

Makkabi Cabu Pathum nah

Olrhoeknah

Makkabi III cabu he khokhuen cil la om tih kohlop koi khaw muep om. He cabu he Egypt kah aka om Jews hlang loh B.C yacut pakhat tluk vaengah a tael. A hmuethma he sawt vaengah *Maccabees 1, 2*; dongkah bangla om pawh. Te tah Makkabi rhal thoh hlan kum sawmnga tluk ah ni Judea a om coeng. Tahae kah dongah tah a kum ngai he Egypt ram ah aka thoeng te ni a tael. Te vaengah manghai Ptolemy IV Philopator (221 to 203 B.C.) loh a uk. 3 *Makkabi* dongah tah kholong manghai kut lamkah Pathen hlang rhoek Pathen loh a tlannah kawng he a tael. He kah cabu he *Makkabi 1, 2* phoeikah a kawng ni a tael. Lamhma kah Greek cayol dongah tah Makkabi cabu ana ti moenih.

Syrian caem te caemtloek ah a tlaknah hnuk ah tah manghai Ptolemy te Jerusalem la cet. Anih te bawkim a cim kah a cim koek hmuen ah kun la cai. Te dae pilnam loh anih te kun sak pawt ham khoep amah. Ngangah cai dae a hnuk atah yah a poh tih mael.

Hmuh mueh Pathen kah thaomnah dongah thangthuinah he olupuei la a om kawng ni n'cang puei.

Outline

Trouble for Jews in Jerusalem (1.1—2.24)

Trouble for Jews in Egypt (2.25—6.21)

The Trouble Ends and the Jews Return Home (6.22—7.23)

Dositheus Saves Philopator's Life

¹ When King Philopator ruled Egypt,* King Antiochus of Syria† invaded and took over much of his territory. Some of the Egyptians escaped and told Philopator what had happened. So he immediately called together his entire army, including foot soldiers and cavalry troops. He took along his sister Arsinoe and led the Egyptian troops to the region near Raphia,‡ where Antiochus and his army were camped.

² That same night a man named Theodotus decided to murder Philopator to end the war between Egypt and Syria. He took with him many of the best Egyptian weapons that had been assigned to him years before,§ and he sneaked into Philopator's tent.

³ But there was a Jewish man by the name of Dositheus,* who had given up the religion of his

* **1.1** *King Philopator ... Egypt:* Also known as Ptolemy IV (ruled 221-203 B.C.). † **1.1** *King Antiochus of Syria:* Antiochus III, later known as Antiochus the Great (ruled 223-187 B.C.). ‡ **1.1** *Raphia:* A town in southern Israel, about five kilometers from Gaza near the Mediterranean coast. § **1.2** *He took with him ... Egyptian weapons ... before:* Or “Theodotus took with him many of the best Egyptian soldiers that had been under his command some time ago.” According to other ancient writings, Theodotus had been the commander of the Egyptian troops stationed in Syria, but had deserted to join the army of Antiochus III. * **1.3** *Dositheus:* Greek “Dositheus, the son of Drimylus.”

ancestors and was now loyal to the Egyptians. Dositheus somehow learned what Theodotus planned to do. And he arranged for Philopator to be away from his tent that night and for some unimportant man to sleep there in his place. So Theodotus killed an innocent man.

The Egyptians Defeat the Syrians

⁴ Not long after the fighting broke out between the Egyptians and the Syrians, Philopator realized his troops would be defeated. So his sister Arsinoe went to the Egyptian troops in tears and with tangled hair, and she begged them to fight bravely for their wives and children. She even promised to pay every soldier two kilograms of gold if the Syrians were defeated.

⁵ Arsinoe's plan worked. The Egyptians defeated the Syrians and took many of them prisoners.

⁶ After that victory, Philopator visited the nearby cities to meet the people

⁷ and donate gifts to their places of worship. The people felt much safer after his visits, and they respected him as their ruler.

Philopator Visits Jerusalem and Asks To Enter the Temple

⁸ The Jews sent some of their religious leaders to meet King Philopator and to congratulate him on what he had done. Their visit, together with the gifts, made Philopator even more anxious to visit their cities.

⁹ Some time later, Philopator arrived in Jerusalem and went to the temple, where he offered the usual sacrifices and gave thanks to God Most High. The size and beauty of the temple amazed Philopator

¹⁰ so much that he wanted to see what it looked like inside.

¹¹ The Jews who walked with Philopator said, “Your Majesty, not even our priests can enter the most holy place in the temple. Only the high priest is allowed inside, and he can enter at a certain time just once a year.”

Philopator refused to believe them.

¹² Then someone opened a copy of the Law of Moses and read aloud the part where God forbids anyone except the high priest to enter the most holy place in the temple.[†]

The king replied, “Even if others aren't allowed to enter this temple, why can't I go in?”

