

Name: Darlene Ingram-NT 504  
Document Title: 3 Maccabees  
The Third Book Of Maccabees

## Final Background/Paper Project

Instructions: Use this guide to help you analyze the assigned primary source document. Answer as many of the questions as you can, **using evidence from the document**. Write your answers to as many questions as possible, based on **what you observe** (which may involve reading between the lines).<sup>1</sup>

### First Impressions

1. What are your first impressions? *Draw from your previous educational and personal knowledge.*

**Living A Life Of Faith in an increasingly hostile World. "The Israelites of the Old Testament have become the Jews of the New Testament and so much has happened to them and the world in which they live" (Powell, 39). "The precarious nature of Jewish life in Diaspora confronts us dramatically in this historical novel" (Helyer, 301)**

**Questioned, Why were the Jews in Egypt, again?** Egypt was a significant part of the history of Israel and Judah in the Old Testament. From Abraham to Joseph, Moses and the Hebrew slaves and their Exodus, Egypt's presence is prevalent as oppressor and cultural influencer. For nearly 2000 years, Jewish people have been apart of the Egyptian presence in the Bible. Since the Babylonian invasion by Nebuchadnezzar in the sixth century their has been a substantial settlement of Jews in Egypt(Helyer, 276). In the period leading up to the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, Israel's history was marked by turmoil from without and from within. As a people in exile, the people of Israel were subjected to the changing winds of military and political conquests. And as God's people(Green, 31). God's redemptive plan finds the Jews in Egypt again being used by God to move His plan forward.

**Portrayal of God as hero and Ptolemy IV Philopator as villain.** In an article entitled "God as Kingly Foil in 3 Maccabees" by Ashley Bauchi, the main characters God, the King of Kings and Ptolemy, the King of Egypt are described as hero and villain, based on the language used by the author in 3Maccabees. "The primary characteristic of the tyrant is anger, often paired with cruelty which leads to disorder" (Bauchi, 62).The author of 3 Maccabees uses words such as arrogant, profane, lawless, proud, insolent, harsh, violent, cruel, and polluted to describe Ptolemy. God is described by Simon the priest in his prayer as "Lord, Lord, King of the heavens, sovereign of all creation, holy among holy ones, the only ruler, almighty. These characterizations foreshadow the actions of each personage and provide a framework for the events in the text. The

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted and expanded from "Engaging Students with Primary Sources," Smithsonian Natural Museum of American History. <https://historyexplorer.si.edu/sites/default/files/PrimarySources.pdf> Accessed 12/21/2021.

story begins with Ptolemy IV  
victoriously, a war hero only to soon

Philopator returning from the battle at Raphia  
encounter the real hero, Egypt's God.

**"Conceived a desire to enter the Holy of Holies", "Then the priests in all their vestments prostrated themselves"** this is reminiscent of Pompey's entrance to the

former Temple in Jerusalem. In Josephus Antiquities 14:1-78, Josephus reports of Pompey's  
a entrance into the Temple and "of the Jews there fell 12,000 but the Romans very  
any ages, had been in accessible and seen by none. For Pompey went into it, and not  
few of those who were with him also, and saw all that which was unlawful for  
other men to see but only for the high priests" (Josephus 14:71-72).

**The sanctity of the Holy of Holies in the lives of the Jews** is seen throughout the  
writings of this period. In 3 Maccabees this is hi-lighted when the people said "that it was  
not permitted for the King to enter the Holy of Holies but only the high priest can  
enter once a year, the king was not persuaded. Then the priest prostrated  
themselves and prayed to God to stop this evil. It was shouted to their fellows to  
take arms and die courageously for the ancestral law" (3 Maccabees 1:11-23).

