

**THE NEW  
ENGLISH BIBLE**

**THE APOCRYPHA**

# THE BIBLE

## A NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION

*Planned and Directed by Representatives of*

THE BAPTIST UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN ENGLAND AND WALES

THE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES FOR WALES

THE IRISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

THE LONDON YEARLY MEETING OF

THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

THE METHODIST CHURCH OF GREAT BRITAIN

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ENGLAND

THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY

THE NATIONAL BIBLE SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND

*The publication of the books of the Apocrypha in this translation prepared under the auspices of the Joint Committee on the New Translation of the Bible does not imply that the bodies represented on the Joint Committee hold a common opinion upon the canonical status of these books*

# THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE

THE APOCRYPHA



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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1970

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# PREFACE TO THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE

In May 1946 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland received an overture from the Presbytery of Stirling and Dunblane, where it had been initiated by the Reverend G. S. Hendry, recommending that a translation of the Bible be made in the language of the present day, inasmuch as the language of the Authorized Version, already archaic when it was made, had now become even more definitely archaic and less generally understood. The General Assembly resolved to make an approach to other Churches, and, as a result, delegates of the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, and the Methodist, Baptist, and Congregational Churches met in conference in October. They recommended that the work should be undertaken; that a completely new translation should be made, rather than a revision, such as had earlier been contemplated by the University Presses of Oxford and Cambridge; and that the translators should be free to employ a contemporary idiom rather than reproduce the traditional 'biblical' English.

In January 1947 a second conference, held like the first in the Central Hall, Westminster, included representatives of the University Presses. At the request of this conference, the Churches named above appointed representatives to form the Joint Committee on the New Translation of the Bible. This Committee met for the first time in July of the same year. By January 1948, when its third meeting was held, invitations to be represented had been sent to the Presbyterian Church of England, the Society of Friends, the Churches in Wales, the Churches in Ireland, the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the National Bible Society of Scotland: these invitations were accepted. At a much later stage the hierarchies of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Scotland accepted an invitation to appoint representatives, and these attended as observers.

The Joint Committee provided for the actual work of translation from the original tongues by appointing three panels, to deal, respectively, with the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, and the New Testament. Their members were scholars drawn from various British universities, whom the Committee believed to be representative of competent biblical scholarship at the present time. Apprehending, however, that sound scholarship does not necessarily carry with it a delicate sense of English style, the Committee appointed a fourth panel, of trusted literary advisers,

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to whom all the work of the translating panels was to be submitted for scrutiny. It should be said that denominational considerations played no part in the appointment of the panels.

The Joint Committee issued general directions to the panels, in pursuance of the aims which the enterprise had in view. The translating panels adopted the following procedure. An individual was invited to submit a draft translation of a particular book, or group of books. Normally he would be a member of the panel concerned. Very occasionally a draft translation was invited from a scholar outside the panel, who was known to have worked specially on the book in question. The draft was circulated in typescript to members of the panel for their consideration. They then met together and discussed the draft round a table, verse by verse, sentence by sentence. Each member brought his view about the meaning of the original to the judgement of his fellows, and discussion went on until they reached a common mind. There are passages where, in the present state of our knowledge, no one could say with certainty which of two (or even more) possible meanings is intended. In such cases, after careful discussion, alternative meanings have been recorded in footnotes, but only where they seemed of sufficient importance. There is probably no member of a panel who has not found himself obliged to give up, perhaps with lingering regret, a cherished view about the meaning of this or that difficult passage, but in the end the panel accepted corporate responsibility for the interpretation set forth in the translation adopted.

The resultant draft was now remitted to the panel of literary advisers. They scrutinized it, once again, verse by verse, sentence by sentence, and took pains to secure, as best they could, the tone and level of language appropriate to the different kinds of writing to be found in the Bible, whether narrative, familiar discourse, argument, law, rhetoric or poetry. The translation thus amended was returned to the translating panel, who examined it to make sure that the meaning intended had not been in any way misunderstood. Passages of peculiar difficulty might on occasion pass repeatedly between the panels. The final form of the version was reached by agreement between the translators concerned and the literary advisers. It was then ready for submission to the Joint Committee.

Since January 1948 the Joint Committee has met regularly twice a year in the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey, with four exceptions during 1954-5 when the Langham Room in the precincts of the Abbey was kindly made available. At these meetings the Committee has received reports on the progress of the work from the Conveners of the four panels, and its members have had in their hands typescripts of the books so far translated and revised. They have made such comments and given such

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advice or decisions as they judged to be necessary, and from time to time they have met members of the panels in conference.

Of the original members of the panels most have happily been able to stay with the work all through, though some have been lost, through death or otherwise, and their places have been filled by fresh appointments.

The Committee has warmly appreciated the courteous hospitality of the Dean of Westminster and of the Trustees of the Central Hall. We owe a great debt to the support and the experienced counsel of the University Presses of Oxford and Cambridge. We recognize gratefully the service rendered to the enterprise by the Reverend Dr G. S. Hendry and the Reverend Professor J. K. S. Reid, who have successively held the office of Secretary to the Committee. To those who have borne special responsibility, as Chairmen of the Joint Committee, we owe more than could readily be told. Dr J. W. Hunkin, Bishop of Truro, our first Chairman, brought to the work an exuberant vigour and initiative without which the formidable project might hardly have got off the ground at all. On his lamented death in 1950 he was succeeded by Dr A. T. P. Williams, then Bishop of Durham and subsequently Bishop of Winchester, who for eighteen years guided our enterprise with judicious wisdom, tact, and benign firmness, but who to our sorrow died when the end of the task was in sight. To both of these we would put on record the gratitude of the Committee and of all engaged in the enterprise.

If we embarked on mentioning the names of those who have served on the various committees and panels, the list would be a long one; and if we mentioned some and not others, the selection would be an invidious one. There are, nevertheless, three names the omission of which would be utterly wrong. As Vice-Chairman and Director, Dr C. H. Dodd has from start to finish given outstanding leadership and guidance to the project, bringing to the work scholarship, sensitivity, and an ever watchful eye. Professor Sir Godfrey Driver, Joint Director since 1965, has also brought to the work a wealth of knowledge and wisdom; to his enthusiasm, tenacity of purpose, and unflagging devotion the whole enterprise is greatly indebted. Professor W. D. McHardy, Deputy Director since 1968, has made an invaluable contribution particularly, but by no means exclusively, in the sphere of the Apocrypha. It is right that the names of these three scholars should always be associated with *The New English Bible*. Our debt to them is incalculably great.

DONALD EBOR:

*Chairman of the Joint Committee*





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# INTRODUCTION

The term 'Apocrypha', a Greek word meaning 'hidden (things)', was early used in different senses. It was applied to writings which were regarded as so important and precious that they must be hidden from the general public and reserved for the initiates, the inner circle of believers. It came to be applied to writings which were hidden not because they were too good but because they were not good enough, because, that is, they were secondary or questionable or heretical. A third usage may be traced to Jerome. He was familiar with the Scriptures in their Hebrew as well as their Greek form, and for him apocryphal books were those outside the Hebrew canon.

The generally accepted modern usage is based on that of Jerome. The Apocrypha as here translated consists of fifteen books or parts of books. They are:

- 1 The First Book of Esdras
- 2 The Second Book of Esdras
- 3 Tobit
- 4 Judith
- 5 The Rest of the Chapters of the Book of Esther
- 6 The Wisdom of Solomon
- 7 Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus son of Sirach
- 8 Baruch
- 9 A Letter of Jeremiah
- 10 The Song of the Three
- 11 Daniel and Susanna
- 12 Daniel, Bel, and the Snake
- 13 The Prayer of Manasseh
- 14 The First Book of the Maccabees
- 15 The Second Book of the Maccabees

These works are outside the Palestinian canon; that is, they form no part of the Hebrew Scriptures, although the original language of some of them was Hebrew. With the exception, however, of the Second Book of Esdras, they are all in the Greek version of the Old Testament made for the Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt. As such they were accepted as biblical by the early Church and were quoted as Scripture by many early Christian writers, for their Bible was the Greek Bible.

In Greek and Latin manuscripts of the Old Testament these books are dispersed throughout the Old Testament, generally in the places most in accord with their contents. The practice of collecting them into a separate

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unit, a practice which dates back no farther than A.D. 1520, explains why certain of the items are but fragments; they are passages not found in the Hebrew Bible, and so have been removed from the books in which they occur in the Greek version. To help the reader over this disunity and lack of context the present translators have resorted to various devices. We have added the name Daniel to the titles of the stories of Susanna and of Bel and the Snake as a reminder that these tales are to be read with the Book of Daniel. A note we have inserted after the title, The Song of the Three, indicates that this item is to be found in the third chapter of the Greek form of Daniel. And the six additions to the Book of Esther are so disjointed and unintelligible as they stand in most editions of the Apocrypha that we have provided them with a context by rendering the whole of the Greek version of Esther.

The text used in this translation of the Apocrypha is that edited by H. B. Swete in *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*. In places Swete includes two texts, and we have chosen to translate the Codex Sinaiticus text of Tobit and Theodotion's version of the additions to the Book of Daniel, namely, The Song of the Three, Daniel and Susanna, and Daniel, Bel, and the Snake. For Ecclesiasticus we have used, in addition to Codex Vaticanus as printed in Swete's edition, the text edited by J. H. A. Hart in *Ecclesiasticus: the Greek Text of Codex 248*, and constant reference has been made to the various forms of the Hebrew text. For the Second Book of Esdras, which apart from a few verses is not extant in a Greek form, we have based our translation on the Latin text of R. L. Bensly's *The Fourth Book of Ezra*. Throughout we have consulted the variant readings given in critical editions of the Greek, the texts of the versions, and the suggestions of editors and commentators.

Alternative readings cited from Greek manuscripts (referred to as *witnesses*) and the evidence of early translations (*Vss.*, that is Versions) are given, as footnotes, only when they are significant either for text or for meaning. In a few places where the text seems to have suffered in the course of transmission and in its present form is obscure or unintelligible we have made a slight change in the text and marked our rendering of it *probable reading*, and we have indicated any evidence other than the evidence afforded by the context. Where an alternative interpretation seemed to deserve serious consideration it has been recorded as a footnote with *Or* as indicator.

In order to preserve the verse numbering of the Authorized (King James) Version of 1611 we have, when necessary, added at the foot of the page those passages which are found in the manuscripts on which the Authorized Version ultimately rests but which are absent from the earlier manuscripts now available.

We have not sought to achieve consistency in the treatment of proper

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names any more than did our predecessors. We have continued to use familiar English forms, especially when the reference is to well-known Old Testament characters or places. Sometimes as an aid to the correct pronunciation we have had recourse to such expedients as the affixing of an acute accent to the word *Sidé* or the introduction of a diphthong, as in our *Soud* for *Sud*. In general it may be said that Greek spellings have been Latinized, but the Greek forms of place-names have not been brought into line with the Hebrew.

We have not aimed at consistency in our treatment of weights and measures. We have rendered terms into the nearest English equivalents only when these seemed suitable and natural in the context.

In the text of the First and Second Books of the Maccabees the dates given are reckoned according to the Greek or Seleucid era. As a help to the reader we have added at the foot of the page the nearest dates according to the Christian era.

This translation of the Apocrypha shares with other parts of The New English Bible the aim of providing a rendering which will be both faithful to the text translated and genuinely English in idiom. The translators have endeavoured to convey the meaning of the original in language which will be the closest natural equivalent. They have tried to avoid free paraphrase on the one hand and, on the other, formal fidelity resulting in a translation which would read like a translation. It is their hope that by their labours these documents, valuable in themselves and indispensable for the study of the background of the New Testament, have been made more intelligible and more readily accessible.

W. D. McH.

# MARGINAL NUMBERS

The conventional verse divisions in the Apocrypha date only from editions printed in the sixteenth century and have no basis in the manuscripts. Any system of division into numbered verses is foreign to the spirit of this translation, which is intended to convey the meaning in continuous natural English.

For purposes of reference, verse numbers are placed in the margin opposite the line in which the first word belonging to the verse in question appears. Sometimes, however, successive verses are combined in a continuous translation, so that the precise point where a new verse begins cannot be fixed; in these cases the verse numbers, joined by a hyphen, are placed at the point where the passage begins.

# THE FIRST BOOK OF ESDRAS

## *Exile and return*

JOSIAH KEPT the Passover at Jerusalem in honour of 1  
his Lord and sacrificed the Passover victims on the fourteenth 2  
day of the first month. The priests, duly robed in their vest-  
ments, he stationed in the temple of the Lord according to the order 3  
of daily service. He commanded the Levites, who served the temple in  
Israel, to purify themselves for the Lord, in order to place the holy 4  
Ark of the Lord in the house which was built by King Solomon, son  
of David. Josiah said to them, 'You are no longer to carry it on your 5  
shoulders. Make yourselves ready now, family by family and clan by  
clan, to do service to the Lord your God and to minister to his people  
Israel in the manner prescribed by King David and provided for so 6  
magnificently by his son Solomon. Take your places in the temple as  
Levites in the prescribed order of your families in the presence of  
your brother Israelites; sacrifice the Passover victims, and prepare 7  
the sacrifices for your brothers. Observe the Passover according to  
the ordinance of the Lord which was given to Moses.'

To those who were present Josiah made a gift of thirty thousand 7  
lambs and kids and three thousand calves. These he gave from the  
royal estates in fulfilment of his promise to the people and to the  
priests and Levites. The temple-wardens, Chelkias, Zacharias, and 8  
Esyelus, gave the priests two thousand six hundred sheep and three  
hundred calves for the Passover. Jechonias, Samaeas, his brother 9  
Nathanael, Sabias, Ozielus, and Joram, army officers of high rank,  
gave the Levites five thousand sheep and seven hundred calves for  
the Passover.

This was the procedure. The priests and the Levites, bearing the 10  
unleavened bread, stood in all their splendour before the people, in  
the order of their clans and families, to make offerings to the Lord as 11  
is laid down in the book of Moses. This took place in the morning.  
They roasted the Passover victims over the fire in the prescribed 12

way and boiled the sacrifices in the vessels and cauldrons, and a  
13 pleasant smell went up; then they carried portions round to the  
whole assembly. After this they made preparations both for them-  
14 selves and for their brothers the priests, the sons of Aaron. The  
priests went on offering the fat until nightfall, while the Levites made  
the preparations both for themselves and for their brothers the  
15-16 priests, the sons of Aaron. The sons of Asaph, the temple singers,  
with Asaph, Zacharias, and Eddinous of the royal court, and the  
door-keepers at each gateway remained at their station according to  
the ordinances of David, which prescribe that no one may lawfully  
default in his daily duty; their brothers the Levites made the pre-  
17 parations for them. All that pertained to the Lord's sacrifice was  
18 completed that day: the keeping of the Passover and the offering of  
the sacrifices on the altar of the Lord according to the command of  
19 King Josiah. The Israelites who were present on this occasion kept  
the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days.  
20 Such a Passover had not been kept in Israel since the time of the  
21 prophet Samuel; none of the kings of Israel had kept such a Pass-  
over as was kept by Josiah, the priests and the Levites, the men of  
Judah, and those Israelites who happened to be resident in Jerusalem.  
22 It was in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign that this Passover was  
celebrated.

23 All that Josiah did he did rightly and in whole-hearted devotion to  
24 his Lord. The events of his reign are to be found in ancient records  
which tell a story of sin and rebellion against the Lord graver than  
that of any other nation or kingdom, and of offences against him  
which brought down his judgement upon Israel.

25 After all these doings of Josiah's it happened that Pharaoh king of  
Egypt was advancing to attack Carchemish on the Euphrates, and  
26 Josiah took the field against him. The king of Egypt sent him this  
27 message: 'What is your business with me, king of Judah? It is not  
against you that the Lord God has sent me to fight; my campaign is  
on the Euphrates. The Lord is with me, the Lord, I say, is with me,  
28 driving me on. Withdraw, and do not oppose the Lord.' Josiah did  
not turn his chariot but went forward to the attack. He disregarded  
29 what the Lord had said through the prophet Jeremiah and joined  
battle with Pharaoh in the plain of Megiddo. Pharaoh's captains  
30 swept down upon King Josiah. The king said to his servants, 'Take  
me out of the battle, for I am badly hurt.' At once his servants took



him out of the line and lifted him into his second chariot. He was brought back to Jerusalem, and there he died and was buried in his ancestral tomb. 31

All Judah mourned Josiah, and the prophet Jeremiah lamented him. The lamentation for Josiah has been observed by the chief men and their wives from that day to this; it was proclaimed that it should be a custom for ever for the whole people of Israel. These things are recorded in the book of the histories of the kings of Judah; every deed that Josiah did which won him fame and showed his understanding of the law of the Lord, both what he did earlier and what is told of him here, is related in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. 32

His compatriots took Joachaz the son of Josiah and made him king in succession to his father. He was twenty-three years old, and he reigned over Judah and Jerusalem for three months. Then the king of Egypt deposed him, fined the nation a hundred talents of silver and one talent of gold, and appointed his brother Joakim king of Judah and Jerusalem. Joakim imprisoned the leading men and had his brother Zarius arrested and brought back from Egypt. 33

Joakim was twenty-five years old when he became king of Judah and Jerusalem; he did what was wrong in the eyes of the Lord. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against him; he put him in chains of bronze and took him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also took some of the sacred vessels of the Lord, carried them off, and put them in his temple in Babylon. The stories about Joakim, his sacrilegious and godless conduct, are recorded in the chronicles of the kings. 34

Joakim was succeeded on the throne by his eighteen-year-old son Joakim. He reigned in Jerusalem for three months and ten days, and did what was wrong in the eyes of the Lord. 35

A year later Nebuchadnezzar had him deported to Babylon together with the sacred vessels of the Lord. He made Zedekiah king of Judah and Jerusalem. Zedekiah was twenty-one years old and reigned eleven years. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the Lord and disregarded what the Lord had said through the prophet Jeremiah. King Nebuchadnezzar had made him take an oath of allegiance by the Lord, but he broke it and revolted. He was stubborn and defiant, and transgressed the commandments of the Lord, the God of Israel. 36

The leaders of the people and the chief priests committed many wicked and lawless acts, outdoing even the heathen in sacrilege, and 37

50 they defiled the holy temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. The God of  
their fathers sent his messenger to reclaim them, because he wished  
51 to spare them and his dwelling-place. But they derided his mes-  
sengers, and on the very day when the Lord spoke they were scoffing  
52 at his prophets. At last he was roused to fury against his people for  
their impieties, and ordained that the kings of the Chaldeans should  
53 attack them. These put their young men to the sword all round the  
holy temple, sparing neither old nor young, neither boy nor girl; the  
54 Lord handed them all over to their enemies. All the sacred vessels of  
the Lord, large and small, the furnishings of the Ark of the Lord,  
55 and the royal treasures were carried off to Babylon. The house of the  
Lord was set on fire, the walls of Jerusalem destroyed, its towers  
56 burnt, and all its splendours ruined. Nebuchadnezzar carried off to  
Babylon the survivors from the slaughter, and they remained slaves  
57 to him and his sons until the Persians took his empire. This fulfilled  
the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah: 'Until the land has run  
58 the full term of its sabbaths, it shall keep sabbath all the time of its  
desolation till the end of the seventy years.'

2 1-2 DURING THE FIRST YEAR of Cyrus king of Persia, the Lord, in  
order to fulfil his word spoken through Jeremiah, moved Cyrus king  
of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his empire, which he  
3 also put in writing: 'This is the decree of Cyrus king of Persia: The  
Lord of Israel, the most high Lord, has made me king of the world  
4 and has directed me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judaea.  
5 Whoever among you belongs to his people, may his Lord be with  
him; let him go up to Jerusalem in Judaea and build the house of the  
6 Lord of Israel, the Lord who dwells in Jerusalem. Wherever each  
7 man lives let his neighbours help him with gold and silver and other  
gifts, with horses and pack-animals, together with other things set  
aside as votive offerings for the Lord's temple in Jerusalem.'

8 Then the chiefs of the clans of the tribe of Judah and of Benjamin,  
the priests, the Levites, came forward, and all whose spirit the Lord  
9 had moved to go up to build the Lord's temple in Jerusalem. Their  
neighbours helped with everything, with silver and gold, horses and  
pack-animals; and many were also moved to help with votive offer-  
10 ings in great quantity. King Cyrus brought out the sacred vessels of  
the Lord which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away from Jerusalem  
11 and set up in his idolatrous temple. Cyrus king of Persia brought

them out and delivered them to Mithradates his treasurer, by whom 12  
they were delivered to Sanabassar, the governor of Judaea. This is the 13  
inventory: a thousand gold cups, a thousand silver cups, twenty-nine  
silver censers, thirty gold bowls, two thousand four hundred and ten 14  
silver bowls, and a thousand other articles. In all, five thousand four  
hundred and sixty-nine gold and silver vessels were returned, and taken 15  
from Babylon to Jerusalem by Sanabassar together with the exiles.

In the time of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Belemus, Mithradates, 16  
Tabellius, Rathymus, Beeltethmus, Semellius the secretary, and their  
colleagues in office in Samaria and other places, wrote him a letter  
denouncing the inhabitants of Judaea and Jerusalem in the following  
terms:

To our Sovereign Lord Artaxerxes your servants Rathymus the 17  
recorder, Semellius the secretary, the other members of their  
council, and the magistrates in Coele-syria and Phoenicia:

This is to inform Your Majesty that the Jews who left you to 18  
come here have arrived in Jerusalem and are rebuilding that  
wicked and rebellious city. They are repairing its streets and walls  
and laying the foundation of the temple. If this city is rebuilt and 19  
the walls completed, they will cease paying tribute and will rebel  
against the royal house. Since work on the temple is in hand, we 20  
have thought it well not to neglect this important matter but to  
bring it to Your Majesty's notice, in order that, if it is Your 21  
Majesty's pleasure, search may be made in the records left by your  
predecessors. You will find in the archives evidence about these 22  
matters and will learn that this is a city that has resisted authority  
and given trouble to kings and to other states, and has been a 23  
centre of armed rebellion by the Jews from the earliest times. That  
is why it was laid in ruins. Now we submit to Your Majesty that, 24  
if this city be rebuilt and its walls rise again, you will no longer have  
access to Coele-syria and Phoenicia.

Then the king wrote to Rathymus the recorder, Beeltethmus, 25  
Semellius the secretary, and their colleagues in office in Samaria,  
Syria, and Phoenicia this reply:

I have read your letter. I ordered search to be made and it was 26  
discovered that this city has always been opposed to its overlords,

27 and its inhabitants have raised rebellions and made wars. There were kings in Jerusalem, powerful and ruthless men, who in their time controlled Coele-syria and Phoenicia and exacted tribute from  
 28 them. I therefore command that the men you mention be prevented from rebuilding the city, and that measures be taken to  
 29 enforce this order and to check the spread of an evil likely to be a nuisance to the royal house.

30 When the letter from King Artaxerxes had been read, Rathymus, Semellius the secretary, and their colleagues set out at once for Jerusalem with cavalry and a large body of other troops and stopped the builders. The building of the temple was broken off until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

### *A debate at the Persian court*

3 KING DARIUS held a great feast for all those under him, his  
 2 household, the chief men of Media and Persia, and the satraps and commanders and governors of his empire in the hundred and  
 3 twenty-seven satrapies from India to Ethiopia. When they had eaten and drunk their fill, they went away, and King Darius with-  
 4 drew to his bedchamber; he went to sleep but woke up again. Then the three young men of the king's personal bodyguard said to each  
 5 other: 'Let each one of us name the thing which he judges the strongest; and to the one whose opinion seems wisest King Darius  
 6 will give rich gifts and prizes: he shall be clothed in purple, drink from gold vessels, and sleep on a golden bed; and he shall have a  
 7 chariot with gold-studded bridles, and a fine linen turban, and a chain about his neck. His wisdom shall give him the right to sit next  
 8 to Darius and to be given the title Kinsman of Darius.' Then each wrote down his own statement, sealed it, and put it under the king's  
 9 pillow. 'When the king wakes again,' they said, 'the writing will be given him. The king and the three chief men of Persia shall judge whose statement is wisest, and the award will be made on the merits of the written statement.'

10, 11 One wrote 'Wine is strongest', the second wrote 'The king is  
 12 strongest', and the third wrote 'Women are strongest, but truth

conquers all'. When the king got up he was presented with what 13  
they had written. He read it, and summoned all the chief men of 14  
Persia and Media, satraps, commanders, governors, and chief  
officers. Then he took his seat in the council chamber, and what they 15  
had written was read out before them. He said, 'Call the young men 16  
and let them expound their statements.' They were called and came  
in. They were asked, 'Tell us about what you have written.' 17

The first, who spoke about the strength of wine, began. 'Sirs,' he 18  
said, 'how true it is that wine is strongest! It sends astray the wits of  
all who drink it; king and orphan, slave and free, rich and poor, it 19  
has the same effect on them all. It turns all thoughts to revelry and 20  
mirth; it brings forgetfulness of grief and debt. It makes all feel 21  
rich, cares nothing for king or satrap, and makes men always talk in  
millions. When they are in their cups, they forget to be friendly to 22  
friends and relations, and are quick to draw their swords; when they 23  
have recovered from their wine, they cannot remember what they  
have done. Sirs, is not wine the strongest, seeing that it forces men 24  
to behave in this way?' With this he ended.

Then the second, the one who spoke of the strength of the king, 4  
began his speech: 'Sirs, is not man the strongest, man who masters 2  
the earth and the sea and all that is in them? But the strongest of 3  
men is the king; he is their lord and master, and they obey all his  
commands. If he bids them make war upon one another they do it; 4  
if he dispatches them against his enemies, they march and level  
mountains and walls and towers. They kill and are killed; they do not 5  
disobey the king's order. If they are victorious they bring everything  
to the king, their spoils and everything else. Or take those who do not 6  
serve as soldiers or go to war, but work the land: they sow and reap,  
and bring their produce to the king. They compel each other to  
bring him their tribute. Though he is no more than one man, if he 7  
orders them to kill, they kill; if he orders them to release, they  
release; he orders them to attack and they attack, to lay waste and 8  
they lay waste, to build and they build, to cut down and they cut 9  
down, to plant and they plant. So all his people and his troops obey 10  
him. Besides this, while he himself sits at table, eats and drinks, and  
goes to sleep, they stand in attendance round about him and none 11  
can leave and see to his own affairs; they never disobey him in any-  
thing. Sirs, of course the king must be strongest when he commands 12  
such obedience!' So he stopped speaking.

13 The third, who spoke about women and truth—and this was  
14 Zerubbabel—said: ‘Sirs, it is true the king is great, men are many,  
and wine is strong, but who rules over them? Who is the sovereign  
15 power? Women, surely! The king and all his people who rule land  
16 and sea were born of women, and from them they came. Women  
brought up the men who planted the vineyards which yield the wine.  
17 They make clothes for men and they bring honour to men; men can-  
18 not do without women. If they have amassed gold and silver and all  
kinds of beautiful things, and then see a woman with a lovely face and  
19 figure, they leave all these things to gape and stare at her with open  
mouth, and all choose her in preference to gold or silver or beautiful  
20 things. A man will desert his father who brought him up, desert  
21 even his country, and become one with his wife. He forgets father,  
mother, and country, and stays with his wife to the end of his days.  
22 Here is the proof that women are your masters: do you not toil and  
23 sweat and then bring all you earn and give it to your wives? A man  
will take his sword and sally forth to plunder and rob, to sail on sea  
24 and river; he faces lions, he travels in the dark; and when he has  
robbed and plundered he brings the spoil home to his beloved.

25, 26 ‘A man loves his wife more than his father or mother. For women’s  
sakes many men have been driven out of their minds, many have  
27 been sold into slavery, many have died or come to grief or ruined their  
28 lives. Do you believe me now? Certainly the king wields great  
29 authority; no country dare lift a finger against him. Yet I watched  
him with Apame, his favourite concubine, daughter of the famous  
30 Bartacus. She was sitting on the king’s right; she took the diadem  
off his head and put it on her own, and slapped his face with her left  
31 hand; and the king only gazed at her open-mouthed. When she  
laughed at him he laughed; when she was cross with him he coaxed  
32 her to make it up. Sirs, if women do as well as this, how can their  
33 strength be denied?’ The king and the chief men looked at one  
another.

34 He then went on to speak about truth: ‘Sirs, we have seen that  
women are strong. The earth is vast, the sky is lofty, the sun swift in  
his course, for he moves through the circle of the sky and speeds  
35 home in a single day. How great is he who does all this! But truth  
36 too is great and stronger than all else. The whole earth calls on  
truth; the sky praises her. All created things shake and tremble;  
37 with her there is no injustice. There is injustice in wine, in kings, in

women, in all men, and in all their works, and so forth. There is no truth in them; they shall perish in their injustice. But truth abides 38  
and is strong for ever; she lives and rules for ever and ever. With her 39  
there is no favouritism or partiality; she chooses to do justice rather  
than what is unjust and evil. All approve her works; in her judge- 40  
ments there is no injustice. Hers are strength and royalty, the  
authority and majesty of all ages. Praise be to the God of truth!'

So he ended his speech, and all the people shouted and said, 41  
'Great is truth: truth is strongest!' Then the king said to him, 'Ask 42  
what you will, even beyond what is in the writing, and I will grant it  
you. For you have been proved the wisest; and you shall sit by me  
and be called my Kinsman.'

Then he said to the king: 'Remember the vow you made on the 43  
day when you came to the throne. You promised to rebuild Jeru-  
salem and to send back all the vessels taken from it which Cyrus set 44  
aside. When he vowed to destroy Babylon he also vowed to restore  
these vessels; and you too made a vow to rebuild the temple which 45  
the Edomites burnt when Judaea was ravaged by the Chaldaeans.  
This is the favour that I now beg of you, my lord king, this is the 46  
magnanimity I request: that you should perform the vow which you  
made to the King of heaven.'

King Darius stood up and kissed him, and wrote letters for him to 47  
all the treasurers, governors, commanders, and satraps instructing  
them to give safe conduct to him and to all those who were going up  
with him to rebuild Jerusalem. To all the governors in Coele-syria 48  
and Phoenicia and in Lebanon he wrote letters ordering them to  
transport cedar-wood from Lebanon to Jerusalem and join with  
Zerubbabel in building the city. He gave all Jews going up from the 49  
kingdom to Judaea letters assuring their liberties: that no officer,  
satrap, governor, or treasurer should interfere with them, that all 50  
land which they should acquire should be immune from taxation,  
and that the Edomites should surrender the villages they had seized  
from the Jews. Each year twenty talents were to be contributed to 51  
the building of the temple until it was finished, and a further ten 52  
talents annually for<sup>a</sup> burnt-offerings to be sacrificed daily upon the  
altar in accordance with their law. All those who were going from 53-54  
Babylonia to build the city were to enjoy freedom, and their descen-  
dants after them. He gave written orders that all the priests going

[a] *Some witnesses add seventeen.*

there should also receive maintenance and the vestments in which they  
 55 would officiate; that the Levites too should receive maintenance, until  
 the day when the building of the temple and Jerusalem was com-  
 56 pleted; and that all who guarded the city should be given land and  
 57 pay. He sent back all the vessels from Babylon which Cyrus had set  
 aside. All that Cyrus had commanded, he reaffirmed, ordering  
 everything to be restored to Jerusalem.

58 When the young man, Zerubbabel, went out, he turned his face  
 toward Jerusalem, looked up to heaven, and praised the King of  
 59 heaven. 'From thee comes victory,' he said, 'from thee comes  
 60 wisdom; thine is the glory and I am thy servant. All praise to thee  
 who hast given me wisdom; to thee I give thanks, O Lord of our  
 fathers.'

61 He took the letters and set off for Babylon, where he told his  
 62 fellow-Jews. They praised the God of their fathers because he had  
 63 given them full freedom to go and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple  
 called by his name, and they feasted for a week with music and  
 rejoicing.

### *The temple rebuilt*

5 **A**FTER THIS the heads of families, tribe by tribe, were chosen to  
 go to Jerusalem, with their wives, their sons and daughters, their  
 2 male and female slaves, and their pack-animals. Darius sent a  
 thousand horsemen to accompany them until they had brought them  
 3 safely back to Jerusalem, with a band of drums and flutes, and all  
 their brothers dancing. So he sent them off with their escort.

4 These are the names of the men who went to Jerusalem, according  
 5 to their families, tribes, and allotted duties. The priests, the sons of  
 Phineas son of Aaron, with Jeshua son of Josedek son of Saraeas,  
 and Joakim his son; and<sup>a</sup> Zerubbabel son of Salathiel of the house of  
 6 David of the line of Phares of the tribe of Judah, who spoke wise  
 words before Darius king of Persia. They went in the second year of  
 his reign, in Nisan the first month.

7 Now these are the men of Judah who came up from amongst the  
 captive exiles, those whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had

[<sup>a</sup>] his son; and: *probable reading (compare Nehemiah 12. 10).*



transported to Babylon. They returned to Jerusalem and the rest of 8  
Judaea, each to his own city: they came with Zerubbabel and  
Jeshua, Nehemiah, Zaraeas, Resaeas, Enenius, Mardocheus,  
Beelsarus, Aspharasus, Reelias, Romelius, and Baana, their leaders.  
The numbers of those from the nation who returned with their 9  
leaders were: the line of Phoros two thousand one hundred and  
seventy-two; the line of Saphat four hundred and seventy-two; the 10  
line of Ares seven hundred and fifty-six; the line of Phaath-moab, 11  
deriving from the line of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight  
hundred and twelve; the line of Elam one thousand two hundred and 12  
fifty-four; the line of Zathui nine hundred and forty-five; the line of  
Chorbe seven hundred and five; the line of Banei six hundred and  
forty-eight; the line of Bebae six hundred and twenty-three; the line 13  
of Astaa one thousand three hundred and twenty-two. The line of 14  
Adonikam six hundred and sixty-seven; the line of Bagoi two  
thousand and sixty-six; the line of Adinus four hundred and fifty-  
four; the line of Ater son of Hezekias ninety-two; the line of Keilan 15  
and Azetas sixty-seven; the line of Azurus four hundred and thirty-  
two; the line of Annias one hundred and one; the line of Arom and 16  
the line of Bassa three hundred and twenty-three; the line of  
Arsiphurith one hundred and twelve; the line of Baeterus three 17  
thousand and five. The line of Bethlomon one hundred and twenty-  
three; the men of Netophae fifty-five; the men of Anathoth one 18  
hundred and fifty-eight; the men of Bethasmoth forty-two; the 19  
men of Cariathiarius twenty-five; the men of Caphira and Beroth  
seven hundred and forty-three; the Chadasians and Ammidaeans 20  
four hundred and twenty-two; the men of Kirama and Gabbes  
six hundred and twenty-one; the men of Macalon one hundred and 21  
twenty-two; the men of Betolio fifty-two; the line of Phinis one  
hundred and fifty-six; the line of Calamolalus and Onus seven 22  
hundred and twenty-five; the line of Jerechus three hundred and  
forty-five; the line of Sanaas three thousand three hundred 23  
and thirty.

The priests: the line of Jeddu son of Jeshua, deriving from the line 24  
of Anasib, nine hundred and seventy-two. The line of Emmeruth  
one thousand and fifty-two. The line of Phassurus one thousand two 25  
hundred and forty-seven. The line of Charme one thousand and  
seventeen.

The Levites: the line of Jesue, Cadmielus, Bannus, and Sudius 26

27 seventy-four. The temple singers: the line of Asaph one hundred and twenty-eight.

28 The door-keepers: the line of Salum, of Atar, of Tolman, of Dacubi, of Ateta, of Sabi, in all one hundred and thirty-nine.

29 The temple-servitors: the line of Esau, of Asipha, of Taboth,  
30 of Keras, of Susa, of Phaleas, of Labana, of Aggaba, of Acud, of Uta, of Ketab, of Gaba, of Subai, of Anan, of Cathua, of Geddur,  
31 of Jairus, of Desan, of Noeba, of Chaseba, of Gazera, of Ozius, of Phinoe, of Asara, of Basthae, of Asana, of Maani, of Naphisi, of  
32 Acum, of Achipha, of Asur, of Pharakim, of Baaloth, of Meedda, of Coutha, of Charea, of Barchue, of Serar, of Thomi, of Nasith, of  
33 Atepha. The descendants of Solomon's servants: the line of Asaphioth, of Pharida, of Jeeli, of Lozon, of Isdael, of Saphythi, of Hagia, of Phacareth, of Sabie, of Sarothie, of Masias, of Gas, of  
34 Addus, of Subas, of Apherra, of Barodis, of Saphat, of Adlon. All the temple-servitors and the descendants of Solomon's servants numbered three hundred and seventy-two.

36 The following came from Thermeleth and Thelsas with their  
37 leaders Charaathalar and Alar, and could not prove by their families and genealogies that they were Israelites: the line of Dalan, the line of Ban, and the line of Necodan six hundred and fifty-two.

38 From among the priests the claimants to the priesthood whose record could not be traced: the line of Obdia, of Accos, of Joddus, who married Augia one of the daughters of Zorzelleas, and took his  
39 name; when search was made for their family record in the register it could not be traced, and so they were excluded from priestly service.  
40 Nehemiah the governor<sup>a</sup> told them that they should not participate in the sacred offerings until a high priest arose wearing the breast-piece of Revelation and Truth.

41 They were in all: Israelites from twelve years old, not counting slaves male and female, forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty;  
42 their slaves seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven; musicians  
43 and singers two hundred and forty-five; camels four hundred and thirty-five, horses seven thousand and thirty-six, mules two hundred and forty-five, donkeys five thousand five hundred and twenty-five.

44 Some of the heads of families, when they arrived at the temple of God in Jerusalem, made a vow to erect the house again on its site as  
45 best they could, and to give to the sacred treasury for the fabric fund

[a] the governor: *probable meaning; Gk. and Atharias.*

one thousand minas of gold and five thousand minas of silver and one hundred vestments.

The priests, the Levites, and some of the people settled in Jerusalem and the neighbourhood, with the temple musicians and the door-keepers; and all Israel settled in their villages.

WHEN THE SEVENTH MONTH came and the Israelites were in their homes they gathered as one man in the broad square of the first gateway toward the east. Jeshua son of Josedek and his brother priests and Zerubbabel son of Salathiel and his colleagues came forward and made ready the altar of the God of Israel, to offer on it whole burnt-offerings according to the directions in the book of Moses the man of God. They were joined<sup>a</sup> by men from the other peoples of the land and they set up the altar on its site (for the peoples in the land as a whole were hostile to them and were too strong for them); and they offered sacrifices to the Lord at the proper time, and whole burnt-offerings morning and evening. They observed the Feast of Tabernacles as enjoined in the law, and the proper sacrifices day by day; and thereafter the continual offerings, and sacrifices on sabbaths, at new moons, and on all solemn feasts. All who had made a vow to God offered sacrifices to God from the new moon of the seventh month, although the temple of God was not yet built. Money was paid to the stonemasons and carpenters; the Sidonians and Tyrians were supplied with food and drink, and with carts to bring cedar-trees from Lebanon, floating them down as rafts to the anchorage at Joppa, as decreed by Cyrus king of Persia.

In the second month of the second year, Zerubbabel son of Salathiel came to the temple of God in Jerusalem and started the work. There were with him Jeshua son of Josedek, their kinsmen, the levitical priests, and all who had come to Jerusalem from the exile; and they laid the foundation of the temple of God. This was at the new moon, in the second month of the second year after they had returned to Judaea and Jerusalem. The Levites from the age of twenty and upwards were set over the works of the Lord. Jeshua, his sons, his brothers, his brother Cadoel, the sons of Jeshua Emadabun, and the sons of Joda son of Iliadun with their sons and brothers, all the Levites, supervisors of the work, were active as one man on the works in the house of God. While the builders built the temple of

[a] Or attacked; the clauses are perhaps in a confused order.

59 the Lord, the priests in their vestments with musical instruments and  
trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with their cymbals, stood  
60 singing to the Lord and praising him as David king of Israel had ap-  
61 pointed. They sang psalms praising the Lord, 'for his goodness and  
62 glory is for ever toward all Israel'. All the people blew their trumpets  
and gave a loud shout, singing to the Lord as the building rose.

63 The priests, the Levites, and heads of families, the older men who  
had seen the former house, came to the building of this one with  
64 cries of lamentation; and so, while many were sounding the trumpets  
65 loudly for joy—so loudly as to be heard far away—the people could  
not hear the trumpets for the noise of lamentation.

66 The enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard the noise of the  
67 trumpets and came to see what it meant. They found the returned  
68 exiles building the temple for the Lord God of Israel; they came to  
Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the leaders of the families, and said:  
69 'We will build with you; for like you we obey your Lord and have  
sacrificed to him from the time of Asbasareth king of Assyria who  
70 transported us here.' But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the leaders of  
the families of Israel replied: 'You can have no share in building the  
71 house for the Lord our God; we alone will build for the Lord of  
72 Israel, as Cyrus king of Persia decreed.' But the peoples of the land  
harassed<sup>a</sup> the men of Judaea, blockaded them, and interrupted the  
73 building. Their plots, agitations, and riots held up the completion of  
the building all the lifetime of King Cyrus. They were prevented  
from building for two years until Darius became king.

6 In the second year of the reign of Darius, the prophets Haggai and  
Zechariah son of Addo prophesied to the Jews in Judaea and Jeru-  
2 salem in the name of the Lord the God of Israel. Then Zerubbabel  
son of Salathiel and Jeshua son of Josedek began to rebuild the house of  
the Lord in Jerusalem. The prophets of the Lord were at their side  
3 to help them. At that time Sisinnus, the governor-general of Syria and  
Phoenicia, with Sathrabuzanes and their colleagues, came to them  
4 and said: 'Who has authorized you to put up this building, complete  
with roof and everything else? Who are the builders carrying out this  
5 work?' But, thanks to the Lord who protected the returned exiles,  
6 the elders of the Jews were not prevented from building during the  
time that Darius was being informed and directions issued.

7 Here is a copy of the letter written to Darius, and sent by Sisinnus,

[a] *Probable reading; Gk. obscure.*

the governor-general of Syria and Phoenicia, with Sathrabuzanes and their colleagues the authorities in Syria and Phoenicia:

To King Darius our humble duty. Be it known to our lord the 8  
king: we visited the district of Judaea and entered the city of Jeru-  
salem, and there we found the elders of the Jews returned from  
exile building a great new house for the Lord with costly hewn 9  
stone and with beams set in the walls. This work was being done 10  
with all speed and the undertaking was making good progress; it  
was being executed in great splendour and with the utmost care.  
We then inquired of these elders by whose authority they were 11  
building this house and laying such foundations. We questioned 12  
them so that we could inform you in writing who their leaders  
were, and asked for a list of their names. They answered as fol- 13  
lows: 'We are servants of the Lord who made heaven and earth.  
This house was built and completed many years ago by a great 14  
and powerful king of Israel. When our fathers sinned against the 15  
heavenly Lord of Israel and provoked him, he delivered them over  
to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, king of the Chaldaeans;  
and they pulled down the house, set it on fire, and took the people 16  
into exile in Babylon. In the first year of the reign of King Cyrus 17  
over Babylonia, the king decreed that this house should be rebuilt.  
The sacred vessels of gold and silver which Nebuchadnezzar had 18  
taken from the house in Jerusalem, and set up in his own temple,  
he brought back out of the temple in Babylon and delivered to  
Zerubbabel and Sanabassar the governor, with orders to take all 19  
these vessels and to put them in the temple at Jerusalem, and to  
rebuild this temple of the Lord on the same site as before. Then 20  
Sanabassar came and laid the foundations of the house of the Lord  
in Jerusalem. From then till now the building has continued and  
is still unfinished.' Therefore, if it is Your Majesty's pleasure, let 21  
search be made in the royal archives in Babylon, and if it is found 22  
that the building of the house of the Lord in Jerusalem took place  
with the approval of King Cyrus, and if our lord the king so  
decide, let directions be issued to us on this subject.

Then King Darius ordered the archives in Babylon to be searched, 23  
and a scroll was found in the castle at Ecbatana in the province of  
Media which contained the following record:

24 In the first year of his reign King Cyrus ordered that the house of  
the Lord in Jerusalem, where they sacrifice with fire continually,  
25 should be rebuilt. Its height should be sixty cubits and its breadth  
sixty cubits, with three courses of hewn stone to one of new local  
26 timber; the expenses to be met from the royal treasury. The sacred  
gold and silver vessels of the house of the Lord which Nebuchad-  
nezzar removed from the house in Jerusalem, and took to Babylon,  
should be restored to the house in Jerusalem and replaced where  
they formerly were.

27 Darius therefore instructed Sisinnus, the governor-general of  
Syria and Phoenicia, with Sathrabuzanes, their colleagues, and the  
governors in office in Syria and Phoenicia, to be careful not to inter-  
fere with the place, but to allow the servant of the Lord, Zerubbabel,  
governor of Judaea, and the elders of the Jews to build the house of  
28 the Lord on its old site. 'I have also given instructions', he con-  
tinued, 'that it should be completely rebuilt, and that they should not  
fail to co-operate with the returned exiles in Judaea until the house  
29 of the Lord is finished. From the tribute of Coele-syria and Phoe-  
nicia let a contribution be duly given to these men for sacrifices to  
the Lord, payable to Zerubbabel the governor, for bulls, rams, and  
30 lambs; and similarly wheat, salt, wine, and oil are to be provided  
regularly each year without question, as the priests in Jerusalem may  
31 require day by day. Let all this be expended in order that sacrifices  
and libations may be offered to the Most High God for the king and  
his children, and that intercession may be made on their behalf.'  
32 He also gave these orders: 'If anyone disobeys or neglects any of  
these orders written above or here set down, let a beam be taken from  
his own house and let him be hanged on it and his estate forfeited to  
33 the king. May the Lord himself, therefore, to whom this temple is  
dedicated, destroy any king or people who shall lift a finger to delay  
34 or damage the Lord's house in Jerusalem. I, Darius the king, decree  
that these orders be obeyed to the letter.'

7 Then, in accordance with the orders of King Darius, Sisinnus,  
governor-general of Coele-syria and Phoenicia, with Sathrabuzanes  
2 and their colleagues, carefully supervised the sacred works, co-  
3 operating with the elders of the Jews and the temple officers. With  
the encouragement of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, good  
4 progress was made with the sacred works, and they were finished by

the ordinance of the Lord God of Israel and with the approval of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia. It was on the twenty-third of Adar in the sixth year of King Darius that the house was completed. The Israelites, the priests, the Levites, and the rest of the former exiles who had joined them carried out the directions in the book of Moses. For the dedication of the temple of the Lord they offered a hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and twelve goats for the sin of all Israel corresponding to the twelve patriarchs of Israel. The priests and the Levites in their vestments stood family by family to preside over the services of the Lord God of Israel according to the book of Moses. The door-keepers took their stand at every gateway.

The Israelites who had returned from exile kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. The priests and the Levites were purified together; not all the returned exiles were purified with the priests, but<sup>a</sup> the Levites were. They slaughtered the Passover victims for all the returned exiles and for their brother priests and for themselves. All those Israelites participated who had returned from exile and had segregated themselves from the abominations of the peoples of the land to seek the Lord. They kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days, rejoicing before the Lord; for he had changed the policy of the Assyrian king towards them and strengthened them for the service of the Lord the God of Israel.

### *Ezra in Jerusalem*

AFTER THESE EVENTS, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, came Ezra, son of Saraeas, son of Ezerias, son of Chelkias, son of Salemus, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub, son of Amarias, son of Ezias, son of Mareroth, son of Zaraeas, son of Savia, son of Bocca, son of Abishua, son of Phineas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the chief priest. This Ezra came from Babylon as a talented scholar in the law of Moses which had been given by the God of Israel. The king held him in high regard and looked with favour upon all the requests he made. He was accompanied to Jerusalem by some Israelites, priests, Levites, temple singers, door-keepers, and temple-servitors, in the

[a] not all . . . but; *probable meaning; Gk. obscure; some witnesses omit not.*

fifth month of the seventh year of Artaxerxes' reign.<sup>a</sup> They left Babylon at the new moon in the first month and reached Jerusalem at the new moon in the fifth month; for the Lord gave them a safe  
 7 journey. Ezra's knowledge of the law of the Lord and the commandments was exact in every detail, so that he could teach all Israel the ordinances and judgements.

8 The following is a copy of the mandate from King Artaxerxes to Ezra the priest, doctor of the law of the Lord:

9 King Artaxerxes to Ezra the priest, doctor of the law of the Lord, greeting.

10 I have graciously decided, and now command, that those of the Jewish nation and of the priests and Levites, in our kingdom, who  
 11 so choose, shall go with you to Jerusalem. I and my council of seven Friends have decided that all who so desire may accompany  
 12 you. Let them look to the affairs of Judaea and Jerusalem in  
 13 pursuance of the law of the Lord, and bring to Jerusalem for the Lord of Israel the gifts which I and my Friends have vowed, all the gold and silver in Babylonia that may be found to belong to  
 14 the Lord in Jerusalem, together with what has been given by the nation for the temple of the Lord their God in Jerusalem. Let the gold and silver be expended upon<sup>b</sup> bulls, rams, lambs, and so  
 15 forth, so that sacrifices may be offered upon the altar of the Lord their God in Jerusalem. Make use of the gold and silver in what-  
 16 ever ways you and your colleagues desire, according to the will of your God, and deliver the sacred vessels of the Lord which have  
 17 been given you for the use of the temple of your God in Jerusalem.

18 Any other expenses that you may incur for the needs of the temple of your God you shall defray from the royal treasury.  
 19 I, Artaxerxes the king, direct the treasurers of Syria and Phoenicia to give without fail to Ezra the priest, doctor of the law of the Most  
 20 High God, whatever he may request up to a hundred talents of silver, and similarly up to a hundred sacks of wheat and a hundred  
 21 casks of wine, and salt without limit. Let him diligently fulfil in honour of the Most High God all the requirements of God's law, so that divine displeasure may not befall the kingdom of the king  
 22 and of his descendants. You are also informed that no tax or other

[a] *Probable reading; one witness adds this was the king's second year.*

[b] *Or collected for.*



impost is to be laid on the priests, the Levites, the temple singers, the door-keepers, the temple-servitors, and the lay officers of this temple; no one is permitted to impose any burden on them. You, 23  
Ezra, under God's guidance, are to appoint judges and magistrates to judge all who know the law of your God in all Syria and Phoenicia; you yourself shall see to the instruction of those who do not know it. All who transgress the law of your God and of the 24  
king shall be duly punished with death, degradation, fine, or exile.

Then Ezra said: All praise to the Lord alone, who put this into 25  
the king's mind, to glorify his house in Jerusalem. He singled me out 26  
for honour before the king, his counsellors, and all his Friends and dignitaries. I took courage from the help of the Lord my God and 27  
gathered men of Israel to go up with me.

These are the leaders according to clans and divisions who went 28  
with me from Babylon to Jerusalem in the reign of King Artaxerxes:  
from the line of Phineas, Gershom; from the line of Ithamar, 29  
Gamael; from the line of David, Attus son of Sechenias; from the line 30  
of Phoros, Zacharias and a hundred and fifty men with him according  
to the register; from the line of Phaath-moab, Eliaonias son of 31  
Zaraeas and with him two hundred men; from the line of Zathoe, 32  
Sechenias son of Jezelus and with him three hundred men; from the  
line of Adin, Obeth son of Jonathan and with him two hundred and  
fifty men; from the line of Elam, Jessias son of Gotholias and with 33  
him seventy men; from the line of Sophotias, Zaraeas son of Michael 34  
and with him seventy men; from the line of Joab, Abadias son of 35  
Jezelus and with him two hundred and twelve men; from the line of 36  
Bani, Assalimoth son of Josaphias and with him a hundred and sixty  
men; from the line of Babi, Zacharias son of Bebae and with him 37  
twenty-eight men; from the line of Astath, Joannes son of Hacatan 38  
and with him a hundred and ten men; last came those from the line 39  
of Adonikam, by name Eliphalatus, Jeuel, and Samaeas, and with  
them seventy men; from the line of Bago, Uthi son of Istalcurus and 40  
with him seventy men.

I assembled them at the river called Theras, where we encamped 41  
for three days, and I inspected them. As I found no one there who 42  
was of priestly or levitical descent, I sent to Eleazar, Idueus, 43  
Maasmas, Elnathan, Samaeas, Joribus, Nathan, Ennatas, Zacharias, 44  
and Mosollamus, who were prominent and discerning men. I told 45

46 them to go to Doldaeus the chief man at the treasury. I instructed them to speak with Doldaeus, his colleagues, and the treasurers there, and ask them to send us priests to officiate in the house of our  
47 Lord. Under the providence of God they brought us discerning men from the line of Mooli son of Levi son of Israel, Asebebias and  
48 his sons and brothers, eighteen men in all, also Asebias and Annunus and Hosaeas his brother. Those of the line of Chanunaeus and their  
49 sons amounted to twenty men; and those of the temple-servitors whom David and the leading men appointed for the service of the Levites amounted to two hundred and twenty. A register of all these names was compiled.

50 There I made a vow that the young men should fast before our Lord to beg him to give us a safe journey for ourselves, our children  
51 who accompanied us, and our pack-animals. I was ashamed to ask the king for an escort of infantry and cavalry against our enemies;  
52 for we had told the king that the strength of our Lord would ensure  
53 success for those who looked to him. So once more we laid all these things before our Lord in prayer and found him gracious.

54 I set apart twelve men from among the heads of the priestly families, and with them Sarabias and Asamias and ten of their  
55 brother priests. I weighed out for them the silver, the gold, and the sacred vessels of the house of our Lord; these had been presented by the king himself, his counsellors, the chief men, and all Israel.  
56 When I had weighed it all I handed over to them six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and vessels of silver weighing a hundred talents,  
57 a hundred talents of gold, and twenty pieces of gold plate, and twelve  
58 vessels of brass so fine that it gleamed like gold. I said to them: 'You are consecrated to the Lord, and so are the vessels; the silver and the  
59 gold are vowed to the Lord, the Lord of our fathers. Be vigilant and keep guard until you hand them over at Jerusalem, in the priests' rooms in the house of our Lord, to the heads of the priestly and  
60 levitical families and to the leaders of the clans of Israel.' The priests and the Levites who received the silver, the gold, and the vessels in Jerusalem brought them to the temple of the Lord.

61 We left the river Theras on the twelfth day of the first month, and under the powerful protection which our Lord gave us we reached Jerusalem. He guarded us against every enemy on our journey, and  
62 so we arrived at Jerusalem. Three days passed, and on the fourth the silver and gold were weighed and handed over in the house of our

Lord to the priest Marmathi son of Uri, with whom was Eleazar son 63  
 of Phineas. With them also were the Levites Josabbus son of Jeshua  
 and Moeth son of Sabannus. Everything was numbered and  
 weighed and every weight recorded there and then. The returned 64, 65  
 exiles offered sacrifices to the Lord the God of Israel, twelve bulls for  
 all Israel, with ninety-six rams and seventy-two lambs, and also 66  
 twelve goats for a peace-offering, the whole as a sacrifice to the Lord.  
 They delivered the king's orders to the royal treasurers and the 67  
 governors of Coele-syria and Phoenicia, and so added lustre to the  
 nation and the temple of the Lord.

WHEN THESE MATTERS had been settled the leaders came to me 68  
 and said: 'The nation of Israel, the rulers, the priests, and the 69  
 Levites, have not kept themselves apart from the alien population of  
 the land with all their pollutions, that is to say the Canaanites,  
 Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Edomites.  
 For they and their sons have intermarried with the daughters of 70  
 these peoples, and the holy race has been mingled with the alien  
 population of the land; and the leaders and principal men have  
 shared in this violation of the law from the very beginning.'

As soon as I heard of this I tore my clothes and sacred vestment, 71  
 plucked out the hair of my head and my beard, and sat down per-  
 plexed and miserable. Those who at that time were moved by the 72  
 word of the Lord of Israel gathered round me, while I grieved over  
 this disregard of the law, and sat in my misery until the evening  
 sacrifice. Then I rose from my fast with my clothes and sacred vest- 73  
 ment torn, and knelt down and, stretching out my hands to the Lord,  
 said: 74

'O Lord, I am covered with shame and confusion in thy presence.  
 Our sins tower above our heads; from the time of our fathers our 75-76  
 offences have reached the sky, and today we are as deep in sin as  
 ever. Because of our sins and the sins of our fathers, we and our 77  
 brothers, our kings and our priests, were given over to the kings of  
 the earth to be killed, taken prisoner, plundered, and humiliated  
 down to this very day. And now, Lord, how great is the mercy thou 78  
 hast shown us! We still have a root and a name in the place of thy  
 sanctuary, and thou hast rekindled our light in the house of our 79  
 Lord, and given us food in the time of our servitude. Even when we 80  
 were slaves we were not deserted by our Lord; for he secured for us

81 the favour of the kings of Persia, who have provided our food and  
added lustre to the temple of our Lord and restored the ruins of  
82 Zion, giving us a firm foothold in Judaea and Jerusalem. And now,  
Lord, what are we to say, we who have received all this? For we have  
broken thy commandments given us through thy servants the pro-  
83 phets. Thou didst say: "The land which you are to occupy is a land  
defiled with the pollution of its heathen peoples; they have filled it  
84 with their impurities. Do not marry your daughters to their sons nor  
85 take their daughters for your sons; never try to make peace with  
them if you want to be strong and enjoy the good things of the land  
86 and take possession of it for your children for ever." All our mis-  
fortunes have come upon us through our evil deeds and our great  
sins. Although thou, Lord, hast lightened the burden of our sins  
87 and given us so firm a root, yet we have fallen away again and broken  
thy law by sharing in the impurities of the heathen peoples of this  
88 land. But thou wast not so angry with us, Lord, as to destroy us, root,  
89 seed, and name; thou keepest faith, O Lord of Israel; the root is left,  
90 we are here today. Behold us, now before thee in our sins; because  
of all we have done we can no longer hold up our heads before thee.'

91 While Ezra prayed and made confession, weeping prostrate on the  
ground before the temple, a very large crowd gathered, men, women,  
and youths of Jerusalem, and there was widespread lamentation among  
92 the people. Jechonias son of Jeel, one of the Israelites, called out to  
Ezra: 'We have sinned against the Lord in taking alien wives from  
the heathen population of this land; and yet there is still hope for  
93 Israel. Let us take an oath to the Lord to expel all our wives of alien  
94 race with their children, in accordance with your judgement and the  
95 judgement of all who are obedient to the law of the Lord. Come  
now, set about it, it is in your hands; take strong action and we are  
96 with you.' Ezra got up and laid an oath upon the principal priests  
and Levites of all Israel that they would act in this way, and they  
swore to it.

9 Ezra left the court of the temple and entered the room of the priest  
2 Joanan son of Eliasibus. There he stayed, eating no food and drink-  
ing no water, while he mourned over the serious violations of the law  
3 by the community. A proclamation was made throughout Judaea  
and in Jerusalem to all the returned exiles that they should assemble  
4 at Jerusalem; those who failed to arrive within two or three days,  
according to the decision of the elders in office, were to have their

cattle confiscated for temple use and would themselves be excluded from the community of the returned exiles.

Three days later all Judah and Benjamin had assembled in Jerusalem; the date was the twentieth of the ninth month. They all sat together in the open space before the temple, shivering because winter had set in. Ezra stood up and said to them: 'You have broken the law and married alien wives, bringing a fresh burden of guilt on Israel. Now make confession to the Lord God of our fathers; do his will and separate yourselves from the heathen population of this land and from your alien wives.'

The whole company answered with a shout: 'We will do as you have said!' 'But', they said, 'our numbers are great, and we cannot stay here in the open in this wintry weather. Nor is this the work of a day or two only; the offence is widespread among us. Let the leaders of the community stay here, and let all members of our settlements who have alien wives attend at an appointed time along with the elders and judges of each place, until we turn away the Lord's anger at what has been done.'

Jonathan son of Azael and Hezekias son of Thocanus took charge on these terms, and Mosollamus, Levi, and Sabbataeus were their assessors. The returned exiles duly carried all this out.

Ezra the priest selected men by name, all chiefs of their clans, and on the new moon of the tenth month they sat to investigate the matter. This affair of the men who had alien wives was settled by the new moon of the first month.

Among the priests some of those who had come together were found to have alien wives; these were Mathelas, Eleazar, Joribus, and Joadanus of the line of Jeshua son of Josedek and his brothers, who undertook to send away their wives and to offer rams in expiation of their error. Of the line of Emmer: Ananias, Zabdaeus, Manes, Samaeus, Jereel, and Azarias; of the line of Phaesus: Elionas, Massias, Ishmael, Nathanael, Okidelus, and Saloas. Of the Levites: Jozabadus, Semis, Colius (this is Calitas), Phathaeus, Judah, and Jonas. Of the temple singers: Eliasibus, Bacchurus. Of the doorkeepers: Sallumus and Tolbanes.

Of the people of Israel there were, of the line of Phoros: Jermas, Jeddias, Melchias, Maelus, Eleazar, Asibias, and Bannaeas. Of the line of Ela: Matthanias, Zacharias, Jezrielus, Oabdius, Jeremoth, and Aedias. Of the line of Zamoth: Eliadas, Eliasimus, Othonias,

29 Jarimoth, Sabathus, and Zardaeas. Of the line of Bebae: Joannes,  
 30 Ananias, Ozabadus, and Emathis. Of the line of Mani: Olamus,  
 31 Mamuchus, Jedaesus, Jasubus, Asaelus, and Jeremoth. Of the line of  
 Addi: Naathus, Moossias, Laccunus, Naidus, Matthanias, Sesthel,  
 32 Balnuus, and Manasseas. Of the line of Annas: Elionas, Asaeas,  
 33 Melchias, Sabbaeas, and Simon Chosomaeus. Of the line of Asom:  
 Altannaeus, Mattathias, Bannaeus, Eliphalat, Manasses, and Semi.  
 34 Of the line of Baani: Jeremias, Momdis, Ismaerus, Juel, Mandae,  
 Paedias, Anos, Carabasion, Enasibus, Mamnitanaemus, Eliasis,  
 Bannus, Eliali, Somis, Selemias, and Nathanias. Of the line of  
 35 Ezora: Sessis, Ezril, Azael, Samatus, Zambris, and Josephus. Of the  
 36 line of Nooma: Mazitias, Zabadaeas, Edaes, Juel, and Banaeas. All  
 these had married alien wives; they sent them away with their  
 children.

37 THE PRIESTS, the Levites, and such Israelites as were in Jerusalem  
 and its vicinity, settled down there on the new moon of the seventh  
 38 month; the other Israelites remained in their settlements. The entire  
 body assembled as one in the open space before the east gateway of  
 39 the temple and asked Ezra the high priest and doctor of the law to  
 40 bring the law of Moses given by the Lord God of Israel. On the new  
 moon of the seventh month he brought the law to all the multitude  
 41 of men and women alike, and to the priests, for them to hear. He read  
 it in the open space before the temple gateway from daybreak until  
 noon, in the presence of both men and women, and the whole body  
 42 listened intently. Ezra the priest and doctor of the law stood upon  
 43 the wooden platform which had been prepared. There stood with him,  
 on his right, Mattathias, Sammus, Ananias, Azarias, Urias, Hezekias,  
 44 and Baalsamus, and on his left, Phaldaeus, Misael, Melchias,  
 45 Lothasubus, Nabarias, and Zacharias. Ezra took up the book of the  
 law; everyone could see him, for he was seated in a conspicuous place  
 46 in front of them all, and when he opened it they all stood up. Ezra  
 47 praised the Lord God the Most High God of hosts, the Almighty. All  
 the multitude cried 'Amen, Amen', and lifting up their hands fell to  
 48 the ground and worshipped the Lord. Jeshua, Annus, Sarabias,  
 Jadinus, Jacobus, Sabbataeas, Autaeas, Maeannas, Calitas, Azarias,  
 Jozabdus, Ananias, and Phiathas, the Levites, taught the law of the  
 Lord; they read the law of the Lord to the whole company, at the  
 same time instilling into their minds what was read.

Then the governor<sup>a</sup> said to Ezra the high priest and doctor of the 49  
law and to each of the Levites who taught the multitude: 'This day is 50  
holy to the Lord.' All were weeping as they heard the law. 'Go 51  
then, refresh yourselves with rich food and sweet wine, and send  
shares to those who have none; for the day is holy to the Lord. Let 52  
there be no sadness; for the Lord will give you glory.' The Levites 53  
issued the command to all the people: 'This day is holy, do not be 54  
sad.' So they all departed to eat and drink and make merry, and to  
send shares to those who had none, and to hold a great celebration;  
because the teaching given them had been instilled into their minds. 55

They gathered together.<sup>b</sup>

[a] *Gk. Attharates.* [b] *Probably the text originally carried on from this point; compare Nehemiah 8. 13.*

# THE SECOND BOOK OF ESDRAS

*Israel's rejection and glory to come*

1 **T**HE SECOND BOOK of the prophet Ezra, son of Seraiah,  
son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, son of Shallum, son of Zadok,  
2 son of Ahitub, son of Ahijah, son of Phinehas, son of Eli, son  
of Amariah, son of Aziah, son of Marimoth, son of Arna, son of  
Uzzi, son of Borith, son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar,  
3 son of Aaron, of the tribe of Levi.

I, EZRA, WAS a captive in Media in the reign of Artaxerxes, king of  
4.5 Persia, when the word of the Lord came to me: 'Go to my people and  
proclaim their crimes; tell their children how they have sinned  
6 against me, and let them tell their children's children. They have  
sinned even more than their fathers; they have forgotten me and  
7 sacrificed to alien gods. Was it not I who rescued them from Egypt,  
the country where they were slaves? And yet they have provoked  
me to anger and ignored my warnings.

8 'Now, Ezra, pluck out your hair and let calamities loose upon  
these people who have disobeyed my law. They are beyond correc-  
9 tion. How much longer shall I endure them, I who have lavished on  
10 them such benefits? Many are the kings I have overthrown for their  
11 sake; I struck down Pharaoh with his court and all his army. I de-  
stroyed every nation that stood in their way, and in the east I routed  
the peoples of two provinces, Tyre and Sidon, and killed all the  
enemies of Israel.

12, 13 'Say to them, "These are the words of the Lord: Was it not I who  
brought you through the sea, and made safe roads for you where no  
road had been? I gave you Moses as your leader, and Aaron as your  
14 priest; I gave you light from a pillar of fire, and performed great  
miracles among you. And yet you have forgotten me, says the Lord.

15 "These are the words of the Lord Almighty: I gave you the quails  
as a sign; I gave you a camp for your protection. But all you did



there was to grumble and complain—instead of celebrating the victory I had given you when I destroyed your enemies. From that day to this you have never stopped complaining. Have you forgotten what benefits I conferred on you? When you were hungry and thirsty in your journey through the desert, you cried out to me, ‘Why have you brought us into this desert to kill us? Better to have remained in Egypt as slaves than to die here in the desert!’ I was grieved by your complaints, and gave you manna for food; you ate the bread of angels. When you were thirsty, I split open the rock, and out flowed water in plenty. Against the summer heat I gave you the shelter of leafy trees. I gave you fertile lands to divide among your tribes, expelling the Canaanites, Perizzites, and Philistines who opposed you. What more could I do for you? says the Lord.

“These are the words of the Lord Almighty: When you were in the desert, suffering thirst by the stream of bitter water and cursing me, I did not bring down fire upon you for your blasphemy; I cast a tree into the stream and made the water sweet. What am I to do with you, Jacob? Judah, you have refused to obey me. I will turn to other nations; I will give them my name, and they will keep my statutes. Because you have deserted me, I will desert you; when you cry for mercy, I will show you none; when you pray to me, I will not listen. You have stained your hands with blood; you run hot-foot to commit murder. It is not I whom you have deserted, but yourselves, says the Lord.

“These are the words of the Lord Almighty: Have I not pleaded with you as a father with his sons, as a mother with her daughters or a nurse with her children? Have I not said, ‘Be my people, and I will be your God; be my sons, and I will be your father’? I gathered you as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings. But now what am I to do with you? I will toss you away. When you offer me sacrifice, I will turn from you; I have rejected your feasts, your new moons, and your circumcisions. I sent you my servants the prophets, but you took them and killed them, and mutilated their dead bodies. For their murder I will call you to account, says the Lord.

“These are the words of the Lord Almighty: Your house is abandoned. I will toss you away like straw before the wind. Your children shall have no posterity, because like you they have ignored my commandments and done what I have condemned. I will hand over your home to a people soon to come; a people who will trust me,

though they have not known me; who will do my bidding, though  
36 I gave them no signs; who never saw the prophets, and yet will keep  
37 in mind what the prophets taught of old. I vow that this people yet to  
come shall have my favour. Their little ones shall jump for joy. They  
have not seen me with their eyes, but they shall perceive by the spirit  
and believe all that I have said."

38 'Now, father Ezra, look with triumph at the nation coming from  
39 the east. The leaders I shall give them are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,  
40 Hosea and Amos, Micah and Joel, Obadiah and Jonah, Nahum,  
Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, Haggai and Zechariah, and Malachi,  
who is also called the Lord's Messenger.

2 'These are the words of the Lord: I freed this people from slavery,  
and gave them commandments through my servants the prophets;  
but they shut their ears to the prophets, and let my precepts become  
2 a dead letter. The mother who bore them says to them: "Go, my  
3 sons; I am widowed and deserted. Joyfully I brought you up; I have  
lost you with grief and sorrow, because you have sinned against the  
4 Lord God and done what I know to be wrong. What can I do for  
you now, widowed and deserted as I am? Go, my sons, ask the Lord  
5 for mercy." Now I call upon you, father Ezra, to add your testimony  
6 to hers, that her children have refused to keep my covenant; and let  
your words bring confusion on them. May their mother be despoiled,  
7 and may they themselves have no posterity. Condemn them to be  
scattered among the nations, and their name to vanish from the  
earth, because they have spurned my covenant.

8 'Woe to you, Assyria, for harbouring sinners! Remember, you  
9 wicked nation, what I did to Sodom and Gomorrah: their land lies  
buried under lumps of pitch and heaps of ashes. That is how I will  
deal with those who have disobeyed me, says the Lord Almighty.

10 'These are the words of the Lord to Ezra: Tell my people that  
I will give to them the kingdom of Jerusalem which once I offered to  
11 Israel. I will withdraw the splendour of my presence from Israel,  
and the home that was to be theirs for ever I will give to my own  
12 people. The tree of life shall spread its fragrance over them; they shall  
13 not toil or grow weary. Ask, and you shall receive; so pray that your  
short time of waiting may be made shorter still. The kingdom is  
14 ready for you now; be on the watch! Call heaven, call earth, to  
witness: I have cancelled the evil and brought the good into being;  
for I am the Living One, says the Lord.

'Mother, cherish your sons. Rear them joyfully as a dove rears her nestlings; teach them to walk without stumbling. You are my chosen one, says the Lord. I will raise up the dead from their resting-places, and bring them out of their tombs, for I have acknowledged that they bear my name. Have no fear, mother of many sons; I have chosen you, says the Lord.

'I will send my servants Isaiah and Jeremiah to help you. As they prophesied, I have set you apart to be my people. I have made ready for you twelve trees laden with different kinds of fruit, twelve fountains flowing with milk and honey, and seven great mountains covered with roses and lilies. There will I fill your sons with joy. Champion the widow, defend the cause of the fatherless, give to the poor, protect the orphan, clothe the naked. Care for the weak and the helpless, and do not mock at the cripple; watch over the disabled, and bring the blind to the vision of my brightness. Keep safe within your walls both old and young.

'When you find the dead unburied, mark them with the sign and commit them to the tomb; and then, when I cause the dead to rise, I will give you the chief place. Be calm, my people; for your time of rest shall come. Care for your children like a good nurse, and train them to walk without falling. Of my servants whom I have given you not one shall be lost; I will demand them back from among your number. Do not be anxious when the time of trouble and hardship comes; others shall lament and be sad, but you shall have happiness and plenty. All nations shall envy you, but shall be powerless against you, says the Lord.

'My power shall protect you, and save your sons from hell. Be joyful, mother, you and your sons, for I will come to your rescue. Remember your children who sleep in the grave; I will bring them up from the depths of the earth, and show mercy to them; for I am merciful, says the Lord Almighty. Cherish your children until I come, and proclaim my mercy to them; for my favour flows abundantly from springs that will never run dry.'

I, EZRA, RECEIVED on Mount Horeb a commission from the Lord to go to Israel; but when I came, they scorned me and rejected the Lord's commandment. Therefore I say to you Gentiles, you who hear and understand: 'Look forward to the coming of your shepherd, and he will give you everlasting rest; for he who is to come at the end

35 of the world is close at hand. Be ready to receive the rewards of the  
 kingdom; for light perpetual will shine upon you for ever and ever.  
 36 Flee from the shadow of this world, and receive the joy and splen-  
 37 dour that await you. I bear witness openly to my Saviour. It is he  
 whom the Lord has appointed; receive him and be joyful, giving  
 thanks to the One who has summoned you to the heavenly realms.  
 38 Rise, stand up, and see the whole company of those who bear the  
 39 Lord's mark and sit at his table. They have moved out of the shadow  
 of this world and have received shining robes from the Lord.  
 40 Receive, O Zion, your full number, and close the roll of those  
 41 arrayed in white who have faithfully kept the law of the Lord. The  
 number of your sons whom you so long desired is now complete.  
 Pray that the Lord's kingdom may come, so that your people, whom  
 he summoned when the world began, may be set apart as his own.'  
 42 I, Ezra, saw on Mount Zion a crowd too large to count, all singing  
 43 hymns of praise to the Lord. In the middle stood a very tall young  
 man, taller than all the rest, who was setting a crown on the head of  
 each one of them; he stood out above them all. I was enthralled at  
 44, 45 the sight, and asked the angel, 'Sir, who are these?' He replied,  
 'They are those who have laid aside their mortal dress and put on the  
 immortal, those who acknowledged the name of God. Now they are  
 46 being given crowns and palms.' And I asked again, 'Who is the  
 young man setting crowns on their heads and giving them palms?',  
 47 and the angel replied, 'He is the Son of God, whom they acknow-  
 ledged in this mortal life.' I began to praise those who had stood so  
 48 valiantly for the Lord's name. Then the angel said to me: 'Go and  
 tell my people all the great and wonderful acts of the Lord God that  
 you have seen.'

### *The mystery of human destiny*

3 **I**N THE THIRTIETH YEAR after the fall of Jerusalem, I, Salathiel  
 (who am also Ezra), was in Babylon. As I lay on my bed I was  
 2 troubled; my mind was filled with perplexity, as I considered the  
 desolation of Zion and the prosperity of those who lived in Babylon.  
 3 My spirit was deeply disturbed; and I uttered my fears to the Most  
 4 High. 'My Lord, my Master,' I said, 'was it not you, and you alone,

who in the beginning spoke the word that formed the world? You commanded the dust, and Adam appeared. His body was lifeless; 5 but yours were the hands that had moulded it, and into it you breathed the breath of life. So you made him a living person. You 6 led him into paradise, which you yourself had planted before the earth came into being. You gave him your one commandment to 7 obey; he disobeyed it, and thereupon you made him subject to death, him and his descendants.

‘From him were born nations and tribes, peoples and families, too numerous to count. Each nation went its own way, sinning against 8 you and scorning you; and you did not stop them. But then again, in 9 due time, you brought the flood upon the inhabitants of the earth and destroyed them. The same doom came upon all: death upon Adam, 10 and the flood upon that generation. One man you spared—Noah, 11 with his household, and all his righteous descendants.

‘The population of the earth increased; families and peoples 12 multiplied, nation upon nation. But then once again they began to sin, more wickedly than those before them. When they sinned, you 13 chose for yourself one of them, whose name was Abraham; him you loved, and to him alone, secretly, at dead of night, you showed how 14 the world would end. You made an everlasting covenant with him 15 and promised never to abandon his descendants. You gave him 16 Isaac, and to Isaac you gave Jacob and Esau; of these you chose Jacob for yourself and rejected Esau; and Jacob grew to be a great nation.

‘You rescued his descendants from Egypt and brought them to 17 Mount Sinai. There you bent the sky, shook<sup>a</sup> the earth, moved the 18 round world, made the depths shudder, and turned creation upside down. Your glory passed through the four gates of fire and earth- 19 quake, wind and frost; and you gave the commandments of the law to the Israelites, the race of Jacob. But you did not take away their 20 wicked heart and enable your law to bear fruit in them. For the first man, Adam, was burdened with a wicked heart; he sinned and was 21 overcome, and not only he but all his descendants. So the weakness became inveterate. Although your law was in your people’s hearts, a 22 rooted wickedness was there too; so that the good came to nothing, and what was bad persisted.

‘Years went by, and when the time came you raised up a servant 23

[a] *So some Vss.; Lat. fixed.*

24 for yourself, whose name was David. You told him to build the city  
that bears your name and there offer to you in sacrifice what was  
25 already your own. This was done for many years; until the inhabi-  
26 tants of the city went astray, behaving just like Adam and all his line;  
27 for they had the same wicked heart. And so you gave your own city  
over to your enemies.

28 'I said to myself: "Perhaps those in Babylon lead better lives, and  
29 that is why they have conquered Zion." But when I arrived here,  
I saw more wickedness than I could reckon, and these thirty years  
30 I have seen many evil-doers with my own eyes. My heart sank, be-  
cause I saw how you tolerate sinners and spare the godless; how you  
have destroyed your own people, but protected your enemies. You  
31 have given no hint whatever to anyone how to understand your ways.<sup>a</sup>  
32 Is Babylon more virtuous than Zion? Has any nation except Israel  
ever known you? What tribes have put their trust in your covenants  
33 as the tribes of Jacob have? But they have seen no reward, no fruit  
for their pains. I have travelled up and down among the nations, and  
have seen how they prosper, heedless though they are of your com-  
34 mandments. So weigh our sins in the balance against the sins of the  
35 rest of the world; and it will be clear which way the scale tips. Has  
there ever been a time when the inhabitants of the earth did not sin  
against you? Has any nation ever kept your commandments like  
36 Israel? You may find one man here, one there; but nowhere a whole  
nation.'

4 The angel who was sent to me, whose name was Uriel, replied:  
2 'You are at a loss to explain this world; do you then expect to under-  
3 stand the ways of the Most High?' 'Yes, my lord', I replied.

'I have been sent to propound to you three of the ways of this  
4 world,' he continued, 'to give you three illustrations. If you can  
explain to me any one of them, then I will answer your question  
about the way of the Most High, and teach you why the heart is  
wicked.'

5 I said, 'Speak, my lord.' 'Come then,' he said, 'weigh me a  
pound of fire, measure me a bushel<sup>b</sup> of wind, or call back a day that  
has passed.'

6 'How can you ask me to do that?' I replied; 'no man on earth can  
7 do it.' He said: 'Suppose I had asked you, "How many dwellings are  
there in the heart of the sea? or how many streams to feed the deep?

[a] how...ways: so some Vss.; Lat. obscure. [b] So some Vss.; Lat. the blast.

or how many watercourses above the vault of heaven? Where are the paths out of the grave, and the roads into<sup>a</sup> paradise?", you might then 8  
have replied, "I have never been down into the deep, I have not yet gone down into the grave, I have never gone up into heaven." But, as 9  
it is, I have only asked you about fire, about wind, and about yesterday, things you are bound to have met; and yet you have failed to tell me the answers.

'If then', he went on, 'you cannot understand things you have 10  
grown up with, how can your small capacity comprehend the ways of the Mos: High? A man corrupted by the corrupt world can never know the way of the incorruptible.'<sup>b</sup> 11

When I heard that, I fell<sup>c</sup> prostrate and exclaimed: 'Better never 12  
to have come into existence than be born into a world of wickedness and suffering which we cannot explain!' He replied, 'I went out into 13  
a wood, and the trees of the forest were making a plan. They said, 14  
"Come, let us make war on the sea, force it to retreat, and win ground for more woods." The waves of the sea made a similar plan: 15  
they said, "Come, let us attack the trees of the forest, conquer them, and annex their territory." The plan made by the trees came to 16  
nothing, for fire came and burnt them down. The plan made by the waves failed just as badly, for the sand stood its ground and blocked 17  
their way. If you had to judge between the two, which would you 18  
pronounce right, and which wrong?'

I answered, 'Both were wrong; their plans were impossible, for 19  
the land is assigned to the trees, and to the sea is allotted a place for its waves.'

'Yes,' he replied, 'you have judged rightly. Why then have you 20  
failed to do so with your own question? Just as the land belongs to the trees and the sea to the waves, so men on earth can understand 21  
earthly things and nothing else; only those who live<sup>d</sup> above the skies can understand the things above the skies.'

'But tell me, my lord,' I said, 'why then have I been given the 22  
faculty of understanding? My question is not about the distant 23  
heavens, but about the things which happen every day before our eyes. Why has Israel been made a byword among the Gentiles; why has the people you loved been put at the mercy of godless nations? Why has the law of our fathers been brought to nothing, and the

[a] the grave. . . into: so some Vss.; Lat. omits. [b] A man. . . incorruptible: reading based on other Vss.; Lat. obscure. [c] When. . . fell: so some Vss.; Lat. defective. [d] Or he who lives.

24 written covenants made a dead letter? We pass like a flight of locusts,  
our life is but a vapour, and we are not worth the Lord's pity,  
25 though we bear his name; what then will he do for us? These are my  
questions.'

26 He answered: 'If you survive, you will see; if you live long  
enough, you will marvel.<sup>a</sup> For this present age is quickly passing  
27 away; it is full of sorrow and frailties, too full to enjoy what is  
28 promised in due time for the godly. The evil about which you ask me  
29 has been sown, but its reaping has not yet come. Until the crop of  
evil has been reaped as well as sown, until the ground where it was  
sown has vanished, there will be no room for the field which has  
30 been sown with the good. A grain of the evil seed was sown in the  
heart of Adam from the first; how much godlessness has it produced  
already! How much more will it produce before the harvest!  
31 Reckon this up: if one grain of evil seed has produced so great a crop  
32 of godlessness, how vast a harvest will there be when good seeds  
beyond number have been sown!'

33 I asked, 'But when? How long have we to wait? Why are our lives  
34 so short and so miserable?' He replied, 'Do not be in a greater hurry  
than the Most High himself. You are in a hurry for yourself alone;  
35 the Most High for many. Are not these the very questions which  
were asked by the righteous in the storehouse of souls: "How long  
must we stay here? When will the harvest begin, the time when we  
36 get our reward?" And the archangel Jeremiel gave them this  
answer: "As soon as the number of those like yourselves is complete.  
37 For the Lord has weighed the world in a balance, he has measured  
and numbered the ages; he will move nothing, alter nothing, until  
the appointed number is achieved."'

38 'But, my lord, my master,' I replied, 'we are all of us sinners  
39 through and through. Can it be that because of us, because of the  
sins of mankind, the harvest and the reward of the just are delayed?'  
40 'Go,' he said, 'ask a pregnant woman whether she can keep the child  
41 in her womb any longer after the nine months are complete.' 'No,  
my lord,' I said, 'she cannot.' He went on: 'The storehouses of souls  
42 in the world below are like the womb. As a woman in travail is  
impatient to see the end of her labour, so they are impatient to give  
43 back all the souls committed to them since time began. Then all your  
questions will be answered.'

[a] *So one Vs.; Lat. live, you will often marvel.*



I said, 'If it is possible for you to tell and for me to understand, 44  
will you be gracious enough to disclose one thing more: which is the 45  
longer—the future still to come, or the past that has gone by?  
What is past I know, but not what is still to be.' 'Come and stand on 46, 47  
my right,' he said; 'you shall see a vision, and I will explain what it  
means.'

So I stood and watched, and there passed before my eyes a blazing 48  
fire; when the flames had disappeared from sight, there was still  
some smoke left. After that a dark rain-cloud passed before me; 49  
there was a heavy storm, and when it had gone over, there were  
still some raindrops left. 'Reflect on this', said the angel. 'The 50  
shower of rain filled a far greater space than the drops of water,  
and the fire more than the smoke. In the same way, the past far  
exceeds the future in length; what remains is but raindrops and  
smoke.'

'Pray tell me,' I said, 'do you think that I shall live to see those 51  
days? Or in whose lifetime will they come?' 'If you ask me what 52  
signs will herald them,' he said, 'I can tell you in part. But the  
length of your own life I am not commissioned to tell you; of that  
I know nothing.

'But now to speak of the signs: there will come a time when the 5  
inhabitants of the earth will be seized with panic.<sup>a</sup> The way of truth  
will be hidden from sight, and the land will be barren of faith. There 2  
will be a great increase in wickedness, worse than anything you now  
see or have ever heard of. The country you now see governing the 3  
world will become a trackless desert, laid waste for all to see. After 4  
the third period (if the Most High grants you a long enough life) you  
will see confusion everywhere. The sun will suddenly begin to shine  
in the middle of the night, and the moon in the day-time. Trees will 5  
drip blood, stones will speak, nations will be in confusion, and the  
courses of the stars will be changed. A king unwelcome to the 6  
inhabitants of earth will succeed to the throne; even the birds will all  
fly away. The Dead Sea will cast up fish, and at night a voice will 7  
sound, unknown to the many but heard by all.<sup>b</sup> Chasms<sup>c</sup> will open in 8  
many places and spurt out flames incessantly. Wild beasts will range  
far afield, women will give birth to monsters, fresh springs will run 9  
with salt water, and everywhere friends will become enemies. Then

[a] *So some Vss.; Lat. corrupt.* [b] *Some Vss. read* and at night one whom the many do  
not know will utter his voice, and all will hear it. [c] *So one Vs.; Lat. Chaos.*

understanding will be hidden, and reason withdraw to her secret  
 10 chamber. Many will seek her, but not find her; the earth will over-  
 11 flow with vice and wickedness. One country will ask another, "Has  
 justice passed your way, or any just man?", and it will answer, "No."  
 12 In those days men will hope, but hope in vain; they will strive, but  
 never succeed.

13 'These are the signs I am allowed to tell you. But turn again to  
 prayer, continue to weep and fast for seven days; and then you shall  
 hear further signs, even greater than these.'

14 I awoke with a start, shuddering; my spirit faltered, and I was  
 15 near to fainting. But the angel who had come and talked to me gave  
 me support and strength, and set me on my feet.

16 The next night Phaltiel, the leader of the people, came to me.  
 17 'Where have you been?' he asked, 'and why that sad look? Have you  
 18 forgotten that Israel in exile has been entrusted to your care? Rouse  
 yourself, take nourishment. Do not abandon us like a shepherd  
 19 abandoning his flock to savage wolves.' I replied: 'Leave me; for  
 seven days do not come near me, then you may come again.' When  
 he heard this, he left me.

20 FOR SEVEN DAYS I fasted, with tears and lamentations, as the  
 21 angel Uriel had told me to do. By the end of the seven days my  
 22 mind was again deeply disturbed, but I recovered the power of  
 thought and spoke once more to the Most High.