¹³ No one has ever refused to let me enter a temple before.”

¹⁴ Without thinking, someone foolishly answered, “You're wrong to think you can go into this temple, just because you've gone into others.”

¹⁵ Philopator said, “After everything I've done for this country, I should be allowed inside whether you say it's all right or not.”

The People of Jerusalem Try To Stop Philopator

[†] **1.12** *the Law of Moses ... temple:* See, for example, Leviticus 16.1,2.

¹⁶ The priests in their priestly robes bowed down and begged God Most High to help them stop the evil thing that Philopator was about to do. They cried so loudly

¹⁷ that everyone in Jerusalem was scared and ran to the temple, because they knew something very unusual was happening.

¹⁸ Young women who had never been out in public[‡] sprinkled dust[§] on their heads to show their sorrow, then rushed outside with their mothers. The sounds of their crying and moaning filled the streets of Jerusalem.

¹⁹ Women who were engaged to be married left their bedrooms and huddled together in the streets, many of them half-naked.

²⁰ Mothers and the women who took care of their newborn babies were in such a hurry to get to the holy temple that they completely forgot about the babies and left them behind in houses and in the streets!

²¹ Everyone ran to the temple, then prayed and begged God to keep Philopator from entering the temple.

²² Meanwhile, a group of brave people had their own plan about how to stop Philopator.

²³ They told the soldiers in the city to get their weapons and to be ready to die bravely for the sake of the ancient Law of Moses. These people caused a lot of confusion at the temple, until

[‡] **1.18** *Young women ... public:* Young women were sometimes kept inside until they were engaged to be married. [§] **1.18** *dust:* Greek; some ancient translations add “and ashes.”

finally the older men and the respected leaders* convinced them to stop and to pray with the others.

²⁴ Everyone prayed sincerely,

²⁵ while the religious leaders tried to talk Philopator out of his arrogant plan.

²⁶ But they were not successful. He stubbornly ignored everything they said and started walking toward the temple.

²⁷ As he did, the people near him, including some of his own officers, began praying and begging God All-Powerful to defend them from the coming disaster and to punish the evil King Philopator.

²⁸ Nothing could be heard except their loud prayers.

²⁹ In fact, it seemed as if the walls of Jerusalem and the earth itself were praying along with them. The people agreed that it would be better for them to die than to watch Philopator make their temple unfit as a place to worship God.

2

Simon the High Priest Prays

¹ Simon the high priest turned toward the temple and kneeled down. Then he raised his arms to heaven and calmly prayed:

² Our Lord God All-Powerful, you alone are the holy King of heaven and the ruler of all creation. We are in misery and are suffering

* ^{1.23} *leaders*: Greek; some ancient translations “priests.”

because of an evil and arrogant man, so hear our prayers.

³ You created all things and rule over them with fairness, and you punish those who depend on their own power.

⁴ In the past, you destroyed everyone who did what was wrong, including the mighty giants that you wiped out with a raging flood.

⁵ You sent burning sulfur to kill the proud people of the town of Sodom, making those wicked people an example for anyone who would dare follow their evil ways.

⁶ Your fearsome power was seen when you punished the king of Egypt for making slaves of your holy people Israel. You punished that arrogant king in terrible ways,

⁷ and when he chased your people with his troops and chariots, you drowned them in the deep waters of the Red Sea,* and you rescued those who trusted you. The whole earth is under your control.

⁸ After the Israelites saw your amazing victory, they praised you, God All-Powerful.

⁹ Our King, you created this entire world, and it is too large to measure. You have everything, yet you chose this city of Jerusalem as your own, and you blessed this temple where you are worshiped. You came here in the brightness of your glory and made this

* **2.7 Red Sea:** This refers to the body of water that the Israelites crossed when they left Egypt and was one of the marshes or fresh water lakes near the eastern part of the Nile Delta, where they lived (see Exodus 13.17—14.9).

temple the one place where you would be praised and honored forever.

¹⁰ Your love for Israel is strong, and you promised that if trouble causes any of us to sin, you would listen when we come here to pray.

¹¹ You have always been faithful to keep that promise.

¹² Many times in the past you rescued our ancestors when they were being mistreated by wicked enemies.

¹³ So now, our holy King, look how we are suffering because we have sinned against you! We can do nothing; our enemies are in control.

¹⁴ This evil man is taking advantage of our distress and is now on his way into the holy temple built to honor only you.

¹⁵ We know your home is in the highest heavens and that no one can ever go there.

¹⁶ Yet you have kindly chosen the people of Israel as your own and have made this temple the place where your glory will stay.