**The price wanted to maintain religious freedom.** The price that Ptolemy wanted  
from the Jews to maintain their religious freedom impressed me...." He proposed to  
tower inflict public disgrace upon the Jewish community and he set up a stone on the  
enter in the courtyard with this inscription: None of those who do not sacrifice shall  
tax their sanctuaries, and all Jews shall be subjected to a registration involving poll  
put to death". They were also told that their bodies would be branded with a symbol of  
Dionysus, the greek god of fertility(3 Maccabees 2:27-29).

**Pitting Jew against Jew.** In 3 Maccabees 3:31-33, some readily gave themselves up,  
to Ptolemy's demands, since they expected to enhance their reputation by their  
future association with king, but the majority acted firmly with a courageous spirit  
and did not depart from their religion....They hated those who separated  
themselves from them, considering them to be enemies of the Jewish nation, and  
depriving them of common fellowship and mutual help.

**The Jews refusal to bow down lead to the King wanting them to be killed,  
reminiscent of the three Hebrew boys refusal to bow to King Nebuchadnezzar.**  
but The king became so infuriated that not only was he enraged against those Jews  
to Jews everywhere, that he ordered that all should be promptly gathered and put  
death" (3 Maccabees 3:1).

**The Power of God/The Power of Prayer.** Two priests/Two Prayers, that made a  
difference in this narrative. Simon and Eleazar pray on behalf of the people. Each  
prayed to God and God intervened to save the Jews. "The God who beholds all, the  
supremely holy father among the holy, heard the prayer of supplication offered  
in the regular form and scourged the one who was greatly exalted by his own  
insolence and effrontery, tossing him to and fro like a reed on the wind until he fell  
impotent to the ground, with his limbs paralyzed and unable to speak,  
completely overpowered by a righteous judgement (3 Maccabees 2:21-23).

**The Jewish Holocaust.** “Jewish communities have faced periods of prejudice, persecution and pogrom as a minority group living within a larger society. This tragic history reached unimaginable depths in the mass-murder of over 6 million Jews by Nazi Germany during the second world War”(Jones, 171). Anti-Semitic rhetoric is prevalent in the pages of 3 Maccabees. Helyer states that for centuries Alexandria was a hotbed for such sentiments and in the 3 Maccabees, the author presents some of the slanders and stereotypes leveled against Jews that continue today with the rise of anti-Semitism. Heyler in his book entitled, “Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period” outlines the anti-Semitic slander found in the 3 Maccabees:

“they hindered others from the observance of their customs”(3:2).

“they kept their separateness with respect to foods” (3:4).

“they appeared hateful to some”(3:4). “loyal  
neither to the king to his authorities, but were hostile and greatly opposed to his  
government”(3:7). “those wicked people who  
never cease from their folly”(3:16). “they were carried  
away by their traditional arrogance....”(3:18-19). “in their innate  
malice....they incline constantly to evil”(3:22).

These statements were meant to feed anti-Jewish sentiments among the Gentiles.

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Stereotypical names are used to describe the Jews throughout the document:  
disloyal Jews, immoral Jews, exclusive Jews, egocentric Jews, mourning Jews, lawless Jews, a  
renegade Jew, Alexandrian Jews, Egyptian Jews and Hellenistic Jews.

**Slave Trade.** The deportation of the Jews at the hands of their enemies is reminiscent of the transatlantic slave trade or middle passage which involved the transport of Africans to the Americas against their will. The crossings were brutal and inhumane, many died at the hands of their enslavers. In 3Maccabees 4, it describes the treatment and brutality experienced by the Jews as they were sent to Alexandria to be killed. They were rounded up, the old men, young brides, their husbands, children and parents, all being roused and cruelly treated as they boarded ships like animals. They were placed in total darkness with fetters put about their necks to keep them under control and subjected to their captors. This narrative shows “the cruel deportation of Jews from their homes to the vast concourse of the hippodrome at Alexandria”.(McLean, 131).

**“The more he tried to kill them, the greater they grew”, so much so that they ran out of ink and paper.** Exodus 1:12 states, “But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites” (NIV). In this narrative, king Ptolemy wants to execute the Jews through the registration process but Divine Providence does not allow this to be so. The scribes report to him that the more Jews that they register the greater the Jews grow and they now lack ink and paper to complete the task.