23 'My Lord, my Master,' I said, 'out of all the forests of the earth,  
 24 and all their trees, you have chosen one vine; from all the lands in  
 the whole world you have chosen one plot; and out of all the flowers  
 25 in the whole world you have chosen one lily. From all the depths of  
 the sea you have filled one stream for yourself, and of all the cities  
 26 ever built you have set Zion apart as your own. From all the birds  
 that were created you have named one dove, and from all the animals  
 27 that were fashioned you have taken one sheep. Out of all the count-  
 less nations, you have adopted one for your own, and to this chosen  
 28 people you have given the law which all men have approved. Why  
 then, Lord, have you put this one people at the mercy of so many?  
 Why have you humiliated<sup>a</sup> this one stock more than all others, and  
 29 scattered your own people among the hordes of heathen? Those who  
 reject your promises have trampled on the people who trust your

[a] *So some Vss.; Lat. prepared.*

covenants. If you so hate your people, they should be punished by 30  
your own hand.'

When I had finished speaking, the angel who had visited me that 31  
previous night was sent to me again. 'Listen to me,' he said, 'and 32  
I will give you instruction. Attend carefully, and I will tell you  
more.' 'Speak on, my lord', I replied. 33

He said to me, 'You are in great sorrow of heart for Israel's sake.  
Do you love Israel more than Israel's Maker does?' 'No, my lord,' 34  
I said, 'but sorrow has forced me to speak; my heart is tortured  
every hour as I try to understand the ways of the Most High and to  
fathom some part of his judgements.'

He said to me, 'You cannot.' 'Why not, my lord?' I asked. 'Why 35  
then was I born? Why could not my mother's womb have been my  
grave? Then I should never have seen Jacob's trials and the weariness  
of the race of Israel.'

He said to me, 'Count me those who are not yet born, collect the 36  
scattered drops of rain, and make the withered flowers bloom again;  
unlock me the storehouses and let loose the winds shut up there; 37  
or make visible the shape of a voice. Then I will answer your  
question about Israel's trials.'

'My lord, my master,' I said, 'how can there be anyone with such 38  
knowledge except the One whose home is not among men? I am 39  
only a fool; how then can I answer your questions?'

He said to me, 'Just as you cannot do any of the things I have put 40  
to you, so you will not be able to find out my judgements or the  
ultimate purpose of the love I have promised to my people.'

I said, 'But surely, lord, your promise<sup>a</sup> is to those who are alive at 41  
the end. What is to be the fate of those who lived before us, or of  
ourselves, or of those who come after us?'

He said to me, 'I will compare the judgement to a circle: the 42  
latest will not be too late, nor the earliest too early.'

To this I replied, 'Could you not have made all men, past, present, 43  
and future, at one and the same time? Then you could have held  
your assize with less delay.' But he answered, 'The creation may not 44  
go faster than the Creator, nor could the world support at the same  
time all those created to live on it.'

'But, my lord,' I said, 'you have told me that you will at one and 45  
the same time restore to life every creature you have made; how can

[a] *So one Vs.; Lat. obscure.*

that be? If it is going to be possible for all of them to be alive at the same time and for the world to support them all, then it could  
46 support all of them together now.' 'Put your question in terms of a woman's womb', he replied. 'Say to a woman, "If you give birth to ten children, why do you do so at intervals? Why not give birth  
47 to ten at one and the same time?"' 'No, my lord, she cannot do that,'  
48 I said; 'the births must take place at intervals.' 'True,' he answered; 'and I have made the earth's womb to bring forth at intervals those  
49 conceived in it. An infant cannot give birth, nor can a woman who is too old; and I have made the same rule for the world I have created.'  
50 I continued my questions. 'Since you have opened the way,' I said, 'may I now ask: is our mother that you speak of still young,  
51, 52 or is she already growing old?' He replied, 'Ask any mother why the children she has lately borne are not like those born earlier, but  
53 smaller. And she will tell you, "Those who were born in the vigour of my youth are very different from those born in my old age, when  
54 my womb is beginning to fail." Think of it then like this: if you are  
55 smaller than those born before you, and those who follow you are smaller still, the reason is that creation is growing old and losing the strength of youth.'  
56 I said to him, 'If I have won your favour, my lord, show me  
6 through whom you will visit your creation.' He said to me, 'Think of the beginning of this earth: the gates of the world had not yet been  
2 set up; no winds gathered and blew, no thunder pealed, no lightning  
3 flashed; the foundations of paradise were not yet laid, nor were its fair flowers there to see; the powers that move the stars were not  
4 established, nor the countless hosts of angels assembled, nor the vast tracts of air set up on high; the divisions of the firmaments had not received their names. Zion had not yet been chosen as God's own  
5 footstool; the present age had not been planned; the schemes of its sinners had not yet been outlawed, nor had God's seal yet been set on  
6 those who have stored up a treasure of fidelity. Then did I think my thought; and the whole world was created through me and through me alone. In the same way, through me and through me alone the end shall come.'  
7 'Tell me', I went on, 'about the interval that divides the ages.  
8 When will the first age end and the next age begin?' He said, 'The interval will be no bigger than that between Abraham and Abraham; for Jacob and Esau were his descendants, and Jacob's hand was

grasping Esau's heel at the moment of their birth. Esau represents 9  
the end of the first age, and Jacob the beginning of the next age. The 10  
beginning of a man is his hand, and the end of a man is his heel.<sup>a</sup>  
Between the heel and the hand, Ezra, do not look for any interval.'

'My lord, my master,' I said, 'if I have won your favour, make 11, 12  
known to me the last of your signs, of which you showed me a part  
that former night.'

'Rise to your feet,' he replied, 'and you will hear a loud resound- 13  
ing voice. When it speaks, do not be frightened if the place where 14-15  
you stand trembles and shakes; it speaks of the end, and the earth's  
foundations will understand that it is speaking of them. They will 16  
tremble and shake; for they know that at the end they must be trans-  
formed.' On hearing this I rose to my feet and listened; and a voice 17  
began to speak. Its sound was like the sound of rushing waters.  
The voice said: 18

'The time draws near when I shall come to judge those who live  
on the earth, the time when I shall inquire into the wickedness of 19  
wrong-doers, the time when Zion's humiliation will be over, the 20  
time when a seal will be set on the age about to pass away. Then  
I will perform these signs: the books shall be opened in the sight of  
heaven, and all shall see them at the same moment. Children only 21  
one year old shall be able to talk, and pregnant women shall give  
birth to premature babes of three and four months, who shall live  
and leap about. Fields that were sown shall suddenly prove unsown, 22  
and barns that were full shall suddenly be found empty. There shall 23  
be a loud trumpet-blast and it shall strike terror into all who hear it.  
At that time friends shall make war on friends as though they were 24  
enemies, and the earth and all its inhabitants shall be terrified.  
Running streams shall stand still; for three hours they shall cease to  
flow.

'Whoever is left after all that I have foretold, he shall be preserved, 25  
and shall see the deliverance that I bring and the end of this world of  
mine. They shall all see the men who were taken up into heaven 26  
without ever knowing death. Then shall men on earth feel a change  
of heart and come to a better mind. Wickedness shall be blotted out 27  
and deceit destroyed, but fidelity shall flourish, corruption be over- 28  
come, and truth, so long unfruitful, be brought to light.'

While the voice was speaking to me, the ground under me began to 29

[a] The beginning of a man...heel: *reading based on other Vss.; Lat. defective.*

30 quake.<sup>a</sup> Then the angel said to me, 'These, then, are the revelations  
 31 I have brought you this night.<sup>b</sup> If once again you pray and fast for  
 32 seven days, then I will return to tell you even greater things.<sup>c</sup> For be  
 sure your voice has been heard by the Most High. The Mighty God  
 has seen your integrity and the chastity you have observed all your  
 33 life. That is why he has sent me to you with all these revelations, and  
 34 with this message: "Be confident, and have no fear. Do not rush too  
 quickly into unprofitable thoughts now in the present age; then you  
 will not act hastily when the last age comes."

35 THEREUPON I wept and fasted again for seven days in the same  
 way as before, thus completing the three weeks enjoined on me.  
 36 On the eighth night I was again disturbed at heart, and spoke to the  
 37, 38 Most High. With spirit aflame and in great agony of mind I said:  
 'O Lord, at the beginning of creation you spoke the word. On the  
 first day you said, "Let heaven and earth be made!", and your word  
 39 carried out its work. At that time the hovering spirit was there, and  
 darkness circled round; there was silence, no sound as yet of human  
 40 voice.<sup>d</sup> Then you commanded a ray of light to be brought out of  
 your store-chambers, to make your works visible from that time on-  
 41 wards. On the second day you created the angel<sup>e</sup> of the firmament,  
 and commanded him to make a dividing barrier between the waters,  
 42 one part withdrawing upwards and the other remaining below. On  
 the third day you ordered the waters to collect in a seventh part of  
 the earth; the other six parts you made into dry land, and from it  
 43 kept some to be sown and tilled for your service. Your word went  
 44 forth, and at once the work was done. A vast profusion of fruits  
 appeared instantly, of every kind and taste that can be desired, with  
 flowers of the most subtle colours and mysterious scents. These were  
 45 made on the third day. On the fourth day by your command you  
 created the splendour of the sun, the light of the moon, and the  
 46 stars in their appointed places; and you ordered them to be  
 at the service of man, whose creation was about to take place.  
 47 On the fifth day you commanded the seventh part, where the  
 water was collected, to bring forth living things, birds and fishes.  
 48 And so, at your command, dumb lifeless water brought forth living

[a] the ground. . .quake: *reading based on other Vss.; Lat. obscure.* [b] *So one Vss.; Lat. this coming night.* [c] *So other Vss.; Lat. adds in the day-time.* [d] *So some Vss.; Lat. adds from you.* [e] *Literally spirit.*

creatures, and gave the nations cause to tell of your wonders. Then 49  
you set apart two creatures: one you called Behemoth and the other  
Leviathan. You put them in separate places, for the seventh part 50  
where the water was collected was not big enough to hold them both.  
A part of the land which was made dry on the third day you gave to 51  
Behemoth as his territory, a country of a thousand hills. To Levia- 52  
than you gave the seventh part, the water. You have kept them to be  
food for whom you will and when you will. On the sixth day you 53  
ordered the earth to produce for you cattle, wild beasts, and  
creeping things. To crown your work you created Adam, and gave 54  
him sovereignty over everything you had made. It is from Adam that  
we, your chosen people, are all descended.

‘I have recited the whole story of the creation, O Lord, because 55  
you have said that you made this first world for our sake, and that all 56  
the rest of the nations descended from Adam are nothing, that they  
are no better than spittle, and, for all their numbers, no more than a  
drop from a bucket. And yet, O Lord, those nations which count for 57  
nothing are today ruling over us and devouring us; and we, your 58  
people, have been put into their power—your people, whom you  
have called your first-born, your only son, your champion, and your  
best beloved. Was the world really made for us? Why, then, may we 59  
not take possession of our world? How much longer shall it be so?’

When I had finished speaking, the same angel was sent to me as on 7  
the previous nights. He said to me, ‘Rise to your feet, Ezra, and 2  
listen to the message I have come to give you.’ ‘Speak, my lord’, 3  
I said.

He said to me: ‘Imagine a sea set in a vast open space, spreading  
far<sup>a</sup> and wide, but the entrance to it narrow like the gorge of a river. 4  
If anyone is determined to reach this sea, whether to set eyes on it or 5  
to gain command of it, he cannot arrive at its open waters except  
through the narrow gorge. Or again, imagine a city built in a plain, a 6  
city full of everything you can desire, but the entrance to it narrow 7  
and steep, with fire to the right and deep water to the left. There is 8  
only the one path, between the fire and the water; and that is only  
wide enough for one man at a time. If some man has been given this 9  
city as a legacy, how can he take possession of his inheritance except  
by passing through these dangerous approaches?’ ‘That is the only 10  
way, my lord’, I agreed.

[a] spreading far: *reading based on other Vss.; Lat. deep.*

11 He said to me: 'Such is the lot of Israel. It was for Israel that  
 12 I made the world, and when Adam transgressed my decrees the  
 13 creation came under judgement. The entrances to this world were  
 14 made narrow, painful, and arduous, few and evil, full of perils and  
 15 grinding hardship. But the entrances to the greater world are broad  
 16 and safe, and lead to immortality. All men must therefore enter this  
 narrow and futile existence; otherwise they can never attain the  
 17 blessings in store. Why then, Ezra, are you so deeply disturbed at the  
 18 thought that you are mortal and must die? Why have you not turned  
 your mind to the future instead of the present?'

17 'My lord, my master,' I replied, 'in your law you have laid it  
 down that the just shall come to enjoy these blessings but the un-  
 18 godly shall be lost. The just, therefore, can endure this narrow life  
 and look for the spacious life hereafter; but those who have lived a  
 wicked life will have gone through the narrows without ever reaching  
 the open spaces.'

19 He said to me: 'You are not a better judge than God, nor wiser  
 20 than the Most High. Better that many now living should be lost,  
 21 than that the law God has set before them should be despised! God  
 has given clear instructions for all men when they come into this  
 world, telling them how to attain life and how to escape punishment.  
 22 But the ungodly have refused to obey him; they have set up their  
 23 own empty ideas, and planned deceit and wickedness; they have  
 even denied the existence of the Most High and have not acknow-  
 24 ledged his ways. They have rejected his law and refused his promises,  
 have neither put faith in his decrees nor done what he commands.  
 25 Therefore, Ezra, emptiness for the empty, fullness for the full!

26 'Listen! The time shall come when the signs I have foretold will  
 be seen; the city which is now invisible<sup>a</sup> shall appear and the  
 27 country now concealed be made visible. Everyone who has been  
 delivered from the evils I have foretold shall see for himself my  
 28 marvellous acts. My son the Messiah<sup>b</sup> shall appear with his com-  
 panions and bring four hundred years of happiness to all who  
 29 survive. At the end of that time, my son the Messiah shall die, and  
 30 so shall all mankind who draw breath. Then the world shall return to  
 its original silence for seven days as at the beginning of creation, and  
 31 no one shall be left alive. After seven days the age which is not yet

[a] *So some Vss.; Lat.* the city, the bride, which is now seen. . . [b] *So some Vss.; Lat.*  
 My son Jesus.



awake shall be roused and the age which is corruptible shall die. The earth shall give up those who sleep in it, and the dust those who 32 rest there in silence; and the storehouses shall give back the souls entrusted to them. Then the Most High shall be seen on the judge- 33 ment-seat, and there shall be an end of all pity and patience. Judge- 34 ment alone shall remain; truth shall stand firm and faithfulness be strong; requital<sup>a</sup> shall at once begin and open payment be made; 35 good deeds shall awake and wicked deeds shall not be allowed to sleep.<sup>b</sup> Then the place of torment shall appear, and over against it the 36 place of rest; the furnace of hell shall be displayed, and on the opposite side the paradise of delight.

'Then the Most High shall say to the nations that have been raised 37 from the dead: "Look and understand who it is you have denied and refused to serve, and whose commandment you have despised. Look 38 on this side, then on that: here are rest and delight, there fire and torments." That is what he will say to them on the day of judgement.

'That day will be a day without sun, moon, or stars; without 39, 40 cloud, thunder, or lightning; wind, water, or air; darkness, evening, or morning; without summer, spring, or winter; without heat, frost, 41 or cold; without hail, rain, or dew; without noonday, night, or 42 dawn; without brightness, glow, or light. There shall be only the radiant glory of the Most High, by which all men will see everything that lies before them. It shall last as it were for a week of years. 43 Such is the order that I have appointed for the Judgement. I have 44 given this revelation to you alone.'

I replied: 'My lord, I repeat what I said before: "How blest are 45 the living who obey the decrees you have laid down!" But as for 46 those for whom I have been praying, is there any man alive who has never sinned, any man who has never transgressed your covenant? I see now that there are few to whom the world to come will bring 47 happiness, and many to whom it will bring torment. For the wicked 48 heart has grown up in us, which has estranged us from God's ways,<sup>c</sup> brought us into corruption and the way of death, opened out to us the paths of ruin, and carried us far away from life. It has done this, not merely to a few, but to almost all who have been created.'

The angel replied: 'Listen to me and I will give you further 49

[a] Probable meaning; literally work. [b] The passage from verse [36] to verse [105], missing from the text of the Authorized Version, but found in ancient witnesses, has been restored. [c] Literally from these things.

- [50] instruction and correction. It is for this reason that the Most High  
 [51] has created not one world but two. There are, you say, not many who  
 are just, but only a few, whereas the wicked are very numerous; well  
 [52] then, hear the answer. Suppose you had a very few precious stones;  
 would you add to their number by putting common lead and clay  
 [53, 54] among them<sup>a</sup>? 'No,' I said, 'no one would do that.' 'Look at it also  
 in this way,' he continued; 'speak to the earth and humbly ask her;  
 [55] she will give you the answer. Say to her: "You produce gold, silver,  
 [56] and copper, iron, lead, and clay. There is more silver than gold,  
 more copper than silver, more iron than copper, more lead than iron,  
 [57] more clay than lead." Then judge for yourself which things are  
 valuable and desirable—those that are common, or those that are  
 [58] rare.' 'My lord, my master,' I said, 'the common things are cheaper,  
 [59] and the rarer are more valuable.' He replied, 'Consider then what  
 follows from that: the owner of something hard to get has more cause  
 [60] to be pleased than the owner of what is common. In the same way,  
 at my promised judgement,<sup>b</sup> I shall have joy in the few who are saved,  
 because it is they who have made my glory prevail, and through  
 [61] them that my name has been made known. But I shall not grieve for  
 the many who are lost; for they are no more than a vapour, they are  
 like flame or smoke; they catch fire, blaze up, and then die out.'
- [62] Then I said: 'Mother Earth, what have you brought forth! Is the  
 [63] mind of man, like the rest of creation, a product of the dust? Far  
 better then if the very dust had never been created, and so had never  
 [64] produced man's mind! But, as it is, we grow up with the power of  
 thought and are tortured by it; we are doomed to die and we know it.  
 [65] What sorrow for mankind; what happiness for the wild beasts! What  
 sorrow for every mother's son; what gladness for the cattle and  
 [66] flocks! How much better their lot than ours! They have no judge-  
 ment to expect, no knowledge of torment or salvation after death.  
 [67] What good to us is the promise of a future life if it is going to be one  
 [68] of torment? For every man alive is burdened and defiled with  
 [69] wickedness, a sinner through and through. Would it not have been  
 better for us if there had been no judgement awaiting us after death?'
- [70] The angel replied: 'When the Most High was creating the world  
 and Adam and his descendants, he first of all planned the judgement  
 [71] and what goes with it. Your own words, when you said that man

[a] by putting... them: *probable reading, based on other Vss.; Lat. obscure.*

[b] *Reading based on other Vss.; Lat. creation.*

grows up with the power of thought, will give you the answer. It [72] was with conscious knowledge that the people of this world sinned, and that is why torment awaits them; they received the commandments but did not keep them, they accepted the law but violated it. What defence will they be able to make at the judgement, what [73] answer at the last day? How patient the Most High has been with the [74] men of this world, and for how long!—not for their own sake, but for the sake of the destined age to be.'

Then I said: 'If I have won your favour, my lord, make this plain [75] to me: at death, when every one of us gives back his soul, shall we be kept at rest until the time when you begin to create your new world, or does our torment begin at once?' 'I will tell you that also', he [76] replied. 'But do not include yourself among those who have despised my law; do not count yourself with those who are to be tormented. For you have a treasure of good works stored up with the Most High, [77] though you will not be shown it until the last days. But now to speak [78] of death: when the Most High has given final sentence for a man to die, the spirit leaves the body to return to the One who gave it, and first of all to adore the glory of the Most High. But as for those who [79] have rejected the ways of the Most High and despised his law, and who hate all that fear God, their spirits enter no settled abode, but [80] roam thenceforward in torment, grief, and sorrow. And this for seven reasons. First, they have despised the law of the Most High. [81] Secondly, they have lost their last chance of making a good repen- [82] tance and so gaining life. Thirdly, they can see the reward in store [83] for those who have trusted the covenants of the Most High. Fourthly, they begin to think of the torment that awaits them at the [84] end. Fifthly, they see that angels are guarding the abode of the [85] other souls in deep silence. Sixthly, they see that they are soon<sup>a</sup> to [86] enter into torment. The seventh cause for grief, the strongest cause of [87] all, is this: at the sight of the Most High in his glory, they break down in shame, waste away in remorse, and shrivel with fear remembering how they sinned against him in their lifetime, and how they are soon to be brought before him for judgement on the last day.

'As for those who have kept to the way laid down by the Most [88] High, this is what is appointed for them when their time comes to leave their mortal bodies. During their stay on earth they served the [89] Most High in spite of constant hardship and danger, and kept to the

[a] *So some Vss.; Lat. obscure.*

- [90] last letter the law given them by the lawgiver. Their reward is this:  
 [91] first they shall exult to see the glory of God who will receive them as  
 his own, and then they shall enter into rest in seven appointed stages  
 [92] of joy. Their first joy is their victory in the long fight against their  
 inborn impulses to evil, which have failed to lead them astray from  
 [93] life into death. Their second joy is to see the souls of the wicked  
 [94] wandering ceaselessly, and the punishment in store for them. Their  
 third joy is the good report given of them by their Maker, that  
 throughout their life they kept the law with which they were en-  
 [95] trusted. Their fourth joy is to understand the rest which they are  
 now to share in the storehouses, guarded by angels in deep silence,  
 [96] and the glory waiting for them in the next age. Their fifth joy is the  
 contrast between the corruptible world they have escaped and the  
 future life that is to be their possession, between the cramped  
 laborious<sup>a</sup> life from which they have been set free and the spacious  
 [97] life which will soon be theirs to enjoy for ever and ever. Their sixth  
 joy will be the revelation that they are to shine like stars, never to  
 [98] fade or die, with faces radiant as the sun. Their seventh joy, the  
 greatest joy of all, will be the confident and exultant assurance which  
 will be theirs, free from all fear and shame, as they press forward to  
 see face to face the One whom they served in their lifetime, and from  
 whom they are now to receive their reward in glory.
- [99] 'The joys I have been declaring are the appointed destiny for the  
 souls of the just; the torments I described before are the sufferings  
 appointed for the rebellious.'
- [100] Then I asked: 'When souls are separated from their bodies, will  
 they be given the opportunity to see what you have described to me?'
- [101] 'They will be allowed seven days,' he replied; 'for seven days they  
 will be permitted to see the things I have told you, and after that  
 they will join the other souls in their abodes.'
- [102] Then I asked: 'If I have won your favour, my lord, tell me more.  
 On the day of judgement will the just be able to win pardon for the  
 [103] wicked, or pray for them to the Most High? Can fathers do so for  
 their sons, or sons for their parents? Can brothers pray for brothers,  
 relatives and friends<sup>b</sup> for their nearest and dearest?'
- [104] 'You have won my favour,' he replied, 'and I will tell you. The  
 day of judgement is decisive,<sup>c</sup> and sets its seal on the truth for all

[a] *So some Vss.; Lat. obscure.* [b] friends: *so some Vss.; Lat. the faithful.* [c] *So one Vss.; Lat. stern.*

to see. In the present age a father cannot send his son in his place, nor a son his father, a master his slave, nor a man his best friend, to be ill<sup>a</sup> for him, or sleep, or eat, or be cured for him. In the same way [105] no one shall ever ask pardon for another; when that day comes, every individual will be held responsible for his own wickedness or goodness.'

To this I replied: 'But how is it, then, that we read of intercessions 36 [106] in scripture? First, there is Abraham, who prayed for the people of Sodom; then Moses, who prayed for our ancestors when they sinned in the desert. Next, there is Joshua, who prayed for the Israelites in 37 [107] the time of Achan, then Samuel in the time of Saul,<sup>b</sup> David during the plague,<sup>c</sup> and Solomon at the dedication of the temple. Elijah 38 [108] prayed for rain for the people, and for a dead man that he might be brought back to life. Hezekiah prayed for the nation in the time 39 [109] of Sennacherib; and there are many more besides. If, then, in the time when corruption grew and wickedness increased, the just asked pardon for the wicked, why cannot it be the same on the day of judgement?' 40 [110] 41 [111]

The angel gave me this answer: 'The present world is not the end, 42 [112] and the glory of God does not stay in it continually.<sup>d</sup> That is why the strong have prayed for the weak. But the day of judgement will be 43 [113] the end of the present world and the beginning of the eternal world to come, a world in which corruption will be over, all excess 44 [114] abolished, and unbelief uprooted, in which justice will be full-grown, and truth will have risen like the sun. On the day of judge- 45 [115] ment, therefore, there can be no mercy for the man who has lost his case, no reversal for the man who has won it.'

I replied, 'But this is my point, my first point and my last: how 46 [116] much better it would have been if the earth had never produced Adam at all, or, since it has done so, if he had been restrained from sinning! For what good does it do us all to live in misery now and 47 [117] have nothing but punishment to expect after death? O Adam, what 48 [118] have you done? Your sin was not your fall alone; it was ours also, the fall of all your descendants. What good is the promise of immortality 49 [119] to us, when we have committed mortal sins; or the hope of eternity, 50 [120] in the wretched and futile state to which we have come; or the 51 [121]

[a] *So some Vss.; Lat. to understand.* [b] in the time of Saul: *so some Vss.; Lat. omits.* [c] during the plague: *so some Vss.; Lat. for the destruction.* [d] does...continually: *so some Vss.; Lat. regularly stays in it.*

prospect of dwelling in health and safety, when we have lived such  
 [122] 52 evil lives? The glory of the Most High will guard those who have  
 [123] 53 led a life of purity; but what help is that to us whose conduct has  
 [124] 54 been so wicked? What good is the revelation of paradise and its  
 [125] 55 imperishable fruit, the source of perfect satisfaction and healing?  
 [126] 56 For we shall never enter it, since we have made depravity our home.  
 Those who have practised self-discipline shall shine with faces  
 brighter than the stars; but what good is that to us whose faces are  
 darker than the night? For during a lifetime of wickedness we have  
 never given a thought to the sufferings awaiting us after death.'

[127] 57 The angel replied, 'This is the thought for every man to keep in  
 [128] 58 mind during his earthly contest: if he loses, he must accept the  
 sufferings you have mentioned, but if he wins, the rewards I have  
 [129] 59 been describing will be his. For that was the way which Moses in his  
 time urged the people to take, when he said, "Choose life and live!"  
 [130] 60 But they did not believe him, nor the prophets after him, nor me  
 [131] 61 when I spoke to them. Over their damnation there will be no sor-  
 row; there will only be joy for the salvation of those who have  
 believed.'<sup>a</sup>

[132] 62 'My lord,' I replied, 'I know that the Most High is called  
 "compassionate", because he has compassion on those yet unborn;  
 [133] 63 and called "merciful", because he shows mercy to those who repent  
 [134] 64 and live by his law; and "patient", because he shows patience to those  
 [135] 65 who have sinned, his own creatures as they are; and "benefactor",  
 [136] 66 because he prefers giving to taking; and "rich in forgiveness", because  
 again and again he forgives sinners, past, present, and to come.  
 [137] 67 For without his continued forgiveness there could be no hope of life  
 [138] 68 for the world and its inhabitants. And he is called "generous",  
 because without his generosity in releasing sinners from their sins,  
 not one ten-thousandth part of mankind could hope to be given life;  
 [139] 69 and he is also called "judge", for unless he grants pardon to those who  
 have been created by his word, and blots out their countless offences,  
 [140] 70 I suppose that of the entire human race only very few would be  
 spared.'

8 The angel said to me in reply: 'The Most High has made this  
 2 world for many, but the next world for only a few. Let me give you  
 an illustration, Ezra. Ask the earth, and it will tell you that it can  
 produce plenty of clay for making earthenware, but very little

[a] *So some Vss.; Lat. for those who are convinced of salvation.*

gold-dust. The same holds good for the present world: many have  
been created, but only a few will be saved.'

I SAID: 'My soul, drink deep of understanding and eat your fill of  
wisdom! Without your consent<sup>a</sup> you came here, and unwillingly  
you go away; only a brief span of life is given you. O Lord above, if  
I may be allowed to approach you in prayer, plant a seed in our  
hearts and minds, and make it grow until it bears fruit, so that fallen  
man may obtain life. For you alone are God, and we are all shaped  
by you in one mould, as your word declares. The body moulded in  
the womb receives from you both life and limbs; that which you  
create is kept safe amid fire and water; for nine months the body  
moulded by you bears what you have created in it. Both the womb  
which holds safely and that which is safely held will be safe only  
because you keep them so. And after the womb has delivered up  
what has been created in it, then from the human body itself, that is  
from the breasts, milk, the fruit of the breasts, is supplied by your  
command. For a certain time what has been made is nourished in  
that way; and afterwards it is still cared for by your mercy. You  
bring it up to know your justice, train it in your law, and correct it by  
your wisdom. It is your creature and you made it; you can put it to  
death or give it life, as you please. But if you should lightly destroy  
one who was fashioned by your command with so much labour, what  
was the purpose of creating him?

'And now let me say this: about mankind at large, you know best;  
but it is for your own people that I grieve, for your inheritance that  
I mourn; my sorrow is for Israel and my distress for the race of  
Jacob. For them and for myself, therefore, I will address my prayer  
to you, since I perceive how low we have fallen, we dwellers on earth;  
and I know well how quickly your judgement will follow. Hear my  
words then, and consider the prayer which I make to you.'

Here begins the prayer which Ezra made, before he was taken up  
to heaven.

'O Lord, who dost inhabit eternity, to whom the sky and the  
highest heavens belong; whose throne is beyond imagining, and  
whose glory is past conceiving; who art attended by the host of  
angels trembling as they turn themselves into wind and fire at thy  
bidding; whose word is true and constant; whose commands are

[a] Without your consent: *so one Vs.; Lat.* To obey.

23 mighty and terrible; whose glance dries up the deeps, whose anger  
 24 melts the mountains, and whose truth stands for ever:<sup>a</sup> hear thy  
 servant's prayer, O Lord, listen to my petition, for thou hast fashioned  
 25 me, and consider my words. While I live I will speak; while under-  
 standing lasts, I will answer.

26 'Do not look upon thy people's offences, look on those who have  
 27 served thee faithfully; pay no heed to the godless and their pursuits,  
 but to those who have observed thy covenant and suffered for it.  
 28 Do not think of those who all their life have been untrue to thee, but  
 remember those who have acknowledged and feared thee from the  
 29 heart. Do not destroy those who have lived like animals, but take  
 30 account of those who have borne shining witness to thy law. Do not  
 be angry with those judged to be worse than beasts; but show love to  
 31 those who have put unfailing trust in thy glory. For we and our  
 fathers have lived in mortal sin,<sup>b</sup> yet it is on our account that thou art  
 32 called merciful; for if it is thy desire to have mercy on us sinners,  
 who have no just deeds to our credit, then indeed thou shalt be called  
 33 merciful. For the reward which will be given to the just, who have  
 many good works stored up with thee, will be no more than their  
 own deeds have earned.

34 'What is man, that thou shouldst be angry with him? or the race of  
 35 mortals, that thou shouldst treat them so harshly? The truth is, no  
 man was ever born who did not sin; no man alive is innocent of  
 36 offence. It is through thy mercy towards those with no store of good  
 deeds to their name that thy justice and kindness, O Lord, will be  
 made known.'

37 The angel said to me in reply: 'Much of what you have said is just,  
 38 and it will be as you say. Be sure that I shall not give any thought to  
 39 sinners, to their creation, death, judgement, or damnation; but I shall  
 take delight in the just, in their creation, their departure from this  
 40 world, their salvation, and their final reward. So I have said, and so  
 41 it is. The farmer sows many seeds in the ground and plants many  
 plants, but not all the seeds sown come up safely in season, nor do all  
 the plants strike root. So too in the world of men: not all who are  
 sown will be preserved.'

42, 43 To that I replied: 'If I have won your favour, let me speak. The  
 farmer's seed may never come up because it is given no rain at the  
 44 right time, or it may rot because of too much rain. But man, who

[a] *So some Vss.; Lat. bears witness.*

[b] in mortal sin: *so some Vss.; Lat. obscure.*



was formed by your hands and made in your image, and for whose sake you made everything—will you compare him with seed sown by a farmer? Surely not, O Lord above! Spare your own people and pity them, for you will be pitying your own creation.' 45

He answered: 'The present is for those now alive, the future for those yet to come. You cannot love my creation with a love greater than mine—far from it! But never again rank yourself among the unjust, as you have so often done. Yet the Most High approves of the modesty you have rightly shown; you have not sought great glory by including yourself among the godly. In the last days, then, the inhabitants of the world will be punished for their arrogant lives by bitter sufferings. But you, Ezra, should direct your thoughts to yourself and the glory awaiting those like you. For all of you, paradise lies open, the tree of life is planted, the age to come is made ready, and rich abundance is in store; the city is already built, rest from toil is assured, goodness and wisdom are brought to perfection. The root of evil has been sealed off from you; for you there is no more illness, death<sup>a</sup> is abolished, hell has fled, and decay is quite forgotten. All sorrows are at an end, and the treasure of immortality has been finally revealed. Ask no more questions, therefore, about the many who are lost. For they were given freedom and used it to despise the Most High, to treat his law with contempt and abandon his ways. Yes, and they trampled on his just servants; they said to themselves, "There is no God", though well aware that they must die. Yours, then, will be the joys I have predicted; theirs the thirst and torments which are prepared. It is not that the Most High has wanted any man to be lost, but that those he created have themselves brought dishonour on their Creator's name, and shown ingratitude to the One who had put life within their reach. My day of judgement is now close at hand, but I have not made this known to all; only to you and a few like you.'

'My lord,' I replied, 'you have now revealed to me the many signs which you are going to perform in the last days; but you have not told me when that will be.'

The angel answered: 'Keep a careful count yourself; when you see that some of the signs predicted have already happened, then you will understand that the time has come when the Most High will judge the world he has created. When the world becomes the scene of earthquakes, insurrections, plots among the nations, unstable

[a] death: so some Vss.; Lat. omits.

4 government, and panic among rulers, then you will recognize these  
 as the events which the Most High has foretold since first the world  
 5 began. Just as everything that is done on earth has its beginning and  
 6 end clearly marked,<sup>a</sup> so it is with the times which the Most High has  
 determined: their beginning is marked by portents and miracles,  
 their end by manifestations of power.

7 'Whoever comes safely through and escapes destruction, thanks to  
 8 his good deeds or the faith he has shown, will survive all the dangers  
 I have foretold and witness the salvation that I shall bring to my  
 land, the country I have marked out from all eternity as my own.  
 9 Then those who have misused my law will be taken by surprise;  
 10 their contempt for it will bring them continual torment. All who in  
 their lifetime failed to acknowledge me in spite of all the good things  
 11 I had given them, all who disdained my law while freedom still was  
 theirs, who scornfully dismissed the thought of penitence while the  
 12 way was still open—all these will have to learn the truth through  
 13 torments after death. Do not be curious any more, Ezra, to know  
 how the godless will be tormented, but only how and when the just  
 will be saved; the world is theirs and it exists for their sake.'

14, 15 I answered, 'I repeat what I have said again and again: the lost  
 16 outnumber the saved as a wave exceeds a drop of water.'

17 The angel replied: 'The seed to be sown depends on the soil, the  
 colour on the flower, the product on the workman, and the harvest  
 18 on the farmer. There was once a time before the world had been  
 created for men to dwell in; at that time I was planning it for the sake  
 19 of those who now exist. No one then disputed my plan, for no one  
 existed. I supplied this world with unfailing food and a mysterious  
 20 law; but those whom I created turned to a life of corruption. I looked  
 at my world, and there it lay spoilt, at my earth in danger from men's  
 21 wicked thoughts; and at the sight I could scarcely bring myself to  
 spare them. One grape I saved out of a cluster, one tree out of a  
 22 forest.<sup>b</sup> So then let it be: destruction for the many who were born in  
 vain, and salvation for my grape and my tree, which have cost me  
 such labour to bring to perfection.

23, 24 'You, Ezra, must wait one more week. Do not fast this time, but  
 go to a flowery field where no house stands, and eat only what grows  
 25 there—no meat or wine—and pray unceasingly to the Most High.  
 Then I will come and talk to you again.'

[a] has...marked: so one Vss.; Lat. defective. [b] So some Vss.; Lat. tribe.

*Visions of the last days*

SO I WENT OUT, as the angel told me, to a field called Ardat. 26  
 There I sat among the flowers; my food was what grew in the  
 field, and I ate to my heart's content. The week ended, and I was 27  
 lying on the grass, troubled again in mind with all the same per-  
 plexities. I broke my silence and addressed the Most High. 'O 28, 29  
 Lord,' I said, 'you showed yourself to our fathers in the desert at the  
 time of the exodus from Egypt, when they were travelling through the  
 barren and untrodden waste. You said, "Hear me, Israel; listen to 30  
 my words, race of Jacob. This is my law, which I sow among you 31  
 to bear fruit and bring you glory for ever." But our fathers who 32  
 received your law did not keep it; they did not observe your com-  
 mandments. Not that the fruit of the law perished; that was impos-  
 sible, for it was yours. Those who received it perished, because they 33  
 failed to keep safe the good seed that had been sown in them. Now 34  
 the usual way of things is that when seed is put into the earth, or a  
 ship on the sea, or food or drink into a jar, then if the seed, or the  
 ship, or the contents of the jar should be destroyed, what held or 35  
 contained them does not perish with them. But with us sinners it is  
 different. Destruction will come upon us, the recipients of the law, 36  
 and upon our hearts, the vessel that held the law. The law itself is not 37  
 destroyed, but survives in all its glory.'

While these thoughts were in my mind, I looked round, and on my 38  
 right I saw a woman in great distress, mourning and loudly lament-  
 ing; her dress was torn, and she had ashes on her head. Abandoning 39  
 my meditations, I turned to her, and said: 'Why are you weeping? 40  
 What is troubling you?' 'Sir,' she replied, 'please leave me to my 41  
 tears and my grief; great is my bitterness of heart, great my distress.'  
 'Tell me,' I asked, 'what has happened to you?' 'Sir,' she replied, 42, 43  
 'I was barren and childless through thirty years of marriage. Every 44  
 hour of every day during those thirty years, day and night alike,  
 I prayed to the Most High. Then after thirty years, my God answered 45  
 my prayer and had mercy on my distress; he took note of my  
 sorrow and granted me a son. What happiness he brought to my  
 husband and myself and to all our neighbours! What praise we  
 gave to the Mighty God! I took great pains over his upbringing. 46

47 When he came of age, I chose a wife for him, and fixed the date of the wedding.

10 'But when my son entered his wedding-chamber, he fell down  
2 dead. So we all put out our lamps, and all my neighbours came to comfort me; I controlled my grief till the evening of the following day. When they had all ceased urging me to take comfort and control my grief, I rose and stole away in the night, and came  
4 here, as you can see, to this field. I have made up my mind never to go back to the town, but to stay here eating nothing and drinking nothing, and to continue my mourning and fasting unbroken till I die.'

5 At that I interrupted the train of my thoughts, and I spoke sternly  
6 to the woman: 'You are the most foolish woman in the world,'  
7 I said; 'are you blind to the grief and sufferings of our nation? It is for the sorrow and humiliation of Zion, the mother of us all, that you  
8 should mourn so deeply; you should share in our common mourning and sorrow. But you are deep in sorrow for your one son. Ask the earth and she will tell you; she must mourn for the thousands  
10 and thousands who come to birth upon her. From her we all originally sprang, and there are more to come. Almost all her children go  
11 to perdition, and their vast numbers are wiped out. Who then has the better right to be in mourning—the earth, who has lost such vast  
12 numbers, or you, whose sorrow is for one alone? You may say to me, "But my grief is very different from the earth's grief; I have lost the fruit of my own womb, which I brought to birth with pain and  
13 travail, but it is only in the course of nature that the vast numbers now alive on earth should depart in the same way as they have come."  
14 My answer to that is: at the cost of pain you have been a mother, but in the same way the earth has always been the mother of mankind, bearing fruit to earth's creator.

15 'Keep your sorrow to yourself, therefore, and bear your misfortunes bravely. If you will accept God's decree as just, then in due time you will receive your son back again, and win an honoured name  
17 among women. So go back to the town and to your husband.'

18 'No, I will not,' she replied; 'I will not go back to the town; I will stay here to die.'

19, 20 But I continued to argue with her. 'Do not do what you say,' I urged; 'be persuaded because of Zion's misfortunes, and take  
21 comfort to yourself from the sorrow of Jerusalem. You see how our

sanctuary has been laid waste, our altar demolished, and our temple destroyed. Our harps are unstrung, our hymns silenced, our shouts 22 of joy cut short; the light of the sacred lamp is out, and the ark of our covenant has been taken as spoil; the holy vessels are defiled, and the name which God has conferred on us is disgraced; our leading men<sup>a</sup> have been treated shamefully, our priests burnt alive, and the Levites taken off into captivity; our virgins have been raped and our wives ravished, our godfearing men carried off, and our children abandoned; our youths have been enslaved, and our strong warriors reduced to weakness. Worst of all, Zion, once sealed with God's own 23 seal, has forfeited its glory and is in the hands of our enemies. Then 24 throw off your own heavy grief, and lay all your sorrows aside; may the Mighty God restore you to his favour, may the Most High give you rest and peace after your troubles!'

Suddenly, while I was still speaking to the woman, I saw her face 25 begin to shine; her countenance flashed like lightning, and I shrank from her in terror. While I wondered what this meant, she suddenly 26 uttered a loud and terrible cry, which shook the earth. I looked up 27 and saw no longer a woman but a complete city, built<sup>b</sup> on massive foundations. I cried aloud in terror, 'Where is the angel Uriel, who 28 visited me before? It is his doing that I have fallen into this bewilderment, that all my hopes are shattered,<sup>c</sup> and all my prayers in vain.'

I was still speaking when the angel appeared who had visited me 29 before. When he saw me lying in a dead faint, unconscious on the 30 ground, he grasped me by my right hand, put strength into me, and raised me to my feet. 'What is the matter?' he asked. 'Why are you 31 overcome? What was it that disturbed your mind and made you faint?' 'It was because you deserted me', I replied. 'I did what 32 you told me: I came out to the field; and what I have seen here and can still see is beyond my power to relate.'

'Stand up like a man,' he said, 'and I will explain it to you.' 33

'Speak, my lord,' I replied; 'only do not abandon me and leave me 34 to die unsatisfied. For I have seen and I hear things beyond my 35 understanding—unless this is all an illusion and a dream. I beg you 36, 37 to tell me, my lord, the meaning of my vision.'

'Listen to me,' replied the angel, 'while I explain to you the 38

[a] *So some Vss.; Lat. our children.* [b] *Probable meaning, based on other Vss.; Lat. but a city was being built...* [c] *Or that my destiny turns out to be corruption.*

meaning of the things that terrify you; for the Most High has revealed  
39 many secrets to you. He has seen your blameless life, your unceasing  
40 grief for your people, and your deep mourning over Zion. Here then  
41 is the meaning of the vision. A little while ago you saw a woman in  
42 mourning, and tried to give her comfort; now you no longer see that  
43 woman, but a whole city. She told you she had lost her son, and this  
44 is the explanation. The woman you saw is Zion, which you now see as  
45 a city with all its buildings. She told you she was childless for thirty  
46 years; that was because there were three thousand years in which  
47 sacrifices were not yet offered in Zion. But then, after the three  
thousand years, Solomon built the city and offered the sacrifices;  
48 that was the time when the barren woman bore her son. She took  
great pains, she said, over his upbringing; that was the period when  
49 Jerusalem was inhabited. Then she told you of the great loss she  
suffered, how her son died on the day he entered his wedding-  
chamber; that was the destruction which overtook Jerusalem. Such  
then was the vision that you saw—the woman mourning for her son  
—and you tried to comfort her in her sufferings; this was the revela-  
50 tion you had to receive. Seeing your sincere grief and heartfelt  
sympathy for the woman, the Most High is now showing you her  
51 radiant glory and her beauty. That was why I told you to stay in a  
52 field where no house stood, for I knew that the Most High intended  
53 to send you this revelation. I told you to come to this field, where no  
54 foundation had been laid for any building; for in the place where the  
city of the Most High was to be revealed, no building made by man  
could stand.

55 ‘Have no fear then, Ezra, and set your trembling heart at rest; go  
into the city, and see the magnificence of the buildings, so far as your  
56 eyes have power to see it all. Then, after that, you shall hear as much  
57 as your ears have power to hear. You are more blessed than most other  
58 men, and few have such a name with the Most High as you have. Stay  
59 here till tomorrow night, when the Most High will show you in  
dreams and visions what he intends to do to the inhabitants of earth  
in the last days.’ I did as I was told and slept there that night and  
the next.

11 ON THE SECOND NIGHT I had a vision in a dream; I saw, rising  
2 from the sea, an eagle with twelve wings and three heads. I saw it  
spread its wings over the whole earth; and all the winds blew on it,

and the clouds<sup>a</sup> gathered. Out of its wings I saw rival wings sprout, 3  
which proved to be only small and stunted. Its heads lay still; even 4  
the middle head, which was bigger than the others, lay still between  
them. As I watched, the eagle rose on its wings to set itself up as 5  
ruler over the earth and its inhabitants. I saw it bring into subjection 6  
everything under heaven; it met with no opposition at all from any  
creature on earth. I saw the eagle stand erect on its talons, and it 7  
spoke aloud to its wings: 'Do not all wake at once,' it said; 'sleep in 8  
your places, and each wake up in turn; the heads are to be kept till 9  
the last.' I saw that the sound was not coming from its heads, but 10  
from the middle of its body. I counted its rival wings, and saw that 11  
there were eight of them.

As I watched, one of the wings on its right side rose and became 12  
ruler over the whole earth. After a time, its reign came to an end, 13  
and it disappeared from sight completely. Then the next one arose  
and established its rule, which it held for a long time. When its reign 14  
was coming to an end and it was about to disappear like the first one,  
a voice could be heard saying to it: 'You have ruled the world for so 15, 16  
long; now listen to my message before your time comes to disappear.  
None of your successors will achieve a reign as long as yours, nor 17  
even half as long.' Then the third wing arose, ruled the world for a 18  
time like its predecessors, and like them disappeared. In the same 19  
way all the wings came to power in succession, and in turn dis-  
appeared from sight.

As time went on, I saw the wings on the left<sup>b</sup> side also raise them- 20  
selves up to seize power. Some of them did so, and passed immedi-  
ately from sight, while others arose but never came to power. At this 21, 22  
point I noticed that two of the little wings were, like the twelve, no  
longer to be seen. Nothing was now left of the eagle's body except 23  
the three motionless heads and six little wings. As I watched, two of 24  
the six little wings separated from the rest and took up a place under  
the head on the right. The other four remained where they were;  
and I saw them planning to rise up and seize power. One rose, but 25, 26  
disappeared immediately; so too did the second, vanishing even  
more quickly than the first. I saw the last two planning to seize the 27  
kingship for themselves. But while they were still plotting, suddenly 28  
one of the heads woke from sleep, the one in the middle, the biggest 29  
of the three. I saw how it joined with the other two heads, and along 30, 31

[a] the clouds: *so some Vss.; Lat. omits.* [b] *So one Vs.; Lat. right.*

with them turned and devoured the two little wings which were  
 32 planning to seize power. This head got the whole earth into its grasp,  
 establishing an oppressive rule over all its inhabitants and a world-  
 33 wide kingdom mightier than any of the wings had ruled. But after  
 that I saw the middle head vanish just as suddenly as the wings  
 34 had done. There were two heads left, and they also seized power over  
 35 the earth and its inhabitants, but as I watched, the head on the right  
 devoured the head on the left.

36 Then I heard a voice which said to me: 'Look carefully at what  
 37 you see before you.' I looked, and saw what seemed to be a lion  
 roused from the forest; it roared as it came, and I heard it address  
 38 the eagle in a human voice. 'Listen to what I tell you', it said. 'The  
 39 Most High says to you: Are you not the only survivor of the four  
 beasts to which I gave the rule over my world, intending through  
 40-41 them to bring my ages to their end? You are the fourth beast, and  
 you have conquered all who went before, ruling over the whole  
 world and holding it in the grip of fear and harsh oppression. You  
 have lived<sup>a</sup> long in the world, governing it with deceit and with no  
 42 regard for truth. You have oppressed the gentle and injured the  
 peaceful, hating the truthful and loving liars; you have destroyed the  
 homes of the prosperous, and razed to the ground the walls of those  
 43 who had done you no harm. Your insolence is known to the Most  
 44 High, and your pride to the Mighty One. The Most High has  
 surveyed the periods he has fixed: they are now at an end, and his  
 45 ages have reached their completion. So you, eagle, must now dis-  
 appear and be seen no more, you and your terrible great wings, your  
 evil small wings, your cruel heads, your grim talons, and your whole  
 46 worthless body. Then all the earth will feel relief at its deliverance  
 from your violence, and look forward hopefully to the judgement  
 and mercy of its Creator.'

12 1, 2 While the lion was still addressing the eagle, I looked and saw the  
 one remaining head disappear. Then the two<sup>b</sup> wings which had gone  
 over to him arose and set themselves up as rulers. Their reign was  
 3 short and troubled, and when I looked at them they were already  
 vanishing. Then the eagle's entire body burst into flames, and the  
 earth was struck with terror.

So great was my alarm and fear that I awoke, and said to myself:

[a] You are the fourth... lived: *so some Vss.; Lat.* The fourth beast came and conquered  
 ...It has lived... [b] *So other Vss.; Lat. corrupt.*



'See the result of your attempt to discover the ways of the Most High! My mind is weary; I am utterly exhausted. The terrors of this night have completely drained my strength. So I will now pray to the Most High for strength to hold out to the end.' Then I said: 'My Master and Lord, if I have won your favour and stand higher in your approval than most men, if it is true that my prayers have reached your presence, then give me strength; reveal to me, my Lord, the exact interpretation of this terrifying vision, and so bring full consolation to my soul. For you have already judged me worthy to be shown the end of the present age.'

He said to me: 'Here is the interpretation of your vision. The eagle you saw rising from the sea represents the fourth kingdom in the vision seen by your brother Daniel. But he was not given the interpretation which I am now giving you or have already given you. The days are coming when the earth will be under an empire more terrible than any before. It will be ruled by twelve kings, one after another. The second to come to the throne will have the longest reign of all the twelve. That is the meaning of the twelve wings you saw.

'As for the voice which you heard speaking from the middle of the eagle's body, and not from its heads, this is what it means: After this second king's reign, great conflicts will arise, which will bring the empire into danger of falling; and yet it will not fall then, but will be restored to its original strength.

'As for the eight lesser wings which you saw growing from the eagle's wings, this is what they mean: The empire will come under eight kings whose reigns will be trivial and short-lived; two of them will come and go just before the middle of the period, four will be kept back until shortly before its end, and two will be left until the end itself.

'As for the three heads which you saw sleeping, this is what they mean: In the last years of the empire, the Most High will bring to the throne three kings, who will restore much of its strength, and rule<sup>a</sup> over the earth and its inhabitants more oppressively than any one before. They are called the eagle's heads, because they will complete and bring to a head its long series of wicked deeds. As for the greatest head, which you saw disappear, it signifies one of the kings, who will die in his bed, but in great agony. The two that

[a] who...rule: so some Vss.; Lat. and he will restore...and they will rule...

28 survived will be destroyed by the sword; one of them will fall by the sword of the other, who will himself fall by the sword in the last days.

29 'As for the two little wings that went over to the head on the right  
30 side, this is what they mean: They are the ones whom the Most High has reserved until the last days, and their reign, as you saw, was short and troubled.

31 'As for the lion which you saw coming from the forest, roused  
32 from sleep and roaring, which you heard addressing the eagle,  
33 taxing it with its wicked deeds and words, this is the Messiah whom  
34 the Most High has kept back until the end. He will address<sup>a</sup> those rulers, taxing them openly with their sins, their crimes, and their defiance. He will bring them alive to judgement; he will convict them and then destroy them. But he will be merciful to those of my people that remain, all who have been kept safe in my land; he will set them free and give them gladness, until the final day of judgement comes, about which I told you at the beginning.

35, 36 'That, then, is the vision which you saw, and its meaning. It is the secret of the Most High, which no one except yourself has proved  
37 worthy to be told. What you have seen you must therefore write in a  
38 book and deposit it in a hiding-place. You must also disclose these secrets to those of your people whom you know to be wise enough to  
39 understand them and to keep them safe. But stay here yourself for seven more days, to receive whatever revelation the Most High thinks fit to send you.' Then the angel left me.

40 When all the people heard that seven days had passed without my  
41 returning to the town, they assembled and came to me. 'What wrong or injury have we done you,' they asked me, 'that you have deserted  
42 us and settled here? Out of all the prophets you are the only one left to us. You are like the last cluster in a vineyard, like a lamp in the  
43 darkness, or a safe harbour for a ship in a storm. Have we not suffered enough? If you desert us, we had far better have been  
44 destroyed in the fire that burnt up Zion. We are no better than those who perished there.' Then they raised a loud lamentation.

46 I replied: 'Take courage, Israel; house of Jacob, lay aside your  
47 grief. The Most High bears you in mind, and the Mighty One has  
48 not for ever<sup>b</sup> forgotten you. I have not left you, nor abandoned you; I came here to pray for Zion in her distress, and to beg for mercy for

[a] He will address: *probable reading*; *Lat. defective*. [b] *So one Vs.*; *Lat. in strife*.

your sanctuary that has fallen so low. Go to your homes now, every 49  
one of you; and in a few days' time I will come back to you.'

So the people returned to the town as I told them, while I re- 50, 51  
mained in the field. I stayed there for seven days in obedience to the  
angel, eating nothing but what grew in the field, and living on that  
for the whole of the time.

THE SEVEN DAYS passed; and the next night I had a dream. In 13 1, 2  
my dream, a wind came up out of the sea and set the waves in  
turmoil. And this wind brought a human figure rising from the 3  
depths,<sup>a</sup> and as I watched, this man came flying<sup>b</sup> with the clouds of  
heaven. Wherever he turned his eyes, everything that they fell on  
was seized with terror; and wherever the sound of his voice reached, 4  
all who heard it melted like wax at the touch of fire.

Next I saw an innumerable host of men gathering from the four 5  
winds of heaven to wage war on the man who had risen from the sea.  
I saw that the man hewed out a vast mountain for himself, and flew 6  
up on to it. I tried to see from what quarter or place the mountain 7  
had been taken, but I could not. Then I saw that all who had 8  
gathered to wage war against the man were filled with fear, and yet  
they dared to fight against him. When he saw the hordes advancing 9  
to attack, he did not so much as lift a finger against them. He had no  
spear in his hand, no weapon at all; only, as I watched, he poured 10  
what seemed like a stream of fire out of his mouth, a breath of flame  
from his lips, and a storm of sparks from his tongue. All of them 11  
combined into one mass—the stream of fire, the breath of flame, and  
the great storm. It fell on the host advancing to join battle, and  
burnt up every man of them; suddenly all that enormous multitude  
had disappeared, leaving nothing but dust and ashes and a reek of  
smoke. I was dumbfounded at the sight.

After that, I saw the man coming down from the mountain and 12  
calling to himself a different company, a peaceful one. He was joined 13  
by great numbers of men, some with joy on their faces, others with  
sorrow. Some came from captivity; some brought others to him as  
an offering. I woke up in terror, and prayed to the Most High.  
I said, 'You have revealed these marvels to me, your servant, all the 14  
way through; you have judged me worthy to have my prayers  
answered. Now show me the meaning of this dream also. How 15, 16

[a] And... depths: so other Vss.; Lat. defective. [b] So other Vss.; Lat. grew strong.

terrible, to my thinking, it will be for all who survive to those days!  
 17 But how much worse for those who do not survive! Those who do  
 18 not survive will have the sorrow of knowing what is in store in the  
 19 last days and yet missing it. Those who do survive are to be pitied  
 for the terrible dangers and trials which, as these visions show, they  
 20 will have to face. But perhaps after all it is better to endure the  
 dangers and reach the goal than to vanish out of the world like a cloud  
 and never see the events of the last days.'

21 'Yes,' he replied, 'I will explain the meaning of this vision, and  
 22 tell you all that you ask. As for your question about those who sur-  
 23 vive, this is the answer: the very person from whom the danger will  
 then come will protect in danger those who have works and fidelity  
 24 laid up to their credit with the Most High. You may be assured  
 that those who survive are more highly blessed than those who die.

25 'This is what the vision means: The man you saw rising from the  
 26 depths of the sea is he whom the Most High has held in readiness  
 through many ages; he will himself deliver the world he has made,  
 27 and determine the lot of those who survive. As for the breath, fire,  
 28 and storm which you saw pouring from the mouth of the man, so that  
 without a spear or any weapon in his hand he destroyed the hordes  
 29 advancing to wage war against him, this is the meaning: The day is  
 near when the Most High will begin to bring deliverance to those on  
 30, 31 earth. Then men will all be filled with great alarm; they will plot to  
 make war on one another, city on city, region on region, nation on  
 32 nation, kingdom on kingdom. When this happens, and all the signs  
 that I have shown you come to pass, then my son will be revealed,  
 33 whom you saw as a man rising from the sea. On hearing his voice, all  
 the nations will leave their own territories and their separate wars,  
 34 and unite in a countless host, as you saw in your vision, with a  
 35 common intent to go and wage war against him. He will take his  
 36 stand on the summit of Mount Zion, and Zion will come into sight  
 before all men, complete and fully built. This corresponds to the  
 37 mountain which you saw hewn out, not by the hand of man. Then  
 my son will convict of their godless deeds the nations that confront  
 38 him. This will correspond to the storm you saw. He will taunt them  
 with their evil plottings and the tortures they are soon to endure. This  
 corresponds to the flame. And he will destroy them without effort  
 by means of<sup>a</sup> the law—and that is like the fire.

[a] by means of: *so one Vs., Lat. and.*

'Then you saw him collecting a different company, a peaceful one. 39  
They are the ten tribes which were taken off into exile in the time of 40  
King Hoshea, whom Shalmaneser king of Assyria took prisoner. He  
deported them beyond the River, and they were taken away into a  
strange country. But then they resolved to leave the country popu- 41  
lated by the Gentiles and go to a distant land never yet inhabited by  
man, and there at last to be obedient to their laws, which in their 42  
own country they had failed to keep. As they passed through the 43  
narrow passages of the Euphrates, the Most High performed miracles 44  
for them, stopping up the channels of the river until they had crossed  
over. Their journey through that region, which is called Arzareth, 45  
was long, and took a year and a half. They have lived there ever since, 46  
until this final age. Now they are on their way back, and once more 47  
the Most High will stop the channels of the river to let them cross.

'That is the meaning of the peaceful assembly that you saw. With 48  
them too are the survivors of your own people, all who are found  
inside my sacred boundary. So then, when the time comes for him 49  
to destroy the nations assembled against him, he will protect his  
people who are left, and show them many prodigies.' 50

'My lord, my master,' I asked, 'explain to me why the man that 51  
I saw rose up out of the depths of the sea.' He replied: 'It is beyond 52  
the power of any man to explore the deep sea and discover what is in  
it; in the same way no one on earth can see my son and his company  
until the appointed day. Such then is the meaning of your vision. 53  
The revelation has been given to you, and to you alone, because you 54  
have given up your own affairs, and devoted yourself entirely to  
mine, and to the study of my law. You have taken wisdom as your 55  
guide in everything, and called understanding your mother. That is 56  
why I have given this revelation to you; there is a reward in store for  
you with the Most High. In three days' time I will speak with you  
again, and tell you some momentous and wonderful things.'

So I went away to the field, giving worship and praise to the Most 57  
High for the wonders he performed from time to time and for his 58  
providential control of the passing ages and what happens in them.  
There I remained for three days.

*The writing of the sacred books*

14 **O**N THE THIRD DAY I was sitting under an oak-tree, when a  
 2 voice came to me from a bush, saying, 'Ezra, Ezra!' 'Here  
 3 I am, Lord', I answered, and rose to my feet. The voice went on:  
 4 'I revealed myself in the bush, and spoke to Moses, when my people  
 4 Israel was in slavery in Egypt, and sent him to lead my people out of  
 Egypt. I brought him up on to Mount Sinai, and kept him with me  
 5 for many days. I told him of many wonders, showing him the  
 6 secrets of the ages and the end of time, and instructed him what to  
 7 make known and what to conceal. So too I now give this order to you:  
 8 commit to memory the signs I have shown you, the visions you have  
 9 seen, and the explanations you have been given. You yourself are  
 about to be taken away from the world of men, and thereafter you  
 will remain with my son and with those like you, until the end of  
 10, 11 time. The world has lost its youth, and time is growing old. For the  
 whole of time is in twelve divisions; nine<sup>a</sup> divisions and half the  
 12, 13 tenth have already passed, and only two and a half still remain. Set  
 your house in order, therefore; give warnings to your nation, and  
 comfort to those in need of it; and take your leave of mortal life.  
 14 Put away your earthly cares, and lay down your human burdens;  
 15 strip off your weak nature, set aside the anxieties that vex you, and be  
 16 ready to depart quickly from this life. However great the evils you  
 17 have witnessed, there are worse to come. As this ageing world grows  
 18 weaker and weaker, so will evils increase for its inhabitants. Truth  
 will move farther away, and falsehood come nearer. The eagle that  
 you saw in your vision is already on the wing.'

19, 20 'May I speak<sup>b</sup> in your presence, Lord?' I replied. 'I am to  
 depart, by your command, after giving warning to those of my people  
 who are now alive. But who will give warning to those born here-  
 after? The world is shrouded in darkness, and its inhabitants are  
 21 without light. For your law was destroyed in the fire, and so no one  
 22 can know about the deeds you have done or intend to do. If I have  
 won your favour, fill me with your holy spirit, so that I may write  
 down the whole story of the world from the very beginning, every-  
 thing that is contained in your law; then men will have the chance

[a] *Probable reading; Lat. ten.* [b] *May I speak: so other Vss.; Lat. omits.*

to find the right path, and, if they choose, gain life in the last days.'

'Go,' he replied, 'call the people together, and tell them not to look for you for forty days. Have a large number of writing-tablets ready, and take with you Seraiah and Dibri, Shelemiah, Ethan, and Asiel, five men all trained to write quickly. Then return here, and I will light a lamp of understanding in your mind, which will not go out until you have finished all that you are to write. When your work is complete, some of it you must make public; the rest you must give to wise men to keep secret. Tomorrow at this time you shall begin to write.'

I went as I was ordered and summoned all the people, and said: 'Israel, listen to what I say. Our ancestors lived originally in Egypt as foreigners. They were rescued from that land, and were given the law which offers life. But they disobeyed it, and you have followed their example. Then you were given a land of your own, the land of Zion; but you, like your ancestors, sinned and abandoned the way laid down for you by the Most High. Because he is a just judge he took away from you in due time what he had given. And so you are now here in exile, and your fellow-countrymen are still farther away. If then you will direct your understanding and instruct your minds, you shall be kept safe in life and meet with mercy after you die. For after death will come the judgement; we shall be restored to life, and then the names of the just will be known and the deeds of the godless exposed. From this moment no one must come to talk to me, nor look for me for the next forty days.'

I took with me the five men as I had been told, and we went away to the field, and there we stayed. On the next day I heard a voice calling me, which said: 'Ezra, open your mouth and drink what I give you.' So I opened my mouth, and was handed a cup full of what seemed like water, except that its colour was the colour of fire. I took it and drank, and as soon as I had done so my mind began to pour forth a flood of understanding, and wisdom grew greater and greater within me, for I retained my memory unimpaired. I opened my mouth to speak, and I continued to speak unceasingly. The Most High gave understanding to the five men, who took turns at writing down what was said, using characters<sup>a</sup> which they had not known before. They remained at work through the forty days, writing all

[a] *Probable reading, based on other Vss.; Lat. corrupt.*

43 day, and taking food only at night. But as for me, I spoke all through  
 44 the day; even at night I was not silent. In the forty days, ninety-  
 45 four<sup>a</sup> books were written. At the end of the forty days the Most  
 High spoke to me. 'Make public the books you wrote first,' he said,  
 46 'to be read by good and bad alike. But the last seventy books are to be  
 47 kept back, and given to none but the wise among your people. They  
 contain a stream of understanding, a fountain of wisdom, a flood of  
 48 knowledge.' And I did so.

### *Prophecies of doom*

15 **P**ROCLAIM TO MY PEOPLE the words of prophecy which I give  
 2 you to speak, says the Lord; and have them written down, because  
 3 they are trustworthy and true. Have no fear of plots against you,  
 4 and do not be troubled by the unbelief of those who oppose you. For  
 everyone who does not believe will die because of his unbelief.<sup>b</sup>  
 5 Beware, says the Lord, I am letting loose terrible evils on the  
 6 world, sword and famine, death and destruction, because wickedness  
 has spread over the whole earth and there is no room for further  
 7, 8 deeds of violence. Therefore the Lord says, I will not keep silence  
 about their godless sins; I will not tolerate their wicked deeds. See  
 how the blood of innocent victims cries to me for vengeance, and the  
 9 souls of the just never cease to plead with me! I will most surely  
 avenge them, says the Lord, and will hear the plea of all the innocent  
 10 blood that has been shed. My people are being led to the slaughter  
 11 like sheep. I will no longer allow them to remain in Egypt, but will  
 use all my power to rescue them; I will strike the Egyptians with  
 12 plagues, as I did before, and destroy their whole land. How Egypt  
 will mourn, shaken to its very foundations, when it is scourged and  
 13 chastised by the Lord! How the tillers of the soil will mourr., when  
 the seed fails to grow, and when their trees are devastated by blight  
 14 and hail and terrible storm!<sup>c</sup> Alas for the world and its inhabitants!  
 15 The sword that will destroy them is not far away. Nation will draw  
 16 sword against nation and go to war. Stable government will be at an  
 end; one faction will prevail over another, caring nothing in their

[a] *So other Vss.; Lat. corrupt.* [b] *Or in his unbelief.* [c] *Probable meaning; Lat. obscure.*



day of power for king or leading man of rank. A man may want to  
visit a city, but will not be able to do so; for ambition and rivalry will  
have reduced cities to chaos, destroyed houses, and filled men with  
panic. A man will violently assault his neighbour's house and  
plunder his goods; no pity will restrain him, when he is in the grip of  
famine and grinding misery.

See how I summon before me all the kings of the earth, says God,  
from sunrise and south wind, from east and south,<sup>a</sup> to turn back and  
repay what they have been given. I will do to them as they are doing  
to my chosen people even to this day; I will pay them back in their  
own coin.

These are the words of the Lord God: I will show sinners no pity;  
the sword will not spare those murderers who stain the ground with  
innocent blood. The Lord's anger has overflowed in fire to scorch  
the earth to its foundations and consume sinners like burning straw.  
Alas for sinners who flout my commands! says the Lord; I will show  
them no mercy. Away from me, you rebels! Do not bring your  
pollution near my holiness. The Lord well knows all who sin against  
him, and has consigned them to death and destruction. Already  
disaster has fallen upon the world, and you will never escape it; God  
will refuse to rescue you, because you have sinned against him.

How terrible the sight of what is coming from the east! Hordes of  
dragons from Arabia will sally forth with countless chariots, and  
from the first day of their advance their hissing will spread across the  
land, to fill all who hear them with fear and consternation. The  
Carmanians, mad with rage, will rush like wild boars out of the  
forest, advancing in full force to join battle with them, and will  
devastate whole tracts of Assyria with their tusks. But then the  
dragons will summon up their native fury, and will prove the  
stronger. They will rally and join forces, and fall on them with over-  
whelming might until they are routed, until their power is silenced,  
and every one of them turns to flight. Then their way will be blocked  
by a lurking enemy from Assyria, who will destroy one of them. Fear  
and panic will spread in their army, and wavering among their kings.

See the clouds stretching from east and north to south! Their  
appearance is hideous, full of fury and tempest. They will clash  
together, they will pour over the land a vast storm;<sup>b</sup> blood, shed by  
the sword, will reach as high as a horse's belly, a man's thigh, or a

[a] south: *probable reading*; *Lat.* Lebanon. [b] storm: *probable meaning*; *Lat.* obscure.

37 camel's hock. Terror and trembling will cover the earth; all who see  
 38 the raging fury will shudder and be stricken with panic. Then vast  
 storm-clouds will approach from north and south, and others from  
 39 the west. But the winds from the east will be stronger still, and will  
 hold in check the raging cloud and its leader; and the storm<sup>a</sup> which  
 was bent on destruction will be fiercely driven back to the south and  
 40 west by the winds from the east. Huge mighty clouds, full of fury,  
 will mount up and ravage the whole land and its inhabitants; a  
 41 terrible storm<sup>a</sup> will sweep over the great and the powerful, with fire  
 and hail and flying swords; and a deluge of water will flood all the  
 42 fields and rivers. They will flatten to the ground cities and walls,  
 43 mountains and hills, trees in the woods and crops in the fields. They  
 44 will advance all the way to Babylon, and blot it out. When they reach  
 it, they will surround it, and let loose a storm<sup>a</sup> in all its fury. The dust  
 and smoke will reach the sky, and all her neighbours will mourn for  
 45 Babylon. Any of her survivors will be enslaved by her destroyers.

46 And you, Asia, who have shared the beauty and the splendour of  
 47 Babylon, alas for you, poor wretch! Like her you have dressed up  
 your daughters as whores, to attract and catch your lovers who have  
 48 always lusted for you. You have copied all the schemes and practices  
 49 of that vile harlot. Therefore God says, I will bring upon you terrible  
 evils: widowhood and poverty, famine, sword, and plague, bringing  
 50 ruin to your homes, bringing violence and death. Your strength and  
 splendour will wither like a flower, when that scorching heat bears  
 51 down upon you. Then you will be a poor weak woman, bruised,  
 beaten, and wounded, unable to receive your wealthy lovers any  
 52, 53 more. Should I be so fierce with you, says the Lord, if you had not  
 killed my chosen ones continually, gloating over the blows you struck  
 them, and hurling your drunken taunts at their corpses?

54, 55 Paint your face; make yourself beautiful! The harlot's pay shall be  
 56 yours; you will get what you have earned. What you do to my chosen  
 people, God will do to you, says the Lord; he will consign you to a  
 57 terrible fate. Your children will die of hunger; you will fall by the  
 sword, your cities will be blotted out, and all your people will fall on  
 58 the field of battle. Those who are up on the mountains will be dying  
 of hunger, and their hunger and thirst will force them to gnaw their  
 59 own flesh and drink their own blood. You will be foremost in misery,  
 60 and still there will be more to come. As the victors go past on their

[a] storm: *probable meaning; Lat. obscure.*

way home from the sack of Babylon, they will smash your peaceful city, destroy a great part of your territory, and bring much of your splendour to an end. They will destroy you—you will be stubble, 61 and they the fire. They will completely devour you and your cities, 62 your land and your mountains, and will burn all your forests and your fruit-trees. They will make your children prisoners and plunder 63 your property; and not a trace will be left of your splendid beauty.

Alas for you, Babylon and Asia! Alas for you, Egypt and Syria! 16 Put on sackcloth and hair-shirt, and raise a howl of lamentation for 2 your sorrows; your doom is close at hand. The sword is let loose against 3 you, and who will turn it aside? Fire is let loose upon you, and who 4 will put it out? Calamities have been let loose against you, and who 5 is there to stop them? Can any man stop a hungry lion in a forest, or 6 put out a fire among the stubble once it has begun to blaze? Can 7 any man stop an arrow shot by a strong archer? When the Lord God 8 sends calamities, who can stop them? When his anger overflows in 9 fire, who can put it out? When the lightning flashes, who will not 10 tremble? When it thunders, who will not shake with dread? When it 11 is the Lord who utters his threats, is there any man who will not be crushed to the ground at his approach? The earth is shaken to its 12 very foundations, and the sea is churned up from its depths; the waves and all the fish with them are in turmoil before the presence of the Lord and the majesty of his strength. For strong is his arm 13 which bends the bow, and sharp the arrows which he shoots; once they are on their way, they will not stop before they reach the ends of the earth. Calamities are let loose, and will not turn back before 14 they strike the earth. The fire is alight and will not be put out until it 15 has burnt up earth's foundations. An arrow shot by a powerful 16 archer does not turn back; no more will the calamities be recalled which are let loose against the earth.

Alas, alas for me! Who will rescue me on that day? When troubles 17, 18 come, many will groan; when famine strikes, many will die; when wars break out, empires will tremble; when the calamities come, all will be filled with terror. What will men do then, in the face of calamity? Famine and plague, suffering and hardship, are scourges 19 sent to teach men better ways. But even so they will not abandon 20 their crimes, nor keep in mind their scourging. A time will come 21 when food grows cheap, so cheap that they will imagine they have been sent peace and prosperity. But at that very moment the earth

22 will become a hotbed of disasters—sword, famine, and anarchy. Most  
of its inhabitants will die in the famine; and those who survive the  
23 famine will be destroyed by the sword. The dead will be tossed out  
like dung, and there will be no one to offer any comfort. For the  
24 earth will be left empty, and its cities a ruin. None will be left to till  
the ground and sow it. The trees will bear their fruits, but who will  
25 pick them? The grapes will ripen, but who will tread them? There  
will be vast desolation everywhere. A man will long to see a human  
26 face or hear a human voice. For out of a whole city, only ten will  
survive; in the country-side, only two will be left, hiding in the  
27 forest or in holes in the rocks. Just as in an olive-grove three or four  
olives might be left on each tree, or as a few grapes in a vineyard  
28 might be overlooked by the sharp-eyed pickers, so also in those days  
three or four will be overlooked by those who search the houses to  
29 kill. The earth will be left a desert, and the fields will be overrun  
with briers; thorns will grow over all the roads and paths, because  
30 there will be no sheep to tread them. Girls will live in mourning  
with none to marry them, women will mourn because they have no  
husbands, their daughters will mourn because they have no one to  
31 support them. The young men who should have married them will  
be killed in the war, and the husbands wiped out by the famine.

35 BUT LISTEN to me, you who are the Lord's servants, and take my  
words to heart. This is the word of the Lord. Receive it, and do  
36 not disbelieve what he says. Calamities are here, close at hand, and  
will not delay. When a pregnant woman is in the ninth month, and  
37 the moment of her child's birth is drawing near, there will be two or  
three hours in which her womb will suffer pangs of agony, and then  
38 the child will come from the womb without a moment's delay; in the  
same way calamities will come on the earth without delay, and the  
world will groan under the pangs that grip it.

40 Listen to my words, my people; get ready for battle, and when the  
calamities surround you, be as though you were strangers on earth.  
41 The seller must expect to have to run for his life, the buyer to lose  
what he buys; the merchant must expect to make no profit, the  
42 builder never to live in the house he builds. The sower must not  
expect to reap, nor the pruner to gather his grapes. Those who  
43 marry must expect no children; the unmarried must think of them-  
selves as widowed. For all labour is labour in vain. Their fruits will  
45, 46

be gathered by foreigners, who will plunder their goods, pull down  
 their houses, and take their children captive. If they have children,  
 they will have been bred only for captivity and famine; any who 47  
 make money do so only to have it plundered. The more care they  
 lavish on their cities, houses, and property, and on their own persons,  
 the fiercer will be my indignation against their sins, says the Lord. 48  
 Like the indignation of a virtuous woman towards a prostitute, so 49, 50  
 will be the indignation of justice towards wickedness with all her  
 finery; she will accuse her to her face, when the champion arrives to  
 expose all sin upon earth. Do not imitate wickedness, therefore, and 51  
 her actions. For in a very short time she will be swept from the earth, 52  
 and the reign of justice over us will begin.

The sinner must not deny that he has sinned; he will only bring 53  
 burning coals on to his own head if he says, 'I have committed no  
 sin against the majesty of God.' For the Lord knows all that men do; 54  
 he knows their plans, their schemes, and their inmost thoughts. He 55  
 said, 'Let the earth be made', and it was made; and 'Let the heavens  
 be made', and they were made. It was by the Lord's word that the 56  
 stars were fixed in their places; the number of the stars is known to  
 him. He looks into the depths with their treasures; he has measured 57  
 the sea and everything it contains. By his word he confined the sea 58  
 within the bounds of the waters, and above the water he suspended  
 the land. He spread out the sky like a vault, and made it secure upon 59  
 the waters. He provided springs in the desert, and pools on the 60  
 mountain-tops as the source of rivers flowing down to water the  
 earth. He created man, and placed a heart in the middle of his body; 61  
 he gave him spirit, life, and understanding, the very breath of 62  
 Almighty God who created the whole world and searches out secret  
 things in secret places. He knows well your plans and all your 63  
 inward thoughts. Alas for sinners who try to hide their sins! The 64  
 Lord will scrutinize all their deeds; he will call you all to account.  
 You will be covered with confusion, when your sins are brought into 65  
 the open, and your wicked deeds stand up to accuse you on that day.  
 What can you do? How can you hide your sins from God and his 66  
 angels? God is your judge: fear him! Abandon your sins, and have 67  
 done with your wicked deeds for ever! Then God will set you free  
 from all distress.

Fierce flames are being kindled to burn you. A great horde will 68  
 descend on you; they will seize some of you and make you eat pagan

69 sacrifices. Those who give in to them will be derided, taunted, and  
70 trampled on. In place after place<sup>a</sup> and in all the neighbourhood  
71 there will be a violent attack on those who fear the Lord. Their  
enemies will be like madmen, plundering and destroying without  
72 mercy all who still fear the Lord. They will destroy and plunder their  
73 property, and throw them out of their homes. Then it will be seen  
that my chosen people have stood the test like gold in the assayer's  
fire.

74 Listen, you whom I have chosen, says the Lord; the days of harsh  
75 suffering are close at hand, but I will rescue you from them. Away  
76 with your fears and doubts! For God is your leader. You who  
follow my commandments and instructions, says the Lord God,  
must not let your sins weigh you down, nor your wicked deeds get  
77 the better of you. Alas for those who are entangled in their sins, and  
overrun with their wicked deeds! They are like a field overrun by  
78 bushes, with brambles across the path and no way through, com-  
pletely shut off and doomed to destruction by fire.

[a] In place after place: *possible meaning; Lat. obscure.*

# TOBIT

## *The troubles of Tobit*

**T**HIS IS THE STORY of Tobit, son of Tobiel, son of <sup>1</sup> Hananiel, son of Aduel, son of Gabael, son of Raphael, son of Raguel, of the family of Asiel, of the tribe of Naphtali. He was taken captive in the time of Shalmaneser<sup>a</sup> king of Assyria, <sup>2</sup> from Thisbe which is south of Kedesb Naphtali in Upper Galilee above Hazor, behind the road to the west, north of Peor.

I, TOBIT, MADE truth and righteousness my lifelong guide; I did <sup>3</sup> many acts of charity for my kinsmen, those of my nation who had gone into captivity with me at Nineveh in Assyria. When I was quite <sup>4</sup> young in my own country, Israel, the whole tribe of Naphtali my ancestor broke away from the dynasty of David,<sup>b</sup> and from Jerusalem, the city chosen out of all the tribes of Israel as the one place of sacrifice. It was there that God's dwelling-place, the temple, had been consecrated, built to last for all generations. All my kinsmen, <sup>5</sup> the whole house of Naphtali my ancestor, sacrificed on the mountains of Galilee to the calf which Jeroboam, king of Israel, had made in Dan; at the festivals I was the only one to make the frequent <sup>6</sup> journey to Jerusalem prescribed for all Israel as an eternal commandment. I used to hurry off to Jerusalem with the firstfruits of crops and herds, the tithes of the cattle, and the first shearings of the sheep; and I gave them to the priests of Aaron's line for the altar, and the <sup>7</sup> tithe of wine, corn, olive oil, pomegranates and other fruits to the Levites ministering in Jerusalem. The second tithe for the six years I converted into money, and I went and distributed it in Jerusalem year by year among the orphans and widows, and the converts who <sup>8</sup> had attached themselves to Israel. Every third year when I brought it and gave it to them, we held a feast according to the rule laid down in the law of Moses and the instructions given by Deborah the mother of Hananiel our grandfather; for my father had died leaving me an orphan.

When I came of age I took a wife from our kindred, and had a son <sup>9</sup>

[a] *Gk.* Enemessaros. [b] *Gk.* adds my ancestor.

10 by her whom I called Tobias. After the deportation to Assyria when  
I was taken captive and came to Nineveh, everyone of my kindred  
11 and nation ate gentile food; but I myself scrupulously avoided doing  
12, 13 so. Since I was whole-heartedly mindful of my God, the Most High  
endowed me with a presence which won me the favour of Shal-  
14 maneser, and I became his buyer of supplies. As long as he lived  
I used to travel to Media and buy for him there. I deposited bags of  
money to the value of ten talents of silver with my kinsman Gabael  
15 son of Gabri in Media. When Shalmaneser died and was succeeded  
by his son Sennacherib, the roads to Media passed out of Assyrian  
control and I could no longer make the journey.

16 In the time of Shalmaneser, I did many acts of charity for my  
17 fellow-countrymen: I shared my food with the hungry and provided  
clothes for the naked. If I saw the dead body of any man of my race  
18 lying outside the wall of Nineveh, I buried it. I buried all those who  
fell victim to Sennacherib after his flight from Judaea, when the  
King of heaven executed judgement on him for all his blasphemies,  
and in his rage he killed many of the Israelites. I stole their bodies  
away and buried them, and Sennacherib looked for them but could  
19 not find them. One of the Ninevites informed the king that I was  
giving burial to his victims; so I went into hiding. When I learnt  
that the king knew about me and that I was wanted for execution,  
20 I took fright and ran away. All my property was seized and put into  
the royal treasury; I was left with nothing but Anna my wife and my  
21 son Tobias. However, less than forty days afterwards, the king was  
murdered by two of his sons. They took refuge in the mountains of  
Ararat, and his son Esarhaddon succeeded him. He appointed  
Ahikar son of my brother Anael to supervise all the finances of his  
22 kingdom; he had control of the entire administration. Then Ahikar  
interceded on my behalf and I came back to Nineveh. For he had  
been chief cupbearer, keeper of the privy seal, comptroller, and  
treasurer when Sennacherib was king of Assyria; and Esarhaddon  
renewed the appointments. Ahikar was my nephew and so one of my  
kinsmen.

2 DURING THE REIGN of Esarhaddon, I returned to my house, and  
my wife Anna and my son Tobias were restored to me. At our  
festival of Pentecost, that is the Feast of Weeks, a good dinner was  
2 prepared for me and I sat down to eat. The table was laid and a



lavish meal was put before me. I said to my son Tobias: 'Go, my boy, and if you can find any poor man of our captive people in Nineveh who is whole-heartedly mindful of God, bring him and he shall share my dinner. I will wait for you until you return.' Tobias 3 went to look for a poor man of our people, but he came back and said, 'Father!' 'Yes, my son?' I replied. He answered, 'Father, one of our nation has been murdered and his body is lying in the market-place. He was strangled only a moment ago.' I jumped up and left 4 my dinner untasted. I took the body from the square and put it in one of the outbuildings until sunset when I could bury it; then I went home, duly bathed myself, and ate my food in sorrow. 5 I recalled the saying of the prophet Amos in the passage about 6 Bethel:

'Your feasts shall be turned into mourning,  
and all your songs<sup>a</sup> into lamentation',

and I wept. After sunset I went and dug a grave and buried the 7 body. The neighbours jeered at me and said: 'Is he no longer afraid? 8 He ran away last time, when they were hunting for him to put him to death for this very offence; and here he is burying the dead again!' That night I bathed myself and went into my courtyard. I lay down 9 to sleep by the courtyard wall, leaving my face uncovered because of the heat. I did not know that there were sparrows in the wall above 10 me; and their droppings fell, still warm, right into my eyes and produced white patches. I went to the doctors to be cured, but the more they treated me with their ointments, the more my eyes were blinded by the white patches, until I lost my sight. For four years I was blind. All my kinsmen grieved for me, and Ahikar looked after me for two years until he moved to Elymais.

During that time my wife Anna used to earn money by women's 11 work. When she took what she had done to her employers they would pay her wages. One day, the seventh of Dystrus, when she had cut off 12 the piece she had woven and delivered it, the owners not only paid her in full, but also gave her a kid from their herd of goats to take home. When my wife came in to me the kid began to bleat. I called 13 out to her: 'Where does that kid come from? I hope it was not stolen? Give it back to its owners; we have no right to eat anything stolen.' She assured me: 'It was given me as a present, over and 14

[a] *So one Vs. (compare Amos 8. 10); Gk. ways.*

above my wages.' I did not believe her and insisted that she should give it back to its owners, and I blushed with shame for what she had done. She retorted: 'So much for all your good works and acts of charity! Now we can see what you are!'

- 3 In deep distress I groaned and wept, and as I groaned I prayed:  
2 'Thou art just, O Lord, and all thy acts are just; in all thy ways  
3 thou art merciful and true; thou art judge of the world. Remember  
me now, Lord, and look upon me. Do not punish me for the sins and  
4 errors which I and my fathers have committed. We have sinned  
against thee and disobeyed thy commandments, and thou hast given  
us up to plunder, captivity, and death, until we have become a byword,  
a proverb, and a taunt to all the nations among whom thou hast  
5 scattered us. I acknowledge the justice of thy many judgements, the  
due penalty for my sins, for we have not obeyed thy commandments  
6 and have not lived in loyal obedience before thee. And now deal  
with me at thy pleasure, and command that my life be taken away, so  
that I may be removed from the face of the earth and turned to  
earth. I should be better dead than alive, for I have had to hear  
undeserved reproaches and am in deep grief. Lord, command that  
I may be released from this misery; let me go to my long home; do  
not turn thy face from me, O Lord. It is better for me to die than to  
live in such misery and to hear such reproaches.'
- 7 On that same day it happened that Sarah, the daughter of Raguel  
who lived at Ecbatana in Media, also had to listen to reproaches from  
8 one of her father's maidservants, because she had been given in  
marriage to seven husbands, and before the marriage could be  
regularly consummated they had all been killed by the wicked demon  
Asmodaeus. The maidservant said to her: 'It is you who kill your  
husbands! You have already been given in marriage to seven, and  
9 you have not borne the name of any one of them. Why punish us  
because they are dead? Go and join your husbands! I hope we never  
see son or daughter of yours!'
- 10 She was sad at heart that day, and went in tears up to the attic in  
her father's house meaning to hang herself. But she had second  
thoughts and said to herself: 'Perhaps they will reproach my father  
and say to him, "You had one dear daughter and she hanged herself  
because of her troubles", and so I shall bring my aged father in sorrow  
to the grave. No, I will not hang myself; it would be better to beg  
11 the Lord to let me die and not live on to hear such reproaches.' Then

at once she spread out her hands towards the window in prayer and said: 'Praise to thee, merciful God, praise to thy name for ever; let all thy works praise thee for evermore. Now I lift up my eyes and look to thee. Command me to be removed from this earth so that I may no longer hear such reproaches. Thou knowest, Lord, that I am a virgin, guiltless of intercourse with any man; I have not disgraced my name nor my father's name in the land of my exile. I am my father's only child; he has no other to be his heir, nor has he any near kinsman or relative who might marry me, and for whom I should stay alive. Already seven husbands of mine have died. What have I to live for any longer? If it is not thy will, O Lord, to let me die, listen now to my complaint.'

