

THE FOURTH BOOK OF THE MACCABEES

¹ As I am going to demonstrate a most philosophical proposition, namely, that religious reasoning is absolute master of the passions, I would willingly advise you to give the utmost heed to philosophy. ² For reason is necessary to everyone as a step to science: and more especially doth it embrace the praise of prudence, the highest virtue. ³ If, then, reasoning appeareth to hold the mastery over the passions which stand in the way of temperance, such as gluttony and lust, ⁴ it surely also and manifestly hath the rule over the affections which are contrary to justice, such as malice; and of those which are hindrances to manliness, as wrath, and pain, and fear. ⁵ How, then, is it, perhaps some may say, that reasoning, if it rule the affections, is not also master of forgetfulness and ignorance? They attempt a ridiculous argument. ⁶ For reasoning doth not rule over its own affections, but over such as are contrary to justice, and manliness, and temperance, and prudence; and yet over these, so as to withstand, without destroying them.

⁷ I might prove to you, from many other considerations, that religious reasoning is sole master of the passions; ⁸ but I shall prove it with the greatest force from the fortitude of Eleazar, and seven brethren, and their mother,

who suffered death in defense of virtue. ⁹ For all these, contemning pains even unto death, by this contempt, demonstrated that reasoning hath command over the passions. ¹⁰ For their virtues, then, it is right that I should commend those men who died with their mother at this time in behalf of rectitude; and for their honors, I may count them happy. ¹¹ For they, winning admiration not only from men in general, but even from their persecutors, for their manliness and endurance, became the means of the destruction of the tyranny against their nation, having conquered the tyrant by their endurance, so that by them their country was purified. ¹² But we may now at once enter upon the question, having commenced, as is our wont, with laying down the doctrine, and so proceed to the account of these persons, giving glory to the all wise God.

¹³ The question, therefore, is, whether reasoning be absolute master of the passions. ¹⁴ Let us determine, then, What is reasoning? and what passion? and how many forms of the passions? and whether reasoning beareth sway over all of these? ¹⁵ Reasoning is, then, intellect accompanied by a life of rectitude, putting foremost the consideration of wisdom. ¹⁶ And wisdom is a knowledge of divine and human things, and of their causes. ¹⁷ And this is contained in the education of the law; by means of which we learn divine things reverently, and human things profitably. ¹⁸ And the forms of wisdom are prudence, and justice, and manliness, and temperance. ¹⁹ The leading one of these is

prudence; by whose means, indeed, it is that reasoning beareth rule over the passions. ²⁰ Of the passions, pleasure and pain are the two most comprehensive; and they also by nature refer to the soul. ²¹ And there are many attendant affections surrounding pleasure and pain. ²² Before pleasure is lust; and after pleasure, joy. ²³ And before pain is fear; and after pain, sorrow. ²⁴ Wrath is an affection, common to pleasure and to pain, if any one will pay attention when it cometh upon him. ²⁵ And there existeth in pleasure a malicious disposition, which is the most multiform of all the affections. ²⁶ In the soul it is arrogance, and love of money, and vaingloriousness, and contention, and faithlessness, and the evil eye. ²⁷ In the body it is greediness and gormandizing, and solitary gluttony.

²⁸ As pleasure and pain are, therefore, two growths of the body and the soul, so there are many offshoots of these passions. ²⁹ And reasoning, the universal husbandman, purging, and pruning these severally, and binding round, and watering, and transplanting, in every way improveth the materials of the morals and affections. ³⁰ For reasoning is the leader of the virtues, but it is the sole ruler of the passions. Observe then first, through the very things which stand in the way of temperance, that reasoning is absolute ruler of the passions. ³¹ Now temperance consisteth of a command over the lusts. ³² But of the lusts, some belong to the

soul, others to the body: and over each of these classes the reasoning appeareth to bear sway. ³³ For whence is it, otherwise, that when urged on to forbidden meats, we reject the gratification which would ensue from them? Is it not because reasoning is able to command the appetites? I believe so. ³⁴ Hence it is, then, that when lusting after water animals and birds, and four-footed beasts, and all kinds of food which are forbidden us by the law, we withhold ourselves through the mastery of reasoning. ³⁵ For the affections of our appetites are resisted by the temperate understanding, and bent back again, and all the impulses of the body are reined in by reasoning.

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¹ And what wonder? if the lusts of the soul, after participation with what is beautiful, are frustrated, ² on this ground, therefore, the temperate Joseph is praised in that by reasoning, he subdued, on reflection, the indulgence of sense. ³ For, although young, and ripe for sexual intercourse, he abrogated by reasoning the stimulus of his passions. ⁴ And it is not merely the stimulus of sensual indulgence, but that of every desire, that reasoning is able to master. ⁵ For instance, the law saith, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor anything that belongeth to thy neighbor. ⁶ Now, then, since it is the law which hath forbidden us to desire, I shall much the more easily persuade you, that reasoning is able to govern our lusts, just as it doth the affections which are impediments

to justice. ⁷ Since in what way is a solitary eater, and a glutton, and a drunkard reclaimed, unless it be clear that reasoning is lord of the passions? ⁸ A man, therefore, who regulateth his course by the law, even if he be a lover of money, straightaway putteth force upon his own disposition; lending to the needy without interest, and canceling the debt of the incoming Sabbath. ⁹ And should a man be parsimonious, he is ruled by the law acting through reasoning; so that he doth not glean his harvest crops, nor vintage: and in reference to other points we may perceive that it is reasoning that conquereth his passions. ¹⁰ For the law conquereth even affection toward parents, not surrendering virtue on their account. ¹¹ And it prevaieth over marriage love, condemning it when transgressing law. ¹² And it lordeth it over the love of parents toward their children, for they punish them for vice; and it domineereth over the intimacy of friends, reproving them when wicked. ¹³ And think it not a strange assertion that reasoning can in behalf of the law conquer even enmity. ¹⁴ It alloweth not to cut down the cultivated herbage of an enemy, but preserveth it from the destroyers, and collecteth their fallen ruins.

¹⁵ And reasoning appeareth to be master of the more violent passions, as love of empire and empty boasting, and arrogance, and loud boasting, and slander. ¹⁶ For the temperate understanding repelleth all these malignant passions, as it doth wrath: for it mastereth even this. ¹⁷ Thus Moses, when angered against Dathan

and Abiram, did nothing to them in wrath, but regulated his anger by reasoning. ¹⁸ For the temperate mind is able, as I said, to be superior to the passions, and to transfer some, and destroy others. ¹⁹ For why, else, doth our most wise father Jacob blame Simeon and Levi for having irrationally slain the whole race of the Shechemites, saying, Cursed be their anger. ²⁰ For if reasoning did not possess the power of subduing angry affections, he would not have spoken thus. ²¹ For at the time when God created man, he implanted within him his passions and moral nature. ²² And at that time he enthroned above all the holy leader mind, through the medium of the senses. ²³ And he gave a law to this *mind*, by living according to which it will maintain a temperate, and just, and good, and manly reign.