The reaction of the people when then found out the king was **“profanely plotting”**.

The virgins rushed out of their chambers and threw dust on their heads, women about

to get married abandoned their bridal chambers, mothers and nurses  
abandoned their newborns and they all crowded together at the Temple and  
prayed, prepared to take up arms.

2. What kind of document is it (letter, prayer, historical account, apocalypse, testament, narrative, etc.)? How do you know? *Clues within the text will alert you to the literary genre the writer used to communicate this message.*

This work of literature has a historical core since it tells the story and struggles of Jews in a set period of time in history. "This is a fictional narrative about a dire threat of extermination for the entire Jewish community of Egypt"(Helyer, page 301). This document of historical-fiction is considered to be piece of work from the Alexandrian Jewish literature, which hi-lights the persecution, oppression and miraculous deliverance of the Jews at the hands of Ptolemy, the king of Egypt"(Nickelsburg, 199).

*The proof of historical narration is evidenced by the story being told by its anonymous writer, to encourage the faithful jews and to remind them of their faithful God in times of pain, slaughter, death and deliverance.*  
*The document has dialogue, through the two main characters God and Ptolemy. Simon and Eleazar speak through prayer. The characters interact with one another, even negatively, and produce results that affect the narrative.*

*Nationalistic Pride, "is the pride or sense of esteem that a person has for one's nation and the pride or self-esteem that a person derives from one's national identity. It was necessary for Israel to display nationalistic pride throughout their journey and beyond, that's why they were chosen to be God's special people. God's plan from the beginning was to create a people among whom he could dwell and with whom he could be in relationship. Yahweh came to choose Abraham's family to bless all and made them a "Special People", for it is through one that many are blessed. God placed a promise within them and gave them an identity that in-spite of whatever life presented them with they would carry that promise, that's what made them "special". When the Second Temple Period begins in the Persian period, the Jews have restored the temple and have hope in a new beginning through the still a people Jews they Seleucid slaughtered which then rule the traditions, they even Jewish cities and domination, physically, class presentation, homeland will be influenced by*  
*worshiping their God and being his chosen people but as they move periods, they continue to take pride in their identity because they are with a promise. Ptolemaic rule, Alexander the Great conquers but the still have a temple, a place to worship, they live in a community where are still allowed to follow their traditions and customs. Under the rule, Jewish practices and traditions are banned and many are because they are forced to embrace Greek customs and ways, causes a Maccabean revolt. During the period of Maccabean Maccabees destroy all thing Greek to return back to drove Hellenized Jews off their land. They re-establish customs only to be conquered by the Romans and face emotionally, financially and spiritually. According to our any culture or people spreading out from their their journey and the conditions where they finally*

settle. Jewish identity is and observances are not a people with a promise.

hampered because their culture, customs beliefs reinforced or simply diminished but they are still

### Looking More Closely

1. Read through the document carefully. Make a list of any unusual words, phrases, or concepts. Does a particular expression or concept strike you as strange? Does it jump out at you?

#### Creative Language used to describe events in the text;

He shook him on this side and that as a reed is shaken by the wind..."

Language used to describe how God dealt with Ptolemy

"Vain minded praise their vanities at the destruction of your beloved people, saying "not even their God has rescued them." Language used to describe how the priest prayed to God

"The walls and the whole bath around echoed..." Stated because the people preferred death rather than to have Ptolemy's "profanation of the place."

**Descriptive words used to describe Ptolemy:** arrogant, profane, lawless, proud, insolent, harsh, violent, cruel, polluted, irrational, excessive, audacious, impious, puffed up;

**Descriptive words used to describe God:** "Lord, Lord, King of the heavens, sovereign of all creation, holy among holy ones, the only ruler, almighty, creator of all things, O'King, King of great powers, Almighty God Most High, governing all creation with mercy.