¹⁷ Please do not punish us for the wicked things that King Philopator and his men are doing. If you do, then our enemies will brag and claim

¹⁸ that their strength destroyed our temple as if it were nothing but a pagan place of worship.

¹⁹ Forgive us for sinning against you and show us your mercy

²⁰ right now, so that those who are depressed and hopeless can sing praises to you. Help us to have peace.

God Punishes Philopator

²¹⁻²² The Holy God, who created all things and watches over them, heard Simon's prayer and knocked Philopator down, as easily as wind blows down tall grass. Philopator was paralyzed and unable to speak, because God had punished him for being arrogant and boastful.

²³ Philopator's officers and bodyguards were terrified. They panicked and thought he was dying, so they dragged him away from the crowd.

²⁴ Philopator recovered, yet he would not apologize to the Jews, even though he had been severely punished. He left Jerusalem, shouting angry threats at them.

Philopator Mistreats the Jews in Alexandria

²⁵ King Philopator went home to Alexandria, where he immediately started mistreating all the Jews. The friends who drank with him encouraged this, because they didn't know what it meant to do right.

²⁶ Philopator did more terrible things than could be counted, but he still wasn't satisfied. He also spread horrible rumors about the Jews living in the surrounding towns and villages. Many of his closest friends agreed to do whatever they could to help him cause trouble for the Jews

²⁷ and completely disgrace them.

In fact, he set up a memorial stone on the tall tower in the courtyard of the Jewish place of worship, with a sign that read:

²⁸ Jews must offer sacrifices to the Greek god Dionysus before they will be allowed to enter this place of worship. The name of every Jew must also be written in a record book to make sure that all taxes are paid and that the Jews remain as slaves. Anyone who refuses to do these things will be arrested and put to death.

²⁹ The ivy-leaf symbol of the god Dionysus must be tattooed on the skin of all Jews, and their few remaining privileges will be completely stripped away.

³⁰ Philopator did not want people to think he hated everyone, and so he had the following words written on the same sign:

If any of the Jews decide to start worshiping the god Dionysus, they will be given the full rights of native Alexandrians.

The Jews Respond to Philopator's Threat

³¹ Some of the Jews in Alexandria did not want to pay the price of remaining faithful to their own religion.[†] So they pledged their loyalty to Philopator and hoped things would now go better for them.

³² However, most of the Jews would not abandon their religion and instead bribed the officials in charge of the record books to avoid being killed.

³³ These faithful Jews firmly believed someone would soon rescue them. They hated the group of rebellious Jews that had chosen to be loyal

[†] **2.31** *to pay ... religion:* One possible meaning for the difficult Greek text.

to Philopator and considered them enemies, refusing to have anything to do with them.

3

The Threat against the Jews Living around Alexandria

¹ As soon as the evil King Philopator learned what the Jews were doing to avoid being punished, he became terribly angry with the Jews in Alexandria and even more furious at those living in the countryside. He immediately gave orders to bring them together and brutally put every one of them to death.

² While this was being arranged, some people who wanted to see the Jews suffer started a hateful rumor, saying the Jews were constantly trying to stop others from obeying the king's laws.*

³ But in fact, the Jews were always loyal to the king and never caused trouble of any kind.

⁴ They worshiped their God and obeyed his Law, and they were careful to eat their own food. All this made some people believe the Jews were nothing but troublemakers.

⁵ Most people respected the Jews and thought they were honest people.

⁶ Yet there were foreigners who ignored all the good things that the Jews did in Egypt and instead believed every rumor about them.

* **3.2 the Jews ... laws:** One possible meaning for the difficult Greek text.

⁷ These foreigners gossiped about the Jews and made fun of their worship and their food. They also spread cruel rumors that the Jews opposed the king and disobeyed government leaders.

⁸ One day, some of the Gentiles who lived in Alexandria saw an angry mob mistreating a group of Jews. These Gentiles were shocked, but because they were ruled by the same cruel leaders, they had no power to do anything except encourage the Jews and tell them things would get better. They knew

⁹ the Jews did not deserve to be treated so badly.

¹⁰ In fact, some business leaders and friends of the Jews secretly began promising that they would help them in every way possible.

Philopator Orders the Arrest of Every Jew in His Kingdom

¹¹ King Philopator was very proud of what he was accomplishing, and he believed nothing was powerful enough to stop him, including God Most High.

Philopator wrote the following letter:

¹² Greetings from King Ptolemy Philopator[†] to my army commanders and soldiers in the surrounding territories. I hope you are well.

¹³ Our kingdom is strong and secure.

¹⁴ In fact, the fighting in Asia was very successful, because the gods were definitely on our side.

[†] **3.12** *King Ptolemy Philopator*: See the note at 1.1.