²⁴ How, then, a man may say, if reasoning be master of the passions, hath it no control over forgetfulness and ignorance?

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¹ The argument is exceedingly ridiculous: for reasoning doth not appear to bear sway over its own affections, but over those of the body, ² in such a way as that any one of you may not be able to root out desire, but reasoning will enable you to avoid being enslaved to it. ³ One may not be able to root out anger from the soul, but it is possible to withstand anger. ⁴ Any one of you may not be able to eradicate malice, but reasoning hath force to work with you to prevent

your yielding to malice. ⁵ For reasoning is not an eradicator, but an antagonist of the passions.

⁶ And this may be more clearly comprehended from the thirst of king David. ⁷ For after David had been attacking the Philistines the whole day, he with the soldiers of his nation slew many of them; ⁸ then when evening came, sweating and very weary, he came to the royal tent, about which the entire host of our ancestors was encamped. ⁹ Now all the rest of them were at supper; ¹⁰ but the king, being very much athirst, although he had numerous springs, could not by their means quench his thirst; ¹¹ but a certain irrational longing for the water in the enemy's camp grew stronger and fiercer upon him, and consumed him with languish. ¹² Wherefore his bodyguards being troubled at this longing of the king, two valiant young soldiers, reverencing the desire of the king, put on their armor, and taking a pitcher, gat over the ramparts of the enemies: ¹³ and unperceived by the guardians of the gate, they went throughout the whole camp of the enemy in quest. ¹⁴ And having boldly discovered the fountain, they filled out of it the draft for the king. ¹⁵ But he, though parched up with thirst, reasoned that a draft reputed of equal value to blood, would be terribly dangerous to his soul. ¹⁶ Wherefore, setting up reasoning in opposition to his desire, he poured out the draft to God. ¹⁷ For the temperate mind hath power to conquer the pressure of the passions, and to quench the fires of excitement, ¹⁸ and to wrestle

down the pains of the body, however excessive; and, through the excellency of reasoning, to abominate all the assaults of the passions.

¹⁹ But the occasion now inviteth us to give an illustration of temperate reasoning from history.

²⁰ For at a time when our fathers were in possession of undisturbed peace through obedience to the law, and were prosperous, so that Seleucus Nicanor, the king of Asia, both assigned them money for divine service, and accepted their form of government, ²¹ then certain persons, bringing in new things contrary to the general unanimity, in various ways fell into calamities.

4

¹ For a certain man named Simon, who was in opposition to Onias, who once held the high priesthood for life, and was an honorable and good man, after that by slandering him in every way, he could not injure him with the people, went away as an exile, with the intention of betraying his country. ² Whence coming to Apollonius, the military governor of Syria, and Phoenicia, and Cilicia, he said, ³ Having good will to the king's affairs, I am come to inform thee that infinite private wealth is laid up in the treasuries of Jerusalem which do not belong to the temple, but pertain to king Seleucus. ⁴ Apollonius, acquainting himself with the particulars of this, praised Simon for his care of the king's interests, and going up to Seleucus informed him of the treasure; ⁵ and

getting authority about it, and quickly advancing into our country with the accursed Simon and a very heavy force, ⁶ he said that he came with the commands of the king that he should take the private money of the treasury. ⁷ And the nation, indignant at this proclamation, and replying to the effect that it was extremely unfair that those who had committed deposits to the sacred treasury should be deprived of them, resisted as well as they could. ⁸ But Apollonius went away with threats into the temple. ⁹ And the priests, with the women and children, having supplicated God to throw his shield over the holy, despised place, ¹⁰ and Apollonius going up with his armed force to the seizure of the treasure—there appeared from heaven angels riding on horseback, all radiant in armor, filling them with much fear and trembling. ¹¹ And Apollonius fell down half dead upon the court which is open to all nations, and extended his hands to heaven, and implored the Hebrews, with tears, to pray for him, and propitiate the heavenly host. ¹² For he said that he had sinned, so as to be consequently worthy of death; and that if he were saved, he would celebrate to all men the blessedness of the holy place. ¹³ Onias the high priest, induced by these words, although for other reasons anxious that king Seleucus should not suppose that Apollonius was slain by human device and not by divine punishment, prayed for him; ¹⁴ and he being thus unexpectedly saved, departed to manifest to the king what had happened to him.

15 But on the death of Seleucus the king, his son Antiochus Epiphanes succeedeth to the kingdom: a man of haughty pride and terrible. 16 Who having deposed Onias from the high priesthood, appointed his brother Jason to be high priest: 17 who had made a covenant, if he would give him this authority, to pay yearly three thousand six hundred and sixty talents. 18 And he committed to him the high priesthood and rulership over the nation. 19 And he both changed the manner of living of the people, and perverted their civil customs into all lawlessness. 20 So that he not only erected a gymnasium on the very citadel of our country, *but neglected* the guardianship of the temple. 21 At which divine vengeance being grieved, instigated Antiochus himself against them. 22 For being at war with Ptolemy in Egypt, he heard that on a report of his death being spread abroad, the inhabitants of Jerusalem had exceedingly rejoiced, and he quickly marched against them. 23 And having subdued them, he established a decree that if any of them lived according to the laws of his country, he should die. 24 And when he could by no means destroy by his decrees the obedience to the law of the nation, but saw all his threats and punishments without effect, 25 for even women, because they continued to circumcise their children, were flung down a precipice along with them, knowing beforehand of the punishment. 26 When, therefore, his decrees were disregarded by the people, he himself

compelled by means of tortures everyone of this race, by tasting forbidden meats, to abjure the Jewish religion.

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¹ The tyrant Antiochus, therefore, sitting in public state with his assessors upon a certain lofty place, with his armed troops standing in a circle round him, ² commanded his spear-bearers to seize every one of the Hebrews, and to compel them to taste swine's flesh, and things offered to idols. ³ And should any of them be unwilling to eat the accursed food, they were to be tortured on the wheel, and so killed. ⁴ And when many had been seized, a foremost man of the assembly, a Hebrew, by name Eleazar, a priest by family, by profession a lawyer, and advanced in years, and for this reason known to many of the king's followers, was brought near to him.

