in bonds until they were embarked on board ship. **8** Their husbands, in the full bloom of youth, their necks girded not in glad celebration and youthful recreation but in dirges, seeing the grave already yawning at their very feet. **9** They were put on board like animals, driven along under the constraint of iron bonds. Some had their necks fastened to the ship's benches, and others had their feet secured in unbreakable fetters. **10** Worse still, they were placed in total darkness that they might be treated as traitors throughout the voyage. **11** When they had been brought to the place Schedia and the voyage as determined by the king was over, he ordered them to be thrown into the hippodrome on the outskirts of the city, an immense concourse eminently suitable for making the captives a public example to all who came down to the city and to those who left the city for a sojourn in the country, the purpose being to prevent them from associating with the king's forces or claiming to be within the precincts of the city. **12** When this was done, the king heard that their fellow countrymen came out frequently to bewail the bitter fate of their brethren **13** and in a rage ordered that they should be treated in precisely the same way as the others and should be allowed no remission whatever of the punishment meted out to these others. **14** Moreover, the whole race was to be registered by name, not for the toilsome labor service, briefly explained above, but to be tortured by the torments which he had commanded and to be put to death in the space of a single day. **15** The registration, undertaken with shameful haste and unremitting diligence from sunrise to sunset, was close after forty days, although still incomplete. **16** Filled with

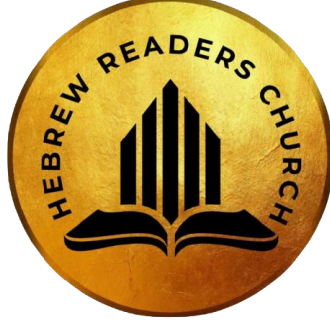


great and continuous joy, the king appointed feasts at all his idol shrines, with a heart far removed from the truth and a profane mouth, praising dumb objects unable to answer or help, and uttering improper words against the Almighty Alahayim. **17** After the interval of time mentioned previously, the scribes reported to the king that they could no longer continue the registration of the Jews on account of their incalculable number, **18** although in fact the majority were still in the country, some still remaining in their homes and others on the journey, the talk was impossible for all the generals in Egypt. **19** After threatening them harshly on the ground that they had been bribed to contrive their escape, he was eventually clearly convinced on this point **20** when they stated, with proof to back it up, that the paper mill and the pens they sued for writing had already given out. **21** But this was the working out of the invincible providence of the one who helps the Jews from heaven.

#### **The divine frustration of the king's plan to execute the Jews**

**5** **1** He then summoned Hermon, who was in charge of the elephants, and, filled with stern anger and rage and completely inflexible, **2** ordered him for the following day to drug all the elephants, five hundred in number, with large handfuls of frankincense and quantities of unmixed wine, then when they were wild with the plentiful supply of drink to bring them in to compass the fate of the Jews. **3** When he had given out these orders he turned to his feasting, having brought together those of his friends and army who were especially hostile to the Jews. **4** Meanwhile, Hermon, the superintendent of the elephants, carried out his orders to the letter. **5** The attendants assigned for the purpose went out in the evening and bound the hands of the poor unfortunate people and took every other precaution to see that they were secure through the night, imagining that the whole nation would meet its ruinous end in one blow. **6** But the Jews, who seemed to the heathen to be bereft of every support, completely restricted as they were by their bonds, called upon **7** their Adono, the all-conquering who governs with all power, the merciful Alahayim and father, all of them beseeching him with unrestrained cries and tears **8** to frustrate the wicked design against them and rescue them by a wonderful manifestation from the disaster imminently in store for them. **9** So their prayer went up fervently to heaven. **10** Heaven drugged the pitiless elephants until they were filled with an abundant supply of wine and saturated with frankincense, and in the early morning he appeared at the palace to inform the king. **11** But that lovely gift of his creation the interval of sleep, bestowed night and day since the beginning of time by him who confers his blessings on whomsoever he chooses, he sent upon the king. **12** And the king, in the spell of the sweet, deep sleep Alahayim brought on him, was greatly thwarted in his lawless purpose and utterly disappointed in his