**An act of Invincible Providence** - when the paper and ink ran out from Him who was aiding the Jews from heaven.

The prayers of the priest, two prayers, two priest..these prayers stood out, The priest are active through pray alone. Prayers are powerful, full of Hebrew history and acknowledges God's promises to his people. Prayers are also answered immediately bringing tragic results for king Ptolemy.

The description of the priests stand out in sharp contrast to Ptolemy..." Then the high priest Simon, facing the sanctuary, bending his knees and extending his hands with dignity, prayed" (3Maccabees 3:1). "Eleazar, famous among the priests of the country, who had attained a ripe old age and throughout his life had been adorned with every virtue, directed the elders around him to cease calling upon the holy God and prayed.." (3Maccabees 6:1).

Continued theme of Jews punishing Jews for "willfully transgressing against God". In this narrative 300 Jews are killed at the hands of Jews who punished them for acts against God(3Maccabees 7:10).

2. Is there a date on it? If so, what is it? If not, are there any other clues within the document that might indicate when it was written? *Documents may allude to a past well-known event as if it was happening now (a common device used to how the hearer-readers understand the message the author wants to convey). Temple writers tended to look back for precedents that provided analogies for exhortations or messages they wanted their generation to consider.*

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Clues to the date of this writing, originally composed in Greek, point to a time between the Battle of Raphia, which took place in 217B.C. and the destruction that befell the temple in A.D. 70. Although it is entitled 3 Maccabees, the events described predate the Maccabean revolt by fifty years (Bacchi, 59).

3. Is there a location indicated? What is it? *Explicit locations could be Babylon or Jerusalem, for example. But the location may be veiled. Perhaps the author mentions customs or events that suggest the location is outside of Judea.*

The main action in the plot of 3 Maccabees takes place in the neighborhood of Alexandria in Egypt. "During the First century B.C. and the first Christian century, a very large Jewish community lived in Egypt, especially the great city of Alexandria. This community generated a number of significant Jewish writings." (Helyer, page 277)

4. Who wrote or created the document? How can you tell? *If the author is stated, is it the actual person identified or is it an anonymous writer using a famous name to give the message greater authority? 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple writers often used pseudonyms of known biblical characters to draw attention to the seriousness of the issues he is addressing. Is the author familiar with Jewish tradition? Is he familiar with values? There is much you can learn from the document itself even if you do not know the author's exact identity.*

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The author of this document is anonymous. "Given the fact that the major concern of the book centers on the Jewish people, the author is almost certainly Jewish. Uriel Rapport states, "3 Maccabees was written in Greek by an anonymous Jew from Alexandria" (551). The writer according to Roderick McClean in his book, "The Original Maccabees Bible, is not an historian whose first interest is to accurately what happened or to preserve the memory of past events. He is rather a man of orthodox Jewish religious sentiment who employs historical narration to edify and encourage the faithful within his own people" (132).

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He is rather a  
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5. For whom was the document written or created? How do you know? *Is the document written to or for a specific group of Jews (or Gentile readers)? Do these Jews seem to live in Palestine or in other parts of the empires in control? Look for clues like the mention of the Torah, Temple, or Jewish customs. Maybe Gentile customs are mentioned (which may clue you into a group of Jews living outside Judea). Do the document just have a general audience in mind?*

the

Judea). Do the  
document just have a

This document was written for the Jews living in Egypt, "to remind them that they are a "special people" and to defend and justify their way and quality of life, their

document to protect courageously for people when then found chambers and their bridal they all crowded arms.