⁵ And Antiochus seeing him, said, ⁶ I would counsel thee, old man, before thy tortures begin, to taste the swine's flesh, and save your life; for I feel respect for your age and hoary head, which since you have had so long, you appear to me to be no philosopher in retaining the superstition of the Jews. ⁷ For wherefore, since nature hath conferred upon you the most excellent flesh of this animal, do you loathe it? ⁸ It seemeth senseless not to enjoy what is pleasant, yet not disgraceful; and from notions of sinfulness, to reject the boons of nature. ⁹ And you will be acting, I think, still more senselessly, if you

follow vain conceits about the truth. ¹⁰ And you will, moreover, be despising me to your own punishment. ¹¹ Will you not awake from your trifling philosophy? and give up the folly of your notions; and, regaining understanding worthy of your age, search into the truth of an expedient course? ¹² and, reverencing my kindly admonition, have pity upon your own years? ¹³ For, bear in mind, that if there be any power which watcheth over this religion of yours, it will pardon you for all transgressions of the law which you commit through compulsion.

¹⁴ While the tyrant incited him in this manner to the unlawful eating of flesh, Eleazar begged permission to speak. ¹⁵ And having received power to speak, he began thus to deliver himself: ¹⁶ We, O Antiochus, who are persuaded that we live under a divine law, consider no compulsion to be so forcible as obedience to that law; ¹⁷ wherefore we consider that we ought not in any point to transgress the law. ¹⁸ And indeed, were our law (as you suppose) not truly divine, and if we wrongly think it divine, we should have no right even in that case to destroy our sense of religion. ¹⁹ Think not eating the unclean, then, a trifling offense. ²⁰ For transgression of the law, whether in small or great matters, is of equal moment; ²¹ for in either case the law is equally slighted. ²² But thou deridest our philosophy, as though we lived irrationally in it. ²³ Yet it instructeth us in temperance, so that we are superior to all pleasures and lusts; and it exerciseth us in manliness, so that we cheerfully

undergo every grievance. ²⁴ And it instructeth us in justice, so that in all our dealings we render what is due; and it teacheth us piety, so that we worship the one only God becomingly.

²⁵ Wherefore it is that we eat not the unclean; for believing that the law was established by God, we are convinced that the Creator of the world, in giving his laws, sympathizeth with our nature. ²⁶ Those things which are convenient to our souls, he hath directed us to eat; but those which are repugnant to them, he hath interdicted. ²⁷ But, tyrant-like, thou not only forcest us to break the law, but also to eat, that thou mayest ridicule us as we thus profanely eat: ²⁸ but thou shalt not have this cause of laughter against me; ²⁹ nor will I transgress the sacred oaths of my forefathers to keep the law. ³⁰ No, not if you pluck out my eyes, and consume my entrails. ³¹ I am not so old, and void of manliness, but that my rational powers are youthful in defense of my religion. ³² Now then; prepare your wheels, and kindle a fiercer flame. ³³ I will not so pity my old age, as on my account to break the law of my country. ³⁴ I will not belie thee, O law, my instructor! or forsake thee, O beloved self-control. ³⁵ I will not put thee to shame, O philosopher reason; or deny thee, O honored priesthood, and science of the law. ³⁶ Mouth! thou shalt not pollute my old age, nor the full stature of a perfect life. ³⁷ My fathers shall receive me pure, not having quailed before your compulsion, though unto death. ³⁸ For over the ungodly thou shalt tyrannize; but thou shalt not

lord it over my thoughts about religion, either by thine arguments, or through deeds.

6

¹ When Eleazar had in this manner answered the exhortations of the tyrant, the spear-bearers came up, and rudely hauled Eleazar to the instruments of torture. ² And first, they stripped the old man, adorned as he was with the comeliness of piety. ³ Then tying back his arms and hands, they disdainfully used him with stripes; ⁴ a herald opposite crying out, Obey the commands of the king. ⁵ But Eleazar, the high-minded and truly noble, as one tortured in a dream, regarded it not at all. ⁶ But raising his eyes on high to heaven, the old man's flesh was stripped off by the scourges, and his blood streamed down, and his sides were pierced through. ⁷ And falling upon the ground, from his body having no power to support the pains, he yet kept his reasoning upright and unbending. ⁸ Then one of the harsh spear-bearers leaped upon his belly as he was falling, to force him upright. ⁹ But he endured the pains, and despised the cruelty, and persevered through the indignities; ¹⁰ and like a noble athlete, the old man, when struck, vanquished his torturers. ¹¹ His countenance sweating, and he panting for breath, he was admired by the very torturers for his courage.

¹² Wherefore, partly in pity for his old age, ¹³ partly from the sympathy of acquaintance, and partly in admiration of his endurance, some of the attendants of the king said, ¹⁴ Why do you

unreasonably destroy yourself, O Eleazar, with these miseries? ¹⁵ We will bring you some meat cooked by yourself, and do you save yourself by pretending that you have eaten swine's flesh.

¹⁶ And Eleazar, as though the advice more painfully tortured him, cried out, ¹⁷ Let not us who are children of Abraham be so evil advised as by giving way to make use of an unbecoming pretense; ¹⁸ for it were irrational, if having lived up to old age in all truth, and having scrupulously guarded our character for it, we should now turn back, ¹⁹ and ourselves should become a pattern of impiety to the young, as being an example of pollution eating. ²⁰ It would be disgraceful if we should live on some short time, and that scorned by all men for cowardice, ²¹ and be condemned by the tyrant for unmanliness, by not contending to the death for our divine law. ²² Wherefore do you, O children of Abraham, die nobly for your religion. ²³ Ye spear-bearers of the tyrant, why do ye linger?

²⁴ Beholding him so high-minded against misery, and not changing at their pity, they led him to the fire: ²⁵ then with their wickedly contrived instruments they burnt him on the fire, and poured stinking fluids down into his nostrils. ²⁶ And he being at length burnt down to the bones, and about to expire, raised his eyes Godward, and said, ²⁷ Thou knowest, O God, that when I might have been saved, I am slain for the sake of the law by tortures of fire. ²⁸ Be merciful to thy people, and be satisfied with the

punishment of me on their account. ²⁹ Let my blood be a purification for them, and take my life in recompense for theirs. ³⁰ Thus speaking, the holy man departed, noble in his torments, and even to the agonies of death resisted in his reasoning for the sake of the law.

³¹ Confessedly, therefore, religious reasoning is master of the passions. ³² For had the passions been superior to reasoning, I would have given them the witness of this mastery. ³³ But now, since reasoning conquered the passions, we befittingly award it the authority of first place. ³⁴ And it is but fair that we should allow, that the power belongeth to reasoning, since it mastereth external miseries. ³⁵ Ridiculous would it be were it not so; and I prove that reasoning hath not only mastered pains, but that it is also superior to the pleasures, and withstandeth them.