At that very time the prayers of both of them were heard in the glorious presence of God. His angel Raphael was sent to cure them both of their troubles: Tobit, by removing the white patches from his eyes so that he might see God's light again, and Sarah daughter of Raguel by giving her in marriage to Tobias son of Tobit and by setting her free from the wicked demon Asmodaeus; for it was the destiny of Tobias and not of any other suitor to possess her. At the moment when Tobit went back from the courtyard into his house, Sarah daughter of Raguel came down from the attic.

### *The adventures of Tobias*

THAT SAME DAY Tobit remembered the silver that he had deposited with Gabael at Rages in Media, and he said to himself, 'I have asked for death; before I die ought I not to send for my son Tobias and explain to him about this money?' So he sent for Tobias, and when he came he said to him: 'Give me decent burial. Show proper respect to your mother, and do not leave her in the lurch as long as she lives; do what will please her, and never grieve her heart in any way. Remember, my son, all the dangers she faced for your sake while you were in her womb. When she dies, bury her beside me in the same grave. And remember the Lord every day of your life. Never deliberately do what is wrong or break his commandments. As long as you live do what is right. Do not fall into evil ways; for an honest life leads to prosperity. To all who keep the law,

19 the Lord gives good guidance, and as he chooses he humbles men to the grave below.<sup>a</sup> Now, my son, remember these commands; let them never be effaced from your mind.

20 'Well now, my boy, let me tell you that I have ten talents of silver  
21 on deposit with Gabael son of Gabri, at Rages in Media. Do not be anxious because we have become poor; there is great wealth waiting for you, if only you fear God and avoid all wickedness and do what is good in the sight of the Lord your God.'

5 Then Tobias said: 'I will do all that you have told me, father.  
2 But how shall I be able to get this money from him, since he does not know me and I do not know him? What proof of identity shall I give him to make him believe me and give me this money? Also I do not  
3 know the roads to Media or how to get there.' To this Tobit replied: 'He gave me his note of hand, and I gave him mine, which I divided in two. We took one part each, and I put mine with the money. It is twenty years since I made this deposit. And now, my boy, find someone reliable to go with you, and we will pay him up to the time of your return; then go and recover the money from Gabael.'

4 Tobias went out to find a man who knew the way and would

[a] To all . . . below: *in place of these words some witnesses have* To all who keep the law (7) give alms from what you possess and never give with a grudging eye. Do not turn your face away from any poor man, and God will not turn away his face from you. (8) Let your almsgiving match your means. If you have little, do not be ashamed to give the little you can afford; (9) you will be laying up a sound insurance against the day of adversity. (10) Almsgiving saves the giver from death and keeps him from going down into darkness. (11) All who give alms are making an offering acceptable to the Most High.

(12) 'Beware, my son, of fornication; above all choose your wife from the race of your ancestors. Do not take a foreign wife who is not of your father's tribe, because we are descendants of the prophets. Remember, my son, that Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our ancestors, back to the earliest days, all chose wives from their kindred. They were blessed in their children, and their descendants shall possess the earth. (13) And you like them, my son, must love your kindred. Do not be too proud to take a wife from among the women of your own nation. Pride breeds ruin and anarchy, and the waster declines into poverty; waste is the mother of starvation.

(14) 'Pay your workmen their wages the same day; do not make any man wait for his money. If you serve God you will be repaid. Be circumspect, my son, in all that you do, and show yourself well-bred in all your behaviour. (15) Do not do to anyone what you yourself would hate. Do not drink to excess and so let drunkenness become a habit. (16) Give food to the hungry and clothes to the naked. Whatever you have beyond your own needs, give away to the poor, and do not give grudgingly. (17) Pour out your wine and offer your bread on the tombs of the righteous; but give nothing to sinners. (18) Ask any sensible man for his advice; do not despise any advice that may help you. (19) Praise the Lord God at all times and ask him to guide your course. Then all you do and all you plan will turn out well. The heathen all lack such guidance; it is the Lord himself who gives all good things, or humbles men at will, as he chooses.

accompany him to Media, and found himself face to face with the angel Raphael. Not knowing he was an angel of God, he questioned him: 'Where do you come from, young man?' 'I am an Israelite,' he replied, 'one of your fellow-countrymen, and I have come here to find work.' Tobias asked, 'Do you know the road to Media?' 'Yes,' he said, 'I have often been there; I am familiar with all the routes and know them well. I have often travelled into Media and used to lodge with Gabael our fellow-countryman who lives there in Rages.<sup>a</sup> It is two full days' journey from Ecbatana to Rages; for Rages is in the hills, and Ecbatana is in the middle of the plain.' Tobias said: 'Wait for me, young man, while I go in and tell my father. I need you to go with me and will pay you your wages.' 'All right, I will wait,' he said; 'only do not be too long.'

Tobias went in and told his father. 'I have found a fellow-Israelite to accompany me', he said. His father replied, 'Call the man in, my son. I want to find out his family and tribe and make sure that he will be a trustworthy companion for you.'

Tobias went out and called him: 'Young man, my father is asking for you.' He went in, and Tobit greeted him first. To Raphael's reply, 'May all be well with you!', Tobit retorted: 'How can anything be well with me now? I am a blind man; I cannot see the light of heaven, but lie in darkness like the dead who cannot see the light. Though still alive, I am as good as dead. I hear men's voices, but the men I do not see.' Raphael answered: 'Take heart; in God's design your cure is at hand. Take heart.' Tobit went on: 'My son Tobias wishes to travel to Media. Can you go with him as his guide? I will pay you, my friend.' 'Yes,' he said, 'I can go with him; I know all the roads. I have often been to Media; I have travelled over all the plains and mountains there, and am familiar with all its roads.' Tobit said to him, 'Tell me, my friend, what family and tribe you belong to.' He asked, 'Why need you know my tribe?' Tobit said, 'I do indeed wish to know whose son you are, my friend, and what your name is.' 'I am Azarias,' he replied, 'son of the older Ananias, one of your kinsmen.'

Tobit said to him: 'Good luck and a safe journey to you! Do not be angry with me, my friend, because I wished to know the facts of your descent. It turns out that you are a kinsman, and a man of good family. I knew Ananias and Nathan the two sons of the older

[a] *Probable reading (compare 4.1); Gk. Ecbatana.*

Semelias. They used to go with me to Jerusalem and worship with me there; they never went astray. Your kinsmen are worthy men; 14 you come of a sound stock. Good luck go with you.' Tobit added: 'I will pay you a drachma a day and allow you the same expenses as 15 my son. Keep him company on his travels, and I will add something 16 to your wages.' Raphael answered: 'I will go with him. Never fear; we shall travel there and back without mishap, because the road is safe.' Tobit replied, 'God bless you, my friend.' He called his son and said to him: 'My boy, get ready what you need for the journey, and set off with your kinsman. May God in heaven keep both of you safe on your journey there and restore you to me unharmed. May his angel safely escort you both.' Before setting out Tobias kissed his father and mother, and Tobit said to him, 'Goodbye, and a safe journey!'

17 Then his mother burst into tears. 'Why have you sent my boy away?' she said to Tobit. 'Is he not our prop and stay? Has he not 18 always been at home with us? Why send money after money? Write 19 it off for the sake of our boy! Let us be content to live the life the 20 Lord has appointed for us.' Tobit said to her: 'Do not worry; our son will go safely and come back safely, and you will see him with your own eyes on the day of his safe return. Do not worry or be 21 anxious about them, my dear. A good angel will go with him, and his 22 journey will prosper, and he will come back safe and sound.' At that she stopped crying.

6 THE BOY and the angel left the house together, and the dog came out with him and accompanied them. They travelled until night 2 overtook them, and then camped by the river Tigris. Tobias went down to bathe his feet in the river, and a huge fish leapt out of the 3 water and tried to swallow the boy's foot. He cried out, and the angel said to him, 'Seize the fish and hold it fast.' So Tobias seized 4 it and hauled it on to the bank. The angel said to him: 'Split the fish open and take out its gall, heart, and liver; keep them by you, but throw the guts away; the gall, heart, and liver can be used as 5 medicine.' Tobias split the fish open, and put together its gall, heart, and liver. He cooked and ate part of the fish; the rest he salted and kept.

They continued the journey together until they came near Media. 6 Then the boy asked the angel: 'Azarias, my friend, what medicine is

there in the fish's heart, liver, and gall?' He said: 'You can use the 7  
heart and liver as a fumigation for any man or woman attacked by a  
demon or evil spirit; the attack will cease, and it will give no further  
trouble. The gall is for anointing a man's eyes when white patches 8  
have spread over them, or for blowing on the white patches in the  
eyes; the eyes will then recover.'

When he had entered Media and was now approaching Ecbatana, 9  
Raphael said to the boy, 'Tobias, my friend.' 'Yes?' he re- 10  
plied. Raphael said: 'We must stay the night with Raguel. He is  
your kinsman and he has a daughter named Sarah. Apart from Sarah  
he has neither son nor daughter. You are her next of kin and have the 11  
right to marry her and inherit her father's property. The girl is 12  
sensible, brave, and very beautiful, and her father is an honourable  
man.' He went on: 'It is right that you should marry her. Be guided  
by me, my friend; I will speak to her father about the girl this very  
night and ask for her hand as your bride, and on our return from  
Rages we will celebrate her marriage. I know that Raguel cannot  
withhold her from you or betroth her to another man without incur-  
ring the death penalty according to the ordinance in the book of  
Moses; and he is aware that his daughter belongs by right to you  
rather than to any other man. Now be guided by me, my friend;  
we will talk about the girl tonight and will betroth her to you, and  
when we return from Rages we shall take her back with us to your  
home.'

Then Tobias answered Raphael: 'Azarias, my friend, I have heard 13  
that she has already been given to seven husbands and they died the  
very night they went into the bridal chamber to her. I have been 14  
told that it is a demon who kills them. And now it is my turn to be  
afraid; he does her no harm, but kills any man who tries to come  
near her. I am my father's only child; I am afraid that if I die I shall  
bring my father and mother to the grave with grief for me. They  
have no other son to bury them.' Raphael said to him: 'Have you 15  
forgotten the orders your father gave you? He told you to take a wife  
from your father's kindred. Now be guided by me, my friend: do  
not worry about the demon, but marry her. I am sure that this night  
she shall be given you as your wife. When you enter the bridal 16  
chamber, take some of the fish's liver and its heart, and put them on  
the smoking incense. The smell will spread, and when the demon 17  
smells it he will make off and never be seen near her any more.

When you are about to go to bed with her, both of you must first stand up and pray, beseeching the Lord of heaven to grant you mercy and deliverance. Have no fear; she was destined for you before the world was made. You shall rescue her and she shall go with you. No doubt you will have children by her and they will be very dear to you.<sup>a</sup> So do not worry!’ When Tobias heard what Raphael said, and learnt that she was his kinswoman and of his father’s house, he was filled with love for her and set his heart on her.

- 7 WHEN THEY REACHED Ecbatana, Tobias said, ‘Azarias, my friend, take me straight to our kinsman Raguel.’ So Azarias brought him to Raguel’s house, and they found him sitting by the courtyard door. They greeted him first, and he replied, ‘A hearty welcome to you, friends. I am glad to see you well after your  
 2 journey.’ He took them into his house and said to Edna his wife, ‘Is  
 3 not this young man like my kinsman Tobit?’ Edna asked them, ‘Where do you come from, friends?’ ‘We belong to the tribe of  
 4 Naphtali,’ they answered, ‘now in captivity at Nineveh.’ ‘Do you know our kinsman Tobit?’ she asked, and they replied, ‘Yes, we do.’  
 5 ‘Is he well?’ she said. ‘He is alive and well’, they answered, and  
 6 Tobias added, ‘He is my father.’ Raguel jumped up and, with tears  
 7 in his eyes, he kissed him and said, ‘God bless you, my boy, son of a good and noble father. But what grievous news that so good and charitable a man has gone blind!’ He embraced Tobias his kinsman  
 8 and wept; and Edna his wife and their daughter Sarah also wept for Tobit. Then Raguel slaughtered a ram from the flock and made them warmly welcome.

- After they had taken a bath and washed their hands, and had sat down to dinner, Tobias said to Raphael, ‘Azarias, my friend, ask  
 9 Raguel to give me Sarah my kinswoman.’ Raguel overheard and said  
 10 to the young man: ‘Eat, drink, and be happy tonight. There is no one but yourself who should have my daughter Sarah; indeed I have no right to give her to anyone else, since you are my nearest kins-  
 11 man. But I must tell you the truth, my son: I have given her in marriage to seven of our kinsmen, and they all died on their wedding night. My son, eat now and drink, and may the Lord deal kindly with you both.’ Tobias answered, ‘I will not eat or drink anything  
 12 here until you have disposed of this business of mine.’ Raguel said

[a] *Literally* be like brothers to you.



to him, 'I will do so: I give her to you as the ordinance in the book of Moses prescribes. Heaven has ordained that she shall be yours. Take your kinswoman. From now on, you belong to her and she to you; she is yours for ever from this day. The Lord of heaven prosper you both this night, my son, and grant you mercy and peace.'

Raguel sent for his daughter Sarah, and when she came he took <sup>13</sup> her hand and gave her to Tobias, saying: 'Take her to be your wedded wife in accordance with the law and the ordinance written in the book of Moses. Keep her and take her home to your father; and may the God of heaven keep you safe and give you peace and prosperity.' Then he sent for her mother and told her to bring paper, <sup>14</sup> and he wrote out a marriage contract granting Sarah to Tobias as his wife, as the law of Moses ordains. After that they began to eat and <sup>15</sup> drink.

Raguel called his wife and said, 'My dear, get the spare room <sup>16</sup> ready and take her in there.' Edna went and prepared the room as he <sup>17</sup> had told her, and took Sarah into it. Edna cried over her, then dried her tears and said: 'Courage, dear daughter; the Lord of heaven give <sup>18</sup> you joy instead of sorrow. Courage, daughter!' Then she went out.

When they had finished eating and drinking and were ready for <sup>8</sup> bed, they escorted the young man to the bridal chamber. Tobias <sup>2</sup> recalled what Raphael had told him; he took the fish's liver and heart out of the bag in which he kept them, and put them on the smoking incense. The smell from the fish held the demon off, and he took <sup>3</sup> flight into Upper Egypt; and Raphael instantly followed him there and bound him hand and foot.

When they were left alone and the door was shut, Tobias rose <sup>4</sup> from the bed and said to Sarah, 'Get up, my love; let us pray and beseech our Lord to show us mercy and keep us safe.' She got up <sup>5</sup> and they began to pray that they might be kept safe. Tobias said: 'We praise thee, O God of our fathers, we praise thy name for ever and ever. Let the heavens and all thy creation praise thee for ever. Thou madest Adam, and Eve his wife to be his helper and support; <sup>6</sup> and those two were the parents of the human race. This was thy word: "It is not good for the man to be alone; let us make him a helper like him." I now take this my beloved to wife, not out of lust <sup>7</sup> but in true marriage. Grant that she and I may find mercy and grow old together.' They both said 'Amen', and slept through the <sup>8,9</sup> night.

Raguel got up and summoned his servants, and they went out and  
10 dug a grave. For he said, 'He may have been killed, and then we  
11 shall have to face scorn and disgrace.' When they had finished dig-  
12 ging the grave, Raguel went into the house and called his wife: 'Send  
one of the maidservants', he said, 'to go in and see if he is alive. If he  
13 is dead, let us bury him so that no one may know.' They lit a lamp,  
opened the door, and sent a maidservant in; and she found them  
14 sound asleep together. She came out and told them: 'He is alive and  
has come to no harm.'

15 Then they praised the God of heaven: 'We praise thee, O God,  
we praise thee with all our heart. Let men praise thee throughout all  
16 ages. Praise to thee for the joy thou hast given me; the thing  
I feared has not happened, but thou hast shown us thy great mercy.  
17 Praise to thee for the mercy thou hast shown to these two, these only  
children. Lord, show them mercy, keep them safe, and grant them a  
18 long life of happiness and affection.' Then he ordered his servants to  
fill in the grave before dawn came.

19 He told his wife to bake a great batch of bread; he went to the herd  
and brought two oxen and four rams and told his servants to get them  
20 ready; so they set about the preparations. He then called Tobias  
and said: 'You shall not stir from here for two weeks. Stay with us;  
let us eat and drink together and cheer my daughter's heart after all  
21 her suffering. Here and now take half of all I have, and go home to  
your father safe and sound; and the other half will come to you both  
when my wife and I die. Be reassured, my son, I am your father and  
Edna is your mother; we are as close to you as to your wife, now and  
always. You have nothing to fear, my son.'

9 1, 2 Tobias called Raphael and said to him: 'Azarias, my friend, take  
four servants with you, and two camels, and make your way to  
Rages. Go to Gabael's house, give him the bond and collect the  
4 money, and bring him with you to the wedding-feast. You know that  
my father will be counting the days and, if I am even one day late, it  
3 will distress him. You see what Raguel has sworn, and I cannot go  
5 against his oath.' Raphael went with the four servants and the two  
camels to Rages in Media and lodged there with Gabael. He gave  
him his bond and informed him that Tobit's son Tobias had taken  
a wife and was inviting him to the wedding-feast. At once Gabael  
counted out the bags to him with their seals intact, and they put  
6 them together. They all made an early start and came to the wedding.

When they entered Raguel's house and found Tobias at the feast, he jumped up and greeted Gabael. With tears in his eyes Gabael blessed him and said: 'Good sir, worthy son of a worthy father, that upright and charitable man, may the Lord give Heaven's blessing to you and your wife, your father and your mother-in-law. Praise be to God that I have seen my cousin Tobias, so like his father.'

*Tobias's homecoming*

NOW DAY BY DAY Tobit was keeping count of the time Tobias 10 would take for his journey there and back. When the days had passed and his son had not returned, Tobit said: 'Perhaps he has 2 been detained there. Or perhaps Gabael is dead and there is no one to give him the money.' And he grew anxious. Anna his wife said: 3, 4 'My child has perished. He is no longer in the land of the living.' She began to weep and lament for her son: 'O my child, the light of 5 my eyes, why did I let you go?' Tobit said to her: 'Hush, do not 6 worry, my dear; he is all right. Something has happened there to distract them. The man who went with him is one of our kinsmen and can be trusted. Do not grieve for him, my dear; he will soon be back.' But she answered: 'Be quiet! Leave me alone! Do not try to 7 deceive me. My boy is dead.' Each day she would rush out and look down the road her son had taken, and would listen to no one; and when she came indoors at sunset she could never sleep, but wept and lamented the whole night long.

The two weeks of wedding celebrations which Raguel had sworn to hold for his daughter came to an end, and Tobias went up to him and said: 'Let me be off on my journey; for I am sure that my parents are thinking they will never see me again. I beg you, father, let me go home now to my father Tobit. I have already told you how I left him.' Raguel said to Tobias: 'Stay, my son. Stay with me, and 8 I will send news of you to your father.' But Tobias answered: 'No; 9 please let me go home to my father.' Then without further delay 10 Raguel handed over to Tobias Sarah his bride and half of all that he possessed, male and female slaves, sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, clothes, money, and furniture. He saw them safely off and 11 embraced Tobias, saying: 'Goodbye, my son; a safe journey to you!

May the Lord of heaven give prosperity to you and Sarah your wife;  
12 and may I live to see your children.' To his daughter Sarah he said:  
'Go to your father-in-law's house; they are now your parents as  
much as if you were their own daughter. Go in peace, my child;  
I hope to hear good news of you as long as I live.' He bade them  
both goodbye and sent them on their way. Edna said to Tobias:  
'Child and beloved cousin, may the Lord bring you safely home, you  
and my daughter Sarah, and may I live long enough to see your  
children. In the sight of the Lord I entrust my daughter to you; do  
nothing to hurt her as long as you live. Go in peace, my son. From  
now on I am your mother and Sarah is your beloved wife. May we  
all be blessed with prosperity to the end of our days!' She kissed  
11 them both and saw them safely off. Tobias parted from Raguel in  
good health and spirits, thankful to the Lord of heaven and earth,  
the king of all, for the success of his journey. Raguel's last words to  
him were: 'May the Lord give you the means to honour your parents  
all their lives.'

2 When they reached Caserin close to Nineveh, Raphael said: 'You  
3 know how your father was when we left him; let us hurry on ahead  
of your wife and see that the house is ready before the others arrive.'  
4 As the two of them went on together Raphael said: 'Take the fish-  
gall in your hand.' The dog went with the angel and Tobias, follow-  
ing at their heels.

5, 6 Anna sat watching the road by which her son would return. She  
saw him coming and exclaimed to his father, 'Here he comes, your  
7 son and the man who went with him!' Before Tobias reached his  
father's house Raphael said: 'I know for certain that his eyes will be  
8 opened. Spread the fish-gall on his eyes, and the medicine will make  
the white patches shrink and peel off. Your father will get his sight  
9 back and see the light of day.' Anna ran forward and flung her arms  
round her son. 'Here you are, my boy; now I can die happy!' she  
cried out with tears in her eyes.

10 Tobit rose to his feet and came stumbling out through the court-  
11 yard door. Tobias went up to him with the fish-gall in his hand and  
blew it into his father's eyes, and took him by the arm and said: 'It  
12 will be all right, father.' Then when he had put the medicine on and  
13 applied it, using both hands he peeled off the patches from the  
14 corners of Tobit's eyes. Tobit flung his arms round him and burst  
into tears. 'I can see you, my son, the light of my eyes!' he cried.

'Praise be to God, and praise to his great name, and to all his holy angels. May his great name rest upon us. Praised be all the angels for ever. He laid his scourge on me, and now, look, I see my son 15 Tobias!'

Tobias went in, rejoicing and praising God with all his strength. He told his father about the success of his journey, how he had brought the money with him and had married Sarah daughter of Raguel. 'She is on her way,' he said, 'quite close to the city gate.' Tobit went out joyfully to meet his daughter-in-law at the gate, 16 praising God as he went. At the sight of him passing through the city in full vigour and walking without a guide, the people of Nineveh were astonished; and Tobit gave thanks to God before them 17 all for his mercy in opening his eyes. When he met Sarah, the wife of his son Tobias, he blessed her and said to her: 'Come in, my daughter, and welcome. Praise be to your God who has brought you to us, my daughter. Blessings on your father, and on my son Tobias, and blessings on you, my daughter. Come into your home, and may health, blessings, and joy be yours; come in, my daughter.' It was a 18 day of joy for all the Jews in Nineveh; and Ahikar and Nadab, Tobit's cousins, came to share his happiness.

When the marriage-feast was over, Tobit called Tobias and said, 12 'My son, see that you pay the man who went with you, and give him something extra, over and above his wages.' Tobias said: 'Father, 2 how much shall I pay him? It would not hurt me to give him half the money he and I brought back. He has kept me safe, 3 cured my wife, helped me bring the money, and healed you. How much extra shall I pay him?' Tobit replied, 'It is right, my son, for 4 him to be given half of all that he has brought with him.' So Tobias 5 sent for him and said, 'Half of all that you have brought with you is yours for your wages; take it, and fare you well.'

Then Raphael called them both aside and said to them: 'Praise 6 God and thank him before all men living for the good he has done you, so that they may sing hymns of praise to his name. Proclaim to all the world what God has done, and pay him honour; do not be slow to give him thanks. A king's secret ought to be kept, but the works 7 of God should be acknowledged publicly. Acknowledge them, therefore, and pay him honour. Do good, and evil shall not touch you. Better prayer with sincerity, and almsgiving with righteousness, 8 than wealth with wickedness. Better give alms than hoard up gold.

9 Almsgiving preserves a man from death and wipes out all sin.  
10 Givers of alms will enjoy long life; but sinners and wrong-doers are their own worst enemies.

11 'I will tell you the whole truth; I will hide nothing from you. Indeed I told you just now when I said, "A king's secret ought to be kept, but the works of God should be publicly honoured." When you and Sarah prayed, it was I who brought your prayers into the glorious presence of the Lord; and so too whenever you buried the dead.  
12 That day when you got up from your dinner without hesitation to go  
13 and bury the corpse, I was sent to test you; and again God sent me to cure both you and Sarah your daughter-in-law at the same time.  
14 I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand in attendance on the Lord and enter his glorious presence.'

16, 17 The two men were shaken, and prostrated themselves in awe. But he said to them: 'Do not be afraid, all is well; praise God for ever.  
18 It is no thanks to me that I have been with you; it was the will of  
19 God. Worship him all your life long, sing his praise. Take note that  
20 I ate no food; what appeared to you was a vision. And now praise the Lord, give thanks to God here on earth; I am ascending to him who sent me. Write down all these things that have happened to you.'  
21 He then ascended, and when they rose to their feet, he was no longer  
22 to be seen. They sang hymns of praise to God, giving him thanks for these great deeds he had done when his angel appeared to them.

13 TOBIT said:

'Praise to the ever-living God and to his kingdom.

2 He punishes and he shows mercy;  
he brings men down to the grave below,  
and up from the great destruction.  
Nothing can escape his power.

3 Give him thanks, men of Israel, in the presence of the nations,  
for he has scattered you among them;  
4 there he has shown you his greatness.  
Exalt him in the sight of every living creature,  
for he is our Lord and God;  
he is our Father and our God for ever.

5 He will punish you for your wickedness,  
and he will show mercy to you all,

gathering you from among all the nations  
 wherever you have been scattered.  
 When you turn to him with all your heart and soul 6  
 and act in loyal obedience to him,  
 then he will turn to you  
 and hide his face from you no longer.  
 Consider now the deeds he has done for you,  
 and give him thanks with full voice;  
 praise the righteous Lord  
 and exalt the King of ages.<sup>a</sup>

'Your sanctuary<sup>b</sup> shall be rebuilt for you with rejoicing. 10  
 May he give happiness to all your exiles  
 and cherish all who mourn and your descendants for ever.  
 Your light shall shine brightly to all the ends of the earth. 11  
 Many nations shall come to you from afar,  
 from all the corners of the earth to your holy name;  
 they shall bring gifts in their hands for the King of heaven.  
 In you endless generations shall utter their joy;  
 the name of the chosen city shall endure for ever and ever.  
 There shall be a curse upon all who speak harshly to you, 12  
 upon all who destroy you and pull down your walls,  
 upon all who demolish your towers and burn your houses;  
 but blessings shall be for evermore upon those who hold you in  
 reverence.  
 Come then, be joyful for the righteous, 13  
 for they shall all be gathered together  
 and shall praise the eternal Lord.

[a] *Some witnesses add*

In the land of my exile I give thanks to him  
 and declare his might and greatness to a sinful nation.  
 Turn, you sinners, and do what is right in his eyes;  
 who knows whether he may not welcome you and show you mercy?  
 I will exalt my God 7  
 and rejoice in the King of heaven.  
 Let all men tell of his majesty 8  
 and give him thanks in Jerusalem.  
 O Jerusalem, the holy city, 9  
 he will punish you for what your sons have done,  
 but he will again show mercy on the righteous.  
 Thank the good Lord and praise the King of ages. 10

[b] *Or home.*

- 14 How happy shall they be who love you and rejoice in your prosperity,  
happy all who grieve for you in your afflictions;  
they shall rejoice over you and for ever be witness of your joy.
- 15 My soul, praise the Lord, the great king,  
16 for Jerusalem shall be built as a city for him to dwell in for ever.
- How happy I shall be when the remnant of my descendants shall  
see your splendour  
and give thanks to the King of heaven.  
The gates of Jerusalem shall be built of sapphire and emerald,  
and all your walls of precious stones.  
The towers of Jerusalem shall be built of gold,  
their battlements of the finest gold.
- 17 The streets of Jerusalem shall be paved with garnets and jewels of Ophir.
- 18 The gates of Jerusalem shall sing hymns of joy  
and all her houses shall say Alleluia,  
praise to the God of Israel!  
Blessed by him, they shall bless his holy name for ever and ever.'

- 14 SO ENDED Tobit's thanksgiving. He died peacefully at the age of a hundred and twelve, and was given honourable burial in Nineveh.
- 2 He was sixty-two years old when his eyes were injured, and after he recovered his sight he lived in prosperity, doing his acts of charity and never ceasing to praise God and proclaim his majesty.
- 3 When he was dying he sent for his son Tobias, and gave him these
- 4 instructions: 'My son, you must take your children and make your escape to Media, for I believe God's word against Nineveh spoken by Nahum. It will all come true; everything will happen to Asshur and Nineveh that was spoken by the prophets of Israel whom God sent. Not a word of it will fall short; everything will be fulfilled when the time comes. It will be safer in Media than in Assyria and Babylon; I know, I am convinced, that all God's words will be fulfilled. It will be so; not one of them will fail. Our countrymen who live in Israel will all be scattered and carried off into captivity out of that good land, and the whole territory of Israel



laid waste. Samaria and Jerusalem will lie waste, and for a time the house of God will be in mourning; it will be burnt to the ground.

'Then God will have mercy on them again and will bring them 5 back to the land of Israel. They will rebuild the house of God, but not as it was before, not until the time of fulfilment comes. Then they will all return from their captivity and rebuild Jerusalem gloriously; then indeed the house will be built in her as the prophets of Israel foretold. All the nations of the world will be converted to 6 the true worship of God; they will abandon their idols which led them astray into falsehood, and praise the eternal God according to 7 his law. All the Israelites who survive at that time and are firm in their loyalty to God will be brought together; they will come to Jerusalem to take possession of the land of Abraham, and live there for ever in safety. Those who love God in truth will rejoice; and sinners and wrong-doers will disappear from the earth. Now, my 8 children, I give you this command: serve God in truth and do what pleases him. Train your children to do what is right and give alms, 9 to keep God in mind at all times and praise his name in sincerity with all their strength.

'And now, my son, you must leave Nineveh. Do not stay here; 10 once you have laid your mother in the grave with me, do not spend another night within the city boundaries. For I see that the place is full of wickedness and shameless dishonesty. My son, think what Nadab did to Ahikar who brought him up: he forced him to hide in a living grave. Ahikar survived to see God requite the dishonour done to him; he came out into the light of day, but Nadab passed into eternal darkness for his attempt to kill Ahikar. Because I gave alms, Ahikar escaped from the fatal trap Nadab set for him, and Nadab fell into the trap himself and was destroyed. So, my children, see what 11 comes of almsgiving, and see what comes of wickedness—death. But now my strength is failing.'

Then they laid him on his bed, and he died; and they gave him honourable burial. When his mother died, Tobias buried her beside 12 his father. He and his wife went away to Media and settled at Ecbatana with his father-in-law Raguel. He honoured and cared for his wife's 13 parents in their old age. He buried them at Ecbatana in Media, and he inherited the estate of Raguel as well as that of his father Tobit. He died greatly respected at the age of one hundred and seventeen. 14

- 15 He lived long enough to hear of the destruction of Nineveh by Ahasuerus king of Media and to see his prisoners of war brought from there into Media. So he praised God for all that he had done to the people of Nineveh and Asshur; and before he died he rejoiced over the fate of Nineveh and praised the Lord God who lives for ever and ever.

Amen.

# JUDITH

## *The Assyrian invasion*

IN THE TWELFTH YEAR of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, 1  
who reigned over the Assyrians from his capital, Nineveh,  
Arphaxad was ruling the Medes from Ecbatana. He it was who 2  
encircled Ecbatana with a wall built of hewn stones which were four  
and a half feet thick and nine feet long.<sup>a</sup> He made the wall a hundred  
and five feet high and seventy-five feet thick, and at the city gates he 3  
set up towers a hundred and fifty feet high with foundations ninety  
feet thick; and he made the gates a hundred and five feet high and 4  
sixty feet wide to allow his army to march out in full force with his  
infantry in formation. It was in those days, then, that King Nebuchadnezzar 5  
waged war against King Arphaxad in the great plain on  
the borders of Ragau. Nebuchadnezzar was opposed by all the 6  
inhabitants of the hill-country, by all those who lived along the  
Euphrates, the Tigris, and the Hydaspes; and, on the plain, by  
Arioch king of Elam; and many tribes of the Chelodites joined forces  
with them.

Then Nebuchadnezzar king of Assyria sent a summons to all the 7  
inhabitants of Persia, and to all who lived in the west: the inhabitants  
of Cilicia and Damascus, Lebanon and Antilebanon, all who  
lived near the coast, the peoples in Carmel and Gilead, Upper 8  
Galilee, and the great plain of Esdraelon, all who were in Samaria 9  
and its towns, and on the west of Jordan as far as Jerusalem, Betane,  
Chelus, Cadesh, and the frontier<sup>b</sup> of Egypt, those who lived in  
Tahpanhes, Rameses, and the whole land of Goshen as far as Tanis 10  
and Memphis, and all the inhabitants of Egypt as far as the borders  
of Ethiopia. But the entire region disregarded the summons of 11  
Nebuchadnezzar king of Assyria and did not join him in the war.  
They were not afraid of him, for he seemed to them to stand alone<sup>c</sup>  
and unsupported; and they treated his envoys with contempt and  
sent them back empty-handed.

This roused Nebuchadnezzar to fury against the whole region, 12

[a] In verses 2-4 the measurements are given in cubits in the Greek. [b] Literally river.

[c] One witness reads to be no more than their equal...

and he swore by his throne and his kingdom that he would have his revenge on all the territories of Cilicia, Damascus, and Syria, and put their inhabitants to the sword, along with the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the people in all Judaea and in Egypt as far as the shores of the two seas.

13 In the seventeenth year of his reign he marshalled his forces against King Arphaxad and defeated him in battle, routing his entire  
14 army, cavalry, chariots, and all. He occupied his towns; and when he reached Ecbatana he captured its towers, looted its bazaars, and  
15 turned its splendour to abject ruin. He caught Arphaxad in the mountains of Ragau, speared him through, and so made an end of  
16 him. Then he returned with his spoils to Nineveh, he and his combined forces, an immense host of warriors. There he rested and feasted with his army for four months.

2 In the eighteenth year, on the twenty-second day of the first month, a proposal was made in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar king of Assyria to carry out his threat of vengeance on the whole region.

2 Assembling all his officers and nobles, the king laid before them his personal decision about the region and declared his intention of  
3 putting an end to its disaffection. They resolved that everyone who had not obeyed his summons should be put to death.

4 When his plans were completed,<sup>a</sup> Nebuchadnezzar king of Assyria summoned Holophernes, his commander-in-chief, who was second  
5 only to himself, and said to him, 'This is the decree of the Great King, lord of all the earth: Directly you leave my presence, you are to take under your command an army of seasoned troops, a hundred and twenty thousand infantry with a force of twelve thousand  
6 cavalry, and march out against all the peoples of the west who have  
7 dared to disobey my command. Tell them to have ready their offering of earth and water, for I am coming to vent my wrath on them. Their whole land will be smothered by my army, and I will  
8 give them up to be plundered by my troops. Their dead will fill the  
9 valleys, and every stream and river will be choked with corpses; and  
10 I will send them into captivity to the ends of the whole earth. Now go and occupy all their territory for me. If they surrender to you,  
11 hold them for me until the time comes to punish them. But show no mercy to those who resist; let them be slaughtered and plundered  
12 throughout the whole region. By my life and my royal power I swear:

[a] Or When he had finished stating his purpose...

I have spoken and I will be as good as my word. As for you, do not  
disobey a single one of my orders, but see that you carry them out  
exactly as I your sovereign have commanded you. Do this without  
delay.' 13

After leaving his sovereign's presence, Holophernes assembled all  
the marshals, generals, and officers of the Assyrian army, and  
mustered picked men, as the king had commanded, a hundred and  
twenty thousand infantry and twelve thousand mounted archers,  
drawing them up in battle order. He took an immense number of  
camels, asses, and mules for their baggage, innumerable sheep, oxen,  
and goats for provisions, and ample rations for every man, as well as a  
great quantity of gold and silver from the royal palace. Then he set  
out with all his army to go ahead of King Nebuchadnezzar and to  
overrun the entire region to the west with chariots, cavalry, and  
picked infantry. Along with them went a motley host like a swarm of  
locusts, countless as the dust of the earth. 14 15 16, 17 18 19 20

From Nineveh they marched for three days towards the plain of  
Bectileth, and encamped beside Bectileth near the mountain north of  
Upper Cilicia. From there, Holophernes advanced into the hill-  
country with his whole army, infantry, cavalry, and chariots. He  
devastated Put and Lud, and plundered all the people of Rassis, and  
the Ishmaelites on the edge of the desert south of the land of the  
Cheleans. Then he followed<sup>a</sup> the Euphrates and traversed Mesopo-  
tamia, destroying all the fortified towns along the river Abron as far  
as the sea. He occupied the territory of Cilicia and cut down all who  
resisted him. Then he came south to the borders of Japheth fronting  
Arabia. He surrounded the Midianites, burnt their encampments,  
and plundered their sheepfolds. At the time of wheat harvest he  
went down to the plain of Damascus, burnt their crops, extermin-  
ated their flocks and herds, sacked their towns, laid waste their  
fields, and put all their young men to the sword. Fear and dread of  
him fell on all the inhabitants of the coast at Tyre and Sidon, of Sur  
and Okina, and of Jemnaan; the people of Azotus and Ascalon were  
terrified of him. 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

They sent envoys to sue for peace, who said: 'We are servants of  
the Great King Nebuchadnezzar, we lie prostrate before you; do  
with us as you please. Our buildings, our territory, our wheat fields,  
our flocks and herds and every sheepfold in our encampments, all are 3 1, 2 3

[a] Or crossed.

4 yours to do with as you wish. Our towns and their inhabitants are subject to you; come and deal with them as you think fit.'

5, 6 When the envoys came to Holophernes with this message, he went down to the coast with his army and garrisoned all the fortified  
7 towns, taking from them picked men as auxiliaries. Both there and in all the surrounding country he was welcomed with garlands,  
8 dancing, and tambourines. He demolished all their sanctuaries<sup>a</sup> and cut down their sacred groves, for he had been commissioned to destroy all the gods of the land, so that Nebuchadnezzar alone should be worshipped by every nation and invoked as a god by men of every tribe and tongue.

9 Holophernes then advanced towards Esdraelon, near Dothan,  
10 which faces the great ridge of Judaea, and encamped between Geba and Scythopolis, where he remained for a whole month to collect supplies for his army.

4 WHEN THE ISRAELITES who lived in Judaea heard of all that had been done to the nations by Holophernes, the commander-in-chief of Nebuchadnezzar king of Assyria, and how he had  
2 plundered and totally destroyed all their temples, they were terrified at his approach. They were in great alarm for Jerusalem and for the  
3 temple of the Lord their God. For they had just returned from captivity, and it was only recently that the people had been re-united in Judaea, and the sacred vessels, the temple, and the altar sanctified  
4 after their profanation. So they sent out a warning to the whole of Samaria, Cona, Beth-horon, Belmain and Jericho, Choba and Aesora  
5 and the valley of Salem, and occupied the tops of all the high hills. They fortified the villages on them and laid up stores of food in preparation for war; for their fields had just been harvested. Joakim, who was high priest in Jerusalem at the time, wrote to the people of Bethulia and Bethomesthaim, which is opposite Esdraelon facing the  
7 plain near Dothan. He ordered them to occupy the passes into the hill-country, because they controlled access to Judaea, and it was easy to hold up an advancing army, for the approach was only wide  
8 enough for two men. The Israelites obeyed the orders of the high  
9 priest Joakim and the senate of all Israel in Jerusalem. Fervently they sent up a cry to God, every man of Israel, and fervently they  
10 humbled themselves before him. They put on sackcloth—they

[a] *So one V.s.; Gk. borders.*

themselves, their wives, their children, their livestock, and every resident foreigner, hired labourer, and slave—and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, men, women, and children, prostrated themselves in front of the sanctuary, and, with ashes on their heads, spread out their sackcloth before the Lord. They draped the altar in sackcloth, and with one voice they earnestly implored the God of Israel not to allow their children to be captured, their wives carried off, their ancestral cities destroyed, and the temple profaned and dishonoured, to the delight of the heathen. The Lord heard their prayer and pitied their distress.

For many days the whole population of Judaea and Jerusalem fasted before the sanctuary of the Lord Almighty. Joakim the high priest and the priests who stood in the presence of the Lord, and all who served in the temple, wore sackcloth when they offered the regular burnt-offering and the votive and freewill offerings of the people; and with ashes on their turbans they cried aloud to the Lord to look favourably on the whole house of Israel.

When it was reported to Holophernes, the Assyrian commander-in-chief, that the Israelites had prepared for war, and that they had closed the passes in the hill-country, fortified all the heights, and dug pitfalls in the plains, he was furious. He summoned all the rulers of Moab, the Ammonite commanders, and all the governors of the coastal region, and said to them, 'Tell me, you Canaanites, what nation is this that lives in the hill-country? What towns do they inhabit? How big is their army? What gives them their power and strength? Who is the king that commands their forces? Why are they the only people of the west who have refused to come and meet me?'

Then Achior, the leader of all the Ammonites, said to him, 'My lord, if you will allow your servant to speak, I will tell you the truth about this nation that lives in the hill-country near here; and no lie shall pass my lips. They are descended from the Chaldaeans; and at one time they settled in Mesopotamia, because they refused to worship the gods their fathers had worshipped in Chaldea. They abandoned the ways of their ancestors and worshipped the God of Heaven, the god whom they now acknowledged. When the Chaldaeans drove them out from the presence of their gods, they fled to Mesopotamia, where they lived for a long time. Then their god told them to leave their new home and go on to Canaan. They settled there and acquired great wealth in gold, silver, and livestock.'

10 'Because of a famine which spread over the whole of Canaan, they went down to Egypt and lived there as long as they were supplied with food. While in Egypt, they multiplied so greatly that their  
11 numbers could not be reckoned, and the king of Egypt turned against them. He exploited them by setting them to hard labour  
12 making bricks, and he reduced them to abject slavery. They cried out to their god, and he inflicted incurable plagues on the whole of  
13 Egypt. So the Egyptians turned them out; and their god dried up the  
14 Red Sea for them and led them on to Sinai and Cadash-barnea. Then  
15 they drove out all the inhabitants of the wilderness and settled in the land of the Amorites, and they destroyed all the people of Heshbon by force of arms. After that they crossed the Jordan and occupied  
16 all the hill-country, driving out the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Shechemites, and all the Gergashites. There they settled for a long time.

17 'As long as they did not sin against their god, they prospered; for  
18 theirs is a god who hates wickedness. But when they left the path he had laid down for them, they suffered heavy losses in many wars and were carried captive to a foreign country; the temple of their god was razed to the ground, and their towns were occupied by their enemies.  
19 But now that they have returned to their god, they have come back from the places where they had been dispersed, and have taken possession of Jerusalem, where their sanctuary is, and have settled in the hill-country, because it was uninhabited.

20 'Now, my lord and master, if these people are guilty of an error and are sinning against their god, and if we find out that they have  
21 committed this offence, then we may go and make war on them. But if these people have committed no wickedness, leave them alone, my lord, for fear the god they serve should protect them and we become  
22 the laughing-stock of the world.' When Achior stopped speaking there were protests from all those who stood round the tent. Holo-  
phernes' officers and all the people from the coastal region and from  
23 Moab demanded that Achior should be cut to pieces. 'We are not going to be afraid of the Israelites,' they said, 'a people quite  
24 incapable of putting an effective army in the field. Let us go ahead, Lord Holofernes; your great army will swallow them whole.'

6 When the hubbub among the men around the council had subsided, Holofernes, the Assyrian commander-in-chief, said to Achior and all the Ammonites, in the presence of the assembled foreigners:



‘And who are you, Achior, you and your Ammonite mercenaries, to 2  
play the prophet among us as you have done today, telling us not to  
make war against the people of Israel because their god will protect  
them? What god is there but Nebuchadnezzar? He will exert his 3  
power and wipe them off the face of the earth; and their god will not  
rescue them. We who serve Nebuchadnezzar will strike them all  
down as if they were only one man. They will not be able to stand up  
to the weight of our cavalry; we shall overwhelm them. Their 4  
mountains will be drenched with blood, and their plains filled with  
their dead. They cannot stand their ground against us; they will be  
completely wiped out. This is the decree of King Nebuchadnezzar,  
lord of the whole earth. He has spoken; and what he has said will be  
made good. As for you, Achior, you Ammonite mercenary, the 5  
words you have spoken today are treason, so from today you shall not  
see my face again until I have taken vengeance on this brood of run-  
aways from Egypt. But when I come back, the warriors of my body- 6  
guard will run you through and add you to their victims. My men 7  
are going to take you away now to the hill-country and leave you in  
one of the towns in the passes. You will not die until you share their 8  
fate. If you are so confident that they will not fall into our hands, 9  
you need not look downcast. I have spoken; and nothing that I have  
said will fail to come true.’

Then Holophernes ordered his men, who were standing by in his 10  
tent, to seize Achior, take him off to Bethulia, and hand him over to  
the Israelites. So they seized him and took him outside the camp to 11  
the plain, and from there into the hill-country, until they arrived at  
the springs below Bethulia. When the men of the town saw them, 12  
they picked up their weapons and came out of the town to the top of  
the hill; then all the slingers pelted the enemy with stones to prevent  
them from coming up. But they slipped through under cover of the 13  
hill, tied Achior up and left him lying at the foot of it, and went back  
to their master. When the Israelites came down from the town and 14  
found him there, they untied him and took him into Bethulia, where  
they brought him before the town magistrates then in office, Ozias 15  
son of Mica, of the tribe of Simeon, and Chabris son of Gothoniel,  
and Charmis son of Melchiel. The magistrates summoned all the 16  
elders of the town; and all the young men and women came running  
to the assembly. When Achior had been brought before the people,  
Ozias asked him what had happened. He answered by telling them 17

all that had taken place in Holophernes' council, what he himself had said in the presence of the Assyrian commanders, and how Holophernes had boasted of what he would do to Israel. Then the people prostrated themselves in worship and cried out to God: 'O Lord, God of heaven, mark their arrogance; pity our people in their humiliation; show favour this day to those who are thy own.' Then they reassured Achior and commended him warmly. Ozias took him from the assembly to his own house, and gave a feast for the elders; and all that night they invoked the help of the God of Israel.

7 THE NEXT DAY Holophernes ordered his whole army and all his allies to strike camp and march on Bethulia, seize the passes into the hill-country, and make war on the Israelites. So the whole force set out that day, an army of a hundred and seventy thousand infantry and twelve thousand cavalry, not counting the baggage train of the infantry, an immense host. They encamped in the valley near Bethulia, beside the spring; and their camp extended in breadth towards Dothan as far as Belbaim, and in length from Bethulia to Cyamon which faces Esdraelon. When the Israelites saw their numbers they said to each other in great alarm, 'These men will strip the whole country bare; the high mountains, the valleys, and the hills will never be able to bear the burden of them.' Then each man stood to arms; and they lit the beacons on the towers and remained on guard all that night.

6 On the following day Holophernes led out all his cavalry in full view of the Israelites in Bethulia, and reconnoitred the approaches to their town. He inspected the springs and seized them; and when he had stationed detachments of soldiers there, he returned to his army. 8 Then all the rulers of the Edomites and all the leaders of Moab and the commanders from the coastal region came to him and said, 9 'Listen to our advice, Lord Holophernes, and save your army from a crushing defeat. These Israelites do not trust in their spears but in the height of the mountains where they live; for it is no easy task to get up to the tops of these mountains of theirs. Now, Lord Holophernes, avoid fighting a pitched battle with them, and you will not lose a single man. Remain in your camp and keep your men in their quarters; but let your servants take possession of the spring at the foot of the hill, for that is where all the townspeople of Bethulia get their water. When they are dying of thirst they will surrender the

town. Meanwhile, we and all our people will go up to the tops of the neighbouring hills and camp there to see that not a man gets away from the town. They and their wives and children will waste away with famine; and before the sword reaches them, their streets will be strewn with their corpses. So you will make them pay heavily for rebelling against you, instead of receiving you peaceably.' Holo- phernes and all his staff approved this plan; and he gave orders that it should be carried out. The Moabite force moved forward in company with five thousand Assyrians and encamped in the valley, where they seized the springs which were the Israelites' water-supply. Then the Edomites and Ammonites went up and encamped in the hill-country opposite Dothan, and sent some of their number south-east<sup>a</sup> in the direction of Egrebel, which is near Chus on the Mochmur ravine. The rest of the Assyrian army encamped on the plain. They filled the entire country-side, their tents and baggage train forming an immense encampment, for they were a vast host.

Then the Israelites cried out to the Lord their God. Their courage failed, because all their enemies had surrounded them and there was no way of escape. The whole Assyrian army, infantry, cavalry, and chariots, kept them blockaded for thirty-four days. The citizens of Bethulia came to the end of their household supplies of water. The cisterns too were running dry; drinking-water was so strictly rationed that there was never a day when their needs were satisfied. The children were lifeless, the women and young men faint with thirst. They collapsed in the streets and gateways from sheer exhaustion.

Then all the people, young men, women, and children, gathered round Ozias and the magistrates of the town, shouting loudly. In the presence of the elders they said: 'May God judge between us, for you have done us a great wrong in not coming to terms with the Assyrians. Now we have no one to help us. God has sold us into their power; they will find us dead of thirst, and the ground strewn with our corpses. Surrender to them; let Holofernes' people and his army sack the town. It is better for us to be taken prisoner; for even as slaves we shall still be alive, and shall not have to watch our babies dying before our eyes, and our wives and children at their last gasp. We call heaven and earth to witness, we call our God, the Lord of our fathers, to witness against you—the God who is punishing us

[a] Or south and east.

for our sins and for the sins of our fathers. We pray that he may not  
 29 let our forebodings come true this day.' Then the whole assembly  
 30 broke into loud lamentation and cried to the Lord God. Ozias said  
 to them, 'Courage, my friends! Let us hold out for five more days;  
 by that time the Lord our God may show us his mercy again. Surely  
 31 he will not finally desert us. But if by the end of that time no help  
 32 has reached us, then I will do what you ask.' Then he dismissed the  
 men to their various posts; and they went off to the walls and towers  
 of the town. The women and children he sent indoors. Throughout  
 the town there was deep dejection.

### *Judith kills Holophernes*

8 **N** EWS OF WHAT was happening reached Judith, daughter of  
 Merari, son of Ox, son of Joseph, son of Oziel, son of Helkias,  
 son of Elias, son of Chelkias, son of Eliab, son of Nathanael, son of  
 2 Salamiel, son of Sarasadae, son of Israel. Her husband Manasses,  
 who belonged to her own tribe and clan, had died at the time of barley  
 3 harvest. While he was out in the fields supervising the binding of the  
 sheaves, he got sunstroke, took to his bed, and died in Bethulia his  
 native town; and they buried him beside his ancestors in the field  
 4 between Dothan and Balamon. For three years and four months  
 5 Judith had lived at home as a widow; she had a shelter erected on the  
 roof of her house; she put on sackcloth and always wore mourning.  
 6 After she became a widow she fasted every day except sabbath eve,  
 the sabbath itself, the eve of the new moon, the new moon, and the  
 7 Israelite feasts and days of public rejoicing. She was a very beautiful  
 and attractive woman. Her husband Manasses had left her gold and  
 silver, male and female slaves, livestock and land, and she lived on her  
 8 estate. No one spoke ill of her, for she was a very devout woman.  
 9 When Judith heard of the shameful attack which the people had  
 made upon Ozias the magistrate, because they were demoralized by  
 the shortage of water, and how he had sworn to surrender the town  
 10 to the Assyrians after five days, she sent her maid who had charge of  
 all her property to ask Ozias, Chabris, and Charmis, the elders of the  
 11 town, to come and see her. When they arrived she said to them:  
 'Listen to me, magistrates of Bethulia. You had no right to speak as

you did to the people today, and to bind yourselves by oath before God to surrender the town to our enemies if the Lord sends no relief within so many days. Who are you to test God at a time like this, and openly set yourselves above him? You are putting the Lord Almighty to the proof. You will never understand! You cannot plumb the depths of the human heart or understand the way a man's mind works; how then can you fathom man's Maker? How can you know God's mind, and grasp his thought? No, my friends, do not rouse the anger of the Lord our God. For even if he does not choose to help us within the five days, he is free to come to our rescue at any time he pleases, or equally to let us be destroyed by our enemies. It is not for you to impose conditions on the Lord our God; God will not yield to threats or be bargained with like a mere man. So we must wait for him to deliver us, and in the mean time appeal to him for help. If he sees fit he will hear us.

'There is not one of our tribes or clans, districts or towns, that worships man-made gods today, or has done so within living memory. This did happen in days gone by, and that was why our ancestors were abandoned to their enemies to be slaughtered and pillaged, and great was their downfall. But we acknowledge no god but the Lord, and so we are confident that he will not spurn us or any of our race. For our capture will mean the loss of all Judaea, and our temple will be looted; and God will hold us responsible for its desecration. The slaughter and deportation of our fellow-countrymen, and the laying waste of the land we inherited, will bring his judgement upon us wherever we become slaves among the Gentiles. Our masters will regard us with disgust and contempt. There will be no happy ending to our servitude, no return to favour; the Lord our God will use it to dishonour us.

'So then, my friends, let us set an example to our fellow-countrymen; for their lives depend on us, and the fate of the sanctuary, the temple, and the altar rests with us. We have every reason to give thanks to the Lord our God; he is putting us to the test as he did our ancestors. Remember how he dealt with Abraham and how he tested Isaac, and what happened to Jacob in Syrian Mesopotamia when he was working as a shepherd for his uncle Laban. He is not subjecting us to the fiery ordeal by which he tested their loyalty, or taking vengeance on us: it is for discipline that the Lord scourges his worshippers.'

28 Ozias replied, 'You are quite right; everything you say is true, and  
29 no one can deny it. This is not the first time that you have given proof  
30 of your wisdom. Throughout your life we have all recognized your  
31 good sense and the soundness of your judgement. But the people  
were desperate with thirst and compelled us to make this promise  
and to pledge ourselves by an oath we may not break. Now, you are  
a devout woman; pray for us and ask the Lord to send rain to fill our  
cisterns, and then we shall no longer faint for lack of water.'

32 'Hear what I have to say', replied Judith. 'I am going to do a  
deed which will be remembered among our people for all generations.  
33 Be at the gate tonight yourselves, and I will go out with my maid.  
Before the day on which you have promised to surrender the town to  
34 our enemies, the Lord will deliver Israel by my hand. But do not try  
to find out my plan; I will not tell you until I have accomplished  
35 what I mean to do.' Ozias and the magistrates said to her, 'Go with  
our blessing, and may God be with you to take vengeance on our  
36 enemies.' So they left the roof-shelter and returned to their posts.

9 Then Judith prostrated herself, put ashes on her head, and un-  
covered the sackcloth she was wearing; and at the time when the  
evening incense was being offered in the temple in Jerusalem, she  
2 cried to the Lord: 'O Lord, the God of my forefather Simeon! Thou  
didst put in his hand a sword to take vengeance on those foreigners  
who had stripped off a virgin's veil to defile her, uncovered her thighs  
to shame her, and polluted her womb to dishonour her. Thou didst  
3 say, "It shall not be done"; yet they did it. So thou didst give up  
their rulers to be slain, and their bed, which blushed for their  
treachery, to be stained with blood; beneath thy stroke slaves fell  
dead upon the bodies of princes, and princes upon their thrones.  
4 Thou didst give up their wives as booty, and their daughters as  
captives, and all their spoils to be divided among thy beloved sons,  
who, aflame with zeal for thy cause and aghast at the pollution of  
their blood, called on thee to help them. O God, thou art my God,  
5 hear now a widow's prayer. All that happened then, and all that  
happened before and after, thou didst accomplish. The things that  
are now, and are yet to be, thou hast designed; and what thou didst  
6 design has come to pass. The things thou hast foreordained present  
themselves and say, "We are here." Thy ways are prepared before-  
hand: foreknowledge determines thy judgement.

7 'Thou seest the Assyrians assembled in their strength, proud of

their horses and riders, boasting of the power of their infantry, and putting their faith in shield and javelin, bow and sling. They do not know that thou art the Lord who stamps out wars; the Lord is thy name. Shatter their strength by thy power and crush their might in thy anger. For they have planned to desecrate thy sanctuary, to pollute the dwelling-place of thy glorious name, and to strike down the horns of thy altar with the sword. Mark their arrogance, pour thy wrath on their heads, and give to me, widow as I am, the strength to achieve my end. Use the deceit upon my lips to strike them dead, the slave with the ruler, the ruler with the servant; shatter their pride by a woman's hand. For thy might lies not in numbers nor thy sovereign power in strong men; but thou art the God of the humble, the help of the poor, the support of the weak, the protector of the desperate, the deliverer of the hopeless. Hear, O hear, thou God of my forefather, God of Israel's heritage, ruler of heaven and earth, creator of the waters, king of all thy creation, hear thou my prayer. Grant that my deceitful words may wound and bruise them; for they have cruel designs against thy covenant, thy sacred house, the summit of Zion, and thy children's home, their own possession. Give thy whole nation and every tribe the knowledge that thou alone art God, God of all power and might, and that thou and thou alone art Israel's shield.'

When Judith had ended her prayer, prostrate before the God of Israel, she rose, called her maid, and went down into the house, where she was accustomed to spend her sabbaths and festivals. She removed the sackcloth she was wearing and took off her widow's weeds; then she washed, and anointed herself with rich perfume. She did her hair, put on a headband, and dressed in her gayest clothes, which she used to wear when her husband Manasses was alive. She put on sandals and anklets, bracelets and rings, her earrings and all her ornaments, and made herself very attractive, so as to catch the eye of any man who might see her. She gave her maid a skin of wine and a flask of oil; then she filled a bag with roasted grain, cakes of dried figs, and the finest bread, packed everything up, and gave it all to her maid to carry.

They went out towards the gate of Bethulia and found Ozias standing there, with Chabris and Charmis the elders of the town. When they saw Judith transformed in appearance and quite differently dressed, they were filled with admiration of her beauty, and

8 said to her, 'The God of our fathers grant you favour and fulfil your plans, so that Israel may triumph and Jerusalem may be exalted!'  
9 Judith bowed to God in worship. Then she said to them, 'Order the gate to be opened for me, and I will go out to accomplish all that you say.' They ordered the young men to open the gate as she had asked.  
10 When they had done so, Judith went out, accompanied by her maid; and the men of the town watched her until she had gone down the hill-side and crossed the valley, and then they lost sight of her.

11 The women went straight across the valley and were met by an  
12 Assyrian outpost; they seized Judith and questioned her: 'What is your nationality? Where have you come from? Where are you going?' 'I am a Hebrew,' she replied; 'but I am running away from my people, because they are going to fall into your hands and be  
13 devoured. I am on my way to Holophernes, your commander-in-chief, with reliable information. I will show him a route by which he can gain command of the entire hill-country without losing a single man.'

14 As the men listened to her story they looked at her face and were  
15 amazed at her beauty. 'You have saved your life', they said, 'by coming down at once to see our master. Go to his tent straight away.  
16 Some of us will escort you and hand you over to him. When you are in his presence, do not be afraid; just tell him what you have told us,  
17 and he will treat you kindly.' They detailed a hundred of their number to accompany her and her maid, and they brought the two women to Holophernes' tent.

18 AS THE NEWS of her arrival spread from tent to tent, men came running from all parts of the camp. They gathered round her as she stood outside Holophernes' tent waiting until he had been told  
19 about her. Her wonderful beauty made them think that the Israelites must be a wonderful people. They said to each other, 'Who can despise a nation which has such women as this? We had better not leave a man of them alive, for if they get away they will be able to outwit the whole world.'

20 Then Holophernes' bodyguard and all his attendants came out and  
21 took her into the tent. He was resting on his bed under a mosquito-net of purple interwoven with gold, emeralds, and precious stones.  
22 When Judith was announced he came out into the front part of the  
23 tent, with silver lamps carried before him. He and his attendants



were all amazed at the beauty of her face as she stood before them. She prostrated herself and did obeisance to him; but his slaves raised her up.

‘Take heart, madam,’ said Holophernes; ‘do not be afraid. I have 11  
never harmed anyone who chose to serve Nebuchadnezzar, king of all  
the earth. I should never have raised my spear against your people 2  
in the hill-country if they had not insulted me; they brought it on  
themselves. Now tell me why you have run away from them and 3  
joined us. By coming here you have saved your life. Take heart! You  
are in no danger tonight or in the future; no one will harm you. You 4  
will enjoy the good treatment which is given to the subjects of my  
master King Nebuchadnezzar.’

Judith replied, ‘My lord, grant your slave a hearing and listen to 5  
what I have to say to you. The information I am giving you tonight  
is the truth. If you follow my advice, God will do some great thing 6  
through you, and my lord will not fail to attain his ends. By the life 7  
of Nebuchadnezzar, king of all the earth, and by the living might of  
him who sent you to bring order to all creatures, I swear: not only do  
men serve him, thanks to you, but wild animals also, cattle, and  
birds, will owe their lives to your power as long as Nebuchadnezzar  
and his dynasty reign.<sup>a</sup> We have heard how wise and clever you are. 8  
You are known throughout the world as the man of ability unrivalled  
in the whole empire, of powerful intelligence and amazing skill in the  
art of war. We know about the speech that Achior made in your 9  
council, because the men of Bethulia rescued him, and he told them  
what he had said to you. Do not disregard what he said, my lord and 10  
master, but give full weight to his words. They are true. No punish-  
ment ever falls on our race and the sword does not subdue them,  
except when they sin against their God. But now, my lord, you are 11  
not to be thwarted and cheated of success, for they are doomed to  
die. Sin has them in its power, and when they do wrong they will  
arouse their God’s anger. Because they have run out of food and 12  
their water-supply is low, they have decided to lay hands on their  
cattle; they mean to consume everything that God by his laws has  
prohibited as food; and they have resolved to use up the firstfruits of 13  
the grain and the tithes of wine and oil, although these are dedicated

[a] not only . . . reign: *or* thanks to you and to your power, not only do men serve him, but wild animals also, cattle, and birds, will live at the disposal of Nebuchadnezzar and his household; *the text and meaning are uncertain.*

and reserved for the priests who stand in attendance before our God  
14 in Jerusalem, and no layman may so much as handle them. They  
have sent men to Jerusalem to get permission from the senate,  
15 because even the people there have done this. As soon as ever word  
reaches them and they act on it, on that very day they will be given  
up to you to be destroyed.

16 'So, my lord, when I learnt all this, I ran away from them; and  
God has sent me to do with you things that will be the wonder of the  
17 world, wherever men hear about them. For I, your servant, am a  
religious woman: day and night I worship the God of heaven. I will  
stay with you now, my lord; and each night I shall go out into the  
valley and pray to God, and he will tell me when they have committed  
18 their sins. Then, when I return and bring you word, you may lead  
out your whole army, and you will meet with no resistance from any  
19 of them. I will guide you across Judaea until you reach Jerusalem,  
and I will set up your throne in the heart of the city. They will follow  
you like sheep that have lost their shepherd, and not a dog will so  
much as growl at you. I have been given foreknowledge of this. It  
has been revealed to me, and I have been sent to announce it to you.'

20 Judith's words delighted Holophernes and all his attendants, and  
21 they were amazed at her wisdom. 'In the whole wide world', they  
said, 'there is not a woman to compare with her for beauty of face or  
22 shrewdness of speech.' Holophernes said to her, 'Thank God for  
sending you out from your people, to bring strength to us and  
23 destruction to those who have insulted my lord! You are a beautiful  
woman and your words are good. If you do as you have promised,  
your God shall be my God, and you shall live in King Nebuchad-  
nezzar's palace and be renowned throughout the world.'

12 Holophernes then commanded them to bring her in where his  
silver was set out, and he ordered a meal to be served for her from  
2 his own food and wine. But Judith said, 'I will not eat any of it, in  
case I should be breaking our law. What I have brought with me will  
3 meet my needs.' Holophernes said to her, 'But if you use up all you  
have with you, where can we get you a fresh supply of the same kind?  
4 There is no one of your race here among us.' Judith replied, 'As  
sure as you live, my lord, I shall not finish what I have brought with  
me before the Lord accomplishes through me what he has planned.'

5 Holophernes' attendants brought her into the tent; and she slept  
6 until midnight. Shortly before the morning watch she got up and

sent this message to Holophernes: 'My lord, will you give orders for me to be allowed to go out and pray?' Holophernes ordered his 7 bodyguard to let her pass. She remained in the camp for three days, going out each night into the valley of Bethulia and bathing in the spring. When she came up from the spring, she prayed the Lord, the 8 God of Israel, to prosper her undertaking to restore her people. Then she returned to the camp purified, and remained in the tent 9 until she took her meal towards evening.

ON THE FOURTH DAY Holophernes gave a banquet for his 10 personal servants only, and did not invite any of the army officers. He said to Bagoas, the eunuch in charge of all his affairs: 11 'Go to the Hebrew woman who is in your care, and persuade her to join us and to eat and drink with us. It would be a disgrace if we let 12 such a woman go without enjoying her company. If we do not win her favours she will laugh at us.' Bagoas left Holophernes' presence, 13 and went to Judith and said, 'Now, my beauty, do not be bashful; come along to my master and give yourself the honour of his company. Drink with us and enjoy yourself, and behave today like one of the Assyrian women in attendance at Nebuchadnezzar's 14 palace.' 'Who am I to refuse my master?' said Judith. 'I am eager to do whatever pleases him; and it will be something to boast of 15 till my dying day.' She proceeded to dress herself up and put on all her feminine finery. Her maid went ahead of her, and spread on the 16 ground in front of Holophernes the fleeces which she had received from Bagoas for her daily use, so that she might recline on them when she ate. When Judith came in and took her place, Holophernes 17 was beside himself with desire for her. He shook with passion and was filled with an ardent longing to possess her; indeed he had been looking for an opportunity to seduce her ever since he first set eyes 18 on her. So he said to her, 'Drink and enjoy yourself with us.' 'Indeed I will, my lord,' said Judith; 'today is the greatest day of my 19 whole life.' Then she took what her servant had prepared, and ate 20 and drank in his presence. Holophernes was delighted with her, and drank a great deal of wine, more, indeed, than he had ever drunk on any single day since he was born.

When it grew late, Holophernes' servants quickly withdrew. 13 Bagoas closed the tent from outside, shutting out all the attendants from his master's presence, and they went to bed; the banquet had

- 2 lasted so long that they were all worn out. Judith was left alone in the tent, with Holophernes lying sprawled on his bed, dead drunk.
- 3 Judith had told her maid to stand outside the sleeping-apartment and wait for her mistress to go out, as she did every day; she had said that she would be going out to pray, and had explained this to
- 4 Bagoas also. When they had all gone and not a soul was left, Judith stood beside Holophernes' bed and prayed silently: 'O Lord, God of all power, look favourably now on what I am about to do to bring
- 5 glory to Jerusalem, for now is the time to help thy heritage and to give success to my plan for crushing the enemies who have risen up
- 6 against us.' She went to the bed-rail beside Holophernes' head and
- 7 took down his sword, and stepping close to the bed she grasped his
- 8 hair. 'Now give me strength, O Lord, God of Israel', she said; then she struck at his neck twice with all her might, and cut off his head.
- 9 She rolled the body off the bed and took the mosquito-net from its posts; a moment later she went out and gave Holophernes' head to
- 10 the maid, who put it in her food-bag. The two of them went out together, as they had usually done for prayer. Through the camp they went, and round that valley, and up the hill to Bethulia till they reached the gates.
- 11 From a distance Judith called to the sentries at the gates: 'Open! Open the gate! God, our God, is with us, still showing his strength in Israel and his might against our enemies. He has shown it today!'
- 12 When the citizens heard her voice, they hurried down to the gate and
- 13 summoned the elders of the town. Everyone high and low came running, hardly able to believe that Judith had returned. They opened the gate and let the two women in; they lit a fire to see by,
- 14 and gathered round them. Then Judith raised her voice and cried, 'Praise God! O praise him! Praise God, who has not withdrawn his mercy from the house of Israel, but has crushed our enemies by
- 15 my hand this very night!' Then she took the head from the bag and showed it to them. 'Look!' she said. 'The head of Holophernes, the Assyrian commander-in-chief! And here is the net under which he lay drunk! The Lord has struck him down by the hand of a woman!
- 16 And I swear by the Lord who has brought me safely along the way I have travelled that, though my face lured him to destruction, he committed no sin with me, and my honour is unblemished.'
- 17 The people were all astounded; and bowing down in worship to God, they said with one voice, 'Praise be to thee, O Lord our God,

who hast humiliated the enemies of thy people this day.' And 18  
Ozias said to Judith, 'My daughter, the blessing of God Most High  
is upon you, you more than all other women on earth; praise be to  
the Lord, the God who created heaven and earth, and guided you  
when you struck off the head of the enemy commander. The sure 19  
hope which inspired you<sup>a</sup> will never fade from men's minds while  
they commemorate the power of God. May God make your deed 20  
redound to your honour for ever, and shower blessings upon you!  
You risked your life for our country when it was faced with humilia-  
tion. You went boldly to meet the disaster that threatened us, and  
held firmly to God's straight road.' All the people responded:  
'Amen! Amen!'

### *The triumph of Israel*

THEN JUDITH SAID to them, 'Listen to me, my friends; take 14  
this head and hang it out on the battlements of your wall.  
As soon as dawn breaks and the sun rises, take up your weapons, 2  
every able-bodied man of you, and march out of the town. You must  
set a commander at your head, as if you were going down to the plain  
to attack the Assyrian outpost; but do not go down. The Assyrians 3  
will take up their weapons and make for their camp, and rouse the  
commanders, who will run to Holophernes' tent but will not find him.  
They will all be seized with panic and will flee from you; then 4  
pursue them, you and all who live within Israel's borders, and cut  
them down in their tracks. But first of all summon Achior the 5  
Ammonite to me, so that he may see and recognize the man who  
treated Israel with contempt and sent him to us as if to his death.'

They summoned Achior from Ozias's house. When he came and 6  
saw Holophernes' head held by one of the men in the assembly of the  
people, he fainted and fell down. They lifted him up, and he threw 7  
himself at Judith's feet and did obeisance to her, and said, 'Your  
praises will be sung in every camp in Judah and among all nations.  
They will tremble when they hear your name. Tell me now the whole 8  
story of what you have done during these days.' Then Judith, in the  
hearing of the people, told him everything from the day she left until  
that very moment. As she ended her story, the people raised a great 9

[<sup>a</sup>] Or which you inspire.

10 shout and made the town ring with their cheers. And when Achior realized all that the God of Israel had done, he came to full belief in God, and was circumcised, and admitted as a member of the community of Israel, as his descendants still are.

11 When dawn came they hung Holophernes' head on the wall; then they all took their weapons and went out in companies into the  
12 approaches to the town. When the Assyrians saw them, they sent word to their leaders, who then went to the generals, captains, and  
13 all the other officers. They came to Holophernes' tent and said to his steward: 'Wake our master. These slaves have had the audacity to  
14 offer us battle; they are asking to be utterly wiped out.' Bagoas went in and knocked at the screen of the inner tent, supposing that Holo-  
15 phernes was sleeping with Judith. When there was no reply, he drew aside the screen, went into the sleeping-apartment, and found the  
16 dead body sprawling over a footstool, and the head gone. He gave a  
17 great cry, wailing and groaning aloud, and tore his clothes. Then he went into the tent which Judith had occupied; and not finding her he  
18 rushed out to the people shouting, 'The slaves have played us false. One Hebrew woman has brought shame on Nebuchadnezzar's  
kingdom. Look! Holophernes is lying on the ground, and his head  
19 is gone!' His words filled the officers of the Assyrian army with dismay; they tore their clothes, and the camp rang with their shouts and cries.

15 When the news spread to the men in the camp, they were thrown  
2 into consternation at what had happened. In terror and panic they all scattered at once, with no attempt to keep together, and fled by  
3 every path across the plain and the hill-country. Those who were encamped in the hills round Bethulia also took to flight. Then all the  
4 Israelites of military age sallied out after them. Ozias sent men to Bethomesthaim, Choba, and Chola, and the whole territory of Israel, to give news of what had happened and to tell them to sally out  
5 against the enemy and destroy them. When the news reached them, every man in Israel joined the attack and cut them down, going as far as Choba. The men from Jerusalem and all the hill-country also joined in, for they had been told what had happened in the enemy camp. The men of Gilead and Galilee outflanked the Assyrians and inflicted heavy losses on them, continuing beyond Damascus and the  
6 district round it. The rest of the inhabitants of Bethulia fell upon the  
7 camp and made themselves rich with the spoils. When the Israelites

returned from the slaughter, they took possession of what remained. The villages and hamlets in the hill-country and in the plain got masses of booty, for there was a huge quantity of it.

Joakim the high priest and the senate of Israel came from Jerusalem to see for themselves the great things the Lord had done for his people, and to meet Judith and wish her well. When they arrived they praised her with one voice and said, 'You are the glory of Jerusalem, the heroine of Israel, the proud boast of our people! With your own hand you have done all this, you have restored the fortunes of Israel, and God has shown his approval. Blessings on you from the Lord Almighty, for all time to come!' And all the people responded, 'Amen!'

The looting of the camp went on for thirty days. They gave Judith Holophernes' tent, with all his silver, and his couches, bowls, and furniture. She took them and loaded her mule, then got her wagons ready and piled the goods on them. All the Israelite women came running to see her; they sang her praises, and some of them performed a dance in her honour. She took garlanded wands in her hands and gave some also to the women who accompanied her; and she and those who were with her crowned themselves with olive leaves. Then, at the head of all the people, she led the women in the dance; and the men of Israel, in full armour and with garlands on their heads, followed them singing hymns.

IN THE PRESENCE of all Israel, Judith struck up this hymn of praise and thanksgiving, in which all the people joined lustily:

'Strike up a song to my God with tambourines;  
sing to the Lord with cymbals;  
raise a psalm of praise<sup>a</sup> to him;  
honour him and invoke his name.  
The Lord is a God who stamps out wars;  
he has brought me safe from my pursuers  
into his camp among his people.  
The Assyrian came from the mountains of the north;  
his armies came in such myriads  
that his troops choked the valleys,  
his cavalry covered the hills.

[<sup>a</sup>] *Some witnesses read a new psalm.*

- 5 He threatened to set fire to my land,  
put my young men to the sword,  
dash my infants to the ground,  
take my children as booty,  
and my maidens as spoil.
- 6 The Lord Almighty has thwarted them by a woman's hand.
- 7 It was no young man that brought their champion low;  
no Titan struck him down,  
no tall giant set upon him;  
but Judith daughter of Merari disarmed him by the beauty of her  
face.
- 8 She put off her widow's weeds  
to raise up the afflicted in Israel;  
she anointed her face with perfume,  
and bound her hair with a headband,  
and put on a linen gown to beguile him.
- 9 Her sandal entranced his eye,  
her beauty took his heart captive;  
and the sword cut through his neck.
- 10 The Persians shuddered at her daring,  
the Medes were daunted by her boldness.
- 11 Then my oppressed people shouted in triumph, and the enemy  
were afraid;  
my weak ones shouted, and the enemy cowered in fear;  
they raised their voices, and the enemy took to flight.
- 12 The sons of servant girls ran them through,  
wounding them like runaway slaves;  
they were destroyed by the army of my Lord.
- 13 'I will sing a new hymn to my God.  
O Lord, thou art great and glorious,  
thou art marvellous in thy strength, invincible.
- 14 Let thy whole creation serve thee;  
for thou didst speak and all things came to be;  
thou didst send out thy spirit and it formed them.  
No one can resist thy voice;
- 15 mountains and seas are stirred to their depths,  
rocks melt like wax at thy presence;  
but to those who revere thee



thou dost still show mercy.

For no sacrifice is sufficient to please thee with its fragrance, 16  
and all the fat in the world is not enough for a burnt-offering,  
but he who fears the Lord is always great.

Woe to the nations which rise up against my people! 17

The Lord Almighty will punish them on the day of judgement;  
he will consign their bodies to fire and worms;  
they will weep in pain for ever.'

When they arrived at Jerusalem they worshipped God. As soon 18  
as the people were purified, they offered their burnt-offerings, free-  
will offerings, and gifts. Judith dedicated to God all Holophernes' 19  
possessions, which the people had given to her; and the net, which  
she had taken for herself from the sleeping-apartment, she presented  
as a votive offering. For three months the people continued their 20  
celebrations in Jerusalem in front of the sanctuary; and Judith  
remained with them.

At the end of that time they all returned to their own homes. 21  
Judith went back to Bethulia and lived on her estate. In her time she  
was famous throughout the whole country. She had many suitors; 22  
but she remained unmarried all her life after her husband Manasses  
died and was gathered to his fathers. Her fame continued to 23  
increase; and she lived on in her husband's house until she was a  
hundred and five years old. She gave her maid her liberty. She died  
in Bethulia and was buried in the same tomb as her husband  
Manasses, and Israel observed mourning for her for seven days. 24  
Before her death she divided her property among all those who were  
most closely related to her husband Manasses, and among her own  
nearest relations.

No one dared to threaten the Israelites again in Judith's lifetime, 25  
or for a long time after her death.

THE REST OF THE CHAPTERS  
OF THE BOOK OF  
ESTHER  
WHICH ARE FOUND NEITHER IN  
THE HEBREW NOR IN THE SYRIAC

NOTE. The portions of the Book of Esther commonly included in the Apocrypha are extracts from the Greek version of the book, which differs substantially from the Hebrew text (translated in *The New English Bible: Old Testament*). In order that they may be read in their original sequence, the whole of the Greek version is here translated, those portions which are not normally printed in the Apocrypha being enclosed in square brackets, with the chapter and verse numbers in italic figures. The order followed is that of the Greek text, but the chapter and verse numbers are made to conform to those of the Authorized Version. Proper names are given in the form in which they occur in the Greek version.

11 2 **I**N THE SECOND YEAR of the reign of Artaxerxes the  
Great King, on the first day of Nisan, Mardochaeus son of Jairus,  
son of Semeius, son of Kisaëus, of the tribe of Benjamin, had a  
3 dream. Mardochaeus was a Jew living in the city of Susa, a man of  
4 high standing, who was in the royal service; he came of those whom  
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken into exile from Jeru-  
5 salem with Jechonias king of Judah. This was his dream: din and  
tumult, peals of thunder and an earthquake, confusion upon the  
6 earth. Then appeared two great dragons, ready to grapple with each  
7 other, and the noise they made was terrible. Every nation was roused  
8 by it to prepare for war, to fight against the righteous nation. It was  
a day of darkness and gloom, with distress and anguish, oppression  
9 and great confusion upon the earth. And the whole righteous nation  
was troubled, dreading the evils in store for them, and they prepared  
10 for death. They cried aloud to God; and in answer to their cry there  
came as though from a little spring a great river brimming with  
11 water. It grew light, and the sun rose; the humble were exalted and  
12 they devoured the great. After he had had this dream and had seen

what God had resolved to do, Mardochaeus woke; he kept it before his mind, seeking in every way to understand it, until nightfall.

Now when Mardochaeus was resting in the royal courtyard with 12 Gabatha and Tharra, the two eunuchs who guarded the courtyard, he heard them deep in discussion. He listened carefully to discover 2 what was on their minds, and found that they were plotting violence against King Artaxerxes. He denounced them to the king, who had 3 the two eunuchs interrogated. They confessed and were led away to execution. Then the king wrote an account of the affair, to have it on 4 record; Mardochaeus also wrote an account of it. The king gave 5 Mardochaeus an appointment at court, and rewarded him for his services. But Haman, the son of Hamadathus, a Bugaeen, who 6 enjoyed the king's favour, sought to injure Mardochaeus and his people because of the two eunuchs.

### *A Jewess becomes queen in Persia*

THOSE EVENTS happened in the days of Artaxerxes, the Arta- 1 xerxes who ruled from India to Ethiopia, a hundred and twenty-seven provinces. At this time he sat on his royal throne in 2 the city of Susa. Then in the third year of his reign he gave a 3 banquet for the King's Friends and persons of various races, the Persian and Median nobles and the leading provincial governors. And afterwards, after displaying to them the wealth of his empire 4 and the splendour of his rich festivities for a hundred and eighty days, when these days of feasting were over, the king gave a banquet 5 for all the people of various races present in the city of Susa; it was held in the court of the king's palace and lasted six days. The court 6 was decorated with white curtains of linen and cotton stretched on cords of purple, and these were attached to blocks of gold and silver resting on stone and marble columns. There were couches of gold and silver set on a pavement of malachite, marble, and mother-of-pearl. There were mats of transparent weave elaborately embroidered with roses arranged in a circle. The cups were of gold and silver, and 7 there was displayed a miniature cup made of carbuncle worth thirty thousand talents. The wine was abundant and sweet, from the king's own cellar. The drinking was not according to a fixed rule, but the 8

king had laid it down that all the stewards of his palace should respect his will and that of the guests. In addition, Queen Astin gave a banquet for the women in the same palace where King Artaxerxes was.

On the seventh day, when he was in high good humour, the king ordered Haman, Mazan, Tharra, Borazes, Zatholtha, Abataza, and Tharaba, the seven eunuchs who were in attendance on the king's person, to bring the queen before him, so that he might place the royal diadem on her head and let her display her beauty to the officers and people of various races; for she was indeed a beautiful woman. But Queen Astin refused to obey him and come with the eunuchs. This offended the king and made him angry.

Then the king said to his courtiers, 'You hear what Astin said. Give your ruling and judgement in the matter.' Then the nobles of Persia and Media who were closest to the king—Harkesaeus, Sarsathaeus, and Malesear, who sat next him in the chief seats—approached him and declared what should be done according to the law to Queen Astin for disobeying the order which the king sent her by the eunuchs. Then Muchaeus said to the king and the nobles: 'Queen Astin has done wrong, and not to the king alone, but to all his nobles and officers as well.' (For he had repeated to them what the queen had said and how she had defied the king.) 'And just as she defied King Artaxerxes, so now the nobles of Persia and Media will find that all their ladies are bold enough to treat their husbands with contempt, when they hear what she said to the king. If it please your majesty, let a royal decree go out from you, and let it be inscribed among the laws of the Medes and Persians, that Astin shall not again appear before the king; this is the only course. And let the king give her place as queen to another woman who is more worthy of it than she. Let whatever law the king makes be proclaimed throughout his empire, and then all women will give due honour to their husbands, rich and poor alike.' The advice pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as Muchaeus had proposed. Letters were sent to all the provinces of the empire, to each province in its own language, in order that every man might be respected in his own house.

Later, when the anger of King Artaxerxes had died down, he remembered Astin and what she had done, and how he had given judgement against her. So the king's attendants said: 'Let beautiful girls of unblemished virtue be sought out for your majesty. Let your

majesty appoint commissioners in all the provinces of the empire to select these beautiful virgins and bring them to the city of Susa, into the women's quarters. There let them be committed to the care of the king's eunuch in charge of the women, and let them be provided with cosmetics and everything else they need. Then the one who is  
4 most acceptable to the king shall become queen in place of Astin.' The advice pleased the king, and he acted on it.

Now there was a Jew in the city of Susa named Mardocheus, son  
5 of Jairus, son of Semeius, son of Kisaëus, of the tribe of Benjamin; he had been carried into exile from Jerusalem when it was taken by  
6 Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. He had a foster-child named  
7 Esther, the daughter of his father's brother Aminadab. She had lost her parents, and he had brought her up to womanhood. She was  
8 a very beautiful girl. When the king's edict was proclaimed, many girls were brought to Susa to be entrusted to Gai, who had charge of  
9 the women, and among them was Esther. She attracted his notice and received his special favour: he readily provided her with her  
cosmetics and allowance of food, and also with seven maids assigned to her from the king's palace. He gave her and her maids honourable  
treatment in the women's quarters.

Esther had not disclosed her race or country, because Mardo-  
10 chaeus had forbidden her to do so. Every day Mardocheus passed  
11 along by the forecourt of the women's quarters to keep an eye on Esther and see what would happen to her.

The period after which a girl was to go to the king was twelve  
12 months. This was for the completion of the required treatment—six months with oil and myrrh and six months with perfumes and  
cosmetics. Then the girl went to the king. She was handed to the  
13 person appointed, and accompanied him from the women's quarters to the king's palace. She entered the palace in the evening and  
14 returned in the morning to Gai, the king's eunuch in charge of the women, in another part of the women's quarters. She did not go to  
the king again unless summoned by name.

When the time came for Esther, daughter of Aminadab the uncle  
15 of Mardocheus, to go to the king, she neglected none of the instructions of Gai the king's eunuch in charge of the women; for Esther  
16 charmed all who saw her. She was taken to King Artaxerxes in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, in the seventh year of his  
17 reign. The king fell in love with her, finding her more acceptable

than any of the other girls, and crowned her with the queen's diadem.

18 Then the king gave a banquet lasting seven days for all the King's Friends and the officers, to celebrate Esther's marriage. He also granted a remission of taxation to all subjects of his empire.

19, 20 Mardochaeus was in attendance in the courtyard. But Esther had not disclosed her country—such were the instructions of Mardochaeus; but she was to fear God and keep his commandments just as she had done when she was with him. So Esther made no change in her way of life.

21 Two of the king's eunuchs, officers of the bodyguard, were offended at the advancement of Mardochaeus and plotted to kill

22 King Artaxerxes. This became known to Mardochaeus, who told

23 Esther, and she revealed the plot to the king. The king interrogated the two eunuchs and had them hanged, and he ordered that the service Mardochaeus had rendered should be recorded in the royal archives to his honour.

### *A plot against the Jews*

3 **A**FTER THIS King Artaxerxes promoted Haman son of Hamadathus the Bugean, advancing him and giving him precedence  
 2 above all the King's Friends. So all who were at court did obeisance to Haman, for so the king had commanded; but Mardochaeus did  
 3 not do obeisance. Then the king's courtiers said to him, 'Mardo-  
 4 chaeus, why do you flout the king's command?' Day by day they challenged him, but he refused to listen to them. Then they informed Haman that Mardochaeus was resisting the king's command.  
 5 Mardochaeus had told them that he was a Jew. So when Haman learnt that Mardochaeus was not doing obeisance to him, he was  
 6 infuriated and plotted to exterminate all the Jews under Artaxerxes' rule.

7 In the twelfth year of King Artaxerxes he arrived at a decision by casting lots, taking the days and the months one by one, to decide on one day for the destruction of the whole race of Mardochaeus. The lot fell on the thirteenth<sup>a</sup> day of the month Adar.