¹⁵ So we decided to be kind to the people living in the territories of Greater Syria[‡] and to treat them as friends instead of enemies.

¹⁶ We even gave lots of money to honor their places of worship. Our plan was to do the same for the Jerusalem temple, where those wicked and foolish Jews worship.

¹⁷ They said they were glad we were there, but when we asked to enter their holy temple and honor it with expensive offerings, they refused

¹⁸ to let us in. They were very arrogant, just as they have always been. We should have punished them right then, but since we are so kind to everyone, we did not harm them.

¹⁹ The Jews are the only people who refuse to believe that foreign rulers can be honest and fair. That's why they despise and hate us.

²⁰ When we returned to Egypt after our victories, we treated the Jews very well, just as we treat all foreigners, and we decided to leave them to their own foolish ways.

²¹ We also told everyone that we would be kind to the Jews, because not only had they signed a treaty with us, but they had often been involved in government matters. We even offered the Jews the opportunity to become full citizens of Alexandria and invited them to participate in our religious ceremonies.

²² But those stubborn Jews were offended by our generous offer, and as always, they chose

[‡] **3.15** *Greater Syria*: Greek "Coele-Syria and Phoenicia."

what is evil

²³ and rejected the chance to become Alexandrians. Then they completely cut off their own people who chose to accept our offer of citizenship. They seem to think that we will soon change our policy toward them—all of this shows how ignorant they are.

²⁴ We have concluded that many of the Jews are simply opposed to us in every way. And so, rather than letting these wicked people rebel openly against us someday, we have come up with a plan.

²⁵ As soon as you have read this letter, send us every Jewish man, woman, and child living in your territory! Show them no mercy and bind them in chains to keep them from escaping. And when they arrive here, we will be sure they are put to death as worthless criminals and enemies.

²⁶ Once every Jew is dead, our kingdom will once again be peaceful.

²⁷ Anyone, whether old or young, who secretly hides a Jew will be tortured to death, together with every family member.

²⁸ But any person who tells us where a Jew is hiding will be paid 2,000 silver coins[§] and will be honored as a hero.* That person will also receive the property of the criminal who is caught hiding Jews,

²⁹ and the hiding place will be completely burned and closed up forever.

§ 3.28 *silver coins*: Drachmas, which weighed about seven grams. * 3.28 *honored as a hero*: One possible meaning for the difficult Greek text.

³⁰ The above letter was copied and sent everywhere in Philopator's kingdom.

4

The Jews Are Brought to Alexandria

¹ In every town where Philopator's letter was received, the leaders held a public feast in honor of the Greek people, who celebrated because they no longer had to hide their bitter hatred of the Jews.

² But the Jews in these towns were extremely frightened and depressed, and they could not stop mourning and crying about the king's command to kill them.

³ In the streets of every city and village in the kingdom, Jews groaned in sorrow

⁴ as army commanders prepared to send them to Alexandria.

The punishment of the Jews was so severe that some of their enemies cried and felt sorry that they had to face such a horrible death.

⁵ Old men who could barely walk were cruelly forced to march out of their hometowns in straight lines,

⁶ and young women who had just been married stopped singing joyful songs and moaned in sadness. Many of them sprinkled ashes on their sweet-smelling hair and removed their wedding

veils, and they cried aloud as the Greek officers severely abused them.*

⁷ The crowds watched as these brides were dragged in chains to the dock where boats were waiting to take them to Alexandria.

⁸ Their new husbands also realized they would soon die. They were forced to wear ropes around their necks instead of flowers, and they stopped their joyful celebration and moaned in pain. Jewish bridegrooms were led along the streets with ropes instead of chains of flowers around their necks. What should have been a time for them to celebrate became a time to mourn, because they knew they were going to die.

⁹ The Jews were tied in chains and dragged on board the boats like wild animals. Some of them were tied to the benches with ropes around their necks, while others were held there with chains around their ankles.

¹⁰ They were all treated like rebels and were put below deck so they would be in total darkness during the trip to Alexandria.

The Jews Are Held Prisoner

¹¹ The boats that brought the Jews to Alexandria docked at Schedia.† Then Philopator gave orders to move the Jews at once to the large stadium in front of the city gate. He did this so that everyone leaving or entering Alexandria

* **4.6** *as the Greek officers severely abused them:* Greek; other ancient translations “as if the Greek officers had beaten them with whips.” † **4.11** *Schedia:* Probably a large, rocky harbor near the city of Alexandria.

could see the Jews and make fun of them. Besides that, the Jews would not be close enough to talk to the king's bodyguard, and they would not be in the city itself.[‡]

¹² Some of the Jews of Alexandria secretly left the city from time to time and went to the stadium, where they mourned the terrible punishment of the Jewish prisoners. Philopator heard about this and was so furious

¹³ that he commanded his troops to punish every Jew in Alexandria the same way!