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¹ The reasoning of our father Eleazar, like a first-rate pilot, steering the vessel of piety in the sea of passions, ² and flouted by the threats of the tyrant, and overwhelmed with the breakers of torture, ³ in no way shifted the rudder of piety till it sailed into the harbor of victory over death. ⁴ Not so hath ever a city, when besieged, held out against many and various machines, as did that holy man, when his pious soul was tried with the fiery trial of tortures and rackings, move his besiegers through the religious reasoning that shielded him. ⁵ For father Eleazar, projecting his disposition, broke the raging waves of the

passions as with a jutting promontory. ⁶ O priest, worthy of the priesthood! thou didst not pollute thy sacred teeth; nor make thine appetite, which had always embraced the clean and lawful, a partaker of profanity. ⁷ O harmonizer with the law, and sage devoted to a divine life! ⁸ Of such a character ought those to be who perform the duties of the law at the risk of their own blood, and defend it with generous sweat by sufferings even unto death. ⁹ Thou, father, hast gloriously established our right government by thy endurance; and making of much account our service past, prevented its destruction, and, by thy deeds, hast made credible the words of philosophy. ¹⁰ O aged man of more power than tortures, elder more vigorous than fire, greatest king over the passions, Eleazar! ¹¹ For as father Aaron, armed with a censer, hastening through the consuming fire, vanquished the flame-bearing angel, ¹² so, Eleazar, the descendant of Aaron, wasted away by the fire, did not give up his reasoning. ¹³ And, what is most wonderful, though an old man, though the labors of his body were now spent, and his fibers were relaxed, and his sinews worn out, he recovered youth. ¹⁴ By the spirit of reasoning, and the reasoning of Isaac, he rendered powerless the many-headed instrument. ¹⁵ O blessed old age, and reverend hoar head, and life obedient to the law, which the faithful seal of death perfected.

¹⁶ If, then, an old man, through religion, despised tortures even unto death, confessedly religious reasoning is ruler of the passions. ¹⁷ But

perhaps some might say, It is not all who conquer passions, as all do not possess wise reasoning. ¹⁸ But they who have meditated upon religion with their whole heart, these alone can master the passions of the flesh: ¹⁹ they who believe that to God they die not; for, as our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, they live to God. ²⁰ This circumstance, then, is by no means an objection, that some who have weak reasoning, are governed by their passions: ²¹ since what person, walking religiously by the whole rule of philosophy, and believing in God, ²² and knowing that it is a blessed thing to endure all kinds of hardships for virtue, would not, for the sake of religion, master his passion? ²³ For the wise and brave man only is lord over his passions.

8

¹ Whence it is, that even boys, imbued with the philosophy of religious reasoning, have conquered still more bitter tortures: ² for when the tyrant was manifestly vanquished in his first attempt, in being unable to force the old man to eat the unclean thing—then, indeed, vehemently swayed with passion, he commanded to bring others of the adult Hebrews, and if they would eat of the unclean thing, to let them go when they had eaten; but if they objected, to torment them more grievously.

³ The tyrant having given this charge, seven brethren were brought into his presence, along with their aged mother, handsome, and modest, and wellborn, and altogether comely. ⁴ Whom,

when the tyrant beheld, encircling their mother as in a dance, he was pleased at them; and being struck with their becoming and ingenuous mien, smiled upon them, and calling them near, said:

⁵ O youths, with favorable feelings, I admire the beauty of each of you; and greatly honoring so numerous a band of brethren, I not only counsel you not to share the madness of the old man who hath been tortured before, ⁶ but I do beg you to yield, and to enjoy my friendship; for I possess the power, not only of punishing those who disobey my commands, but of doing good to those who obey them. ⁷ Put confidence in me, then, and you shall receive places of authority in my government, if you forsake your national ordinance, ⁸ and, conforming to the Greek mode of life, alter your rule, and revel in youth's delights. ⁹ For if you provoke me by your disobedience, you will compel me to destroy you, every one, with terrible punishments by tortures. ¹⁰ Have mercy, then, upon your own selves, whom I, although an enemy, have compassion for your age and comeliness. ¹¹ Will you not reason upon this—that if you disobey, there will be nothing left for you but to die in tortures?

¹² Thus speaking, he ordered the instruments of torture to be brought forward, that very fear might prevail upon them to eat unclean meat. ¹³ And when the spearman brought forward the wheels, and the racks, and hooks, and catapults, and caldrons, pans, and finger-racks, and iron hands, and wedges, and bellows, the

tyrant continued: ¹⁴ Fear, young men, and the righteousness which ye worship will be merciful to you if you err from compulsion.

¹⁵ Now they having listened to these words of persuasion, and seeing the fearful instruments, not only were not afraid, but even answered the arguments of the tyrant, and through their good reasoning destroyed his power. ¹⁶ Now let us consider the matter: had any of them been weak-spirited and cowardly among them, what reasonings would they have employed but such as these? ¹⁷ O wretched that we are, and exceeding senseless! when the king exhorteth us, and calleth us to his bounty, should we not obey him? ¹⁸ Why do we cheer ourselves with vain counsels, and venture upon a disobedience bringing death? ¹⁹ Shall we not fear, O brethren, the instruments of torture, and weigh the threatenings of torment, and shun this vainglory and destructive pride? ²⁰ Let us have compassion upon our age and relent over the years of our mother. ²¹ And let us bear in mind that we shall be dying as rebels. ²² And divine justice will pardon us if we fear the king through necessity. ²³ Why withdraw ourselves from a most sweet life, and deprive ourselves of this pleasant world? ²⁴ Let us not oppose necessity, nor seek vainglory by our own excruciation. ²⁵ The law itself is not forward to put us to death, if we dread torture. ²⁶ Whence hath such angry zeal taken root in us, and such fatal obstinacy approved itself to us, when we might live unmolested by giving ear to the king?

²⁷ But nothing of this kind did the young men say or think when about to be tortured. ²⁸ For they were well aware of the sufferings, and masters of the pains. So that as soon as the tyrant had ceased counseling them to eat the unclean, they altogether with one voice, as from the same heart, said:

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¹ Why delayest thou, O tyrant? for we are readier to die than to transgress the injunctions of our fathers. ² And we should be disgracing our fathers if we did not obey the law, and take knowledge for our guide. ³ O tyrant, counselor of lawbreaking, do not, hating us as thou dost, pity us more than we pity ourselves. ⁴ For we account your pity of us on the terms of unlawful escape to be worse than death. ⁵ And you think to scare us, by threatening us with death by tortures, as though thou hadst learned nothing by the death of Eleazar. ⁶ But if aged men of the Hebrews have died in the cause of religion after enduring torture, more rightly should we younger men die, scorning your cruel tortures, which our aged instructor overcame. ⁷ Make the attempt, then, O tyrant; and if thou puttest us to death for our religion, think not that thou harmest us by torturing us. ⁸ For we through this ill treatment and endurance shall bear off the rewards of virtue. ⁹ But thou, for the wicked and despotic slaughter of us, shalt, from the divine vengeance, endure eternal torture by fire.