8 Then Haman said to King Artaxerxes: 'There is a certain nation

[a] So some witnesses, and compare 8. 12 (page 128); other witnesses read fourteenth.

dispersed among the other nations of your empire. Their laws are different from those of every other nation; they do not keep your majesty's laws. It is not to your majesty's advantage to tolerate them. If it please your majesty, let an order be made for their 9 destruction; and I will contribute ten thousand talents of silver to the royal treasury.' So the king took off his signet-ring and gave it to 10 Haman to seal the decree against the Jews. 'Keep the money, and 11 deal with these people as you will', he said.

On the thirteenth day of the first month the king's secretaries were 12 summoned, and in accordance with Haman's instructions, they wrote in the name of King Artaxerxes to his army commanders and governors in every province from India to Ethiopia. There were a hundred and twenty-seven provinces in all, and each was addressed in its own language. Instructions were dispatched by courier to all 13 the empire of Artaxerxes to exterminate the Jewish race, on a given day of the twelfth month, Adar, and to plunder their possessions.]

THIS IS a copy of the letter:

13

Artaxerxes the Great King to the governors of the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia, and to the subordinate officials.

Ruler as I am over many nations and master of all the world, it is 2 my will—not in the arrogance of power, but because my rule is mild and equitable—to ensure to my subjects a life permanently free from disturbance, to pacify my empire and make it safe for travel to its farthest limits, and to restore the peace that all men long for. I asked my counsellors how this object might be achieved 3 and received a reply from Haman. Haman is eminent among us for sound judgement, one whose worth is proved by his constant goodwill and steadfast loyalty, and who has gained the honour of the second place at our court. He represented to us that scattered 4 among all the races of the empire is a disaffected people, opposed in its laws to every nation, and continually ignoring the royal ordinances, so that our irreproachable plans for the unified administration of the empire cannot be made effective. We under- 5 stand that this nation stands alone in its continual opposition to all men, that it evades the laws by its strange manner of life, and in disloyalty to our government commits grievous offences, thus

- 6 undermining the security of our empire. We therefore order that those who are designated to you in the indictments drawn up by Haman, our vicegerent and second father, shall all, together with their wives and children, be utterly destroyed by the sword of their enemies, without mercy or pity, on the thirteenth<sup>a</sup> day of Adar, 7 the twelfth month, of the present year. Those persons who have long been disaffected shall meet a violent death in one day so that our government may henceforth be stable and untroubled.

3 14 [Copies of the document were posted up in every province, and all 15 nations of the empire were ordered to be ready by that day. The matter was expedited also in Susa. While the king and Haman caroused together, the city of Susa was thrown into confusion.

- 4 WHEN MARDOCHAEUS learnt all that was being done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and sprinkled himself with ashes; and he rushed through the city, crying loudly: 'An innocent 5 nation is being destroyed.' He went as far as the king's gate, and there he halted, because no one was allowed to enter the courtyard 6 clothed with sackcloth and ashes. In every province where the king's decree was posted up, there was a great cry of mourning and lamentation among the Jews, and they put on sackcloth and ashes. 7 When the queen's maids and eunuchs came and told her, she was distraught at the news, and sent clothes for Mardochaeus, urging 8 him to take off his sackcloth; but he would not consent. Then Esther summoned Hachrathaeus, the eunuch who waited upon her, and ordered him to obtain accurate information for her from Mardochaeus.<sup>b</sup> So Mardochaeus told him all that had happened, and how Haman had promised to pay ten thousand talents into the royal 9 treasury to bring about the destruction of the Jews. He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction which had been posted up in Susa, to show to Esther; and he gave him a message for her, that she should go to the king and plead for his favour and entreat him for her people. 'Remember', he said, 'those days when you were brought up in my humble home; for Haman, who stands next to the king, has spoken against us and demanded our death. Call upon the Lord, and then speak for us to the king and save our

[a] *Gk.* fourteenth; see note on 3. 7 (page 120). [b] Some witnesses add (6) So he went out to Mardochaeus in the street opposite the city gate.



lives.' Hachrathaeus returned and told her what Mardochaeus had said. She sent him back with this message: 'All nations of the empire know that if any person, man or woman, enters the king's presence in the inner court unbidden, there is no escape for him. Only one to whom the king stretches out the golden sceptre is safe; and it is now thirty days since I myself was called to go to the king.'

When Hachrathaeus delivered her message, Mardochaeus told him to go back and say: 'Do not imagine, Esther, that you alone of all the Jews in the empire will escape alive. For if you remain silent at such a time as this, the Jews will somewhere find relief and deliverance, but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows whether it is not for such a time as this that you have been made a queen?' Esther gave the messenger this answer to take back to Mardochaeus: 'Go and assemble all the Jews who are in Susa and fast for me; for three days take neither food nor drink, night or day, and I and my maids will also go without food. Then in defiance of the law I will enter the king's presence, even if it costs me my life.' So Mardochaeus went away and did as Esther had bidden him.]

AND MARDOCHAEUS prayed to the Lord, calling to mind all the works of the Lord. He said, 'O Lord, Lord and King who rulest over all, because the whole world is under thy authority, and when it is thy will to save Israel there is no one who can stand against thee: thou didst make heaven and earth and every wonderful thing under heaven; thou art Lord of all, and there is no one who can resist thee, the Lord. Thou knowest all things; thou knowest, Lord, that it was not from insolence or arrogance or vainglory that I refused to bow before proud Haman, for I could gladly have kissed the soles of his feet to save Israel; no, I did it so that I might not hold a man in greater honour than God; I will not bow before any but thee, my Lord, and it is not from arrogance that I refuse this homage. And now Lord, God and King, God of Abraham, spare thy people; for our enemies are watching us to bring us to ruin, and they have set their hearts upon the destruction of thy chosen people, thine from the beginning. Do not disdain thy own possession which thou didst ransom for thyself out of Egypt. Hear my prayer, and have mercy on thy heritage, and turn our mourning into feasting, that we may live and sing of thy name, Lord; do not put to silence

18 the lips that give thee praise.' And all Israel cried aloud with all their might, for death stared them in the face.

14 Then Queen Esther, caught up in this deadly conflict,<sup>a</sup> took refuge  
2 in the Lord. She stripped off her splendid attire and put on the garb of mourning and distress. Instead of proud perfumes she strewed ashes and dung over her head. She abased her body, and every part that she had delightfully adorned she covered with her dishevelled  
3 hair. And so she prayed to the Lord God of Israel:

'O my Lord, thou alone art our king; help me who am alone, with  
4. 5 no helper but thee; for I am taking my life in my hands. Ever since I was born I have been taught by my father's family and tribe that thou, O Lord, didst choose Israel out of all the nations, and out of all the founders of our race didst choose our fathers for an everlasting possession, and that what thou didst promise them, thou didst perform. But now we have sinned against thee, and thou hast handed us  
6 over to our enemies because we honoured their gods; thou art just, O Lord. But they are not content with our bitter servitude; they  
7 have now pledged themselves to their idols to annul thy decree and to destroy thy possession, silencing those who praise thee, extinguishing the glory of thy house, and casting down thy altar. They  
8 would give the heathen cause to sing the praises of their worthless gods, and would have a mortal king held in everlasting honour.

11 'Yield not thy sceptre, O Lord, to gods that are nothing; let not our enemies mock at our ruin, but turn their plot against themselves, and make an example of the man who planned it. Remember us, O Lord, make thy power known in the time of our distress, and give  
12 me courage, O King of gods, almighty Lord. Give me the apt word to say when I enter the lion's den. Divert his hatred to our enemy, so that there may be an end of him and his confederates.

14 'Save us by thy power, and help me who am alone and have no  
15 helper but thee, Lord. Thou knowest all; thou knowest that I hate the splendour of the heathen, I abhor the bed of the uncircumcised  
16 or of any Gentile. Thou knowest in what straits I am: I loathe that symbol of pride, the headdress that I wear when I show myself abroad, I loathe it as one loathes a filthy rag; in private I refuse to  
17 wear it. I, thy servant, have not eaten at Haman's table; I have not graced a banquet of the king or touched the wine of his drink-  
18 offerings; I have not known festive joy from the time that I was

[a] caught . . . conflict: *or* seized by mortal anxiety.

brought here until now except in thee, Lord God of Abraham. O God who dost prevail against all, give heed to the cry of the despairing: rescue us from the power of wicked men, and rescue me from what I dread.'

ON THE THIRD DAY Esther brought her prayers to an end. She took off the clothes she had worn while she worshipped and put on all her splendour. When she was in her royal robes and had invoked the all-seeing God, her preserver, she took two maids with her; on one she leaned for support, as befitted a fine lady, while the other followed, bearing her train. She was blushing and in the height of her beauty; her face was as cheerful as it was lovely, but her heart was in the grip of fear. She passed through all the doors and reached the royal presence. The king was seated on his throne, in the full array of his majesty. He was all gold and precious stones, an awe-inspiring figure. He looked up, his face glowing with regal dignity, and glanced at her in towering anger. The queen fell, changing colour in a faint, and swooning on the shoulder of the maid who went before her.

Then God changed the spirit of the king to gentleness, and in deep concern he leapt from his throne and took her in his arms until she came to herself. He soothed her with reassuring words: 'Esther, what is it? Have no fear of me, your loving husband; you shall not die, for our order is only for our subjects. Come to me.' And the king lifted his golden sceptre and laid it upon her neck; then he kissed her and said, 'You may speak to me.' She answered, 'I saw you, my lord, looking like an angel of God, and I was awestruck at your glorious appearance; your countenance is so full of grace, my lord, that I look on you in wonder.' But while she was speaking she fell down in a faint; the king was distressed, and all his attendants comforted her.

【Then the king said, 'What is your wish, Queen Esther? What is your request? Up to half my empire, it shall be given you.' 'Today is a special day for me', said Esther. 'If it please your majesty, will you come, and Haman with you, to a banquet which I shall give today?' The king ordered Haman to be sent for in haste, so that Esther's wish might be fulfilled; and they both went to the banquet to which Esther had invited them. Over the wine the king said to her, 'What is it, Queen Esther? Whatever you ask for shall be

7, 8 yours.' Esther said, 'This is my humble request: if I have won your majesty's favour, will your majesty and Haman come again tomorrow to the banquet which I shall give for you both, and tomorrow I will do as I have done today.'

9 So Haman went out from the royal presence in good spirits and well pleased with himself. But when he saw Mardocheus the Jew in  
10 the king's courtyard, he was filled with rage. He went home, and  
11 called for his friends and his wife Zosara, and held forth to them about his wealth and the honours with which the king had invested  
12 him, how he had made him first man in the empire. 'Queen Esther', he said, 'invited no one but myself to accompany the king to her  
13 banquet; and I am invited again for tomorrow. Yet all this is no pleasure to me so long as I see that Jew Mardocheus in the court-  
14 yard.' Then his wife Zosara and his friends said to him: 'Have a gallows put up, seventy-five feet<sup>a</sup> high, and in the morning speak to the king and have Mardocheus hanged upon it. Then you can go with the king to the banquet and enjoy yourself.' Haman thought this an excellent plan, and the gallows was made ready.

### *The triumph of the Jews*

6 **T**HAT NIGHT the Lord kept sleep from the king, so he ordered his private secretary to bring the court chronicle and read it to  
2 him. He found written there the record about Mardocheus, how he had given information about the two royal eunuchs who, while they  
3 were on guard, had plotted violence against King Artaxerxes. Whereupon the king said, 'What honour or favour did we confer on Mardocheus for this?' The king's courtiers who were in attendance  
4 replied, 'You have done nothing for him.' While the king was inquiring about the service that Mardocheus had rendered, Haman appeared in the courtyard. 'Who is that in the court?' asked the king. Now Haman had just come in to recommend to the king that Mardocheus should be hanged on the gallows which he had pre-  
5 pared; so the king's servants said, 'It is Haman standing in the  
6 court.' 'Call him', said the king. Then the king said to Haman, 'What shall I do for the man I wish to honour?' Haman said to

[<sup>a</sup>] *Gk.* fifty cubits.

himself, 'Whom would the king wish to honour but me?' So he said 7  
to the king, 'For the man whom the king wishes to honour, let the 8  
king's attendants bring a robe of fine linen from the king's own  
wardrobe and a horse from the king's own stable. Let both be 9  
delivered to one of the king's most honourable Friends, and let him  
robe the man whom the king loves and mount him on the horse, and  
let him proclaim through the city: "This shall be the lot of any man  
whom the king honours."' Then the king said to Haman, 'An 10  
excellent suggestion! Do all this for Mardochaeus the Jew who  
serves in the courtyard. Let nothing that you have said be omitted.'  
So Haman took the robe and put it on Mardochaeus, and mounted 11  
him on the horse; then he went through the city, proclaiming: 'This  
shall be the lot of any man whom the king wishes to honour.'

Then Mardochaeus returned to the courtyard, and Haman hurried 12  
off home with head veiled in mourning. He told his wife Zosara 13  
and his friends what had happened to him. They replied, 'If Mardo-  
chaeus is a Jew, and you have been humiliated before him, you are a  
lost man. You cannot get the better of him, because the living God is  
on his side.'

While they were still talking with Haman, the king's eunuchs 14  
arrived and hurried him away to the banquet which Esther had  
prepared.

So the king and Haman went to the queen's banquet. Again on 7 1, 2  
that second day, over the wine, the king said, 'What is it, Queen  
Esther? What is your request? What is your petition? You shall have  
it, up to half my empire.' Queen Esther answered: 'If I have won 3  
your majesty's favour, my request is for my life, my petition is for  
my people. For it has come to my ears that we have been sold, I and 4  
my people, to be destroyed, plundered, and enslaved, we and our  
children, male and female. Our adversary is a disgrace to the king's  
court.' The king said, 'Who is it that has dared to do such a thing?' 5  
'Our enemy', said Esther, 'is this wicked Haman.' Haman stood 6  
dumbfounded before the king and the queen. The king rose from the 7  
banquet and went into the garden, and Haman began to plead with  
the queen, for he saw that things were going badly for him. When the 8  
king returned to the banqueting hall from the garden, Haman in his  
entreaties had flung himself across the queen's couch. The king  
exclaimed, 'What! You assault the queen in my own house?' At  
those words Haman turned away in despair. Then Bugathan, one of 9

the eunuchs, said to the king, 'Look! Haman has even prepared a gallows for Mardocheus, the man who reported the plot against the king, and there it stands, seventy-five feet<sup>a</sup> high, in Haman's compound.' 'Have Haman hanged on it', said the king. So Haman was hanged on the gallows that he himself had prepared for Mardocheus. After that the king's rage died down.

8 That day King Artaxerxes gave Esther all that had belonged to Haman the persecutor; and Mardocheus was called into the king's presence, for Esther had told him how he was related to her.

2 Then the king took off his signet-ring, which he had taken back from Haman, and gave it to Mardocheus. And Esther put Mardocheus in charge of Haman's estate.

3 Once again Esther spoke before the king, falling at his feet and pleading with him to avert the calamity planned by Haman and to  
4 frustrate his plot against the Jews. The king stretched out the golden  
5 sceptre to Esther, and she rose and stood before the king. 'May it please your majesty,' she said; 'if I have won your favour, let an order be issued recalling the letters which Haman sent in pursuance  
6 of his plan to destroy the Jews in your empire. How can I bear to see the downfall of my people? How escape myself when my country is  
7 destroyed?' Then the king said to Esther: 'I have given Haman's property to you, and hanged him on the gallows because he threatened the lives of the Jews. If you want anything further, you may draw up an order in my name, in whatever terms you think fit, and seal it with my signet. An order written at the king's direction and sealed with the royal signet cannot be contravened.'

9 And so, on the twenty-third day of the first month, Nisan, in the same year, the king's secretaries were summoned; and the Jews were informed in writing of the instructions given to the administrators and chief governors in the provinces, from India to Ethiopia, a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, to each province in its own  
10 language. The orders were written as from the king and sealed with  
11 his signet, and dispatched by courier. By these documents the king granted permission to the Jews in every city to observe their own laws and to defend themselves, and to deal as they would with their  
12 opponents and enemies, throughout the empire of Artaxerxes, on a given day, the thirteenth of the twelfth month, Adar.]

[a] *Gk.* fifty cubits.

THE FOLLOWING IS a copy of this letter:

16

Artaxerxes the Great King to the governors of the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia, and to those who are of our allegiance, greeting.

Many who have been honoured only too often by the lavish 2  
generosity of their benefactors have grown arrogant and not only 3  
attempt to ill-treat our subjects but, unable to carry the favours  
heaped upon themselves, even plot mischief against those who  
grant them. Not content with destroying gratitude in men, they 4  
are carried away by the insolence of those who are strangers to  
good breeding; they even suppose that they will escape the justice  
of all-seeing God, who is no friend to evil-doers. And often, when 5  
the king's business has been entrusted to those he counts his  
friends, they have, by their plausibility, made those in supreme  
authority partners in shedding innocent blood and involved them  
in irreparable misfortunes, for their malevolence with its mislead- 6  
ing sophistries has imposed upon the sincere goodwill of their  
rulers. The evil brought about by those who wield power un- 7  
worthily you can observe, not only in records of tradition and  
history but also in your familiar experience, and apply the lesson 8  
to the future. Thus we shall peacefully free this realm from dis-  
turbance for the benefit of all, making no changes but always 9  
deciding matters which come under our notice with firmness and  
equity. Now Haman son of Hamadathus, a Macedonian, an alien 10  
in fact with no Persian blood, a man with nothing of our kindly  
nature,<sup>a</sup> was accepted by us and enjoyed<sup>b</sup> so fully the benevolence 11  
with which we treat every nation that he was proclaimed our  
Father, and all along received obeisance from everyone as second  
only to our royal throne. But this man in his unbridled arrogance 12  
planned to deprive us of our empire and our life by using fraud 13  
and tortuous cunning to bring about the destruction of Mardo-  
chaeus, our constant benefactor who had saved our life, and of  
Esther, our blameless consort, together with their whole nation.  
For he thought that by these methods he would catch us defence- 14  
less and would transfer to the Macedonians the sovereignty now  
held by the Persians. But we find that the Jews, whom this triple- 15  
dyed villain had consigned to extinction, are no evil-doers; they

[a] Or a man fallen away greatly from our favour. [b] Or won.

16 order their lives by the most just of laws, and are children of the living God, most high, most mighty, who maintains the empire in most wonderful order, for us as for our ancestors.

17 You will therefore disregard the letters sent by Haman son of  
18 Hamadathus, because he, the contriver of all this, has been hanged aloft at the gate of Susa with his whole household, God who is Lord of all having speedily brought upon him the punishment that he deserved. Copies of this letter are to be posted up in all  
19 public places. Permit the Jews to live under their own laws, and give them every assistance so that on the thirteenth day of  
20 Adar, the twelfth month, on that very day, they may avenge themselves on those who were ranged against them<sup>a</sup> in the time of their  
21 oppression. For God, who has all things in his power, has made this a day not of ruin, but of joy, for his chosen people. Therefore  
22 you also must keep it with all good cheer, as a notable day among your feasts of commemoration, so that henceforth it may be a  
23 standing symbol of deliverance to us and our loyal Persians, but a reminder of destruction to those who plot against us. Any city or  
24 country whatsoever which does not act upon these orders shall incur our wrath and be wiped out with fire and sword. No man shall set foot in it and even the beasts and birds shall shun it for all time.

8 23 [Let copies be posted up conspicuously throughout the empire, so that the Jews may be prepared by that day to fight against their enemies.

14 Mounted messengers set out with all speed to do what the king commanded; and the decree was posted up also in Susa.

15 Mardocheaus left the king's presence in royal robes, wearing a golden crown and a turban of fine linen dyed purple, and all in Susa  
16, 17 rejoiced to see him. For the Jews there was light and gladness in every province and every city. Wherever the decree was posted up there was joy and gladness for the Jews, feasting and merriment. And many of the Gentiles were circumcised and professed Judaism, because they were afraid of the Jews.

9 ON THE THIRTEENTH DAY of the twelfth month, Adar, the decree drawn up by the king arrived. On that very day the

[a] Or may defend themselves against their assailants.



enemies of the Jews perished. No one offered resistance, because <sup>2</sup>  
they were afraid of them. The leading provincial governors, the <sup>3</sup>  
princes, and the royal secretaries paid all respect to the Jews, because  
fear of Mardochaeus weighed upon them. For they had received the <sup>4</sup>  
king's decree that his name should be honoured throughout the  
empire.<sup>a b</sup> In the city itself the Jews slaughtered five hundred men, <sup>6</sup>  
including Pharsanestan, Delphon, Phasga, Pharadatha, Barsa, <sup>7, 8</sup>  
Sarbacha, Marmasima, Ruphaeus, Arsaeus, and Zabuthaeus, the ten <sup>9, 10</sup>  
sons of Haman son of Hamadathus, the Bugaeon, the Jews' great  
enemy; and that day they took plunder.

When the number of those killed in Susa was reported to the king, <sup>11</sup>  
he said to Esther, 'In the city of Susa the Jews have killed five <sup>12</sup>  
hundred men. What do you suppose they have done in the surround-  
ing country? Whatever further request you have will be granted.'  
Esther answered him, 'Let the Jews be allowed to do the same to- <sup>13</sup>  
morrow, and hang up the bodies of Haman's ten sons.' The king <sup>14</sup>  
consented; he handed over the bodies of Haman's sons to the Jews of  
the city to be hung up. The Jews in Susa assembled on the fourteenth <sup>15</sup>  
day of Adar also, and killed three hundred, but they took no plunder.

The rest of the Jews in the empire rallied together in self-defence, <sup>16-17</sup>  
and so were quit of their enemies; for they slaughtered fifteen  
thousand of them on the thirteenth of Adar; but they took no  
plunder. On the fourteenth they rested, and made that day a  
day of rest, with rejoicing and merriment. The Jews in the city of <sup>18</sup>  
Susa had assembled also on the fourteenth day of the month; they  
did not rest on that day, but they kept the fifteenth day with rejoic-  
ing and merriment. That is why Jews who are dispersed over the <sup>19</sup>  
remoter parts keep the fourteenth day of Adar as a holiday with  
rejoicing and merriment, sending presents of food to one another;  
but those who live in the principal cities keep the fifteenth of Adar as  
a holiday, sending presents of food to one another.

Then Mardochaeus wrote down the whole story in a book and sent <sup>20</sup>  
it to all the Jews in the empire of Artaxerxes, far and near, ordering <sup>21</sup>  
them to establish these holidays, and to keep the fourteenth and  
fifteenth of Adar, because these were the days on which the Jews <sup>22</sup>  
were quit of their enemies, and to keep the whole month of Adar, in

[a] For they... empire: *probable reading; Gk. obscure.* [b] *Some witnesses add from the Heb. (5) So the Jews put their enemies to the sword with great slaughter and destruction; they worked their will on those who hated them.*

which came the great change from sorrow to joy and from mourning to holiday, as a time for feasting and merriment, days for sending presents of food to friends and to the poor.

23 So the Jews formally accepted the account which Mardocheus  
24 wrote: how Haman son of Hamadathus, the Bugaeon,<sup>a</sup> fought against  
25 them; how he cast lots to decide the date of their destruction; how he  
came before the king with a proposal to hang Mardocheus; and how  
all the evils which he had plotted against the Jews recoiled on his  
26 own head, and he and his sons were hanged. This is why these days  
were named 'Purim', which in the Jews' language means 'lots'.  
Because of all that was recorded in this letter—all that they had  
experienced, all that had happened—Mardocheus directed that this  
27 festival should be observed, and the Jews undertook, on behalf of  
themselves, their descendants, and all who should join them, to do so  
28 without fail. These were to be days of commemoration, duly  
celebrated age after age in every town, family, and province. These  
days of Purim were to be kept for all time, and the commemoration  
was never to cease throughout all ages.

29 Queen Esther daughter of Aminadab, and Mardocheus the Jew,  
recorded in writing all that they had done, and confirmed the regula-  
30-32 tions for Purim. They made themselves responsible for this decision  
32 and staked their life upon the plan.<sup>b</sup> Esther established it for all time  
by her decree, and it was put on record.

10 1, 2 The king made decrees for the empire by land and sea. His  
strength and courage, his wealth and the splendour of his empire, are  
recorded in the annals of the kings of the Persians and Medes.  
3 Mardocheus acted for King Artaxerxes; he was a great man in the  
empire and honoured by the Jews. His way of life won him the  
affection of his whole nation.]

4, 5 MARDOCHAEUS SAID, 'All this is God's doing. For I have been  
reminded of the dream I had about these things; not one of the  
6 visions I saw proved meaningless. There was the little spring which  
became a river, and there was light and sun and water in abundance.  
7 The river is Esther, whom the king married and made queen; the  
8 two dragons are Haman and myself; the nations are those who  
9 gathered to wipe out the Jews; my nation is Israel, which cried aloud

[a] Some witnesses read the Macedonian. [b] They made... plan: possible meaning; Gk. obscure.

to God and was delivered. The Lord has delivered his people, he has rescued us from all these evils. God performed great miracles and signs such as have not occurred among the nations. He made ready 10 two lots, one for the people of God and one for all the nations; then 11 came the hour and the time for these two lots to be cast, the day of decision by God before<sup>a</sup> all the nations; he remembered his people 12 and gave the verdict for his heritage.

‘So they shall keep these days in the month of Adar, the fourteenth 13 and fifteenth of that month, by gathering with joy and gladness before God from one generation of his people to another, for ever.’

IN THE FOURTH YEAR of the reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, 11 : Dositheus, who said that he was a levitical priest, and Ptolemaeus his son, brought the foregoing letter about Purim, which they said was authentic and had been translated by Lysimachus son of Ptolemaeus, a resident in Jerusalem.

[a] Or the day of judgement by God upon...

# THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

## *The promise of immortality*

1 LOVE JUSTICE, you rulers of the earth; set your mind  
upon the Lord, as is your duty, and seek him in simplicity of  
2 heart; for he is found by those who trust him without question,  
3 and makes himself known to those who never doubt him. Dishonest  
thinking cuts men off from God, and if fools will take liberties with  
4 his power, he shows them up for what they are. Wisdom will not  
enter a shifty soul, nor make her home in a body that is mortgaged to  
5 sin. This holy spirit of discipline will have nothing to do with false-  
hood; she cannot stay in the presence of unreason, and will throw up  
6 her case at the approach of injustice. Wisdom is a spirit devoted to  
man's good, and she will not hold a blasphemer blameless for his  
words, because God is a witness of his inmost being, who sees clear  
7 into his heart and hears every word he says. For the spirit of the  
Lord fills the whole earth, and that which holds all things together is  
8 well aware of what men say. Hence no man can utter injustice and  
not be found out, nor will justice overlook him when she passes  
9 sentence. The devices of a godless man will be brought to account,  
and a report of his words will come before the Lord as proof of his  
10, 11 iniquity; no muttered syllable escapes that vigilant ear. Beware,  
then, of futile grumbling, and avoid all bitter words; for even a  
secret whisper will not go unheeded, and a lying tongue is a man's  
12 destruction. Do not stray from the path of life and so court death;  
13 do not draw disaster on yourselves by your own actions. For God  
did not make death, and takes no pleasure in the destruction of any  
14 living thing; he created all things that they might have being. The  
creative forces of the world make for life; there is no deadly poison in  
15, 16 them. Death is not king on earth, for justice is immortal; but godless  
men by their words and deeds have asked death for his company.  
Thinking him their friend, they have made a pact with him because  
they are fit members of his party; and so they have wasted away.

They said to themselves in their deluded way: 'Our life is short 2  
and full of trouble, and when a man comes to his end there is no  
remedy; no man was ever known to return from the grave. By mere 2  
chance were we born, and afterwards we shall be as though we had  
never been, for the breath in our nostrils is but a wisp of smoke; our  
reason is a mere spark kept alive by the beating of our hearts, and 3  
when that goes out, our body will turn to ashes and the breath of our  
life disperse like empty air. Our names will be forgotten with the 4  
passing of time, and no one will remember anything we did. Our life  
will blow over like the last vestige of a cloud; and as a mist is chased  
away by the sun's rays and overborne by its heat, so will it too be dis-  
persed. A passing shadow—such is our life, and there is no post- 5  
ponement of our end; man's fate is sealed, and none returns. Come 6  
then, let us enjoy the good things while we can, and make full use of  
the creation, with all the eagerness of youth. Let us have costly 7  
wines and perfumes to our heart's content, and let no flower of  
spring escape us. Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they 8  
can wither. Let none of us miss his share of the good things that are 9  
ours; who cares what traces our revelry leaves behind? This is the  
life for us; it is our birthright.

'Down with the poor and honest man! Let us tread him under 10  
foot; let us show no mercy to the widow and no reverence to the grey  
hairs of old age. For us let might be right! Weakness is proved to be 11  
good for nothing. Let us lay a trap for the just man; he stands in our 12  
way, a check to us at every turn; he girds at us as law-breakers, and  
calls us traitors to our upbringing. He knows God, so he says; he 13  
styles himself "the servant<sup>a</sup> of the Lord". He is a living condemna-  
tion of all our ideas. The very sight of him is an affliction to us, 15  
because his life is not like other people's, and his ways are different.  
He rejects us like base coin, and avoids us and our ways as if we were 16  
filth; he says that the just die happy, and boasts that God is his  
father. Let us test the truth of his words, let us see what will happen 17  
to him in the end; for if the just man is God's son, God will stretch 18  
out a hand to him and save him from the clutches of his enemies.  
Outrage and torment are the means to try him with, to measure his 19  
forbearance and learn how long his patience lasts. Let us condemn 20  
him to a shameful death, for on his own showing he will have a  
protector.'

[a] Or child.

21 So they argued, and very wrong they were; blinded by their own  
22 malevolence, they did not understand God's hidden plan; they never  
23 expected that holiness of life would have its recompense; they  
24 thought that innocence had no reward. But God created man for  
immortality, and made him the image of his own eternal self; it was  
the devil's spite that brought death into the world, and the experience  
of it is reserved for those who take his side.

3 But the souls of the just are in God's hand, and torment shall not  
2 touch them. In the eyes of foolish men they seemed to be dead;  
3 their departure was reckoned as defeat, and their going from us as  
4 disaster. But they are at peace, for though in the sight of men they  
5 may be punished, they have a sure hope of immortality; and after a  
little chastisement they will receive great blessings, because God has  
6 tested them and found them worthy to be his. Like gold in a crucible  
he put them to the proof, and found them acceptable like an offering  
7 burnt whole upon the altar. In the moment of God's coming to  
them they will kindle into flame, like sparks that sweep through  
8 stubble; they will be judges and rulers over the nations of the world,  
9 and the Lord shall be their king for ever and ever. Those who have  
put their trust in him shall understand that he is true, and the faith-  
ful shall attend upon him in love; they are his chosen, and grace and  
mercy shall be theirs.

10 But the godless shall meet with the punishment their evil thoughts  
deserve, because they took no account of justice and rebelled against  
11 the Lord. Wretched indeed is he who thinks nothing of wisdom and  
discipline; such men's hopes are void, their labours unprofitable,  
12 their actions futile; their wives are frivolous, their children criminal,  
13 their parenthood is under a curse. No, blessed is the childless  
woman if she is innocent, if she has never slept with a man in sin; at  
the great assize of souls she shall find a fruitfulness of her own.  
14 Blessed is the eunuch, if he has never done anything against the law  
and never harboured a wicked thought against the Lord; he shall  
receive special favour in return for his faith, and a place in the  
15 Lord's temple to delight his heart the more. Honest work bears  
glorious fruit, and wisdom grows from roots that are imperishable.  
16 But the children of adultery are like fruit that never ripens; they have  
17 sprung from a lawless union, and will come to nothing. Even if they  
attain length of life, they will be of no account, and at the end their  
18 old age will be without honour. If they die young, they will have no

hope, no consolation in the hour of judgement; the unjust generation 19  
has a hard fate in store for it.

It is better to be childless, provided one is virtuous; for virtue held 4  
in remembrance is a kind of immortality, because it wins recognition  
from God, and from men too. They follow the good man's example 2  
while it is with them, and when it is gone they mourn its loss; and  
through all time virtue makes its triumphal progress, crowned with  
victory in the contest for prizes that nothing can tarnish. But the 3  
swarming progeny of the wicked will come to no good; none of their  
bastard offshoots will strike deep root or take firm hold. For a time 4  
their branches may flourish, but as they have no sure footing they  
will be shaken by the wind, and by the violence of the winds up-  
rooted. Their boughs will be snapped off half-grown, and their fruit 5  
will be worthless, unripe, uneatable, and good for nothing. Children 6  
engendered in unlawful union are living evidence of their parents'  
sin when God brings them to account.

But the good man, even if he dies an untimely death, will be at rest. 7  
For it is not length of life and number of years which bring the 8  
honour due to age; if men have understanding, they have grey hairs 9  
enough, and an unspotted life is the true ripeness of age. There was 10  
once such a man who pleased God, and God accepted him and took  
him while still living from among sinful men. He was snatched 11  
away before his mind could be perverted by wickedness or his soul  
deceived by falsehood (because evil is like witchcraft: it dims the 12  
radiance of good, and the waywardness of desire unsettles an  
innocent mind); in a short time he came to the perfection of a full 13  
span of years. His soul was pleasing to the Lord, who removed him 14  
early from a wicked world. The mass of men see this and give it no 15  
thought; they do not lay to heart this truth, that those whom God has  
chosen enjoy his grace and mercy, and that he comes to the help of  
his holy people. Even after his death the just man will shame the 16  
godless who are still alive; youth come quickly to perfection will  
shame the man grown old in sin. Men will see the wise man's end, 17  
without understanding what the Lord had purposed for him and  
why he took him into safe keeping; they will see it and make light of 18  
him, but it is they whom the Lord will laugh to scorn. In death their  
bodies will be dishonoured, and among the dead they will be an  
object of contempt for ever; for he shall strike them speechless, fling 19  
them headlong, shake them from their foundations, and make an

utter desert of them; they shall be full of anguish, and all memory of  
 20 them shall perish. So in the day of reckoning for their sins, they will  
 come cringing, convicted to their face by their lawless doings.

5 Then the just man shall take his stand, full of assurance, to con-  
 2 front those who oppressed him and made light of all his sufferings; at  
 the sight of him there will be terror and confusion, and they will be  
 3 beside themselves to see him so unexpectedly safe home. Filled with  
 remorse, groaning and gasping for breath, they will say among them-  
 selves: 'Was not this the man who was once our butt, a target for our  
 4 contempt? Fools that we were, we held his way of life to be madness  
 5 and his end dishonourable. To think that he is now counted one of  
 the sons of God and assigned a place of his own among God's  
 6 people! How far we strayed from the road of truth! The lamp of  
 7 justice never gave us light, the sun never rose upon us. We roamed  
 to our heart's content along the paths of wickedness and ruin,  
 wandering through trackless deserts and ignoring the Lord's high-  
 8 way. What good has our pride done us? What can we show for all  
 9 our wealth and arrogance? All those things have passed by like a  
 10 shadow, like a messenger galloping by; like a ship that runs through  
 the surging sea, and when she has passed, not a trace is to be found,  
 11 no track of her keel among the waves; or as when a bird flies through  
 the air, there is no sign of her passing, but with the stroke of her  
 pinions she lashes the insubstantial breeze and parts it with the whirr  
 and the rush of her beating wings, and so she passes through it, and  
 12 thereafter it bears no mark of her assault; or as when an arrow is shot  
 at a target, the air is parted and instantly closes up again and no one  
 13 can tell where it passed through. So we too ceased to be, as soon as  
 we were born; we left no token of virtue behind, and in our wicked-  
 14 ness we frittered our lives away.' The hope of a godless man is like  
 down flying on the wind, like spindrift swept before a storm and  
 smoke which the wind whirls away, or like the memory of a guest  
 who stayed for one day and passed on.

15 But the just live for ever; their reward is in the Lord's keeping,  
 16 and the Most High has them in his care. Therefore royal splendour  
 shall be theirs, and a fair diadem from the Lord himself; he will  
 17 protect them with his right hand and shield them with his arm. He  
 will put on from head to foot the armour of his wrath, and make all  
 18 creation his weapon against his enemies. With the cuirass of justice  
 19 on his breast, and on his head the helmet of doom inflexible, he will



take holiness for his impenetrable shield and sharpen his relentless 20  
anger for a sword; and his whole world shall join him in the fight  
against his frenzied foes. The bolts of his lightning shall fly straight 21  
on the mark, they shall leap upon the target as if his bow in the  
clouds were drawn in its full arc, and the artillery of his resentment 22  
shall let fly a fury of hail. The waters of the sea shall rage over them,  
and the rivers wash them relentlessly away; a great tempest will arise 23  
against them, and blow them away like chaff before a whirlwind. So  
lawlessness will make the whole world desolate, and active wicked-  
ness will overturn the thrones of princes.

*In praise of wisdom*

HEAR THEN, YOU KINGS, take this to heart; learn your lesson, 6  
H lords of the wide world; lend your ears, you rulers of the 2  
multitude, whose pride is in the myriads of your people. It is 3  
the Lord who gave you your authority; your power comes from the  
Most High. He will put your actions to the test and scrutinize your  
intentions. Though you are viceroys of his kingly power, you have 4  
not been upright judges; you do not stand up for the law or guide  
your steps by the will of God. Swiftly and terribly will he descend 5  
upon you, for judgement falls relentlessly upon those in high place.  
The small man may find pity and forgiveness, but the powerful will 6  
be called powerfully to account; for he who is all men's master is 7  
obsequious to none, and is not overawed by greatness. Small and  
great alike are of his making, and all are under his providence  
equally, but it is the powerful for whom he reserves the sternest 8  
inquisition. To you then who have absolute power I speak, in hope 9  
that you may learn wisdom and not go astray; those who in holiness 10  
have kept a holy course, will be accounted holy, and those who have  
learnt that lesson will be able to make their defence. Be eager then 11  
to hear me, and long for my teaching; so you will learn.

Wisdom shines bright and never fades; she is easily discerned by 12  
those who love her, and by those who seek her she is found. She is 13  
quick to make herself known to those who desire knowledge of her;  
the man who rises early in search of her will not grow weary in the 14  
quest, for he will find her seated at his door. To set all one's thoughts 15

on her is prudence in its perfect shape, and to lie wakeful in her cause  
16 is the short way to peace of mind. For she herself ranges in search of  
those who are worthy of her; on their daily path she appears to them  
17 with kindly intent, and in all their purposes meets them half-way. The  
true beginning of wisdom is the desire to learn, and a concern for  
18 learning means love towards her; the love of her means the keeping  
19 of her laws; to keep her laws is a warrant of immortality; and im-  
20 mortality brings a man near to God. Thus the desire of wisdom  
21 leads to kingly stature. If, therefore, you value your thrones and  
your sceptres, you rulers of the nations, you must honour wisdom, so  
that you may reign for ever.

22 What wisdom is, and how she came into being, I will tell you;  
I will hide no secret from you. From her first beginnings I will trace  
out her course, and bring the knowledge of her into the light of day;  
23 I will not leave the truth untold. Pale envy shall not travel in my  
24 company, for the spiteful man will have no share in wisdom. Wise  
men in plenty are the world's salvation, and a prudent king is the  
25 sheet-anchor of his people. Learn what I have to teach you, there-  
fore, and it will be for your good.

7 I too am a mortal man like all the rest, descended from the first  
2 man, who was made of dust, and in my mother's womb I was  
wrought into flesh during a ten-months space, compacted in blood  
from the seed of her husband and the pleasure that is joined with  
3 sleep. When I was born, I breathed the common air and was laid on  
the earth that all men tread; and the first sound I uttered, as all do,  
4 was a cry; they wrapped me up and nursed me and cared for me.  
5, 6 No king begins life in any other way; for all come into life by a single  
path, and by a single path go out again.

7 Therefore I prayed, and prudence was given to me; I called for  
8 help, and there came to me a spirit of wisdom. I valued her above  
sceptre and throne, and reckoned riches as nothing beside her;  
9 I counted no precious stone her equal, because all the gold in the  
world compared with her is but a little sand, and silver worth no more  
10 than clay. I loved her more than health and beauty; I preferred her  
11 to the light of day; for her radiance is unsleeping. So all good things  
together came to me with her, and in her hands was wealth past  
12 counting; and all was mine to enjoy, for all follows where wisdom  
leads, and I was in ignorance before, that she is the beginning of it  
13 all. What I learnt with pure intention I now share without grudging,

nor do I hoard for myself the wealth that comes from her. She is an  
inexhaustible treasure for mankind, and those who profit by it  
become God's friends, commended to him by the gifts they derive  
from her instruction.

God grant that I may speak according to his will, and that my own  
thoughts may be worthy of his gifts; for even wisdom is under God's  
direction and he corrects the wise; we and our words, prudence and  
knowledge and craftsmanship, all are in his hand. He himself gave  
me true understanding of things as they are: a knowledge of the  
structure of the world and the operation of the elements; the begin-  
ning and end of epochs and their middle course; the alternating  
solstices and changing seasons; the cycles of the years and the con-  
stellations; the nature of living creatures and behaviour of wild  
beasts; the violent force of winds and the thoughts of men; the  
varieties of plants and the virtues of roots. I learnt it all, hidden or  
manifest, for I was taught by her whose skill made all things, wisdom.

For in wisdom there is a spirit intelligent and holy, unique in its  
kind yet made up of many parts, subtle, free-moving, lucid, spotless,  
clear, invulnerable,<sup>a</sup> loving what is good, eager, unhindered, bene-  
ficient, kindly towards men, steadfast, unerring, untouched by care,  
all-powerful, all-surveying, and permeating all intelligent, pure, and  
delicate spirits. For wisdom moves more easily than motion itself,  
she pervades and permeates all things because she is so pure. Like a  
fine mist she rises from the power of God, a pure effluence from the  
glory of the Almighty; so nothing defiled can enter into her by  
stealth. She is the brightness that streams from<sup>b</sup> everlasting light,  
the flawless mirror of the active power of God and the image of his  
goodness. She is but one, yet can do everything; herself unchanging,  
she makes all things new; age after age she enters into holy souls, and  
makes them God's friends and prophets, for nothing is acceptable to  
God but the man who makes his home with wisdom. She is more  
radiant than the sun, and surpasses every constellation; compared  
with the light of day, she is found to excel; for day gives place to  
night, but against wisdom no evil can prevail. She spans the world  
in power from end to end, and orders all things benignly.

Wisdom I loved; I sought her out when I was young and longed to  
win her for my bride, and I fell in love with her beauty. She adds  
lustre to her noble birth, because it is given her to live with God,

[a] invulnerable: *or* working no harm. [b] *Or* She is the reflection of...

4 and the Lord of all things has accepted her. She is initiated into the  
knowledge that belongs to God, and she decides for him what he shall  
5 do. If riches are a prize to be desired in life, what is richer than  
6 wisdom, the active cause of all things? If prudence shows itself in  
7 action, who more than wisdom is the artificer of all that is? If virtue  
is the object of a man's affections, the fruits of wisdom's labours are  
the virtues; temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude, these  
are her teaching, and in the life of men there is nothing of more value  
8 than these. If a man longs, perhaps, for great experience, she knows  
the past, she can infer what is to come; she understands the subtleties  
of argument and the solving of problems, she can read signs and  
9 portents, and can foretell the outcome of events and periods. So  
I determined to bring her home to live with me, knowing that she  
would be my counsellor in prosperity and my comfort in anxiety and  
10 grief. Through her, I thought, I shall win fame in the eyes of the  
11 people and honour among older men, young though I am. When  
I sit in judgement, I shall prove myself acute, and the great men will  
12 admire me; when I say nothing, they will wait for me to speak;  
when I speak they will attend, and though I hold forth at length, they  
13 will lay a finger to their lips and listen. Through her I shall have  
immortality, and shall leave an undying memory to those who come  
14 after me. I shall rule over many peoples, and nations will become my  
15 subjects. Grim tyrants will be frightened when they hear of me;  
among my own people I shall show myself a good king, and on the  
16 battlefield a brave one. When I come home, I shall find rest with her;  
for there is no bitterness in her company, no pain in life with her,  
only gladness and joy.

17 I thought this over in my mind, and I perceived that in kinship  
18 with wisdom lies immortality and in her friendship is pure delight;  
that in doing her work is wealth that cannot fail, to be taught in her  
school gives understanding, and an honourable name is won by  
converse with her. So I went about in search of some way to win her  
19 for my own. As a child I was born to excellence, and a noble soul fell  
20 to my lot; or rather, I myself was noble, and I entered into an un-  
21 blemished body; but I saw that there was no way to gain possession  
of her except by gift of God—and it was a mark of understanding to  
know from whom that gift must come. So I pleaded with the Lord,  
and from the depths of my heart I prayed to him in these words:

9 God of our fathers, merciful Lord, who hast made all things by thy

word, and in thy wisdom hast fashioned man, to be the master of thy 2  
whole creation, and to be steward of the world in holiness and 3  
righteousness, and to administer justice with an upright heart, give 4  
me wisdom, who sits beside thy throne, and do not refuse me a place  
among thy servants. I am thy slave, thy slave-girl's son, a weak 5  
ephemeral man, too feeble to understand justice and law; for let a 6  
man be ever so perfect in the eyes of his fellow-men, if the wisdom  
that comes from thee is wanting, he will be of no account. Thou didst 7  
choose me to be king of thy own people, and judge over thy sons  
and daughters; thou didst tell me to build a temple on thy sacred 8  
mountain and an altar in the city which is thy dwelling-place, a copy  
of the sacred tabernacle prepared by thee from the beginning. And 9  
with thee is wisdom, who is familiar with thy works and was present  
at the making of the world by thee, who knows what is acceptable to  
thee and in line with thy commandments. Send her forth from the 10  
holy heavens, and from thy glorious throne bid her come down, so  
that she may labour at my side and I may learn what pleases thee.  
For she knows and understands all things, and will guide me 11  
prudently in all I do, and guard me in her glory. So shall my life's 12  
work be acceptable, and I shall judge thy people justly, and be  
worthy of my father's throne. For how can any man learn what is 13  
God's plan? How can he apprehend what the Lord's will is? The  
reasoning of men is feeble, and our plans are fallible; because a 15  
perishable body weighs down the soul, and its frame of clay burdens  
the mind so full of thoughts. With difficulty we guess even at things 16  
on earth, and laboriously find out what lies before our feet; and who  
has ever traced out what is in heaven? Who ever learnt to know thy 17  
purposes, unless thou hadst given him wisdom and sent thy holy  
spirit down from heaven on high? Thus it was that those on earth 18  
were set upon the right path, and men were taught what pleases thee;  
thus were they preserved by wisdom.

*Divine wisdom in history*

WISDOM IT WAS who kept guard over the first father of the 10  
human race, when he alone had yet been made; she saved him  
after his fall, and gave him the strength to master all things. It was 2, 3

because a wicked man forsook her in his anger that he murdered his  
 4 brother in a fit of rage, and so destroyed himself. Through his fault  
 the earth was covered with a deluge, and again wisdom came to the  
 rescue, and taught the one good man to pilot his plain wooden hulk.  
 5 It was she, when heathen nations leagued in wickedness were thrown  
 into confusion, who picked out one good man and kept him blame-  
 less in the sight of God, giving him strength to resist his pity for his  
 6 child. She saved a good man from the destruction of the godless,  
 7 and he escaped the fire that came down on the Five Cities, cities  
 whose wickedness is still attested by a smoking waste, by plants whose  
 fruit can never ripen, and a pillar of salt standing there as a memorial  
 8 of an unbelieving soul. Wisdom they ignored, and they suffered for  
 it, losing the power to recognize what is good and leaving by their  
 lives a monument of folly, such that their enormities can never be  
 9 forgotten. But wisdom brought her servants safely out of their  
 10 troubles. It was she, when a good man was a fugitive from his  
 brother's anger, who guided him on the straight path; she showed  
 him that God is king, and gave him knowledge of his holiness;<sup>a</sup> she  
 11 prospered his labours and made his toil productive. When men in  
 their rapacity tried to exploit him, she stood by him and made him  
 12 rich. She kept him safe from his enemies, and preserved him from  
 treacherous attacks; she gave him victory after a hard struggle, and  
 13 taught him that godliness is the greatest power of all. It was she who  
 refused to desert a good man when he was sold as a slave; she pre-  
 14 served him from sin and went down into the dungeon with him, nor  
 did she leave him when he was in chains until she had brought him  
 sceptre and kingdom and authority over his persecutors; she gave the  
 15 lie to his accusers, and brought him undying fame. It was she who  
 rescued a godfearing people, a blameless race, from a nation of  
 16 oppressors; she inspired a servant of the Lord, and with his signs  
 17 and wonders he defied formidable kings. She rewarded the labours  
 of godfearing men, she guided them on a marvellous journey and  
 became a covering for them by day and a blaze of stars by night.  
 18 She brought them over the Red Sea and guided them through its  
 19 deep waters; but their enemies she engulfed, and cast them up again  
 20 out of the fathomless deep. So good men plundered the ungodly;  
 they sang the glories of thy holy name, O Lord, and praised with one

[a] showed . . . holiness: *or* gave him a vision of God's realm, and knowledge of his holy angels.

accord thy power, their champion; for wisdom taught the dumb to 21  
speak, and made the tongues of infants eloquent.

Wisdom, working through a holy prophet, brought them success 11  
in all they did. They made their way across an unpeopled desert and 2  
pitched camp in untrodden wastes; they resisted every enemy, and 3  
beat off hostile assaults. When they were thirsty they called upon 4  
thee, and water to slake their thirst was given them out of the hard  
stone of a rocky cliff. The self-same means by which their oppressors 5  
had been punished were used to help them in their hour of need:  
those others found their river no unfailing stream of water, but 6  
putrid and befouled with blood, in punishment for their order that 7  
all the infants should be killed, while to these thou gavest abundant  
water unexpectedly. So from the thirst they then endured, they 8  
learnt how thou hadst punished their enemies; when they themselves 9  
were put to the test, though discipline was tempered with mercy, they  
understood the tortures of the godless who were sentenced in anger.  
Thy own people thou didst subject to an ordeal, warning them like 10  
a father; those others thou didst put to the torture, like a stern king  
passing sentence. At home and abroad, they were equally in distress, 11  
for a double misery had come upon them, and they groaned as they 12  
recalled the past. When they heard that the means of their own 13  
punishment had been used to benefit thy people, they saw thy hand  
in it, O Lord. The man who long ago had been abandoned and 14  
exposed, whom they had rejected with contumely, became in the  
event the object of their wonder and admiration; their thirst was such  
as the godly never knew.

In return for the insensate imagination of those wicked men, 15  
which deluded them into worshipping reptiles devoid of reason, and  
mere vermin, thou didst send upon them a swarm of creatures  
devoid of reason to chastise them, and to teach them that the instru- 16  
ments of a man's sin are the instruments of his punishment. For 17  
thy almighty hand, which created the world out of formless matter,  
was not without other resource: it could have let loose upon them a  
host of bears or ravening lions or unknown ferocious monsters 18  
newly created, either breathing out blasts of fire, or roaring and  
belching smoke, or flashing terrible sparks like lightning from their  
eyes, with power not only to exterminate them by the wounds they 19  
inflicted, but by their mere appearance to kill them with fright.  
Even without these, a single breath would have sufficed to lay them 20

low, with justice in pursuit and the breath of thy power to blow them away; but thou hast ordered all things by measure and number and weight.

21 Great strength is thine to exert at any moment, and the power of  
 22 thy arm no man can resist, for in thy sight the whole world is like a  
 grain that just tips the scale or a drop of dew alighting on the ground  
 23 at dawn. But thou art merciful to all men because thou canst do all  
 things; thou dost overlook the sins of men to bring them to repen-  
 24 tance; for all existing things are dear to thee and thou hatest nothing  
 25 that thou hast created—why else wouldst thou have made it? How  
 could anything have continued in existence, had it not been thy will?  
 26 How could it have endured unless called into being by thee? Thou  
 sparest all things because they are thine, our lord and master who  
 12 lovest all that lives; for thy imperishable breath is in them all.

2 For this reason thou dost correct offenders little by little, ad-  
 monishing them and reminding them of their sins, in order that they  
 3 may leave their evil ways and put their trust, O Lord, in thee. For  
 4 example, the ancient inhabitants of thy holy land were hateful to thee  
 5 for their loathsome practices, their sorcery and unholy rites, ruthless  
 6 murders of children, cannibal feasts of human flesh and blood; they  
 were initiates of a secret ritual in which parents slaughtered their  
 defenceless children. Therefore it was thy will to destroy them at the  
 7 hand of our forefathers, so that the land which is of all lands most  
 precious in thine eyes could receive in God's children settlers worthy  
 8 of it. And yet thou didst spare their lives because even they were  
 men, sending hornets as the advance-guard of thy army to extermi-  
 9 nate them gradually. It was well within thy power to let the godly  
 overwhelm the godless in a pitched battle, or to wipe them out in an  
 10 instant with cruel beasts or by one stern word. But thou didst carry  
 out their sentence gradually to give them space for repentance,  
 knowing well enough that they came of evil stock, their wickedness  
 ingrained, and that their way of thinking would not change to the  
 11 end of time, for there was a curse on their race from the beginning.

Nor was it out of deference to anyone else that thou gavest them an  
 12 amnesty for their misdeeds; for to thee no one can say 'What hast  
 thou done?' or dispute thy verdict. Who shall bring a charge against  
 thee for destroying nations which were of thy own making? Who  
 shall appear against thee in court to plead the cause of guilty men?  
 13 For there is no other god but thee; all the world is thy concern, and



there is none to whom thou must prove the justice of thy sentence. There is no king or other ruler who can outface thee on behalf of those whom thou hast punished. But thou art just and orderest all things justly, counting it alien to thy power to condemn a man who ought not to be punished. For thy strength is the source of justice, and it is because thou art master of all that thou sparest all. Thou showest thy strength when men doubt the perfection of thy power; it is when they know it and yet are insolent that thou dost punish them. But thou, with strength at thy command, judgest in mercy and rulest us in great forbearance; for the power is thine to use when thou wilt.

By acts like these thou didst teach thy people that the just man must also be kind-hearted, and thou hast filled thy sons with hope by the offer of repentance for their sins. If thou didst use such care and such indulgence even in punishing thy children's enemies, who deserved to die, granting them time and space to get free of their wickedness, with what discrimination thou didst pass judgement on thy sons, to whose fathers thou hast given sworn covenants full of the promise of good!

So we are chastened by thee, but our enemies thou dost scourge ten thousand times more, so that we may lay thy goodness to heart when we sit in judgement, and may hope for mercy when we ourselves are judged. This is why the wicked who had lived their lives in heedless folly were tormented by thee with their own abominations. They had strayed far down the paths of error, taking for gods the most contemptible and hideous creatures, deluded like thoughtless children. And so, as though they were mere babes who have not learnt reason, thou didst visit on them a sentence that made them ridiculous; but those who do not take warning from such derisive correction will experience the full weight of divine judgement. They were indignant at their own sufferings, but finding themselves chastised through the very creatures they had taken to be gods, they recognized that the true God was he whom they had long ago refused to know. Thus the full rigour of condemnation descended on them.

*The evils of idolatry*

- 13 **W**HAT BORN FOOLS all men were who lived in ignorance of God, who from the good things before their eyes could not learn to know him who really is, and failed to recognize the artificer
- 2 though they observed his works! Fire, wind, swift air, the circle of the starry signs, rushing water, or the great lights in heaven that rule
- 3 the world—these they accounted gods. If it was through delight in the beauty of these things that men supposed them gods, they ought to have understood how much better is the Lord and Master of it all; for it was by the prime author of all beauty that they were created.
- 4 If it was through astonishment at their power and influence, men should have learnt from these how much more powerful is he who
- 5 made them. For the greatness and beauty of created things give us a
- 6 corresponding idea of their Creator. Yet these men are not greatly to be blamed, for when they go astray they may be seeking God and
- 7 really wishing to find him. Passing their lives among his works and making a close study of them, they are persuaded by appearances
- 8 because what they see is so beautiful. Yet even so they do not deserve
- 9 to be excused, for with enough understanding to speculate about the universe, why did they not sooner discover the Lord and Master of it all?
- 10 The really degraded ones are those whose hopes are set on dead things, who give the name of gods to the work of human hands, to gold and silver fashioned by art into images of living creatures, or to
- 11 a useless stone carved by a craftsman long ago. Suppose some skilled woodworker fells with his saw a convenient tree and deftly strips off all the bark, then works it up elegantly into some vessel suitable for
- 12 everyday use; and the pieces left over from his work he uses to cook
- 13 his food, and eats his fill. But among the waste there is one useless piece, crooked and full of knots, and this he takes and carves to occupy his idle moments, and shapes it with leisurely skill into the
- 14 image of a human being; or else he gives it the form of some contemptible creature, painting it with vermilion and raddling its surface
- 15 with red paint, so that every flaw in it is painted over. Then he makes a suitable shrine for it and fixes it on the wall, securing it with iron
- 16 nails. It is he who has to take the precautions on its behalf to save it

from falling, for he knows that it cannot fend for itself: it is only an image, and needs help. Yet he prays to it about his possessions and his wife and children, and feels no shame in addressing this lifeless object; for health he appeals to a thing that is feeble, for life he prays to a dead thing, for aid he implores something utterly incapable, for a prosperous journey something that has not even the use of its legs; in matters of earnings and business and success in handicraft he asks effectual help from a thing whose hands are entirely ineffectual.

The man, again, who gets ready for a voyage, and plans to set his course through the wild waves, cries to a piece of wood more fragile than the ship which carries him. Desire for gain invented the ship, and the shipwright with his wisdom built it;<sup>a</sup> but it is thy providence, O Father, that is its pilot, for thou hast given it a pathway through the sea and a safe course among the waves, showing that thou canst save from every danger, so that even a man without skill can put to sea. It is thy will that the things made by thy wisdom should not lie idle; and therefore men trust their lives even to the frailest spar, and passing through the billows on a mere raft come safe to land. Even in the beginning, when the proud race of giants was being brought to an end, the hope of mankind escaped on a raft and, piloted by thy hand, bequeathed to the world a new breed of men. For a blessing is on the wooden vessel through which right has prevailed; but the wooden idol made by human hands is accursed, and so is its maker—he because he made it, and the perishable thing because it was called a god. Equally hateful to God are the godless man and his ungodliness; the doer and the deed shall both be punished.

And so retribution shall fall upon the idols of the heathen, because though part of God's creation they have been made into an abomination, to make men stumble and to catch the feet of fools. The invention of idols is the root of immorality; they are a contrivance which has blighted human life. They did not exist from the beginning, nor will they be with us for ever; superstition brought them into the world, and for good reason a short sharp end is in store for them.

Some father, overwhelmed with untimely grief for the child suddenly taken from him, made an image of the child and honoured thenceforth as a god what was once a dead human being, handing on to his household the observance of rites and ceremonies. Then this impious custom, established by the passage of time, was observed as

[a] *Other witnesses read* and wisdom was the shipwright that built it.

a law. Or again graven images came to be worshipped at the command of despotic princes. When men could not do honour to such a prince before his face because he lived far away, they made a likeness of that distant face, and produced a visible image of the king they sought to honour, eager to pay court to the absent prince as though he were present. Then the cult grows in fervour as those to whom the king is unknown are spurred on by ambitious craftsmen. In his desire, it may be, to please the monarch, a craftsman skilfully distorts the likeness into an ideal form, and the common people, beguiled by the beauty of the workmanship, take for an object of worship him whom lately they honoured as a man. So this becomes a trap for living men: enslaved by mischance or misgovernment, men confer on stocks and stones the name that none may share.

Then, not content with gross error in their knowledge of God, men live in the constant warfare of ignorance and call this monstrous evil peace. They perform ritual murders of children and secret ceremonies and the frenzied orgies of unnatural cults; the purity of life and marriage is abandoned; and a man treacherously murders his neighbour or corrupts his wife and breaks his heart. All is in chaos—bloody murder, theft and fraud, corruption, treachery, riot, perjury, honest men driven to distraction; ingratitude, moral corruption, sexual perversion, breakdown of marriage, adultery, debauchery. For the worship of idols, whose names it is wrong even to mention, is the beginning, cause, and end of every evil. Men either indulge themselves to the point of madness, or produce inspired utterance which is all lies, or live dishonest lives, or break their oath without scruple. They perjure themselves and expect no harm because the idols they trust in are lifeless. On two counts judgement will overtake them: because in their devotion to idols they have thought wrongly about God, and because, in their contempt for religion, they have deliberately perjured themselves. It is not any power in what they swear by, but the nemesis of sin, that always pursues the transgression of the wicked.

But thou, our God, art kind and true and patient, a merciful ruler of all that is. For even if we sin, we are thine; we acknowledge thy power. But we will not sin, because we know that we are accounted thine. To know thee is the whole of righteousness, and to acknowledge thy power is the root of immortality. We have not been led astray by the perverted inventions of human skill or the barren

labour of painters, by some gaudy painted shape, the sight of which 5  
arouses in fools a passionate desire for a mere image without life or  
breath. They are in love with evil and deserve to trust in nothing 6  
better, those who do these evil things or hanker after them or  
worship them.

For a potter kneading his clay laboriously moulds every vessel for 7  
our use, but out of the self-same clay he fashions without distinction  
the pots that are to serve for honourable uses and the opposite; and  
what the purpose of each one is to be, the moulder of the clay  
decides. And then with ill-directed toil he makes a false god out of 8  
the same clay, this man who not long before was himself fashioned  
out of earth and soon returns to the place whence he was taken, when  
the living soul that was lent to him must be repaid. His concern is 9  
not that he must one day fall sick or that his span of life is short; but  
he must vie with goldsmiths and silversmiths and copy the bronze-  
workers, and he thinks it does him credit to make counterfeits. His 10  
heart is ashes, his hope worth less than common earth, and his life  
cheaper than his own clay, because he did not recognize by whom he 11  
himself was moulded, or who it was that inspired him with an active  
soul and breathed into him the breath of life. No, he reckons our life 12  
a game, and our existence a market where money can be made; 'one  
must get a living', he says, 'by fair means or foul'. But this man 13  
knows better than anyone that he is doing wrong, this maker of  
fragile pots and idols from the same earthy stuff.

The greatest fools of all, and worse than infantile, were the enemies 14  
and oppressors of thy people, for they supposed all their heathen 15  
idols to be gods, although they have eyes that cannot see, nostrils that  
cannot draw breath, ears that cannot hear, fingers that cannot feel,  
and feet that are useless for walking. It was a man who made them; 16  
one who draws borrowed breath gave them their shape. But no  
human being has the power to shape a god like himself: he is only 17  
mortal, but what he makes with his impious hands is dead; and so he  
is better than the objects of his worship, for he is at least alive—they  
never can be.

Moreover, these men worship animals, the most revolting animals. 18  
Compared with the rest of the brute creation, their divinities are the  
least intelligent. Even as animals they have no beauty to make them 19  
desirable; when God approved and blessed his work, they were left  
out.

*The pattern of divine justice*

- 16 **AND SO THE OPPRESSORS** were fittingly chastised by creatures  
 2 **A** like these: they were tormented by swarms of vermin. But while  
 they were punished, thou didst make provision for thy people, send-  
 ing quails for them to eat, an unwonted food to satisfy their hunger;  
 3 for thy purpose was that whereas those others, hungry as they were,  
 should turn in loathing even from necessary food because the  
 creatures sent upon them were so disgusting, thy people after a short  
 4 spell of scarcity should enjoy unwonted delicacies. It was right that  
 the scarcity falling on the oppressors should be inexorable, and that  
 thy people should learn by brief experience how their enemies were  
 5 tormented. Even when fierce and furious snakes attacked thy people  
 and the bites of writhing serpents were spreading death, thy anger  
 6 did not continue to the bitter end; their short trouble was sent them  
 as a lesson, and they were given a symbol<sup>a</sup> of salvation to remind  
 7 them of the requirements of thy law. For any man who turned to-  
 wards it was saved, not by the thing he looked upon but by thee, the  
 8 saviour of all. In this way thou didst convince our enemies that thou  
 9 art the deliverer from every evil. Those other men died from the bite  
 of locusts and flies, and no remedy was found to save their lives,  
 because it was fitting for them to be chastised by such creatures.  
 10 But thy sons did not succumb to the fangs of snakes, however  
 11 venomous, because thy mercy came to their aid and healed them. It  
 was to remind them of thy utterances that they were bitten and  
 quickly recovered; it was for fear they might fall into deep forgetful-  
 12 ness and become unresponsive to thy kindness. For it was neither  
 herb nor poultice that cured them, but thy all-healing word,  
 13 O Lord. Thou hast the power of life and death, thou bringest a man  
 14 down to the gates of death and up again. Man in his wickedness may  
 kill, but he cannot bring back the breath of life that has gone forth  
 nor release a soul that death has arrested.
- 15, 16 But from thy hand there is no escape; for godless men who refused  
 to acknowledge thee were scourged by thy mighty arm, pursued by  
 extraordinary storms of rain and hail in relentless torrents, and  
 17 utterly destroyed by fire. Strangest of all, in water, that quenches

[a] Or pledge.

everything, the fire burned more fiercely; creation itself fights to defend the godly. At one time the flame was moderated, so that it should not burn up the living creatures inflicted on the godless, who were to learn from this that it was by God's justice that they were pursued; at another time it blazed even under water with more than the natural power of fire, to destroy the produce of a sinful land. By contrast, thy own people were given angels' food, and thou didst send them from heaven, without labour of their own, bread ready to eat, rich in delight of every kind and suited to every taste. The sustenance thou didst supply showed thy sweetness towards thy children, and the bread, serving the desire of each man who ate it, was changed into what he wished. Its snow and ice resisted fire and did not melt, to teach them that whereas their enemies' crops had been destroyed by fire that blazed in the hail and flashed through the teeming rain, that same fire had now forgotten its own power, in order that the godly might be fed.

For creation, serving thee its maker, exerts its power to punish the godless and relaxes into benevolence towards those who trust in thee. And so it was at that time too: it adapted itself endlessly in the service of thy universal bounty, according to the desire of thy suppliants. So thy sons, O Lord, whom thou hast chosen, were to learn that it is not the growing of crops by which mankind is nourished, but it is thy word that sustains those who trust in thee. That substance, which fire did not destroy, simply melted away when warmed by the sun's first rays, to teach us that we must rise before the sun to give thee thanks and pray to thee as daylight dawns. The hope of an ungrateful man will melt like the hoar-frost of winter, and drain away like water that runs to waste.

Great are thy judgements and hard to expound; and thus it was that uninstructed souls went astray. Thus heathen men imagined that they could lord it over thy holy people; but, prisoners of darkness and captives of unending night, they lay each immured under his own roof, fugitives from eternal providence. Thinking that their secret sins might escape detection beneath a dark pall of oblivion, they lay in disorder, dreadfully afraid, terrified by apparitions. For the dark corner that held them offered no refuge from fear, but loud unnerving noises roared around them, and phantoms with downcast unsmiling faces passed before their eyes. No fire, however great, had force enough to give them light, nor had the brilliant

6 flaming stars strength to illuminate that hideous darkness. There  
 shone upon them only a blaze, of no man's making, that terrified  
 them, and in their panic they thought the real world even worse than  
 7 that imaginary sight. The tricks of the sorcerers' art failed, and all  
 8 their boasted wisdom was exposed and put to shame; for the very  
 men who profess to drive away fear and trouble from sick souls were  
 9 themselves sick with dread that made them ridiculous. Even if  
 nothing frightful was there to terrify them, yet having once been  
 10 scared by the advancing vermin and the hissing serpents, they col-  
 lapsed in terror, refusing even to look upon the air from which there  
 11 can be no escape.<sup>a</sup> For wickedness proves a cowardly thing when  
 condemned by an inner witness, and in the grip of conscience gives  
 12 way to forebodings of disaster. Fear is nothing but an abandonment  
 13 of the aid that comes from reason; and hope, defeated by this inward  
 weakness, capitulates before ignorance of the cause by which the  
 torment comes.

14 So all that night, which really had no power against them because  
 it came upon them from the powerless depths of hell, they slept the  
 15 same haunted sleep, now harried by portentous spectres, now paralysed  
 by the treachery of their own souls; sudden and unforeseen,  
 16 fear came upon them. Thus a man would fall down where he stood  
 17 and be held in durance, locked in a prison that had no bars. Farmer  
 or shepherd or labourer toiling in the wilds, he was caught, and  
 awaited the inescapable doom; the same chain of darkness bound all  
 18 alike. The whispering breeze, the sweet melody of birds in spreading  
 19 branches, the steady beat of water that rushes by, the headlong crash  
 of rocks falling, the racing of creatures as they bound along unseen,  
 the roar of fierce wild beasts, or echo reverberating from hollows in  
 20 the hills—all these sounds paralysed them with fear. The whole  
 world was bathed in the bright light of day, and went about its tasks  
 21 unhindered; those men alone were overspread with heavy night, fit  
 image of the darkness that awaited them; and heavier than the dark-  
 ness was the burden each was to himself.

18 But for thy holy ones there shone a great light. And so their  
 enemies, hearing their voices but not seeing them, counted them  
 2 happy because they had not suffered like themselves, gave thanks for  
 their forbearance under provocation, and begged as a favour that  
 3 they should part company. Accordingly, thy gift was a pillar of fire

[a] Or there is no need to escape.



to be the guide of their uncharted journey, a sun that would not scorch them on their glorious expedition. Their enemies did indeed 4  
deserve to lose the light of day and be kept prisoners in darkness, for they had kept in durance thy sons, through whom the imperishable light of the law was to be given to the world.

They planned to kill the infant children of thy holy people, but 5  
when one child had been exposed to death and rescued, thou didst deprive them of all their children in requital, and drown them all together in the swelling waves. Of that night our forefathers were 6  
given warning in advance, so that, having sure knowledge, they might be heartened by the promises which they trusted. Thy people 7  
were looking for the deliverance of the godly and the destruction of their enemies; for thou didst use the same means to punish our 8  
enemies and to make us glorious when we heard thy call. The devout 9  
children of a virtuous race were offering sacrifices in secret, and covenanted with one consent to keep the law of God and to share alike in the same blessings and the same dangers, and they were already singing their sacred ancestral songs of praise. In discordant 10  
contrast there came an outcry from their enemies, as piteous lamentation for their children spread abroad. Master and slave were 11  
punished together with the same penalty; king and common man suffered the same fate. All alike had their dead, past counting, 12  
struck down by one common form of death; there were not enough living even to bury the dead; at one stroke the most precious of their offspring had perished. Relying on their magic arts, they had scouted 13  
all warnings; but when they saw their first-born dead, they confessed that thy people have God as their father.

All things were lying in peace and silence, and night in her swift 14  
course was half spent, when thy almighty Word leapt from thy 15  
royal throne in heaven into the midst of that doomed land like a relentless warrior, bearing the sharp sword of thy inflexible decree, 16  
and stood and filled it all with death, his head touching the heavens, his feet on earth. At once nightmare phantoms appalled them, and 17  
unlooked-for fears set upon them; and as they flung themselves to 18  
the ground half dead, one here, one there, they confessed the reason for their deaths; for the dreams that tormented them had taught 19  
them before they died, so that they should not die ignorant of the reason why they suffered.

The godly also had a taste of death when a multitude were struck 20

down in the wilderness; but the divine wrath did not long continue.

- 21 A blameless man was quick to be their champion, bearing the weapons of his priestly ministry, prayer and the incense that propitiates; he withstood the divine anger and set a limit to the disaster,
- 22 thus showing that he was thy servant. He overcame the avenging fury not by bodily strength or force of arms; by words he subdued the avenger, appealing to the sworn covenants made with our fore-
- 23 fathers. When the dead had already fallen in heaps one on another, he interposed himself and beat back the divine wrath, barring its line of
- 24 attack upon the living. On his long-skirted robe the whole world was represented; the glories of the fathers were engraved on his four rows of precious stones; and thy majesty was in the diadem upon his
- 25 head. To these the destroyer yielded, for these made him afraid; only to taste his wrath had been enough.

- 19 But the godless were pursued by pitiless anger to the bitter end,
- 2 for God knew their future also: how after allowing thy people to depart, and even urging their departure, they would change their
- 3 minds and set out in pursuit. While they were still mourning, still lamenting at the graves of their dead, they rushed into another foolish decision, and pursued as fugitives those whom they had
- 4 begged to leave. For the fate they had merited was drawing them on to this conclusion and made them forget what had happened, so that they might suffer the torments still needed to complete their
- 5 punishment, and that thy people might achieve an incredible journey, and that their enemies might meet an outlandish death.

- 6 The whole creation, with all its elements, was refashioned in subservience to thy commands, so that thy servants might be preserved
- 7 unscathed. Men gazed at the cloud that overshadowed the camp, at dry land emerging where before was only water, at an open road leading out of the Red Sea, and a grassy plain in place of stormy
- 8 waves, across which the whole nation passed, under the shelter of thy
- 9 hand, after all the marvels they had seen. They were like horses at pasture, like skipping lambs, as they praised thee, O Lord, by whom
- 10 they were rescued. For they still remembered their life in a foreign land: how instead of cattle the earth bred lice, and instead of fish
- 11 the river spewed up swarms of frogs; and how, after that, they had seen a new sort of bird when, driven by greed, they had begged for
- 12 delicacies to eat, and for their relief quails came up from the sea.

- 13 So punishment came upon those sinners, not unheralded by violent

thunderbolts. They suffered justly for their own wickedness, for they had raised bitter hatred of strangers to a new pitch. There had been 14 others who refused to welcome strangers when they came to them, but these made slaves of guests who were their benefactors. There is 15 indeed a judgement awaiting those who treated foreigners as enemies; but these, after a festal welcome, oppressed with hard labour men 16 who had earlier shared their rights. They were struck with blindness 17 also, like the men at the door of the one good man, when yawning darkness fell upon them and each went groping for his own doorway.

For as the notes of a lute can make various tunes with different 18 names though each retains its own pitch, so the elements combined among themselves in different ways, as can be accurately inferred 19 from the observation of what happened. Land animals took to the water and things that swim migrated to dry land; fire retained its 20 normal power even in water, and water forgot its quenching properties. Flames on the other hand failed to consume the flesh of 21 perishable creatures that walked in them, and the substance of heavenly food, like ice and prone to melt, no longer melted.

In everything, O Lord, thou hast made thy people great and 22 glorious, and hast not neglected in every time and place to be their helper.

# ECCLESIASTICUS

## OR THE WISDOM OF JESUS SON OF SIRACH

### *Preface*

A LEGACY of great value has come to us through the law, the prophets, and the writers who followed in their steps, and for this Israel's traditions of discipline and wisdom deserve recognition. It is the duty of those who study the scriptures not only to become expert themselves, but also to use their scholarship for the benefit of the outside world through both the spoken and the written word. So my grandfather Jesus, who had applied himself industriously to the study of the law, the prophets, and the other writings of our ancestors, and had gained a considerable proficiency in them, was moved to compile a book of his own on the themes of discipline and wisdom, so that, with this further help, scholars might make greater progress in their studies by living as the law directs.

You are asked then to read with sympathetic attention, and make allowances if, in spite of all the devoted work I have put into the translation, some of the expressions appear inadequate. For it is impossible for a translator to find precise equivalents for the original Hebrew in another language. Not only with this book, but with the law, the prophets, and the rest of the writings, it makes no small difference to read them in the original.

When I came to Egypt and settled there in the thirty-eighth year of<sup>a</sup> the reign of King Euergetes, I found great scope for education; and I thought it very necessary to spend some energy and labour on the translation of this book. Ever since then I have been applying my skill night and day to complete it, and to publish it for the use of those who have made their home in a foreign land, and wish to become scholars by training themselves to live according to the law.

[a] Or there at the age of thirty-eight in . . .

*The ways of wisdom*

ALL WISDOM IS from the Lord; 1  
 wisdom is with him for ever.  
 Who can count the sand of the sea, 2  
 the drops of rain, or the days of unending time?  
 Who can measure the height of the sky, 3  
 the breadth of the earth, or the depth of the abyss<sup>a</sup>?  
 Wisdom was first of all created things; 4  
 intelligent purpose has been there from the beginning.<sup>b</sup>  
 Who has laid bare the root of wisdom? 6  
 Who has understood her subtlety?<sup>c</sup>  
 One alone is wise, the Lord most terrible, 8  
 seated upon his throne.  
 It is he who created her, surveyed and measured her, 9  
 and infused her into all his works.  
 To all mankind he has given her in some measure, 10  
 but in plenty to those who love him.

THE FEAR OF THE LORD brings honour and pride, 11  
 cheerfulness and a garland of joy.  
 The fear of the Lord gladdens the heart; 12  
 it brings cheerfulness and joy and long life.  
 Whoever fears the Lord will be prosperous at the last; 13  
 blessings will be his on the day of his death.  
 The essence of wisdom is the fear of the Lord; 14  
 she is created with the faithful in their mother's womb,  
 she has built an everlasting home among men, 15  
 and will keep faith with their descendants.  
 Those who fear the Lord have their fill of wisdom; 16  
 she gives them deep draughts of her wine.  
 She stocks her home with all that the heart can desire 17  
 and her storehouses with her produce.

[a] *Some witnesses add or wisdom.* [b] *Some witnesses add* (5) *The fountain of wisdom is God's word on high, and her ways are the eternal commandments.* [c] *Some witnesses add* (7) *Who has discovered all that wisdom knows, or understood her wealth of experience?*

- 18 Wisdom's garland is the fear of the Lord,  
flowering with peace and health.
- 19 She showers down knowledge and ability,  
and bestows high honour on those who hold fast to her.
- 20 Wisdom is rooted in the fear of the Lord,  
and long life grows on her branches.<sup>a</sup>
- 22 Unjust rage can never be excused;  
when anger tips the scale it is a man's downfall.
- 23 Until the right time comes, a patient man restrains himself,  
and afterwards cheerfulness breaks through again;
- 24 until the right moment he keeps his thoughts to himself,  
and later his good sense is on everyone's lips.
- 25 In wisdom's store are wise proverbs,  
but godliness is detestable to a sinner.
- 26 If you long for wisdom, keep the commandments,  
and the Lord will give it you in plenty.
- 27 For the fear of the Lord is wisdom and discipline;  
fidelity and gentleness are his delight.
- 28 Do not disregard the fear of the Lord  
or approach him without sincerity.
- 29 Do not act a part before the eyes of the world;  
keep guard over your lips.
- 30 Never be arrogant, for fear you fall  
and bring disgrace on yourself;  
the Lord will reveal your secrets  
and humble you before the assembly,  
because it was not the fear of the Lord that prompted you,<sup>b</sup>  
but your heart was full of hypocrisy.

- 2 MY SON, IF YOU ASPIRE to be a servant of the Lord,  
prepare yourself for testing.
- 2 Set a straight course, be resolute,  
and do not lose your head in time of disaster.
- 3 Hold fast to him, never desert him,  
if you would end your days in prosperity.

[a] *Some witnesses add* (21) *The fear of the Lord drives away sins, and wherever it dwells it averts his anger.* [b] *Or because you had no concern for the fear of the Lord.*

Bear every hardship that is sent you; 4  
be patient under humiliation, whatever the cost.  
For gold is assayed by fire, 5  
and the Lord proves men in the furnace of humiliation.  
Trust him and he will help you; 6  
steer a straight course and set your hope on him.

You who fear the Lord, wait for his mercy; 7  
do not stray or you will fall.  
You who fear the Lord, trust in him, 8  
and you shall not miss your reward.  
You who fear the Lord, expect prosperity, 9  
lasting happiness and favour.  
Consider the past generations and see: 10  
was anyone who trusted the Lord ever disappointed?  
was anyone who stood firm in the fear of him ever deserted?  
did he ever neglect anyone who prayed to him?  
For the Lord is compassionate and merciful; 11  
he forgives sins and comes to the rescue in time of trouble.

Woe to faint hearts and nerveless hands 12  
and to the sinner who leads a double life!  
Woe to the feeble-hearted! they have no faith, 13  
and therefore shall go unprotected.  
Woe to you who have given up the struggle! 14  
What will you do when the Lord's reckoning comes?

Those who fear the Lord never disobey his words; 15  
and all who love him keep to his ways.  
Those who fear the Lord try to do his will; 16  
and all who love him steep themselves in the law.  
Those who fear the Lord are always prepared; 17  
they humble themselves before him and say:  
'We will fall into the hands of the Lord, not into the hands of men, 18  
for his majesty is equalled by his mercy.'

CHILDREN, LISTEN TO ME, for I am your father; 3  
do what I tell you, if you wish to be safe.

- 1 It is the Lord's will that a father should be honoured by his children,  
and a mother's rights recognized by her sons.
- 2 Respect for a father atones for sins,  
and to honour your mother is to lay up a fortune.
- 3 A son who respects his father will be made happy by his own children;  
when he prays, he will be heard.
- 4 He who honours his father will have a long life,  
and he who obeys the Lord comforts his mother;
- 5 he obeys his parents as though he were their slave.
- 6 My son, honour your father by word and deed,  
so that you may receive his blessing.
- 7 For a father's blessing strengthens his children's houses,  
but a mother's curse uproots their foundations.
- 8 Never seek honour at the cost of discredit to your father;  
how can his discredit bring honour to you?
- 9 A man is honoured if his father is honoured,  
and neglect of a mother is a disgrace to children.
- 10 My son, look after your father in his old age;  
do nothing to vex him as long as he lives.
- 11 Even if his mind fails, make allowances for him,  
and do not despise him because you are in your prime.
- 12 If you support your father it will never be forgotten,  
but be put to your credit against your sins;
- 13 when you are in trouble, it will be remembered in your favour,  
and your sins will melt away like frost in the sunshine.
- 14 To leave your father in the lurch is like blasphemy,  
and to provoke your mother's anger is to call down the Lord's curse.
- 15 My son, be unassuming in all you do,  
and those the Lord approves will love you.
- 16 The greater you are, the humbler you must be,  
and the Lord will show you favour.<sup>a</sup>
- 17 For his power is great,  
and he is honoured by the humble.
- 18 Do not pry into things too hard for you  
or examine what is beyond your reach.
- 19 Meditate on the commandments you have been given;

[a] *Some witnesses add* (19) Many are high and mighty; but he reveals his secrets to the modest.



what the Lord keeps secret is no concern of yours.  
Do not busy yourself with matters that are beyond you; 23  
even what has been shown you is above man's grasp.  
Many have been led astray by their speculations, 24  
and false conjectures have impaired their judgement.<sup>a</sup>

Stubbornness will come to a bad end, 25  
and the man who flirts with danger will lose his life.  
Stubbornness brings a load of troubles; 27  
the sinner piles sin on sin.  
When calamity befalls the arrogant, there is no cure; 28  
wickedness is too deeply rooted in him.

A sensible man will take a proverb to heart; 29  
an attentive ear is the desire of the wise.  
As water quenches a blazing fire, 30  
so almsgiving atones for sin.  
He who repays a good turn is mindful of the future; 31  
when he falls he will find support.

My son, do not cheat a poor man of his livelihood 4  
or keep him waiting with hungry eyes.  
Do not tantalize a starving man 2  
or drive him to desperation in his need.  
If a man is desperate, do not add to his troubles 3  
or keep him waiting for the charity he asks.  
Do not reject the appeal of a man in distress 4  
or turn your back on the poor;  
when he begs for alms, do not look the other way 5  
and so give him reason to curse you,  
for if he curses you in his bitterness, 6  
his Maker will listen to his prayer.  
Make yourself popular in the assembly, 7  
and show deference to the great.  
When a poor man speaks to you, give him your attention 8  
and answer his greeting politely.  
Rescue the downtrodden from the oppressor, 9

[a] *Some witnesses add* (25) Without eyes you will be deprived of light; if you have no knowledge, do not lay claim to it.

and be firm when giving a verdict.

- 10 Be a father to orphans  
and like a husband to their mother;  
then the Most High will call you his son,  
and his love for you will be greater than a mother's.

- 11 WISDOM RAISES HER SONS to greatness  
and cares for those who seek her.  
12 To love her is to love life;  
to rise early for her sake is to be filled with joy.  
13 The man who attains her will win recognition;  
the Lord's blessing rests upon every place she enters.  
14 To serve her is to serve the Holy One,  
and the Lord loves those who love her.  
15 Her dutiful servant will give laws to the heathen,  
and because he listens to her, his home will be secure.  
16 If he trusts her, he will possess her  
and bequeath her to his descendants.  
17 At first she will lead him by devious ways,  
filling him with craven fears.  
Her discipline will be a torment to him,  
and her decrees a hard test  
until he trusts her with all his heart.<sup>a</sup>  
18 Then she will come straight back to him again and gladden him,  
and reveal her secrets to him.  
19 But if he strays from her, she will desert him  
and abandon him to his fate.

- 20 WATCH YOUR CHANCE and defend yourself against wrong,  
and do not be over-modest in your own cause;  
21 for there is a modesty that leads to sin,  
as well as a modesty that brings honour and favour.  
22 Do not be untrue to yourself in deference to another,  
or so diffident that you fail in your duty.  
23 Never remain silent when a word might put things right,  
24 for wisdom shows itself by speech,

[a] Or until she can trust him.

and a man's education must find expression in words.

Do not argue against the truth, 25

but have a proper sense of your own ignorance.

Never be ashamed to admit your mistakes, 26

nor try to swim against the current.

Do not let yourself be a doormat to a fool 27

or curry favour with the powerful.

Fight to the death for truth, 28

and the Lord God will fight on your side.

Do not be forward in your speech 29

but slack and neglectful in your work.

Do not play the lion in your home 30

or swagger<sup>a</sup> among your servants.

Do not keep your hand open to receive 31

and close it when it is your turn to give.

Do not rely upon your money 5

and say, 'I am independent.'

Do not yield to every impulse you can gratify 2

or follow the desires of your heart.

Do not say, 'I am my own master'; 3

you may be sure the Lord will call you to account.

Do not say, 'I sinned, yet nothing happened to me'; 4

it is only that the Lord is very patient.

Do not be so confident of pardon 5

that you sin again and again.

Do not say, 'His mercy is so great, 6

he will pardon my sins, however many.'

To him belong both mercy and wrath,

and sinners feel the weight of his retribution.

Come back to the Lord without delay; 7

do not put it off from one day to the next,

or suddenly the Lord's wrath will be upon you,

and you will perish at the time of reckoning.

Do not rely upon ill-gotten gains, 8

for they will not avail in time of calamity.

[a] Possible meaning; Gk. obscure.

