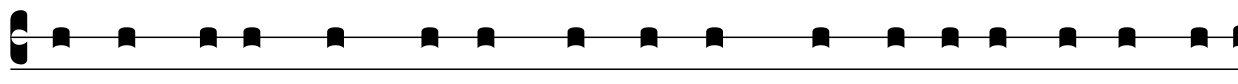
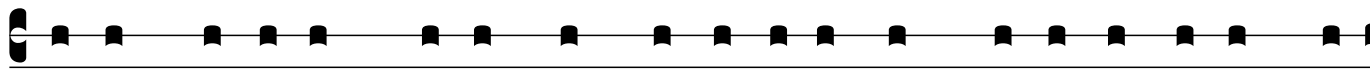


## 2 Maccabees 6:1-2 7:1-23

*Vigil for the Eve of All Saints' Day 4*



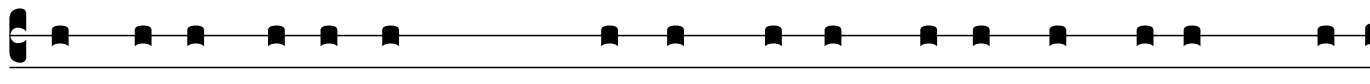
**N**ot long after this, the king sent an Athenian sen-a-tor to compel



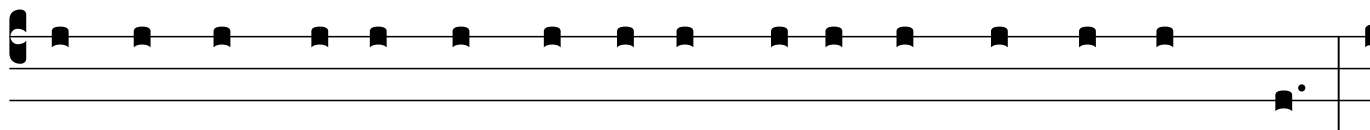
the Jews to forsake the laws of their ancestors and no longer to live by



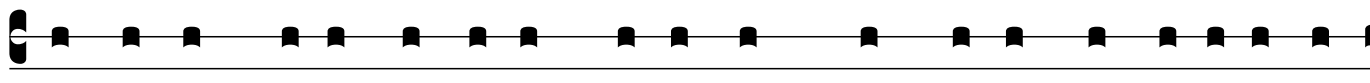
the laws of God, also to pol-lute the temple in Je-ru-sa-lem and to call



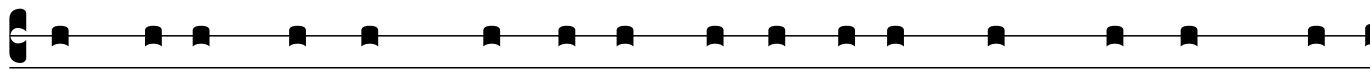
it the temple of Olympian Zeus and to call the one in Ger-izim Zeus-



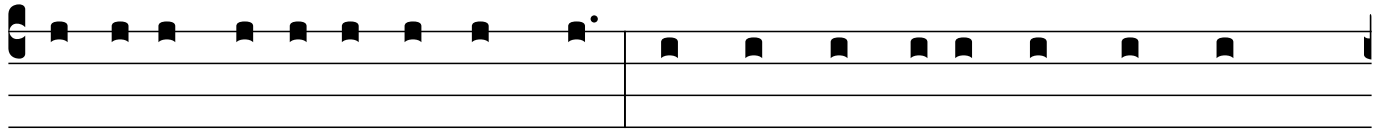
the-Friend-of-Strangers, as the people who live in that place are known.



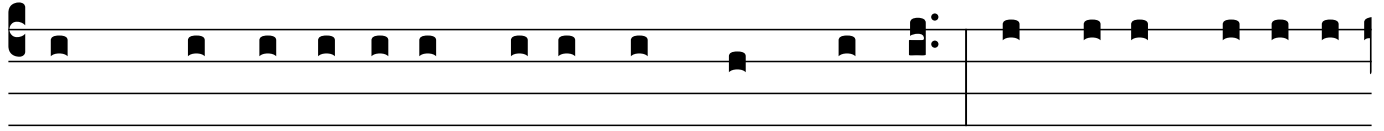
It happened also that sev-en brothers and their mother were arrested and