¹⁰ When they had thus spoken, the tyrant was not only exasperated against them as being refractory, but enraged with them as being ungrateful. ¹¹ So that, at his bidding, the torturers brought forth the eldest of them, and tearing through his tunic, bound his hands and arms on each side with thongs. ¹² And when they had labored hard without effect in scourging him, they hurled him upon the wheel. ¹³ And the noble youth, extended upon this, became dislocated. ¹⁴ And with every member disjointed, he exclaimed in expostulation,

¹⁵ O most accursed tyrant, and enemy of heavenly justice, and cruelhearted, I am no murderer, nor sacrilegious man, whom thou thus ill-usest; but a defender of the divine law. ¹⁶ And when the spearmen said, Consent to eat, that you may be released from your tortures— ¹⁷ he answered, Not so powerful, O accursed ministers, is your wheel, as to stifle my reasoning; cut my limbs, and burn my flesh, and twist my joints. ¹⁸ For through all my torments I will convince you that the children of the Hebrews are alone unconquered in behalf of virtue. ¹⁹ While he was saying this, they heaped up fuel, and setting fire to it, strained him upon the wheel still more. ²⁰ And the wheel was defiled all over with blood, and the hot ashes were quenched by the droppings of gore, and pieces of flesh were scattered about the axles of the machine. ²¹ And although the framework of his bones was now destroyed, the high-minded

and Abrahamic youth did not groan. ²² But, as though transformed by fire into immortality, he nobly endured the rackings, saying, ²³ Imitate me, O brethren, nor ever desert your station, nor abjure my brotherhood in courage: fight the holy and honorable fight of religion; ²⁴ by which means our just and paternal providence, becoming merciful to the nation, will punish the pestilent tyrant. ²⁵ And saying this, the revered youth abruptly closed his life.

²⁶ And when all admired his courageous soul, the spearmen brought forward him who was second in point of age, and having put on iron hands, bound him with pointed hooks to the catapult. ²⁷ And when, on inquiring whether he would eat before he was tortured, they heard his noble sentiment, ²⁸ after they with the iron hands had violently dragged all the flesh from the neck to the chin, the panther-like beasts tare off the very skin of his head: but he, bearing with firmness this misery, said,

²⁹ How sweet is every form of death for the religion of our fathers! and he said to the tyrant, ³⁰ Thinkest thou not, most cruel of all tyrants, that thou art now tortured more than I, finding thine overweening conception of tyranny conquered by our patience in behalf of our religion? ³¹ For I lighten my suffering by the pleasures which are connected with virtue. ³² But thou art tortured with threatenings for impiety; and thou shalt not escape, most corrupt tyrant, the vengeance of divine wrath.

10

¹ Now this one, having endured this praiseworthy death, the third was brought along, and exhorted by many to taste and save his life. ² But he cried out and said, Know ye not, that the father of those who are dead, begat me also; and that the same mother bare me; and that I was brought up in the same tenets? ³ I abjure not the noble relationship of my brethren. ⁴ Now then, whatever instrument of vengeance ye have, apply it to my body, for ye are not able to touch, even if ye wish it, my soul. ⁵ But they, highly incensed at his boldness of speech, dislocated his hands and feet with racking engines, and wrenching them from their sockets, dismembered him. ⁶ And they dragged round his fingers, and his arms, and his legs, and his ankles. ⁷ And not being able by any means to strangle him, they tare off his skin, together with the extreme tips of his fingers, flayed him, and then hauled him to the wheel; ⁸ around which his vertebral joints were loosened, and he saw his own flesh torn to shreds, and streams of blood flowing from his entrails. ⁹ And when about to die, he said, ¹⁰ We, O accursed tyrant, suffer this for the sake of divine education and virtue. ¹¹ But thou, for thine impiety and bloodshedding, shalt endure indissoluble torments.

¹² And thus having died worthily of his brethren, they dragged forward the fourth, saying, ¹³ Do not thou share the madness of thy brethren: but give regard to the king, and save thyself. ¹⁴ But he said to them, You have not a

fire so scorching as to make me play the coward. ¹⁵ By the blessed death of my brethren, and the eternal punishment of the tyrant, and the glorious life of the pious, I will not repudiate the noble brotherhood. ¹⁶ Invent, O tyrant, tortures; that you may learn, even through them, that I am the brother of those tormented before. ¹⁷ When he had said this, the bloodthirsty, and murderous, and unhallowed Antiochus ordered his tongue to be cut out. ¹⁸ But he said, Even if you take away the organ of speech, yet God heareth the silent. ¹⁹ Behold, my tongue is extended, cut it off; for not for that shalt thou extirpate our reasoning. ²⁰ Gladly do we lose our limbs in behalf of God. ²¹ But God shall speedily find you, since you cut off the tongue, the instrument of divine melody.

11

¹ And when he had died, disfigured in his torments, the fifth leaped forward, and said,

² I intend not, O tyrant, to get excused from the torment which is in behalf of virtue. ³ But I have come of mine own accord, that by the death of me, you may owe heavenly vengeance a punishment for more crimes. ⁴ O thou hater of virtue and of men, what have we done that thou thus revelest in our blood? ⁵ Doth it seem evil to thee that we worship the Founder of all things, and live according to his surpassing law? ⁶ But this is worthy of honors, not of torments; ⁷ hadst thou been capable of the higher feelings of men, and possessed the hope of salvation

from God. ⁸ Behold, now, being alien from God, thou makest war against those who are religious toward God. ⁹ As he said this, the spear-bearers bound him, and drew him to the catapult: ¹⁰ to which binding him at his knees, and fastening them with iron fetters, they bent down his loins upon the wedge of the wheel; and his body was then dismembered, scorpion-fashion. ¹¹ With his breath thus confined, and his body strangled, he said, ¹² A great favor thou bestowest upon us, O tyrant, by enabling us to manifest our adherence to the law by means of nobler sufferings.