¹⁴ The name of every Jew was to be written in government records, but this time the Jews would not become slaves—the king planned for them to be violently tortured and then put to death.

¹⁵ Although the king's officials worked forty days to register Jews, they still did not finish.

¹⁶ Philopator was excited that the Jews were finally going to be punished as he had planned, and he started behaving in odd ways and making no sense when he talked. He held feasts to honor his idols and praised them, even though they could not speak or help anyone. Philopator even dared to curse God Most High!

¹⁷ Meanwhile, the officials who were in charge of registering the Jews went to the king and said, “We cannot finish this job. There are simply too many of them.

¹⁸ Even if we had every general in Egypt helping us, it would be impossible. There are

[‡] **4.11** *would not be in the city itself:* Or “could not claim they deserved the protection of the city walls.”

Jews still being brought to the stadium from their homes in the countryside.”

¹⁹ Philopator threatened to arrest these officials and accused them of accepting bribes from the Jews. Yet he quickly changed his mind

²⁰ when he saw that the officials had already run out of paper and pens.

²¹ He did not realize that God All-Powerful had made this happen so that the Jews would be rescued.

5

Philopator Orders the Death of Every Jew

¹ Now King Philopator was more furious than ever, and he sent for Hermon, the man who took care of the elephants that were used in battle.

² Philopator gave him the following orders: “Tomorrow, give all 500 elephants large handfuls of frankincense and all the undiluted wine they will drink. Then after the elephants are angry and confused, release them in the stadium so that the Jews will be trampled to death!”

³ After that, the king returned to the feast, where he and his trusted friends* and army commanders celebrated the coming death of the Jews.

⁴ Meanwhile, Hermon left to do what he had been told.

* **5.3** *trusted friends*: This was a title that Greek kings gave to special advisors and officials. These friends received gifts, honors, and other privileges.

⁵ The servants at the stadium believed the whole Jewish nation would be wiped out, and they wanted to make sure that none of their prisoners could escape. So that same evening the servants went to the stadium and tied the Jews' hands.

⁶ All the Gentiles were convinced that nothing could save the Jews now

⁷ that they couldn't move.

The Jews cried bitterly and prayed together in loud voices to the Lord God All-Powerful, who rules everything. They called on his mercy,

⁸ asking him to take revenge on the wicked foreigners and stop their evil plan, and begging him to rescue them from death.

⁹ God heard their prayers.

God Rescues the Jews

¹⁰ Meanwhile, Hermon gave the unsuspecting elephants frankincense and wine until they would eat and drink no more. Then he went to the palace courtyard to tell King Philopator that everything had been done according to plan.

¹¹ But the Lord had caused Philopator to fall into a deep sleep—this was the Lord's way of rescuing the Jews.

¹² In fact, Philopator was so sleepy that he wasn't able to give Hermon the orders to carry out the evil plan!

¹³ The time set aside to kill the Jews had now passed, so they celebrated and praised their holy God for his kindness, then asked him to show the arrogant foreigners his mighty power.

¹⁴ By now it was the middle of the afternoon, and the official in charge of the celebration at the palace saw that the guests had started arriving. So he tried to wake Philopator.

¹⁵ When he was finally awake, the official told him what had happened and that the feast was ready to begin.

¹⁶ Philopator was still confused, and he immediately invited his guests to sit down, then started eating and drinking.

¹⁷ He asked everyone there to enjoy themselves and forget about what was going on elsewhere.

¹⁸ Some time later, Philopator called for Hermon and demanded to know why the Jews were still alive.

¹⁹ Hermon and his officials explained that everything had been done the night before just as the king had ordered.

²⁰ Philopator was angrier than a crazy man[†] and said to Hermon, "The Jews may have been saved today because I overslept, but the first thing tomorrow, make sure the elephants are ready to wipe out those worthless people!"

²¹ The guests at the feast cheered and approved of the king's plan, then went home.

²² None of them slept well that night; they all lay awake thinking of insults to shout at the doomed Jews.

[†] **5.20** *a crazy man*: Greek "the cruel Phalaris," a man who was well-known for his anger and violence. He ruled the Greek city of Acragas on the island of Sicily 570-554 B.C.

*God Rescues the Jews
a Second Time*

²³ Early the next morning, just after the roosters started crowing, Hermon finished giving the elephants frankincense and wine, and he began leading them down the long passageway that led into the stadium.

²⁴ Along the way, crowds of people were already gathering to see what horrible thing would happen to the Jews at daybreak.

²⁵ The Jews, meanwhile, had lost all hope. They knew they had little time left alive, so they raised their hands to heaven and with loud moaning they cried out to God Most High, begging him to rescue them again.