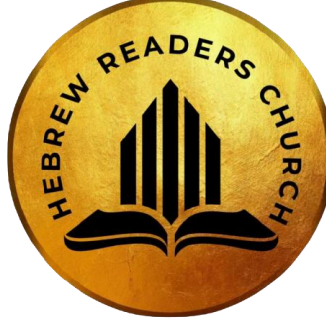




inflexible aim. **13** The Jews, having escaped the appointed hour, praised their holy Alahayim and begged him who is quick to respond in mercy to show the power of his mighty hand to the arrogant heathen. **14** But the middle of the tenth hour had nearly arrived when the official in charge of the invitations noticed that the guests were assembled and went to the king and shook him. **15** He had trouble in awakening him, but then pointed out that the duration of the banquet was almost past and reminded him of the circumstances. **16** The king took account of what he said and then, turning to his cups, he ordered his guests at banquet to take their places opposite him. **17** This done, he advised them to give themselves up to revelry, to appreciate the great honor conferred upon them and regard this late part of the feast as all good cheer. **18** After a period of table fellowship the king summoned Hermon and with severe threats inquired of him why the Jews had been allowed to survive that day. **19** But when he pointed out that he had carried out every last word of the king's bidding overnight and his friends confirmed it, **20** the king was seized with rage more fierce than Phalaris' and said that the Jews had only sleep to thank for that day's grace. Then he added that the elephants should be prepared without delay for the coming day, in exactly the same fashion, for the extermination of the accursed Jews.

**21** When the king had spoken, all who were present readily assented together with joy and each went off to his own home. **22** But they used the nighttime not so much for sleep as for devising all sorts of insults for the people they thought were doomed. **23** The cock had no sooner crowed the dawn that Hermon set the beasts in all their paraphernalia in motion in the great colonnade. **24** The crowds in the city thronged together for the piteous spectacle, eagerly awaiting the first light of morning. **25** But the Jews, drawing their last brief breath in tearful supplication and strains of lament, stretched out their hands to heaven and implored the Almighty Alahayim once more to help them speedily. **26** The rays of the sun were not yet widely dispersed and the king was receiving his friends when Hermon presented himself and invited him to go forth, explain that his wishes were no ready to be granted. **27** When the king received his report he was amazed at the outrageous invitation to go forth, overtaken as he was by complete ignorance, and asked what business was on hand that required everything to be completed for his sake with such haste. **28** But this was the working of the Alahayim who governs all things who had implanted in his mind forgetfulness of his previous schemes. **29** But Hermon and all his friends pointed to the beasts and the troops and said, "Everything is in readiness, King, in accordance with your firm purpose."

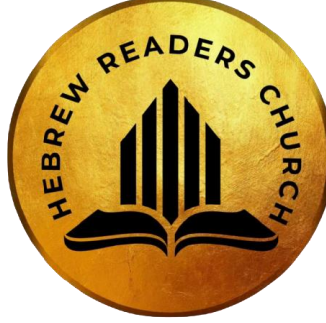
**30** However, he was filled with stern anger at the words, since by the providence of Alahayim in this matter his mind had gone blank, and



gazing at him threateningly, he said, **31** “If your parents or your offspring were here, I would have served them as an ample meal to the wild beasts instead of the Jews, against whom I have no complaint and who above all others showed an absolutely unflinching loyalty to my ancestors. **32** Indeed, if it were not for the affection that comes of our habitual companionship and your service, your life would have been taken instead of theirs.” **33** So Herman met an unexpected and dangerous threat and he cast his eyes down and his face fell. **34** The king’s friends, slipping out sulkily one by one, sent away the gathered throng, each to his own business. **35** The Jews, on hearing what had happened with the king, praised the Alahayim who had manifested himself, Ahayah, the king of kings, since they had obtained this help from him also.

**36** Now the king once more arranged the whole banquet in the same way and ordered the company to turn to revelry. **37** He then summoned Hermon and said menacingly, “How often, wretch, must I give you orders on the self-same matters? **38** Fit the elephants right now for tomorrow for the extermination of the Jews.” **39** But his kinsfolk who were at the table with him were astonished at his waywardness and remonstrated with him as follows. **40** “How long, King, will you make trial of us as though we were fools? For the third time now you have ordered us to exterminate the Jews, and once again when the business is in hand you change your mind and cancel your decree. **41** All this has put the city in a tumult of anticipation, and already crowded with throngs of the people, it has several times now been in danger of being plundered.” **42** Thereupon the king, a veritable Phalaris in every respect, was filled with madness and, completely heedless of the changes of heart which had been effected in him for the protection of the Jews, vowed emphatically but vainly that he would forthwith dispatch the Jews to the grave, mangled by the knees and feet of the beasts, **43** and that he would make an expedition against Judea and quickly level it to the ground with fire and sword and would swiftly burn down the Temple to which he had been refused admission and empty it for all time of those who sacrificed there. **44** Then his friends and kinsfolk left in great glee and high confidence and had troops posted in the most convenient spots in the city to keep guard.