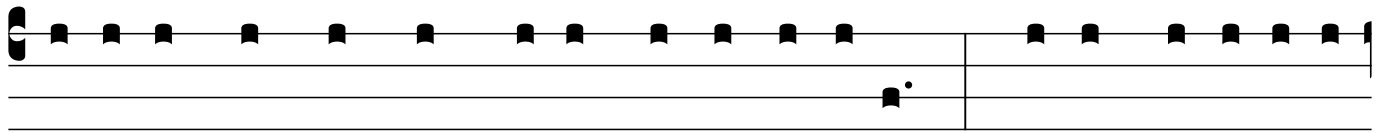
were be- ing compelled by the king, under torture with whips and straps,



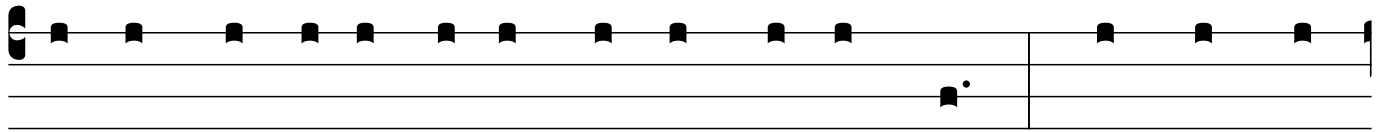
to partake of unlawful pig's flesh. One of them, acting as their spokesman,



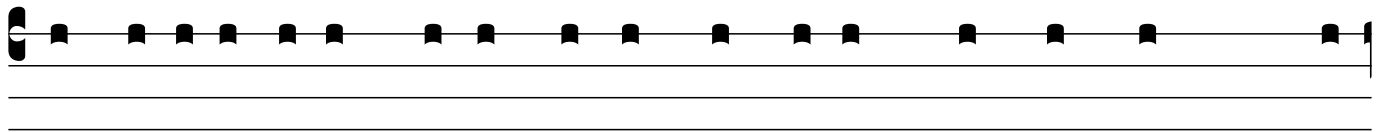
said, "What do you intend to ask and learn from us? For we are ready to



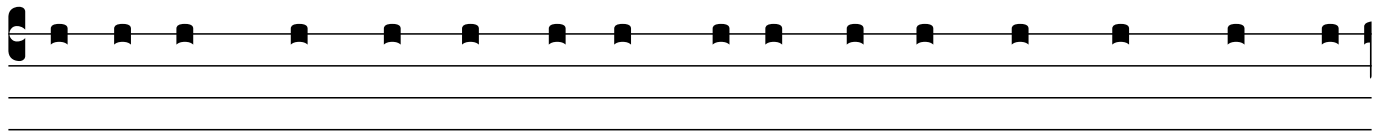
die rather than transgress the laws of our ancestors." The king fell into a



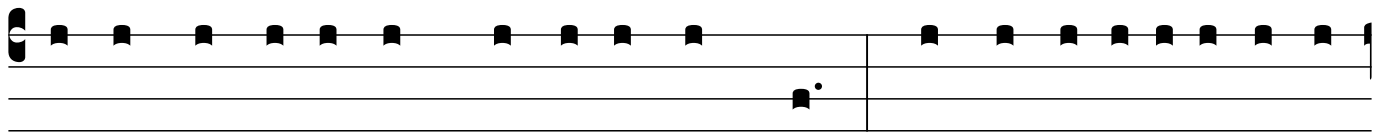
rage and gave orders to have pans and caldrons heated. These were heated



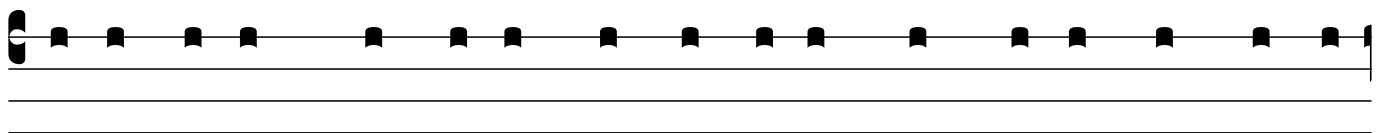
immedi-ately, and he commanded that the tongue of their spokesman be



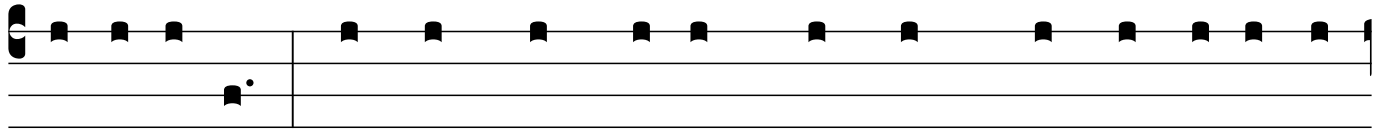
cut out and that they scalp him and cut off his hands and feet, while the