- 9 Do not winnow in every wind  
or walk along every path.<sup>a</sup>
- 10 Stand firmly by what you know  
and be consistent in what you say.
- 11 Be quick to listen,  
but take time over your answer.
- 12 Answer a man if you know what to say,  
but if not, hold your tongue.
- 13 Honour or shame can come through speaking,  
and a man's tongue may be his downfall.
- 14 Do not get a name for being a gossip  
or lay traps with your tongue;  
for as there is shame in store for the thief,  
so there is harsh censure for duplicity.
- 15 Avoid the little faults as well as the great.
- 6 Do not change from a friend into an enemy,  
for a bad name brings shame and disgrace,  
and this is the mark of duplicity.
- 2 Never be roused by violent passions;  
they will tear you apart like a bull,<sup>b</sup>
- 3 they will eat up your leaves, destroy your fruit,  
and leave you a withered tree.
- 4 Evil passion ruins the man who harbours it,  
to the delight of his gloating enemies.
- 5 Pleasant words win many friends,  
and an affable manner makes acquaintance easy.
- 6 Accept a greeting from everyone,  
but advice from only one in a thousand.
- 7 When you make a friend, begin by testing him,  
and be in no hurry to trust him.
- 8 Some friends are loyal when it suits them  
but desert you in time of trouble.
- 9 Some friends turn into enemies  
and shame you by making the quarrel public.
- 10 Another sits at your table,  
but is nowhere to be found in time of trouble;

[a] *Gk.* adds this is the mark of duplicity (from 6. 1). [b] they . . . bull: *probable meaning; Gk. and Heb. both obscure.*

when you are prosperous, he will be your second self 11  
and make free with your servants,  
but if you come down in the world, he will turn against you 12  
and you will not see him again.  
Hold your enemies at a distance, 13  
and keep a wary eye on your friends.  
A faithful friend is a secure shelter; 14  
whoever finds one has found a treasure.  
A faithful friend is beyond price; 15  
his worth is more than money can buy.  
A faithful friend is an elixir of life, 16  
found only by those who fear the Lord.  
The man who fears the Lord keeps his friendships in repair, 17  
for he treats his neighbour as himself.

MY SON, SEEK WISDOM'S DISCIPLINE while you are young, 18  
and when your hair is white, you will find her still.  
Come to her like a farmer ploughing and sowing; 19  
then wait for her plentiful harvest.  
If you cultivate her, you will labour for a little while,  
but soon you will be eating her crops.  
How harsh she seems to the undisciplined! 20  
The fool cannot abide her;  
like a stone she is a burden that tests his strength, 21  
but he is quick to toss her aside.  
Wisdom well deserves her name, 22  
for she is not accessible to many.

Listen, my son, accept my judgement; 23  
do not reject my advice.  
Put your feet in wisdom's fetters 24  
and your neck into her collar.  
Stoop to carry her on your shoulders 25  
and do not chafe at her bonds.  
Come to her whole-heartedly, 26  
and keep to her ways with all your might.  
Follow her track, and she will make herself known to you; 27  
once you have grasped her, never let her go.

- 28 In the end you will find the relief she offers;  
 she will transform herself into joy for you.  
 29 Her fetters will become your strong defence  
 and her collar a gorgeous robe.  
 30 Her yoke<sup>a</sup> is a golden ornament  
 and her bonds a purple cord.  
 31 You shall put her on like a gorgeous robe  
 and wear her like a splendid crown.
- 32 If it is your wish, my son, you can be trained;  
 if you give your mind to it, you can become clever;  
 33 if you enjoy listening, you will learn;  
 if you are attentive, you will grow wise.  
 34 When you stand among your elders,  
 decide who is wise and join him.  
 35 Listen gladly to every godly argument  
 and see that no wise proverb escapes you.  
 36 If you discover a wise man, rise early to visit him;  
 let your feet wear out his doorstep.  
 37 Ponder the decrees of the Lord  
 and study his commandments at all times.  
 He will strengthen your mind  
 and grant your desire for wisdom.
- 7 Do no evil, and evil will not come upon you;  
 2 turn away from wrong, and it will avoid you.  
 3 Do not sow in the furrows of injustice,  
 for fear of reaping a sevenfold crop.
- 4 Do not ask the Lord for high office  
 or the king for preferment.  
 5 Do not pose as a righteous man before the Lord  
 or play the sage in the king's presence.  
 6 Do not aspire to be a judge,  
 unless you have the strength to put an end to injustice;  
 for you may be intimidated by a man of rank  
 and so compromise your integrity.  
 7 Do not commit an offence against the community  
 and so incur a public disgrace.

[a] *So Heb.; Gk. Upon her.*

Do not pile sin upon sin,	8
for even one is enough to make you guilty.	
Do not say, 'My liberality will be taken into account;	9
when I make an offering to God Most High he will accept it.'	
Do not grow weary of praying	10
or neglect the giving of charity.	
Never laugh at a man in his bitter humiliation,	11
for there is One who both humbles and exalts.	
Do not plot to deceive your brother	12
or pay back a friend in his own coin.	
Refuse ever to tell a lie;	13
it is a habit from which no good comes.	
Never be garrulous among your elders	14
or repeat yourself when you pray.	
Do not resent manual labour or farm-work,	15
for it was ordained by the Most High.	
Do not enlist in the ranks of sinners;	16
remember that retribution will not delay.	
Humble yourself to the uttermost,	17
for the doom of the impious is fire and worms.	
Do not part with a friend for gain, <sup>a</sup>	18
or a true brother for all the gold of Ophir.	
Do not lose the chance of a wise and good wife,	19
for her attractions are worth more than gold.	
Do not ill-treat a slave who works honestly	20
or a hired servant whose heart is in his work.	
Love a good slave from the bottom of your heart	21
and do not grudge him his freedom.	
Have you cattle? Take care of them,	22
and if they bring you profit, keep them.	
Have you sons? Discipline them	23
and break them in from their earliest years.	
Have you daughters? See that they are chaste,	24
and do not be too lenient with them.	
Marry your daughter, and a great load will be off your	25
hands;	
but give her to a sensible husband.	

[a] *Probable reading (compare 27. 1), supported by Vss.; Gk. for a trifle.*

- 26 If you have a wife after your own heart, do not divorce her;  
but do not trust yourself to one you cannot love.
- 27 Honour your father with all your heart  
and do not forget your mother's birth-pangs;
- 28 remember that your parents brought you into the world;  
how can you repay what they have done for you?
- 29 Fear the Lord with all your heart  
and reverence his priests.
- 30 Love your Maker with all your might  
and do not leave his ministers without support.
- 31 Fear the Lord and honour the priest  
and give him his dues, as you have been commanded,  
the firstfruits, the guilt-offering, and the shoulder of the  
victim,  
the dedication sacrifice, and the firstfruits of holy things.
- 32 Be open-handed also with the poor,  
so that your own well-being may be complete.
- 33 Every living man appreciates generosity;  
do not withhold your kindness even when a man is dead.
- 34 Do not turn your back on those who weep,  
but mourn with those who mourn.
- 35 Do not hesitate to visit the sick,  
for by such visits you will win their affection.
- 36 Whatever you are doing, remember the end that awaits you;  
then all your life you will never go wrong.
- 8 Do not pit yourself against a great man,  
for fear of falling into his power.
- 2 Do not quarrel with a rich man;  
you may be sure he will outbid you.  
For money has been the ruin of many  
and has misled the minds of kings.
- 3 Do not argue with a long-winded man,  
and so add fuel to his fire.
- 4 Never make fun of an ill-mannered man,  
or you may hear your ancestors insulted.
- 5 Do not rebuke a man who is already penitent;  
remember that we are all guilty.



Despise no man for being old; 6  
some of us are growing old as well.  
Do not be smug over another man's death; 7  
remember that we must all die.

Do not neglect the studies of the learned, 8  
but apply yourself to their maxims;  
from these you will learn discipline,  
and how to be the servant of princes.  
Do not ignore the discourse of your elders, 9  
for they themselves learned from their fathers;  
they can teach you to understand  
and to have an answer ready in time of need.

Do not kindle a sinner's coals, 10  
for fear of being burnt in the flames of his fire.  
Do not let a man's insolence bring you to your feet; 11  
he will only sit waiting to trap you with your own words.  
Do not lend to a man with more influence than yourself, 12  
or, if you do, write off the loan as a loss.  
Do not stand surety beyond your means, 13  
and, when you do stand surety, be prepared to pay.

Do not go to law with a judge, 14  
for in deference to his position they will give him the verdict.  
Do not go travelling with a reckless man: 15  
you may find him a burden on you.  
He will do as he fancies,  
and his folly will bring death on you as well.  
Do not fall out with a hot-tempered man 16  
or walk with him in unfrequented places;  
he thinks nothing of bloodshed,  
and where no help is at hand he will set upon you.  
Never discuss your plans with a fool, 17  
for he cannot keep a secret.  
Do nothing private in the presence of a stranger; 18  
you do not know what use he will make of it.  
Do not tell what is in your mind to all comers 19  
or accept favours from them.

- 9 Do not be jealous over the wife you cherish,  
and so put into her head the idea of wronging you.
- 2 Do not surrender yourself to a woman  
and let her trample down your strength.
- 3 Do not go near a loose woman,  
for fear of falling into her snares.
- 4 Do not keep company with a dancing-girl,  
or you may be caught by her tricks.
- 5 Do not let your mind dwell on a virgin,  
or you may be trapped into paying damages for her.
- 6 Never surrender yourself to prostitutes,  
for fear of losing all you possess,
- 7 nor gaze about you in the city streets  
or saunter in deserted corners.
- 8 Do not let your eye linger on a woman's figure  
or your thoughts dwell on beauty not yours to possess.  
Many have been seduced by the beauty of a woman,  
which kindles passion like fire.
- 9 Never sit at table with another man's wife  
or join her in a drinking party,  
for fear of succumbing to her charms  
and slipping into fatal disaster.
- 10 Do not desert an old friend;  
a new one is not worth as much.  
A new friend is like new wine;  
you do not enjoy drinking it until it has matured.
- 11 Do not envy a bad man his success;  
you do not know what fate is in store for him.
- 12 Take no pleasure in the pleasures of the wicked;  
remember that they will not go scot-free all their lives.
- 13 Keep clear of a man who has power to kill,  
and you will not be haunted by the fear of death.  
If you do approach him, make no false step  
or you will risk losing your life.  
Tell yourself that you are making your way among pitfalls,  
or walking on the battlements of the city.
- 14 Take the measure of your neighbours as best you can,  
and accept advice from those who are wise.

Let your discussion be with intelligent men 15  
and all your talk about the law of the Most High.  
Choose the company of good men at table, 16  
and take pride in fearing the Lord.

A craftsman is recognized by his skilful hand 17  
and a councillor by his words of wisdom.  
A gossip is the terror of his town, 18  
detested for his unguarded talk.  
A wise ruler trains his people, 10  
and gives them sound and orderly government.  
Like ruler, like ministers; 2  
like sovereign, like subjects;  
a king untutored is the people's ruin, 3  
but wise rulers make a city fit to live in.

*Man's life under divine providence*

THE GOVERNMENT of the world is in the hand of the Lord; 4  
at the right time he appoints the right man to rule it.  
In the Lord's hand is all human success; 5  
it is he who confers honour on the legislator.

Do not nurse a grievance against your neighbour for every offence, 6  
and do not resort to acts of insolence.  
Arrogance is hateful to God and man, 7  
and injustice is offensive to both.  
Empire passes from nation to nation 8  
because of injustice, insolence, and greed.  
What has man to be so proud of? He is only dust and ashes, 9  
subject even in life to bodily decay.<sup>a</sup>  
A long illness mocks the doctor's skill; 10  
today's king is tomorrow's corpse.  
When a man dies, he comes into an inheritance 11  
of maggots and vermin and worms.  
The origin of pride is to forsake the Lord, 12

[a] subject...decay: *probable meaning, based on Heb.; Gk. obscure.*

man's heart revolting against his Maker;

- 13 as its origin is sin,  
so persistence in it brings on a deluge of depravity.  
Therefore the Lord sends upon them signal punishments  
and brings them to utter disaster.

- 14 The Lord overturns the thrones of princes  
and enthrones the gentle in their place.  
15 The Lord pulls up nations by the roots  
and plants the humble instead.  
16 The Lord lays waste the territory of nations,  
destroying them to the very foundations of the earth.  
17 Some he shrivels away to nothing,  
so that all memory of them vanishes from the earth.  
18 Pride was not the Creator's design for man  
nor violent anger for those born of woman.

- 19 What creature is worthy of honour? Man.  
What men? Those who fear the Lord.  
What creature is worthy of contempt? Man.  
What men? Those who break the commandments.  
20 As the members of the family honour their head,  
so the Lord honours those who fear him.<sup>a</sup>  
22 The rich, the famous, and the poor—  
their only boast is the fear of the Lord.  
23 It is unjust to despise a poor man who is intelligent,  
and wrong to honour a man who is a sinner.  
24 The prince, the judge, and the ruler win high honours,  
but none of them is as great as the godfearing man.  
25 The wise slave will have free men to wait on him,  
and a man of sense will not grumble at it.

- 26 DO NOT BE TOO CLEVER to do a day's work  
or boast when you have nothing to live on.  
27 It is better to work and have more than enough  
than to boast and go hungry.  
28 My son, in all modesty, keep your self-respect

[a] *Some witnesses add* (21) Fear the Lord, and you will be accepted; be obstinate and proud, and you will be rejected.

and value yourself at your true worth.

Who will speak up for a man who is his own enemy, 29  
or respect one who disparages himself?

A poor man may be honoured for his wisdom, 30  
a rich man for his wealth;

if a man is honoured in poverty, how much more in wealth! 31

And if he is despised in wealth, how much more in poverty!

A poor man with wisdom can hold his head high 11  
and take his seat among the great.

Do not overrate one man for his good looks 2  
or be repelled by another man's appearance.

The bee is small among winged creatures, 3  
yet her produce takes first place for sweetness.

Do not pride yourself on your fine clothes 4  
or be haughty when honours come to you;  
for the Lord can perform marvels  
which are hidden from the eyes of men.

Many kings have been reduced to sitting on the ground, 5  
while a mere nobody has worn the crown.

Many rulers have been stripped of their honours, 6  
and great men have found themselves at the mercy of others.

Do not find fault before examining the evidence; 7  
think first, and criticize afterwards.

Do not answer without first listening, 8  
and do not interrupt when another is speaking.

Never take sides in a quarrel not your own 9  
or become involved in the disputes of rascals.

My son, do not engage in too many transactions; 10  
if you attempt too much, you will come to grief.

When you are in pursuit, you will not overtake;  
when you are in flight, you will not escape.

One man slaves and strains and hurries 11  
and is all the farther behind.

Another is slow-witted and in need of help, 12  
lacking in strength and abounding in poverty;  
but the Lord turns a kindly eye upon him

and lifts him up out of his miserable plight.

- 13 He raises him to dignity  
to the amazement of all.
- 14 Good fortune and bad, life and death,  
poverty and wealth, all come from the Lord.<sup>a</sup>
- 17 His gifts to the devout are lasting;  
his approval brings unending success.
- 18 A man may grow rich by stinting and sparing,  
but what does he get for his pains?
- 19 When he says, 'I have earned my rest,  
now I can live on my savings',  
he does not know how long it will be  
before he must die and leave his wealth to others.
- 20 Stand by your contract and give your mind to it;  
grow old at your work.
- 21 Do not envy a rogue his success;  
trust the Lord and stick to your job.  
It is no difficult thing for the Lord  
to make a poor man rich in a moment.
- 22 The Lord's blessing is the reward of piety,  
which blossoms in one short hour.
- 23 Do not say, 'What use am I?  
What good<sup>b</sup> can the future hold for me?'
- 24 And do not say, 'I am independent;  
nothing can ever go wrong for me.'
- 25 Hardship is forgotten in time of success,  
and success in time of hardship.
- 26 Even on the day a man dies it is easy for the Lord  
to give him his deserts.
- 27 One hour's misery wipes out all memory of delight,  
and a man's end reveals his true character.
- 28 Call no man happy before he dies,  
for not until death is a man known for what he is.<sup>c</sup>

[a] *Some witnesses add* (15) From the Lord come wisdom, understanding, and love, knowledge of the law, and the doing of good works. (16) Error and darkness have been with sinners from their birth, and evil grows old along with those who take delight in it.

[b] *Or* 'What more do I need? What greater success...' [c] *not... he is: so Heb.; Gk. a man is known by his children.*

DO NOT INVITE ALL COMERS into your home; 29  
dishonesty has many disguises.

A proud man's mind is like a decoy-partridge in its cage, 30  
or like a spy watching for a false step.

He waits for a chance to twist good into evil 31  
or to cast blame on innocent actions.

A small spark kindles many coals, 32  
and the insinuations of a bad man end in bloodshed.

Beware of a scoundrel and his evil plots, 33  
or he may ruin your reputation for ever.

Admit a stranger to your home and he will stir up trouble for you 34  
and make you a stranger to your own flesh and blood.

If you do a good deed, make sure to whom you are doing it; 12  
then you will have credit for your kindness.

A good turn done to a godfearing man will be rewarded, 2  
if not by him, then by the Most High.

No good comes to the persistent wrong-doer 3  
or to the man who never gives alms;<sup>a</sup>

refuse him bread; give him nothing at all; 5  
he will only use your gifts to get the better of you,

and you will suffer a double wrong  
in return for the favours you have done him.

The Most High himself hates sinners 6  
and sends bad men what they deserve.

Give to a good man, but never help a sinner; 7  
keep your good works for the humble, not the insolent.<sup>b</sup>

Prosperity does not reveal your friends; 8  
adversity does not conceal your enemies.

When all goes well a man's enemies are friendly,<sup>c</sup> 9  
but in hard times even his friend will desert him.

Never trust your enemy; 10  
he will turn vicious as sure as metal rusts.

If he appears humble and obsequious, 11  
take care! Be on your guard against him!

[a] *The order of the following verses has been disturbed in all versions; Gk. reads... gives alms; (4) give to a godfearing man, but never help a sinner; (5) keep your good works for the humble, not the insolent; refuse him... (compare verse 7).* [b] *keep... insolent: this is the beginning of verse 5 in Gk.* [c] *So Heb.; Gk. grieve.*

Behave towards him like a man who polishes a mirror  
to make sure that it does not corrode away.

- 12 Do not have him at your side,  
or he will trip you up and supplant you.  
Do not let him sit at your right hand,  
or he will soon be wanting your own seat;  
and in the end you will see the force of my words  
and recall my warning with regret.
- 13 Who sympathizes with a snake-charmer when he is bitten,  
or with a tamer of wild animals?
- 14 No more does anyone pity the man who keeps bad company  
and involves himself in another's wickedness.
- 15 He may stand by you for a while,  
but, if you falter, his friendship will not last.
- 16 An enemy has honey on his lips,  
but in his heart he plans to trip you into the ditch.  
He may have tears in his eyes,  
but give him a chance and he will not stop at bloodshed.
- 17 If disaster overtakes you, you will find him there ahead of you,  
ready, with a pretence of help, to pull your feet from under you.
- 18 Then he will nod his head and rub his hands  
and spread gossip, showing his true colours.
- 19 Handle pitch and it will make you dirty;  
keep company with an arrogant man and you will grow like him.
- 20 Do not lift a weight too heavy for you,  
keeping company with a man greater and richer than yourself.  
How can a jug be friends with a kettle?  
If they knock together, the one will be smashed.
- 21 A rich man does wrong, and adds insult to injury;  
a poor man is wronged, and must apologize into the bargain.
- 22 If you can serve his turn, a rich man will exploit you,  
but if you are in need, he will leave you alone.
- 23 If you are in funds, he will be your constant companion,  
and drain you dry without a twinge of remorse.
- 24 He may need you; and then he will deceive you,  
and will be all smiles and encouragement,  
paying you compliments and asking, 'What can I do for you?'



embarrassing you with his hospitality, 7  
until he has drained you two or three times over;  
but in the end he will laugh at you.  
Afterwards, when he sees you, he will pass you by,  
nodding his head over you.

Take care not to be led astray 8  
and humiliated when you are enjoying yourself.  
If a great man invites you, be slow to accept, 9  
and he will be the more pressing in his invitation.  
Do not be forward, for fear of a rebuff, 10  
but do not keep aloof, or you may be forgotten.  
Do not presume to converse with him as an equal 11  
or be over-confident if he holds you long in talk.  
The more he speaks, the more he is testing you,  
examining you even while he smiles.  
The man who cannot keep your secrets is without compunction 12  
and will not spare you harm or imprisonment;  
so keep your secrets to yourself and be very careful, 13  
for you are walking on the brink of ruin.<sup>a</sup>

Every animal loves its like, 15  
and every man his neighbour.  
All creatures flock together with their kind, 16  
and men form attachments with their own sort.  
What has a wolf in common with a lamb, 17  
or a sinner with a man of piety?  
What peace can there be between hyena and dog, 18  
what peace between rich man and pauper?  
As lions prey on the wild asses of the desert, 19  
so the rich batten on the poor.  
As humility disgusts the proud, 20  
so is the rich man disgusted by the poor.

If a rich man staggers, he is held up by his friends; 21  
a poor man falls, and his friends disown him as well.  
When a rich man slips, many come to his rescue; 22

[a] *Some witnesses add* When you hear this in your sleep, wake up. (14) Love the Lord all your life and appeal to him for salvation.

- if he says something outrageous, they make excuses for him.  
 A poor man makes a slip, and they all criticize him;  
 even if he talks sense, he is not given a hearing.
- 23 A rich man speaks, and all are silent;  
 then they praise his speech to the skies.  
 A poor man speaks, and they say, 'Who is this?',  
 and if he stumbles, they give him an extra push.
- 24 WEALTH IS GOOD, if sin has not tainted it;  
 poverty is a crime only to the ungodly.
- 25 It is a man's heart that changes the look on his face  
 either for better or worse.
- 26 The sign of a happy heart is a cheerful face,  
 but the invention of proverbs involves wearisome thought.
- 14 Happy the man who has never let slip a careless word,  
 who has never felt the sting of remorse!
- 2 Happy the man whose conscience does not accuse him,  
 whose hope has never been disappointed!
- 3 It is not proper for a mean man to be rich:  
 what use is money to a miser?
- 4 He deprives himself only to hoard for other men;  
 others will live in luxury on his riches.
- 5 How can a man be hard on himself and kind to others?  
 His possessions bring him no enjoyment.
- 6 No one is worse than the man who is grudging to himself:  
 his niggardliness is its own punishment.
- 7 If ever he does good, it is by mistake,  
 and then in the end he reveals his meanness.
- 8 It is a hard man who has a grudging eye;  
 he turns his back on need and looks the other way.
- 9 A covetous man's eye is not satisfied with his share;  
 greedy injustice shrivels the soul.
- 10 A miser grudges bread  
 and keeps an empty table.
- 11 My son, if you can afford it, do yourself well,  
 always offering to the Lord the sacrifice due to him.
- 12 Remember that death is not to be postponed;

the hour of your appointment with the grave is undisclosed.

Before you die, do good to your friend;  
reach out as far as you can to help him. 13

Do not miss a day's enjoyment  
or forgo your share of innocent pleasure. 14

Are you to leave to others all you have laboured for  
and let them draw lots for your hard-earned wealth? 15

Give and receive; indulge yourself;  
you need not expect luxuries in the grave. 16

Man's body wears out like a garment;  
for the ancient sentence stands: You shall die. 17

In the thick foliage of a growing tree  
one crop of leaves falls and another grows instead; 18

so the generations of flesh and blood pass  
with the death of one and the birth of another.

All man's works decay and vanish,  
and the workman follows them into oblivion. 19

HAPPY THE MAN WHO fixes his thoughts on wisdom  
and uses his brains to think, 20

the man who contemplates her ways  
and ponders her secrets. 21

Stalk her like a hunter  
and lie in wait beside her path! 22

The man who peers in at her windows  
and listens at her keyhole, 23

who camps beside her house,  
driving his tent-peg into her wall, 24

who pitches his tent close by her,  
where it is best for men to live— 25

he will put his children in her shade  
and camp beneath her branches, 26

sheltered by her from the heat,  
and dwelling in the light of her presence. 27

The man who fears the Lord will do all this, 15

and if he masters the law, wisdom will be his.

She will come out to meet him like a mother; 2

she will receive him like a young bride.

- 3 For food she will give him the bread of understanding  
and for drink the water of knowledge.
- 4 He will lean on her and not fall;  
he will rely on her to save him from disgrace.
- 5 She will promote him above his neighbours,  
and find words for him when he speaks in the assembly.
- 6 He shall be crowned with joy and exultation;  
lasting honour shall be his heritage.
- 7 Fools shall never possess wisdom;  
sinners shall catch no glimpse of her.
- 8 She holds aloof from arrogance,  
far from the thoughts of liars.
- 9 Worship is out of place on the lips of a sinner,  
unprompted as he is by the Lord.
- 10 Worship is the outward expression of wisdom,  
and the Lord himself inspires it.
- 11 Do not say, 'The Lord is to blame for my failure';  
it is for you to avoid doing what he hates.
- 12 Do not say, 'It was he who led me astray';  
he has no use for sinful men.
- 13 The Lord hates every kind of vice;  
you cannot love it and still fear him.
- 14 When he made man in the beginning,  
he left him free to take his own decisions;
- 15 if you choose, you can keep the commandments;  
whether or not you keep faith is yours to decide.
- 16 He has set before you fire and water;  
reach out and take which you choose;
- 17 before man lie life and death,  
and whichever he prefers is his.
- 18 For in his great wisdom and mighty power  
the Lord sees everything.
- 19 He keeps watch over those who fear him;  
no human act escapes his notice.
- 20 But he has commanded no man to be wicked,  
nor has he given licence to commit sin.

DO NOT SET YOUR HEART on a large family of ne'er-do-wells 16  
or be content if your sons are godless.

However many they are, do not think yourself happy, 2  
unless the fear of the Lord is in them.

Do not count on their living to be old 3  
or rely on their numbers;

for one son can be better than a thousand;  
better indeed to die childless than to have godless children.

Thanks to one man of good sense a city may be populous, 4  
while a tribe of lawless men becomes a desert.

Many a time have I seen this with my own eyes, 5  
and still weightier examples have come to my ears.

Where sinners gather, the fire breaks out; 6  
retribution blazes up in a rebellious nation.

There was no pardon for the giants of old, 7  
who revolted in all their strength.

There was no reprieve for Lot's adopted home, 8  
abhorrent in its arrogance.

There was no mercy for the doomed nation, 9  
exterminated for their sins—

those six hundred thousand warriors 10  
marshalled in stubborn defiance.

Even if only one man were obstinate, 11  
it would be a miracle for him to escape punishment.

For mercy and anger belong to the Lord;  
he shows his power in forgiveness, or in the flood of his wrath.

His mercy is great, but great also is his condemnation; 12  
he judges a man by what he has done.

He does not let the sinner escape with his loot 13  
or try the patience of the godly too long.

He opens a way for every work of mercy, 14  
and everyone is treated according to his own deserts.<sup>a</sup>

Do not say, 'I am hidden from the Lord; 17  
who is there in heaven to give a thought to me?

[a] *Some witnesses add* (15) The Lord made Pharaoh too stubborn to acknowledge him, so that his deeds might be published to the world. (16) He displays his mercy to the whole creation, and has separated light from darkness with a plumb-line.

Among so many I shall not be noticed;  
what is my life compared with the measureless creation?

- 18 Heaven itself, the highest heaven,  
the abyss and the earth are shaken at his coming;
- 19 the very mountains and the foundations of the world  
tremble when he looks upon them.
- 20 What human mind can grasp this,  
or comprehend his ways?
- 21 As a squall takes men unawares,  
so most of his works are done in secret.
- 22 Who is to declare his acts of justice  
or wait for his remote decree?'
- 23 These are the thoughts of a small mind,  
the absurdities of a senseless and misguided man.

- 24 LISTEN TO ME, MY SON, and learn sense;  
pay close attention to what I say;
- 25 I will show you exact discipline  
and teach you accurate knowledge.
- 26 When the Lord created his works in the beginning,  
and after making them defined<sup>a</sup> their boundaries,
- 27 he disposed them in an eternal order  
and fixed their influences for all time.  
They do not grow hungry or weary,  
or abandon their tasks;
- 28 one does not jostle another;  
they never disobey his word.
- 29 The Lord then looked at the earth  
and filled it with his good things.
- 30 With every kind of living creature he covered the ground,  
into which they must all return.

- 17 The Lord created man from the earth  
and sent him back to it again.
- 2 He set a fixed span of life for men  
and granted them authority over everything on earth.

[a] When...defined: *probable reading, based on Heb.; Gk.* The works of the Lord have been under his judgement from the beginning,...he defined...

He clothed them with strength like his own, <sup>a</sup>	3
forming them in his own image.	
He put the fear of man into all creatures	4
and gave him lordship over beasts and birds. <sup>b</sup>	
He gave men tongue and eyes and ears,	6
the power of choice and a mind for thinking.	
He filled them with discernment	7
and showed them good and evil.	
He kept watch over their hearts,	8
to display to them the majesty of his works. <sup>c</sup>	
They shall praise his holy name,	10
proclaiming the grandeur of his works.	
He gave them knowledge as well	11
and endowed them with the life-giving law.	
He established a perpetual covenant with them	12
and revealed to them his decrees.	
Their eyes saw his glorious majesty,	13
and their ears heard the glory of his voice.	
He said to them, 'Guard against all wrongdoing',	14
and taught each man his duty towards his neighbour.	
 Their conduct always lies open before him,	15
never hidden from his scrutiny. <sup>d</sup>	
For every nation he appointed a ruler,	17
but chose Israel to be his own possession. <sup>e</sup>	
So whatever they do is clear to him as daylight;	19
he keeps constant watch over their lives.	
Their wrongdoing is not hidden from the Lord;	20
he observes all their sins. <sup>f</sup>	
A man's good deeds he treasures like a signet-ring,	22
and his kindness like the apple of his eye.	

[a] *So one Vs.; Gk. their own.* [b] *Some witnesses add* (5) The Lord gave them the use of the five faculties; as a sixth gift he distributed to them mind, and as a seventh, reason, the interpreter of those faculties. [c] *Some witnesses add* (9) He has given them the right to boast for ever of his marvels. [d] *Some witnesses read* . . . scrutiny. (16) Every man from his youth tended towards evil; they could not make themselves hearts of flesh in place of their hearts of stone. (17) When he distributed the nations over all the earth, for every . . . [e] *Some witnesses add* (18) He rears them with discipline as his first-born, imparting to them the light of love and never neglecting them. [f] *Some witnesses add* (21) The Lord who is gracious and knows what they are made of has neither rejected nor deserted them, but spared them.

- 23 In the end he will rise up and give the wicked their deserts,  
bringing down their recompense on their own heads.
- 24 Yet he leaves a way open for the penitent to return to him,  
and gives the waverer strength to endure.
  
- 25 Turn to the Lord and have done with sin;  
make your prayer in his presence, and so lessen your offence.
- 26 Come back to the Most High, renounce wrongdoing,  
and hate intensely what he abhors.
- 27 Who will praise the Most High in the grave  
in place of the living who give him thanks?
- 28 When a man is dead and ceases to be, his gratitude dies with him;  
it is when he is alive and well that he praises the Lord.
- 29 How great is the Lord's mercy  
and his pardon to those who turn to him!
- 30 Not everything is within man's reach,  
for the human race is not immortal.
- 31 Is anything brighter than the sun? Yet the sun suffers eclipse.  
So flesh and blood have evil thoughts.
- 32 The Lord marshals the armies of high heaven,  
but all men are dust and ashes.
  
- 18 He who lives for ever is the Creator of the whole universe;  
2 right belongs to the Lord alone.<sup>a</sup>
- 4 To no man is it given to unfold the story of his works;  
who can trace his marvels to their source?
- 5 No one can measure his majestic power,  
still less, tell the full tale of all his mercies.
- 6 Man can neither increase nor diminish them,  
nor fathom the wonders of the Lord.
- 7 When a man comes to the end of them he is still at the beginning,  
and when he has finished he will still be perplexed.
  
- 8 What is man and what use is he?  
What do his good or evil deeds signify?
- 9 His span of life is at the most a hundred years;

[a] *Some witnesses add* and there is none beside him, (3) who can steer the world with his little finger, so that all things obey his will; as king of the universe, he has power to fix the bounds between what is holy and what is profane.



compared with endless time, his few years 10  
are like one drop of sea-water or a single grain of sand.

This is why the Lord is patient with them, 11  
lavishing his mercy upon them.

He sees and knows the harsh fate in store for them, 12  
and therefore gives full play to his forgiveness.

Man's compassion is only for his neighbour, 13  
but the Lord's compassion is for every living thing.

He corrects and trains and teaches  
and brings them back as a shepherd his flock.

He has compassion on those who accept discipline 14  
and are eager to obey his decrees.

My son, do good without scolding; 15  
do not spoil your generosity with hard words.

Does not the dew give respite from the sweltering heat? 16  
So a word can do more than a gift.

A kind word counts for more than a rich present; 17  
with a gracious man you will find both.

A fool cannot refrain from tactless criticism, 18  
and a grudging giver makes no eyes sparkle.

Before you speak, learn; 19  
and before you fall sick, consult a doctor.

Before judgement comes, examine yourself, 20  
and you will find pardon in the hour of scrutiny.

Before you fall ill, humble yourself; 21  
show your penitence as soon as you sin.

Let nothing hinder the prompt discharge of your vows; 22  
do not wait till death to be absolved.

Before you make a vow, give it due thought; 23  
do not be like those who try the Lord's patience.

Think of the wrath you must face in the hour of death, 24  
when the time of reckoning comes, and he turns away his face.

In time of plenty remember the time of famine, 25  
poverty and need in days of wealth.

Between dawn and dusk times may alter; 26  
all change comes quickly, when the Lord wills it.

A wise man is always on his guard; 27

when sin is rife, he will beware of negligence.

- 28 Every man of sense makes acquaintance with wisdom,  
and to him who finds her she gives cause for thankfulness.
- 29 Skilled speakers display their special wisdom  
by a flow of apt proverbs.

*Maxims of prudence and self-discipline*

- 30 **D**O NOT LET your passions be your guide,  
but restrain your desires.
- 31 If you indulge yourself with all that passion fancies,  
it will make you the butt of your enemies.
- 32 Do not revel in great luxury,  
or the expense of it may ruin you.
- 33 Do not beggar yourself by feasting on borrowed money,  
when there is nothing in your purse.
- 19 A drunken workman never grows rich;  
carelessness in small things leads little by little to ruin.
- 2 Wine and women rob the wise of their wits,  
and a frequenter of prostitutes becomes more and more reckless,
- 3 till sores<sup>a</sup> and worms take possession of him,  
and his recklessness becomes his undoing.
- 4 To trust a man hastily shows a shallow mind,  
and to sin is to do an injury to yourself.
- 5 To delight in wickedness is to court condemnation,
- 6 but evil loses its hold on the man who hates gossip.
- 7 Never repeat what you hear,  
and you will never be the loser.
- 8 Tell no tales about friend or foe;  
unless silence makes you an accomplice, never betray a man's secret.
- 9 Suppose he has heard you and learnt to distrust you,  
he will seize the first chance to show his hatred.
- 10 Have you heard a rumour? Let it die with you.  
Never fear, it will not make you burst.
- 11 A fool with a secret goes through agony

[a] Or decay.

like a woman in childbirth.

As painful as an arrow through the thigh  
is a rumour in the heart of a fool. 12

Confront your friend with the gossip about him; he may not have  
done it; 13

or if he did it, he will know not to do it again.

Confront your neighbour; he may not have said it;  
or if he did say it, he will know not to say it again. 14

Confront your friend; it will often turn out to be slander;  
do not believe everything you hear. 15

A man may let slip more than he intends;  
whose tongue is always free from guilt? 16

Confront your neighbour before you threaten him,  
and let the law of the Most High take its course.<sup>a</sup> 17

All wisdom is the fear of the Lord  
and includes the fulfilling of the law.<sup>b</sup> 20

The knowledge of wickedness is not wisdom,  
nor is there good sense in the advice of sinners. 22

There is a cleverness that is loathsome,  
and some fools are merely ignorant. 23

Better to be godfearing and lack brains  
than to have great intelligence and break the law. 24

A meticulous cleverness may lead to injustice,  
and a man may make himself offensive in order that right may  
prevail. 25

There is a scoundrel who stoops and wears mourning,  
but who is a fraud at heart. 26

He covers his face and pretends to be deaf,  
but when nobody is looking, he will steal a march on you; 27

and if lack of strength prevents him from doing wrong,  
he will still harm you at the first opportunity. 28

Yet you can tell a man by his looks  
and recognize good sense at first sight. 29

[a] *Some witnesses add* without giving way to anger. (18) The fear of the Lord is the way towards acceptance, and wisdom wins love from him. (19) The knowledge of the Lord's commandments is life-giving discipline, and those who do what pleases him eat from the tree of immortality. [b] *Some witnesses add* and a knowledge of his omnipotence. (21) A servant who says, 'I will not do as you wish', even if he does it later, angers the man who feeds him.

- 30 A man's clothes, and the way he laughs,  
and his gait, reveal his character.
- 20 A reproof may be untimely,  
and silence may show a man's good sense.
- 2 Yet how much better it is to complain than to nurse a grudge,  
and confession saves a man from disgrace.<sup>a</sup>
- 4 Like a eunuch longing to seduce a girl  
is the man who tries to do right by violence.
- 5 One man is silent and is found to be wise;  
another is hated for his endless chatter.
- 6 One man is silent, at a loss for an answer;  
another is silent, biding his time.
- 7 The wise man is silent until the right moment,  
but a swaggering fool is always speaking out of turn.
- 8 A garrulous man makes himself detested,  
and one who abuses his position arouses hatred.
- 9 A MAN SOMETIMES FINDS profit in adversity,  
and a windfall may result in loss.
- 10 Sometimes liberality does not benefit the giver,  
sometimes it brings a double return.
- 11 The quest for honour may lead to disgrace,  
but there are those who have risen from obscurity to eminence.
- 12 A man may make a good bargain,  
but pay for it seven times over.
- 13 A wise man endears himself when he speaks,  
but fools scatter compliments in vain.
- 14 A gift from a fool will bring you no benefit;  
it looks bigger to him than it does to you.
- 15 He gives small gifts accompanied by long lectures,  
and opens his mouth as wide as the town crier.  
He gives a loan today and asks it back tomorrow,  
obnoxious fellow that he is!
- 16 The fool says, 'I have no friends,  
I get no thanks for my kindnesses;

[a] *Some witnesses add* (3) How good it is to respond to reproof with repentance, and so escape deliberate sin!

though they eat my bread, they speak ill of me.'

How everyone will laugh at him—and how often!

17

Better a slip on the stone floor than a slip of the tongue;  
and the fall of the wicked comes just as suddenly.

18

An ill-mannered man is like an unseasonable story,  
continually on the lips of the ill-bred.

19

A proverb will fall flat when uttered by a fool,  
for he will produce it at the wrong time.

20

Poverty may keep a man from doing wrong;  
when the day's work is over, conscience will not trouble him.

21

A man's diffidence may be his undoing,  
or the foolish figure he cuts in the eyes of the world.

22

A man may be shamed into making promises to a friend  
and needlessly turn him into an enemy.

23

A lie is an ugly blot on a man's name,  
and is continually on the lips of those who know no better.

24

It is better to be a thief than a habitual liar,  
but both will come to the same bad end.

25

A lying disposition brings disgrace;  
the shame of it can never be shaken off.

26

A wise man advances himself when he speaks,  
and a man of sense makes himself pleasant to the great.

27

The man who tills his land heaps up a harvest,  
and he who pleases the great reaps pardon for his wrongdoing.

28

Hospitality and presents make wise men blind;  
like a gag in the mouth they silence criticism.

29

Hidden wisdom and buried treasure,  
what use is there in either?

30

Better a man who hides his folly  
than one who hides his wisdom!<sup>a</sup>

31

Have you done wrong, my son? Do it no more,  
but ask pardon for your past wrongdoing.

21

[a] *Some witnesses add* (32) Better to seek the Lord with unremitting patience than to be the masterless charioteer of one's own life.

- 2 Avoid wrong as you would a viper,  
for if you go near, it will bite you;  
its teeth are like a lion's teeth  
and can destroy the lives of men.
- 3 Every breach of the law is like a two-edged sword;  
it inflicts an incurable wound.
- 4 By intimidation and insolence a man forfeits his wealth;  
thus a proud man will be stripped of his possessions.
- 5 The Lord listens to the poor man's appeal,  
and his verdict follows without delay.
- 6 To hate reproof is to go the way of sinners,  
but whoever fears the Lord will repent whole-heartedly.
- 7 A great talker is known far and wide,  
but a sensible man is aware of his failings.
- 8 To build a house with borrowed money  
is like collecting stones for your own tomb.<sup>a</sup>
- 9 A gathering of lawless men is like a bundle of tow,  
which ends by going up in flames.
- 10 The road of sinners is smoothly paved,  
but it leads straight down to the grave.
- 11 Whoever keeps the law keeps his thoughts under control;  
the fear of the Lord has its outcome in wisdom.
  
- 12 A MAN WHO IS NOT CLEVER cannot be taught,  
but there is a cleverness which only breeds bitterness.
- 13 A wise man's knowledge is like a river in full spate,  
and his advice is a life-giving spring.
- 14 A fool's mind is a leaky bucket:  
it cannot hold anything it learns.
- 15 If an instructed man hears a wise saying,  
he applauds it and improves on it.  
If a rake hears it, he is annoyed  
and throws it behind his back.
- 16 Listening to a fool is like travelling with a heavy pack,  
but there is delight to be found in intelligent conversation.
- 17 The assembly welcomes a word from the wise man,  
and thinks over what he says.

[a] *Some witnesses read* like harvesting stones against the winter.

A fool's wisdom is like a tumbledown house; 18  
his knowledge is a string of ill-digested sayings.

To fools education is like fetters, 19  
like a handcuff on the wrist.

To the wise education is a golden ornament 21  
like a bracelet on the arm.

A fool laughs out loud; 20  
a clever man smiles quietly, if at all.

A fool rushes into a house, 22  
while a man of experience hangs back politely.

A boor peers into the house from the doorstep, 23  
while a well-bred man stands outside.

It is bad manners to listen at doors; 24  
a man of sense would think it a crushing disgrace.

The glib only repeat what others have said, 25  
but the wise weigh every word.

Fools speak before they think; 26  
wise men think first and speak afterwards.

When a bad man curses his adversary,<sup>a</sup> 27  
he is cursing himself.

A tale-bearer blackens his own character 28  
and makes himself hated throughout the neighbourhood.

An idler is like a filthy stone; 22  
everyone jeers at his disgrace.

An idler is like a lump of dung; 2  
whoever picks it up shakes it off his hand.

There is shame in being father to a spoilt son, 3  
and the birth of a daughter means loss.

A sensible daughter wins a husband, 4  
but an immodest one is a grief to her father.

A brazen daughter disgraces both father and husband 5  
and is despised by both.

Unseasonable talk is like music in time of mourning, 6  
but the lash of wisdom's discipline is always in season.

[a] Or curses Satan.

- 7 Teaching a fool is like mending pottery with glue,  
or like rousing a sleeper from heavy sleep.
- 8 As well reason with a drowsy man as with a fool;  
when you have finished, he will say, 'What was that?'<sup>a</sup>
- 11 Mourn over the dead for the eclipse of his light;  
mourn over the fool for the eclipse of his wits.  
Mourn less bitterly for the dead, for he is at rest;  
but the fool's life is worse than death.
- 12 Mourning for the dead lasts seven days,  
but for a godless fool it lasts all his life.
- 13 Do not talk long with a fool  
or visit a stupid man.  
Beware of him, or you may be in trouble  
and find yourself bespattered when he shakes himself.  
Avoid him, if you are looking for peace,  
and you will not be worn out by his folly.
- 14 What is heavier than lead?  
What is its name but 'Fool'?
- 15 Sand, salt, and a lump of iron  
are less of a burden than a stupid man.
- 16 A tie-beam fixed firmly into a building  
is not shaken loose by an earthquake;  
so a mind kept firm by intelligent advice  
will not be daunted in a crisis.
- 17 A mind solidly backed by intelligent thought  
is like the stucco that decorates a smooth wall.
- 18 As a fence set on a hill-top  
cannot stand against the wind,  
so a mind made timid by foolish fancies  
is not proof against any terror.
- 19 Hurt the eye and tears will flow;  
hurt the mind and you will find it sensitive.
- 20 Throw a stone at the birds and you scare them away;  
abuse a friend and you break off your friendship.
- 21 If you have drawn your sword on a friend,

[a] *Some witnesses add* (9) Children well brought up reveal no trace of any humble origin.  
(10) But those who run riot, haughty and undisciplined, sully the nobility of their parentage.



do not give up hope, there is still a way back.

If you have quarrelled with your friend, 22

never fear, there can still be a reconciliation.

But abuse, scorn, a secret betrayed, a stab in the back—  
these will make any friend keep his distance.

Win your neighbour's confidence while he is poor, 23

and you will share the joy of his prosperity;

stand by him in time of trouble,

and you will be his partner when he comes into a fortune.

As furnace-fumes and smoke come before the flame, 24

so insults come before bloodshed.

I will not be afraid to protect my friend 25

nor will I turn my back on him.

If harm should befall me on his account, 26

everyone who hears of it will beware of him.

OH FOR A SENTRY to guard my mouth 27

and a seal of discretion to close my lips,

to keep them from being my downfall,

and to keep my tongue from causing my ruin!

Lord, Father, and Ruler of my life, 23

do not abandon me to the tongue's control

or allow me to fall on its account.

Oh for wisdom's lash to curb my thoughts 2

and to discipline my mind,

without overlooking my mistakes

or condoning my sins!

Then my mistakes would not multiply 3

nor my sins increase,

humiliating me before my opponents

and giving my enemy cause to gloat.

Lord, Father, and God of my life, 4

do not let me have a supercilious eye.

Protect me from the onslaught of desire; 5

let neither gluttony nor lust take hold of me, 6

nor give me over to the power of shameless passion.

Hear, my sons, how to discipline the mouth, 7

take warning, and you will never be caught out.

- 8 It is by his own words that the sinner is ensnared;  
he is tripped up by his own scurrility and pride.
- 9 Do not inure your mouth to oaths  
or make a habit of naming the Holy One.
- 10 As a slave constantly under the lash  
is never free from weals,  
so the man who has oaths and the sacred name for ever on his lips  
will never be clear of guilt.
- 11 A man given to swearing is lawless to the core;  
the scourge will never be far from his house.  
If he goes back on his word, he must bear the blame;  
if he wilfully neglects it, he sins twice over;  
if his oath itself was insincere, he cannot be acquitted;  
his house will be filled with trouble.
- 12 There is a kind of speech that is the counterpart of death;  
may it never be found among Jacob's descendants!  
The pious keep clear of such conduct  
and do not wallow in sin.
- 13 Do not make a habit of coarse, vulgar talk,  
or you will be bound to say something sinful.
- 14 Remember your father and mother  
when you take your seat among the great,  
or you may forget yourself in their presence  
and make a fool of yourself through bad habit;  
then you will wish you had never been born,  
and curse the day of your birth.
- 15 A man addicted to scurrilous talk  
will never learn better as long as he lives.
- 16 TWO KINDS OF MEN add sin to sin,  
and a third brings retribution on himself.  
Hot lust that blazes like a fire  
can never be quenched till life is destroyed.  
A man whose whole body is given to sensuality  
never stops till the fire consumes him.
- 17 To a seducer every loaf is as sweet as the last,  
and he does not weary until he dies.
- 18 The man who strays from his own bed

says to himself, 'Who can see me?  
All around is dark and the walls hide me;  
nobody can see me, why need I worry?  
The Most High will not take note of my sins.'  
The eyes of men are all he fears; 19  
he forgets that the eyes of the Lord  
are ten thousand times brighter than the sun,  
observing every step men take  
and penetrating every secret.  
Before the universe was created, it was known to him, 20  
and so it is since its completion.  
This man will pay the penalty in the public street, 21  
caught where he least expected it.  
So too with the woman who is unfaithful to her husband, 22  
presenting him with an heir by a different father:  
first, she disobeys the law of the Most High; 23  
secondly, she commits an offence against her husband;  
thirdly, she has prostituted herself  
by bearing bastard children.  
She shall be disgraced before the assembly, 24  
and the consequences will fall on her children.  
Her children will not take root, 25  
nor will fruit grow on her branches.  
A curse will rest on her memory, 26  
and her shame will never be blotted out.  
All who survive her will learn 27  
that nothing is better than the fear of the Lord  
or sweeter than obeying his commandments.<sup>a</sup>

*The praise of wisdom*

HEAR THE PRAISE of wisdom from her own mouth, 24  
as she speaks with pride among her people,  
before the assembly of the Most High 2  
and in the presence of the heavenly host:

[a] *Some witnesses add* (28) To follow God brings great honour; to win his approval means long life.

- 3 'I am the word which was spoken by the Most High;  
it was I who covered the earth like a mist.
- 4 My dwelling-place was in high heaven;  
my throne was in a pillar of cloud.
- 5 Alone I made a circuit of the sky  
and traversed the depth of the abyss.
- 6 The waves of the sea, the whole earth,  
every people and nation were under my sway.
- 7 Among them all I looked for a home:  
in whose territory was I to settle?
- 8 Then the Creator of the universe laid a command upon me;  
my Creator decreed where I should dwell.  
He said, "Make your home in Jacob;  
find your heritage in Israel."
- 9 Before time began he created me,  
and I shall remain for ever.
- 10 In the sacred tent I ministered in his presence,  
and so I came to be established in Zion.
- 11 Thus he settled me in the city he loved  
and gave me authority in Jerusalem.
- 12 I took root among the people whom the Lord had honoured  
by choosing them to be his special possession.
- 13 'There I grew like a cedar of Lebanon,  
like a cypress on the slopes of Hermon,  
14 like a date-palm at Engedi,  
like roses at Jericho.  
I grew like a fair olive-tree in the vale,  
or like a plane-tree planted beside the water.
- 15 Like cassia or camel-thorn I was redolent of spices;  
I spread my fragrance like choice myrrh,  
like galban, aromatic shell, and gum resin;  
I was like the smoke of incense in the sacred tent.
- 16 Like a terebinth I spread out my branches,  
laden with honour and grace.
- 17 I put forth lovely shoots like the vine,  
and my blossoms were a harvest of wealth and honour.<sup>a</sup>

[a] *Some witnesses add* (18) I give birth to noble love, reverence, knowledge, and holy hope; and I give all these my eternal progeny to God's elect (*probable meaning; Gk. obscure*).

‘Come to me, you who desire me, 19  
and eat your fill of my fruit.  
The memory of me is sweeter than syrup, 20  
the possession of me sweeter than honey dripping from the comb.  
Whoever feeds on me will be hungry for more, 21  
and whoever drinks from me will thirst for more.  
To obey me is to be safe from disgrace; 22  
those who work in wisdom will not go astray.’

All this is the covenant-book of God Most High, 23  
the law which Moses enacted to be the heritage of the assemblies of  
Jacob.<sup>a</sup>  
He sends out wisdom in full flood like the river Pishon 25  
or like the Tigris at the time of firstfruits;  
he overflows with understanding like the Euphrates 26  
or like Jordan at the time of harvest.  
He pours forth instruction like the Nile,<sup>b</sup> 27  
like the Gihon at the time of vintage.  
No man has ever fully known wisdom; 28  
from first to last no one has fathomed her;  
for her thoughts are vaster than the ocean 29  
and her purpose deeper than the great abyss.

As for me, I was like a canal leading from a river, 30  
a watercourse into a pleasure-garden.  
I said, ‘I will water my garden, 31  
drenching its flower-beds’;  
and at once my canal became a river  
and my river a sea.  
I will again make discipline shine like the dawn, 32  
so that its light may be seen from afar.  
I will again pour out doctrine like prophecy 33  
and bequeath it to future generations.  
Truly, my labour has not been for myself alone 34  
but for all seekers of wisdom.

[a] *Some witnesses add* (24) Never fail to be strong in the Lord; hold fast to him, so that he may strengthen you; the Lord Almighty is God alone; beside him there is no saviour.

[b] *So one V.s.; Gk.* He makes instruction shine like light.

- 25 THERE ARE THREE SIGHTS which warm my heart<sup>a</sup>  
and are beautiful in the eyes of the Lord and of men:  
concord among brothers, friendship among neighbours,  
and a man and wife who are inseparable.
- 2 There are three kinds of men who arouse my hatred,  
who disgust me by their manner of life:  
a poor man who boasts, a rich man who lies,  
and an old fool who commits adultery.
- 3 If you have not gathered wisdom in your youth,  
how will you find it when you are old?
- 4 Sound judgement sits well on grey hairs  
and wise advice comes well from older men.
- 5 Wisdom is fitting in the aged,  
and ripe counsel in men of eminence.
- 6 Long experience is the old man's crown,  
and his pride is the fear of the Lord.
- 7 I can think of nine men I count happy,  
and I can tell you of a tenth:  
a man who can take delight in his children,  
and one who lives to see his enemy's downfall;
- 8 happy the husband of a sensible wife,  
the farmer who does not plough with ox and ass together,<sup>b</sup>  
the man whose tongue never betrays him,  
and the servant who has never worked for an inferior!
- 9 Happy the man who has found a friend,<sup>c</sup>  
and the speaker who has an attentive audience!
- 10 How great is the man who finds wisdom!  
But no greater than he who fears the Lord.
- 11 The fear of the Lord excels all other gifts;  
to what can we compare the man who has it?<sup>d</sup>

[a] *So Vss.; Gk.* which make me beautiful. [b] the farmer . . . together: *so Heb.; Gk. omits.* [c] *So Vss.; Gk.* found good sense. [d] *Some witnesses add* (12) The fear of the Lord is the source of love for him, and faith is the source of loyalty to him.

*Counsels upon social behaviour*

ANY WOUND BUT a wound in the heart!	13
Any spite but a woman's!	
Any disaster but one caused by hate!	14
Any vengeance but the vengeance of an enemy!	
There is no venom <sup>a</sup> worse than a snake's,	15
and no anger worse than an enemy's.	
I would sooner share a home with a lion or a snake	16
than keep house with a spiteful wife.	
Her spite changes her expression,	17
making her look as surly as a bear.	
Her husband goes to a neighbour for his meals	18
and cannot repress a bitter sigh.	
There is nothing so bad as a bad wife;	19
may the fate of the wicked overtake her! <sup>b</sup>	
It is as easy for an old man to climb a sand-dune	20
as for a quiet husband to live with a nagging wife.	
Do not be enticed by a woman's beauty	21
or set your heart on possessing her.	
If a man is supported by his wife	22
he must expect tantrums, shamelessness, and outrage.	
A bad wife brings humiliation,	23
downcast looks, and a wounded heart.	
Slack of hand and weak of knee	
is the man whose wife fails to make him happy.	
Woman is the origin of sin,	24
and it is through her that we all die.	
Do not leave a leaky cistern to drip	25
or allow a bad wife to say what she likes.	
If she does not accept your control,	26
divorce her and send her away.	

[a] *Probable meaning, based on one Vs.; Gk. head.* [b] *Or may it fall to her lot to marry a scoundrel!*

- 26 A good wife makes a happy husband;  
she doubles the length of his life.
- 2 A staunch wife is her husband's joy;  
he will live out his days in peace.
- 3 A good wife means a good life;  
she is one of the Lord's gifts to those who fear him.
- 4 Rich or poor, they are light-hearted,  
and always have a smile on their faces.
- 5 Three things there are that alarm me,  
and a fourth I am afraid to face:  
the scandal of the town, the gathering of a mob,  
and calumny—all harder to bear than death;
- 6 but it is heart-ache and grief when a wife is jealous of a rival,  
and everyone alike feels the lash of her tongue.
- 7 A bad wife is a chafing yoke;  
controlling her is like clutching a scorpion.
- 8 A drunken wife is a great provocation;  
she cannot keep her excesses secret.
- 9 A loose woman betrays herself by her bold looks;  
you can tell her by her glance.
- 10 Keep close watch over a headstrong daughter;  
if she finds you off your guard, she will take her chance.
- 11 Beware of her impudent looks  
and do not be surprised if she disobeys you.
- 12 As a parched traveller with his tongue hanging out  
drinks from any spring that offers,  
she will open her arms to every embrace,  
and her quiver to the arrow.
- 13 A wife's charm is the delight of her husband,  
and her womanly skill puts flesh on his bones.
- 14 A silent wife is a gift from the Lord;  
her restraint is more than money can buy.
- 15 A modest wife has charm upon charm;  
no scales can weigh the worth of her chastity.
- 16 As beautiful as the sunrise in the Lord's heaven  
is a good wife in a well-ordered home.



As bright as the light on the sacred lamp-stand 17  
 is a beautiful face in the settled prime of life.  
 Like a golden pillar on a silver base 18  
 is a shapely leg with a firm foot.<sup>a b</sup>

TWO THINGS GRIEVE my heart, 28  
 and a third excites my anger:  
 a soldier in distress through poverty,  
 wise men treated with contempt,  
 and a man deserting right conduct for wrong—  
 the Lord will bring him to the scaffold.

How hard it is for a merchant to keep clear of wrong 29  
 or for a shopkeeper to be innocent of dishonesty!  
 Many have cheated for gain;<sup>c</sup> 27  
 a money-grubber will always turn a blind eye.  
 As a peg is held fast in the joint between stones, 2  
 so dishonesty squeezes in between selling and buying.  
 Unless a man holds resolutely to the fear of the Lord, 3  
 his house will soon be in ruins.

[a] is . . . foot: *probable meaning; Gk. obscure.* [b] *Some witnesses add*

My son, guard your health in the bloom of your youth, 19  
 and do not waste your vigour on what belongs to others.  
 Search the whole plain for a fertile plot; 20  
 sow your own seed, trusting in your pedigree.  
 Then the children you leave behind 21  
 will prosper, confident in their parentage.  
 A woman of the streets counts as mere spittle, 22  
 a married woman as a mortuary for her lovers.  
 A godless woman is a good match for a lawless husband, 23  
 a pious one for a man who fears the Lord.  
 A brazen woman courts disgrace, 24  
 but a virtuous one is modest even before her husband.  
 A wilful woman is a shameless bitch, 25  
 but a modest one fears the Lord.  
 A woman who honours her husband is accounted wise by all, 26  
 but if she despises him, all know her as proud and godless.  
 A good wife makes a happy husband;  
 she doubles the length of his life.  
 A strident, garrulous wife is like a trumpet sounding the charge; 27  
 in a home like hers a man lives in the tumult of war.

[c] *Some witnesses read for a trifle.*

- 4 Shake a sieve, and the rubbish remains;  
start an argument, and discover a man's faults.
- 5 As the work of a potter is tested in the furnace,  
so a man is tried in debate.
- 6 As the fruit of the tree reveals the skill of its grower,  
so the expression of a man's thought reveals his character.
- 7 Do not praise a man till you hear him in discussion,  
for this is the test.
- 8 If justice is what you seek, you will succeed,  
and wear it like a splendid robe.
- 9 Birds of a feather roost together,  
and honesty comes home to those who practise it.
- 10 A lion lies in wait for its prey,  
and so do sins for those who do wrong.
- 11 The conversation of the pious is constantly wise,  
but a fool is as changeable as the moon.
- 12 Grudge every minute spent among fools,  
but linger among the thoughtful.
- 13 The conversation of fools is repulsive;  
they make a joke of unbridled vice.
- 14 Their cursing and swearing make the hair stand on end;  
when such men quarrel, others stop their ears.
- 15 The quarrels of the proud lead to bloodshed;  
their abuse offends the ear.
- 16 The betrayer of secrets loses his credit  
and can never find an intimate friend.
- 17 Love your friend and keep faith with him,  
but if you betray his secrets, keep out of his way;
- 18 as a man kills his enemy,  
so you have killed your neighbour's friendship.
- 19 As a bird that is allowed to escape your hand,  
your neighbour, once lost, will not be caught again.
- 20 He has gone too far for you to pursue him,  
and escaped like a gazelle from a trap.
- 21 A wound may be bandaged, an insult pardoned,  
but the betrayer of secrets has nothing to hope for.

A man who winks is plotting mischief; 22  
those who know him will keep their distance.  
He speaks sweetly enough to your face 23  
and admires whatever you say,  
but later he will change his tune  
and use your own words to trip you.  
There are many things I hate, but him above all; 24  
the Lord will hate him too.

Whoever throws a stone up in the air is throwing it at his own 25  
head,  
and a treacherous blow means wounds all round.  
Dig a pit and you will fall into it; 26  
set a trap and you will be caught by it.  
The wrong a man does recoils on him, 27  
and he does not know where it has come from.  
An arrogant man deals in mockery and insults, 28  
but retribution lies in wait for him like a lion.  
Those who rejoice at the downfall of good men will be trapped 29  
and consumed with pain before they die.

Rage and anger, these also I abhor, 30  
but a sinner has them ready at hand.  
The vengeful man will face the vengeance of the Lord, 28  
who keeps strict account of his sins.  
Forgive your neighbour his wrongdoing; 2  
then, when you pray, your sins will be forgiven.  
If a man harbours a grudge against another, 3  
is he to expect healing from the Lord?  
If he has no mercy on his fellow-man, 4  
is he still to ask forgiveness for his own sins?  
If a mere mortal cherishes rage, 5  
where is he to look for pardon?  
Think of the end that awaits you, and have done with hate; 6  
think of mortality and death, and be true to the commandments;  
think of the commandments, and do not be enraged at your 7  
neighbour;  
think of the covenant of the Most High, and overlook faults.

- 8 To avoid a quarrel is a setback for sin,  
for it is a hot temper that kindles quarrels.
- 9 A sinner sows trouble between friends  
and spreads scandal where before there was peace.
- 10 A fire is kept hot by stoking  
and a quarrel by persistence.  
A man's rage is in proportion to his strength,  
and his anger in proportion to his wealth.
- 11 A hasty argument kindles a fire,  
and a hasty quarrel leads to bloodshed.
- 12 Blow on a spark to make it glow, or spit on it to put it out;  
both results come from the one mouth.
- 13 Curses on the gossip and the tale-bearer!  
For they have been the ruin of many peaceable men.
- 14 The talk of a third party has wrecked the lives of many  
and driven them from country to country;  
it has destroyed fortified towns  
and demolished the houses of the great.
- 15 The talk of a third party has brought divorce on staunch wives  
and deprived them of all they have laboured for.
- 16 Whoever pays heed to it will never again find rest  
or live in peace of mind.
- 17 The lash of a whip raises weals,  
but the lash of a tongue breaks bones.
- 18 Many have been killed by the sword,  
but not so many as by the tongue.
- 19 Happy the man who is sheltered from its onslaught,  
who has not been exposed to its fury,  
who has not borne its yoke,  
or been chained with its fetters!
- 20 For its yoke is of iron,  
its fetters of bronze.
- 21 The death it brings is an evil death;  
better the grave than the tongue!
- 22 But it has no power over the godfearing;  
they cannot be burned in its flames.
- 23 Those who desert the Lord fall victim to it;  
among them it will burn like fire and not be quenched.

It will launch itself against them like a lion  
and tear them like a leopard.

As you enclose your garden with a thorn hedge, 24  
and lock up your silver and gold,

so weigh your words and measure them, 25  
and make a door and a bolt for your mouth.

Beware of being tripped by your tongue 26  
and falling into the power of a lurking enemy.

A DEVOUT MAN LENDS to his neighbour; 29  
by supporting him he keeps the commandments.

Lend to your neighbour in his time of need; 2  
repay your neighbour punctually.

Be as good as your word and keep faith with him, 3  
and your needs will always be met.

Many treat a loan as a windfall 4  
and bring trouble on those who helped them.

Until he gets a loan, a man kisses his neighbour's hand 5  
and talks with bated breath about his money;

but when it is time to repay, he postpones it,  
pays back only perfunctory promises,  
and alleges that the time is too short.<sup>a</sup>

If he can pay, his creditor will scarcely get back half, 6  
and will count himself lucky at that;

if he cannot pay, he has defrauded the other of his money,  
and gratuitously made an enemy of him;<sup>b</sup>

he will pay him back in curses and insults  
and with shame instead of honour.

Because of such dishonesty many refuse to lend, 7  
for fear of being needlessly defrauded.

Nevertheless be patient with the penniless, 8  
and do not keep him waiting for your charity;

for the commandment's sake help the poor, 9  
and in his need do not send him away empty-handed.

Be ready to lose money for a brother or a friend; 10

[a] Or that times are hard. [b] and . . . him: *some witnesses read* and the other has won himself an enemy at his own expense.

do not leave it to rust away under a stone.

- 11 Store up for yourself the treasure which the Most High has commanded,  
and it will benefit you more than gold.
- 12 Let almsgiving be the treasure in your strong-room,  
and it will rescue you from every misfortune.
- 13 It will arm you against the enemy  
better than stout shield or strong spear.
- 14 A good man will stand surety for his neighbour;  
only a man who has lost all sense of shame will fail him.
- 15 If a man stands surety for you, do not forget his kindness,  
for he has staked his very self for you.
- 16 A sinner wastes the property of his surety,  
17 and an ungrateful man fails his rescuer.
- 18 Suretyship has ruined the prosperity of many  
and wrecked them like a storm at sea;  
it has driven men of influence into exile,  
and set them wandering in foreign countries.
- 19 When a sinner commits himself to suretyship,  
his pursuit of gain will involve him in lawsuits.
- 20 Help your neighbour to the best of your ability,  
but beware of becoming too deeply involved.
- 21 The necessities of life are water, bread, and clothes,  
and a home with its decent privacy;
- 22 better the life of a poor man in his own hut  
than a sumptuous banquet in another man's house.
- 23 Be content with whatever you have,  
and do not get a name for living on hospitality.<sup>a</sup>
- 24 It is a poor life going from house to house,  
keeping your mouth shut because you are a visitor.
- 25 You receive the guests and hand the drinks without being thanked  
for it,  
and into the bargain must listen to words that rankle:
- 26 'Come here, stranger, and lay the table;  
whatever you have there, hand it to me.'
- 27 'Be off, stranger! Make way for a more important guest;

[a] Reading based on one V.s.; Gk. and do not hear reproaches from your family.

my brother has come to stay, and I need the guest-room.'

How hard it is for a sensible man to bear

28

criticism from the household or abuse from his creditor!

A MAN WHO LOVES HIS SON will whip him often

30

so that when he grows up he may be a joy to him.

He who disciplines his son will find profit in him

2

and take pride in him among his acquaintances.

He who gives his son a good education will make his enemy jealous

3

and will boast of him among his friends.

When the father dies, it is as if he were still alive,

4

for he has left a copy of himself behind him.

While he lived he saw and rejoiced,

5

and when he died he had no regrets.

He has left an heir to take vengeance on his enemies

6

and to repay the kindness of his friends.

A man who spoils his son will bandage every wound

7

and will be on tenterhooks at every cry.

An unbroken horse turns out stubborn,

8

and an unchecked son turns out headstrong.

Pamper a boy and he will shock you;

9

play with him and he will grieve you.

Do not share his laughter, for fear of sharing his pain;

10

you will only end by grinding your teeth.

Do not give him freedom while he is young

11

or overlook his errors.

Break him in while he is young,

12

beat him soundly while he is still a child,

or he may grow stubborn and disobey you

and cause you vexation.

Discipline your son and take pains with him

13

or he may offend you by some disgraceful act.

BETTER A POOR MAN who is healthy and fit

14

than a rich man racked by disease.

Health and fitness are better than any gold,

15

and bodily vigour than boundless prosperity.

- 16 There is no wealth to compare with health of body,  
no festivity to equal a joyful heart.
- 17 Better death than a life of misery,  
eternal rest than a long illness.
- 18 Good things spread before a man without appetite  
are like offerings of food placed on a tomb.
- 19 What use is a sacrifice to an idol  
which can neither taste nor smell?  
So it is with the man afflicted by the Lord.
- 20 He gazes at the food before him and sighs  
as a eunuch sighs when he embraces a girl.
  
- 21 Do not give yourself over to sorrow  
or distress yourself deliberately.
- 22 A merry heart keeps a man alive,  
and joy lengthens his span of days.
- 23 Indulge yourself, take comfort,  
and banish sorrow;  
for sorrow has been the death of many,  
and no advantage ever came of it.
- 24 Envy and anger shorten a man's life,  
and anxiety brings premature old age.
- 25 A man with a gay heart has a good appetite  
and relishes the food he eats.
  
- 31 A rich man loses weight by wakeful nights,  
when the cares of wealth drive sleep away;  
2 sleepless worry keeps him wide awake,  
just as serious illness banishes<sup>a</sup> sleep.
- 3 A rich man toils to amass a fortune,  
and when he relaxes he enjoys every luxury.
- 4 A poor man toils to make a slender living,  
and when he relaxes he finds himself in need.
  
- 5 Passion for gold can never be right;  
the pursuit of money leads a man astray.<sup>b</sup>

[a] banishes: *probable meaning, based on Heb.; Gk. obscure.* [b] the pursuit...astray: *so Heb.; Gk. the man who pursues destruction shall have his fill of it.*



Many a man has come to ruin for the sake of gold 6  
and found disaster staring him in the face.  
Gold is a pitfall to those who are infatuated with it, 7  
and every fool is caught by it.  
Happy the rich man who has remained free of its taint 8  
and has not made gold his aim!  
Show us that man, and we will congratulate him; 9  
he has performed a miracle among his people.  
Has anyone ever come through this test unscathed? 10  
Then he has good cause to be proud.  
Has anyone ever had it in his power to sin and refrained,  
or to do wrong and has not done it?  
Then he shall be confirmed in his prosperity, 11  
and the whole people will hail him as a benefactor.

IF YOU ARE SITTING at a grand table, 12  
do not lick your lips and exclaim, 'What a spread!'  
Remember, it is a vice to have a greedy eye. 13  
There is no greater evil in creation than the eye;  
that is why it must shed tears at every turn.  
Do not reach for everything you see, 14  
or jostle your fellow-guest at the dish;  
judge his feelings by your own 15  
and always behave considerately.  
Eat what is set before you like a gentleman; 16  
do not munch and make yourself objectionable.  
Be the first to stop for good manners' sake 17  
and do not be insatiable, or you will give offence.  
If you are dining in a large company, 18  
do not reach out your hand before others.  
A man of good upbringing is content with little, 19  
and he is not short of breath when he goes to bed.  
The moderate eater enjoys healthy sleep; 20  
he rises early, feeling refreshed.  
But sleeplessness, indigestion, and colic  
are the lot of the glutton.  
If you cannot avoid overeating at a feast, 21  
leave the table and find relief by vomiting.

- 22 Listen to me, my son; do not disregard me,  
and in the end my words will come home to you.  
Whatever you do, do it shrewdly,  
and no illness will come your way.
- 23 Everyone has a good word for a liberal host,  
and the evidence of his generosity is convincing.
- 24 The whole town grumbles at a mean host,  
and there is precise evidence of his meanness.
- 25 Do not try to prove your manhood by drinking,  
for wine has been the ruin of many.
- 26 As the furnace tests iron when it is being tempered,  
so wine tests character when boastful men are wrangling.
- 27 Wine puts life into a man,  
if he drinks it in moderation.  
What is life to a man deprived of wine?  
Was it not created to warm men's hearts?
- 28 Wine brings gaiety and high spirits,  
if a man knows when to drink and when to stop;
- 29 but wine in excess makes for bitter feelings  
and leads to offence and retaliation.
- 30 Drunkenness inflames a fool's anger to his own hurt;  
it saps his strength and exposes him to injury.
- 31 At a banquet do not rebuke your fellow-guest  
or make him feel small while he is enjoying himself.  
This is no time to take up a quarrel with him  
or pester him to pay his debts.
- 32 If they choose you to preside at a feast, do not put on airs;  
behave to them as one of themselves.  
Look after the others before you sit down;
- 2 do not take your place until you have discharged all your duties.  
Let their enjoyment be your pleasure,  
and you will win the prize for good manners.
- 3 Speak, if you are old—it is your privilege—  
but come to the point and do not interrupt the music.
- 4 Where entertainment is provided, do not keep up a stream of talk;  
it is the wrong time to show off your wisdom.

Like a signet of ruby in a gold ring 5  
 is a concert of music at a banquet.  
 Like a signet of emerald in a gold setting 6  
 is tuneful music with good wine.

Speak, if you are young, when the need arises, 7  
 but twice at the most, and only when asked.  
 Be brief, say much in few words, 8  
 like a man who knows and can still hold his tongue.  
 Among the great do not act as their equal 9  
 or go on chattering when another is speaking.  
 As lightning travels ahead of thunder, 10  
 so popularity goes before a modest man.  
 Leave in good time and do not be the last to go; 11  
 go straight home without lingering.  
 There you may amuse yourself to your heart's content, 12  
 and run no risk of arrogant talk.  
 And one thing more: give praise to your Maker, 13  
 who has filled your cup with his blessings.

THE MAN WHO FEARS THE LORD will accept his discipline, 14  
 and the diligent will receive his approval.  
 The genuine student will find satisfaction in the law, 15  
 but it will prove a stumbling-block to the insincere.  
 Those who fear the Lord will discover what is right, 16  
 and will make his decrees<sup>a</sup> shine out like a lamp.  
 A sinner will not accept criticism; 17  
 he will find precedents to justify his choice.

A sensible man can always take a hint; 18  
 but an arrogant heathen does not know the meaning of diffi-  
 dence.  
 Never do anything without deliberation, 19  
 and afterwards you will have no regrets.<sup>b</sup>  
 Do not travel by a road full of obstacles 20  
 and stumble along through its boulders.  
 Do not be careless on a clear road 21

[a] Or their good conduct. [b] you...regrets: or do not change your mind.

- 22 but watch where you are going.<sup>a</sup>  
23 Whatever you are doing, rely on yourself,  
for this too is a way of keeping the commandments.  
24 To rely on the law is to heed its commandments,  
and to trust the Lord is to want for nothing.
- 33 Disaster never comes the way of the man who fears the Lord:  
in times of trial he will be rescued again and again.  
2 A wise man never hates the law,  
but the man who is insincere about it is like a boat in a squall.  
3 A sensible man trusts the law  
and finds it as reliable as the divine oracle.
- 4 Prepare what you have to say, if you want a hearing;  
marshal your learning and then give your answer.  
5 The feelings of a fool turn like a cart-wheel,  
and his thoughts spin like an axle.  
6 A sarcastic friend is like a stallion  
which neighs no matter who is on its back.
- 7 Why is one day more important than another,  
when every day in the year has its light from the sun?  
8 It was by the Lord's decision that they were distinguished;  
he appointed the various seasons and festivals:  
9 some days he made high and holy,  
and others he assigned to the common run of days.  
10 All men alike come from the ground;  
Adam was created out of earth.  
11 Yet in his great wisdom the Lord distinguished them  
and made them go various ways:  
12 some he blessed and lifted high,  
some he hallowed and brought near to himself,  
some he cursed and humbled  
and removed from their place.  
13 As clay is in the potter's hands,  
to be moulded just as he chooses,  
so are men in the hands of their Maker,  
to be dealt with as he decides.

[a] but...going: *so Heb.; Gk.* and keep an eye on your children.

Good is the opposite of evil, and life of death; 14  
yes, and the sinner is the opposite of the godly.  
Look at all the works of the Most High: 15  
they go in pairs, one the opposite of the other.

I was the last to wake up, 16  
I was like a gleaner following the grape-pickers;  
by the Lord's blessing I arrived in time  
to fill my winepress as full as any of them.  
Remember that I did not toil for myself alone, 17  
but for all who seek learning.  
Listen to me, you dignitaries; 18  
leaders of the assembly, give me your attention.

As long as you live, give no one power over yourself— 19  
son or wife, brother or friend.  
Do not give your property to another,  
in case you change your mind and want it back.  
As long as you have life and breath, 20  
never change places with anyone.  
It is better for your children to ask from you 21  
than for you to be dependent on them.  
Whatever you are doing, keep the upper hand, 22  
and allow no blot on your reputation.  
Let your life run its full course, 23  
and then, at the hour of death, distribute your estate.

Fodder, and stick, and burdens for the donkey; 24  
bread, and discipline, and work for the servant!  
Make your slave work, if you want rest for yourself; 25  
if you leave him idle, he will be looking for his liberty.  
The ox is tamed by yoke and harness, 26  
the bad servant by racks and tortures.  
Put him to work to keep him from being idle, 27  
for idleness is a great teacher of mischief.  
Set him to work, for that is what he is for, 28  
and if he disobeys you, load him with fetters.

- 29 Do not be too exacting towards anyone  
or do anything contrary to justice.
- 30 If you have a servant, treat him as an equal,  
because you bought him with blood.
- 31 If you have a servant, treat him like a brother;  
you will need him as much as you need yourself.  
If you ill-treat him and he takes to his heels,  
where will you go to look for him?
- 34 Vain hopes delude the senseless,  
and dreams give wings to a fool's fancy.
- 2 It is like clutching a shadow, or chasing the wind,  
to take notice of dreams.
- 3 What you see in a dream is nothing but a reflection,  
like the image of a face in a mirror.
- 4 Purity cannot come out of filth;  
how then can truth issue from falsehood?
- 5 Divination, omens, and dreams are all futile,  
mere fantasies, like those of a woman in labour.
- 6 Unless they are sent by intervention from the Most High,  
pay no attention to them.
- 7 Dreams have led many astray  
and ruined those who built their hopes on them.
- 8 Such delusions can add nothing to the completeness of the law;  
the wisdom spoken by the faithful is complete in itself.
- 9 An educated man knows many things,  
and a man of experience understands what he is talking about.
- 10 An inexperienced man knows little,  
but a man who travels grows in ability.
- 11 I have seen many things in the course of my travels,  
and understand more than I can tell.
- 12 I have often been in deadly danger  
and escaped, thanks to the experience I had gained.

*True piety and the mercy of God*

THOSE WHO FEAR the Lord shall live,	13
for their trust is in one who can keep them safe.	
The man who fears the Lord will have nothing else to fear;	14
he will never be a coward, because his trust is in the Lord.	
How blest is the man who fears the Lord!	15
He knows where to look for support.	
The Lord keeps watch over those who love him,	16
their strong shield and firm support,	
a shelter from scorching wind and midday heat,	
a safeguard against stumbles and falls.	
He raises the spirits and makes the eyes sparkle,	17
giving health, and life, and blessing.	
A sacrifice derived from ill-gotten gains is contaminated,	18
a lawless mockery that cannot win approval.	
The Most High is not pleased with the offering of the godless,	19
nor do endless sacrifices win his forgiveness.	
To offer a sacrifice from the possessions of the poor	20
is like killing a son before his father's eyes.	
Bread is life to the destitute,	21
and it is murder to deprive them of it.	
To rob your neighbour of his livelihood is to kill him,	22
and the man who cheats a worker of his wages sheds blood.	
When one builds and another pulls down,	23
what have they gained except hard work?	
When one prays and another curses,	24
which is the Lord to listen to?	
Wash after touching a corpse and then touch it again,	25
and what have you gained by your washing?	
So it is with the man who fasts for his sins	26
and goes and does the same again;	
who will listen to his prayer?	
what has he gained by his penance?	

- 35 Keeping the law is worth many offerings;  
to heed the commandments is to sacrifice a thank-offering.
- 2 A kindness repaid is an offering of flour,  
and to give alms is a praise-offering.
- 3 The way to please the Lord is to renounce evil;  
and to renounce wrongdoing is to make atonement.
- 4 Yet do not appear before the Lord empty-handed;  
5 perform these sacrifices because they are commanded.
- 6 When the just man brings his offering of fat to the altar,  
its fragrance rises to the presence of the Most High.
- 7 The just man's sacrifice is acceptable;  
it will never be forgotten.
- 8 Be generous in your worship of the Lord  
and present the firstfruits of your labour in full measure.
- 9 Give all your gifts cheerfully  
and be glad to dedicate your tithe.
- 10 Give to the Most High as he has given to you,  
as generously as you can afford.
- 11 For the Lord always repays;  
you will be repaid seven times over.
- 12 Do not offer him a bribe, for he will not accept it,  
and do not rely on a dishonest sacrifice;  
for the Lord is a judge  
who knows no partiality.
- 13 He has no favourites at the poor man's expense,  
but listens to his prayer when he is wronged.
- 14 He never ignores the appeal of the orphan  
or the widow when she pours out her complaint.
- 15 How the tears run down the widow's cheeks,  
and her cries accuse the man who caused them!
- 16 To be accepted a man must serve the Lord as he requires  
and then his prayer will reach the clouds.
- 17 The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds,  
but he is not consoled until it reaches its destination.  
He does not desist until the Most High intervenes,  
gives the just their rights, and sees justice done.
- 18 The Lord will not be slow,  
neither will he be patient with the wicked,



until he crushes the sinews of the merciless  
 and sends retribution on the heathen;  
 until he blots out the insolent, one and all,  
 and breaks the power of the unjust;  
 until he gives all men their deserts, 19  
 judging their actions by their intentions;  
 until he gives his people their rights  
 and gladdens them with his mercy.  
 His mercy is as timely in days of trouble 20  
 as rain-clouds in days of drought.

HAVE PITY ON US, O LORD, thou God of all; look down, 36  
 and send thy terror upon all nations. 2  
 Raise thy hand against the heathen, 3  
 and let them see thy power.  
 As they have seen thy holiness displayed among us, 4  
 so let us see thy greatness displayed among them.  
 Let them learn, as we also have learned, 5  
 that there is no God but only thou, O Lord.  
 Renew thy signs, repeat thy miracles, 6  
 win glory for thy hand, for thy right arm.  
 Rouse thy wrath, pour out thy fury, 7  
 destroy the adversary, wipe out the enemy.  
 Remember the day thou hast appointed and hasten it,<sup>a</sup> 8  
 and give men cause to recount thy wonders.  
 Let fiery anger devour the survivors, 9  
 and let the oppressors of thy people meet their doom.  
 Crush the heads of hostile princes, 10  
 who say, 'There is no one to match us.'  
 Gather all the tribes of Jacob, 11  
 and grant them their inheritance,<sup>b</sup> as thou didst long ago.  
 Have pity, O Lord, on the people called by thy name, 12  
 Israel, whom thou hast named thy first-born.  
 Show mercy to the city of thy sanctuary, 13  
 Jerusalem, the city of thy rest.  
 Fill Zion with the praise of thy triumph; 14

[a] Remember . . . it: *some witnesses read* Hasten the day and remember thy oath.

[b] Or and take them to be thy own.

fill thy people with thy glory.

- 15 Thou didst create them at the beginning; acknowledge them now  
and fulfil the prophecies spoken in thy name.
- 16 Reward those who wait for thee;  
prove thy prophets trustworthy.
- 17 Listen, O Lord, to the prayer of thy servants,  
who claim Aaron's blessing upon thy people.  
Let all who live on earth acknowledge  
that thou art the Lord, the eternal God.

*Man in society*

- 18 **A**LL IS FOOD for the stomach,  
but one food is better than another.
- 19 As the palate identifies game by its taste,  
so the discerning mind detects lies.
- 20 A warped mind makes trouble,  
but a man of experience can pay it back.
- 21 A woman will take any man for husband,  
but a man may prefer one girl to another.
- 22 A woman's beauty makes a man happy,  
and there is nothing he desires more.
- 23 If she has a kind and gentle tongue,  
then her husband is luckier than most men.
- 24 The man who wins a wife has the beginnings of a fortune,  
a helper to match his needs and a pillar to support him.
- 25 Where there is no hedge, property is plundered;  
and where there is no wife, the wanderer sighs for a home.
- 26 Does anyone trust a roving bandit  
who swoops on town after town?  
No more will they trust a homeless man  
who lodges wherever night overtakes him.
- 37 Every friend says, 'I too am your friend';  
but some are friends in name only.
- 2 What a mortal grief it is  
when a dear friend turns into an enemy!

Oh this propensity to evil, how did it creep in 3  
to cover the earth with treachery?  
A friend may be all smiles when you are happy, 4  
but turn against you when trouble comes.  
Another shares your toil for the sake of a meal, 5  
and yet may protect you against an enemy.  
Never forget a friend 6  
or neglect him when prosperity comes your way.

Every counsellor says his own advice is best, 7  
but some have their own advantage in view.  
Beware of the man who offers advice, 8  
and find out beforehand where his interest lies.  
His advice will be weighted in his own favour  
and may tip the scales against you.  
He may say, 'Your road is clear', 9  
and stand aside to see what happens.  
Do not consult a man who is suspicious of you 10  
or reveal your intentions to those who envy you.  
Never consult a woman about her rival 11  
or a coward about war,  
a merchant about a bargain  
or a buyer about a sale,  
a skinflint about gratitude  
or a hard-hearted man about a kind action,  
an idler about work of any sort,  
a casual labourer about finishing the job,  
or a lazy servant about an exacting task—  
do not turn to them for any advice.  
Rely rather on a godfearing man 12  
whom you know to be a keeper of the commandments,  
whose interests are like your own,  
who will sympathize if you have a setback.  
But also trust your own judgement, 13  
for it is your most reliable counsellor.  
A man's own mind has sometimes a way of telling him more 14  
than seven watchmen posted high on a tower.  
But above all pray to the Most High 15  
to keep you on the straight road of truth.

- 16 Every undertaking begins in discussion,  
and consultation precedes every action.
- 17 Here you can trace the mind's variety.
- 18 Four kinds of destiny are offered to men,  
good and evil, life and death;  
and always it is the tongue that decides the issue.
- 19 A man may be clever enough to teach others  
and yet be useless to himself.
- 20 A brilliant speaker may make enemies  
and end by dying of hunger,
- 21 if the Lord has withheld the gift of popular appeal,  
because he is devoid of wisdom.
- 22 If a man is wise in the conduct of his own life,  
his good sense can be trusted when he speaks.
- 23 If a man is wise and instructs his people,  
then his good sense can be trusted.
- 24 A wise man will have praise heaped on him,  
and all who see him will count him happy.
- 25 The days of a man's life can be numbered,  
but the days of Israel are countless.
- 26 A wise man will possess the confidence of his people,  
and his name will live for ever.
- 27 MY SON, TEST YOURSELF all your life long;  
take note of what is bad for you and do not indulge in it.
- 28 For not everything is good for everyone;  
we do not all enjoy the same things.
- 29 Do not be greedy for every delicacy  
or eat without restraint.
- 30 For illness is a sure result of overeating,  
and gluttony is next door to colic.
- 31 Gluttony has been the death of many;  
be on your guard and prolong your life.
- 38 Honour the doctor for his services,  
for the Lord created him.
- 2 His skill comes from the Most High,  
and he is rewarded by kings.

The doctor's knowledge gives him high standing 3  
and wins him the admiration of the great.

The Lord has created medicines from the earth, 4  
and a sensible man will not disparage them.

Was it not a tree that sweetened water 5  
and so disclosed its properties<sup>a</sup>?

The Lord has imparted knowledge to men, 6  
that by their use of his marvels he may win praise;

by using them the doctor<sup>b</sup> relieves pain 7  
and from them the pharmacist makes up his mixture. 8

There is no end to the works of the Lord,  
who spreads health over the whole world.

My son, if you have an illness, do not neglect it, 9  
but pray to the Lord, and he will heal you.

Renounce your faults, amend your ways, 10  
and cleanse your heart from all sin.

Bring a savoury offering and bring flour for a token 11  
and pour oil on the sacrifice; be as generous as you can.<sup>c</sup>

Then call in the doctor, for the Lord created him; 12  
do not let him leave you, for you need him.