*religious sensitivities and their continuing religious observances". This shows the religious practices of the Jews and just how far they would go and defend their way of life. They were willing to take arms and die the ancestral law"(3 Maccabees 1:11-23). The reaction of the out the king was "profanely plotting". The virgins rushed out of their threw dust on their heads, women about to get married abandoned chambers, mothers and nurses abandoned their newborns and together at the Temple and prayed, prepared to take up arms.*

6. *What is the purpose of the document? What made you think this? Are the documents written to people who are oppressed, need encouragement, need to be warned, etc.? It helps to imagine what life must be like in the era we are studying for a specific lesson.*

This document clearly outlines life for the Jews under the hands of their oppressors. Nickelsburg says "persecution, oppression and miraculous deliverance are the stuff of this piece of historical fiction".(199). He continues to say that this work focuses on the Jews' status as God's special, protected people and shows considerable ambivalence toward a Gentile world that can be a serious threat to the chosen people". The Jews in this document refuse to give up there religious customs and beliefs at the hand of a tyrant who is set on controlling them and their God. The tyrant soon realizes you can't win against God, no matter how hard you try. This affords the Jews the opportunity to be victorious in this narrative, showing how their God overpowers the tyrant. For a people who now face hardships and uncertainties about their future this narrative would serve to encourage.

### Thinking Further

1. *What do you think the writer thought was the most important information to convey? Why? Think theologically and/or practically.*

At a time when anti-Jewish sentiment was spreading and Jewish identity and religious practices were under attack, the author thought it was important to convey a message of hope and encouragement. A message of deliverance and vindication from the oppression of their enemies. The author also "celebrates the courage of those who stand fast and promises them deliverance and vindication"(Nickelsburg, 201).

The Jews faced a future of uncertainty, being cast out of their homeland to the unknown, not having the freedoms to worship as they desired or to adhere to torah rituals. Living in foreign lands, adjusting to new customs, new people, new ways of life, any people spreading out from their homeland will be influenced by their journey and the conditions where they finally settle. Their dogma made them the object of ridicule, so the author seeks to provide

exaltation of God as their savior and the evil tyrant.

deliverer in the midst of their persecution by

There is also a warning to those Jews who turn their backs on God, there will be repercussions for all who deny God and the torah teaching, within the pages of the document 300 Jews were killed because they chose to side with the enemy.

2. *Does the document convey a certain tone? For example, is it entertaining, humorous, encouraging, warning, etc.?*

Cruelty, shame, painful, vulnerability, authoritarian, callous, contemptuous, hateful, ambivalent, victorious, arrogant, caustic, prayerful, reverent, domineering, childish, tragic, warning, trickery, depressing, Entertaining, humorous, encouraging, and warning(of what is to come).

3. *Can you tell the point of view of the writer? Is it objective? No writer is purely objective, but the document may want to portray a sense of being objective (usually historical documents such as the writings of Josephus). Yet even Josephus has a clear bias in how he tells the story of Israel's history. The point of view could be something as simple as favorable to some aspects of a foreign culture or completely disapproving of pagan culture.*

The writer is definitely working from a Jewish point of view with a positive Jewish perspective. With 3 Maccabees being primarily "an exhortation to the Jewish community and by application, to the Jewish Diaspora to remain faithful to the ancestral tradition even in the face of threats to their very existence"(302). This document is full of reminders to the Jewish community of God's greatness and how he delivered them in the past and will continue to do so in the future. The prayers by the two priest are riddled with declarations of God's exploits for his "special people", "You destroyed those who in the past committed injustice", "You consumed with fire and sulphur the men of Sodom who acted arrogantly". God's promises are displayed though the prayers, "you promised that if we should have reverses and tribulation overtake us you would listen to our petition". The writer shows God's power versus the weakness of the enemy, this lets the Jews know that God is the greatest power and that he will prevail. This is significant based on what they are enduring and it provides hope.

This document presents the Jewish people as special, chosen people of God, who are preyed upon by a cruel and evil regime. In an article entitled "God as Kingly Foil in 3 Maccabees" by Ashley Bauchi, the main characters God, the King of Kings and Ptolemy, the King of Egypt are described as hero and villain, based on the language used by the author in 3Maccabees. Good versus Evil motif is employed and quite obvious based on the narrative.