²⁶ The sun was just coming up as Philopator welcomed his trusted friends[‡] to the palace. Hermon finally arrived and told them everything was now ready, and he invited them to go to the stadium.

²⁷ But Philopator suddenly became very confused and had no idea what Hermon was talking about. The king even had to ask Hermon what he was inviting him to do.

²⁸ God, who rules over all things, had made Philopator forget his own plan.

²⁹ Hermon and the king's friends told Philopator that the elephants and the soldiers were ready to kill the Jews, just as the king had ordered.

[‡] **5.26** *trusted friends*: See the note at 5.3.

³⁰ This made the king furious, because God had made him forget everything. Philopator stared at Hermon and the others

³¹ and said, "I swear that if your parents or children were here, I would let the elephants eat them, instead of eating the Jews. They have done nothing to me and have always been loyal to my ancestors.

³² If it weren't for your usefulness to me and my devotion to you, your lives would have ended long ago."

³³ Hermon couldn't believe what he was hearing, and he suddenly became nervous and afraid.

³⁴ The king's friends quietly slipped out one by one and told the crowd of people to go on about their own business.

³⁵ When the Jews heard what the king had said, they knew at once that God had rescued them again. So they praised their Lord God, the king of all rulers.

Philopator Again Tries To Have the Jews Killed

³⁶ King Philopator called his guests back to the celebration and begged them to drink some more.

³⁷ He called for Hermon and shouted in anger, "You worthless fool! How many times do I need to tell you

³⁸ to get those elephants ready? I want the Jews trampled tomorrow!"

³⁹ The officials sitting near Philopator thought he had gone crazy and asked,

40 “Your Majesty, how long do you think we will wait for that to happen? We’re not fools! You’ve said the same thing twice already, and you’ll probably change your mind again.

41 The city of Alexandria is crowded with people, and they are getting impatient and angry. We are afraid they might start a riot.”

42 In a violent rage, Philopator forgot he had just praised the Jews for their loyalty. He yelled, “I swear by my own life that the elephants will trample the Jews to death immediately!

43 I will attack the cities of Judea with torches and spears, so that their cities are nothing but ruins and the temple in Jerusalem is burned to the ground. Since I wasn’t allowed to enter that place, then no one will ever offer sacrifices there again.”

44 The king’s trusted friends[§] and army commanders were very excited as they left and ordered their troops to stand guard at key places around the city.

The Elephants Are Led into the Stadium

45 Hermon made sure the elephants had drunk plenty of wine and eaten lots of frankincense so that they were very angry and confused. He also tied small swords and knives to the sides and stomachs of the elephants.

46 Then he went to the palace courtyard around dawn and told Philopator everything was

§ 5.44 *trusted friends*: See the note at 5.3.

ready. The city was filled with people crowding their way into the stadium to watch.

⁴⁷ Philopator stormed out of his palace to see the elephants and to watch the cruel and painful death of the Jews.

⁴⁸ The Jews in the stadium saw the dust that the elephants stirred up as they came closer to the gate, and they watched as soldiers and other people ran behind the elephants. And when the Jews heard the noisy crowd,

⁴⁹ they were convinced their terrible wait was over and that they would soon die. They wept and groaned in sorrow as they kissed and hugged each other. But all of them—the parents and the children, the mothers with babies who were still nursing—

⁵⁰ all of them remembered that God had helped them before, so they bowed down on the ground to pray. Mothers laid aside their babies,

⁵¹ while everyone cried out to God in loud voices, asking him to have mercy on them as they faced death and for him to show the world that he is the ruler over everything.

6

Eleazar Prays

¹ Eleazar was a Jewish priest who had been highly respected for all his long life, and he was one of the prisoners there in the stadium. He turned to the leaders near him and told them to stop praying, then he prayed the following prayer:

² God Most High, our All-Powerful King, you rule your creation with mercy.

³ We are your children, so look down on us, the descendants of Abraham and Jacob. Long ago, you chose us to be your own people, yet now we are dying as foreigners in a strange land.

⁴ Our ancestors were once slaves here in Egypt, and the king who ruled over them proudly boasted about the strength of his chariots and troops. You showed the greatness of your mercy for the people of Israel and drowned that king and his entire army in the sea.

⁵ King Sennacherib of Assyria also boasted about his large number of troops, and he was able to take control of every nation in the world. But when he insulted and attacked Jerusalem, your holy city, you shattered that cruel king and showed the world your power.

⁶ Our Lord, you rescued the three young men who decided they would die in a flaming furnace rather than worship Babylonian idols. Not a hair on their heads was burned. You cooled the furnace with dew and burned up their enemies instead.