There may come a time when your recovery is in their hands; 13  
then they too will pray to the Lord 14

to give them success in relieving pain  
and finding a cure to save their patient's life.

When a man has sinned against his Maker, 15  
let him put himself in the doctor's hands.

My son, shed tears for the dead; 16  
raise a lament for your grievous loss.

Shroud his body with proper ceremony,  
and do not neglect his burial.

With bitter weeping and passionate lament 17  
make your mourning worthy of him.

Mourn for a few days as propriety demands,  
and then take comfort for your grief.

For grief may lead to death, 18

[a] Or and revealed the power of the Lord. [b] the doctor: so *Heb.*; *Gk.* he heals and...

[c] be...can: so *Heb.*; *Gk.* obscure.

and a sorrowful heart saps the strength.

- 19 When a man is taken away, suffering is over,  
but to live on in poverty goes against the grain.
- 20 Do not abandon yourself to grief;  
put it from you and think of your own end.
- 21 Never forget! there is no return;  
you cannot help him and can only injure yourself.
- 22 Remember that his fate will also be yours:  
'Mine today and yours tomorrow.'
- 23 When the dead is at rest, let his memory rest too;  
take comfort as soon as he has breathed his last.
- 24 A SCHOLAR'S WISDOM COMES of ample leisure;  
if a man is to be wise he must be relieved of other tasks.
- 25 How can a man become wise who guides the plough,  
whose pride is in wielding his goad,  
who is absorbed in the task of driving oxen,  
and talks only about cattle?
- 26 He concentrates on ploughing his furrows,  
and works late to give the heifers their fodder.
- 27 So it is with every craftsman or designer  
who works by night as well as by day,  
such as those who make engravings on signets,  
and patiently vary the design;  
they concentrate on making an exact representation,  
and sit up late to finish their task.
- 28 So it is with the smith, sitting by his anvil,  
intent on his iron-work.  
The smoke of the fire shrivels his flesh,  
as he wrestles in the heat of the furnace.  
The hammer rings again and again in his ears,  
and his eyes are on the pattern he is copying.  
He concentrates on completing the task,  
and stays up late to give it a perfect finish.
- 29 So it is with the potter, sitting at his work,  
turning the wheel with his feet,  
always engrossed in the task  
of making up his tally;

he moulds the clay with his arm, 30  
crouching forward to apply his strength.  
He concentrates on finishing the glazing,  
and stays awake to clean out the furnace.

All these rely on their hands, 31  
and each is skilful at his own craft.  
Without them a city would have no inhabitants; 32  
no settlers or travellers would come to it.  
Yet they are not in demand at public discussions 33  
or prominent in the assembly.  
They do not sit on the judge's bench  
or understand the decisions of the courts.  
They cannot expound moral or legal principles  
and are not ready with maxims.  
But they maintain the fabric of this world, 34  
and their prayers are about their daily work.<sup>a</sup>

How different it is with the man who devotes himself 39  
to studying the law of the Most High,  
who investigates all the wisdom of the past,  
and spends his time studying the prophecies!  
He preserves the sayings of famous men 2  
and penetrates the intricacies of parables.  
He investigates the hidden meaning of proverbs 3  
and knows his way among riddles.  
The great avail themselves of his services, 4  
and he is seen in the presence of rulers.  
He travels in foreign countries  
and learns at first hand the good or evil of man's lot.  
He makes a point of rising early 5  
to pray to the Lord, his Maker,  
and prays aloud to the Most High,  
asking pardon for his sins.  
If it is the will of the great Lord, 6  
he will be filled with a spirit of intelligence;  
then he will pour forth wise sayings of his own  
and give thanks to the Lord in prayer.

[<sup>a</sup>] Or and their daily work is their prayer.

- 7 He will have sound advice and knowledge to offer,  
and his thoughts will dwell on the mysteries he has studied.
- 8 He will disclose what he has learnt from his own education,  
and will take pride in the law of the Lord's covenant.
- 9 Many will praise his intelligence;  
it will never sink into oblivion.  
The memory of him will not die  
but will live on from generation to generation;
- 10 the nations will talk of his wisdom,  
and his praises will be sung in the assembly.
- 11 If he lives long, he will leave a name in a thousand,  
and if he goes to his rest, his reputation is secure.<sup>a</sup>

- 12 I HAVE STILL MORE in my mind to express;  
I am full like the moon at mid-month.
- 13 Listen to me, my devout sons, and blossom  
like a rose planted by a stream.
- 14 Spread your fragrance like incense,  
and bloom like a lily.  
Scatter your fragrance; lift your voices in song,  
praising the Lord for all his works.
- 15 Ascribe majesty to his name  
and give thanks to him with praise,  
with songs on your lips, and with harps;  
let these be your words of thanksgiving:
- 16 'All that the Lord has made is very good;  
all that he commands will happen in due time.'
- 17 No one should ask, 'What is this?' or 'Why is that?'  
At the proper time all such questions will be answered.  
When he spoke the water stood up like a heap,  
and his word created reservoirs for it.
- 18 When he commands, his purpose is fulfilled,  
and no one can thwart his saving power.
- 19 He sees the deeds of all mankind;  
there is no hiding from his gaze.
- 20 From the beginning to the end of time he keeps watch,  
and nothing is too marvellous for him.

[a] his reputation is secure: *possible reading*; *Gk. obscure*.



No one should ask, 'What is this?' or 'Why is that?' 21  
Everything has been created for its own purpose.  
His blessing is like a river in flood 22  
which inundates the parched ground.  
But the doom he assigns the heathen is his wrath, 23  
as when he turned a watered plain into a salt desert.  
For the devout his paths are straight, 24  
but full of pitfalls for the wicked.  
From the beginning good things were created for the good, 25  
and evils for sinners.  
The chief necessities of human life 26  
are water, fire, iron, and salt,  
flour, honey, and milk,  
the juice of the grape, oil, and clothing.  
All these are good for the godfearing, 27  
but turn to evil for sinners.

There are winds created to be agents of retribution, 28  
with great whips to give play to their fury;  
on the day of reckoning, they exert their force  
and give full vent to the anger of their Maker.  
Fire and hail, famine and deadly disease, 29  
all these were created for retribution;  
beasts of prey, scorpions and vipers, 30  
and the avenging sword that destroys the wicked.  
They delight in carrying out his orders, 31  
always standing ready for his service on the earth;  
and when their time comes, they never disobey.

I have been convinced of all this from the beginning; 32  
I have thought it over and left it in writing:  
all the works of the Lord are good, 33  
and he supplies every need as it occurs.  
No one should say, 'This is less good than that', 34  
for all things prove good at their proper time.  
Come then, sing with heart and voice, 35  
and praise the name of the Lord.

- 40 HARD WORK IS THE LOT of every man,  
and a heavy yoke is laid on the sons of Adam,  
from the day when they come from their mothers' womb  
until the day of their return to the mother of all;  
2 troubled thoughts and fears are theirs,  
and anxious expectation of the day of their death.  
3 Whether a man sits in royal splendour on a throne  
or grovels in dust and ashes,  
4 whether he wears the purple and a crown  
or is clothed in sackcloth,  
5 his life is nothing but anger and jealousy, worry and perplexity,  
fear of death, and guilt, and rivalry.  
Even when he goes to bed at night,  
sleep only brings to mind the same things in a new form.  
6 His rest is little or nothing;  
he begins to struggle as hard in his sleep as in the day.<sup>a</sup>  
Disturbed by nightmares,  
he fancies himself a fugitive from the battlefield;  
7 and at the moment when he reaches safety, he wakes up,  
astonished to find his fears groundless.
- 8 To all living creatures, man and beast—  
and seven times over to sinners—  
9 come death and bloodshed, quarrel and sword,  
disaster, famine, ruin, and plague.  
10 All these were created for the wicked,  
and on their account the flood happened.  
11 All that is of earth returns to earth again,  
and all that is of water finds its way back to the sea.
- 12 Bribery and injustice will all vanish,  
but good faith will last for ever.  
13 The wealth of the wicked will dry up like a torrent  
and die away like a great roll of thunder in a storm.  
14 As a generous man will have cause for rejoicing,  
so law-breakers will come to utter ruin.  
15 The shoots of an impious stock put out few branches;  
their tainted roots are planted on sheer rock.

[a] he begins...day: *possible meaning; Gk. obscure.*

The rush that grows on every river-bank 16  
is pulled up before any other grass,  
but kindness is like a luxuriant garden, 17  
and almsgiving lasts for ever.

To be employed and to be one's own master, both are sweet, 18  
but it is better still to find a treasure.  
Offspring and the founding of a city perpetuate a man's name, 19  
but better still is a perfect wife.  
Wine and music gladden the heart, 20  
but better still is the love of wisdom.  
Flute and harp make pleasant melody, 21  
but better still is a pleasant voice.  
A man likes to see grace and beauty, 22  
but better still the green shoots in a cornfield.  
A friend or companion is always welcome, 23  
but better still to be man and wife.  
Brothers and helpers are a stand-by in time of trouble, 24  
but better still is almsgiving.  
Gold and silver make a man stand firm, 25  
but better still is good advice.  
Wealth and strength make for confidence, 26  
but better still is the fear of the Lord.  
To fear the Lord is to lack nothing  
and never to be in need of support.  
The fear of the Lord is like a luxuriant garden; 27  
it shelters a man better than any riches.

My son, do not live the life of a beggar; 28  
it is better to die than to beg.  
When a man starts looking to another man's table, 29  
his existence is not worth calling life.  
It is demoralizing to live on another man's food,  
and a wise, well-disciplined man will guard against it.  
When a man has lost all shame, he speaks as if begging were sweet, 30  
but inside him there is a blazing fire.

Death, how bitter is the thought of you 41  
to a man living at ease among his possessions,

free from anxiety, prosperous in all things,  
and still vigorous enough to enjoy a good meal!

- 3 Death, how welcome is your sentence  
to a destitute man whose strength is failing,  
worn down by age and endless anxiety,  
resentful and at the end of his patience!
- 3 Do not be afraid of death's summons;  
remember those who have gone before you, and those who will come  
after.
- 4 This is the Lord's decree for all living men;  
why try to argue with the will of the Most High?  
Whether life lasts ten years, or a hundred, or a thousand,  
there will be no questions asked in the grave.
- 5 What a loathsome brood are the children of sinners,  
brought up in haunts of vice!
- 6 Their inheritance dwindles away,  
and their descendants suffer a lasting disgrace.
- 7 A godless father is blamed by his children  
for the disgrace they endure on his account.
- 8 Woe to you, godless men  
who have abandoned the law of God Most High!
- 9 When you are born, you are born to a curse,  
and when you die, a curse is your lot.
- 10 Whatever comes from earth returns to earth;  
so too the godless go from curse to ruin.
- 11 Men grieve over the death of the body,  
but sinners have no good name to survive them.
- 12 Take thought for your name, for it will outlive you  
longer than a thousand hoards of gold.
- 13 The days of a good life are numbered,  
but a good name lasts for ever.
- 14 MY CHILDREN, BE TRUE to your training and live in peace.  
Wisdom concealed and treasure hidden—  
what is the use of either?
- 15 Better a man who hides his folly  
than one who hides his wisdom!

Show deference then to my teaching:	16
shame is not always to be encouraged,	
or given unqualified approval in all circumstances.	
Be ashamed to be found guilty of fornication by your parents,	17
or of lies by a ruler or prince;	
of crime by a judge or magistrate,	18
or of a breach of the law by the assembly and people;	
of dishonesty by a partner or friend,	
or of theft by the neighbourhood;	19
be ashamed before the truth of God and his covenant.	
Be ashamed of bad manners at table,	
of giving or receiving with a sneer,	
of refusing to return a greeting,	20
or of ogling a prostitute.	
Be ashamed of turning away a relative,	21
of robbing someone of his rightful share,	
or of eyeing another man's wife.	
Be ashamed of meddling with his slave-girl,	22
and keep away from her bed.	
Be ashamed of reproaching your friends,	
or following up your charity with a lecture.	
Be ashamed of repeating what you have heard	23
and of betraying a secret.	
Then you will be showing a proper shame	24
and will be popular with everyone.	
But at other times you must not be ashamed,	42
or you will do wrong out of deference to others.	
Do not be ashamed of the law and covenant of the Most High,	2
or of justice, for fear you acquit the guilty;	
of settling accounts with a partner or a travelling-companion,	3
or of sharing an inheritance with the other heirs;	
of using accurate weights and measures,	4
or of business dealings, large or small,	
and making a profit out of trade;	5
of frequent disciplining of children,	
or of drawing blood from the back of a worthless servant.	
If your wife is untrustworthy, or where many hands are at work,	6
it is well to keep things under lock and key.	

- 7 When you make a deposit, see that it is counted and weighed,  
and when you give or receive, have it all in writing.
- 8 Do not be ashamed to correct the ignorant and foolish,  
or a greybeard guilty of fornication.  
Then you will be showing your sound upbringing  
and will win everyone's approval.
- 9 A daughter is a secret anxiety to her father,  
and the worry of her keeps him awake at night;  
when she is young, for fear she may grow too old to marry,  
and when she is married, for fear she may lose her husband's love;
- 10 when she is a virgin, for fear she may be seduced  
and become pregnant in her father's house,  
when she has a husband, for fear she may misbehave,  
and after marriage, for fear she may be barren.
- 11 Keep close watch over a headstrong daughter,  
or she may give your enemies cause to gloat,  
making you the talk of the town and a byword<sup>a</sup> among the people,  
and shaming you in the eyes of the world.
- 12 Do not let her display her beauty to any man,  
or gossip in the women's quarters.<sup>b</sup>
- 13 For out of clothes comes the moth,  
and out of woman comes woman's wickedness.
- 14 Better a man's wickedness than a woman's goodness;  
it is woman who brings shame and disgrace.

### *The wonders of creation*

- 15 **N**OW I WILL CALL to mind the works of the Lord  
and describe what I have seen;  
by the words of the Lord his works are made.
- 16 As the sun in its brilliance looks down on everything,  
so the glory of the Lord fills his creation.
- 17 Even to his angels the Lord has not given the power  
to tell the full story of his marvels,  
which the Lord Almighty has established

[a] a byword: *so Heb.; Gk. obscure.* [b] Do not...quarters: *so Heb.; Gk. obscure.*

so that the universe may stand firm in his glory. He fathoms the abyss and the heart of man, he is versed in their intricate secrets; for the Lord possesses all knowledge and observes the signs of all time. He discloses the past and the future, and uncovers the traces of the world's mysteries. No thought escapes his notice, and not a word is hidden from him. He has set in order the masterpieces of his wisdom, he who is from eternity to eternity; nothing can be added, nothing taken away, and he needs no one to give him advice. How beautiful is all that he has made, down to the smallest spark that can be seen! His works endure, all of them active for ever and all responsive to their various purposes. All things go in pairs, one the opposite of the other; he has made nothing incomplete. One thing supplements the virtues of another. Who could ever contemplate his glory enough?	18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25
What a masterpiece is the clear vault of the sky! How glorious is the spectacle of the heavens! The sun comes into view proclaiming as it rises how marvellous a thing it is, made by the Most High. At noon it parches the earth, and no one can endure its blazing heat. The stoker of a furnace works in the heat, but three times as hot is the sun scorching the hills. It breathes out fiery vapours, and its glare blinds the eyes. Great is the Lord who made it, whose word speeds it on its course.	43 2 3 5
He made the moon also to serve in its turn, a perpetual sign to mark the divisions of time. From the moon, feast-days are reckoned; it is a light that wanes as it completes its course.	6 7

- 8 The moon gives its name to the month;  
it waxes marvellously as its phases change,  
a beacon to the armies of heaven,  
shining in the vault of the sky.
- 9 The brilliant stars are the beauty of the sky,  
a glittering array in the heights of the Lord.
- 10 At the command of the Holy One they stand in their appointed place;  
they never default at their post.
- 11 Look at the rainbow and praise its Maker;  
it shines with a supreme beauty,
- 12 rounding the sky with its gleaming arc,  
a bow bent by the hands of the Most High.
- 13 His command speeds the snow-storm  
and sends the swift lightning to execute his sentence.
- 14 To that end the storehouses are opened,  
and the clouds fly out like birds.
- 15 By his mighty power the clouds are piled up  
and the hailstones broken small.
- 16-17 The crash of his thunder makes the earth writhe,  
and, when he appears, an earthquake shakes the hills.  
At his will the south wind blows,  
the squall from the north and the hurricane.  
He scatters the snow-flakes like birds alighting;  
they settle like a swarm of locusts.
- 18 The eye is dazzled by their beautiful whiteness,  
and as they fall the mind is entranced.
- 19 He spreads frost on the earth like salt,  
and icicles form like pointed stakes.
- 20 A cold blast from the north,  
and ice grows hard on the water,  
settling on every pool,  
as though the water were putting on a breastplate.
- 21 He consumes the hills, scorches the wilderness,  
and withers the grass like fire.
- 22 Cloudy weather quickly puts all to rights,  
and dew brings welcome relief after heat.



By the power of his thought he tamed the deep 23  
and planted it with islands.

Those who sail the sea tell stories of its dangers, 24  
which astonish all who hear them;

in it are strange and wonderful creatures, 25  
all kinds of living things and huge sea-monsters.

By his own action he achieves his end, 26  
and by his word all things are held together.

However much we say, we cannot exhaust our theme; 27  
to put it in a word: he is all.

Where can we find the skill to sing his praises? 28  
For he is greater than all his works.

The Lord is terrible and very great, 29  
and marvellous is his power.

Honour the Lord to the best of your ability, 30  
and he will still be high above all praise.

Summon all your strength to declare his greatness,  
and be untiring, for the most you can do will fall short.

Has anyone ever seen him, to be able to describe him? 31  
Can anyone praise him as he truly is?

We have seen but a small part of his works, 32  
and there remain many mysteries greater still.

The Lord has made everything 33  
and has given wisdom to the godly.

### *Heroes of Israel's past*

LET US NOW SING the praises of famous men, 44  
L the heroes of our nation's history,

through whom the Lord established his renown, 2  
and revealed his majesty in each succeeding age.

Some held sway over kingdoms 3  
and made themselves a name by their exploits.

Others were sage counsellors,  
who spoke out with prophetic power.

Some led the people by their counsels 4

- and by their knowledge of the nation's law;  
out of their fund of wisdom they gave instruction.
- 5 Some were composers of music or writers of poetry.  
6 Others were endowed with wealth and strength,  
living peacefully in their homes.
- 7 All these won fame in their own generation  
and were the pride of their times.
- 8 Some there are who have left a name behind them  
to be commemorated in story.
- 9 There are others who are unremembered;  
they are dead, and it is as though they had never existed,  
as though they had never been born  
or left children to succeed them.
- 10 Not so our forefathers; they were men of loyalty,  
whose good deeds have never been forgotten.
- 11 Their prosperity is handed on to their descendants,  
and their inheritance to future generations.<sup>a</sup>
- 12 Thanks to them their children are within the covenants—  
the whole race of their descendants.
- 13 Their line will endure for all time,  
and their fame will never be blotted out.
- 14 Their bodies are buried in peace,  
but their name lives for ever.
- 15 Nations will recount their wisdom,  
and God's people will sing their praises.
- 16 Enoch pleased the Lord and was carried off to heaven,  
an example of repentance to future generations.
- 17 Noah was found perfect and righteous,  
and thus he made amends in the time of retribution;  
therefore a remnant survived on the earth,  
when the flood came.
- 18 A perpetual covenant was established with him,  
that never again should all life be swept away by a flood.
- 19 Great Abraham was the father of many nations;  
no one has ever been found to equal him in fame.
- 20 He kept the law of the Most High;

[a] Their prosperity . . . generations: *probable meaning, based on other Vss.; Gk. obscure.*

he entered into covenant with him,  
setting upon his body the mark of the covenant;  
and, when he was tested, he proved faithful.  
Therefore the Lord swore an oath to him, 21  
that nations should find blessing through his descendants,  
that his family should be countless as the dust of the earth  
and be raised as high as the stars,  
and that their possessions should reach from sea to sea,  
from the Great River to the ends of the earth.

To Isaac he made the same promise 22  
for the sake of his father Abraham,  
a blessing for all mankind and a covenant;  
and so he transmitted them to Jacob. 23  
He confirmed him in the blessings he had received  
and gave him the land he was to inherit,  
dividing it into portions,  
which he allotted to the twelve tribes.

From Jacob's stock the Lord raised up a loyal servant, 45  
who won the approval of all mankind,  
beloved by God and men,  
Moses of blessed memory.

The Lord made him equal in glory to the angels 2  
and gave him power to strike terror into his enemies.

At his request he put an end to the portents, 3  
and enhanced his reputation with kings.

He gave him commandments for his people  
and showed him a vision of his own glory.  
For his loyalty and humility he consecrated him, 4  
choosing him out of all mankind.

He let him hear his voice 5  
and led him into the dark cloud.

Face to face, he gave him the commandments,  
a law that brings life and knowledge,  
so that he might teach Jacob the covenant  
and Israel his decrees.

- 6 He raised to a like holy office  
Moses' brother Aaron from the tribe of Levi.
- 7 He made a perpetual covenant with him,  
conferring on him the priesthood of the nation.  
He honoured him with splendid ornaments  
and clothed him in gorgeous vestments.
- 8 He robed him in perfect splendour  
and armed him with the emblems of power,  
the breeches, the mantle, and the tunic.
- 9 Round his robe he placed pomegranates  
and a circle of many golden bells,  
to make music as he walked,  
ringing aloud throughout the temple  
as a reminder to his people.
- 10 He gave him the sacred vestment adorned by an  
embroiderer  
with gold and violet and purple;  
the oracle of judgement with the tokens of truth;<sup>a</sup>
- 11 the scarlet thread spun with a craftsman's art;  
the precious stones, engraved like seals,  
and placed by the jeweller in a gold setting,  
with inscriptions to serve as reminders,  
one for each of the tribes of Israel;
- 12 the gold crown upon his turban,  
engraved like a seal with 'Holy to the Lord'.<sup>b</sup>  
What rich adornments to feast the eyes!  
What a miracle of art! What a proud honour!
- 13 Before him no such splendour existed,  
and no one outside his family has ever put them on,  
no one except his sons  
and his descendants in perpetuity.
- 14 Twice every day without fail  
they present his sacrifice of a whole-offering.
- 15 It was Moses who ordained him  
and anointed him with sacred oil,  
in token of the perpetual covenant made with him

[a] the oracle . . . truth: *or* the breast-piece of judgement with the Urim and Thummim (*Exodus* 28. 30). [b] *Compare Exodus* 28. 36; *literally* a seal of holiness.

and with his descendants as long as the heavens endure,  
that he should be the Lord's minister in the priestly office  
and bless his people in his name.

He chose him out of all mankind

16

to bring offerings to the Lord,  
incense and the fragrance of memorial sacrifice,  
to make atonement for the people.

He entrusted to him his commandments,  
with authority to pronounce legal decisions,  
to teach JACOB his decrees  
and enlighten Israel about his law.

17

Upstarts grew jealous of him

18

and conspired against him in the desert,  
Dathan and Abiram with their supporters  
and Korah's band in their violent anger.

The Lord saw and refused his sanction;  
he destroyed them in the heat of his wrath,  
and worked a miracle against them  
by consuming them in a blazing fire.

19

But he added fresh honours to Aaron

20

and gave him a special privilege,  
allotting to the priests the choicest firstfruits,  
to ensure that they above all should have bread in plenty.

For they eat the sacrifices of the Lord,  
which he gave to Aaron and his descendants.

21

But he was to have no inheritance in the land of his people,  
no portion allotted to him among them;  
for the Lord himself is his portion, his inheritance.

22

Phinehas son of Eleazar ranks third in renown  
for being zealous in his reverence for the Lord,  
and for standing firm with noble courage,  
when the people were in revolt;  
by so doing he made atonement for Israel.

23

Therefore a covenant was established with him,  
assuring him command of the sanctuary and of the nation,  
conferring on him and his descendants  
the high-priesthood for ever.

24

- 25 Just as a covenant was made with David son of Jesse of the tribe of  
Judah,  
that the royal succession should always pass from father to son,  
so the succession was to pass from Aaron to his descendants.
- 26 May the Lord grant you a wise mind  
to judge his people with justice,  
so that their prosperity may never vanish  
and their glory may be handed on to future generations!
- 46 Joshua son of Nun was a mighty warrior,  
who succeeded Moses in the prophetic office.  
He lived up to his name  
as a great liberator of the Lord's chosen people,  
able to take reprisals on the enemies who attacked them,  
and to put Israel in possession of their territory.
- 2 How glorious he was when he raised his hand  
and brandished his sword against cities!
- 3 Never before had a man made such a stand,  
for he was fighting the Lord's battles.
- 4 Was it not through him that the sun stood still  
and made one day as long as two?
- 5 He called on the Most High, the Mighty One,  
when the enemy was pressing him on every side,  
and the great Lord answered his prayer
- 6 with a violent storm of hail.  
He overwhelmed that nation in battle  
and crushed his assailants as they fled down the pass,  
to make the nations recognize his strength in arms  
and teach them that he fought under the very eyes of the Lord,  
for he followed the lead of the Mighty One.
- 7 In the time of Moses he had proved his loyalty,  
he and Caleb son of Jephunneh:  
they stood their ground against the whole assembly,  
restrained the people from sin,  
and silenced their wicked grumbling.
- 8 Out of six hundred thousand warriors  
these two alone escaped with their lives  
to enter the land and take possession of it,

the land flowing with milk and honey.

The Lord gave Caleb strength, 9

which still remained with him in his old age,

so that he was able to invade the hill-country

and win possession of it for his descendants.

So all Israel could see 10

how good it is to be a loyal follower of the Lord.

Then there are the judges, name after famous name, 11

all of them men who rejected idolatry

and never rebelled against the Lord:

blessings be on their memory!

May their bones send forth new life from the ground where they 12

lie!

May the fame of the honoured dead be matched by their sons!

Samuel was beloved by his Lord; 13

as prophet of the Lord he established the monarchy

and anointed rulers over his people.

As long as he dispensed justice according to the law of the Lord, 14

the Lord kept watch over Jacob.

Because of his fidelity he proved to be an accurate prophet; 15

the truth of his vision was shown by his utterances.

He called on the Mighty Lord, 16

when enemies were pressing him on every side,

and offered a sucking-lamb in sacrifice;

then the Lord thundered from heaven, 17

making his voice heard in a mighty crash,

and routed the leaders of the enemy,<sup>a</sup> 18

all the rulers of the Philistines.

Before the time came for his eternal sleep, 19

Samuel called the Lord and his anointed to witness:

'I never took any man's property,

not so much as a pair of shoes';

and no man accused him.

Even after he had gone to his rest he prophesied 20

and foretold to the king his death,

lifting up his voice in prophecy from the ground

to wipe out the people's guilt.

[a] the enemy: *so Heb.; Gk. Tyre.*

- 47 After him Nathan came forward  
to be prophet in the reign of David.
- 2 As the fat is separated from the sacrifice,  
so David was chosen out of all Israel.
- 3 He played with lions as though they were kids,  
with bears as though they were lambs.
- 4 In his youth did he not kill a giant  
and restore the honour of his people,  
when he whirled his sling with its stone  
and brought down boastful Goliath?
- 5 For he called on the Lord Most High,  
who gave strength to his right arm  
to strike down that mighty warrior  
and win victory for his people.
- 6 So they hailed him as conqueror of tens of thousands,  
they sang his praises for the blessings bestowed by the Lord,  
when he was offered the royal diadem.
- 7 For he subdued their enemies on every side  
and crushed the resistance of the Philistines,  
whose power remains broken to this day.
- 8 In all he did he gave thanks,  
ascribing glory to the Holy One, the Most High.  
With his whole heart he sang hymns of praise,  
to show his love for his Maker.
- 9 He appointed musicians to stand before the altar  
and sing sweet music to the harp.
- 10 So he gave splendour to the festivals  
and fixed for all time the round of sacred seasons,  
when men praise the holy name of the Lord  
and the sanctuary resounds from morning to night.
- 11 The Lord pardoned his sins  
and endowed him with great power for ever:  
he gave him a covenant of kingship  
and the glorious throne of Israel.
- 12 He was succeeded by a wise son, Solomon,  
who, thanks to his father David, lived in spacious days.
- 13 He reigned in an age of peace,  
because God made all his frontiers quiet,



and so he was able to build a house in God's honour,  
a sanctuary founded to last for ever.

How wise you were, Solomon, in your youth!

14

Your mind was like a brimming river;

your influence spread throughout the world,

15

which you filled with your proverbs and riddles.

Your fame reached to distant islands,

16

and you were beloved for your peaceful reign.

Your songs, your proverbs, your parables,

17

and the answers you gave were the admiration of the world.

In the name of the Lord God,

18

who is known as the God of Israel,

you amassed gold and silver

as though they were tin and lead.

But you took women to lie at your side

19

and gave yourself up to their control.

You stained your reputation

20

and tainted your line.

You brought retribution on your children

and made them grieve over your folly,

because it divided the sovereignty

21

and produced out of Ephraim a rebel kingdom.

But the Lord never ceases to be merciful;

22

he does not destroy what he himself has made;

he will not wipe out the children of his chosen servant

or cut short the line of the man who has loved him.

So he granted a remnant to Jacob

and let one scion of David survive.

So Solomon died like his forefathers

23

and left one of his sons to succeed him,

a man of weak intelligence, the fool of the nation,

Rehoboam, whose policy drove the people to revolt.

Then Jeroboam son of Nebat led Israel into sin

and started Ephraim on its wicked course.

Their sins increased beyond measure,

24

until they were driven into exile from their native land;

for they had explored every kind of wickedness,

25

until retribution came upon them.

- 48 Then Elijah appeared, a prophet like fire,  
whose word flamed like a torch.
- 2 He brought famine upon them,  
and his zeal made their numbers small.
- 3 By the word of the Lord he shut up the sky  
and three times called down fire.
- 4 How glorious you were, Elijah, in your miracles!  
Who else can boast such deeds?
- 5 You raised a corpse from death  
and from the grave, by the word of the Most High.
- 6 You sent kings and famous men  
from their sick-beds down to their deaths.
- 7 You heard a denunciation at Sinai,  
a sentence of doom at Horeb.
- 8 So you anointed kings for vengeance,  
and prophets to succeed you.
- 9 You were taken up to heaven in a fiery whirlwind,  
in a chariot drawn by horses of fire.
- 10 It is written that you are to come at the appointed time with warnings,  
to allay the divine wrath before its final fury,  
to reconcile father and son,  
and to restore the tribes of Jacob.
- 11 Happy are those who saw you  
and were honoured with your love! <sup>a</sup>
- 12 When Elijah had vanished in a whirlwind,  
Elisha was filled with his spirit.  
Throughout his life no ruler made him tremble;  
no one could make him subservient.
- 13 Nothing was too difficult for him;  
even in the grave his body kept its prophetic power.
- 14 In life he worked miracles,  
and in death his deeds were marvellous.
- 15 In spite of all this the people did not repent  
or renounce their sins,  
until they were carried off as plunder from their land  
and scattered over the whole earth.

[a] honoured . . . love: *probable meaning*; *Gk. adds* for we also shall certainly live.

Only a tiny nation was left,  
with a ruler from the house of David;  
and of these some did what was pleasing to the Lord, 16  
but others heaped sin upon sin.

Hezekiah fortified his city, 17  
bringing water within its walls;  
he drilled through the rock with tools of iron  
and made cisterns for the water.

In his reign Sennacherib invaded the country. 18  
He sent Rab-shakeh from Lachish,<sup>a</sup>  
who made threats against Zion  
and grew arrogant in his boasting.

Then they were unnerved in heart and hand; 19  
they suffered the anguish of a woman in labour.  
So they called on the merciful Lord, 20  
spreading out their hands in supplication to him.

The Holy One quickly answered their prayer from heaven  
by sending Isaiah to the rescue;  
he struck down the Assyrian camp, 21  
and his angel wiped them out.

For Hezekiah did what was pleasing to the Lord, 22  
and kept firmly to the ways of his ancestor David,  
as he was instructed by Isaiah,  
the great prophet whose vision could be trusted.

In his time the sun went back, 23  
and he added many years to the king's life.

With inspired power he saw the future 24  
and comforted the mourners in Zion.

He revealed things to come before they happened, 25  
the secrets of the future to the end of time.

The memory of Josiah is fragrant as incense 49  
blended by the skill of the perfumer,  
sweet as honey to every palate  
or as music at a banquet.

He did what was right: he reformed the nation 2  
and rooted out their loathsome and lawless practices.

[a] from Lachish: *other witnesses read* and went away.

- 3 He was whole-heartedly loyal to the Lord  
and in lawless times made godliness prevail.
- 4 Except David, Hezekiah, and Josiah,  
all were guilty of wrongdoing,  
for they deserted the law of the Most High;  
and so the royal line of Judah came to an end.
- 5 They surrendered their power to others  
and their glory to a foreign nation,
- 6 who set fire to the chosen city, the city of the sanctuary,  
and left its streets deserted, as Jeremiah prophesied;
- 7 for they had ill-treated him,  
a prophet consecrated even before his birth  
to uproot, to destroy, and to demolish,  
but also to build and to plant.
- 8 Ezekiel had a vision of the Glory,  
which was revealed enthroned on the chariot of the cherubim.
- 9 The Lord remembered his enemies and sent a storm,  
but he did good to those who kept to the straight path.
- 10 May the bones of the twelve prophets also  
send forth new life from the ground where they lie!  
For they put new heart into Jacob,  
and rescued the people by their confident hope.
- 11 How can we tell the greatness of Zerubbabel,  
who was like a signet-ring on the Lord's right hand?
- 12 With him was Joshua son of Jehozadak;  
in their days they built the house,  
raising a holy temple to the Lord,  
destined for eternal glory.
- 13 Great is the memory of Nehemiah,  
who raised our fallen walls,  
constructed gates and bars,  
and rebuilt our ruined homes.
- 14 No one on earth has been created to equal Enoch,  
for he was taken up from the earth.
- 15 No man has been born to be Joseph's peer,

the ruler of his brothers and the strength of his people;  
and the Lord kept watch over his body.

Shem and Seth were given distinction among men, 16  
but Adam holds pre-eminence over all creation.

It was the high priest Simon son of Onias 50  
in whose lifetime the house was repaired,  
in whose days the temple was fortified.

He laid the foundation for the high double wall, 2  
the high retaining wall of the temple precinct.

In his day they dug<sup>a</sup> the reservoir, 3  
a cistern broad as the sea.

He applied his mind to protecting his people from ruin 4  
and strengthened the city against siege.

How glorious he was, surrounded by the people, 5  
when he came from behind the temple curtain!

He was like the morning star appearing through the clouds 6  
or the moon at the full;

like the sun shining on the temple of the Most High 7  
or the light of the rainbow on the gleaming clouds;

like a rose in spring 8  
or lilies by a fountain of water;

like a green shoot upon Lebanon on a summer's day 9  
or burning incense in the censer;

like a cup of beaten gold, 10  
decorated with every kind of precious stone;

like an olive-tree laden with fruit 10  
or a cypress with its top in the clouds.

When he put on his gorgeous vestments, 11  
robed himself in perfect splendour,

and went up to the holy altar, 11  
he added lustre to the court of the sanctuary.

When the priests were handing him the portions of the sacrifice, 12  
as he stood by the altar hearth

with his brothers round him like a garland, 12  
he was like a young cedar of Lebanon

in the midst of a circle of palms. 13  
All the sons of Aaron in their magnificence

[a] they dug: so *Heb.*; *Gk. obscure.*

stood with the Lord's offering in their hands  
before the whole congregation of Israel.

- 14 To complete the ceremonies at the altar  
and adorn the offering of the Most High, the Almighty,  
15 he held out his hand for the libation cup  
and poured out the blood of the grape,  
poured its fragrance at the foot of the altar  
to the Most High, the King of all.  
16 Then the sons of Aaron shouted  
and blew their trumpets of beaten silver;  
they sounded a mighty fanfare  
as a reminder before the Lord.  
17 Instantly the people as one man fell on their faces  
to worship the Lord their God, the Almighty, the Most High.  
18 Then the choir broke into praise,  
in the full sweet strains of resounding song,  
19 while the people of the Most High  
were making their petitions to the merciful Lord,  
until the liturgy of the Lord was finished  
and the ritual complete.  
20 Then Simon came down and raised his hands  
over the whole congregation of Israel,  
to pronounce the Lord's blessing,  
proud to take his name on his lips;  
21 and a second time they bowed in worship  
to receive the blessing from the Most High.
- 22 COME THEN, PRAISE the God of the universe,  
who everywhere works great wonders,  
who from our birth ennobles our life<sup>a</sup>  
and deals with us in mercy.  
23 May he grant us a joyful heart,  
and in our time send Israel lasting peace.  
24 May he confirm his mercy towards us,  
and in his own good time grant us deliverance.

[a] ennobles our life: *or* brings us up.

Two nations I detest, 25  
and a third is no nation at all:  
the inhabitants of Mount Seir,<sup>a</sup> the Philistines, 26  
and the senseless folk that live at Shechem.

In this book I have written 27  
lessons of good sense and understanding,  
I, Jesus son of Sirach,<sup>b</sup> of Jerusalem,  
whose mind was a fountain of wisdom.  
Happy the man who occupies himself with these lessons, 28  
who lays them to heart and grows wise!  
If he lives by them, he will be equal to anything, 29  
with the light of the Lord shining on his path.

### *Epilogue*

I THANK THEE, my Lord and King, 51  
I praise thee, my God and Saviour,  
I give thee thanks,  
because thou hast been my protector and helper, 2  
rescuing me from death,  
from the trap laid by a slanderous tongue  
and from lips that utter lies.  
In the face of my assailants thou didst come to my help;  
in the fullness of thy mercy and glory thou didst rescue me 3  
from grinding teeth which waited to devour me,  
from hands that threatened my life,  
from the many troubles I endured,  
from the choking fire around me, 4  
from the flames I had not kindled,  
from the deep recesses of the grave, 5  
from the foul tongue and its lies—  
a wicked slander spoken in the king's presence. 6  
I came near to death;  
I was on the brink of the grave.

[a] Mount Seir: *so Heb.; Gk.* the mountain of Samaria. [b] Sirach: *some witnesses read* Sirach Eleazar.

- 7 They surrounded me on every side,  
and there was no one to help me.  
I looked for human aid and there was none.
- 8 Then I remembered thy mercy, Lord,  
thy deeds in bygone days;  
thou dost deliver those who patiently trust thee  
and free them from the power of their enemies.
- 9 So I sent up a prayer from the earth  
and begged for rescue from death.
- 10 I cried, 'Lord, thou art my Father;<sup>a</sup>  
do not desert me in time of trouble,  
when I am helpless in the face of arrogance.
- 11 I will praise thee continually,  
I will sing hymns of thanksgiving.'  
And my prayer was granted;
- 12 for thou didst save me from death  
and rescue me from my desperate plight.  
Therefore I will thank thee and praise thee  
and bless thee, O Lord.
- 13 When I was still young, before I set out on my travels,  
I asked openly for wisdom in my prayers.
- 14 In the forecourt of the sanctuary I laid claim to her,  
and I shall seek her out to the end.
- 15 From the first blossom to the ripening of the grape  
she has been the delight of my heart.  
From my youth my steps have followed her without swerving.
- 16 I had hardly begun to listen when I was rewarded,  
and I gained for myself much instruction.
- 17 I made progress in my studies;  
all honour to him who gives me wisdom!
- 18 I determined to practise what I had learnt;  
I pursued goodness, and shall never regret it.
- 19 I strove for wisdom with all my might,  
and was scrupulous in whatever I did.  
I spread out my hands to heaven above,  
deploring my ignorance;
- 20 I set my heart on possessing wisdom,

[a] thou . . . Father: *so Heb.; Gk. Father of my lord.*



and by keeping myself pure I found her.  
With her I gained understanding from the first;  
therefore I shall never be at a loss.  
Because I passionately yearned to discover her, 21  
I won a noble prize.  
The Lord gave me eloquence as my reward, 22  
and with it I will praise him.

Come to me, you who need instruction, 23  
and lodge in my house of learning.  
Why do you admit to a lack of these things, 24  
yet leave your great thirst unslaked?  
I have made my proclamation: 25  
'Buy for yourselves without money,  
bend your neck to the yoke, 26  
be ready to accept discipline;  
you need not go far to find it.'  
See for yourselves how little were my labours 27  
compared with the great peace I have found.  
Your share of instruction may cost you a large sum of silver, 28  
but it will bring you a large return in gold.  
May you take delight in the Lord's mercy 29  
and never be ashamed of praising him.  
Do your duty in good time, 30  
and in his own time he will reward you.

# BARUCH

*A message to a conquered people*

- 1 **T**HIS IS THE BOOK of Baruch, son of Neriah, son of  
Mahseiah, son of Zedekiah, son of Hasadiah, son of Hilkiah,  
2 written in Babylon, on the seventh day of the month, in the  
fifth year after the Chaldaeans had captured and burnt Jerusalem.  
3 Baruch read the book aloud to Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim, king of  
4 Judah, and to all the people who had assembled to hear it: the nobles,  
the princes of the royal blood, the elders, and the whole community,  
high and low—in short, all who lived in Babylon, by the river Soud.  
5, 6 Then they prayed to the Lord with tears and fasting; and each of  
7 them collected as much money as he could, and they sent it to Jeru-  
salem, to Jehoiakim the high priest, son of Hilkiah, son of Shallum,  
8 and to the priests and all the people who were with him. This was  
the time when he took the vessels belonging to the house of the Lord  
which had been looted from the temple, and returned them to the  
land of Judah, on the tenth of the month Sivan. These were the silver  
9 vessels made by Zedekiah son of Josiah, king of Judah, after Nebu-  
chadnezzar king of Babylon had deported Jeconiah, the rulers, the  
captives, the nobles, and the common people from Jerusalem and  
taken them to Babylon.  
10 They said: We are sending you money to buy whole-offerings,  
sin-offerings, and incense; provide a grain-offering, and offer them  
11 all upon the altar of the Lord our God; and pray for Nebuchadnezzar  
king of Babylon, and for his son Belshazzar, that their life on earth  
12 may last as long as the heavens. So the Lord will give us strength,  
and light to walk by, and we shall live under the protection of Nebu-  
chadnezzar king of Babylon, and of Belshazzar his son; we shall give  
13 them long service and gain their favour. Pray also for us to the Lord  
our God, because we have sinned against him, and to this day the  
Lord's anger and wrath have not been averted from us.  
14 You are to read this book that we are sending you, and make your  
confession in the house of the Lord on the feast day and during the  
15 festal season, and say: The Lord our God is in the right; but on us  
the shame rests to this very day—on the men of Judah, the citizens of

Jerusalem, on our kings and rulers, on our priests and prophets, and 16  
on our fathers. We have sinned against the Lord and disobeyed him; 17, 18  
we did not listen to the Lord our God or follow the precepts he gave  
us. From the day when the Lord brought our fathers out of Egypt 19  
until now, we have been disobedient to the Lord our God and have  
heedlessly disregarded his voice. So here we are today in the grip of 20  
adversity, suffering under the curse which the Lord commanded his  
servant Moses to pronounce, when he led our fathers out of Egypt to  
give us a land flowing with milk and honey. Moreover we refused to 21  
hear the Lord our God speaking in all the words of the prophets he  
sent us; we went our own way, each following the promptings of his 22  
own wicked heart, serving other gods, doing what was evil in the  
sight of the Lord our God.

So the Lord made good the warning he had given to us, to our 2  
magistrates in Israel, our kings and our rulers, and the men of Israel  
and Judah. Nowhere under heaven have such deeds been done as 2  
were done in Jerusalem, thus fulfilling what was foretold in the law of  
Moses, that we should eat the flesh of our children, one his own son 3  
and another his own daughter. The Lord made our nation subject to 4  
all the kingdoms round us, our land a waste, our name a byword to  
all the nations among whom he had scattered our people. Instead of 5  
rising to the top, they sank to the bottom, because we sinned against  
the Lord our God and did not listen to his voice. The Lord our God 6  
is in the right; but on us and our fathers the shame rests to this very  
day. All these evils of which the Lord warned us have come about. 7  
Yet we did not entreat the Lord that we might all turn away from the 8  
thoughts of our wicked hearts. The Lord kept strict watch and 9  
brought these evils on our heads, because he is just; he laid all these  
commandments upon us, but we did not listen to his voice or follow 10  
the precepts which he gave us.

And now, Lord God of Israel, who didst bring thy people out of 11  
Egypt with a mighty hand, with signs and portents, with great power  
and arm uplifted, winning for thyself a renown that lives on to this  
day: by our sin, our godlessness, and our injustice we have broken all 12  
thy commandments, O Lord our God. Be angry with us no longer, 13  
for we are left a mere handful among the heathen where thou hast  
scattered us. Listen, O Lord, to our prayer and our entreaty, deliver 14  
us for thy own sake, and grant us favour with those who have  
taken us into exile, so that the whole earth may know that thou art 15

the Lord our God, who hast named Israel and his posterity as thy own.

16 O Lord, look down from thy holy dwelling and think of us. Turn  
17 thy ear to us, Lord, and hear us; open thine eyes and see. The dead  
are in their graves, the breath is gone from their bodies; it is not they  
18 who can sing the Lord's praises or applaud his justice; it is living  
men, mourning their fall from greatness, walking the earth bent and  
feeble, blind and famished—it is these who will sing thy praises,  
O Lord, and applaud thy justice.

19 Not for any just deeds of our fathers and our kings do we lay  
20 before thee our plea for pity, O Lord our God. Thou hast vented  
upon us that wrath and anger of which thou didst warn us through  
21 thy servants the prophets who said: 'These are the words of the  
Lord: Bow your shoulders and serve the king of Babylon and you  
22 shall remain in the land that I gave to your fathers; but if you do not  
23 listen to the Lord and serve the king of Babylon, then I will banish  
from Jerusalem and the cities of Judah all sounds of joy and merri-  
ment, the voice of bride and bridegroom; the whole land shall lie  
24 waste and uninhabited.' But we did not obey thy command to serve  
the king of Babylon. And so thou didst make good the warning given  
through thy servants the prophets: the bones of our kings and of our  
25 fathers have been taken from their resting-place; and there they lie,  
exposed to the heat by day and the frost by night. They died a painful  
26 death by famine, sword, and disease.<sup>a</sup> And because of the wickedness  
of Israel and Judah the house that was named as thine has become  
what it is today.

27 Yet thou hast shown us, O Lord our God, all thy wonted for-  
28 bearance and great mercy. For this is what thou didst promise  
through thy servant Moses, on the day thou didst command him to  
29 write thy law in the presence of the Israelites: 'If you will not listen  
to my voice, this great swarming multitude will be reduced to a tiny  
30 remnant among the heathen where I will scatter them. I know they  
will not hear me, this stubborn people, but in the land of their exile  
31 they will come to their senses and know that I am the Lord their  
32 God. I will give them a mind to understand and ears to hear. Then  
they will praise me in the land of their exile and will turn their  
33 thoughts to me; they will repent of their stubbornness and their  
wicked deeds, for they will recall how their fathers sinned against the

[a] disease: *probable meaning (compare Jeremiah 32. 36); Gk. obscure.*

Lord. Then I will restore them to the land that I swore to give to 34  
their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and they shall rule over  
it. And I will increase their number: they shall never dwindle away.  
I will enter into an eternal covenant with them, that I will become 35  
their God and they shall become my people. Never again will I  
remove my people Israel from the land that I have given them.'

O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, the soul in anguish and the 3  
fainting spirit cry out to thee. Listen, Lord, and have mercy, for we 2  
have sinned against thee. Thou art enthroned for ever; we are for 3  
ever passing away. Now, Almighty Lord, God of Israel, hear the 4  
prayer of Israel's dead and of the sons of those who sinned against  
thee. They did not heed the voice of their God, and so we are in the  
grip of adversity. Do not recall the misdeeds of our fathers, but 5  
remember now thy power and thy name, for thou art the Lord our 6  
God, and we will praise thee, O Lord. It is for this that thou hast put 7  
the fear of thee in our hearts, to make us call upon thy name. And  
we will praise thee in our exile, for we have put away from us all the  
wrongdoing of our fathers who sinned against thee. Today we are in 8  
exile; thou hast scattered us and made us a byword and a curse, to be  
punished for all the sins of our fathers, who rebelled against the  
Lord our God.

LISTEN, ISRAEL, to the commandments of life; hear, and learn 9  
wisdom. Why is it, Israel, that you are in your enemies' country, 10  
that you have grown old in an alien land? Why have you shared the  
defilement of the dead and been numbered with those that lie in the 11  
grave? It is because you have forsaken the fountain of wisdom. If 12, 13  
you had walked in the way of God, you would have lived in peace for  
ever. Where is understanding, where is strength, where is intelli- 14  
gence? Learn that, and then you will know where to find life and light  
to walk by, long life and peace. Has any man discovered the dwelling- 15  
place of wisdom or entered her storehouse? Where are the rulers of 16  
the nations now? Where are those who have hunted wild beasts or 17  
the birds of the air for sport? Where are those who have hoarded the  
silver and gold men trust in, never satisfied with their gains? Where 18  
are the silversmiths with their patient skill and the secrets of their  
craft? They have all vanished and gone down to the grave, and others 19  
have risen to take their place. A younger generation saw the light 20  
of day and dwelt in the land. But they did not learn the way of

21 knowledge, or discover its paths; they did not lay hold of it; their  
22 sons went far astray. Wisdom was not heard of in Canaan, nor seen  
23 in Teman. The sons of Hagar who sought for understanding on  
earth, the merchants of Merran and Teman, the myth-makers, the  
seekers after knowledge, none of them discovered the way of wisdom,  
or remembered her paths.

24 How great, O Israel, is God's dwelling-place, how vast the extent  
25 of his domain! Great it is, and boundless, lofty, and immeasurable.  
26 There in ancient time the giants were born, a famous race, great in  
27 stature, skilled in war. But these men were not chosen by God, nor  
28 shown the way of knowledge. So their race died out because they  
29 had no understanding; they lacked the wit to survive. Has any man  
gone up to heaven to gain wisdom and brought her down from the  
30 clouds? Has any man crossed the sea to find her or bought her for  
31 fine gold? No one can know the path or conceive the way that will  
32 lead to her. Only the One who knows all things knows her: his  
understanding discovered her. He who established the earth for all  
33 time filled it with four-footed beasts. He sends forth the light, and it  
34 goes on its way; he called it, it feared him and obeyed. The stars  
shone at their appointed stations and rejoiced; he called them and  
they answered, 'We are here!' Joyfully they shone for their Maker.  
35, 36 This is our God; there is none to compare with him. The whole way  
of knowledge he found out and gave to Jacob his servant, and to  
37 Israel, whom he loved. Thereupon wisdom appeared on earth and  
4 lived among men. She is the book of the commandments of God, the  
law that stands for ever. All who hold fast to her shall live, but those  
2 who forsake her shall die. Return, Jacob, and lay hold of her; set  
3 your course towards her radiance, and face her beacon light. Do not  
give up your glory to another or your privileges to an alien people.  
4 Happy are we, Israel, because we know what is pleasing to God!  
5, 6 Take heart, my people, you who keep Israel's name alive. You  
were sold to the heathen, but not to be destroyed; it was because you  
7 roused God's anger that you were handed over to your enemies. You  
provoked your Maker by sacrificing to demons and to that which is  
8 not God. You forgot the Everlasting God who nurtured you, and you  
9 grieved Jerusalem who fostered you; for she saw how God's anger  
had come upon you, and she said: Listen, you neighbours of Zion,  
10 God has brought great grief upon me. I have seen the captivity of  
my sons and daughters which the Everlasting has inflicted upon

them; I nursed them in delight, but with tears and mourning I saw 11  
them go. Let no one exult over me in my widowhood, bereaved of so 12  
many. I have been left desolate through the sins of my children,  
through their turning away from the law of God. They would not 13  
learn his statutes, or follow his commandments, or let God guide and  
train them in his righteousness.

Come then, neighbours of Zion, remember the captivity of my 14  
sons and daughters which the Everlasting has inflicted upon them.  
For he brought down on them a nation from far away, a ruthless 15  
nation speaking a strange language and without reverence for age or  
pity for children. They carried off the widow's beloved sons, and left 16  
her in loneliness, deprived of her daughters. But I, how can I help 17  
you? Only the One who brought these evils upon you can deliver 18  
you from your enemies. Go your way, my children, go, for I am left 19  
desolate. I have put off the robes of peaceful days, and put on the 20  
sackcloth of a suppliant. I will cry out to the Everlasting as long as  
I live.

Take heart, my children! Cry out to God, and he will rescue you 21  
from tyranny and from the power of your enemies. For I have set my 22  
hope of your deliverance on the Everlasting; the Holy One, your  
everlasting saviour, has filled me with joy over the mercy soon to be  
granted you. I saw you go with mourning and tears, but God will 23  
give you back to me with joy and gladness for ever. For as the 24  
neighbours of Zion have now seen your captivity, so they will soon  
see your deliverance coming upon you from your God with the great  
glory and splendour of the Everlasting. My children, endure in 25  
patience the wrath God has brought upon you; your enemy has  
hunted you down, but soon you will see him destroyed, and will put  
your foot upon his neck. My pampered children have trodden rough 26  
paths; they have been carried off like a flock seized by raiders.

Take heart, my children! Cry out to God, for he who afflicted you 27  
will not forget you. You once resolved to go astray from God; now 28  
with tenfold zeal you must turn about and seek him. He who 29  
brought these calamities upon you will bring you everlasting joy  
when he delivers you.

Take heart, Jerusalem! He who called you by name will comfort 30  
you. Wretched shall they be who despoiled you and gloated over 31  
your fall; wretched the cities where your children were slaves; 32  
wretched the city that received your sons! The same city that rejoiced 33

at your downfall and made merry over your ruin shall grieve over her  
34 own desolation. I will strip her of the multitudes that were her boast,  
35 and turn her pride to mourning. Fire from the Everlasting shall be  
her doom for many a day, and long shall she be a haunt of demons.

36 Jerusalem, look eastwards and see the joy that is coming to you  
37 from God. They come, the sons from whom you parted, they come,  
gathered together at the word of the Holy One from east to west,  
rejoicing in the glory of God.

5 Jerusalem, strip off the garment of your sorrow and affliction,  
and put on for ever the glorious majesty that is the gift of God.  
2 Wrap about you his robe of righteousness; set on your head for  
3 diadem the splendour of the Everlasting; for God will show your  
4 radiance to every land under heaven. You shall receive from God for  
ever the name Righteous Peace, Godly Splendour.

5 Jerusalem, arise and stand upon the height; look eastwards and  
see from west to east your children gathered together at the word of  
6 the Holy One, rejoicing that God has remembered them. They went  
away from you on foot, led off by their enemies, but God is bringing  
them home to you borne aloft in glory, like a king on his throne.  
7 For God has commanded every high mountain and the everlasting  
hills to be made low, and the valleys to be filled and levelled, so that  
8 Israel may walk safely in the glory of God. And woods and every  
9 fragrant tree shall give Israel shade by God's command. For God  
shall lead Israel with joy in the light of his glory, granting them his  
mercy and his righteousness.



# A LETTER OF JEREMIAH

## *The folly of idolatry*

A COPY OF A LETTER sent by Jeremiah to the captives 6<sup>a</sup>  
who were to be taken to Babylon by the king of Babylon,  
conveying a message entrusted to him by God.

The sins you have committed in the sight of God are the cause of 2  
your being led away captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar king of  
Babylon. Once you are in Babylon, your stay there will be long; it 3  
will last for many years, up to seven generations; but afterwards I will  
lead you out in peace and prosperity.

Now in Babylon you will see carried on men's shoulders gods 4  
made of silver, gold, and wood, which fill the heathen with awe.  
Be careful, then, never to imitate these Gentiles; do not be overawed 5  
by their gods when you see them in the midst of a procession of  
worshippers. But say in your hearts, 'To thee alone, Lord, is worship 6  
due.' For my angel is with you; your lives are in his care. 7

The idols are plated with gold and silver, they have tongues 8  
fashioned by a craftsman, but they are a fraud and cannot speak.  
And the people take gold and make crowns for the heads of their 9  
gods, as one might for a girl fond of finery. Sometimes also the 10  
priests filch gold and silver from their gods and spend it on them-  
selves; they will even give some of it to the prostitutes in the inner 11  
chamber. They dress up the idols in clothes like human beings, these  
gods of silver, gold, and wood. But the gods, decked in purple 12  
though they are, cannot protect themselves against rust and moth.  
The dust in the temple, too, lies thick upon them, so that their faces 13  
have to be wiped clean. Like a human judge the god holds a sceptre, 14  
yet he cannot put to death anyone who offends him. In his right 15  
hand he has a dagger and an axe, yet he cannot deliver himself from  
war and pillage. This shows they are not gods, so have no fear of 16  
them.

[a] The chapter and verse numbering is that of the Authorized Version, in which this forms chapter 6 of Baruch.

- 17 Their gods are no more use than a broken tool, sitting there in  
their temples. Their eyes get filled with dust from the feet of those  
18 who come in. And just as the palace-court is barricaded to secure a  
traitor awaiting execution, so the priests secure their temples with  
doors and bolts and bars to guard against plundering by robbers.  
19 They light lamps, more than they need for themselves—yet the idols  
20-21 can see none of them. They are like one of the beams of the temple;  
their hearts are eaten out, as the saying is, for creatures crawl out of  
the ground and devour them and their clothing. When their faces are  
blackened by the smoke of the temple they are quite unaware of it.  
22 Bats and swallows and birds of all kinds perch on their heads and  
23 bodies, and cats do the same. From all this you may be sure that  
they are not gods, so have no fear of them.
- 24 Though plated with gold for ornament, the idols will not shine,  
unless someone rubs off the tarnish. Even when they were being cast  
25 they did not feel it. They were bought at great cost, but there is no  
26 breath in them. As they have no real feet they are carried on men's  
27 shoulders, which shows how worthless they are. Even those who  
serve them are ashamed, because if ever an idol falls on the ground,  
it does not get up by itself; nor, if anyone sets it up again, can it move  
by its own effort, and if it is tilted it cannot straighten itself. To set  
28 offerings before them is like setting them before the dead. The  
sacrifices made to gods are sold by the priests, who spend the proceeds  
on themselves. Their wives are no better; they take portions of these  
sacrifices and cure the meat, and give no share to the poor or helpless.  
29 Their offerings are touched by women who are menstruating or by  
mothers fresh from childbed. Be assured by all this that they are not  
gods, and have no fear of them.
- 30 Why should they be called gods? These gods of silver, gold, and  
31 wood have food served to them by women. In their temples the  
priests sit shaven and shorn, with their clothes rent, and their heads  
32 uncovered. They shout and howl before these gods of theirs, like  
33 mourners at a funeral feast. The priests strip vestments from the  
34 gods to clothe their own wives and children. Should anyone do these  
gods either injury or service they will not be able to repay it. They  
35 cannot set up or depose a king. So also they are incapable of bestow-  
ing wealth or money; if someone makes a vow to them and does not  
36 honour it, they will never exact payment. They will never save any  
37 man from death, never rescue the weak from the strong. They cannot

restore the blind man's sight or give relief to the needy. They do not 38  
pity the widow or befriend the orphan. They are like blocks from the 39  
quarry, these wooden things plated with gold and silver, and their  
worshippers will be humiliated. How then can anyone suppose 40  
them to be gods or call them so?

Besides, even the Chaldaean themselves bring these idols of  
theirs into disrepute; for, when they see a dumb man without the 41  
power of articulate speech, they bring him into the temple and make  
him call upon Bel, as if Bel could understand him. They cannot see 42  
the folly of it and abandon the idols, because they themselves have no  
understanding. The women too sit in the street with cords round 43  
them, burning bran for incense. And when a passer-by has pulled  
one of them to him and she has lain with him, she taunts her neigh-  
bour, because she has not been thought as attractive as herself and  
her cord has not been broken. Everything to do with these idols is 44  
fraud and delusion. How then can anyone suppose them to be gods  
or call them so?

They are things manufactured by carpenters and goldsmiths; they 45  
can be nothing but what the craftsmen wish them to be. Even their 46  
makers' lives cannot be prolonged; what, then, can the things they  
make expect? It is simply a scandalous fraud that they have be- 47  
queathed to posterity. When war and disasters befall the gods, it is 48  
the priests who discuss amongst themselves where they and their  
gods can hide. How then can men fail to see that these are not gods, 49  
when they cannot save themselves from war and disaster? Since 50  
they are nothing but wood plated with gold and silver, they will in  
time be recognized for the frauds they are. All the heathen and their 51  
kings will plainly see that they are not gods but the work of men's  
hands, with no divine power in them at all. Can there still be anyone 52  
who does not realize that they are not gods?

They cannot set up a king over a country, and they cannot give men 53  
rain. They cannot decide a case or redress a wrong.<sup>a</sup> They are as 54  
helpless as crows tossed about in mid air. When fire breaks out in a 55  
temple belonging to those wooden gods all gilded and silvered, their  
priests will run away to safety, but the gods will be burnt up in the  
flames like timbers. They cannot resist king or enemy. How then 56  
can anyone allow or believe that they are gods?

They cannot save themselves from thieves and robbers, these 57

[a] *Some witnesses read cannot judge in their own cause, or redress a wrong done them.*

58 wooden gods, plated with silver and gold. Anyone who can will strip  
away their gold and silver and make off with the clothing they wear,  
59 and the gods can do nothing to help themselves. It is better to be a  
king who proves his courage than such a sham god, better a household  
vessel that serves its owner's purpose, better even the door of a  
60 house that keeps the contents safe, or a wooden pillar in a palace. Sun  
and moon and the stars that shine so brightly are sent to serve a  
61 purpose, and they obey. So too, when the lightning flashes, it is seen  
far and wide. It is the same with the wind; it blows in every land.  
62 And when God orders the clouds to travel over all the world they  
63 carry out their task, and so does fire when it is sent down from above  
to consume mountains and forests. But idols are not to be compared  
64 with any of these, in appearance or in power. It follows that they are  
not to be considered gods or called by that name, seeing that they  
are incapable of pronouncing judgement or of conferring benefits on  
65 mankind. Recognize, therefore, that they are not gods, and have no  
fear of them.

66 They wield no power over kings, either to curse them or to bless  
67 them; and they cannot provide heavenly signs for the nations, either  
68 by shining like the sun or by giving light like the moon. They are  
more helpless than wild beasts, which can at least save themselves by  
69 taking cover. There is no evidence at all that they are gods, so have no  
fear of them.

70 These wooden gods of theirs, plated with gold and silver, give no  
71 better protection than a scarecrow in a plot of cucumbers. They are  
like a thorn-bush in a garden, a perch for every bird, like a corpse  
cast out in the dark. Such are their wooden gods, with their plating  
72 of gold and silver. The purple and fine linen<sup>a</sup> rotting on them proves  
that they are not gods; in the end they will themselves be eaten  
away, held in contempt throughout the land.

73 Better, then, is an upright man who has no idols; he will be in no  
danger of contempt.

[a] fine linen: *probable meaning*; Gk. marble.

# THE SONG OF THE THREE

AN ADDITION IN THE GREEK  
VERSION OF DANIEL  
BETWEEN 3.23 AND 3.24

THEY WALKED in the heart of the fire, praising God and  
blessing the Lord. Azariah stood still among the flames and  
began to pray aloud: 'Blessed art thou, O Lord, the God of  
our fathers, thy name is worthy of praise and glorious for ever:  
thou art just in all thy deeds and true in all thy works; straight are  
thy paths, and all thy judgements just. Just sentence hast thou passed  
in all that thou hast brought upon us and upon Jerusalem the holy  
city of our fathers: yes, just sentence thou hast passed upon our sins.  
For indeed we sinned and broke thy law in rebellion against thee, in  
all we did we sinned; we did not heed thy commandments, we did  
not keep them, we did not do what thou hadst commanded us for  
our good. In all the punishments thou hast sent upon us thy judge-  
ments have been just. Thou hast handed us over to our bitterest  
enemies, rebels against thy law, and to a wicked king, the vilest in the  
world. And so now we are speechless for shame: contempt has fallen  
on thy servants and thy worshippers. For thy honour's sake do not  
abandon us for ever; do not annul thy covenant. Do not withdraw  
thy mercy from us, for the sake of Abraham, thy beloved, for the  
sake of Isaac, thy servant, and Israel, thy holy one. Thou didst  
promise to multiply their descendants as the stars in the sky and the  
sand on the sea-shore. But now, Lord, we have been made the smal-  
lest of all nations; for our sins we are today the most abject in the  
world. We have no ruler, no prophet, no leader now; there is no  
burnt-offering, no sacrifice, no oblation, no incense, no place to  
make an offering before thee and find mercy. But because we come  
with contrite heart and humbled spirit, accept us. As though we  
came with burnt-offerings of rams and bullocks and with thousands  
of fat lambs, so let our sacrifice be made before thee this day. Accept

our pledge of loyalty to thee,<sup>a</sup> for no shame shall come to those who  
 18 put their trust in thee. Now we will follow thee with our whole heart  
 19 and fear thee. We seek thy presence; do not put us to shame, but  
 deal with us in thy forbearance and in the greatness of thy mercy.  
 20 Grant us again thy marvellous deliverance, and win glory for thy  
 21 name, O Lord. Let all who do thy servants harm be humbled; may  
 they be put to shame and stripped of all their power, and may their  
 22 strength be crushed; let them know that thou alone art the Lord  
 God, and glorious over all the world.'

23 The servants of the king who threw them in kept on feeding the  
 24 furnace with naphtha, pitch, tow, and faggots, and the flames poured  
 25 out above it to a height of seventy-five feet.<sup>b</sup> They spread out and  
 26 burnt those Chaldaeans who were caught near the furnace. But the  
 angel of the Lord came down into the furnace to join Azariah and his  
 27 companions; he scattered the flames out of the furnace and made the  
 heart of it as if a moist wind were whistling through. The fire did not  
 touch them at all and neither hurt nor distressed them.

### *The praises of creation*

28 **T**HEN THE THREE with one voice praised and glorified and  
 blessed God in the furnace:

29 'Blessed art thou, O Lord, the God of our fathers;  
 worthy of praise, highly exalted for ever.  
 30 Blessed is thy holy and glorious name;  
 highly to be praised, highly exalted for ever.  
 31 Blessed art thou in thy holy and glorious temple;  
 most worthy to be hymned and glorified for ever.  
 32 Blessed art thou who dost behold the depths from thy seat upon  
 the cherubim;  
 worthy of praise, highly exalted for ever.  
 33 Blessed art thou on thy royal throne;  
 most worthy to be hymned, highly exalted for ever.  
 34 Blessed art thou in the dome of heaven;  
 worthy to be hymned and glorified for ever.

[a] Accept our . . . thee; *possible meaning; Gk. obscure.*

[b] *Gk. forty-nine cubits.*

'Let the whole creation bless the Lord, sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	35
Bless the Lord, you heavens; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	36
Bless the Lord, you angels of the Lord; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	37
Bless the Lord, all you waters above the heavens; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	38
Bless the Lord, all you his hosts; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	39
Bless the Lord, sun and moon; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	40
Bless the Lord, stars of heaven; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	41
Bless the Lord, all rain and dew; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	42
Bless the Lord, all winds that blow; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	43
Bless the Lord, fire and heat; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	44
Bless the Lord, scorching blast and bitter cold; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	45
Bless the Lord, dews and falling snow; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	46
Bless the Lord, nights and days; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	47
Bless the Lord, light and darkness; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	48
Bless the Lord, frost and cold; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	49
Bless the Lord, rime and snow; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	50
Bless the Lord, lightnings and clouds; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	51
 'O earth, bless the Lord; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	 52
Bless the Lord, mountains and hills; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	53

- 54 Bless the Lord, all that grows in the ground;  
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 56 Bless the Lord, seas and rivers;  
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 55 Bless the Lord, you springs;  
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 57 Bless the Lord, you whales and all that swim in the waters;  
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 58 Bless the Lord, all birds of the air;  
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 59 Bless the Lord, you cattle and wild beasts;  
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 60 'All men on earth, bless the Lord;  
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 61 Bless the Lord, O Israel;  
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 62 Bless the Lord, you priests of the Lord;  
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 63 Bless the Lord, you servants of the Lord;  
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 64 Bless the Lord, all men of upright spirit;  
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 65 Bless the Lord, you that are holy and humble in heart;  
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 66 Bless the Lord, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael;  
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- For he has rescued us from the grave and from the power of death:  
he has saved us from the furnace of burning flame;  
he has rescued us from the heart of the fire.
- 67 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
for his mercy endures for ever.
- 68 All who worship the Lord, bless the God of gods;  
sing his praise and give him thanks,  
for his mercy endures for ever.'



# DANIEL AND SUSANNA

## *Innocence vindicated*

THERE ONCE LIVED in Babylon a man named Joakim. 1  
He married Susanna daughter of Hilkiah, a very beautiful 2  
and devout woman. Her parents, religious people, had 3  
brought up their daughter according to the law of Moses. Joakim 4  
was very rich and his house had a fine garden adjoining it, which was  
a regular meeting-place for the Jews, because he was the man of  
greatest distinction among them.

Now two elders of the community were appointed that year as 5  
judges. It was of them that the Lord had said, 'Wickedness came  
forth from Babylon from elders who were judges and were supposed  
to govern my people.' These men were constantly at Joakim's house, 6  
and everyone who had a case to be tried came to them there.

When the people went away at noon, Susanna used to go and walk 7  
in her husband's garden. Every day the two elders saw her entering 8  
the garden and taking her walk, and they were obsessed with lust for  
her. They no longer prayed to God, but let their thoughts stray from 9  
him and forgot the claims of morality. They were both infatuated 10  
with her; but they did not tell each other what pangs they suffered,  
because they were ashamed to confess that they wanted to seduce 11  
her. Day after day they watched eagerly to see her. 12

One day they said, 'Let us go home; it is time for lunch.' So they 13, 14  
went off in different directions, but soon retraced their steps and  
found themselves face to face. When they questioned one another,  
each confessed his passion. Then they agreed on a time when they  
might find her alone.

And while they were watching for an opportune day, she went into 15  
the garden as usual with only her two maids; it was very hot, and she  
wished to bathe there. No one else was in the garden except the two 16  
elders, who had hidden and were spying on her. She said to her 17  
maids, 'Bring me soap and olive oil, and shut the garden doors so

18 that I can bathe.' They did as she told them: they closed the garden doors and went out by the side door to fetch the things they had been ordered to bring; they did not see the elders because they were  
19 hiding. As soon as the maids had gone, the two elders started up and  
20 ran to Susanna. 'Look!' they said, 'the garden doors are shut, and no one can see us. We are burning with desire for you, so consent and  
21 yield to us. If you refuse, we shall give evidence against you that there was a young man with you and that was why you sent your  
22 maids away.' Susanna groaned and said: 'I see no way out. If I do this thing, the penalty is death; if I do not, you will have me at your  
23 mercy. My choice is made: I will not do it. It is better to be at your mercy than to sin against the Lord.'

24 With that Susanna gave a loud shout, but the two elders shouted  
25, 26 her down. One of them ran and opened the garden door. The household, hearing the uproar in the garden, rushed in through the  
27 side door to see what had happened to her. And when the elders had told their story, the servants were deeply shocked, for no such allegation had ever been made against Susanna.

28 Next day, when the people gathered at her husband Joakim's house, the two elders came, full of their criminal design to put Susanna to  
29 death. In the presence of the people they said, 'Send for Susanna daughter of Hilkiah, Joakim's wife.' So they sent for her, and she  
30 came with her parents and children and all her relatives. Now  
31 Susanna was a woman of great beauty and delicate feeling. She was closely veiled, but those scoundrels ordered her to be unveiled so  
32 that they might feast their eyes on her beauty. Her family and all  
33 who saw her were in tears. Then the two elders stood up before the  
34 people and put their hands on her head. She looked up to heaven  
35 through her tears, for she trusted in the Lord. The elders said: 'As we were walking alone in the garden, this woman came in with two  
36 maids. She shut the garden doors and dismissed her maids. Then a  
37 young man, who had been in hiding, came and lay down with her. We were in a corner of the garden, and when we saw this wickedness we  
38 ran up to them. Though we saw them in the act, we could not hold the man; he was too strong for us, and he opened the door and forced his  
39 way out. We seized the woman and asked who the young man was, but she would not tell us. That is our evidence.'

41 As they were elders of the people and judges, the assembly believed  
42 them and condemned her to death. Then Susanna cried out loudly:

'Eternal God, who dost know all secrets and foresee all things, thou knowest that their evidence against me was false. And now I am to die, guiltless though I am of all the wicked things these men have said against me.'

The Lord heard her cry. Just as she was being led off to execution, God inspired a devout young man named Daniel to protest, and he shouted out, 'I will not have this woman's blood on my head.' All the people turned and asked him, 'What do you mean by that?' He came forward and said: 'Are you such fools, you Israelites, as to condemn a woman of Israel, without making careful inquiry and finding out the truth? Re-open the trial; the evidence these men have brought against her is false.'

So the people all hurried back, and the rest of the elders said to him, 'Come, take your place among us and state your case, for God has given you the standing of an elder.' Daniel said to them, 'Separate these men and keep them at a distance from each other, and I will examine them.' When they had been separated Daniel summoned one of them. 'You hardened sinner,' he said, 'the sins of your past have now come home to you. You gave unjust decisions, condemning the innocent, and acquitting the guilty, although the Lord has said, "You shall not put to death an innocent and guiltless man." Now then, if you saw this woman, tell us, under what tree did you see them together?' He answered, 'Under a clove-tree.'<sup>a</sup> Then Daniel retorted, 'Very good: this lie has cost you your life, for already God's angel has received your sentence from God, and he will cleave<sup>b</sup> you in two.' And he told him to stand aside, and ordered them to bring in the other.

He said to him: 'Spawn of Canaan, no son of Judah, beauty has been your undoing, and lust has corrupted your heart! Now we know how you have been treating the women of Israel, frightening them into consorting with you; but here is a woman of Judah who would not submit to your villainy. Now then, tell me, under what tree did you surprise them together?' 'Under a yew-tree',<sup>c</sup> he replied. Daniel said to him, 'Very good: this lie has cost you your life, for the angel of God is waiting with his sword to hew<sup>d</sup> you down and destroy you both.'

Then the whole assembly gave a great shout and praised God, the

[a] clove: *literally* mastic. [b] clove...cleave: *there is a play on words in the Gk.*

[c] yew: *literally* oak. [d] yew...hew: *there is a play on words in the Gk.*

61 saviour of those who trust in him. They turned on the two elders, for  
out of their own mouths Daniel had convicted them of giving false  
62 evidence; they dealt with them according to the law of Moses, and  
put them to death, as they in their wickedness had tried to do to their  
63 neighbour. And so an innocent life was saved that day. Then  
Hilkiah and his wife gave praise for their daughter Susanna, because  
she was found innocent of a shameful deed, and so did her husband  
64 Joakim and all her relatives. And from that day forward Daniel was  
a great man among his people.

# DANIEL, BEL, AND THE SNAKE

## *The destruction of Bel*

1 **W**HEN KING ASTYAGES was gathered to his  
fathers he was succeeded on the throne by Cyrus the  
2 Persian. Daniel was a confidant of the king, the most  
honoured of all the King's Friends.

3 Now the Babylonians had an idol called Bel, for which they pro-  
vided every day twelve bushels of fine flour, forty sheep, and fifty  
4 gallons of wine. The king held it to be divine and went daily to  
worship it, but Daniel worshipped his God. So the king said to him,  
5 'Why do you not worship Bel?' He replied, 'Because I do not  
believe in man-made idols, but in the living God who created heaven  
6 and earth and is sovereign over all mankind.' The king said, 'Do you  
think that Bel is not a living god? Do you not see how much he eats  
7 and drinks each day?' Daniel laughed and said, 'Do not be deceived,  
your majesty; this Bel of yours is only clay inside and bronze outside,  
and has never eaten anything.'

8 Then the king was angry, and summoned the priests of Bel and

said to them, 'If you cannot tell me who it is that eats up all these provisions, you shall die; but if you can show that it is Bel that eats 9 them, then Daniel shall die for blasphemy against Bel.' Daniel said to the king, 'Let it be as you command.' (There were seventy priests 10 of Bel, not counting their wives and children.) Then the king went with Daniel into the temple of Bel. The priests said, 'We are now 11 going outside; set out the food yourself, your majesty, and mix the wine; then shut the door and seal it with your signet. When you 12 come back in the morning, if you do not find that Bel has eaten it all, let us be put to death; but if Daniel's charges against us turn out to be false, then he shall die.' They treated the whole affair with con- 13 tempt, because they had made a hidden entrance under the table, and they regularly went in by it and ate everything up.

So when the priests had gone, the king set out the food for Bel; 14 and Daniel ordered his servants to bring ashes and sift them over the whole temple in the presence of the king alone. Then they left the temple, closed the door, sealed it with the king's signet, and went away. During the night the priests, with their wives and children, 15 came as usual and ate and drank everything. Early in the morning the king came, and Daniel with him. The king said, 'Are the seals 16 intact, Daniel?' He answered, 'They are intact, your majesty.' As soon as he opened the door, the king looked at the table and cried 17 aloud, 'Great art thou, O Bel! In thee there is no deceit at all.' But Daniel laughed and held back the king from going in. 'Just look at 18 the floor,' he said, 'and judge whose footprints these are.' The king 19 said, 'I see the footprints of men, women, and children.' In a rage he put the priests under arrest, with their wives and children. Then they 20 showed him the secret doors through which they used to go in and consume what was on the table. So the king put them to death, and 21 handed Bel over to Daniel, who destroyed the idol and its temple. 22

### *The destruction of the snake*

NOW THERE WAS a huge snake, which the Babylonians held to 23 be divine. The king said to Daniel, 'You cannot say that this is 24 not a living god; so worship him.' Daniel answered, 'I will worship 25 the Lord my God, for he is the living God. But give me authority, 26

your majesty, and without sword or staff I will kill the snake.'

27 'I give it you', said the king. So Daniel took pitch and fat and hair, boiled them together, and made them into cakes, which he put into the mouth of the snake. When the snake ate them, it burst. Then  
28 Daniel said, 'See what things you worship!' When the Babylonians heard of this they gathered in an angry crowd to oppose the king. 'The king has turned Jew!' they cried. 'He has pulled down Bel,  
29 killed the snake, and put the priests to the sword.' So they went to the king and said, 'Hand Daniel over to us, or else we will kill you  
30 and your family.' The king, finding himself hard pressed, was compelled to give Daniel up to them. They threw him into the lion-pit,  
31 and he was there for six days. There were seven lions in the pit, and every day two men and two sheep were fed to them; but now they were given nothing, to make sure that they would devour Daniel.

32 Now the prophet Habakkuk was in Judaea; he had made a stew and crumbled bread into the bowl, and he was on the way to his field,  
33 carrying it to the reapers, when an angel of the Lord said, 'Habakkuk, carry the meal you have with you to Babylon, for Daniel, who is in  
34 the lion-pit.' Habakkuk said, 'My lord, I have never been to Babylon. I do not know where the lion-pit is.' Then the angel took the prophet by the crown of his head, and carrying him by his hair, he swept him to Babylon with the blast of his breath and put him down  
35 above the pit. Habakkuk called out, 'Daniel, Daniel, take the meal that God has sent you!' Daniel said, 'O God, thou dost indeed  
36 remember me; thou dost never forsake those who love thee.' Then he got up and ate; and God's angel returned Habakkuk at once to his  
37 home. On the seventh day the king went to mourn for Daniel, but when he arrived at the pit and looked in, there sat Daniel! Then the king cried aloud, 'Great art thou, O Lord, the God of Daniel, and  
38 there is no God but thou alone.' So the king drew Daniel up; and the men who had planned to destroy him he flung into the pit, and then and there they were eaten up before his eyes.

# THE PRAYER OF MANASSEH

## *Repentance*

LORD ALMIGHTY, 1  
God of our fathers,  
of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,  
and of their righteous offspring;  
who hast made heaven and earth in their manifold array; 2  
who hast confined the ocean by thy word of command, 3  
who hast shut up the abyss and sealed it with thy fearful and glorious  
name;  
all things tremble and quake in the face of thy power. 4  
For the majesty of thy glory is more than man can bear, 5  
and none can endure thy menacing wrath against sinners;  
the mercy in thy promise is beyond measure: none can fathom it. 6  
For thou art Lord Most High, 7  
compassionate, patient, and of great mercy,  
relenting when men suffer for their sins.  
For out of thy great goodness thou, O God,  
hast promised repentance and remission to those who sin against  
thee,  
and in thy boundless mercy thou hast appointed repentance for  
sinners as the way to salvation.<sup>a</sup>  
So thou, Lord God of the righteous, 8  
didst not appoint repentance for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,  
who were righteous and did not sin against thee,  
but for me, a sinner,  
whose sins are more in number than the sands of the sea. 9  
My transgressions abound, O Lord, my transgressions abound,  
and I am not worthy to look up and gaze at the height of heaven  
because of the number of my wrongdoings.  
Bowed down with a heavy chain of iron, 10

[a] *Some witnesses omit* For out of . . . salvation.

I grieve over my sins and find no relief,  
because I have provoked thy anger  
and done what is evil in thine eyes,  
setting up idols and so piling sin on sin.

<sup>11</sup> Now I humble my heart, imploring thy great goodness.

<sup>12</sup> I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned,  
and I acknowledge my transgressions.

<sup>13</sup> I pray and beseech thee,  
spare me, O Lord, spare me,  
destroy me not with my transgressions on my head,  
do not be angry with me for ever, nor store up evil for me.  
Do not condemn me to the grave,  
for thou, Lord, art the God of the penitent.

<sup>14</sup> Thou wilt show thy goodness towards me,  
for unworthy as I am thou wilt save me in thy great mercy;

<sup>15</sup> And so I shall praise thee continually all the days of my life.  
For all the host of heaven sings thy praise,  
and thy glory is for ever and ever. Amen.



# THE FIRST BOOK OF THE MACCABEES

## *Antiochus and the Jewish revolt*

ALEXANDER of Macedon, the son of Philip, marched 1  
from the land of Kittim, defeated Darius, king of Persia and  
Media, and seized his throne, being already king of Greece.<sup>a</sup>  
In the course of many campaigns he captured fortified towns, 2  
slaughtered kings, traversed the earth to its remotest bounds, and 3  
plundered innumerable nations. When at last the world lay quiet  
under his rule, his pride knew no limits; he built up an extremely 4  
powerful army, and ruled over countries, nations, and dominions; all  
paid him tribute.

The time came when he fell ill, and, knowing that he was dying, 5  
he summoned his generals, nobles who had been brought up with 6  
him from childhood, and divided his empire among them while he  
was still alive. Alexander had reigned twelve years when he died. 7  
His generals took over the government, each in his own province. On 8, 9  
his death they were all crowned as kings, and their descendants suc-  
ceeded them for many years. They brought untold miseries upon  
the world.

A scion of this stock was that wicked man, Antiochus Epiphanes, 10  
son of King Antiochus. He had been a hostage in Rome before he  
succeeded to the throne in the year 137 of the Greek era.<sup>b</sup>

At that time there appeared in Israel a group of renegade Jews, 11  
who incited the people. 'Let us enter into a covenant with the  
Gentiles round about,' they said, 'because disaster upon disaster has  
overtaken us since we segregated ourselves from them.' The people 12  
thought this a good argument, and some of them in their enthusiasm 13  
went to the king and received authority to introduce non-Jewish  
laws and customs. They built a sports-stadium in the gentile style in 14  
Jerusalem. They removed their marks of circumcision and repudiated 15  
the holy covenant. They intermarried with Gentiles, and abandoned  
themselves to evil ways.

[a] being...Greece: *probable meaning; Gk. obscure.* [b] That is 175 B.C.

16 When he was firmly established on his throne, Antiochus made up  
his mind to become king of Egypt and so to rule over both kingdoms.  
17 He assembled a powerful force of chariots, elephants, and cavalry,  
18 and a great fleet, and invaded Egypt. When battle was joined,  
Ptolemy king of Egypt was seized with panic and took to flight,  
19 leaving many dead. The fortified towns were captured and the land  
pillaged.

20 On his return from the conquest of Egypt, in the year 143,<sup>a</sup>  
Antiochus marched with a strong force against Israel and Jerusalem.  
21 In his arrogance he entered the temple and carried off the golden  
22 altar, the lamp-stand with all its equipment, the table for the Bread  
of the Presence, the sacred cups and bowls, the golden censers, the  
curtain, and the crowns. He stripped off all the gold plating from  
23 the temple front. He seized the silver, gold, and precious vessels,  
24 and whatever secret treasures he found, and took them all with him  
when he left for his own country. He had caused much bloodshed,  
and he gloated over all he had done.

25 Great was the lamentation throughout Israel;  
26 rulers and elders groaned in bitter grief.  
Girls and young men languished;  
the beauty of our women was disfigured.  
27 Every bridegroom took up the lament,  
and every bride sat grieving in her chamber.  
28 The land trembled for its inhabitants,  
and all the house of Jacob was wrapped in shame.

29 Two years later, the king sent to the towns of Judaea a high  
revenue official, who arrived at Jerusalem with a powerful force.  
30 His language was friendly, but full of guile. For, once he had gained  
the city's confidence, he suddenly attacked it. He dealt it a heavy  
31 blow, and killed many Israelites, plundering the city and setting it  
32 ablaze. He pulled down houses and walls on every side; women and  
children were made prisoners, and the cattle seized.

33 The city of David was turned into a citadel, enclosed by a high,  
34 stout wall with strong towers, and garrisoned by impious foreigners  
35 and renegades. Having made themselves secure, they accumulated  
arms and provisions, and deposited there the massed plunder of

[a] *That is 169 B.C.*

Jerusalem. There they lay in ambush, a lurking threat to the temple 36  
and a perpetual menace to Israel.

They shed the blood of the innocent round the temple; 37  
they defiled the holy place.

The citizens of Jerusalem fled for fear of them; 38  
she became the abode of aliens,  
and alien herself to her offspring:  
her children deserted her.

Her temple lay desolate as a wilderness; 39  
her feasts were turned to mourning,  
her sabbaths to a reproach,  
her honour to contempt.

The shame of her fall matched the greatness of her renown, 40  
and her pride was bowed low in grief.

The king then issued a decree throughout his empire: his subjects 41  
were all to become one people and abandon their own laws and 42  
religion. The nations everywhere complied with the royal command,  
and many in Israel accepted the foreign worship, sacrificing to idols 43  
and profaning the sabbath. Moreover, the king sent agents with 44  
written orders to Jerusalem and the towns of Judaea. Ways and  
customs foreign to the country were to be introduced. Burnt- 45  
offerings, sacrifices, and libations in the temple were forbidden;  
sabbaths and feast-days were to be profaned; the temple and its 46  
ministers to be defiled. Altars, idols, and sacred precincts were to be 47  
established; swine and other unclean beasts to be offered in sacrifice.  
They must leave their sons uncircumcised; they must make them- 48  
selves in every way abominable, unclean, and profane, and so forget 49  
the law and change all their statutes. The penalty for disobedience 50  
was death.