4. *What is the writer's attitude about Israel's God or the nations' gods? How can you tell?*

"Lord, Lord, King of the heavens, sovereign of all creation, holy among holy ones, the only ruler, almighty, creator of all things, O'King, King of great powers, Almighty

this in who God Most High, governing all creation with mercy. God is seen as the Hero of story, He answers the prayers of His people. He punishes the evil tyrant and the people rejoice and celebrate. God is also portrayed as the deliverer, the 2 priest the prayers acknowledge the power of God in the ancestral wall of fame, a God makes all things right, who delivers and restores and vindicate. God is Ptolemy's opponent, out matching him from the beginning and throughout the narrative.

only in something serves only power of Dionysus. fact that Ptolemy wants to get that goes awry and the Dionysus, the God of fertility, wine and drink is Egypt's God. The children of Israel are threatened with the prospect of having their bodies branded by fire with the ivy-leaf symbol of Dionysus. The writer sees the nation's god as powerless, he is referred to once in story and the tyrant does not pray to him or ask him to help anyway. Thought it was interesting that Dionysus was a god of fertility, the Jews did not have a problem with. Ptolemy, the king of Egypt, because God allows him to, he does not function under the Dionysus is also associated with the elephants and the them drunk so that he can destroy the Jews but even elephants wind up destroying his own people.

5. *What is the writer's attitude toward "Jews"? Pay particular attention to whether the writer distinguishes between Jews (for example, Jews who are faithful and those who are disobedient to the Torah). Does he disapprove of some Jews?*

he rushed out married abandoned their newborns and prepared to take up arms. This work focuses on the Jews, God's special and protected people. It presents Egyptian Jews with a history of being loyal citizens who will accept martyrdom before taking up arms (Bacchi, 65). The Jews presented are very loyal to God and the torah, they are willing to die to protect their religious custom. When the king decides wants to enter the Temple he is met with great opposition...the reaction of the people when then found out the king was "profanely plotting". The virgins of their chambers and threw dust on their heads, women about to get abandoned their bridal chambers, mothers and nurses they all crowded together at the Temple and prayed,

Throughout the document stereotypical names are used to describe the Jews renegade Jews, apostate Jews, disloyal Jews, immoral Jews, exclusive Jews, egocentric Jews, mourning Jews, lawless Jews, Alexandrian Jews, Egyptian Jews and Hellenistic Jews.

Just as God"(68). It also allows us to see the fate of those Jews that are disobedient to the Torah. "The Egyptian Jews put three-hundred men to death who transgressed the law of God. This can be seen as demonstrating that the Jews did not take apostasy lightly; Mattathias killed the Jew that went to sacrifice to the idols on the altar, the Egyptian Jew would not allow their own people to turn their back to

6. *What is the writer's attitude about "non-Jews" or those ruling over them? How can you tell? The most pressing issue for Judaism during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple period was the*

*relationship of Jews with Gentiles. Their experiences vary throughout the centuries and with different writers. How is this writer relating or thinking about non-Jews?*

The non-Jews are seen as the oppressors and in this document the writer is trying to find a way for the Jews to assimilate and live among the Gentiles. "To a large extent, 3 Maccabees accentuates the differences between the Jews and the Gentiles(Nickelsburg, 201). 3Maccabees shows how the customs and observances make the Jews different and thus make them the focus of Gentile ridicule. Ptolemy becomes so angry when he is not allowed to enter the Temple that he begins a campaign to exterminate all Jews. "First he openly slandered the Jews among his high-ranking officials, and this then creates a climate of Jew-bashing (Helyer, 304), re-enforcing anti-Jewish sentiments like:

"they hindered others from the observance of their customs"(3:2). "they kept their separateness with respect to foods" (3:4). "they appeared hateful to some"(3:4). "loyal neither to the king to his authorities, but were hostile and greatly opposed to his government"(3:7). "those wicked people who never cease from their folly"(3:16). "they were carried away by their traditional arrogance...."(3:18-19). "in their innate malice....they incline constantly to evil"(3:22).

