



Photographs by Chuck Louviere

What Happened at Masada?

From Eleazar Ben-Yair's Speech

(Josephus Flavius, *The Wars of the Jews*, VII, 320–336)

“Since we, long ago, my generous friends, resolved never to be servants to the Romans, nor to any other than to God himself, who alone is the true and just Lord of mankind, the time is now come that obliges us to make that resolution true in practice. And let us not at this time bring a reproach upon ourselves for self-contradiction, while we formerly would not undergo slavery, though it were then without danger, but must now, together with slavery, choose such punishments also as are intolerable; I mean this, upon the supposition that the Romans once reduce us under their power while we are alive. We were the very first that revolted from them, and we are the last that fight against them; and I cannot but esteem it as a favor that God hath granted us, that it is still in our power to die bravely, and in a state of freedom, which hath not been the case of others, who were conquered unexpectedly. It is very plain that we shall be taken within a day's time, but it is still an eligible thing to die after a glorious manner, together with our dearest friends...

Let our wives die before they are abused, and our children before they have tasted slavery; and after we have slain them, let us bestow that glorious benefit upon one another mutually and preserve ourselves in freedom as an excellent funeral monument for us. But first let us destroy our money and the fortress by fire; for I am well assured that this will be a great relief to the Romans, that they shall not be able to seize upon our bodies, and shall fail to our wealth also: and let us spare nothing but our provisions; for they will be a testimonial when we are dead that we are not subdued for want of necessaries; but that, according to our original resolution, we have preferred death before slavery.”

For this document, Holy Land related products, information on future trips, resources, and much more, go to www.holywordcafe.com/tours