Such was the decree which the king issued to all his subjects. He 51  
appointed superintendents over all the people, and instructed the  
towns of Judaea to offer sacrifice, town by town. People thronged to 52  
their side in large numbers, every one of them a traitor to the law.  
Their wicked conduct throughout the land drove Israel into hiding 53  
in every possible place of refuge.

On the fifteenth day of the month Kislev in the year 145,<sup>a</sup> 'the 54

[a] *That is 167 B.C.*

abomination of desolation' was set up on the altar. Pagan altars were  
 55 built throughout the towns of Judaea; incense was offered at the  
 56 doors of houses and in the streets. All scrolls of the law which were  
 57 found were torn up and burnt. Anyone discovered in possession of a  
 Book of the Covenant, or conforming to the law, was put to death by  
 58 the king's sentence. Thus month after month these wicked men used  
 their power against the Israelites whom they found in their towns.

59 On the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the  
 60 pagan altar which was on top of the altar of the Lord. In accordance  
 with the royal decree, they put to death women who had had their  
 61 children circumcised. Their babies, their families, and those who had  
 62 circumcised them, they hanged by the neck. Yet many in Israel found  
 strength to resist, taking a determined stand against eating any un-  
 63 clean food. They welcomed death rather than defile themselves and  
 64 profane the holy covenant, and so they died. The divine wrath raged  
 against Israel.<sup>a</sup>

2 AT THIS TIME a certain Mattathias, son of John, son of Symeon,  
 appeared on the scene. He was a priest of the Joarib family from  
 2 Jerusalem, who had settled at Modin. Mattathias had five sons, John  
 3, 4 called Gaddis, Simon called Thassis, Judas called Maccabaeus,  
 5 Eleazar called Avaran, and Jonathan called Apphus.

6 When Mattathias saw the sacrilegious acts committed in Judaea  
 7 and Jerusalem, he said:

'Oh! Why was I born to see this,  
 the crushing of my people, the ruin of the holy city?  
 They sat idly by when it was surrendered,  
 when the holy place was given up to the alien.  
 8 Her temple is like a man robbed of honour;  
 9 its glorious vessels are carried off as spoil.  
 Her infants are slain in the street,  
 her young men by the sword of the foe.  
 10 Is there a nation that has not usurped her sovereignty,<sup>b</sup>  
 a people that has not plundered her?  
 11 She has been stripped of all her adornment,  
 no longer free, but a slave.

[a] The divine... Israel: or Israel lived under a reign of terror. [b] Or occupied her palaces.

Now that we have seen our temple with all its beauty and splendour 12  
laid waste and profaned by the Gentiles, why should we live any 13  
longer?' So Mattathias and his sons tore their garments, put on 14  
sackcloth, and mourned bitterly.

The king's officers who were enforcing apostasy came to the town 15  
of Modin to see that sacrifice was offered, and many Israelites went 16  
over to them. Mattathias and his sons stood in a group. The king's 17  
officers spoke to Mattathias: 'You are a leader here,' they said, 'a  
man of mark and influence in this town, with your sons and brothers  
at your back. You be the first now to come forward and carry out the 18  
king's order. All the nations have done so, as well as the leading men  
in Judaea and the people left in Jerusalem. Then you and your sons  
will be enrolled among the King's Friends; you will all receive high  
honours, rich rewards of silver and gold, and many further benefits.'

To this Mattathias replied in a ringing voice: 'Though all the 19  
nations within the king's dominions obey him and forsake their  
ancestral worship, though they have chosen to submit to his com-  
mands, yet I and my sons and brothers will follow the covenant of 20  
our fathers. Heaven forbid we should ever abandon the law and its  
statutes. We will not obey the command of the king, nor will we 21  
deviate one step from our forms of worship.' 22

As soon as he had finished, a Jew stepped forward in full view of all 23  
to offer sacrifice on the pagan altar at Modin, in obedience to the  
royal command. The sight stirred Mattathias to indignation; he 24  
shook with passion, and in a fury of righteous anger rushed forward  
and slaughtered the traitor on the very altar. At the same time he 25  
killed the officer sent by the king to enforce sacrifice, and pulled the  
pagan altar down. Thus Mattathias showed his fervent zeal for the 26  
law, just as Phinehas had done by killing Zimri son of Salu.  
'Follow me,' he shouted through the town, 'every one of you who is 27  
zealous for the law and strives to maintain the covenant.' He and his 28  
sons took to the hills, leaving all their belongings behind in the town.

At that time many who wanted to maintain their religion and law 29  
went down to the wilds to live there. They took their sons, their 30  
wives, and their cattle with them, for their miseries were more than  
they could bear. Word soon reached the king's officers and the forces 31  
in Jerusalem, the city of David, that men who had defied the king's  
order had gone down into hiding-places in the wilds. A large body of 32  
men went quickly after them, came up with them, and occupied

positions opposite. They prepared to attack them on the sabbath.  
33 'There is still time,' they shouted; 'come out, obey the king's com-  
34 mand, and your lives will be spared.' 'We will not come out,' the  
Jews replied; 'we will not obey the king's command or profane  
35, 36 the sabbath.' Without more ado the attack was launched; but the  
Israelites did nothing in reply; they neither hurled stones, nor  
37 barricaded their caves. 'Let us all meet death with a clear conscience,'  
they said; 'we call heaven and earth to testify that there is no justice  
38 in this slaughter.' So they were attacked and massacred on the  
sabbath, men, women, and children, up to a thousand in all, and  
their cattle with them.

39 Great was the grief of Mattathias and his friends when they heard  
40 the news. They said to one another, 'If we all do as our brothers have  
done, if we refuse to fight the Gentiles for our lives as well as for our  
laws and customs, then they will soon wipe us off the face of the  
41 earth.' That day they decided that, if anyone came to fight against  
them on the sabbath, they would fight back, rather than all die as  
their brothers in the caves had done.

42 It was then that they were joined by a company of Hasidaeans,  
stalwarts of Israel, every one of them a volunteer in the cause of  
43 the law; and all who were refugees from the troubles came to swell  
44 their numbers, and so add to their strength. Now that they had an  
organized force, they turned their wrath on the guilty men and  
renegades. Those who escaped their fierce attacks took refuge with  
the Gentiles.

45 Mattathias and his friends then swept through the country,  
46 pulling down the pagan altars, and forcibly circumcising all the  
47 uncircumcised boys found within the frontiers of Israel. They hunted  
down their arrogant enemies, and the cause prospered in their hands.  
48 Thus they saved the law from the Gentiles and their kings, and broke  
the power of the tyrant.

49 The time came for Mattathias to die, and he said to his sons:  
'Arrogance now stands secure and gives judgement against us; it is a  
50 time of calamity and raging fury. But now, my sons, be zealous for  
51 the law, and give your lives for the covenant of your fathers. Re-  
member the deeds they did in their generations, and great glory and  
52 eternal fame shall be yours. Did not Abraham prove steadfast under  
53 trial, and so gain credit as a righteous man? Joseph kept the com-  
mandments, hard-pressed though he was, and became lord of Egypt.

Phinehas, our father, never flagged in his zeal, and his was the 54  
covenant of an everlasting priesthood. Joshua kept the law, and he 55  
became a judge in Israel. Caleb bore witness before the congrega- 56  
tion, and a share in the land was his reward. David was a man of 57  
loyalty, and he was granted the throne of an everlasting kingdom.  
Elijah never flagged in his zeal for the law, and he was taken up to 58  
heaven. Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael had faith, and they were 59  
saved from the blazing furnace. Daniel was a man of integrity, and he 60  
was rescued from the lions' jaws. As generation succeeds generation, 61  
follow their example; for no one who trusts in Heaven shall ever lack  
strength. Do not fear a wicked man's words; all his success will end 62  
in filth and worms. Today he may be high in honour, but tomorrow 63  
there will be no trace of him, because he will have returned to the dust  
and all his schemes come to nothing. But you, my sons, draw your 64  
courage and strength from the law, for by it you will win great glory.

'Now here is Symeon, your brother; I know him to be wise in 65  
counsel: always listen to him, for he shall be a father to you. Judas 66  
Maccabaeus has been strong and brave from boyhood; he shall be  
your commander in the field, and fight his people's battles. Gather 67  
to your side all who observe the law, and avenge your people's  
wrongs. Repay the Gentiles in their own coin, and always heed the 68  
law's commands.'

Then Mattathias blessed them, and was gathered to his fathers. 69  
He died in the year 146,<sup>a</sup> and was buried by his sons in the family 70  
tomb at Modin. All Israel raised a loud lament for him.

### *The war under Judas and Jonathan*

THEN JUDAS MACCABAEUS came forward in his father's place. 3  
He had the support of all his brothers and his father's followers, 2  
and they carried on the fight for Israel with zest.

He enhanced his people's glory. 3  
He put on his breastplate like a giant,  
and girt himself with weapons of war.  
He fought battle on battle;

[a] *That is 166 B.C.*

he guarded his army with his sword.  
4 He was like a lion in his exploits,  
like a lion's whelp roaring for prey.  
5 He hunted and tracked down the lawless;  
he blasted the troublers of his people.  
6 The lawless cowered in fear of him;  
all evil-doers were confounded.  
The cause of freedom prospered in his hands;  
7 he provoked many kings to anger.  
But he made Jacob glad by his deeds;  
he is remembered for ever in blessing.  
8 He passed through the towns of Judaea;  
he destroyed the godless there.  
He turned wrath away from Israel;  
9 his fame spread to the ends of the earth,  
and he rallied a people near to destruction.

10 Apollonius now collected a gentile force and a large contingent  
11 from Samaria, to fight against Israel. When Judas heard of it, he  
marched out to meet him, and defeated and killed him. Many of the  
12 Gentiles fell, and the rest took to flight. From the arms they captured,  
Judas took the sword of Apollonius, and used it in his campaigns for  
the rest of his life.

13 When Seron, who commanded the army in Syria, heard that Judas  
had mustered a large force, consisting of all his loyal followers of  
14 military age, he said to himself, 'I will win a glorious reputation in  
the empire by making war on Judas and his followers, who defy the  
15 royal edict.' Seron was reinforced by a strong contingent of rene-  
gade Jews, who marched up to help him take vengeance on Israel.  
16 When he reached the pass of Beth-horon, Judas advanced to meet  
17 him with a handful of men. When his followers saw the host coming  
against them, they said to Judas, 'How can so few of us fig<sup>h</sup>t against  
so many? Besides, we have had nothing to eat all day, and we are  
exhausted.'

18 Judas replied: 'Many can easily be overpowered by a few; it makes  
19 no difference to Heaven to save by many or by few. Victory does not  
20 depend on numbers; strength comes from Heaven alone. Our  
enemies come filled with insolence and lawlessness to plunder and to  
21 kill us and our wives and children. But we are fighting for our lives



and our religion. Heaven will crush them before our eyes. You need 22  
not be afraid of them.'

When he had finished speaking, he launched a sudden attack, 23  
and Seron and his army broke before him. They pursued them 24  
down the pass of Beth-horon as far as the plain; some eight hundred  
of the enemy fell, and the rest fled to Philistia.

Thus Judas and his brothers began to be feared, and alarm spread 25  
to the Gentiles all round. His fame reached the ears of the king, and 26  
the story of his battles was told in every nation. When King Antio- 27  
chus heard this news, he flew into a rage and ordered all the forces of  
his empire to be assembled, an immensely powerful army. He 28  
opened his treasury and gave a year's pay to his troops, ordering  
them to be prepared for any duty. But he found that his resources 29  
were running low; his tribute, too, had dwindled as a result of the  
disaffection and violence he had brought upon the world by abolish-  
ing traditional laws and customs. He now saw with alarm that he 30  
might be short of money, as had happened once or twice before,  
both for his normal expenses and for the gifts he had been accustomed  
to distribute with an even more lavish hand than any of his predeces-  
sors on the throne.

For a time he was much perplexed; then he decided to go to Persia, 31  
collect the tribute due from the provinces, and raise a large sum of  
ready money. He left Lysias, a distinguished member of the royal 32  
family, as viceroy of the territories between the Euphrates and the  
Egyptian frontier. He also appointed him guardian of his son 33  
Antiochus until his return. He transferred to Lysias half the armed 34  
forces, together with the elephants, and told him all that he wanted  
done, especially to the population of Judaea and Jerusalem. Against 35  
these Lysias was to send a force, and break and destroy the strength  
of Israel and those who were left in Jerusalem, to blot out all  
memory of them from the place. He was to settle foreigners in all 36  
their territory, and allot the land to the settlers. The other half of the 37  
forces the king took with him, and set out from Antioch, his capital,  
in the year 147.<sup>a</sup> He crossed the Euphrates and marched through  
the upper provinces.

Lysias chose Ptolemaeus son of Dorymenes, with Nicanor and 38  
Gorgias, all three powerful members of the order of King's Friends,  
and sent with them forty thousand infantry and seven thousand 39

[a] *That is 165 B.C.*

cavalry to invade Judaea and devastate the country as the king had  
40 commanded. They set out with all their forces and encamped near  
41 Emmaus in the lowlands. The merchants of the region, impressed by  
what they heard of the army, took a large quantity of silver and gold,  
with a supply of fetters, and came into the camp to buy the Israelites  
for slaves. The army was also reinforced by troops from Syria and  
Philistia.

42 Judas and his brothers saw that their plight had become grave,  
with the enemy encamped inside their frontiers. They learnt, too, of  
the commands which the king had given for the complete destruction  
43 of the nation. So they said to one another, 'Let us restore the shat-  
tered fortunes of our nation; let us fight for our nation and for the  
44 holy place.' They gathered in full assembly to prepare for battle, and  
to pray and seek divine mercy and compassion.

45 Jerusalem lay deserted like a wilderness;  
none of her children went in or out.  
Her holy place was trampled down;  
aliens and heathen lodged in her citadel.  
Joy had been banished from Jacob;  
and flute and harp were dumb.

46 They assembled at Mizpah, opposite Jerusalem, for in former  
47 times Israel had a place of worship at Mizpah. That day they fasted,  
put on sackcloth, sprinkled ashes on their heads, and tore their  
48 garments. They unrolled the scroll of the law, seeking the guidance  
49 which Gentiles seek from the images of their gods. They brought the  
priestly vestments, the firstfruits, and the tithes; they presented  
50 Nazirites who had completed their vows, and they cried to Heaven:  
'What shall we do with these Nazirites, and where shall we take them?  
51 Thy holy place is trodden down and defiled, and sorrow and humilia-  
52 tion have come upon thy priests. And see, the Gentiles have gathered  
against us to destroy us. Thou knowest the fate they plan for us;  
53, 54 how can we withstand them unless thou help us?' Then the trumpets  
sounded, and a great shout went up.

55 Judas then appointed leaders of the people, officers over thousands,  
56 hundreds, fifties, and tens. As the law commands, he ordered back  
to their homes those who were building their houses or were newly  
wed or who were planting vineyards, or who were faint-hearted.  
57 Thereupon the army moved and took up their positions to the south

of Emmaus, where Judas thus addressed them: 'Prepare for action 38  
and show yourselves men. Be ready at dawn to fight these Gentiles  
who are massed against us to destroy us and our holy place. Better 39  
die fighting than look on while calamity overwhelms our people and  
the holy place. But it will be as Heaven wills.' 60

Gorgias, taking a detachment of five thousand men and a thousand 4  
picked cavalry, set out by night to attack the Jewish army and fall 2  
upon them unawares; his guides were men from the citadel. But 3  
Judas had word of this, and he and his soldiers moved out to attack  
the king's army in Emmaus, while its forces were still divided. 4  
Gorgias reached the camp of Judas during the night, but found no 5  
one there. He set out to search for them in the hills, thinking, 'These  
Jews are running away from us.'

At daybreak, there was Judas in the plain with three thousand 6  
men, though they had not all the armour and the swords they  
wanted. They saw the Gentiles' camp strongly fortified with breast- 7  
works, while mounted guards, seasoned troops, patrolled round it.

Judas said to his men: 'Do not be afraid of their great numbers or 8  
panic when they charge. Remember how our fathers were saved at the 9  
Red Sea, when Pharaoh and his army were pursuing them. Let us cry 10  
now to Heaven to favour our cause, to remember the covenant made  
with our fathers, and to crush this army before us today. Then all the 11  
Gentiles will know that there is One who saves and liberates Israel.'

When the foreigners looked up and saw them advancing to the 12  
attack, they marched out of their camp to give battle. Judas and his 13  
men sounded their trumpets and closed with them. The Gentiles 14  
broke, and fled to the plain. All the rearmost fell by the sword. The 15  
pursuit was pressed as far as Gazara and the lowlands of Idumaea,  
Azotus and Jamnia; about three thousand of the enemy were killed.

Judas and his force then broke off the pursuit and returned. He 16, 17  
said to the people: 'Curb your greed for spoil; there is more fighting  
before us; Gorgias and his force are in the hills near by. Stand firm 18  
now against our enemies and fight; after that, plunder as you please.'

Before Judas had finished speaking, an enemy patrol appeared, 19  
reconnoitring from the hills. They saw that their army was in flight, 20  
and that their camp was being set on fire; the smoke that met their  
gaze showed what had happened. They were filled with panic as they 21  
took in the scene, and when they saw the army of Judas in the plain,  
ready for battle, they all fled to Philistia. 22

23 Then Judas turned back to plunder the camp, and there they got  
much gold and silver, violet and purple stuffs, and great riches.  
24 On their return they sang songs of thanksgiving and praised Heaven,  
25 'for it is right, because his mercy endures for ever'. That day saw a  
great deliverance for Israel.

26 Those of the Gentiles who escaped with their lives went and  
27 reported to Lysias all that had happened. On hearing the news he  
was overwhelmed with disappointment, because Israel had not  
suffered the disaster he had hoped for, and the issue was not what the  
king had ordered.

28 In the following year he gathered sixty thousand picked infantry  
29 and five thousand cavalry to make war on the Jews. They marched  
into Idumaea, and encamped at Bethsura, where Judas met them  
30 with ten thousand men. When he saw the strength of the enemy's  
army, he prayed: 'All praise to thee, the Saviour of Israel, who didst  
break the attack of the giant by thy servant David. Thou didst  
deliver the army of the Philistines into the power of Saul's son,  
31 Jonathan, and of his armour-bearer. In like manner put this army  
into the power of thy people Israel. Humble their pride in their  
32 forces and their mounted men. Strike them with panic, turn their  
insolent strength to water, make them reel under a crushing defeat.  
33 Overthrow them by the sword of those who love thee, and let all who  
know thy name praise thee with songs of thanksgiving.'

34 So they joined battle, and Lysias lost about five thousand men in  
35 the close fighting. When he saw his own army routed and Judas's  
army full of daring, ready to live or die nobly, he departed for  
Antioch, and there collected a force of mercenaries, in order to  
return to Judaea with a much larger army than before.<sup>a</sup>

36 But Judas and his brothers said: 'Now that our enemies have been  
crushed, let us go up to Jerusalem to cleanse the temple and re-  
37 dedicate it.' So the whole army was assembled and went up to  
38 Mount Zion. There they found the temple laid waste, the altar  
profaned, the gates burnt down, the courts overgrown like a thicket  
39 or wooded hill-side, and the priests' rooms in ruin. They tore their  
40 garments, wailed loudly, put ashes on their heads, and fell on their  
faces to the ground. They sounded the ceremonial trumpets, and  
cried aloud to Heaven.

41 Then Judas detailed troops to engage the garrison of the citadel

[a] in order . . . before: *probable meaning; Gk. obscure.*

while he cleansed the temple. He selected priests without blemish, 42  
devoted to the law, and they purified the temple, removing to an 43  
unclean place the stones which defiled it. They discussed what to do 44  
with the altar of burnt-offering, which was profaned, and rightly 45  
decided to demolish it, for fear it might become a standing reproach  
to them because it had been defiled by the Gentiles. They therefore  
pulled down the altar, and stored away the stones in a fitting place on 46  
the temple hill, until a prophet should arise who could be consulted  
about them. They took unhewn stones, as the law commands, and 47  
built a new altar on the model of the previous one. They rebuilt the 48  
temple and restored its interior, and consecrated the temple courts.  
They renewed the sacred vessels and the lamp-stand, and brought 49  
the altar of incense and the table into the temple. They burnt incense 50  
on the altar and lit the lamps on the lamp-stand to shine within the  
temple. When they had put the Bread of the Presence on the table 51  
and hung the curtains, all their work was completed.

Then, early on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, the month 52  
Kislev, in the year 148,<sup>a</sup> sacrifice was offered as the law commands 53  
on the newly made altar of burnt-offering. On the anniversary of the 54  
day when the Gentiles had profaned it, on that very day, it was re-  
dedicated, with hymns of thanksgiving, to the music of harps and  
lutes and cymbals. All the people prostrated themselves, worship- 55  
ping and praising Heaven that their cause had prospered.

They celebrated the rededication of the altar for eight days; there 56  
was great rejoicing as they brought burnt-offerings and sacrificed  
peace-offerings and thank-offerings. They decorated the front of the 57  
temple with golden wreaths and ornamental shields. They renewed  
the gates and the priests' rooms, and fitted them with doors. There 58  
was great merry-making among the people, and the disgrace brought  
on them by the Gentiles was removed.

Then Judas, his brothers, and the whole congregation of Israel 59  
decreed that the rededication of the altar should be observed with  
joy and gladness at the same season each year, for eight days,  
beginning on the twenty-fifth of Kislev.

At that time they encircled Mount Zion with high walls and strong 60  
towers to prevent the Gentiles from coming and trampling it down  
as they had done before. Judas set a garrison there; he also fortified 61  
Bethsura, so that the people should have a fortress facing Idumaea.

[a] *That is 164 B.C.*

5 WHEN THE GENTILES round about heard that the altar had  
2 been rebuilt and the temple rededicated, they were furious, and  
determined to wipe out all those of the race of Jacob who lived  
among them. Thus began the work of massacre and extermination  
among the people.

3 Judas then made war on the descendants of Esau in Idumaea and  
attacked Acrabattene, because they had hemmed Israel in. There he  
inflicted on them a severe and humiliating defeat, and took spoils  
4 from them. He remembered also the wrong done by the Baeonites,  
who with their traps and road-blocks were continually ambushing  
5 the Israelites. He first confined them to their forts and took up  
positions against them; then he solemnly committed them to destruc-  
6 tion and set the forts ablaze with all their occupants. He crossed  
over to the Ammonites, and came upon a strong and numerous force  
7 under the command of a certain Timotheus. He fought many battles  
8 with them, and they broke before him and were crushed. After  
capturing Jazer and its dependent villages, he returned to Judaea.

9 Then the Gentiles in Gilead gathered against the Israelites within  
their territory, intending to destroy them; but they took refuge in the  
10 fortress of Dathema, and sent this letter to Judas and his brothers:

11 The Gentiles round us have gathered to wipe us out. They are  
preparing to come and seize the fortress where we have taken  
12 refuge; Timotheus is in command of their army. So come at once  
and rescue us from their clutches, for many of our number have  
13 already fallen. All our fellow-Jews in the region of Tubias have  
been massacred, their wives and their children taken captive, and  
their property carried off. About a thousand men there have lost  
their lives.

14 While the letter was being read, other messengers with their  
15 garments torn arrived from Galilee. 'Ptolemais, Tyre and Sidon,'  
they said, 'and all heathen Galilee have mustered their forces to  
make an end of us.'

16 When Judas and the people heard this, a full assembly was called  
to decide what they should do for their fellow-countrymen in distress  
17 and under enemy attack. Judas said to Simon his brother, 'Choose  
your men, and go and rescue your countrymen in Galilee, while  
18 I and my brother Jonathan march into Gilead.' The rest of his forces

he left for the defences of Judaea, with Josephus son of Zacharias, and Azarias, leading citizens, and gave them this order: 'Take charge of the people of Jerusalem, but on no account join battle with the Gentiles until we return.' Simon was allotted three thousand men for the march on Galilee, and Judas eight thousand for the march on Gilead.

Simon invaded Galilee and, after many battles, broke the resistance of the Gentiles. He pursued them as far as the gate of Ptolemais, killed nearly three thousand of them, and stripped their corpses. He took back with him the Jews from Galilee and Arbatta, their wives and children, and all their property, and brought them to Judaea with great jubilation.

Meanwhile Judas Maccabaeus and his brother Jonathan crossed the Jordan and made a three days' march through the desert. They came upon some Nabataeans, who met them peacefully, and gave them an account of all that had happened to their fellow-Jews in Gilead: many of them were held prisoner in Bozrah and Bezer, in Alema, Casphor, Maked, and Carnaim—all large fortified towns; some in the other towns of Gilead. 'Your enemies', they told them, 'are marshalling their forces to storm your fortresses tomorrow so as to capture them and destroy all the Jews in them in a single day.'

Then Judas and his army suddenly turned aside to Bozrah by way of the desert, captured the town, and put all the males to the sword. He plundered all their property and set fire to the town. From there he made a night-march and came within reach of the fortress of Dathema. When dawn broke they saw in front of them an innumerable host, bringing up scaling-ladders and siege-engines and engaging the defenders, to capture the fortress. Judas saw that battle was already joined, and a cry went up to heaven from the town, with trumpeting and loud shouting. Judas said to his men: 'Now is the time to fight for our brothers.'

They marched out in three columns to take the enemy in the rear. Then they sounded the trumpets and cried aloud in prayer, and the army of Timotheus recognized that it was Maccabaeus and took to flight before him. He inflicted a severe defeat on them, and nearly eight thousand of the enemy fell that day.

Judas then turned aside to Alema,<sup>a</sup> attacked and captured it, and killed all the males. He plundered the town and set it on fire. From

[a] *Some witnesses read Maapha.*

there he moved on and occupied Casphor, Maked, Bezer, and the other towns of Gilead.

37 After these events, Timotheus gathered another army, and took  
38 up position opposite Raphon, on the other side of the ravine. Judas  
sent spies to their camp, and they reported that all the Gentiles in the  
39 neighbourhood had rallied in very great strength to Timotheus, who  
had also hired Arab mercenaries to help them; they were encamped  
on the far side of the ravine, ready to engage him in battle. So Judas  
marched to meet them.

40 As Judas and his army were approaching the flooded ravine,  
Timotheus said to his officers: 'If Judas crosses over to our side first,  
we shall not be able to stand up to him; he will certainly get the  
41 better of us. If, however, his courage fails him and he takes up a  
position on the other side of the river, then we will cross over and get  
42 the better of him.' When Judas reached the ravine, he stationed the  
officers of the muster on its bank, with instructions that no one  
should be allowed to take up a fixed position, but that all should  
43 advance to battle. Thus Judas forestalled the enemy by crossing to  
attack them, with all his people following. The Gentiles broke before  
him; they all threw away their arms and took refuge in the temple at  
44 Carnaim. Judas captured the town and burnt the temple together  
with all its occupants: Carnaim was completely subdued and could  
no longer withstand him.

45 Then Judas gathered together all the Israelites in Gilead to escort  
them to Judaea. They amounted to an immense host, small and  
46 great, women and children, with their property. They came as far as  
Ephron, a large and strongly fortified town on the road: it was impos-  
sible to pass by it on either side; the only route was through the  
47 town. But the townsmen kept them out, barricading their gates with  
48 boulders. Judas sent them a conciliatory message: 'We have to pass  
through your territory to reach our own. No one shall do you any  
harm: we shall only march through.' But they refused to open their  
gates to him.

49 Judas issued orders to the whole host for everyone to halt where he  
50 was. Then the fighting men took up battle positions and attacked the  
town all that day and all the night, until it fell into their hands.  
51 They put every male to the sword, razed the town to the ground and  
plundered it, and then marched through it over the bodies of the  
52 dead. They crossed the Jordan to the great plain opposite Bethshan,



while Judas brought up the stragglers and encouraged the people all 53  
along the road till he arrived in Judaea. They went up to Mount Zion 54  
with gladness and jubilation, and offered burnt-offerings, because  
they had returned in safety without the loss of a single man.

Now while Judas and Jonathan were in Gilead, and Simon their 55  
brother in Galilee was besieging Ptolemais, the two commanders, 56  
Josephus son of Zacharias, and Azarias, heard of their exploits in  
battle. 'We too', they said, 'must make a name for ourselves: let us go 57  
and fight the Gentiles in our neighbourhood.' So they gave orders to 58  
their forces and marched against Jamnia. Gorgias came out of the 59  
town with his men to meet them in battle; and Josephus and Azarias 60  
were routed and pursued to the frontier of Judaea. Some two  
thousand of the people fell that day. So the Israelites suffered a 61  
heavy defeat, because their commanders, thinking to play the hero  
themselves, had not obeyed Judas and his brothers. They were not, 62  
however, of that family to whom it was granted to bring deliverance  
to Israel.

Judas and his brothers won a great reputation in all Israel and 63  
among the Gentiles, wherever their fame was heard, and crowds 64  
flocked to acclaim them.

After this, Judas marched out with his brothers and made war on 65  
the descendants of Esau to the south. He struck at Hebron and its  
villages, demolished its fortifications, and burnt down its forts on all  
sides. He then set out to invade Philistine territory, marching 66  
through Marisa. On that day several priests, who had ill-advisedly 67  
gone into action wishing to distinguish themselves, fell in battle.  
Then Judas turned aside to Azotus in Philistia. He pulled down their 68  
altars, burnt the images of their gods, carried off the spoil from their  
towns, and returned to Judaea.

As King Antiochus marched through the upper provinces he heard 6  
that there was a city in Persia called Elymais, famous for its wealth  
in silver and gold. Its temple was very rich, full of gold shields, coats 2  
of mail, and arms, left there by Alexander son of Philip, king of  
Macedon and the first to be king over the Greeks. Antiochus came 3  
and tried to capture and plunder the city, but failed because his plan  
had become known to the citizens. They gave battle and put him to 4  
flight, and he withdrew to Babylon in bitter disappointment.

A messenger met him in Persia with the news that the armies which 5  
had invaded Judaea were in full retreat. Lysias had marched up with 6

an exceptionally strong force, only to be flung back before the enemy, and the strength of the Jews had grown by the capture of arms, equipment, and spoils from the Syrian armies they had defeated.

7 They had pulled down the abomination he had built on the altar in Jerusalem, and surrounded their temple with high walls as before, and had even fortified Bethsura.

8 When the king heard this news, he was thrown into such deep dismay that he took to his bed, ill with grief at the miscarriage of his  
9 plans. There he lay for many days, his bitter grief breaking out again  
10 and again, and he realized that he was dying. So he summoned all his Friends and said to them: 'Sleep has deserted me; the weight  
11 of care has broken my heart. At first I said to myself, "Why am I overwhelmed by this flood of trouble, I who was kind and well-  
12 loved in the day of my power?" But now I remember the wrong I did in Jerusalem, when I took all her vessels of silver and gold, and when I made an unjustified attempt to wipe out the inhabitants of  
13 Judaea. It is for this, I know, that these misfortunes have come upon me; and here I am, dying of grief in a foreign land.'

14 He summoned Philip, one of his Friends, and appointed him  
15 regent over his whole empire, giving him the crown, the royal robe, and the signet-ring, with authority to take his son Antiochus and  
16 bring him up to be king. King Antiochus died there in the year 149.<sup>a</sup>

17 When Lysias learnt that the king was dead, he placed the young Antiochus, whom he had brought up from boyhood, on the throne in succession to his father, and gave him the name of Eupator.

18 MEANWHILE the garrison of the citadel were confining the Israelites to the neighbourhood of the temple, and giving continual  
19 support to the Gentiles by their harassing tactics. Judas therefore determined to make an end of them. He gathered all the people  
20 together to lay siege to the citadel in the year 150,<sup>b</sup> erecting emplacements and siege-engines against the enemy.

21 Now some of the besieged garrison escaped and were joined by a  
22 number of renegade Israelites. They went to the king and said: 'How long must we wait for you to do justice and avenge our comrades? We were willing to serve your father, to follow his instructions  
23 and to obey his decrees, and what was the result? Our own countrymen became our enemies. They actually killed as many of us as they

[a] That is 163 B.C. [b] That is 162 B.C.

could find, and robbed us of our property. Nor are we the only ones 25  
to suffer at their hands. They have attacked all their neighbours as  
well. At this very moment they are besieging the citadel in Jeru- 26  
salem and mean to capture it; and they have fortified both the temple  
and Bethsura. Unless your majesty quickly overpowers them they 27  
will go to yet greater lengths, and you will not be able to keep them in  
check.'

When the king heard this he was furious. He assembled all his 28  
Friends, the commanders of his army, and his cavalry officers. He 29  
was joined by mercenary troops from other kingdoms and from the  
islands. His forces numbered one hundred thousand infantry, 30  
twenty thousand cavalry, and thirty-two war-elephants. They passed 31  
through Idumaea and laid siege to Bethsura. They kept up the attack  
for a long time and erected siege-engines, but the defenders made a  
sortie and set fire to them, and fought back manfully.

Judas now withdrew from the citadel and encamped at Beth- 32  
zacharia, opposite the camp of the king. Early next morning the king 33  
broke camp and rushed his army along the road to Bethzacharia;  
there his forces were drawn up for battle and the trumpets were  
sounded. The elephants were roused for battle with the juice of 34  
grapes and of mulberries. The great beasts were distributed among 35  
the phalanxes; by each were stationed a thousand men, equipped  
with coats of chain-mail and bronze helmets. Five hundred picked  
horsemen were also assigned to each animal. These had been 36  
stationed beforehand where the beast was; and wherever it went, they  
went with it, never leaving it. Each animal had a strong wooden tur- 37  
ret fastened on its back with a special harness, by way of protection,  
and carried four<sup>a</sup> fighting men as well as an Indian driver. The rest of 38  
the cavalry Lysias stationed on either flank of the army, to harass the  
enemy while themselves protected by the phalanxes. When the sun 39  
shone on the gold and bronze shields, they lit up the hills, which  
flashed like torches.

Part of the king's army was deployed over the heights, and part 40  
over the low ground. They advanced confidently and in good order.  
All who heard the din of this marching multitude and its clashing 41  
arms shook with fear. It was a very great and powerful array  
indeed.

Judas advanced with his army and gave battle, and six hundred of 42

[a] *Probable reading; Gk. thirty-two (compare verse 30).*

43 the king's men were killed. Eleazar Avaran, seeing that one of the  
44 elephants wore royal armour and stood out above all the rest, thought  
45 that the king was riding on it. So he gave his life to save his people  
46 and win everlasting renown for himself. He ran boldly towards it,  
into the middle of the phalanx, dealing death right and left, while  
46 they fell back on either side before him. He got in underneath the  
elephant, and thrust at it from below and killed it. It fell to the  
ground on top of him, and there he died.

47 When the Jews saw the strength and impetus of the imperial  
48 forces, they fell back before them. Part of the king's army marched  
up to Jerusalem to renew the engagement, and the king put Judaea  
49 and Mount Zion into a state of siege. He made peace with the people  
of Bethsura, who abandoned the town, having no more food there to  
withstand a siege, as it was a sabbatical year when the land was left  
50 fallow. Thus the king occupied Bethsura and detailed a garrison to  
hold it.

51 He then attacked the temple and subjected it to a long siege; he set  
up emplacements and siege-engines, with flame-throwers, catapults  
52 for discharging stones and barbed missiles, and slings. But the  
defenders too constructed engines to counter his engines, and put up  
53 a prolonged resistance. There was no food, however, in the stores<sup>a</sup>  
because of the sabbatical year; those who from time to time had  
arrived in Judaea as refugees from the Gentiles had eaten up all that  
54 remained of the provisions. There were only a few men left in the  
temple, because the famine had been too severe for them, and they  
had scattered to their own homes.

55 Lysias heard that Philip, whom King Antiochus had appointed  
56 before he died to educate his son Antiochus for the kingship, had  
returned from Persia and Media with the late king's expeditionary  
57 force, and that he was seeking to take over the government. So he  
hastily gave orders for departure, saying to the king, his com-  
manders, and his troops: 'Every day we are growing weaker, pro-  
visions are low, the place we are besieging is strong, and the affairs of  
58 the empire are pressing. So let us offer these men terms and make  
59 peace with them and their whole nation. Let us guarantee their right  
to follow their laws and customs as they used to do, for it was our  
abolition of these very customs and laws that roused their resentment,  
and produced all these consequences.'

[a] *Some witnesses read in the temple.*

The proposal met with the approval of the king and the commanders, and an offer of peace was sent and accepted. The king and his commanders bound themselves by oath, and on the agreed terms the besieged emerged from their stronghold. But when the king entered Mount Zion and saw how strongly the place was fortified, he went back on the oath he had sworn, and gave orders for the surrounding wall to be demolished. He then set off at top speed for Antioch, where he found Philip in possession; a battle ensued, and the city was taken by storm.

IN THE YEAR 151,<sup>a</sup> Demetrius son of Seleucus left Rome, landed with a handful of men at a town on the coast, and there made himself king. While he was travelling to the royal seat of his ancestors, the army seized Antiochus and Lysias, intending to hand them over to him. When this was reported to him, he said, 'Do not let me set eyes on them.' The soldiers accordingly put them to death, and Demetrius ascended the throne.

All the godless renegades from Israel, led by Alcimus, who aspired to be high priest, came to the king and brought charges against their people. They said to him: 'Judas and his brothers have killed all your supporters, and have driven us from our country. Be pleased now to send a man whom you trust, to go and see what devastation they have brought upon us and upon the king's territory, and to punish them and all their supporters.' The king chose Bacchides, one of the royal Friends, who was governor beyond the Euphrates, a man of high standing in the empire and loyal to the king. He sent him and the godless Alcimus, on whom he had conferred the high-priesthood, with orders to take vengeance on Israel.

They set out with a large army and entered Judaea. Bacchides sent envoys to Judas and his brothers to make false offers of friendship; but when they saw what a large force he had brought with him, they took no notice of these offers.

A deputation of doctors of the law came before Alcimus and Bacchides, asking for justice. The Hasidaeans were in fact the first group in Israel to make overtures to them; for they said to themselves, 'A priest of the family of Aaron has come with their forces, and he will do us no harm.' The language of Alcimus was conciliatory; he assured them on oath that no harm was intended to them or their

[a] *That is 161 B.C.*

16 friends. But once he had gained their confidence, he arrested sixty of them and put them to death in a single day; as Scripture says:

17                   ‘The bodies of thy saints were scattered,  
                    their blood was shed round Jerusalem,  
                    and there was none to bury them.’

18 This put all the people in fear and terror of them, and they said to each other, ‘There is neither truth nor justice among them; they  
19 have broken their pledge and the oath they swore.’ Then Bacchides left Jerusalem and camped in Bethzaith; and he ordered the arrest of many of those who had deserted to him, together with some of the  
20 people, and had them slaughtered and thrown into a great pit. He assigned the whole district to Alcimus, detailed some troops to assist him, and returned to the king.

21, 22 Alcimus fought hard for his high-priesthood. All the trouble-makers rallied to him; they gained control over Judaea, and did terrible damage in Israel. When Judas saw all the mischief which  
23 Alcimus and his followers had brought upon the Israelites, far worse than anything the Gentiles had done, he marched through all the  
24 territory of Judaea and its environs, punishing deserters and debar-ring them from access to the country districts. When Alcimus saw  
25 that Judas and his band had grown powerful, and recognized that he was unable to withstand them, he returned to the king and accused them of atrocities.

26 Then the king sent Nicanor, one of his distinguished commanders  
27 and a bitter enemy of Israel, with orders to wipe them out. Nicanor arrived at Jerusalem with a large force, and sent envoys to Judas and  
28 his brothers to make false offers of friendship: ‘Let there be no quarrel between us,’ he said; ‘I propose to come with a few men for a friendly personal meeting.’

29 He came to Judas and they greeted one another as friends, yet the  
30 enemy were preparing to kidnap Judas. When Judas discovered that Nicanor’s visit was a trick, he took alarm and refused to meet him  
31 again. Nicanor, realizing that his plan had been detected, marched  
32 out to engage Judas near Capharsalama. About five hundred of Nicanor’s army were killed, and the rest escaped to the city of David.

33 After these events, Nicanor went up to Mount Zion, and some of the priests and members of the senate came out from the temple to

give him a friendly welcome, and to show him the burnt-offering which was being sacrificed for the king. But he mocked them, jeered 34 at them, and spat on them,<sup>a</sup> boasting and swearing angrily: 'Unless 35 Judas and his army are surrendered to me at once, when I return victorious I will burn down this house.' And he went off in a rage. Thereupon the priests went in, and stood facing the altar and the 36 temple. They wept and said: 'Thou didst choose this house to bear 37 thy name, to be a house of prayer and supplication for thy people; take vengeance on this man and his army, and make them fall by the 38 sword. Remember all their blasphemy, and grant them no reprieve.'

Nicanor moved from Jerusalem and encamped at Beth-horon, 39 where he was joined by an army from Syria. Judas encamped at 40 Adasa with three thousand men; there he prayed in these words: 'There was a king whose followers blasphemed, and thy angel 41 came forth and struck down one hundred and eighty-five thousand of them. So do thou crush this army before us today, and let all men 42 know that Nicanor has reviled thy holy place; judge him as his wickedness deserves.'

The armies joined battle on the thirteenth of the month Adar, and 43 the army of Nicanor suffered a crushing defeat, he himself being the first to fall in the battle. When his army saw that Nicanor had fallen, 44 they threw away their arms and took to flight. The Jews, sounding the signal trumpets in the enemy's rear, pursued them as far as Gazara, a 45 day's journey from Adasa. From all the villages of Judaea round 46 about, the inhabitants came out and attacked their flanks, forcing them back upon their pursuers. They all fell by the sword; there were 47 no survivors. The Jews seized spoil and booty; they cut off Nicanor's head and that right hand which he had stretched out so arrogantly, 48 and brought them to be displayed at Jerusalem. There was great public rejoicing and that day was kept as a special day of jubilation. 49 It was ordained that the day should be observed annually, on the thirteenth of Adar. Thus Judaea entered upon a short period of 50 peace.

Now JUDAS had heard about the Romans: they were renowned 8 for their military power and for the welcome they gave to those who became their allies; any who joined them could be sure of their firm friendship. He was told about the wars they had fought, and 2

[a] *Literally* and polluted them.

the valour they had shown in their conquest of the Gauls, whom  
3 they had laid under tribute. He heard of their successes in Spain,  
4 where they had seized silver-mines and gold-mines, maintaining  
their hold on the entire country—distant as it was from their own  
land—by their patience and good judgement. There were kings from  
far and near who had marched against them, but they had been  
beaten off after crushing defeats; others paid them annual tribute.

5 They had crushed in battle and conquered Philip, and Perseus  
6 king of Kittim, and all who had attacked them. Antiochus the Great,  
king of Asia, had marched against them with one hundred and  
twenty elephants, with cavalry and chariots and an immense force,  
7 but they had totally defeated him. They had taken the king alive, and  
had required that he and his successors should pay them a large  
8 annual tribute, give hostages, and cede the territories of India,  
Media, and Lydia, together with some of their finest provinces.  
These they had taken from him and given to King Eumenes.

9, 10 When the Greeks planned to attack and destroy them, they heard  
of it and sent a single general against them. Battle was joined, and  
many of the Greeks fell; the Romans took their women and children  
prisoner, plundered their territory and annexed it, razed their  
11 fortifications, and made them slaves, as they are to this day. The  
remaining kingdoms, the islands, and all who had ever opposed  
12 them, they destroyed or reduced to slavery. With their friends,  
however, and all who put themselves under their protection, they  
maintained firm friendship. They thus conquered kings near and far,  
13 and all who heard their fame went in fear of them. Those whom they  
wished to help and to appoint as kings, became kings, and those  
they wished to depose, they deposed; and thus they rose to great  
14 heights of power. For all this, not one of them made any personal  
15 claim to greatness by wearing the crown or donning the purple. They  
had established a senate where three hundred and twenty senators  
met daily to deliberate, giving constant thought to the proper  
16 ordering of the affairs of the common people. They entrusted their  
government and the ruling of all their territory to one of their  
number every year, all obeying this one man without envy or jealousy  
among themselves.

17 Judas accordingly chose Eupolemus son of John son of Accos, and  
Jason son of Eleazar, and sent them to Rome to conclude a treaty  
18 of friendship and alliance, so that the Romans might rid them of



tyranny, for it was clear that the Greek empire was reducing Israel to slavery. They made the long journey to Rome and entered the Senate, where they spoke as follows: 'Judas, known as Maccabaeus, his brothers, and the Jewish people have sent us to you to conclude a treaty of friendly alliance with you, so that we may be enrolled as your allies and friends.' The Romans found the proposal acceptable, and the following is a copy of the reply which they inscribed on tablets of bronze and sent to Jerusalem, so that the Jews there might have a record of the treaty of alliance:

Success to the Romans and the Jewish nation by sea and land for ever! May sword and foe be far from them! But if war breaks out first against Rome or any of her allies throughout her dominion, then the Jewish nation shall support them whole-heartedly as occasion may require. To the enemies of Rome or of her allies the Jews shall neither give nor supply provisions, arms, money, or ships; so Rome has decided; and they shall observe their commitments, without compensation.

Similarly, if war breaks out first against the Jewish nation, then the Romans shall give them hearty support as occasion may require. To their enemies there shall be given neither provisions, arms, money, nor ships; so Rome has decided. These commitments shall be kept without breach of faith.

These are the terms of the agreement which the Romans have made with the Jewish people. But if, hereafter, both parties shall agree to add or to rescind anything, then they shall do as they decide; any such addition or rescindment shall be valid.

To this the Romans added: As for the misdeeds which King Demetrius is perpetrating against the Jews, we have written to him as follows: 'Why have you oppressed our friends and allies the Jews so harshly? If they make any further complaint against you, then we will see that justice is done them, and will make war upon you by sea and by land.'

When Demetrius heard that Nicanor and his forces had fallen in battle, he sent Bacchides and Alcimus a second time into Judaea, with the right wing of his army. They marched along the Gilgal road, laid siege to Messaloth in Arbela, and captured it, inflicting heavy loss of life.

3 In the first month of the year 152,<sup>a</sup> they moved camp to Jeru-  
 4 salem. From there they marched to Berea with twenty thousand  
 5 infantry and two thousand cavalry. Now Judas was in camp at  
 6 Alasa, with three thousand picked men. But when they saw the size  
 of the enemy forces, their courage failed, and many deserted, leaving  
 a mere eight hundred men in the field.

7 When Judas saw that with the campaign going against him his  
 army had melted away, his heart sank, for there was no time to rally  
 8 them. Though much discouraged, he said to those who were left,  
 9 'Let us move to the attack and see if we can defeat them.' But his  
 men tried to dissuade him: 'Impossible!' they said. 'No; let us save  
 our lives now and come back later with our comrades to fight them.  
 10 Now we are too few.' But Judas replied: 'Heaven forbid that  
 I should do such a thing as run away! If our time is come, let us die  
 bravely for our fellow-countrymen, and leave no stain on our  
 honour.'

11 The Syrian army left its camp and took up position to meet the  
 Jews. The cavalry<sup>b</sup> was divided into two detachments; the slingers  
 and the archers went ahead of the main force, and the picked troops  
 12 were in the front line. Bacchides was on the right. The phalanx came  
 13 on in two divisions with trumpets sounding; Judas's men also  
 sounded their trumpets. The earth shook at the din of the armies  
 as battle was joined, and they fought from dawn until evening.

14 When Judas saw that Bacchides and the main strength of his army  
 was on the right flank, all his stout-hearted men rallied to him,  
 15 and they broke the Syrian right; then he pursued them as far as  
 16 Mount Azotus. When the Syrians on the left wing saw that their  
 right had been broken, they turned about and followed on the heels of  
 17 Judas and his men, attacking them in the rear. The fighting became  
 18 very heavy, and many fell on both sides. Judas himself fell, and the  
 19 rest of the Jews took to flight. Jonathan and Simon carried off Judas  
 20 their brother; they buried him in the family tomb at Modin, and  
 wept over him. Great was the grief in Israel, and they mourned him  
 for many days, saying,

21 'How is our champion fallen,  
 the saviour of Israel!'

[a] That is 160 B.C. [b] The Syrian army...cavalry: or The Jewish army left its camp and stood to meet the enemy. The Syrian cavalry...

The rest of the history of Judas, his wars, exploits, and achievements 22  
—all these were so numerous that they have not been written down.

AFTER THE DEATH of Judas the renegades raised their heads in 23  
every part of Israel, and all the evil-doers reappeared. In those 24  
days a terrible famine broke out, and the country went over to their  
side. Bacchides chose apostates to be in control of the country. 25  
These men set inquiries on foot, and tracked down the friends of 26  
Judas and brought them before Bacchides, who took vengeance on  
them, loading them with indignities. It was a time of great affliction 27  
for Israel, worse than any since the day when prophets ceased to  
appear among them. Then all the friends of Judas assembled and 28  
said to Jonathan: 'Since your brother Judas died, there has not been 29  
a man like him to take the lead against our enemies, Bacchides and  
those of our own nation who are hostile to us. Today, therefore, we 30  
choose you to succeed him as our ruler and leader and to fight our  
battles.' So Jonathan took over the leadership at that time in place of 31  
his brother Judas.

The news reached Bacchides, and he set himself to kill Jonathan. 32  
When Jonathan and his brother Simon and all their men learnt of 33  
this, they took refuge in the desert of Tekoa, encamping by the pool  
of Asphar. Bacchides discovered this on the sabbath, and crossed the 34  
Jordan with his whole army. So Jonathan sent his brother John to 35  
take the camp followers and appeal to his friends the Nabataeans to  
look after their baggage train, which was of some size. But the 36  
Jambrites appeared from Medaba and kidnapped John; they seized  
the baggage and made off with it. Some time afterwards, news was 37  
brought to Jonathan and his brother Simon that the Jambrites were  
celebrating an important wedding, and bringing the bride, the  
daughter of one of the great nobles of Canaan, from Nadabath with 38  
a large retinue. Remembering how their brother John had been  
killed, Jonathan and his men set out and hid themselves under cover 39  
of a hill. They looked out and there they saw the bridegroom, in the  
middle of a bustling crowd and a train of baggage, coming to meet  
the bridal party, escorted by his friends and kinsmen fully armed, to  
the sound of drums and instruments of music. Emerging from 40  
ambush, Jonathan attacked and cut them down; many fell, while  
others made off into the hills and the Jews took all their goods as  
spoil. So the wedding was turned into mourning, and the sound of 41

42 music to lamentation. The blood of their brother was fully avenged,  
and Jonathan returned to the marshes of Jordan.

43 Bacchides heard this and came to the banks of Jordan on the  
44 sabbath with a powerful force. Jonathan said to his men: 'Now is  
the time to fight for our lives; we are today in worse plight than ever:  
45 the enemy in front, the water of Jordan behind, to right and left  
46 marsh and thicket; there is no escape. Cry to Heaven to save you  
47 from the hands of the enemy.' Battle was joined, and Jonathan had  
raised his hand to strike down Bacchides, when he fell back and  
48 evaded him. Then Jonathan and his men leapt into the Jordan and  
swam over to the other side; but the enemy did not cross the river in  
49 pursuit. The army of Bacchides lost about a thousand men that day.

50 Bacchides returned to Jerusalem and fortified with high walls,  
gates, and bars a number of places in Judaea: the fortress at Jericho,  
Emmaus and Beth-horon, Bethel, Timnath-pharathon, and Tephon;  
51, 52 in all of these he placed garrisons to harass Israel. He fortified the  
towns of Bethsura and Gazara and the citadel, placing forces and  
53 stores of provisions there. He took the sons of the leading men of the  
country as hostages and put them under guard in the citadel at  
Jerusalem.

54 In the second month of the year 153,<sup>a</sup> Alcimus gave orders for the  
wall of the inner court of the temple to be demolished, thereby  
55 destroying the work of the prophets. But at the moment when he  
began demolition, Alcimus had a stroke, which put a stop to his  
activities. Paralysed and with his speech impaired, he could not  
56 utter a word or give final instructions about his property. Thus  
57 he died in great torment. On learning that Alcimus was dead,  
Bacchides returned to the king, and for two years Judaea had peace.

58 Then the renegades put their heads together: 'Look!' they said,  
'Jonathan and his people are living in peace and security. Let us  
bring Bacchides here; he will capture them all in a single night.'  
59, 60 They went and conferred with Bacchides, and he set out with a large  
force, sending letters secretly to all his supporters in Judaea, with  
instructions to seize Jonathan and his men. But they were unable to  
61 do so, because their plan leaked out. About fifty of the ringleaders  
62 of this villainy in Judaea were seized and put to death. Jonathan,  
Simon, and their men then made their way out to Bethbasi in the  
63 desert, built up its ruined fortifications, and strengthened it. When

[a] *That is 159 B.C.*

Bacchides learnt of this, he gathered together all his army and sent word to those in Judaea. He came and took up position against 64 Bethbasi, and attacked it for a long time, erecting siege-engines. Jonathan left his brother Simon in the town and slipped out into the 65 country with a few men. He attacked Odomera and his people and 66 the Phasirites in their encampment; he began to get the better of 67 them and to advance towards Bethbasi with his forces.

Simon and his men made a sally out of the town and set fire to the siege-engines. They fought Bacchides and defeated him. They kept 68 up heavy pressure upon him, and so his plan and his expedition proved fruitless. There was great anger against the renegades at 69 whose instance he had invaded the land, and many of them were put to death. Bacchides then decided to return to his own country.

When Jonathan learnt of this, he sent envoys to Bacchides to 70 arrange terms of peace with him and a return of the Jewish prisoners. Bacchides agreed and did as Jonathan proposed, swearing to do him 71 no harm for the rest of his life. He sent him back the prisoners he 72 had taken previously from Judaea, and returned to his own country; never again did he enter their territory. So the war came to an end in 73 Israel. Jonathan took up residence in Michmash and began to govern the people, rooting the godless out of Israel.

### *Jonathan rules the nation*

IN THE YEAR 160,<sup>a</sup> Alexander Epiphanes son of Antiochus came and 10 took possession of Ptolemais, where he was welcomed and proclaimed king. When King Demetrius heard of this, he raised a huge 2 army and marched out to meet him in battle. At the same time 3 Demetrius sent Jonathan a letter in friendly and flattering terms; for 4 he said to himself, 'Let us forestall Alexander by making peace with the Jews before Jonathan comes to terms with him against us, for he 5 will remember all the harm we have done him by our treatment of his brothers and of his nation.' He gave Jonathan authority to collect 6 and equip an army, conferred on him the title of ally, and ordered the hostages in the citadel to be handed over to him. Jonathan came to 7 Jerusalem and read the letter aloud before all the people and the

[a] That is 152 B.C.

8 garrison of the citadel, who were filled with apprehension when they  
 heard that the king had given Jonathan authority to raise an army.  
 9 They surrendered the hostages to him, and he restored them to their  
 parents.

10 Jonathan took up his quarters in Jerusalem and began to repair  
 11 and rebuild the city. He gave orders to those engaged on the work to  
 build the walls and surround Mount Zion with a fortification of  
 12 squared stones, and this was done. The foreigners in the strongholds  
 13 which Bacchides had built made their escape, each man leaving his  
 14 post and returning to his own country; however, in Bethsura there  
 were still left some of those who had abandoned the law and  
 ordinances, and had found asylum there.

15 King Alexander heard of the promises which Demetrius had sent  
 to Jonathan, and was told of the battles and heroic deeds of Jonathan  
 16 and his brothers, and the hardships they had endured. 'Where shall  
 we ever find another man like this?' he exclaimed. 'Let us make him  
 17 our friend and ally.' He therefore wrote a letter to Jonathan to this  
 effect:

18 King Alexander to his brother Jonathan, greeting.

19 We have heard about you, what a valiant man you are and how  
 20 fit to be our friend. Now therefore we do appoint you this day to  
 be High Priest of your nation with the title of King's Friend, to  
 support our cause and to keep friendship with us.

He sent him a purple robe and a gold crown.

21 Jonathan assumed the vestments of the high priest in the seventh  
 month of the year 160<sup>a</sup> at the Feast of Tabernacles, and he gathered  
 an army together and prepared a large supply of arms.

22, 23 When this news reached Demetrius he was mortified. 'How did  
 we come to let Alexander forestall us', he asked, 'in gaining the  
 24 friendship and support of the Jews? I too will send them cordial  
 25 messages and offer honours and gifts to keep them on n.y side.' So  
 he sent a message to the Jews to this effect:

King Demetrius to the Jewish nation, greeting.

26 We have heard with great pleasure that you have kept your  
 agreements and remained in friendship with us and have not gone  
 27 over to our enemies. Continue, then, to keep faith with us, and we

[a] *That is 152 B.C.*

shall reward you well for all that you do in our cause, both by 28  
granting you numerous exemptions and making you gifts.

I hereby release and exempt you and all Jews whatsoever from 29  
tribute, from the tax on salt, and from the crown-money. From 30  
today and hereafter I release you from the one-third of the grain-  
harvest and the half of the fruit-harvest due to me. From today  
and for all time, I will no longer exact them from Judaea or from  
the three administrative districts, formerly part of Samaria and  
Galilee, which I now attach to Judaea. Jerusalem and its environs, 31  
with its tithes and tolls, shall be sacred and tax free. I also sur- 32  
render authority over the citadel in Jerusalem and grant the High  
Priest the right to garrison it with men of his own choice. All 33  
Jewish prisoners of war taken from Judaea into any part of my  
kingdom, I set at liberty without ransom. No man shall exact any  
levy whatsoever on the cattle of the Jews. All their festivals, 34  
sabbaths, new moons, and appointed days, and three days preced-  
ing and following each festival, shall be days of exemption and  
release for all the Jews in my kingdom; no one shall have authority 35  
to impose any exaction or burden on a Jew in any respect.

Jews shall be enlisted in the forces of the King to the number 36  
of thirty thousand men; they shall receive the usual army pay.  
Some of them shall be stationed in the great royal fortresses, others 37  
put in positions of trust in the kingdom. Their commanders and  
officers shall be of their own race, and they shall follow their own  
customs, just as the King has ordered for Judaea.

The three districts added to Judaea from the territory of Samaria 38  
shall be attached to Judaea so as to be under one authority, and  
subject to the High Priest alone.

Ptolemais and the lands belonging to it I make over to the temple 39  
in Jerusalem, to meet the expenses proper to it. I give fifteen 40  
thousand silver shekels annually, charged on my own royal  
accounts, to be drawn from such places as may prove convenient.  
And the arrears of the subsidy, in so far as it has not been paid by 41  
the revenue officials, as it formerly was, shall henceforth be paid in  
for the needs of the temple. In addition, the five thousand silver 42  
shekels which used to be taken from the annual income of the  
temple are also released, because they belong to the ministering  
priests. Whoever shall take sanctuary in the temple at Jerusalem, 43  
or in any part of its precincts, because of a debt to the crown or

any other debt, shall be free from distraint on his person or on his  
 44 property within my kingdom. The cost of the rebuilding and  
 45 repair of the temple shall be borne by the royal revenue; also the  
 repair of the walls of Jerusalem and its surrounding fortification, as  
 well as of the fortresses in Judaea, shall be at the expense of the  
 royal revenue.

46 When Jonathan and the people heard these proposals, they did not  
 believe or accept them, for they recalled the terrible calamity the  
 47 king had brought upon Israel, and his harsh oppression. They  
 favoured Alexander, because it was he who had been the initiator of  
 peaceful overtures; so they remained his allies to the end.

48 King Alexander mustered powerful forces and took up position  
 49 against Demetrius, and the two kings joined battle. The army of  
 Alexander took to flight, and Demetrius pursued him and got the  
 50 better of them. He fought hard till sunset, but on that day Demetrius  
 fell.

51 Thereupon Alexander sent ambassadors to Ptolemy king of  
 52 Egypt, with a message to this effect: 'I have returned to my kingdom  
 and sit on the throne of my ancestors. I have assumed the govern-  
 ment, defeated Demetrius, and made myself master of our country;  
 53 for I gave him battle, and he and his army were crushed by us, and we  
 54 sit on the throne of his kingdom. Let us now form an alliance; make  
 me your son-in-law by giving me your daughter in marriage, and  
 I will give presents to you and her worthy of your royal state.'

55 King Ptolemy replied: 'It was a happy day when you returned to  
 the land of your ancestors and ascended the throne of their realm.  
 56 I will now do as you ask; only come to Ptolemais so that we may meet,  
 and I will become your father-in-law as you propose.'

57 In the year 162,<sup>a</sup> Ptolemy set out from Egypt, with his daughter  
 58 Cleopatra, and arrived at Ptolemais, where King Alexander met him,  
 and Ptolemy gave him his daughter in marriage. The wedding was  
 celebrated in royal style, with great pomp.

59, 60 King Alexander wrote to Jonathan to come and meet him. Jona-  
 than went in state to Ptolemais, where he met the two kings; he gave  
 them silver and gold, and also made many gifts to their Friends; and  
 so he won their favour.

61 There were some scoundrelly Jewish renegades who conspired to

[a] That is 150 B.C.



lodge complaints against Jonathan. The king, however, paid no attention to them, but gave orders for Jonathan to be divested of the garment he wore and robed in purple, and this was done. The king made him sit at his side, and told his officers to go with Jonathan into the centre of the city and proclaim that no one should bring any complaint against him or make trouble for him for any reason whatsoever. When this proclamation was made and those who planned to lodge complaints saw Jonathan's splendour, and the purple robe he wore, they all made off. Thus the king honoured him, enrolling him in the first class of the order of King's Friends, and making him a general and a provincial governor. Jonathan returned to Jerusalem well pleased with his success.

IN THE YEAR 165,<sup>a</sup> Demetrius, the son of King Demetrius, arrived in the land of his fathers from Crete. King Alexander was greatly upset by this news, and returned to Antioch. Demetrius appointed as his commander Apollonius the governor of Coele-syria, who raised a powerful force and encamped at Jamnia. From there he sent this message to Jonathan the high priest: 'You are all alone in resisting us, and you are making me look ridiculous and absurd. Why do you defy us up there in the hills? If you have confidence in your forces, come down to meet us on the plain, and let us try conclusions with each other there, for I have the power of cities behind me. Make inquiries; find out who I am and who are our allies; you will be told that you cannot stand your ground against us, for your predecessors have twice been routed in their own territory, and now you will not be able to resist my cavalry, and such a force as mine, on the plain, where there is not so much as a stone or a pebble to give you cover, or any place to which you can escape.'

Jonathan was provoked by this message from Apollonius. He took ten thousand men and marched out from Jerusalem, and was joined by his brother Simon with reinforcements. He laid siege to Joppa, whose gates the citizens had closed against him because Apollonius had a garrison there. But when fighting started, the citizens took fright and opened the gates; thus Jonathan became master of Joppa. When Apollonius heard of it he took three thousand cavalry and a large force of infantry, and marched to Azotus as if to pass through it, but at the same time, relying on his numerous cavalry, he advanced

[a] *That is 147 B.C.*

78 into the plain. Jonathan went in pursuit as far as Azotus, where the  
79 armies joined battle. But Apollonius had left a thousand cavalry in  
80 hiding in their rear, and Jonathan discovered that there was an  
ambush behind him. The enemy surrounded his army, showering  
81 arrows on our people from dawn till dusk. But they stood fast as  
82 Jonathan had ordered them, and the enemy cavalry grew weary. At  
that point Simon led out his troops and joined battle with the enemy  
phalanx, now that the cavalry was exhausted. They were routed by  
him and took to flight.

83 The horsemen scattered across the plain and took refuge in  
Azotus, where they sought asylum in the temple of Dagon their idol.  
84 But Jonathan set fire to Azotus and its surrounding villages, and  
plundered them; the temple of Dagon, and those who had taken  
85 refuge there, he destroyed with fire. The numbers of those who fell  
by the sword, together with those who lost their lives in the fire,  
86 reached eight thousand. Jonathan marched away from Azotus, and  
encamped at Ascalon, where the citizens came out to meet him with  
87 great pomp. Then he and his men returned to Jerusalem loaded with  
spoil.

88 When King Alexander heard of all this, he did Jonathan still  
89 greater honour, sending him the gold clasp which it is the custom to  
give to the King's Kinsmen. He also presented him with Accaron  
and all its districts.

11 The king of Egypt collected a huge army, countless as the sand on  
the sea-shore, and a great fleet of ships, meaning to make himself  
master of Alexander's kingdom by treachery and add it to his own.  
2 He set out for Syria with professions of peace, and the people of the  
towns proceeded to open their gates to him and went to meet him;  
King Alexander had ordered them to do this, because Ptolemy was  
his father-in-law.

3 As he went on his progress from town to town, Ptolemy left a  
4 detachment of troops in each of them as a garrison. When he reached  
Azotus, he was shown the burnt-out temple of Dagon, the city itself  
and its ruined suburbs strewn with corpses, and, piled up along his  
way, the bodies of those who had been burned in the course of the  
5 fighting. They told the king that it was Jonathan's doing, hoping that  
6 he would reprimand him; but the king said nothing. Jonathan met  
him in state at Joppa, where they exchanged greetings and passed the  
7 night. Jonathan accompanied the king as far as the river Eleutherus

and then returned to Jerusalem. King Ptolemy made himself master 8  
of the coast towns as far as Seleucia-by-the-sea. He was harbouring  
malicious designs against Alexander.

He sent ambassadors to King Demetrius with the following 9  
message: 'I propose that you and I should make a pact: I will give  
you my daughter, now Alexander's wife, and you shall reign over the  
kingdom of your father. I now regret having given my daughter to 10  
him, for he has tried to kill me.'

He maligned Alexander in this way because he coveted his king- 11  
dom, and he took his daughter away and gave her to Demetrius. 12  
This led to a breach between him and Alexander, and to open  
enmity.

Ptolemy now entered Antioch, where he assumed the crown of 13  
Asia; thus he wore two crowns, that of Egypt and that of Asia.

King Alexander was at this time in Cilicia, because the inhabitants 14  
of that region were in revolt. But when he heard the news he 15  
marched against Ptolemy, who came to meet him with a powerful  
army and routed him. Alexander fled to Arabia for protection, and 16  
King Ptolemy was triumphant. Zabdiel the Arab chieftain cut off 17  
Alexander's head and sent it to Ptolemy. But two days later King 18  
Ptolemy died, and his garrisons in the fortresses were killed by the  
inhabitants. So in the year 167<sup>a</sup> Demetrius became king. 19

At this time Jonathan gathered together the Judaeans to assault the 20  
citadel in Jerusalem, and they brought up many siege-engines against  
it. But a number of renegades, enemies of their own people, went to 21  
the king and reported that Jonathan was besieging the citadel. The 22  
king was furious at the news and immediately moved his quarters to  
Ptolemais. He wrote to Jonathan ordering him to raise the siege, and  
to meet him for conference at Ptolemais with all speed.

When Jonathan received this letter, he gave orders for the siege to 23  
be continued. Then, selecting elders of Israel and priests to accom-  
pany him, he set out on his dangerous mission. He took with him 24  
silver and gold, and robes, and many other gifts, and went to meet  
the king at Ptolemais.

He won the favour of Demetrius, although some renegade Jews 25  
tried to lodge complaints against him. But the king treated him just 26  
as his predecessors had done, honouring him in the presence of all  
his Friends. He confirmed him in the high-priesthood and in all his 27

[a] That is 145 B.C.

former dignities, and appointed him head of the first class of the King's Friends.

28 Jonathan requested the king to exempt Judaea and the three Samaritan districts<sup>a</sup> from tribute, promising him in return three  
29 hundred talents. King Demetrius consented, writing to Jonathan on all these affairs as follows:

30 King Demetrius to his brother Jonathan, and to the Jewish nation, greeting.

31 This is a copy of our letter written to our kinsman Lasthenes about you, which we have had made for your information:

32 'King Demetrius to his respected kinsman Lasthenes, greeting.

33 'Because our friends the Jewish nation show us goodwill, and observe their obligations to us, we are resolved to become their  
34 benefactor. We have therefore settled on them the lands of Judaea and the three districts, Apherema, Lydda, and Ramathaim, which are now transferred from Samaria to Judaea, together with all the lands adjacent thereto, for the benefit of the priesthood at Jerusalem. This is a transfer of the annual dues which the King formerly received from these territories, from the produce of the  
35 soil and of the orchards. Other of our revenues, the tithes and tolls now pertaining to us, the salt-pans, and the crown-money, all these  
36 we shall cede to them. These provisions are irrevocable from now  
37 for all future time. See to it then that you make a copy of them to be given to Jonathan and set by him in a conspicuous position on the holy mountain.'

38 When King Demetrius saw that the country was quiet under his rule and resistance was at an end, he disbanded all his forces, sending every man home, with the exception of the foreign mercenaries he had hired from the islands of the Gentiles. Then all the troops enlisted  
39 under his predecessors turned against the king. A certain Trypho, formerly of the party of Alexander, aware of the disaffection of all the forces towards Demetrius, went to Imalcue, the Arab chieftain, who  
40 had charge of the child Antiochus, Alexander's son, and kept pressing him to hand the boy over to him to be made king in succession to his father. He also informed Imalcue of all the measures Demetrius was taking and of his unpopularity with his troops. There he remained for some time.

[a] three . . . districts: *probable reading*; *Gk.* three districts and Samaria.

Meanwhile Jonathan sent to King Demetrius requesting him to 41  
withdraw, from the citadel in Jerusalem and from the fortresses, the  
garrisons which were constantly harassing Israel. Demetrius sent 42  
Jonathan this reply: 'I will not only meet your request, but when  
opportunity arises I will do you and your people the highest honour.  
And now be so good as to send men to support me, for all my troops 43  
are in revolt.'

Jonathan dispatched three thousand fighting men to Antioch, and 44  
the king was much relieved at their arrival. The citizens poured into 45  
the centre of the city, a hundred and twenty thousand strong, bent on  
killing the king. He took refuge in the palace, while the citizens 46  
seized control of the streets and fighting broke out. King Demetrius 47  
called the Jews to his assistance, and they rallied to him at once.  
They then dispersed all over the city and slaughtered that day as  
many as a hundred thousand, setting the city on fire and taking much 48  
booty. And thus they saved the king's life.

When the citizens saw that the Jews had the city completely at 49  
their mercy, their courage failed them and they clamoured to the  
king to accept their surrender and to stop the Jews fighting against 50  
them and the city. They threw down their arms and made peace; and 51  
the Jews, now in high repute with the king and all his subjects,  
returned to Jerusalem loaded with booty. But when King Demetrius 52  
was secure upon his throne, with the country quiet under him,  
he went back on all his promises and broke off relations with 53  
Jonathan; instead of repaying the benefits he had received, he put  
severe pressure upon him.

After this, Trypho returned, and with him Antiochus, a mere lad. 54  
Antiochus was crowned, and all the forces Demetrius had so con- 55  
temptuously discharged rallied to the king. These fought against  
Demetrius, and he was utterly routed. Trypho brought up his 56  
elephants and made himself master of Antioch. The young Antiochus 57  
wrote to Jonathan confirming him in the high-priesthood, with  
authority over the four districts, and making him one of the King's 58  
Friends. He also sent him a service of gold plate, and gave him the  
right to drink from a gold cup, to be robed in purple, and to wear 59  
the gold clasp. He appointed Jonathan's brother Simon as officer  
commanding the area from the Ladder of Tyre to the borders of  
Egypt.

Jonathan made a tour through the country on the far side of the 60

river and the towns there; and all the forces of Syria gathered to his support.

He went to Ascalon, where he was received with great honour by the citizens. From there he went on to Gaza, but the inhabitants closed the gates against him; so he blockaded the city, set fire to its suburbs, and plundered them. The citizens of Gaza then sought peace, and he made terms with them, taking the sons of their magistrates as hostages and sending them off to Jerusalem; he himself continued his progress through the country in the direction of Damascus.

Jonathan heard that Demetrius's officers had arrived at Kedesh-in-Galilee with a large force to prevent him from reaching his objective. He went to meet them, leaving his brother Simon in Judaea. Simon took up position against Bethsura and, after prolonged fighting, blockaded it. Finally the citizens sued for terms of peace and Simon consented; he evicted them, took over the town, and installed a garrison there.

Jonathan, who had encamped with his army by the Lake of Gennesaret, marched out early in the morning into the plain of Asor. There in the plain the gentile army was advancing to meet him; they had set an ambush for him in the hills, while they themselves confronted him. When the men from the ambush emerged and joined in the fighting, all Jonathan's men took to flight; not one remained except Mattathias son of Absalom, and Judas son of Chalphi, officers in the army. Jonathan tore his clothes, put dust upon his head, and prayed. Then he turned upon the enemy and routed them in headlong flight. When the fugitives of Jonathan's army saw this, they rallied to him and joined in the pursuit as far as the enemy base at Kedesh; there they encamped. That day about three thousand of the Gentiles fell. Jonathan then returned to Jerusalem.

JONATHAN NOW SAW his opportunity and sent picked men on a mission to Rome to confirm and renew the treaty of friendship with that city. He sent letters to the same effect to Sparta and to other places. The envoys travelled to Rome and went to the Senate House to deliver their message: 'Jonathan the High Priest and the Jewish people have sent us to renew their former pact of friendship and alliance.' The Romans gave them letters requiring the authorities in each place to give them safe conduct to Judaea.

Here follows a transcript of the letter which Jonathan wrote to the Spartans:

Jonathan the High Priest, the Senate of the Jews, the priests, and the rest of the Jewish people, to our brothers of Sparta, greeting.

On a previous occasion a letter was sent to Onias the High Priest from Arius your king, acknowledging our kinship; a copy is given below. Onias welcomed your envoy with full honours and received the letter in which the terms of the alliance and friendship were set forth. We do not regard ourselves as needing such alliances, since our support is the holy books in our possession. Nevertheless, we now venture to send and renew our pact of brotherhood and friendship with you, so that we may not become estranged, for it is many years since you wrote to us. We never lose any opportunity, on festal and other appropriate days, of remembering you at our sacrifices and in our prayers, as it is right and proper to remember kinsmen; and we rejoice at your fame. We ourselves have been under the pressure of hostile attacks on every side; all the surrounding kings have made war upon us. In the course of these wars we had no wish to trouble you or the rest of our allies and friends: we have the aid of Heaven to support us, and so we have been saved from our enemies, and they have been humbled. Accordingly, we chose Numenius son of Antiochus, and Antipater son of Jason, and have sent them to the Romans to renew our former friendship and alliance with them. We instructed them to go to you also with our greetings, and to deliver this letter about the renewal of our pact of brotherhood. And now we pray you to send us a reply to this letter.

This is a copy of the letter sent by the Spartans to Onias:

Arius, King of Sparta, to Onias the High Priest, greeting.

A document has come to light which shows that Spartans and Jews are kinsmen, descended alike from Abraham. Now that we have learnt this, we beg you to write and tell us how your affairs prosper. The message we return to you is, 'What is yours, your cattle and every kind of property, is ours, and what is ours is yours', and we have therefore instructed our envoys to report to you in these terms.

24 Jonathan heard that Demetrius's generals had returned to attack  
25 him with larger forces than before. He marched from Jerusalem and  
26 met them in the region of Hamath, giving them no chance to set foot  
27 in his territory. He sent spies to their camp, who on their return  
28 reported that preparations were being made for a night attack. At  
29 sunset Jonathan gave orders to his men to stay awake and stand to  
30 arms all night, ready for battle; and he stationed outposts all round  
31 the camp. When the enemy heard that Jonathan and his men were  
32 ready for battle, they were alarmed; their courage failed, and they  
33 withdrew, first lighting watch-fires in their camp. Jonathan and his  
34 men, seeing the watch-fires burning, did not realize what had hap-  
pened until morning. Then Jonathan set out in pursuit, but failed to  
overtake them, for they had crossed the river Eleutherus. So Jonathan  
turned aside against the Arabs called Zabadaeans, and he dealt them  
a severe blow and plundered them. He struck camp and came to  
Damascus, and then made a march through the whole country.

33-34 Simon set out and marched as far as Ascalon and the neighbouring  
fortresses. He then turned towards Joppa; he had heard that the  
citizens intended to hand it over to the supporters of Demetrius, but  
before they could do so, he occupied the town and placed a garrison  
there to defend it.

35 When Jonathan returned he convened the senate. With their  
36 agreement he decided to build fortresses in Judaea, to heighten the  
walls of Jerusalem, and to erect a high barrier to separate the citadel  
from the city and so to isolate it that the garrison could not buy or  
37 sell. They assembled to rebuild the city, for the wall along the ravine  
to the east had partly collapsed, and he repaired the section of the  
38 wall called Chaphenatha. Simon also rebuilt and fortified Adida in  
the Shephelah, erecting gates and bars.

39 Trypho now aspired to be king of Asia; he meant to rebel against  
40 King Antiochus and assume the crown himself. But he was afraid  
that Jonathan would fight to prevent this, so he cast about for some  
means of capturing and killing him. He set off and reached Bethshan.  
41 Jonathan marched out to meet him with forty thousand picked troops,  
42 and he also reached Bethshan. Trypho, seeing that Jonathan had a  
43 large force with him, was afraid to attack. So he received him  
honourably and commended him to all his Friends, gave him  
presents, and ordered his Friends and his troops to obey Jonathan as  
44 they would himself. He said to Jonathan: 'Why have you put all



these men to so much trouble, when we are not at war? Send them 45  
home now and choose a few to accompany you, and come with me  
to Ptolemais. I will hand it over to you with all the other fortresses,  
the rest of the troops, and all the officials, and then I will leave the  
country. This is the only purpose of my coming.' Jonathan took him 46  
at his word and did as he said: he dismissed his forces and they  
returned to Judaea. He kept back three thousand men, of whom he 47  
left two thousand in Galilee, while a thousand accompanied him. But 48  
when Jonathan entered Ptolemais, the citizens closed the gates,  
seized him, and put to the sword all who had entered with him.

Trypho sent a force of infantry and cavalry into Galilee to the 49  
great plain, to wipe out all Jonathan's men. They now learnt that 50  
Jonathan had been seized and was lost, along with his escort, but  
they put heart into one another and marched in close formation,  
ready for battle. When their pursuers saw that they would fight to 51  
the death, they turned back. So all came safely home to Judaea, 52  
mourning for Jonathan and his followers, and filled with alarm. All  
Israel was plunged in grief. The surrounding Gentiles were now 53  
bent on destroying them root and branch, saying to themselves, 'The  
Jews have no leader or champion, so now is the time to attack, and  
we shall blot out all memory of them among men.'

### *The high-priesthood of Simon*

THE NEWS REACHED Simon that Trypho had mustered a large 13  
force for the invasion and destruction of Judaea, and it threw the 2  
people into a state of panic. When Simon saw this, he went up to  
Jerusalem, called an assembly, and encouraged them in these words: 3  
'I need not remind you of all that my brothers and I and my father's  
house have done for the laws and the holy place, what battles we  
have fought, what hardships we have endured. My brothers have all 4  
fallen in this cause, fighting for Israel, and I am the only one left.  
Now Heaven forbid that I should grudge my own life in any moment 5  
of danger, for I am not worth more than my brothers. No! I will 6  
take up the cause of my nation and the holy place, of your wives and  
children, since all the Gentiles in their hatred have gathered to  
destroy us.' At these words the people plucked up courage, and they 7, 8

shouted in answer: 'You shall be our leader in place of Judas and  
9 your brother Jonathan. Fight our battles, and we will do whatever  
10 you tell us.' So Simon mustered all the fighting men and hurried on  
the completion of the walls of Jerusalem until it was fortified on all  
11 sides. He sent Jonathan son of Absalom with a considerable force to  
Joppa; he expelled its inhabitants and remained in possession of the  
town.

12 Trypho marched out from Ptolemais with a large force to invade  
13 Judaea, taking Jonathan with him as a prisoner. Simon encamped at  
14 Adida on the edge of the plain. When Trypho learnt that Simon  
had come forward to take the place of his brother Jonathan, and that  
he was about to join battle with him, he sent envoys to Simon with  
15 the following message: 'We are detaining your brother Jonathan  
because of certain monies which he owed to the royal treasury in  
16 connection with the offices he held. To ensure that he will not again  
revolt if we release him, send one hundred talents of silver and two of  
17 his sons as hostages, and we will let him go.' Simon himself realized  
that this was a trick, but he had the money and the children brought  
to him, fearing that otherwise he might arouse deep animosity among  
18 the people, who would say, 'It was because you did not send the  
19 money and the children that Jonathan lost his life.' So he sent the  
children and the hundred talents, but Trypho broke his word and  
did not release Jonathan.

20 After this, Trypho set out to invade the country and ravage it,  
taking a roundabout way through Adora. Simon and his army  
21 marched parallel with him everywhere he went. Meanwhile the  
garrison of the citadel were sending emissaries to Trypho, urging him  
to come to them by way of the desert, and to send them provisions.  
22 Trypho prepared to send all his cavalry, but that night there was a  
severe snow-storm, which prevented their arrival; so he withdrew  
23 into Gilead. When he reached Bascama, he had Jonathan put to  
24 death, and there he was buried. Trypho then turned and went back  
to his own country.

25 Simon had the body of his brother Jonathan brought to Modin,  
26 and buried in the town of their fathers; and all Israel made a great  
27 lamentation and mourned him for many days. Simon built a high  
monument over the tomb of his father and his brothers, visible at a  
28 great distance, faced back and front with polished stone. He erected  
seven pyramids, those for his father and mother and his four brothers

arranged in pairs. For the pyramids he contrived an elaborate setting: he surrounded them with great columns surmounted with trophies of armour for a perpetual memorial, and between the trophies carved ships, plainly visible to all at sea. This mausoleum which he made at Modin stands to this day.

Trypho now plotted against the young King Antiochus and murdered him. He usurped his throne and assumed the crown of Asia. This was a disaster for the country.

Simon rebuilt the fortresses of Judaea, furnishing them with high towers and great walls with gates and bars; he also provisioned the fortresses. He sent representatives to King Demetrius to negotiate a remission of taxes for the country, on the ground that all Trypho's exactions had been exorbitant. Demetrius replied favourably to this request and wrote him a letter in the following terms:

King Demetrius to Simon the High Priest and friend of kings, and to the Senate and nation of the Jews, greeting.

We have received the golden crown and the palm branch which you sent, and we are ready to make a lasting peace with you and to instruct the revenue officers to grant you immunities. All our agreements with you stand, and the strongholds which you built shall remain yours. We give a free pardon for any errors of omission or commission, to take effect from the date of this letter. We remit the crown-money which you owed us, and every other tax formerly exacted in Jerusalem is henceforth cancelled. All those of you who are suitable for enrolment in our retinue shall be so enrolled. Let there be peace between us.

In the year 170,<sup>a</sup> Israel was released from the gentile yoke. The people began to write on their contracts and agreements, 'In the first year of Simon, the great high priest, general and leader of the Jews'.

Then Simon invested Gazara,<sup>b</sup> and surrounded it with his forces. He constructed a siege-engine and brought it up to the town, made a breach in one of the towers and captured it. The men on the siege-engine leapt out of it into the town, and there was a great commotion. The townspeople and their wives and children climbed up on to the city wall with their garments torn, clamouring to Simon to offer them terms. 'Do not treat us as our wickedness deserves,' they cried, 'but as your mercy prompts you.' Simon came to terms with

[a] That is 142 B.C. [b] Probable reading; Gk. Gaza.

them, and brought the war to an end. But he expelled them from the town, and after purifying the houses in which the idols stood, he  
 48 made his entry with songs of thanksgiving and praise. He removed every pollution from it and settled men in it who would keep the law. He strengthened its fortifications and built a residence there for himself.

49 The men in the citadel in Jerusalem were prevented from going in and out to buy and sell in the country; famine set in and many of  
 50 them died of starvation. They clamoured to Simon to accept their surrender, and he agreed: he expelled them from the citadel and  
 51 cleansed it from its pollutions. It was on the twenty-third day of the second month in the year 171<sup>a</sup> that he made his entry, with a chorus of praise and the waving of palm branches, with lutes, cymbals, and zithers, with hymns and songs, to celebrate Israel's final riddance of a  
 52 formidable enemy. Simon decreed that this day should be observed as an annual festival. He fortified the temple hill opposite the citadel,  
 53 and he and his men took up residence there. When Simon saw that his son John had become a man, he made him commander of all the forces, with Gazara as his headquarters.

14 In the year 172,<sup>b</sup> King Demetrius mustered his army and went into Media to recruit additional forces for his war against Trypho.

2 When Arsakes king of Persia and Media heard that Demetrius had entered his territories, he sent one of his generals to capture him alive.

3 The general marched out and defeated Demetrius, captured him and brought him to Arsakes, who put him in prison.

4 As long as Simon lived, Judaea was at peace. He promoted his people's welfare, and they lived happily all through the glorious days  
 5 of his reign. Among other notable achievements he captured the  
 6 port of Joppa to secure his communications overseas. He extended his nation's territories and made himself master of the whole land.  
 7 He repatriated a large number of prisoners of war. Without meeting any resistance he gained control over Gazara and Bethsura and over the citadel, and removed their pollution.

8 They farmed their land in peace, and the land produced its crops,  
 9 and the trees in the plains their fruit. Old men sat in the streets, talking together of their blessings; and the young men dressed  
 10 themselves in splendid military style. Simon supplied the towns with food in plenty and equipped them with weapons for defence.

[a] That is 141 B.C. [b] That is 140 B.C.

His renown reached the ends of the earth. He restored peace to the land, and there were great rejoicings throughout Israel. Each man sat under his own vine and fig-tree, and they had no one to fear. Those were days when every enemy vanished from the land and every hostile king was crushed. Simon gave his protection to the poor among the people; he paid close attention to the law and rid the country of lawless and wicked men. He gave new splendour to the temple and furnished it with a wealth of sacred vessels.

THE REPORT OF Jonathan's death reached Rome, and Sparta too, and they were deeply grieved. When they heard, however, that his brother Simon had become high priest in his place, and was in firm control of the country and the towns in it, they inscribed on bronze tablets a renewal of the treaty of friendship and alliance which they had established with his brothers Judas and Jonathan. This was read before the assembly in Jerusalem. The following is a copy of the letter from Sparta:

The rulers and city of Sparta to the High Priest Simon, to the Senate, the priests, and the rest of the Jewish people, our brothers, greeting.

The envoys you sent to our people have told us about your fame and honour; their visit has given us great pleasure. We have entered a transcript of the message they brought in the minutes of the public assembly: 'Numenius son of Antiochus, and Antipater son of Jason, envoys of the Jews, visited us to renew their treaty of friendship with us. It was resolved by the public assembly to receive these men with honour and to place a copy of their address in the public archives, so that the Spartans might have it on permanent record. A copy of this document has been made for Simon the High Priest.'

After this, Simon sent Numenius to Rome with a large gold shield, worth a thousand minas, to confirm the alliance with the Romans.