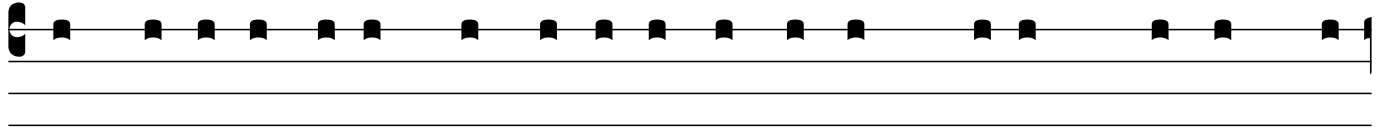
rest of the brothers and the mother looked on. When he was utterly helpless,



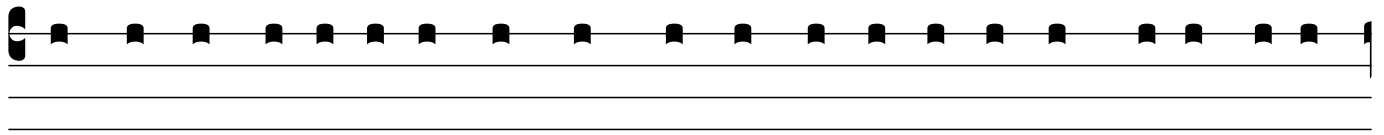
the king ordered them to take him to the fire, still breathing, and to fry



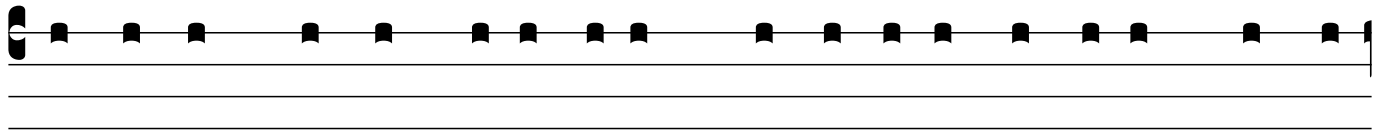
him in a pan. The smoke from the pan spread widely, but the brothers and



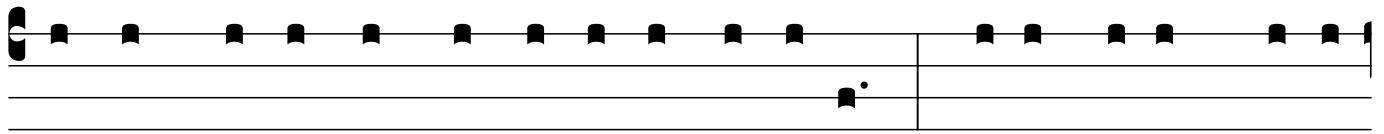
their mother encouraged one another to die nobly, saying, "The Lord God



is watching over us and in truth has compassion on us, as Moses declared



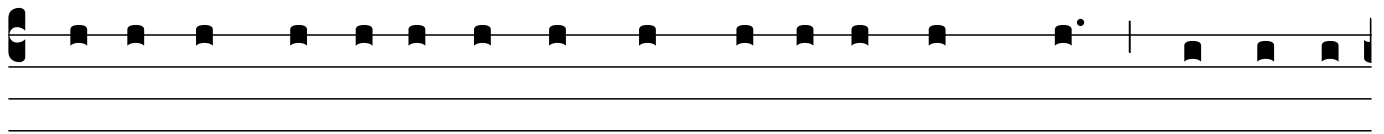
in his song that bore witness against the people to their faces, when he



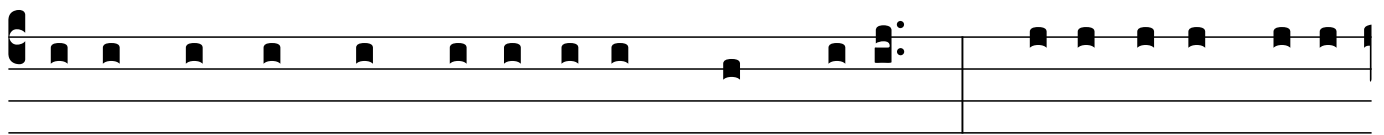
said, 'And he will have compassion on his servants.' " After the first brother



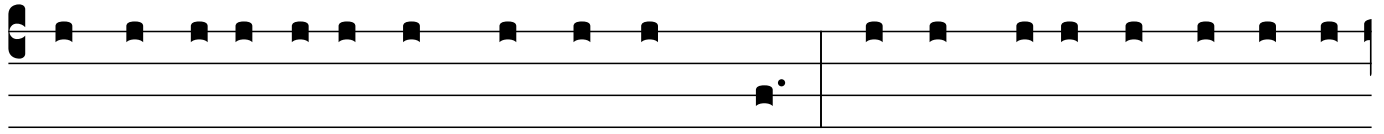
had died in this way, they brought forward the second for their sport.