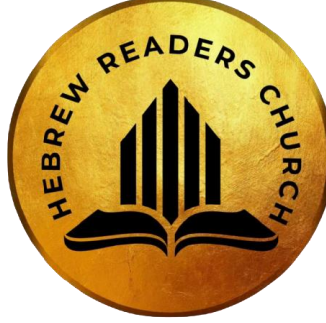
**45** The superintendent of the elephants drove the beasts almost, one might say, to a state of madness with fragrant draughts of wine mingled with frankincense and equipped them with horrible implements. **46** About dawn, when the city was already full of innumerable crowds making their way toward the hippodrome, he entered the palace and incited the king to take up the business on hand. **47** Then the king, his impious heart filled with stern anger, stormed out with the beast, determined to watch without a qualm and with his very own eyes the spectacle of the aforementioned



Jews' painful and piteous destruction. **48** When the Jews saw the dust stirred up by the elephants going out at the gate, the fully armed troops accompanying them and the movement of the people and heard the thunderous din, **49** thinking that the last crisis of their life and the end of their agonizing suspense had come, they took wailing and moaning and kissed one another, embracing their relatives and falling on their necks, parents and children, mothers and daughters; some had newborn infants at their breasts, drawing their last milk, **50** Nevertheless, mindful of the former occasions on which help was given from heaven, they threw themselves on their faces with one accord; they removed the babes from breasts **51** and cried out with an exceedingly great shout, imploring the ruler of all power by a manifestation to show mercy to them now that they were standing at the very gates of death.

#### **Eleazar's prayer**

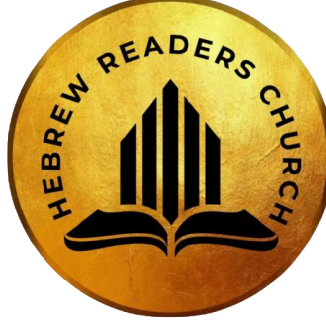
**6** **1** A certain Eleazar, a man of distinction among the priests of the country, already well advanced in years and a shining example of all life's virtues, directed the elders around him to stop calling on the holy Alahayim and prayed as follows: **2** "King, great in power, Most High, All-conquering Alahayim, who governs the whole creation with mercy, **3** look upon the seed of Abraham, upon the children of Jacob whom you sanctified, the people of your sanctified inheritance who are perishing unjustly as strangers in a strange land. **4** Pharaoh, the former ruler of this Egypt, with his multitude of chariots, high and mighty in his lawless insolence and boastful tongue, you destroyed in the depths of the seas with his proud host, Father, causing the light of your mercy to shine upon the people of Israel. **5** Sennacherib, the cruel king of the Assyrians, exulting in his countless hosts, when he had subjugated the whole earth by the spear and was lifted up against your holy city, utterly grievous words with boastfulness and insolence, you shattered, Ahayah, displaying your power openly to many nations. **6** The three comrades in Babylonia who of their own choice gave their life to the fire rather than serve idols you delivered unharmed to the very hair of their head, making the fiery furnace like dew, and you sent flame upon their enemies. **7** When, through the slanderous accusations brought against him out of envy, Daniel was thrown to the lions underground as food for beasts, you brought him up to the light unscathed. **8** When Jonah was pining away unpitied in the belly of the monster of the deep, you, Father, restored him uninjured to all his household. **9** Son now, you who hate insolence, full of mercy, protector of all, manifest yourself swiftly to those of the people of Israel who are outrageously treated by the abominable and lawless heathen. **10** If our life is subject to penalty because of impious deeds in the course of our sojourn abroad, rescue us from the hand of our enemies, Ahayah, and destroy us



by a fate of your own choosing. **11** Let not those who think vain thoughts bless their vain alahayims for the destruction of your beloved people and say, “Not even their Alahayim could rescue them. **12** You who possess all might and power, Eternal, look now upon us. Pity us who are being put to death like traitors by the mad insolence of lawless men. **13** Let the heathen fear your unconquerable power this day, highly honored one, who are continually might to save the people of Jacob. **14** The whole multitude of children and their parents implore you with tears. **15** Let it be made clear to all the nations that you are with us, Ahayah, and have not turned your face away from us, but even as you have said, “Not even when they were in the land of their enemies have I neglected them, ‘ so bring it to pass, Ahayah.”