⁷ And you rescued Daniel, who was punished for lies that others told against him, and who was thrown into a pit of lions.

⁸ When you saw Jonah suffering in the stomach of a big fish in the ocean, you rescued him just as he was about to die, and you let him go safely back to his family.

⁹ We are the people of Israel, and these

corrupt foreigners are torturing and abusing us. You hate pride and boasting, and you love to show mercy and protect the weak. So let us see your power!

¹⁰ Though we have turned against you in our captivity here in Egypt, please rescue us from our enemies. Our Lord, if you choose to destroy us, then do so now in whatever way you want.

¹¹ That way fools can't praise their worthless idols when we are killed or claim that you refused to rescue your own people.

¹² You are the Eternal God, and you are strong and mighty. Protect us and have mercy on us, because these wicked people are about to put us to death as if we were traitors.

¹³ Make them tremble with fear at your strength. We honor you, Lord. You are always victorious and have the power to rescue us from death.

¹⁴ Hear our prayers and the prayers of our children,

¹⁵ and show all foreigners that you are on our side and have not rejected us. Keep your promise and be with us here in this enemy land.

God Appears and Rescues the Jews

¹⁶ Just as Eleazar finished praying, King Philopator arrived at the stadium, along with the elephants and his proud army.

¹⁷ The Jews saw this and began praying so loudly that the nearby valleys echoed with their cries, and the noise terrified the soldiers.

¹⁸ Just then, the face of God All-Powerful, the one true God, appeared in the sky! He opened the gates of heaven, and two angels came down. Everyone in the stadium watched in complete horror, yet the Jews never saw a thing.

¹⁹ The two angels fought the enemy troops and tied them up with unbreakable chains, leaving them completely shocked and terrified.

²⁰ Philopator himself began to shake with fear, and he was no longer puffed-up with pride.

²¹ Just then, the elephants turned around and started trampling the troops who were marching behind them.

Philopator Orders the Release of the Jews

²² Philopator's anger suddenly turned to pity, and he cried at the thought of his evil plan to wipe out these Jews.

²³ When he heard them moaning and saw them bowed down ready to face death, he screamed in anger at his own trusted friends:*

²⁴ You have rebelled against me and have acted more cruelly than slavemasters! I have been kind to you, yet now you refuse to obey me and instead are secretly planning things that disgrace my kingdom.

* **6.23** *trusted friends*: See the note at 5.3.

²⁵ You were wrong and foolish to take these Jews from their homes and bring them to Alexandria! They have faithfully guarded our nation for years

²⁶ and are the only outsiders who have always been kind to us. I cannot believe that you disobeyed my law and planned to abuse these brave people. They have suffered long enough.

²⁷ I order you to release these Jews and free them from this unfair punishment. Send them back to their own homes in peace and beg for their forgiveness as they go.

²⁸ These are the children of God All-Powerful, the living God of heaven. He has constantly been a help to our kingdom since the days of our ancestors, and his children must be freed!

²⁹ As soon as Philopator had said these things, the Jews were released, and they praised their God for rescuing them from death.

The Jews Celebrate

³⁰ Philopator went back to Alexandria and sent for the official who kept track of the kingdom's money. Philopator told him to buy enough wine and food so that the Jews could celebrate seven days. The feast was to be held at the stadium, because that was where they had expected to die.

³¹ The Jews celebrated with shouts of joy. These same people who had been disgraced and close to death now cheered at the very place where they were supposed to die and be buried.

³² They stopped their songs of mourning and sang praises to God, just like those their ancestors had sung, and they thanked him for saving them with his mighty power. They also arranged for musicians to celebrate by singing joyful songs.[†]

³³ Philopator also celebrated at his own feast, and he thanked God for rescuing the Jews.

³⁴ His officials had believed that the Jews would die and be left as food for the birds—now these same officials groaned in disgrace. They had been filled with arrogance and fiery anger as they registered the Jews to die—now they were completely ashamed.

³⁵ While the Jews thanked God and ate at the feast, they listened to the musicians sing their songs of praise.

³⁶ After the Jews had finished celebrating, they decided this rescue should be remembered as a joyful celebration for seven days each year. The festival would not be a time for getting drunk, but a time for them to remember how God had rescued them from death.

³⁷ Then they asked Philopator to let them return to their homes,

³⁸⁻⁴¹ and he agreed.

Philopator's officials had begun registering the Jews on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Pachon[‡] and ended on the fourth day of

[†] **6.32** *by singing joyful songs:* Or “by dancing to joyful songs.”

[‡] **6.38-41** *the twenty-fifth day of the month of Pachon:* A month of the Egyptian calendar; the twenty-fifth day was probably around July 7.