¹³ He also being dead, the sixth, quite a youth, was brought out; and on the tyrant asking him whether he would eat and be delivered, he said,

¹⁴ I am indeed younger than my brethren, but in understanding I am as old; ¹⁵ for having been born and reared unto the same end, we are bound to die also in behalf of the same cause. ¹⁶ So that if thou think proper to torment us for not eating the unclean—torment! ¹⁷ As he said this, they brought him to the wheel. ¹⁸ Extended upon which, with limbs racked and dislocated, he was gradually roasted from beneath. ¹⁹ And having heated sharp spits, they approached them to his back; and having transfixed his sides, they burned away his entrails. ²⁰ And he, while tormented, said, O period good and holy, in which, for the sake of religion, we brethren have been called to the contest of pain, and have not been conquered. ²¹ For religious understanding, O tyrant, is unconquered. ²² Armed with upright virtue, I also shall depart with my brethren. ²³ I,

too, bearing with me a great avenger, O deviser of tortures, and enemy of the truly pious. ²⁴ We six youths have destroyed thy tyranny. ²⁵ For is not your inability to overrule our reasoning, and to compel us to eat the unclean, thy destruction? ²⁶ Your fire is cold to us, your catapults are painless, and your violence harmless. ²⁷ For the guards not of a tyrant but of a divine law are our defenders: through this we keep our reasoning unconquered.

12

¹ When he, too, had undergone blessed martyrdom, and died in the caldron into which he had been thrown, the seventh, the youngest of all, came forward: ² whom the tyrant pitying, though he had been dreadfully reproached by his brethren, ³ seeing him already encompassed with chains, had him brought nearer, and endeavored to counsel him, saying,

⁴ Thou seest the end of the madness of thy brethren: for they have died in torture through disobedience; and you, if disobedient, having been miserably tormented, will yourself perish prematurely. ⁵ But if you obey, you shall be my friend, and have a charge over the affairs of the kingdom. ⁶ And having thus exhorted him, he sent for the mother of the boy; that, by condoling with her for the loss of so many sons, he might incline her, through the hope of safety, to render the survivor obedient. ⁷ And he, after his mother had urged him on in the Hebrew

tongue, (as we shall soon relate) saith, ⁸ Release me, that I may speak to the king and all his friends. ⁹ And they, rejoicing exceedingly at the promise of the youth, quickly let him go. ¹⁰ And he, running up to the pans, said, ¹¹ Impious tyrant, and most blasphemous man, wert thou not ashamed, having received prosperity and a kingdom from God, to slay his servants, and to rack the doers of godliness? ¹² Wherefore the divine vengeance is reserving thee for eternal fire and torments, which shall cling to thee for all time. ¹³ Wert thou not ashamed, man as thou art, yet most savage, to cut out the tongues of men of like feeling and origin, and having thus abused to torture them? ¹⁴ But they, bravely dying, fulfilled their religion toward God. ¹⁵ But thou shalt groan according to thy deserts for having slain without cause the champions of virtue. ¹⁶ Wherefore, he continued, I myself, being about to die, ¹⁷ will not forsake the testimony of my brethren. ¹⁸ And I call upon the God of my fathers to be merciful to my race. ¹⁹ But thee, both living and dead, he will punish. ²⁰ Thus having prayed, he hurled himself into the pans; and so expired.

13

¹ If then, the seven brethren despised troubles even unto death, it is confessed on all sides that righteous reasoning is absolute master over the passions. ² For just as if, had they as slaves to the passions eaten of the unholy, we should have said that they had been conquered by them; ³ now it is not so: but by means of the reasoning

which is praised by God, they mastered their passions. ⁴ And it is impossible to overlook the leadership of reflection: for it gained the victory over both passions and troubles. ⁵ How, then, can we avoid according to these men mastery of passion through right reasoning, since they drew not back from the pains of fire? ⁶ For just as by means of towers projecting in front of harbors men break the threatening waves, and thus assure a still course to vessels entering port, ⁷ so that seven-towered right reasoning of the young men, securing the harbor of religion, conquered the intemperance of passions. ⁸ For having arranged a holy choir of piety, they encouraged one another, saying, ⁹ Brethren, may we die brotherly for the law. Let us imitate the three young men in Assyria who despised the equally afflicting furnace. ¹⁰ Let us not be cowards in the manifestation of piety. ¹¹ And one said, Courage, brother; and another, Nobly endure. ¹² And another, Remember of what stock ye are; and by the hand of what father Isaac endured to be slain for the sake of piety. ¹³ And one and all, looking on each other serene and confident, said, Let us sacrifice with all our heart our souls to God who gave them, and employ our bodies for the keeping of the law. ¹⁴ Let us not fear him who thinketh he killeth; ¹⁵ for great is the trial of soul and danger of eternal torment laid up for those who transgress the commandment of God. ¹⁶ Let us arm ourselves, therefore, in the abnegation of the divine reasoning. ¹⁷ If we suffer thus,

Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob will receive us, and all the fathers will commend us. ¹⁸ And as each one of the brethren was hauled away, the rest exclaimed, Disgrace us not, O brother, nor falsify those who have died before you.

¹⁹ Now you are not ignorant of the charm of brotherhood, which the divine and all-wise providence hath imparted through fathers to children, and hath engendered through the mother's womb. ²⁰ In which these brethren having remained an equal time, and having been formed for the same period, and been increased by the same blood, and having been perfected through the same principle of life, ²¹ and having been brought forth at equal intervals, and having sucked milk from the same fountains, hence their brotherly souls are reared up lovingly together; ²² and increase the more powerfully by reason of this simultaneous rearing, and by daily intercourse, and by other education, and exercise in the law of God.

²³ Brotherly love being thus sympathetically constituted, the seven brethren had a more sympathetic mutual harmony. ²⁴ For being educated in the same law, and practicing the same virtues, and reared up in a just course of life, they increased this harmony with each other. ²⁵ For a like ardor for what is right and honorable increased their fellow feeling toward each other. ²⁶ For it acting along with religion, made their brotherly feeling more desirable to them. ²⁷ And yet, although nature and intercourse and virtuous morals increased their brotherly love, those

who were left endured to behold their brethren, who were ill-used for their religion, tortured even unto death.

14

¹ And more than this, they even urged them on to this ill treatment; so that they not only despised pains themselves, but they even gat the better of their affections of brotherly love.