These statements were meant to feed anti-Jewish sentiments among the Gentiles.  
(303)

### *7. What does the writer believe about the Torah (the Law)?*

In this document, we see the author's rigorous devotion to the Law. This is evidence in the slaying of 300 renegade Jews for not adhering to the teaching of the Torah. In accordance with the law, "If your very own brother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you love, or your closest friend secretly entices you, saying, "Let us go and worship other gods" (gods that neither you nor your ancestors have known, gods of the peoples around you, whether near or far, from one end of the land to the other), do not yield to them or listen to them. Show them no pity. Do not spare them or shield them."Deuteronomy 13:6-8 NIV. They are to be put to death.

In this document we see how reverence is given to God each time his name is mentioned and through strict religious practices and customs. We also see how the sacred history of the Jews is rehearse again and again, a custom used so that they never forget and it is shared from generation to generation. The prayers of the high priest are significant to the teachings of the Torah.

*8. What other customs or institutions of Judaism do the writers mention? What is his attitude toward these customs or institutions? These can include such things as dietary laws, marriage, the Temple, the priesthood, etc.*

The descriptions in 3 Maccabees 1:19-29 of how the people responded to the mere fact that Ptolemy wanted to enter the temple, shows the reverence and importance of the temple to the Jews. The people began to abandon their rituals to defend the temple, the virgins rushed out of their chambers and threw dust on their heads, women about to get married abandoned their bridal chambers, mothers and nurses abandoned their newborns and they all crowded together at the Temple and prayed, prepared to take up arms. The temple was the very essence of who they were, that was their place of worship, where they met God. The temple was an important part of their identity, in "The Jewish Diaspora in Greco-Roman Antiquity", the author speaks about how temple worship and religious practices were changing during this period and how the Jews were still trying to hold on to the past. "Male circumcision, the mark of biblical covenant, sabbath observances, exemption from the military, rearrangement of grain distributions to help with sabbath observances, dietary laws and purity laws were all being viewed by Gentiles as excessive (Rajak, 152).

9. *What is the attitude of the writer toward morality or natural law? How can you tell?*

*The writer may have a general audience in mind, or he may have a specific group he is addressing. Does he expect these groups to demonstrate morality? is addressing. Does he expect these groups to demonstrate morality?*

The Writer is addressing the Jews, in general, and he hopes and purposes that by telling this story, no one ever forgets the sacrifices of these Jews who gave their lives so that the customs and traditions could be passed from generation to generation to uphold the morality of a people who were chosen by God to preserve and carry the law. They were not destined to have Gentiles rule over them but live among them. This document clearly outlines life for the Jews under the hands of their oppressors. Nickelsburg says "persecution, oppression and miraculous deliverance are the stuff of this piece of historical fiction". (199). He continues to say that this work focuses on the Jews' status as God's special, protected people and shows considerable ambivalence toward a Gentile world that can be a serious threat to the chosen people". The Jews in this document refuse to give up their religious customs and beliefs at the hand of a tyrant who is set on controlling them and their God. The tyrant soon realizes you can't win against God, no matter how hard you try. This affords the Jews the opportunity to be victorious in this narrative, showing how God overpowers the tyrant. For a people who now face hardships and their uncertainties about their future this narrative would serve to encourage.

10. *Does the document remind you of any biblical event, character, or book of the Bible?*

*What made you think of those events, characters, or biblical books?*

**The Jews refusal to bow down lead to the King wanting them to be killed, reminiscent of the three Hebrew boys refusal to bow to King Nebuchadnezzar.**

but to The king became so infuriated that not only was he enraged against those Jews Jews everywhere, that he ordered that all should be promptly gathered and put death" (3 Maccabees 3:1).

In 3 Maccabees 6:17, "And when the Jews observed this they raised great cries to heaven so that even the nearby valleys resounded with them and brought an uncontrollable terror upon the army". 2 Chronicles describes a similar incident, loud shout of praise that confuses the enemy, Judah began to praise and the enemy was confused.