Epeiph[§]—a total of 40 days. The Jews were then supposed to have been punished and killed from the fifth day to the seventh day of Epeiph. But the Lord had shown his mercy and rescued every one of them.

So the Jews celebrated seven days, from the eighth day of Epeiph to the fourteenth day, and Philopator himself provided all the wine and food.

7

Philopator's Letter

Not only did Philopator agree to let the Jews return to their homes, he also wrote a letter about them and sent it to the army commanders in every city of his kingdom. The letter said:

¹ Greetings from King Ptolemy Philopator of Egypt* to my army commanders and the highest-ranking officials of my kingdom. I hope you are in good health.

² The people are safe and well, because God Most High has been very kind and has made good things happen to our kingdom.

³ Yet some of my officials here in Alexandria encouraged us to do something evil. They asked us to bring together all the Jews in my kingdom and to severely torture and punish them, as if they were rebels.

§ 6.38-41 *the fourth day of Epeiph*: A month of the Egyptian calendar; the fourth day was probably around August 15. * 7.1 *King Ptolemy Philopator*: See the note at 1.1.

⁴ These wicked officials claimed that the Jews were a constant threat to any nation where they lived, and that our own government would never be completely in control until they were wiped out.

⁵ The Jews were led to the stadium and treated no better than slaves or traitors. Our own officials were terribly mean and cruel,[†] and they tried their best to put the Jews to death—without asking them a single question!

⁶ My other officials and I threatened to punish these rebel officials for what they were doing. And then we rescued the Jews, just as we would rescue any foreigners. We know for certain that the God of heaven defends the Jews and treats them as well as a father treats his own children.

⁷ The Jews have always been loyal and friendly to us and our ancestors. So we have forgotten every false charge brought against them,

⁸ and we told them to go back to their own homes. We ordered everyone to leave the Jews alone and not harm them in any way[‡] or make fun of them for the awful things that have happened.

⁹ You know that if we plan to do any evil against the Jews or cause them any trouble at all, we won't have a human ruler as our enemy. God Most High, the ruler over all human powers,

[†] 7.5 *terribly mean and cruel*: Greek “meaner than Scythians,” a people who were known for their cruelty. [‡] 7.8 *in any way*: Greek; some ancient translations “anywhere along their way.”

will turn against us and avenge them. Goodbye.

*The Rebellious Jews
Are Punished*

¹⁰ When the faithful Jews read this letter, they did not leave immediately. Instead, they asked Philopator if they could punish the other Jews in Alexandria who had sinned against God and rejected his Law

¹¹ to avoid starving to death. § The faithful Jews told Philopator that these rebels would never be truly loyal to him.

¹² Philopator agreed and gave the faithful Jews complete authority to wipe out the rebellious Jews who had disobeyed God's commands.

¹³ The priests and the rest of the Jews clapped and cheered when they heard Philopator's decision, and they shouted praises to God just before they left.

¹⁴ As they went through Alexandria, they punished every Jew who had become unacceptable to God by disobeying his commands. These rebels were shamefully put to death where everyone could watch.

¹⁵ Three hundred men were killed on that day, and it was remembered as a special day on which many unfaithful Jews were destroyed.

¹⁶ After that, the faithful Jews left Alexandria. They wore sweet-smelling flowers around their heads, and they sang beautiful songs of praise in honor of the God their ancestors had worshiped.

§ 7.11 *Jews in Alexandria ... starving to death:* This probably refers to the events of 2.25-31.

And as they left, they thanked God for rescuing them, just as he had always rescued the people of Israel.

*The Faithful Jews
Return Home*

¹⁷ Some time later, the Jews arrived at Ptolemais,* also known as the “City of Roses,” where the boats to take them home were docked. The boats waited seven days, because all the Jews agreed

¹⁸ to celebrate their rescue once again. They also honored King Philopator, who had provided the supplies they would need until every one of them returned home.

¹⁹ The Jews were very thankful when they were safely off the boats, and they decided to remember their travel days as festival days.

²⁰ Before they left for their homes, they found a stone column and carved on it the command to celebrate these sacred festival days each year. Then they dedicated the place as a sacred place for prayer.

Everyone got home safely, because Philopator made sure they were safe all along the way home, whether on land or water. They were very happy that they were free and were no longer abused prisoners.

²¹ In fact, the enemies of the Jews now respected them and promised to treat them like friends.

* **7.17 Ptolemais:** Possibly a town on the Nile River about 20 kilometers north of present-day Cairo.

²² The people who had taken over the Jews' property were afraid of what God might do, so these people were eager to give it back, according to the government records that told how much the Jews owned.

God Is Praised

God Most High did all the miracles written in this book so that the Jews would be rescued from death.

²³ Shout praises forever to the God who saves the people of Israel! Amen.

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