² O reasonings more royal than a king, and freer than freemen! ³ Sacred and harmonious concert of the seven brethren as concerning piety! ⁴ None of the seven youths turned cowardly, or shrank back from death. ⁵ But all of them, as though running the road to immortality, hastened on to death through tortures. ⁶ For just as hands and feet are moved sympathetically with the directions of the soul, so those holy youths agreed unto death for religion's sake, as through the immortal soul of religion. ⁷ O holy seven of harmonious brethren! for as the seven days of creation, about religion, ⁸ so the youths, circling around the number seven, annulled the fear of torments. ⁹ We now shudder at the recital of the affliction of those young men; but they not only beheld, and not only heard the immediate execution of the threat, but undergoing it, persevered; and that through the pains of fire. ¹⁰ And what could be more painful? for the power of fire, being sharp and quick, speedily dissolved their bodies. ¹¹ And think it not wonderful that reasoning bare rule over those men in their torments, when even a

woman's mind despised more manifold pains. ¹² For the mother of those seven youths endured the rackings of each of her children.

¹³ And consider how comprehensive is the love of offspring, which draweth everyone to sympathy of affection, ¹⁴ where irrational animals possess a similar sympathy and love for their offspring with men. ¹⁵ The tame birds frequenting the roofs of our houses, defend their fledglings. ¹⁶ Others build their nests, and hatch their young, in the tops of mountains and in the precipices of valleys, and the holes and tops of trees, and keep off the intruder. ¹⁷ And if not able to do this, they fly circling round them in agony of affection, calling out in their own note, and save their offspring in whatever manner they are able. ¹⁸ But why should we point attention to the sympathy toward children shown by irrational animals? ¹⁹ The very bees, at the season of honey-making, attack all who approach; and pierce with their sting, as with a sword, those who draw near their hive, and repel them even unto death. ²⁰ But sympathy with her children did not turn aside the mother of the young men, who had a spirit kindred with that of Abraham.

15

¹ O reasoning of the sons, lord over the passions, and religion more desirable to a mother than progeny! ² The mother, when two things were set before her, religion and the safety of her seven sons for a time, on the conditional promise of a tyrant, ³ rather elected the religion

which according to God preserveth to eternal life. ⁴ O in what way can I describe ethically the affections of parents toward their children, the resemblance of soul and of form engrafted into the small type of a child in a wonderful manner, especially through the greater sympathy of mothers with the feelings of those born of them! ⁵ for by how much mothers are by nature weak in disposition and prolific in offspring, by so much the fonder they are of children. ⁶ And of all mothers the mother of the seven was the fondest of children, who in seven childbirths had deeply engendered love toward them; ⁷ and through her many pains undergone in connection with each one, was compelled to feel sympathy with them; ⁸ yet, through fear of God, she neglected the temporary salvation of her children. ⁹ Not only that, but also on account of the excellent disposition of her sons, and their obedience to the law, her maternal affection toward them was increased. ¹⁰ For they were both just and temperate, and manly, and high-minded, and fond of their brethren, and so fond of their mother that even unto death they obeyed her by observing the law. ¹¹ And yet, though there were so many circumstances connected with love of children to draw on a mother to sympathy, in the case of none of them were the various tortures able to pervert her principle. ¹² But she inclined each one separately and all together to death for religion. ¹³ O holy nature and parental feeling, and reward of bringing up children, and unconquerable maternal affection! ¹⁴ At

the racking and roasting of each one of them, the observant mother was prevented by religion from changing. ¹⁵ She beheld her children's flesh dissolving around the fire; and their extremities quivering on the ground, and the flesh of their heads dropped forward down to their beards, like masks. ¹⁶ O thou mother, who wast tried at this time with more bitter pangs than those of parturition! ¹⁷ O thou only woman who hast brought forth perfect holiness! ¹⁸ Thy firstborn, expiring, turned thee not; nor the second, looking miserable in his torments; nor the third, breathing out his soul. ¹⁹ Nor when thou didst behold the eyes of each of them looking sternly upon their tortures, and their nostrils foreboding death, didst thou weep! ²⁰ When thou didst see children's flesh heaped upon children's flesh that had been torn off, hands upon hands cut off, heads decapitated upon heads, dead falling upon the dead, and a choir of children turned through torture into a burying ground, thou lamentedst not. ²¹ Not so do siren melodies, or songs of swans, attract the hearers to listening, O voices of children calling upon your mother in the midst of torments! ²² With what and what manner of torments was the mother herself tortured, as her sons were undergoing the wheel and the fires! ²³ But religious reasoning, having strengthened her courage in the midst of sufferings, enabled her to forego, for the time, parental love.

²⁴ Although beholding the destruction of seven children, the noble mother, after one embrace, stripped off *her feelings* through faith in God.

²⁵ For just as in a council room, beholding in her own soul vehement counselors, nature and parentage and love of her children, and the racking of her children, ²⁶ she holding two votes, one for the death, the other for the preservation of her children, ²⁷ did not lean to that which would have saved her children for the safety of a brief space. ²⁸ But this daughter of Abraham remembered his holy fortitude.

²⁹ O mother of a nation, avenger of the law, and defender of religion, and prime bearer in the battle of the affections! ³⁰ O thou nobler in endurance than males, and more manly than men in patience! ³¹ For as the ark of Noah, bearing the world in the world-filling flood, bare up against the waves, ³² so thou, the guardian of the law, when surrounded on every side by the flood of passions, and straitened by violent storms which were the torments of thy children, didst bear up nobly against the storms against religion.

16

¹ If, then, even a woman, and that an aged one, and the mother of seven children, endured to see her children's torments even unto death, confessedly religious reasoning is master even of the passions. ² I have proved, then, that not only men have obtained the mastery of their passions, but also that a woman despised the greatest torments. ³ And not so fierce were the lions round Daniel, nor the furnace of Mishael burning with most vehement fire, as that natural

love of children burned within her, when she beheld her seven sons tortured. ⁴ But with the reasoning of religion the mother quenched passions so great and powerful.

⁵ For we must consider also this: that, had the woman been fainthearted, as being their mother, she would have lamented over them; and perhaps might have spoken thus:

⁶ Ah! wretched I, and many times miserable; who having born seven sons, have become the mother of none. ⁷ O seven useless childbirths, and seven profitless periods of labor, and fruitless givings of suck, and miserable nursings at the breast. ⁸ Vainly, for your sakes, O sons, have I endured many pangs, and the more difficult anxieties of rearing. ⁹ Alas, of my children, some of you unmarried, and some who have married to no profit, I shall not see your children, nor be felicitated as a grandmother. ¹⁰ Ah, that I who had many and fair children, should be a lone widow full of sorrows! ¹¹ Nor, should I die, shall I have a son to bury me.