Retribution theory in Job where Satan feels that Job is only upright and blameless because God has built a hedge around him and treats him well, the thought that God rewards the good and punishes the bad. In this document we see where God intervenes to save his people and He instantly punishes Ptolemy for his wicked behavior. God is seen as a protector of the Jews.

The power of prayer, PRAYER is one of the most powerful and important exercises to the believer. We speak to God through prayer and he speaks to us through his word. The prayers in this document are powerful and they are effective because they're answered. "The heartfelt prayer of a good man works powerful"(James 5:16). Each high priest assumes the posture and prays to God believing that He will answer and God does.

Queen Esther, as in the Book of Esther a tyrant plots to destroy all Jews but his plan is thwart and he winds up dying on gallows planned for the Jews. Much like the tyrant in the 3 Maccabees that plots against the Jews only not be used by God to bless them.

**Summary Statement:** How does this document give insight into the beliefs and concerns of Jews for the historical period being investigated? How does it add to what the textbooks say about the period?

The 2nd Temple Period was a time of great crisis, transition and survival for the Jews. They dealt with dispersion, resistance, identity crisis, death, destruction and renewal. They had to deal with issues like, how to survive in a world run by Gentiles? and what does it mean to be Jewish when you no longer live in a promised land? This Second Temple Period, known as the silent years, speak very loudly to the Jews who have had their world shook by war, oppression under foreign rulers and spiritual and political change. After the Babylonians captured the city of Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah, the temple was destroyed. Babylon was conquered by the Persians and under Persian rule, a portion of the Israelites began to rebuild the Temple and the Jews enjoy freedom and were permitted to govern themselves, according to their own laws and customs. Many Jews were dispersed to cities around the Mediterranean, even Egypt, where this fictional historical narrative takes place.

The literature of the times gives insight into the history, strong religious beliefs of the Jews, their customs, traditions and their willingness to die for what they believe. These literary documents show their struggle to hold on to their identity in a World that was quickly changing due to war, aggression, conquest and domination. We see writings that focus on dispersion, conquest, reform, revolt, repression, destruction and reconstruction. Second Temple Jewish Literature focused on the following issues, ideas about YHWH, views of the law of Moses, Jewish ideas about religious cult, ideas about morality and attitudes towards Gentiles(Cox, class lecture). The 3 Maccabees clearly outlines life for the Jews at the hands of their oppressors. Nickelsburg says "persecution, oppression and miraculous

deliverance are the stuff of this piece of historical fiction".(199). He continues to say that this work focuses on the Jews' status as God's special, protected people and shows considerable ambivalence toward a Gentile world that can be a serious threat to the chosen people". The Jews in this document refuse to give up their religious customs and beliefs at the hand of a tyrant who is set on controlling them and their God. This affords the Jews the opportunity to be victorious in this narrative, showing how their God overpowers the tyrant. For a people who now face hardships and uncertainties about their future this narrative would serve to encourage. At a time when anti-Jewish sentiment was spreading and Jewish identity and religious practices were under attack, the author thought it was important to convey a message of hope and encouragement. A message of deliverance and vindication from the oppression of their enemies. The author also "celebrates the courage of those who stand fast and promises them deliverance and vindication"(Nickelsburg, 201). The Jews faced a future of uncertainty, being cast out of their homeland to the unknown, not having the freedoms to worship as they desired or to adhere to Torah teachings and rituals. Living in foreign lands, adjusting to new customs, new people, new ways of life, any people spreading out from their homeland will be influenced by their journey and the conditions where they finally settle. Their dogma made them the object of ridicule, so the author seeks to provide exaltation of God as their savior and deliverer in the midst of their persecution by the evil tyrant. God used the so-called silent years, its literature, history and its people, the Jews, to set the stage for the culmination of His redemptive plan first set forth in Genesis 3:15

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