#### **A remarkable turnabout in events and in the king’s attitude**

**16** Just as Eleazar was finishing his prayer, the king arrived at the hippodrome with the beasts and the whole wanton array of his army. **17** And the Jews observed it and raised a great cry to heaven that made the surrounding valleys ring with the sound and struck uncontrollable terror in all the hosts. **18** Then the great and glorious all-conquering and true Alahayim revealed his holy face and opened heaven’s gates, from which descended two angels, clothed in glory and of awe-inspiring appearance, visible to all except the Jews, **19** and they confronted the forces of their adversaries and filled them with confusion and timidity and bound them with immovable fetters. **20** The king also experienced a shuddering in his body and his gross insolence faded to nothing. **21** And the beasts turned back on the armed forces that followed them and began to trample them down and destroy them. **22** The king’s anger was now turned to pity and tears on account of the scheme he had previously devised. **23** For when he heard the outcry and saw them all prostrate to meet their death, he wept angrily threatened his friends, saying, **24** “You usurp the king’s power and excel tyrants in savagery, and you even attempt to deprive me myself, your benefactor, of my rule and indeed of my life, secretly devising measures that are deleterious from my kingdom. **25** Who was driven from their homes those who held fortresses of our country with such loyalty and stupidity mustered them here, each one? **26** Who has lawlessly surrounded with torments those who from the beginning have in every way exceeded all peoples in their goodwill toward us and have frequently submitted to the worst dangers confronting men? **27** Loose, yes loose completely their unrighteous bonds. Send them back to their homes in peace, asking their forgiveness for what has been done to them. **28** Release the sons of the all-conquering, the living Alahayim of heaven, how from the times of our ancestors until now has conferred upon our estate an impregnable stability with glory?” **29** So the king spoke. The Jews were released forthwith and blessed the holy Alahayim, their savior, for their



narrow escape from death.

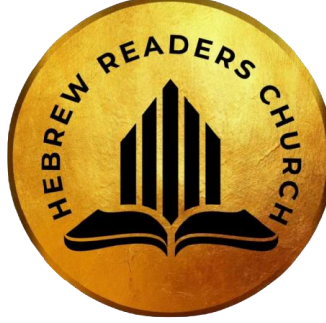
### **The Jewish celebration of a feast of deliverance**

**30** Then the king left for the city and, summoning the keeper of the public revenues, he ordered him to supply the Jews with wine and all the perquisites for a feast for seven days, decreeing that in every place where they had thought to meet their fate they should hold a festival of deliverance with joy. **31** Then those who had been reviled and had just been close to the grave, or rather had already had one foot in it, instead of a bitter and wretched fate held a feast celebrating their deliverance, and filled with gladness they portioned out to different festive groups the space that had been made ready for their destruction and burial. **32** They left off the mournful sound of dirges and took up the song of their fathers, praising Alahayim the deliverer and worker of wonders, and laying aside all wailing and lamentation, they formed dances as a sign of the joy and peace that had come upon them. **33** The king likewise held a great banquet in celebration of all that had happened and endlessly returned solemn thanks to heaven for the unexpected deliverance granted to him. **34** But those who previously imagined that the Jews were doomed to destruction and to become a prey for the birds, and had joyfully conducted the registration, no groaned at being covered with confusion and at having their blazing effrontery ignominiously quenched. **35** The Jews, however, as we have said, having formed the dance just mentioned, spent the time in festivity, with glad thanksgiving and psalms. **36** And they laid down a general ordinance on these matters, to have effect wherever future generations might sojourn, that they should celebrate the aforementioned days with a festival of joy, not for the sake of drinking and gluttony but of the deliverance that had come to them through Alahayim. **37** They next petitioned the king, requesting him to dismiss them to their own homes. **38** Now the process of registration had gone from the twenty-fifth day of Pachon to the fourth of Epiphi, for forty days, and the appointment of their destruction from the fifth of Epiphi to the seventh, for three days. **39** On these days the ruler of all revealed his mercy with great glory and rescued them one and all unharmed. **40** They feasted, with everything supplied by the king, until the fourteenth day, when they made the petition for their dismissal. **41** The king consented and on their behalf wrote the following letter to the generals in the cities, generously declaring his purpose.