¹² But with such a lament as this the holy and God-fearing mother bewailed none of them. Nor did she divert any of them from death, nor grieve for them as for the dead. ¹³ But as one possessed with an adamant mind, and as one bringing forth again her full number of sons to immortality, she rather with supplications exhorted them to death in behalf of religion. ¹⁴ O woman, soldier of God for religion, thou, aged and a female, hast conquered through endurance even a tyrant; and though but weak,

has been found more powerful in deeds and words. ¹⁵ For when thou wast seized along with thy children, thou stoodest looking upon Eleazar in torments, and saidst to thy sons in the Hebrew tongue, ¹⁶ O sons, noble is the contest to which you, being called as a witness for the nation, strive zealously for the laws of your country. ¹⁷ For it were disgraceful that this old man should endure pains for the sake of righteousness, and that you who are younger should be afraid of the tortures. ¹⁸ Remember that through God ye obtained existence, and have enjoyed it. ¹⁹ And on this account ye ought to bear every affliction because of God. ²⁰ For whom also our father Abraham was forward to sacrifice Isaac our progenitor, and shuddered not at the sight of his own paternal hand descending down with the sword upon him. ²¹ And the righteous Daniel was cast unto the lions; and Hananiah, and Azariah, and Mishael, were slung out into a furnace of fire; yet they endured through God. ²² You, then, having the same faith toward God, be not troubled. ²³ For it is unreasonable that they who know religion should not stand up against troubles.

²⁴ With these arguments, the mother of seven, exhorting each of her sons, persuaded them to die rather than transgress the commandment of God. ²⁵ And they saw this, too, that they who die for God, live to God; as Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the patriarchs.

17

¹ And some of the spear-bearers said, that when she herself was about to be seized for the purpose of being put to death, she threw herself upon the pile, rather than that they should touch her person.

² O thou mother, who together with seven children didst destroy the violence of the tyrant, and render void his wicked intentions, and exhibit the nobleness of faith! ³ For thou, as a house bravely built upon the pillar of thy children, didst bear without swaying, the shock of tortures. ⁴ Be of good cheer, therefore, O holy-minded mother, holding the firm *substance of the* hope of your steadfastness with God. ⁵ Not so gracious doth the moon appear with the stars in heaven, as thou art established honorable before God, and fixed in the firmament with thy sons whom thou didst illuminate with religion to the stars. ⁶ For thy bearing of children was after the fashion of a child of Abraham. ⁷ And, were it lawful for us to paint as on a tablet the religion of thy story, the spectators would not shudder at beholding the mother of seven children enduring for the sake of religion various tortures even unto death. ⁸ And it had been a worthy thing to have inscribed upon the tomb itself these words as a memorial to those of the nation,

⁹ Here an aged priest, and an aged woman, and seven sons, are buried through the violence of a tyrant, who wished to destroy the polity of the Hebrews. ¹⁰ These also avenged their nation, looking unto God, and enduring torments

unto death.

¹¹ For it was a truly divine contest which was carried through by them. ¹² For at that time virtue presided over the contest, approving the victory through endurance, namely, immortality, eternal life. ¹³ Eleazar was the first to contend: and the mother of the seven children entered the contest; and the brethren contended. ¹⁴ The tyrant was the opposite; and the world and living men were the spectators. ¹⁵ And reverence for God conquered, and crowned its own athletes. ¹⁶ Who did not admire those champions of true legislation? who were not astonished?

¹⁷ The tyrant himself, and all their council, admired their endurance; ¹⁸ through which, also, they now stand beside the divine throne, and live a blessed life. ¹⁹ For Moses saith, And all the saints are under thy hands. ²⁰ These, therefore, having been sanctified through God, have been honored not only with this honor, but that also by their means the enemy did not overcome our nation; ²¹ and that the tyrant was punished, and their country purified. ²² For they became the ransom for the sin of the nation; and the divine providence saved Israel, aforesaid afflicted, by the blood of those pious ones, and their propitiatory death.

²³ For the tyrant Antiochus, looking to their manly virtue, and to their endurance in torture, proclaimed that endurance as an example to his soldiers. ²⁴ And they proved to be to him noble and brave for land battles and sieges; and

he conquered and stormed the towns of all his enemies.

18

¹ O Israelitish children, descendants of the seed of Abraham, obey this law, and in every way be religious. ² Knowing that religious reasoning is lord of the passions, and those not only inward but outward.

³ Whence those persons giving up their bodies to pains for the sake of religion, were not only admired by men, but were deemed worthy of a divine portion. ⁴ And the nation through them obtained peace, and having renewed the observance of the law in their country, drove the enemy out of the land. ⁵ And the tyrant Antiochus was both punished upon earth, and is punished now he is dead; for when he was quite unable to compel the Israelites to adopt foreign customs, and to desert the manner of life of their fathers, then, departing from Jerusalem, he made war against the Persians.

⁶ And the righteous mother of the seven children spake also as follows to her offspring: ⁷ I was a pure virgin, and went not beyond my father's house; but I took care of the built-up rib. ⁸ No destroyer of the desert, *or* ravisher of the plain, injured me; nor did the destructive, deceitful serpent make spoil of my chaste virginity; ⁹ and I remained with my husband during the period of my prime. And these my children, having arrived at maturity, their father died: blessed was he! for having sought out a life

of fertility in children, he was not grieved with a period of loss of children. ¹⁰ And he used to teach you, when yet with you, the law and the prophets. ¹¹ He used to read to you the slaying of Abel by Cain, and the offering up of Isaac, and the imprisonment of Joseph. ¹² And he used to tell you of the zealous Phinehas; and informed you of Hananiah and Azariah, and Mishael in the fire. ¹³ And he used to glorify Daniel, who was in the den of lions, and pronounce him blessed. ¹⁴ And he used to put you in mind of the Scripture of Isaiah, which saith, Even if thou pass through the fire, it shall not burn thee. ¹⁵ He chanted to you David, the hymn writer, who saith, Many are the afflictions of the just. ¹⁶ He declared the proverbs of Solomon, who saith, He is a tree of life to all those who do his will. ¹⁷ He used to verify Ezekiel, who said, Shall these dry bones live? ¹⁸ For he did not forget the song which Moses taught, proclaiming, I will kill, and I will make to live. ¹⁹ This is our life, and the length of our days.

²⁰ O that bitter, and yet not bitter, day when the bitter tyrant of the Greeks, quenching fire with fire in his cruel caldrons, brought with boiling rage the seven sons of the daughter of Abraham to the catapult, and to all his torments! ²¹ He pierced the balls of their eyes, and cut out their tongues, and put them to death with varied tortures. ²² Wherefore divine retribution pursued and will pursue the pestilent wretch. ²³ But the children of Abraham, with their victorious mother, are assembled together to the

choir of their fathers; having received pure and immortal souls from God. ²⁴ To whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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