When the people heard of these events they asked themselves how they could show their gratitude to Simon and his sons. For he, with his brothers and his father's family, had stood firm, fought off the enemies of Israel, and ensured his nation's freedom. So an inscription was engraved on tablets of bronze and placed on a monument on Mount Zion. A copy of the inscription follows:

On the eighteenth day of the month Elul, in the year 172,<sup>a</sup> the  
28 third year of Simon's high-priesthood, at Asaramel, in a large  
assembly of priests, people, rulers of the nation, and elders of the  
29 land, the following facts were placed on record. Whereas our land  
had been subject to frequent wars, Simon son of Mattathias, a  
priest of the Joarib family, and his brothers, risked their lives in  
resisting the enemies of their people, in order that the temple and  
law might be preserved, and they brought great glory to their  
30 nation. Jonathan rallied the nation, became their high priest, and  
31 then was gathered to his fathers. Their enemies resolved to invade  
32 their land and destroy it, and to attack the temple. Then Simon came  
forward and fought for his nation. He spent large sums of his own  
money to arm the soldiers of his nation and to provide their pay.  
33 He fortified the towns of Judaea, and Bethsura on the boundaries  
of Judaea, formerly an enemy arsenal, and stationed a garrison  
34 of Jews there. He fortified Joppa by the sea, and Gazara near  
Azotus, formerly occupied by the enemy. There he settled Jews,  
and provided these towns with everything needful for their welfare.  
35 When the people saw Simon's patriotism and his resolution to win  
fame for his nation, they made him their leader and high priest, in  
recognition of all that he had done, of his just conduct, his loyalty  
36 to his nation, and his constant efforts to enhance its renown. His  
leadership was crowned with success, and the Gentiles were  
expelled from the land, as were also the troops in Jerusalem who  
had built themselves a citadel in the city of David, from which  
they sallied forth to bring defilement upon the whole precinct  
37 of the temple and do violence to its purity. He settled Jews in  
it and fortified it for the security of the land and of the city, and  
38 he raised the height of the walls of Jerusalem. King Demetrius  
39 confirmed him in the office of high priest, made him one of his  
40 Friends, and granted him the highest honours; for he had heard  
that the Romans were naming the Jews friends, allies, and brothers,  
and had gone in state to meet Simon's envoys.

41 The Jews and their priests confirmed Simon as their leader and  
high priest in perpetuity until a true prophet should appear.  
42 He was to be their general, and to have full charge of the temple;  
and in addition to this the supervision of their labour, of the  
country, and of the arms and fortifications was to be entrusted to

[a] *That is 140 B.C.*

him. He was to be obeyed by all; all contracts in the country were 43  
to be drawn up in his name. He was to wear the purple robe and  
the gold clasp.

None of the people or the priests shall have authority to abrogate 44  
any of these decrees, to oppose commands issued by Simon or  
convene any assembly in the land without his consent, to be robed  
in purple, or to wear the gold clasp. Whoever shall contravene these 45  
provisions or neglect any of them shall be liable to punishment.  
It is the unanimous decision of the people that Simon shall 46  
officiate in the ways here laid down. Simon has agreed and con- 47  
sented to be high priest, general and ethnarch of the Jews and the  
priests, and to be the protector of them all.

This inscription, it was declared, should be engraved on bronze 48  
tablets and set up within the precincts of the temple in a con-  
spicuous position, and copies should be placed in the treasury, in the 49  
keeping of Simon and his sons.

Antiochus son of King Demetrius sent a letter from overseas to 15  
Simon the high priest and ethnarch of the Jews, and to the whole  
nation. The contents were as follows: 2

King Antiochus to Simon, High Priest and Ethnarch, and to the  
Jewish nation, greeting.

Whereas certain traitors have seized my ancestral kingdom, 3  
I have now decided to assert my claim to it, so that I may restore it  
to its former condition. I have raised a large body of mercenaries  
and fitted out ships of war. I intend to land in my country and to 4  
attack those who have ravaged my kingdom and destroyed many of  
its cities. Now therefore I confirm all the tax remissions which my 5  
royal predecessors granted you, and all their other remissions of  
tribute. I permit you to mint your own coinage as currency for 6  
your country. Jerusalem and the temple shall be free. All the 7  
arms you have prepared, and the fortifications which you have  
built and now hold, shall remain yours. All debts now owing to 8  
the royal treasury and all future liabilities thereto shall be cancelled  
from this time on for ever. When we have re-established our 9  
kingdom, we shall confer the highest honours upon you, your  
nation and temple, to make your country's greatness apparent to  
the whole world.

10 In the year 174,<sup>a</sup> Antiochus marched into his ancestral domain, and  
 all the armed forces came over to him, leaving very few with  
 11 Trypho. Antiochus pursued him, and Trypho came as a fugitive to  
 12 Dor by the sea. He knew that his position was desperate now that all  
 13 his troops had deserted. Antiochus, at the head of a hundred and  
 twenty thousand trained soldiers and eight thousand horsemen, laid  
 14 siege to Dor. He encircled the town, and his ships joined in the  
 blockade from the sea. He thus exerted heavy pressure on it from  
 both land and sea, and prevented anyone from leaving or entering.

15 NUMENIUS AND HIS PARTY arrived from Rome with a letter  
 to the various kings and countries, which read as follows:

16 Lucius, Consul of the Romans, to King Ptolemy, greeting.

17 Envoys have come to us from our friends and allies the Jews,  
 sent by Simon the High Priest and the Jewish people, to renew  
 18 their original treaty of friendship and alliance. They brought a  
 19 gold shield worth a thousand minas. We have decided, therefore,  
 to write to the kings and countries, requiring them to do no harm  
 to the Jews, nor make war on them or their cities or their country,  
 20 nor ally themselves with those who so make war. And we have  
 21 decided to accept the shield from them. If therefore any traitors  
 have escaped from their country to you, hand them over to Simon  
 the High Priest to be punished by him according to the law of  
 the Jews.

22 The same message was sent to King Demetrius, to Attalus,  
 23 Ariarathes, Arsakes, Sampsakes, and the Spartans, and also to the  
 following places: Delos, Myndos, Sicyon, Caria, Samos, Pamphylia,  
 Lycia, Halicarnassus, Rhodes, Phaselis, Cos, Sidé, Aradus, Gortyna,  
 24 Cnidus, Cyprus, and Cyrene. A copy was sent to Simon the high  
 priest.

25 KING ANTIOCHUS laid siege to Dor for the second time,<sup>b</sup> and  
 launched repeated attacks against it; he had siege-engines con-  
 structed, and blockaded Trypho, preventing all movement in or out  
 of the town.

26 Simon sent Antiochus two thousand picked men to assist him,  
 27 with silver and gold and much equipment; but he refused the offer.

[a] That is 138 B.C. [b] Some witnesses read on the second day.



He repudiated all his previous agreements with Simon and broke off relations. He sent Athenobius, one of the Friends, to parley with him. This was his message: 'You are occupying Joppa and Gazara and the citadel in Jerusalem, cities that belong to my kingdom. You have laid waste their territories, and done great damage to the country, and have made yourselves masters of many places in my kingdom. I demand the return of the cities you have captured and the surrender of the tribute exacted from places beyond the frontiers of Judaea over which you have assumed control. Otherwise, you must pay five hundred talents of silver on their account, and another five hundred as compensation for the destruction you have caused and for the loss of tribute from the cities. Failing this, we shall go to war with you.'

Athenobius, the King's Friend, came to Jerusalem, and when he saw the splendour of Simon's establishment, the gold and silver vessels on his sideboard, and his display of wealth, he was amazed. He delivered the king's message, to which Simon replied: 'We have not occupied other people's land or taken other people's property, but only the inheritance of our ancestors, unjustly seized for a time by our enemies. We have grasped our opportunity and have claimed our patrimony. With regard to Joppa and Gazara, which you demand, these towns were doing a great deal of damage among our people and in our land. For these we offer one hundred talents.'

Athenobius answered not a word, but went off in a rage to the king; he reported what Simon had said, and described Simon's splendour and all the things he had seen. The king was furious.

Meanwhile Trypho boarded a ship and made good his escape to Orthosia. The king appointed Kendebaeus as commander-in-chief of the coastal zone, and gave him infantry and cavalry. He instructed him to blockade Judaea, to rebuild Kedron and strengthen its gates, and to make war on our people, while he himself continued the pursuit of Trypho. Kendebaeus arrived in Jamnia and began to harass our people by invading Judaea, and by capturing and killing the inhabitants. He rebuilt Kedron, stationing cavalry and troops there to sally out and patrol the roads of Judaea, in accordance with the king's instructions.

John came from Gazara and reported to his father Simon the results of Kendebaeus's campaign. Simon summoned his two eldest sons Judas and John, and said to them: 'My brothers and I and my

father's family have fought Israel's battles from our youth until this day, and many a time we have been successful in rescuing Israel.

3 Now I am old, but mercifully you are in the prime of life. Take my place and my brother's and go out and fight for our nation. And may help from on high be with you.'

4 He then levied from the country twenty thousand picked warriors and cavalry, and they marched against Kendebaeus. After passing  
5 the night at Modin they rose early and proceeded to the plain, where a large force of infantry and cavalry stood ready to meet them on the  
6 far side of a gully. When his army had taken up a position opposite, John saw that his men were afraid to cross the gully. So he crossed  
7 first himself; his men saw him and followed. John drew up his army with the cavalry in the centre of the infantry, for the enemy cavalry  
8 were very numerous. The trumpets were sounded, and Kendebaeus and his army were routed; many of them fell, and the remainder took  
9 refuge in the fortress. It was in this engagement that John's brother Judas was wounded. John kept up the pursuit until Kendebaeus  
10 reached Kedron, which he had rebuilt. The enemy took refuge in the towers in the open country round Azotus, whereupon John set fire to Azotus. Some two thousand of the enemy fell in the fighting, and John returned to Judaea in safety.

11 Now Ptolemaeus son of Abubus had been appointed commander  
12 for the plain of Jericho. He had great wealth, for he was the high  
13 priest's son-in-law. But he became over-ambitious; he proposed to make himself master of the country and plotted to put Simon and his  
14 sons out of the way. In the course of a tour to inspect the towns in that region and to attend to their needs, Simon came to Jericho with his sons Mattathias and Judas in the year 177,<sup>a</sup> in the eleventh  
15 month, the month of Shebat. The son of Abubus, with treachery in his heart, received them at the small fort called Dok which he had built, and entertained them lavishly. But he had men in conceal-  
16 ment there, and when Simon and his sons had drunk freely, Ptolemaeus and his accomplices jumped up, seized their weapons, and rushed in to the banquet. They attacked Simon and killed him, along  
17 with his two sons and some of his servants. It was an act of base treachery in which evil was returned for good.

18 Ptolemaeus sent news of this in a dispatch to the king, asking him to send troops to his assistance and to give him authority over the

[a] *That is 134 B.C.*

country and its towns. He sent some of his men to Gazara to kill 19  
John, and wrote to the army officers urging them to join him, and  
offering them silver and gold and presents. Other troops he sent to 20  
take Jerusalem and the temple hill. But someone ran ahead and 21  
reported to John at Gazara that his father and brothers had been  
murdered, and that Ptolemaeus had sent men to kill him as well.  
When John heard this he was beside himself; he arrested the men 22  
who came to kill him, and put them to death, because he had dis-  
covered their plot against his life.

The rest of the story of John, his wars and the deeds of valour he 23  
performed, the walls he built, and his exploits, are written in the 24  
annals of his high-priesthood from the time when he succeeded his  
father.

# THE SECOND BOOK OF THE MACCABEES

*Foreword: letters to the Jews in Egypt*

1 **T**O THEIR JEWISH KINSMEN in Egypt, the Jews who are in Jerusalem and those in the country of Judaea send brotherly greeting.

2 May God give you peace and prosperity and remember his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, his faithful servants.

3 May he give to you all a will to worship him, to fulfil his purposes  
4 eagerly with heart and soul. May he give you a mind open to his law  
5 and precepts. May he make peace and answer your prayers, and be  
6 reconciled to you and not forsake you in an evil hour. Here and now we are praying for you.

7 In the reign of Demetrius, in the year 169,<sup>a</sup> we the Jews wrote to you during the persecution and the crisis that came upon us in those years since the time when Jason and his partisans revolted from the  
8 holy land and the kingdom. They set the porch of the temple on fire and shed innocent blood. Then we prayed to the Lord and were answered. We offered a sacrifice and fine flour, we lit the lamps, and  
9 set out the Bread of the Presence. And now, you are to observe the celebration of a Feast of Tabernacles in the month Kislev.

10 Written in the year 188.<sup>b</sup>

FROM THE PEOPLE of Jerusalem and Judaea, from the Senate, and from Judas, to Aristobulus, the teacher of King Ptolemy and a member of the high-priestly family, and to the Jews in Egypt, greeting and good health.

11 We have been saved by God from great dangers, and give him all  
12 thanks, as men standing ready to resist the king. It was God who drove out the enemy force in the holy city.

13 For when the king went into Persia with an army that seemed invincible, they were cut to pieces in the temple of Nanaea through a  
14 stratagem employed by Nanaea's priests. Antiochus, along with his

[a] That is 143 B.C. [b] That is 124 B.C.

Companions, arrived at the temple to marry the goddess, in order to secure the considerable treasure by way of dowry. After this had been laid out by the priests, he went into the temple precinct with a small retinue. When Antiochus entered, the priests shut the sanctuary, opened a secret door in the panelling, and hurled stones at them. The king fell, as if struck by a thunderbolt. They hacked off limbs and heads and threw them to those outside. Blessed in all things be our God, who handed over the evil-doers to death!

We are about to celebrate the purification of the temple on the twenty-fifth of Kislev, and think it right to inform you, so that you also for your part may celebrate a Feast of Tabernacles, in honour of the fire which appeared when Nehemiah offered sacrifices, after he had built the temple and the altar. When our fathers were carried off to Persia, the pious priests of those days secretly took fire from the altar and concealed it in a dry well. It proved a safe hiding-place and remained undiscovered. After many years had passed, in God's good time, Nehemiah was sent back by the king of Persia. He then dispatched the descendants of the priests who had hidden it to get the fire, and they informed our people that they found, not fire, but a thick liquid. Nehemiah ordered them to draw some out and bring it to him. When the materials of the sacrifice had been presented, he ordered the priests to sprinkle this liquid over the wood and the things laid upon it, and this was done. Some time passed; then the sun, which earlier had been hidden by clouds, shone out and the altar burst into a great blaze, so that everyone marvelled. As the sacrifice was burning, the priests offered prayer, they and all those present: Jonathan began and the rest responded, led by Nehemiah.

The prayer was in this style: 'O Lord God, creator of all things, thou the terrible, the mighty, the just, and the merciful, the only King, the only gracious one, the only giver, the only just, omnipotent, and everlasting one, who dost deliver Israel from every evil, who didst choose the patriarchs and set them apart: accept this sacrifice on behalf of thy whole people Israel; they are thy own, watch over them and sanctify them. Gather the dispersed, free those who are in slavery among the heathen, look favourably on the despised and detested; let the heathen know that thou art our God. Punish our oppressors for their insolent brutality and make them suffer torment; but plant thy people in thy holy place, as Moses said.'

Then the priests chanted the hymns. After the materials of the

sacrifice had been consumed, Nehemiah further ordered what remained of the liquid to be poured over some great stones.<sup>a</sup> At this a flame shot up, but burnt itself out as soon as the fire on the altar outshone it.<sup>b</sup>

These events became widely known. The king of Persia was told that, in the place where the priests who were deported had hidden the fire, a liquid had appeared, and that Nehemiah and his companions had used it to burn up the materials of the sacrifice. When he had verified the fact, the king enclosed the site and made it sacred. The custodians he appointed received a share of the very substantial revenue that the king derived from it. Nehemiah and his companions called the liquid 'nephthar', which means 'purification'; but most people call it 'naphtha'.

The records show that it was the prophet Jeremiah who ordered the exiles to hide the fire, as has been mentioned; also that, having given them the law, he charged them not to neglect the ordinances of the Lord, or be led astray by the sight of images of gold and silver with all their finery. In similar words he appealed to them not to abandon the law.

Further, this document records that, prompted by a divine message, the prophet gave orders that the Tent of Meeting and the ark should go with him. Then he went away to the mountain from the top of which Moses saw God's promised land. When he reached the mountain, Jeremiah found a cave-dwelling; he carried the tent, the ark, and the incense-altar into it, then blocked up the entrance. Some of his companions came to mark out the way, but were unable to find it. When Jeremiah learnt of this he reprimanded them. 'The place shall remain unknown', he said, 'until God finally gathers his people together and shows mercy to them. Then the Lord will bring these things to light again, and the glory of the Lord will appear with the cloud, as it was seen both in the time of Moses and when Solomon prayed that the shrine might be worthily consecrated.'

It was also related that Solomon, having the gift of wisdom, offered the dedication sacrifice at the completion of the temple; and that, just as Moses prayed to the Lord and fire came down from heaven and burnt up the sacrificial offerings, so Solomon prayed and

[a] what remained . . . stones: so some witnesses; others read that great stones should enclose what remained of the liquid. [b] Or but hardly had the light been reflected from the altar, when it burnt itself out.

the fire came down and consumed the whole-offerings. (Moses said: 11  
'The sin-offering was burnt up in the same way because it was not  
eaten.') Solomon celebrated the feast for eight days. 12

These same facts are set out in the official records and in the 13  
memoirs of Nehemiah. Just as Nehemiah collected the chronicles of  
the kings, the writings of prophets, the works of David, and royal  
letters about sacred offerings, to found his library, so Judas also has 14  
collected all the books that had been scattered as a result of our recent  
conflict. These are in our possession, and if you need any of them, 15  
send messengers for them.

As, then, we are about to celebrate the purification of the temple, 16  
we are writing to impress upon you the duty of celebrating this  
festival. God has saved his whole people and granted to all of us the 17  
holy land, the kingship, the priesthood, and the consecration, as he  
promised by the law; and in him we have confidence that he will soon 18  
be merciful to us and gather us from every part of the world to the  
holy temple. For he has delivered us from great evils and purified  
the temple.

### *Preface to this abridgement*

**I**N FIVE BOOKS Jason of Cyrene has set out the history of Judas 19  
Maccabaeus and his brothers, the purification of the great temple,  
and the dedication of the altar. He has described the battles with 20  
Antiochus Epiphanes and with his son Eupator, and the apparitions 21  
from heaven which appeared to those who vied with one another in  
fighting manfully for Judaism. Few though they were, they ravaged  
the whole country and routed the foreign hordes; they restored the 22  
world-renowned temple, freed the city of Jerusalem, and reaffirmed  
the laws which were in danger of being abolished. All this they  
achieved because the Lord was merciful and gracious to them.

These five books of Jason I shall try to summarize in a single work; 23  
for I was struck by the mass of statistics and the difficulty which the  
bulk of the material causes to those wishing to grasp the narratives of 24  
this history. I have tried to provide for the entertainment of those 25  
who read for pleasure, the convenience of students who must com-  
mit the facts to memory, and the profit of even the casual reader.  
The task which I have taken upon myself in making this summary is 26

- 27 no easy one. It means toil and late nights, just as it is no light task for the man who plans a dinner-party and aims to satisfy his guests. Nevertheless, I will gladly undergo this hard labour for the benefit  
 28 of<sup>a</sup> readers in general. I shall leave to the original author the minute discussion of every detail, and concentrate on the main points of my  
 29 outline. As the architect of a new house must concern himself with the whole of the structure, while the man who paints in encaustic on the walls needs to discover only what is necessary for the ornamenta-  
 30 tion, so, I judge, it is with me also. It is the province of the original author of a history to take possession of the field, to spread himself in  
 31 discussion, and to inquire closely into particular questions. The man who makes a paraphrase must be allowed to aim at conciseness of expression and to omit a full treatment of the subject-matter.  
 32 Here, then, without adding anything further, I begin my narrative. It would be absurd to make a lengthy introduction to the history and cut short the history itself.

### *Syrian oppression of the Jews*

- 3 DURING THE RULE of the high priest Onias, the holy city enjoyed complete peace and prosperity, and the laws were still observed most scrupulously, because he was a pious man and hated wicked-  
 2 ness. The kings themselves held the sanctuary in honour and used to  
 3 embellish the temple with the most splendid gifts; even Seleucus, king of Asia, bore all the expenses of the sacrificial worship from his own revenues.  
 4 But a certain Simon, of the clan Bilgah,<sup>b</sup> who had been appointed administrator of the temple, quarrelled with the high priest about the  
 5 regulation of the city market. Unable to get the better of Onias, he went to Apollonius son of Thrasaeus, then governor of Coele-syria  
 6 and Phoenicia, and alleged that the treasury at Jerusalem was full of untold riches—indeed the total of the accumulated balances was incalculable and did not correspond with the account for the sacrifices; he suggested that these balances might be brought under the  
 7 control of the king. When Apollonius met the king, he reported what

[a] for...of: so some witnesses; others read to win the gratitude of... [b] So some witnesses (compare Nehemiah 12. 5, 18); others read Benjamin.



he had been told about the riches. The king selected Heliodorus, his chief minister, and sent him with orders to remove these treasures.

Heliodorus set off at once, ostensibly to make a tour of inspection 8 of the cities of Coele-syria and Phoenicia, but in fact to carry out the purpose of the king. When he arrived at Jerusalem and had been 9 courteously received by the high priest and the citizens, he explained why he had come: he told them about the allegations and asked if they were in fact true. The high priest intimated that the deposits 10 were held in trust for widows and orphans, apart from what belonged 11 to Hyrcanus son of Tobias, a man of very high standing; the matter was being misrepresented by the impious Simon. In all there were 12 four hundred talents of silver and two hundred of gold. It was unthinkable, he said, that wrong should be done to those who had relied on the sanctity of the place, on the dignity and inviolability of the world-famous temple. But Heliodorus, in virtue of the king's orders, 13 replied that these deposits must without question be handed over to the royal treasury.

He fixed a day and went into the temple to make an inventory. At 14 this there was great distress throughout the whole city. The priests, 15 prostrating themselves in their vestments before the altar, prayed to Heaven, to the Lawgiver who had made deposits sacred, to keep them intact for their rightful owners. The high priest's looks pierced 16 every beholder to the heart, for his face and its changing colour betrayed the anguish of his soul. Alarm and shuddering gripped 17 him, and the pain he felt was clearly apparent to the onlookers. The people rushed pell-mell from their houses to join together in 18 supplication because of the dishonour which threatened the holy place. Women in sackcloth, their breasts bare, filled the streets; un- 19 married girls who were kept in seclusion ran to the gates or walls of their houses, while others leaned out from the windows; all with out- 20 stretched hands made solemn entreaty to Heaven. It was pitiful to 21 see the crowd all lying prostrate in utter confusion, and the high priest in an agony of apprehension.

While the people were calling upon the Lord Almighty to keep 22 the deposits intact and safe for those who had deposited them, Heliodorus proceeded to carry out his decision. But at the very 23, 24 moment when he arrived with his bodyguard at the treasury, the Ruler of spirits and of all powers produced a mighty apparition, so that all who had the audacity to accompany Heliodorus were faint

25 with terror, stricken with panic at the power of God. They saw a horse, splendidly caparisoned, with a rider of terrible aspect; it rushed fiercely at Heliodorus and, rearing up, attacked him with its  
26 hooves. The rider was wearing golden armour. There also appeared to Heliodorus two young men of surpassing strength and glorious beauty, splendidly dressed. They stood on either side of him and  
27 scourged him, raining ceaseless blows upon him. He fell suddenly to the ground, overwhelmed by a great darkness, and his men  
28 snatched him up and put him on a litter. This man, who so recently had entered the treasury with a great throng and his whole body-guard, was now borne off by them quite helpless, publicly compelled to acknowledge the sovereignty of God.<sup>a</sup>

29 While he lay speechless, deprived by this divine act of all hope of  
30 recovery, the Jews were praising the Lord for the miracle he had performed in his own house. The temple, which a short time before was full of alarm and confusion, now overflowed with joy and festivity, because the Lord Almighty had appeared.

31 Some of Heliodorus's companions hastily begged Onias to pray to the Most High, and so to spare the life of their master now lying at his  
32 very last gasp. The high priest, fearing that the king might suspect that Heliodorus had met with foul play at the hands of the Jews, brought a sacrifice for the man's recovery. As the high priest was making the expiation, the same young men, dressed as before, again appeared to Heliodorus. They stood over him and said: 'Be very grateful to Onias the high priest; for his sake the Lord has spared  
34 your life. You have been scourged by God; now tell all men of his mighty power.' When they had said this, they vanished.

35 Heliodorus offered a sacrifice and made lavish vows to the Lord who had spared his life; then, after taking friendly leave of Onias, he  
36 led his troops back to the king. He bore witness to everyone of the miracles of the supreme God which he had seen with his own eyes.

37 When the king asked him what sort of man would be suitable to  
38 send to Jerusalem another time, Heliodorus replied: 'If you have an enemy or someone plotting against your government, that is the place to send him; you will receive him back soundly flogged, if he survives at all, for beyond doubt there is a divine power surrounding  
39 the temple. He whose habitation is in heaven watches over it himself

[a] was now . . . of God: *so some witnesses; others read* they, recognizing the sovereignty of God, now bore off quite helpless.

and gives it his aid; those who approach the place with evil intent he strikes and destroys.'

So runs the story of Heliodorus and the preservation of the 40 treasury.

BUT THE SIMON mentioned earlier, the man who had made 4 allegations against his country about the money, slandered Onias, alleging that he had attacked Heliodorus and had been the author of these troubles. He had the effrontery to accuse him of 2 conspiracy against the government—this benefactor of the holy city, this protector of his fellow-Jews, this zealot for the laws. The enmity 3 grew so great that one of Simon's trusted followers even resorted to murder. Onias, realizing that Simon's rivalry was dangerous and 4 that Apollonius son of Menestheus, governor of Coele-syria and Phoenicia, was encouraging his evil ways, paid a visit to the king. 5 He did not appear as an accuser of his fellow-citizens, but as concerned for the interests of all the Jews, both as a nation and as individuals. For he saw that unless the king intervened there could not 6 possibly be peace in public affairs, nor could Simon be stopped in his mad course.

But when Seleucus was dead and had been succeeded by Antio- 7 chus, known as Epiphanes, Jason, Onias's brother, obtained the high-priesthood by corrupt means. He petitioned the king and 8 promised him three hundred and sixty talents in silver coin immediately, and eighty talents from future revenue. In addition he 9 undertook to pay another hundred and fifty talents for the authority to institute a sports-stadium, to arrange for the education of young men there, and to enrol in Jerusalem a group to be known as the 'Antiochenes'.<sup>a</sup> The king agreed, and, as soon as he had seized the 10 high-priesthood, Jason made the Jews conform to the Greek way of life.

He set aside the royal privileges established for the Jews through 11 the agency of John, the father of that Eupolemus who negotiated a treaty of friendship and alliance with the Romans. He abolished the lawful way of life and introduced practices which were against the law. He lost no time in establishing a sports-stadium at the foot of 12 the citadel itself, and he made the most outstanding of the young men assume the Greek athlete's hat. So Hellenism reached a high 13

[a] Or enrol the inhabitants of Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch.

point with the introduction of foreign customs through the boundless wickedness of the impious Jason, no true high priest. As a result, the priests no longer had any enthusiasm for their duties at the altar, but despised the temple and neglected the sacrifices; and in defiance of the law they eagerly contributed to the expenses of the wrestling-school whenever the opening gong called them. They placed no value on their hereditary dignities, but cared above everything for Hellenic honours. Because of this, grievous misfortunes beset them, and the very men whose way of life they strove after, and tried so hard to imitate, turned out to be their vindictive enemies. To act profanely against God's laws is no light matter, as will become clear in due time.

When the quinquennial games were being held at Tyre in the presence of the king, the blackguard Jason sent, as envoys to represent Jerusalem, Antiochenes carrying three hundred drachmas in cash for the sacrifice to Hercules. Even the bearers thought it improper that this money should be used for a sacrifice, and considered that it should be spent otherwise. So, thanks to the bearers, the money designed by the sender for the sacrifice to Hercules went to fit out the triremes.

When Apollonius son of Menestheus was sent to Egypt for the enthronement of King Philometor, Antiochus learnt that Philometor was now hostile to his state, and became anxious for his own security. So he went to Joppa, and then on to Jerusalem, where he was lavishly welcomed by Jason and the city and received with torchlight and ovations. After this, he quartered his army in Phoenicia.

Three years later, Jason sent Menelaus, brother of the Simon mentioned above, to convey money to the king and to carry out his directions about urgent business. But Menelaus established his position with the king by acting as if he were a person of great authority, outbid Jason by three hundred talents in silver, and so diverted the high-priesthood to himself. He arrived back with the royal mandate, but with nothing else to make him worthy of the high-priesthood; he still had the temper of a cruel tyrant and the fury of a savage beast. Jason, who had supplanted his own brother, was now supplanted in his turn and forced to flee to Ammonite territory. As for Menelaus, he continued to hold the high-priesthood but without ever paying any of the money he had promised the king, although it was demanded by Sostratus, the

commander of the citadel, who was responsible for collecting the revenues. In consequence they were both summoned by the king. As their deputies, Menelaus left his brother Lysimachus, and Sostratus left Crates, the commander of the Cypriots.

It was at this point that the inhabitants of Tarsus and Mallus revolted, because their cities had been handed over as a gift to the king's concubine, Antiochis. The king hastened off to restore order, leaving as regent Andronicus, one of his ministers. Menelaus, thinking he had obtained a favourable opportunity, made a present to Andronicus of some of the gold plate belonging to the temple which he had appropriated. He had already sold some of it to Tyre and to the neighbouring cities. When Onias heard this on good authority, he withdrew to sanctuary at Daphne near Antioch and denounced him. As a result, Menelaus approached Andronicus privately and urged him to kill Onias. The regent went to Onias bent on treachery; he greeted him, gave him assurances on oath, and persuaded him, though still suspicious, to leave the sanctuary. Then at once, with no respect for justice, he made away with him.

His murder filled not only Jews, but many from other nations as well, with alarm and anger. So when the king returned from Cilicia, the Jews of Antioch sent him a petition about the senseless killing of Onias, the Gentiles sharing in their detestation of the crime. Antiochus was deeply grieved, and was moved to pity and tears as he thought of the prudence and disciplined habits of the dead man. In a burning fury, he immediately stripped Andronicus of the purple, tore off his clothes, led him round the whole city to that very place where he had committed sacrilege against Onias, and there disposed of the murderer. Thus the Lord repaid him with the retribution he deserved.

Lysimachus committed many acts of sacrilegious plunder in Jerusalem with the connivance of Menelaus. When the news of them became public and the people heard that much of the gold plate had been disposed of, they banded together against Lysimachus. Since the crowds were seething with rage and getting out of hand, Lysimachus armed some three thousand men and began to launch a vicious attack, led by a certain Auranus, a man advanced in years and no less in folly. Realizing that the attack came from Lysimachus, some of the crowd seized stones and others blocks of wood, while others again took handfuls of the ashes that were lying

round, and there was complete confusion as they all hurled them  
42 at Lysimachus and his men. As a result, they wounded many,  
killed some, and routed them all; the sacrilegious man himself they  
dispatched near the treasury.

43 An action was brought against Menelaus in connection with this  
44 incident. When the king came to Tyre, the three men sent by the  
45 Jewish senate pleaded the case before him. Menelaus's cause was as  
good as lost; but he promised a large sum of money to Ptolemaeus  
46 son of Dorymenes to win over the king. So Ptolemaeus led the king  
aside into a colonnade, as if to take the air, and persuaded him to  
47 change his mind. The king acquitted Menelaus, the cause of all the  
mischief, dismissed the charges brought against him, and condemned  
his unfortunate accusers to death, men who would have been dis-  
charged as entirely innocent had they appeared even before Scy-  
48 thians. Without more ado those who had pleaded for their city, their  
49 people, and their sacred vessels, suffered the unjust penalty. At this,  
even some of the Tyrians showed their detestation of the crime by  
50 providing a splendid funeral for the victims. Menelaus, thanks to  
the greed of those in power, remained in office. He went from bad to  
worse, this arch-plotter against his own fellow-citizens.

5 About this time Antiochus undertook his second invasion of  
2 Egypt. Apparitions were seen in the sky all over Jerusalem for nearly  
forty days: galloping horsemen in golden armour, companies of  
3 spearmen standing to arms, swords unsheathed, cavalry divisions in  
battle order. Charges and countercharges were made on each side,  
shields were shaken, spears massed and javelins hurled; breastplates  
4 and golden ornaments of every kind shone brightly. All men prayed  
that this apparition might portend good.

5 Upon a false report of Antiochus's death, Jason collected no less  
than a thousand men and made a surprise attack on Jerusalem. The  
defenders on the wall were driven back and the city was finally  
6 taken; Menelaus took refuge in the citadel, and Jason continued to  
massacre his fellow-citizens without pity. He little knew that success  
against one's own kindred is the greatest of failures, and he imagined  
that the trophies he raised marked the defeat of enemies, not of  
7 fellow-countrymen. He did not, however, gain control of the govern-  
ment; he gained only dishonour as the result of his plot, and returned  
8 again as a fugitive to Ammonite territory. His career came to a  
miserable end; for, after being imprisoned by Aretas the ruler of the

Arabs, he fled from city to city, hunted by all, hated as a rebel against the laws, and detested as the executioner of his country and his fellow-citizens, and finally was driven to take refuge in Egypt. In the 9  
end the man who had banished so many from their native land himself died in exile after setting sail for Sparta, where he had hoped to obtain shelter because of the Spartans' kinship with the Jews. He 10  
who had cast out many to lie unburied was himself unmourned; he had no funeral of any kind, no resting-place in the grave of his ancestors.

When news of this reached the king, it became clear to him that 11  
Judaea was in a state of rebellion. So he set out from Egypt in savage mood, took Jerusalem by storm, and ordered his troops to cut down 12  
without mercy everyone they met and to slaughter those who took refuge in the houses. Young and old were murdered, women and 13  
children massacred, girls and infants butchered. At the end of three 14  
days their losses had amounted to eighty thousand: forty thousand killed in action, and as many sold into slavery.

Not satisfied with this, the king had the audacity to enter the 15  
holiest temple on earth, guided by Menelaus, who had turned traitor both to his religion and his country. He laid impious hands on the 16  
sacred vessels; his desecrating hands swept together the votive offerings which other kings had set up to enhance the splendour and fame of the shrine.

The pride of Antiochus passed all bounds. He did not understand 17  
that the sins of the people of Jerusalem had angered the Lord for a short time, and that this was why he left the temple to its fate. If they had not already been guilty of many sinful acts, Antiochus 18  
would have fared like Heliodorus who was sent by King Seleucus to inspect the treasury; like him he would have been scourged and his insolent plan foiled at once. But the Lord did not choose the 19  
nation for the sake of the sanctuary; he chose the sanctuary for the sake of the nation. Therefore even the sanctuary itself first had its part 20  
in the misfortunes that overtook the nation, and afterwards shared its good fortune. It was abandoned when the Lord Almighty was angry, but restored again in all its splendour when he became reconciled.

Antiochus, then, carried off eighteen hundred talents from the 21  
temple and hastened back to Antioch. In his arrogance he was rash enough to think that he could make ships sail on dry land and men

- 22 walk over the sea. He left commissioners behind to oppress the  
 Hebrews: in Jerusalem Philip, by race a Phrygian, by disposition  
 23 more barbarous than his master, and in Mount Gerizim, Andronicus,  
 to say nothing of Menelaus, who was more brutally overbearing to the  
 citizens than the others. Such was the king's hostility towards the  
 24 Jews that he sent Apollonius, the general of the Mysian mercenaries,  
 with an army of twenty-two thousand men, and ordered him to kill  
 25 all the adult males and to sell the women and boys into slavery. When  
 Apollonius arrived at Jerusalem, he posed as a man of peace; he  
 waited until the holy sabbath day and, finding the Jews abstaining  
 26 from work, he ordered a review of his troops. All who came out to  
 see the parade he put to the sword; then, charging into the city with  
 his soldiers, he killed a great number of people.
- 27 BUT JUDAS, also called Maccabaeus, with about nine others,  
 escaped into the desert, where he and his companions lived in  
 the mountains, fending for themselves like the wild animals. They  
 remained there living on what vegetation they found, so as to have  
 no share in the pollution.
- 6 Shortly afterwards King Antiochus sent an elderly Athenian to  
 force the Jews to abandon their ancestral customs and no longer  
 2 regulate their lives according to the laws of God. He was also  
 commissioned to pollute the temple at Jerusalem and dedicate it  
 to Olympian Zeus, and to dedicate the sanctuary on Mount Gerizim  
 to Zeus God of Hospitality, following the practice of the local  
 inhabitants.
- 3, 4 This evil hit them hard and was a severe trial. The Gentiles filled  
 the temple with licentious revelry: they took their pleasure with  
 prostitutes and had intercourse with women in the sacred precincts.  
 5 They also brought forbidden things inside, and heaped the altar with  
 6 impure offerings prohibited by the law. It was forbidden either to  
 observe the sabbath or to keep the traditional festivals, or to admit to  
 7 being a Jew at all. On the monthly celebration of the king's birthday,  
 the Jews were driven by brute force to eat the entrails of the sacrificial  
 victims; and on the feast of Dionysus they were forced to wear  
 8 ivy-wreaths and join the procession in his honour. At the instigation  
 of the inhabitants of Ptolemais<sup>a</sup> an order was published in the neigh-  
 bouring Greek cities to the effect that they should adopt the same

[a] *Some witnesses read* At the instigation of Ptolemaeus...



policy of compelling the Jews to eat the entrails and should kill those 9  
who refused to change over to Greek ways.

Their miserable fate was there for all to see. For instance, two 10  
women were brought to trial for having had their children circum-  
cised. They were paraded through the city, with their babies hanging  
at their breasts, and then flung down from the fortifications. Other 11  
Jews had assembled in caves near Jerusalem to keep the sabbath in  
secret; they were denounced to Philip and were burnt alive, since  
they scrupled to defend themselves out of regard for the holiness of  
the day.

Now I beg my readers not to be disheartened by these calamities, 12  
but to reflect that such penalties were inflicted for the discipline of  
our race and not for its destruction. It is a sign of great kindness that 13  
acts of impiety should not be let alone for long but meet their due  
recompense at once. The Lord did not see fit to deal with us as he 14  
does with the other nations: with them he patiently holds his hand  
until they have reached the full extent of their sins, but upon us he 15  
inflicted retribution before our sins reached their height. So he never 16  
withdraws his mercy from us; though he disciplines his people by  
calamity, he never deserts them. Let it be enough for me to have 17  
recalled this truth; after this short digression, I must continue with  
my story.

There was Eleazar, one of the leading teachers of the law, a man of 18  
great age and distinguished bearing. He was being forced to open his  
mouth and eat pork, but preferring an honourable death to an un- 19  
clean life, he spat it out and voluntarily submitted to the flogging,  
as indeed men should act who have the courage to refuse to eat for- 20  
bidden food even for love of life. For old acquaintance' sake, the 21  
officials in charge of this sacrilegious feast had a word with Eleazar in  
private; they urged him to bring meat which he was permitted to eat  
and had himself prepared, and only pretend to be eating the sacrificial 22  
meat as the king had ordered. In that way he would escape death and  
take advantage of the clemency which their long-standing friendship  
merited. But Eleazar made an honourable decision, one worthy of 23  
his years and the authority of old age, worthy of the grey hairs he had  
attained to and wore with such distinction, worthy of his perfect  
conduct from childhood up, but above all, worthy of the holy and  
God-given law. So he answered at once: 'Send me quickly to my 24  
grave. If I went through with this pretence at my time of life, many

of the young might believe that at the age of ninety Eleazar had  
25 turned apostate. If I practised deceit for the sake of a brief moment of  
life, I should lead them astray and bring stain and pollution on my  
26 old age. I might for the present avoid man's punishment, but, alive  
27 or dead, I shall never escape from the hand of the Almighty. So if  
I now die bravely, I shall show that I have deserved my long life  
28 and leave the young a fine example, to teach them how to die a good  
death, gladly and nobly, for our revered and holy laws.'

When he had finished speaking, he was immediately dragged away  
29 to be flogged. Those who a little while before had shown him friend-  
ship now became his enemies because, in their view, what he had said  
30 was madness. When he was almost dead from the blows, Eleazar  
sighed deeply and said: 'To the Lord belongs all holy knowledge.  
He knows what terrible agony I endure in my body from this flog-  
ging, though I could have escaped death; yet he knows also that in  
my soul I suffer gladly, because I stand in awe of him.'

31 So he died; and by his death he left a heroic example and a  
glorious memory, not only for the young but also for the great body  
of the nation.

7 Again, seven brothers with their mother had been arrested, and  
were being tortured by the king with whips and thongs to force them  
2 to eat pork, when one of them, speaking for all, said: 'What do you  
expect to learn by interrogating us? We are ready to die rather than  
3 break the laws of our fathers.' The king was enraged and ordered  
4 great pans and cauldrons to be heated up, and this was done at once.  
Then he gave orders that the spokesman's tongue should be cut out  
and that he should be scalped and mutilated before the eyes of his  
5 mother and his six brothers. This wreck of a man the king ordered to  
be taken, still breathing, to the fire and roasted in one of the pans. As  
the smoke from it streamed out far and wide, the mother and her sons  
6 encouraged each other to die nobly. 'The Lord God is watching',  
they said, 'and without doubt has compassion on us. Did not Moses  
tell Israel to their faces in the song denouncing apostasy: "He will  
have compassion on his servants"?'

7 After the first brother had died in this way, the second was sub-  
jected to the same brutality. The skin and hair of his head were torn  
off, and he was asked: 'Will you eat, before we tear you limb from  
8 limb?' He replied in his native language, 'Never!', and so he in turn  
9 underwent the torture. With his last breath, he said: 'Fiend though

you are, you are setting us free from this present life, and, since we die for his laws, the King of the universe will raise us up to a life everlastingly made new.'

After him the third was tortured. When the question was put to 10 him, he at once showed his tongue, boldly held out his hands, and 11 said courageously: 'The God of heaven gave me these. His laws mean far more to me than they do, and it is from him that I trust to receive them back.' When they heard this, the king and his followers 12 were amazed at the young man's spirit and his utter disregard for suffering.

When he too was dead, they tortured the fourth in the same cruel 13 way. At the point of death, he said to the king: 'Better to be killed 14 by men and cherish God's promise to raise us again. There will be no resurrection to life for you!'

Then the fifth was dragged forward for torture. Looking at the 15, 16 king, he said: 'You have authority over men, mortal as you are, and can do as you please. But do not imagine that God has abandoned our race. Wait and see how his great power will torment you and your 17 descendants.'

Next the sixth was brought and said with his dying breath: 'Do 18 not delude yourself. It is our own fault that we suffer these things; we have sinned against our God and brought these appalling disasters upon ourselves. But do not suppose you will escape the consequences of trying to fight against God.' 19

The mother was the most remarkable of all, and deserves to be 20 remembered with special honour. She watched her seven sons all die in the space of a single day, yet she bore it bravely because she put her trust in the Lord. She encouraged each in turn in her native 21 language. Filled with noble resolution, her woman's thoughts fired by a manly spirit, she said to them: 'You appeared in my womb, 22 I know not how; it was not I who gave you life and breath and set in order your bodily frames. It is the Creator of the universe who 23 moulds man at his birth and plans the origin of all things. Therefore he, in his mercy, will give you back life and breath again, since now you put his laws above all thought of self.'

Antiochus felt that he was being treated with contempt and suspected an insult in her words. The youngest brother was still left, 24 and the king, not content with appealing to him, even assured him on oath that the moment he abandoned his ancestral customs he would

make him rich and prosperous, by enrolling him as a King's Friend  
25 and entrusting him with high office. Since the young man paid no  
attention to him, the king summoned the mother and urged her to  
26 advise the lad to save his life. After much urging from the king, she  
27 agreed to persuade her son. She leaned towards him, and flouting the  
cruel tyrant, she said in their native language: 'My son, take pity on  
me. I carried you nine months in the womb, suckled you three years,  
28 reared you and brought you up to your present age. I beg you, child,  
look at the sky and the earth; see all that is in them and realize that  
God made them out of nothing, and that man comes into being in the  
29 same way. Do not be afraid of this butcher; accept death and prove  
yourself worthy of your brothers, so that by God's mercy I may  
receive you back again along with them.'

30 She had barely finished when the young man spoke out: 'What are  
you all waiting for? I will not submit to the king's command; I obey  
31 the command of the law given by Moses to our ancestors. And you,  
King Antiochus, who have devised all kinds of harm for the Hebrews,  
32 you will not escape God's hand. We are suffering for our own sins,  
33 and though to correct and discipline us our living Lord is angry for a  
34 short time, yet he will again be reconciled to his servants. But you,  
impious man, foulest of the human race, do not indulge vain hopes  
or be carried away by delusions of greatness, you who lay hands on  
35 God's servants. You are not yet safe from the judgement of the  
36 almighty, all-seeing God. My brothers have now fallen in loyalty to  
God's covenant, after brief pain leading to eternal life;<sup>a</sup> but you will  
37 pay the just penalty of your insolence by the verdict of God. I, like  
my brothers, surrender my body and my life for the laws of our  
fathers. I appeal to God to show mercy speedily to his people and  
by whips and scourges to bring you to admit that he alone is God.  
38 With me and my brothers may the Almighty's anger, which has  
justly fallen on all our race, be ended!'

39 The king, exasperated by these scornful words, was beside himself  
40 with rage. So he treated him worse than the others, and the young  
man died, putting his whole trust in the Lord, without having  
41 incurred defilement. Then finally, after her sons, the mother died.

42 This, then, must conclude our account of the eating of the entrails  
and the monstrous outrages that accompanied it.

[a] in loyalty . . . life: *or* after a brief time of pain, in loyalty to God's covenant of everlasting life.

*The revolt of Judas Maccabaeus*

MEANWHILE JUDAS, also called Maccabaeus, and his com- 8  
 panions were making their way into the villages unobserved. They summoned their kinsmen and enlisted others who had remained faithful to Judaism, until they had collected about six thousand men. They invoked the Lord to look down and help his 2  
 people, whom all were trampling under foot, to take pity on the temple profaned by impious men, and to have mercy on Jerusalem, 3  
 which was being destroyed and would soon be levelled to the ground. They prayed him also to give ear to the blood that cried to him for vengeance, to remember the infamous massacre of innocent 4  
 children and the deeds of blasphemy against his name, and to show his hatred of wickedness.

Once his band of partisans was organized, Maccabaeus proved 5  
 invincible to the Gentiles, for the Lord's anger had changed to mercy. He came on towns and villages without warning and burnt 6  
 them; he occupied the key positions, and inflicted many severe reverses on the enemy, choosing the night-time as being especially 7  
 favourable for these attacks. His heroism<sup>a</sup> was talked about everywhere. When Philip realized that the small gains made by Judas were 8  
 occurring with growing frequency, he wrote to Ptolemaeus, the governor of Coele-syria and Phoenicia, asking for his help in protect-  
 ing the royal interests. Ptolemaeus immediately selected Nicanor, 9  
 son of Patroclus, a member of the highest order of King's Friends, and sent him at the head of at least twenty thousand troops of various nationalities to exterminate the entire Jewish race. With him Ptolemaeus associated Gorgias, a general of wide experience. Nicanor determined to pay off the two thousand talents due from the 10  
 king as tribute to the Romans, by the sale of the Jews he would take prisoner; and he at once made an offer of Jewish slaves to the coastal 11  
 towns, undertaking to deliver them at the price of ninety to the talent. But he did not expect the vengeance of the Almighty, which was soon to be at his heels.

Word of Nicanor's advance reached Judas, and he informed his 12  
 men that the enemy was at hand. The cowards who doubted God's 13

[a] Or His numerous force.

- 14 justice took themselves off and fled. But the rest disposed of their remaining possessions, and they prayed together to the Lord to save them from the impious Nicanor, who had sold them even before they  
15 met in battle; and if they could not ask this for their own merits, they did so on the ground of the covenants God had made with their ancestors, and of his holy and majestic Name which they bore.  
16 Maccabaeus assembled his followers, six thousand in number, and appealed to them not to flee in panic before the enemy nor to be afraid of the great host which was attacking them without just cause.  
17 Rather they should fight nobly, having before their eyes the wicked crimes of the Gentiles against the temple, their callous outrage upon Jerusalem, and, further, their suppression of the traditional Jewish  
18 way of life. 'They rely on their weapons and their audacity,' he said, 'but we rely on God Almighty, who is able to overthrow with a nod  
19 our present assailants and, if need be, the whole world.' He went on to recount to them the occasions when God had helped their ancestors: how, in Sennacherib's time, one hundred and eighty-five  
20 thousand of the enemy had perished, and also how, on the occasion of the battle against the Galatians in Babylonia, all the Jews engaged in the combat had numbered no more than eight thousand, with four thousand Macedonians, yet, when the Macedonians were hard pressed, the eight thousand through heaven's aid had destroyed one hundred and twenty thousand and taken much booty.  
21 His words put them in good heart and made them ready to die for their laws and for their country. He then divided the army into four  
22 and gave each of his brothers, Simon, Josephus, and Jonathan, command of a division of fifteen hundred men. Besides this, he  
23 appointed Eleazar to read the holy book aloud,<sup>a</sup> and giving the signal for battle with the cry 'God is our help', and taking command of the  
24 leading division in person, he engaged Nicanor. The Almighty fought on their side, and they slaughtered over nine thousand of the enemy, wounded and disabled the greater part of Nicanor's forces, and  
25 routed them completely. They seized the money of those who had come to buy them as slaves. After chasing the enemy a considerable  
26 distance, they were forced to break off because it was late; for it was the day before the sabbath, and for that reason they called off the  
27 pursuit. When they had collected the enemy's weapons and stripped the dead, they turned to keep the sabbath. They offered thanks and

[a] Besides . . . aloud: *probable reading; Gk. obscure.*

praises loud and long to the Lord who had kept the first drops of his mercy to shed on them that day.<sup>a</sup> After the sabbath was over, they distributed some of the spoils among the victims of persecution and the widows and orphans; the remainder they divided among themselves. This done, all together made supplication to the merciful Lord, praying him to be fully reconciled with his servants.

The Jews now engaged the forces of Timotheus and Bacchides and killed over twenty thousand of them. They gained complete control of some high strongholds, and divided the immense booty, giving shares equal to their own to the victims of persecution, to the widows and orphans, and to the old men as well. They carefully collected all the enemy's weapons and stored them at strategic points; the remainder of the spoils they brought into Jerusalem. They killed the officer commanding the forces of Timotheus, an utterly godless man who had caused the Jews great suffering. During the victory celebrations in their capital, they burnt alive the men who had set fire to the sacred gates, including Callisthenes, who had taken refuge in a small house; he thus received the due reward of his impiety.

Thus, by the Lord's help, Nicanor, that double-dyed villain who had brought the thousand merchants to buy the Jewish captives, was humiliated by the very people whom he despised above all others. He threw off his magnificent uniform, and all alone like a runaway slave made his escape through the interior, and was, indeed, very lucky to reach Antioch after losing his whole army. So the man who had undertaken to secure tribute for the Romans by taking prisoner the inhabitants of Jerusalem showed the world that the Jews had a champion and were therefore invulnerable, because they kept the laws he had given them.

It so happened that, about this time, Antiochus had returned in disorder from Persia. He had entered the city of Persepolis and attempted to plunder its temples and assume control. But the populace rose and rushed to arms in their defence, with the result that Antiochus was routed by civilians and forced to beat a humiliating retreat. When he was near Ecbatana, news reached him of what had happened to Nicanor and the forces of Timotheus. Transported with fury, he conceived the idea of making the Jews pay for the

[a] kept... day: so some witnesses; others read brought them safely to that day and had appointed it as the beginning of mercy for them.

injury inflicted by those who had put him to flight, and so he ordered his charioteer to drive without stopping until the journey was finished.

But riding with him was the divine judgement! For in his arrogance he said: 'When I reach Jerusalem, I will make it a common  
5 graveyard for the Jews.' But the all-seeing Lord, the God of Israel, struck him a fatal and invisible blow. As soon as he had said the words, he was seized with incurable pain in his bowels and with  
6 sharp internal torments—a punishment entirely fitting for one who had inflicted many unheard-of torments on the bowels of others.  
7 Still he did not in the least abate his insolence; more arrogant than ever, he breathed fiery threats against the Jews. After he had given orders to speed up the journey, it happened that he fell out of his chariot as it hurtled along, and so violent was his fall that every joint  
8 in his body was dislocated. He, who in his pretension to be more than man had just been thinking that he could command the waves of the sea and weigh high mountains on the scales, was brought to the ground and had to be carried in a litter, thus making God's power<sup>a</sup>  
9 manifest to all. Worms swarmed even from the eyes of this godless man and, while he was still alive and in agony, his flesh rotted off,  
10 and the whole army was disgusted by the stench of his decay. It was so unbearably offensive that nobody could escort the man who only a short time before had seemed to touch the stars in the sky.

11 In this broken state, Antiochus began to abate his great arrogance. Under God's lash, and racked with continual pain, he began to see  
12 things in their true light. He could not endure his own stench and said, 'It is right to submit oneself to God and, being mortal, not to  
13 think oneself equal to him.' Then the villain made a solemn promise to the Lord, who had no intention of sparing him any longer, and it  
14 was to this effect: Jerusalem the holy city, which he had been hurrying to level to the ground and to transform into a graveyard, he would  
15 now declare a free city; to all the Jews, whom he had not considered worthy of burial but only fit to be thrown out with their children as prey for birds and beasts, he would give privileges equal to those  
16 enjoyed by the citizens of Athens. The holy temple which he had earlier plundered he would adorn with the most splendid gifts; he would replace all the sacred utensils on a much more lavish scale; he  
17 would meet the cost of the sacrifices from his own revenues. In

[a] *Some witnesses read litter. God made his power...*



addition to all this, he would even turn Jew and visit every inhabited place to proclaim God's might.

When his pains in no way abated, because the just judgement of 18 God had fallen on him, he was in despair and, as a kind of olive branch, wrote to the Jews the letter here copied:

To my worthy citizens, the Jews, warm greetings and good 19 wishes for their health and prosperity from Antiochus, King and Chief Magistrate.

May you and your children flourish and your affairs go as you 20 wish. Having my hope in heaven, I keep an affectionate remembrance of your regards and goodwill. 21

As I was returning from Persia, I suffered a tiresome illness, and so I have judged it necessary to provide for the general safety of you all. Not that I despair of my condition—on the contrary 22 I have good hopes of recovery—but I observed that my father, whenever he made an expedition east of the Euphrates, appointed a successor, so that, if anything unexpected should happen or if 23 some tiresome report should spread, his subjects would not be disturbed, since they would know to whom the empire had been left. Further, I know well that the neighbouring princes on the 24 frontiers of my kingdom are watching for an opportunity and waiting on events. So I have designated as king my son Antiochus, whom I frequently entrusted and recommended to most of you during my regular visits to the satrapies beyond the Euphrates. 25 I have written to him what is here copied. Wherefore I pray and entreat each one of you to maintain your existing goodwill towards myself and my son, remembering the services I have rendered to you both as a community and as individuals. For 26 I am sure my son will follow my own policy of moderation and benevolence and will accommodate himself to your wishes. 27

Thus this murderer and blasphemer, suffering the worst of 28 agonies, such as he had made others suffer, met a pitiable end in the mountains of a foreign land. His body was brought back by Philip, 29 his intimate friend; but he was afraid of Antiochus's son and went over to Ptolemy Philometor in Egypt.

Maccabaeus with his men, led by the Lord, recovered the temple 10 and city of Jerusalem. He demolished the altars erected by the 2 heathen in the public square, and their sacred precincts as well. When 3

they had purified the sanctuary, they constructed another altar; then, striking fire from flints, they offered a sacrifice for the first time for two whole years, and restored the incense, the lights, and the  
4 Bread of the Presence. This done, they prostrated themselves and prayed the Lord not to let them fall any more into such disasters, but, should they ever happen to sin, to discipline them himself with clemency and not hand them over to blasphemous and barbarous  
5 Gentiles. The sanctuary was purified on the twenty-fifth of Kislev, the same day of the same month as that on which foreigners had  
6 profaned it. The joyful celebration lasted for eight days; it was like the Feast of Tabernacles, for they recalled how, only a short time before, they had kept that feast while they were living like wild  
7 animals in the mountains and caves; and so they carried garlanded wands and branches with their fruits, as well as palm-fronds, and they chanted hymns to the One who had so triumphantly achieved  
8 the purification of his own temple. A measure was passed by the public assembly to the effect that the entire Jewish race should keep these days every year.

### *The campaign against Eupator*

9 **W**E HAVE ALREADY recounted the end of Antiochus called  
10 Epiphanes. Now we will describe what happened under that godless man's son, Antiochus Eupator, in a brief summary of the  
11 principal evils brought about by his wars. At his accession, Eupator appointed as vicegerent a man called Lysias who had succeeded Ptolemaeus Macron as governor-general of Coele-syria and Phoe-  
12 nicia. For Ptolemaeus had taken the lead in reversing the former unjust treatment of the Jews and had attempted to maintain peaceful  
13 relations with them, and as a result he was denounced by the King's Friends to Eupator. On every side he was called traitor, because he had already abandoned Cyprus, entrusted to him by Philometor, and had gone over to Antiochus Epiphanes. He still enjoyed power, but no longer respect, and in despair he ended his life by poison.

14 When Gorgias became governor, he engaged mercenaries and took  
15 every opportunity of attacking the Jews. At the same time the Idumaeans, who were in control of strategic fortresses, were also

harassing them; they harboured the fugitives from Jerusalem and tried to carry on the war. Maccabaeus and his men made public supplication and prayed God to fight on their side. They made an assault on the Idumaeen fortresses, pressed the attack vigorously, and captured them; they drove off all who were manning the walls, and killed all they met, to the number of at least twenty thousand.

Nine thousand or more of the enemy took refuge in two towers, very strongly fortified and fully equipped against a siege. Maccabaeus himself set out for the places which were being hard pressed, but left Simon and Josephus behind, with Zacchaeus and his men, enough to prosecute the siege. But Simon's men were too fond of money, and when they were bribed with seventy thousand drachmas by some of those in the towers, they let them slip through their lines. When Maccabaeus was informed of this, he assembled the leaders of the army and denounced these men for having sold their brothers for money by letting their enemies escape. Then he executed the men who had turned traitor, and immediately the two towers fell to him. His military operations were completely successful; in the two fortresses he destroyed over twenty thousand of the enemy.

After his previous defeat by the Jews, Timotheus collected a huge force of mercenaries and Asian cavalry, and advanced to take Judaea by storm. As he approached, Maccabaeus and his men made their prayer to God. They sprinkled dust on their heads and put sackcloth round their waists; they prostrated themselves on the altar-step and begged God to favour them, 'to be an enemy of their enemies and an opponent of their opponents', as the law clearly states.

When they had finished their prayer, they took up their weapons, advanced a good distance from Jerusalem, and halted near the enemy. At first light the two armies joined battle. For the Jews, success and victory were guaranteed not only because of their bravery but even more because the Lord was their refuge, whereas the Gentiles had only their own fury to lead them into battle. As the fighting grew hot, the enemy saw in the sky five magnificent figures riding horses with golden bridles, who placed themselves at the head of the Jews, formed a circle round Maccabaeus, and kept him invulnerable under the protection of their armour. They launched arrows and thunderbolts at the enemy, who, confused and blinded, broke up in complete disorder. Twenty thousand five hundred of the infantry, as well as six hundred cavalry, were slaughtered.

32 Timotheus himself fled to a fortress called Gazara, commanded by  
33 Chaereas and strongly garrisoned. Maccabaeus and his men wel-  
34 comed this, and for four days they laid siege to the place. The garri-  
son, confident in the strength of their position, hurled horrible and  
35 impious blasphemies at them, until, at dawn on the fifth day, twenty  
young men from the force of Maccabaeus, burning with rage at the  
blasphemy, courageously stormed the wall and in savage anger cut  
36 down all they met. Under cover of this distraction others got up the  
same way, attacked the defenders, set light to the towers, and started  
fires on which they burnt the blasphemers alive. Others broke  
down the gates and let in the rest of the army, and thus the city was  
37 occupied. Timotheus had hidden himself in a cistern, but he was  
38 killed along with his brother Chaereas and Apollophanes. To cele-  
brate their achievement, the Jews praised with hymns and thanks-  
givings the Lord who showers blessings on Israel and gives them the  
victory.

11 Very shortly afterwards, Lysias the vicegerent, the king's guardian  
2 and relative, angered by these events, collected about eighty thousand  
troops, in addition to his entire cavalry, and advanced on the Jews.  
3 He reckoned on making Jerusalem a settlement for Gentiles, subject-  
ing the temple to taxation like all gentile shrines, and putting up the  
4 high-priesthood for sale annually. He reckoned not at all with the  
might of God, but was elated with his myriads of infantry, his  
5 thousands of cavalry, his eighty elephants. Penetrating into Judaea,  
he approached Bethsura, a fortified place about twenty miles from  
Jerusalem, and closely invested it.

6 When Maccabaeus and his men learnt that Lysias was besieging  
their fortresses, they and all the people, wailing and weeping, prayed  
7 the Lord to send a good angel to deliver Israel. Maccabaeus was the  
first to arm himself, and he urged the rest to share his danger and  
come to the help of their brothers. One and all, they set out eagerly.  
8 They were still in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem when there  
appeared at their head a horseman arrayed in white, brandishing his  
9 golden weapons. Then with one voice they praised their merciful  
God and felt so strong in spirit that they could have attacked not  
only men but also the most savage animals, and even walls of iron.  
10 They came on fully armed, with their heavenly ally, under the mercy  
11 of the Lord. They hurled themselves like lions against the enemy, cut  
down eleven thousand of them, as well as sixteen hundred cavalry,

and put all the rest to flight. Most of those who escaped lost their weapons and were wounded, and Lysias saved his life only by running away. 12

Lysias was no fool, and as he took stock of the defeat he had suffered he realized that the Hebrews were invincible, because the mighty God fought on their side. So he proposed a settlement on terms entirely acceptable, promising also to win the king over by putting pressure on him to show friendship to the Jews. Maccabaeus agreed to all the proposals of Lysias out of regard for the general welfare, for the king had accepted all the proposals from the Jewish side which Maccabaeus had forwarded to Lysias in writing. 13 14 15

The letter of Lysias to the Jews ran as follows: 16

Lysias to the Jewish community, greeting.

Your representatives John and Absalom have handed to me the document here copied and have asked me to ratify what is contained in it. Whatever needed to be brought to the king's knowledge, I have communicated to him, and what was within my own competence, I have granted. If, therefore, you maintain your goodwill towards the empire, I for my part will endeavour to promote your welfare for the future. I have ordered your representatives and mine to confer with you about the details. Farewell. 17 18 19 20 21

The twenty-fourth of Dioscorus in the year 148.<sup>a</sup>

The king's letter ran as follows: 22

King Antiochus to his brother Lysias, greeting.

Now that our royal father has gone to join the gods, we desire that our subjects be undisturbed in the conduct of their own affairs. We have learnt that the Jews do not consent to adopt Greek ways, as our father wished, but prefer their own mode of life and request that they be allowed to observe their own laws. We choose, therefore, that this nation like the rest should be left undisturbed, and decree that their temple be restored to them and that they shall regulate their lives in accordance with their ancestral customs. Have the goodness, therefore, to inform them of this and ratify it, so that, knowing what our intentions are, they may settle down confidently and quietly to manage their own affairs. 23 24 25 26

[a] *That is 164 B.C.*

27 To the people the king's letter ran thus:

King Antiochus to the Jewish Senate and people, greeting.

28 We hope that you prosper. We too are in good health.  
 29 Menelaus has informed us of your desire to return to your own  
 30 homes. Therefore we declare an amnesty for all who return be-  
 31 fore the thirtieth of Xanthicus. The Jews may follow their own  
 food-laws as heretofore, and none of them shall be charged with  
 32 any previous infringement. I am sending Menelaus to reassure  
 33 you. Farewell.

The fifteenth of Xanthicus in the year 148.<sup>a</sup>

34 The Romans also sent the Jews the following letter:

Quintus Memmius and Titus Manius, Roman legates, to the Jewish people, greeting.

35 We give our assent to all that Lysias, the king's relative, has  
 36 granted you. But examine carefully the questions which he  
 reserved for reference to the king; then send someone immediately,  
 so that we may make suitable proposals, for we are proceeding to  
 37 Antioch. Send messengers therefore without delay, so that we  
 38 also may know what your opinion is. Farewell.

The fifteenth of Xanthicus in the year 148.<sup>a</sup>

12 When these agreements had been concluded, Lysias went off to  
 2 the king, and the Jews returned to their farming. But some of the  
 governors in the region, Timotheus and Apollonius son of Gen-  
 naeus and also Hieronymus and Demophon, and in addition Nica-  
 nor, chief of the Cypriot mercenaries, would not allow them to enjoy  
 security and live in quiet.

3 I MUST NOW describe an atrocity committed by the inhabitants of  
 Joppa. They invited the Jews living in the town to embark with  
 their wives and children in boats which they provided, with no  
 4 indication of any ill will towards them. As it was a public decision by  
 the whole town, and because they wished to live in peace and sus-  
 pected nothing, they accepted; but when they were out at sea, the  
 people of Joppa sank the boats, drowning no fewer than two  
 5 hundred of them. When Judas learnt of this brutal treatment of his

[a] *That is 164 B.C.*

fellow-countrymen, he alerted his troops, invoked God, the just 6  
judge, and fell upon their murderers. He set the harbour of Joppa  
on fire by night, burnt the shipping, and put to the sword those  
who had taken refuge there. But finding the town gates closed, he 7  
withdrew, meaning however to return and root out the entire com-  
munity. When he learnt that the people of Jamnia intended to do the 8  
same to the Jews who lived among them, he attacked Jamnia by night 9  
and set fire to its harbour and fleet; the light of the flames was visible  
in Jerusalem thirty miles away.

When they had marched more than a mile further in their advance 10  
against Timotheus, they were set upon by not less than five thousand  
Arabs, with five hundred cavalry. A violent combat ensued, in which 11  
by divine help Judas and his men were victorious. The defeated  
nomads begged Judas to make an alliance with them, and promised to  
supply him with cattle and to give the Jews every other kind of help.  
Judas realized that they could indeed be useful in many ways; so he 12  
agreed to make peace with them, and, after receiving assurances from  
him, they went back to their tents.

Judas also attacked Caspin, a walled town, strongly fortified and 13  
inhabited by a motley crew of Gentiles. Confident in the strength of 14  
their walls and in their store of provisions, the defenders behaved  
provocatively towards Judas and his men, abusing them and also  
uttering the most wicked blasphemies. But they invoked the world's 15  
great Sovereign who in the days of Joshua threw down the walls of  
Jericho without battering-rams or siege-engines. They attacked the  
wall fiercely and, by the will of God, captured the town. The carnage 16  
was indescribable; the adjacent lake, a quarter of a mile wide,  
appeared to be overflowing with blood.

Advancing about ninety-five miles from there, they reached 17  
Charax, which is inhabited by the Tubian Jews, as they are called.  
They did not find Timotheus there; he had by that time left the 18  
district, having had no success, but in one place he had left behind  
an extremely strong garrison. Dositheus and Sosipater, Macca- 19  
baeus's generals, set out and destroyed the garrison, which con-  
sisted of over ten thousand men. Maccabaeus for his part grouped 20  
his army in several divisions, appointed commanders for them,<sup>a</sup> and  
hurried after Timotheus, whose forces numbered a hundred and  
twenty thousand infantry and two thousand five hundred cavalry.

[a] *Probable meaning, based on one Vs.; Gk. appointed them to command the divisions.*

21 When he learnt of Judas's approach, Timotheus sent off the women  
and children with all the baggage to a town called Carnaim, this  
22 being an inaccessible place, hard to storm because all the approaches  
to it were narrow. But when Judas's first division appeared, terror  
and panic seized the enemy at the manifestation of the all-seeing  
One. In their flight they rushed headlong in every direction, so that  
23 frequently they were injured by their comrades and were run through  
by the points of their swords. Judas pressed the pursuit vigorously  
24 and put thirty thousand of these criminals to the sword. Timotheus  
himself was taken prisoner by the troops of Dositheus and Sosipater.  
With much cunning, he begged them to let him go in safety, pointing  
out that most of them had parents, and some of them brothers, who  
25 were in his hands, and might never be heard of again. He pledged  
himself over and over again to restore these hostages safe and sound;  
and so they let him go in order to save their relatives.

26 Judas moved on Carnaim and the sanctuary of Atargatis, and killed  
27 twenty-five thousand people there. After this victory and destruction  
he next marched on Ephron, a fortified town inhabited by a mixed  
population.<sup>a</sup> Stalwart young men took up their position in front of  
the walls and fought vigorously, while inside there was a great supply  
28 of engines of war and ammunition. But the Jews invoked the  
Sovereign whose might shatters all the strength of the enemy. They  
made themselves masters of the town and killed twenty-five thousand  
29 of the defenders. Leaving that place, they advanced to Scythopolis,  
30 some seventy-five miles from Jerusalem. The Jews who lived there  
testified to the goodwill shown them by the people of Scythopolis  
and the kindness with which they had treated them in their bad  
31 times; so Judas and his men thanked them, and charged them to be  
equally friendly to the Jewish race for the future. They returned to  
Jerusalem in time for the Feast of Weeks.

32 After celebrating Pentecost, as it is called, they advanced to attack  
33 Gorgias, the general in charge of Idumaea, who met them with three  
thousand infantry and four hundred cavalry. When the ranks joined  
34 battle, a small number of the Jews fell. But a cavalryman of great  
strength called Dositheus, one of the Tubian Jews, had hold of  
Gorgias by his cloak and was dragging the villain off by main force,  
with the object of taking him alive, when a Thracian horseman bore  
down on him and chopped off his arm; so Gorgias escaped to Marisa.

[a] *Some witnesses add where Lysias had his headquarters.*



Esdrias and his men had been fighting for a long time and were exhausted. But Judas invoked the Lord to show himself their ally and leader in battle. Striking up hymns in his native language as a battle-cry, he put the forces of Gorgias to flight by a surprise attack.

Regrouping his forces, he led them to the town of Adullam. The seventh day was coming on, so they purified themselves, as custom dictated, and kept the sabbath there. Next day they went, as had by now become necessary, to collect the bodies of the fallen in order to bury them with their relatives in the ancestral graves. But on every one of the dead, they found, under the tunic, amulets sacred to the idols of Jamnia, objects which the law forbids to Jews. It was evident to all that here was the reason why these men had fallen. Therefore they praised the work of the Lord, the just judge, who reveals what is hidden; and, turning to prayer, they asked that this sin might be entirely blotted out. The noble Judas called on the people to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened to the fallen because of their sin. He levied a contribution from each man, and sent the total of two thousand silver drachmas to Jerusalem for a sin-offering—a fit and proper act in which he took due account of the resurrection. For if he had not been expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been foolish and superfluous to pray for the dead. But since he had in view the wonderful reward reserved for those who die a godly death, his purpose was a holy and pious one. And this was why he offered an atoning sacrifice to free the dead from their sin.

In the year 149,<sup>a</sup> information reached Judas and his men that Antiochus Eupator was advancing on Judaea with a large army; he was accompanied by Lysias, his guardian and vicegerent, bringing in addition a Greek force, consisting of one hundred and ten thousand infantry, five thousand three hundred cavalry, twenty-two elephants, and three hundred chariots armed with scythes.

Menelaus also joined them and urged Antiochus on; this he did most disingenuously, not for his country's good, but because he believed he would be maintained in office. However, the King of kings aroused the rage of Antiochus against Menelaus: Lysias produced evidence that this criminal was responsible for all Antiochus's troubles, and so the king ordered him to be taken to Beroea and there to be executed in the manner customary at that place. Now in

[a] *That is 163 B.C.*

Beroea there is a tower some seventy-five feet<sup>a</sup> high, filled with ashes; it has a circular device sloping down sheer on all sides into the  
 6 ashes. This is where the citizens take anyone guilty of sacrilege or  
 7 any other notorious crime, and thrust him to his doom; and such  
 was the fate of the law-breaker Menelaus, who was not even allowed  
 8 burial—a fate he richly deserved. Many a time he had desecrated the  
 hallowed ashes of the altar-fire, and by ashes he met his death.

9 So the king came on with the barbarous intention of inflicting on  
 10 the Jews sufferings far worse than his father had inflicted. When  
 Judas heard this he ordered the people to invoke the Lord day and  
 night and pray that now more than ever he would come to their aid,  
 11 since they were on the point of losing law, country, and temple; and  
 that he would not allow them, just when they had begun to breathe  
 12 again, to fall into the hands of blaspheming Gentiles. They all obeyed  
 his orders: for three days without respite they prayed to their merciful  
 Lord, they wailed, they fasted, they prostrated themselves. Then  
 Judas urged them to action and called upon them to stand by him.

13 After holding a council of war with the elders, he decided not to  
 wait until the royal army invaded Judaea and took Jerusalem, but to  
 14 march out and with God's help to bring things to a decision. He  
 entrusted the outcome to the Creator of the world; his troops he  
 charged to fight bravely to the death for the law, for the temple and  
 for Jerusalem, for their country and their way of life. He pitched  
 15 camp near Modin, and giving his men the signal for battle with the  
 cry 'God's victory!', he made a night attack on the royal pavilion  
 with a picked force of the bravest young men. He killed as many as  
 two thousand in the enemy camp, and his men stabbed to death<sup>b</sup> the  
 16 leading elephant and its driver. In the end they reduced the whole  
 17 camp to panic and confusion, and withdrew victorious. It was all  
 over by daybreak, through the help and protection which Judas had  
 received from the Lord.

18 Now that he had had a taste of Jewish daring, the king tried  
 19 stratagems in attacking their strong-points. He advanced on  
 Bethsura, one of their powerful forts; he was repulsed; he attacked,  
 20, 21 he was beaten. Judas sent in supplies to the garrison, but a soldier in  
 the Jewish ranks, Rhodocus by name, betrayed their secrets to the  
 22 enemy. However, he was tracked down, arrested, and put away. The  
 king parleyed for the second time with the inhabitants of Bethsura,

[a] some . . . feet: *Gk.* fifty cubits. [b] stabbed to death: *probable reading, based on one V's.*

and, when he had given and received guarantees, he withdrew; he then attacked Judas and his men, but had the worst of it. He now received news that Philip, whom he had left in charge of state affairs in Antioch, had gone out of his mind. In dismay he summoned the Jews, agreed to their terms, took an oath to respect all their rights, and, after this settlement, offered a sacrifice, paid honour to the sanctuary and its precincts, and received Maccabaeus graciously. He left behind Hegemonides as governor of the region from Ptolemais to Gerra, and went himself to Ptolemais. Its inhabitants were furious at the treaty he had made, and in their alarm wanted to repudiate it. Lysias mounted the rostrum, made the best defence he could, won the people over, calmed them down, and, having thus gained their support, left for Antioch.

Such was the course of the king's offensive and retreat.

### *The victory of Maccabaeus over Nicanor*

AFTER AN INTERVAL of three years, information reached Judas and his men that Demetrius son of Seleucus had sailed into the harbour of Tripolis with a powerful army and fleet, and, after disposing of Antiochus and his guardian Lysias, had taken possession of the country.

There was a man called Alcimus, who had formerly been high priest but had submitted voluntarily to pollutions at the time of the secession. This man, realizing that there was not now the slightest guarantee of his safety, or any possibility of access to the holy altar, came to King Demetrius, about the year 151,<sup>a</sup> and presented him with a gold crown and palm, and also some of the customary olive branches from the temple. On that particular occasion he kept quiet; but he found a chance of forwarding his own mad scheme when Demetrius summoned him to his council and questioned him about the attitude and plans of the Jews. He replied: 'Those of the Jews who are called Hasidaeans and are led by Judas Maccabaeus are keeping the war alive and fomenting sedition, refusing to leave the kingdom in peace. Thus, although I have been deprived of my hereditary dignity—I mean the high-priesthood—I am here today

[a] That is 161 B.C.

8 from two motives: first, a genuine concern for the king's rights; and  
 9 secondly, a regard for my fellow-citizens, since our whole race is  
 10 suffering considerable hardship as a result of the folly of the people  
 11 I have just mentioned. I would advise your majesty to acquaint  
 yourself with every one of these matters and then make provision for  
 our country and our beleaguered nation, as befits your universal  
 kindness and goodwill. For the empire will enjoy no peace so long as  
 Judas remains alive.'

12 When he had spoken to this effect, the other Friends, who were  
 13 hostile to Judas, immediately inflamed Demetrius still more. The  
 king at once selected Nicanor, commander of the elephant corps,  
 14 gave him command of Judaea, and sent him off with a commission  
 to dispose of Judas himself and disperse his forces, and to install  
 Alcimus as high priest of the great temple. The gentile population of  
 Judaea, refugees from the attacks of Judas, now flocked to Nicanor,  
 thinking that defeat and misfortune for the Jews would mean  
 prosperity for themselves.

15 When they learnt of Nicanor's offensive and the gentile attack, the  
 Jews sprinkled dust over themselves and prayed to the One who  
 established his people for ever, who never fails to manifest himself  
 16 when his chosen are in need of help. At their leader's command, they  
 immediately struck camp and joined battle with the enemy at the  
 17 village of Adasa.<sup>a</sup> Simon, the brother of Judas, had fought an  
 engagement with Nicanor, but, because the enemy came up<sup>b</sup> un-  
 18 expectedly, he had suffered a slight reverse. In spite of this, when  
 Nicanor learnt how brave Judas and his troops were and how  
 courageously they fought for their country, he shrank from deciding  
 19 the issue in battle. So he sent Posidonius, Theodotus, and Mat-  
 tathias to negotiate a settlement.

20 After a lengthy consideration of the proposals, Judas informed his  
 21 men of them; they were unanimous in agreeing to make peace. A day  
 was fixed for a private meeting of the leaders. A chariot advanced  
 22 from each of the two lines, and seats were placed for them; but Judas  
 posted armed men at strategic points ready to deal with any unfore-  
 seen treachery on the enemy's part. The discussion between the two  
 23 leaders was harmonious. Nicanor stayed some time in Jerusalem and  
 behaved correctly; he dismissed the crowds that had flocked round

[a] Adasa: *probable reading; compare 1 Macc. 7. 40.* [b] came up: *probable reading, based on one Vs.*

him, and kept Judas always close to himself. He had acquired a real affection for him, and urged him to marry and start a family. So Judas married and settled down to the quiet life of an ordinary citizen.

Alcimus noticed their friendliness and got hold of a copy of the agreement they had concluded. He went to Demetrius and said that Nicanor was pursuing a policy detrimental to the interests of the empire, by appointing that traitor Judas King's Friend designate. The king was furious and was provoked by these villainous slanders to write to Nicanor expressing his dissatisfaction with the agreement and ordering him to arrest Maccabaeus and send him at once to Antioch. This message filled Nicanor with dismay; he took it hard that he should have to break his agreement although the man had committed no offence, but since there was no going against the king, he watched for a favourable opportunity of carrying out the order by means of some stratagem. Maccabaeus, however, observed that Nicanor had become less friendly towards him and no longer showed him the same civility. He realized that this unfriendliness boded no good, so he collected a large number of his followers and went into hiding from Nicanor.

When Nicanor recognized that he had been outmanœuvred by the resolute action of Judas, he went to the great and holy temple at the time when the priests were offering the regular sacrifices, and ordered them to surrender Judas to him. The priests declared on oath that they did not know the whereabouts of the wanted man. But Nicanor stretched out his right hand towards the shrine and swore this oath: 'Unless you surrender Judas into my custody, I will raze God's sanctuary to the ground, I will destroy the altar, and on this spot I will build a temple to Dionysus for all the world to see.' With these words he left; but the priests with outstretched hands prayed to Heaven, the constant champion of our race: 'Lord, thou hast no need of anything in the world, yet it was thy pleasure that among us there should be a shrine for thy dwelling-place. Now, Lord, who alone art holy, keep this house, so newly purified, for ever free from defilement.'

A man called Razis, a member of the Jerusalem senate, was denounced to Nicanor. He was very highly spoken of, a patriot who for his loyalty was known as 'Father of the Jews'. In the early days of the secession he had stood his trial for practising Judaism, and with the utmost eagerness had risked life and limb for that cause.

2 MACCABEES 14, 15 *The victory of Maccabaeus over Nicanor*

- 39 Nicanor wished to give clear proof of his hostility towards the Jews,  
40 and sent more than five hundred soldiers to arrest Razis; he reckoned  
41 that his arrest would be a severe blow to the Jews. The troops were  
on the point of capturing the tower where Razis was, and were trying  
to force the outer door. Then an order was given to set the door on  
fire, and Razis, hemmed in on all sides, turned his sword on himself.  
42 He preferred to die nobly rather than fall into the hands of criminals  
43 and be subjected to gross humiliation. In his haste and anxiety he  
misjudged the blow, and with the troops pouring through the doors  
he ran without hesitation on to the wall and heroically threw himself  
44 down into the crowd. The crowd hurriedly gave way and he fell in  
45 the space they left. He was still breathing, still on fire with courage;  
so, streaming with blood and severely wounded, he picked himself up  
and dashed through the crowd. Finally, standing on a sheer rock,  
46 and now completely drained of blood, he took his entrails in both  
hands and flung them at the crowd. And thus, invoking the Lord of  
life and breath to give these entrails back to him again, he died.
- 15 Nicanor received information that Judas and his men were in the  
region of Samaria, and he determined to attack them on their day of  
2 rest, when it could be done without any danger. Those Jews who  
were forced to accompany his army said, 'Do not carry out such a  
savage and barbarous massacre, but respect the day singled out and  
3 made holy by the all-seeing One.' The double-dyed villain retorted,  
'Is there a ruler in the sky who has ordered the sabbath day to be  
4 observed?' The Jews declared, 'The living Lord himself is ruler in  
5 the sky, and he ordered the seventh day to be kept holy.' 'But I',  
replied Nicanor, 'am a ruler on earth, and I order you to take your  
arms and do your duty to the king.' However, he did not succeed in  
carrying out his cruel plan.
- 6 Now Nicanor, in his pretentious and extravagant conceit, had  
resolved upon erecting a public trophy from the spoils of Judas's  
7 forces. But Maccabaeus's confidence never wavered, and he had not  
8 the least doubt that he would obtain help from the Lord. He urged  
his men not to be afraid of the gentile attack, but to bear in mind the  
aid they had received from heaven in the past and so look to the  
9 Almighty for the victory which he would send this time also. He  
drew encouragement for them from the law and the prophets and, by  
reminding them of the struggles they had already come through,  
10 filled them with a fresh enthusiasm. When he had roused their

courage, he gave them their orders, reminding them at the same time of the Gentiles' broken faith and perjury. He armed each one of them, not so much with the security of shield and spear, as with the encouragement that brave words bring; and he also told them of a trustworthy dream he had had, a sort of waking vision, which put them all in good heart.

What he had seen was this: the former high priest Onias appeared to him, that great gentleman of modest bearing and mild disposition, apt speaker, and exponent from childhood of the good life. With outstretched hands he was praying earnestly for the whole Jewish community. Next there appeared in the same attitude a figure of great age and dignity, whose wonderful air of authority marked him as a man of the utmost distinction. Then Onias said, 'This is God's prophet Jeremiah, who loves his fellow-Jews and offers many prayers for our people and for the holy city.' Jeremiah extended his right hand and delivered to Judas a golden sword, saying as he did so, 'Take this holy sword, the gift of God, and with it crush your enemies.'

The eloquent words of Judas had the power of stimulating everyone to bravery and making men out of boys. Encouraged by them, the Jews made up their minds not to remain in camp, but to take the offensive manfully and fight hand to hand with all their strength until the issue was decided. This they did because Jerusalem, their religion, and their temple were in danger. Their fear was not chiefly for their wives and children, not to mention brothers and relatives, but first and foremost for the sacred shrine. The distress of those shut up in Jerusalem was no less, for they were anxious at the prospect of a battle on open ground.

All were waiting for the decisive struggle which lay ahead. The enemy had already concentrated his forces; his army was drawn up in order of battle, the elephants stationed in a favourable position and the cavalry ranged on the flank. When Maccabaeus observed the deployment of the troops, the variety of their equipment, and the ferocity of the elephants, with hands upraised he invoked the Lord, the worker of miracles; for he knew that God grants victory to those who deserve it, not because of their military strength but as he himself decides. This was his prayer: 'Master, thou didst send thy angel in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and he killed as many as a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in Sennacherib's camp.

23 Now, Ruler of heaven, send once again a good angel to go in front of  
24 us spreading fear and panic. May they be struck down by thy strong  
arm, these blasphemers who are coming to attack thy holy people!’  
Thus he ended.

25 Nicanor and his forces advanced with trumpets and war-songs,  
26 but Judas and his men joined battle with invocations and prayers.  
27 Fighting with their hands and praying to God in their hearts, they  
killed no fewer than thirty-five thousand men, and were greatly  
cheered by the divine intervention.

28 The action was over, and they were joyfully disbanding, when  
29 they recognized Nicanor lying dead in his armour. Then with  
tumultuous shouts they praised their Master in their native lan-  
30 guage. Judas their leader, who had always fought body and soul on  
behalf of his fellow-Jews, never losing his youthful patriotism, now  
ordered Nicanor’s head to be cut off, also his hand and arm, and  
31 taken to Jerusalem. On arrival there he summoned all the people and  
stationed the priests before the altar. Then he sent for the men in the  
32 citadel, and showed them the head of the blackguardly Nicanor and  
the hand which this bragging blasphemer had extended against the  
33 Almighty’s holy temple. He cut out the tongue of the impious  
Nicanor, and said he would give it to the birds bit by bit; and he gave  
orders that the evidence of what Nicanor’s folly had brought upon  
34 him should be hung up opposite the shrine. They all made the sky  
ring with the praises of the Lord who had shown his power: ‘Praise  
35 to him who has preserved his own sanctuary from defilement!’ Judas  
hung Nicanor’s head from the citadel, a clear proof of the Lord’s  
36 help, for all to see. It was unanimously decreed that this day should  
never pass unnoticed but be regularly celebrated. It is the thirteenth  
of the twelfth month, called Adar in Aramaic, the day before  
37 Mordecai’s Day. Such, then, was the fate of Nicanor, and from that  
time Jerusalem has remained in the possession of the Hebrews.

38 AT THIS POINT I will bring my work to an end. If it is found  
well written and aptly composed, that is what I myself hoped for;  
39 if cheap and mediocre, I could only do my best. For, just as it is  
disagreeable to drink wine alone or water alone, whereas the mixing  
of the two gives a pleasant and delightful taste, so too variety of style  
in a literary work charms the ear of the reader. Let this then be my  
final word.