### **The king's letter on behalf of the Jews**

**7** **1** "King Ptolemy Philopator to the generals in Egypt and all who have charge of our affairs, greetings and good health, **2** We, for our part, are in good health, and our children also, the great Alahayim directing our estate as we desire. **3** Some of our friends, out of malice, by urging the matter on us continually, persuaded us to gather the Jews together in the kingdom in



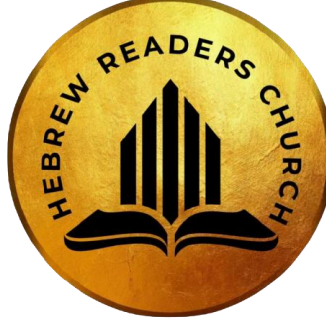


a body and to inflict upon them extraordinary punishments as traitors, **4** suggesting that our state would never be stable because of the ill will the Jews bear to all nations until this as carried out. **5** So they brought them down with atrocious treatment, as slaves or rather conspirators, and they sought to put them to death without legal trail or even investigation, decking themselves out with cruelty more savage than the law of the Scythians. **6** But because of the fairness we show to all men, we reprimanded them for their conduct with stern threats and barely granted them their lives, and knowing of a surety that Alahayim in heaven protects the Jews, and alliance with them continually like a father with his children, **7** and taking account of their unshakable friendly disposition toward us and our ancestors, we have justly absolved them of any blame whatever. **8** And we have enjoined that all should return, each one to his own home, and that no one should do them harm at all in any place or reproach them for the unreasonable penalties inflicted on them. **9** Be sure of this that if we devise any evil scheme against them or cause them any trouble, we shall have not man but the most high Alahayim, who is ruler of all power, as our adversary to exact vengeance for what is done, inexorably in all circumstances for all time. Farewell.”

**10** On receiving this letter, the Jews did not at once make hast for their departure, but requested further of the king that those of the Jewish people who had wittingly transgressed against the holy Alahayim and his Law should receive the due punishment at their hands, **11** stressing that those who had transgressed the divine commandments for their belly’s sake would never be well disposed to the king’s business either. **12** The king acknowledged the truth of what they said, and praising them, he granted them full indemnity, to destroy without let or hindrance or any royal license or investigation those who had transgressed the Law of Alahayim anywhere in his dominion.

### **The Jews’ joyous departure and return home**

**13** Then, applauding him, as was fitting, their priests and the whole multitude departed with joy, shouting the HalūlūYah. **14** Any one of their countrymen they encountered on the way who had become defiled they punished and put to death as a public example. **15** On that day they put to death over three hundred men, and they kept it as a joyous festival, having subdued the unclean. **16** But those who held fast to Alahayim even unto death enjoyed the full advantage of their deliverance and departed from the city crowned with all kinds of fragrant flowers, giving thanks to the Alahayim of their fathers, the everlasting saviour of Israel, with gladness and with shouting, in a song of praise and melodious hymns. **17** When they have reached Ptolemias, called “rose-bearing” because of the special



characteristics of the place, the fleet waited for them, according to their general wish, for seven days, **18** and there they held a banquet to celebrate their deliverance, the king having generously supplied every one of them with all they needed until their arrival at their own home. **19** And when they had completed their voyage in peace with appropriate thanksgiving, there too in the same fashion as before they decided to make these days also during the time of their sojourn festival days. **20** They consecrated them with an inscription on a pillar, and having dedicated the place of prayer on the site of the banquet, they went away unscathed, free, and filled with joy, and were conducted safely, by ordinance of the king, over land and sea and river, each to his own home. **21** They had even greater authority than before among their enemies and were regarded with high esteem and awe; no one at all extorted their property. **22** They recovered all their possessions, according to the register, and those who had anything of theirs returned it to them with great fear: The great Alahayim perfectly accomplished great things for their salvation. **23** Blessed be the deliverer of Israel forever and ever! Amen.

THE END of 3rd Maccabees