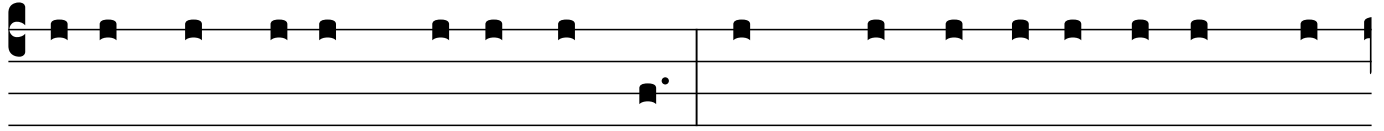
They tore off the skin of his head with the hair and asked him, "Will you eat



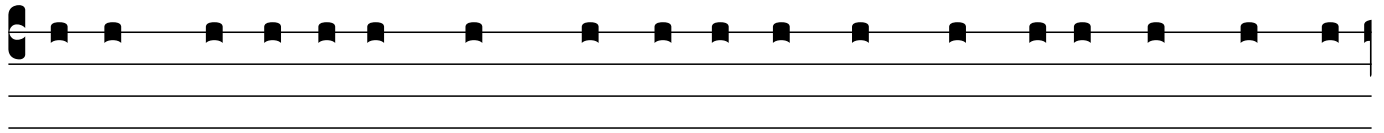
rather than have your body punished limb by limb?" He replied in the lan-



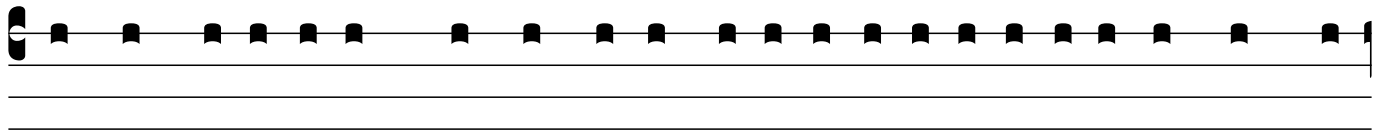
guage of his ancestors and said to them, "No." Therefore he in turn underwent



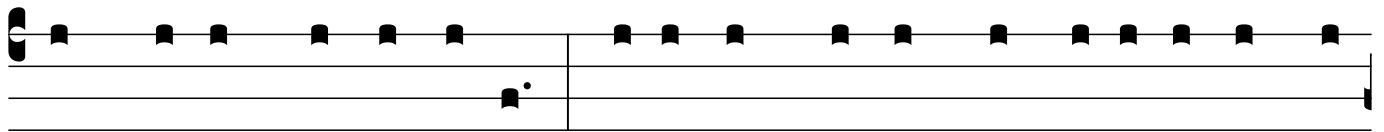
tortures as the first brother had done. And when he was at his last breath,



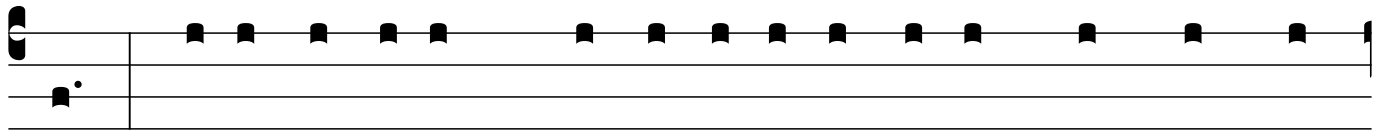
he said, "You accursed wretch, you dismiss us from this present life, but the



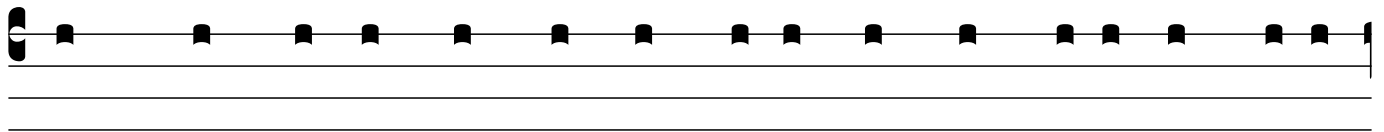
King of the universe will raise us up to a renewal of everlasting life, be-



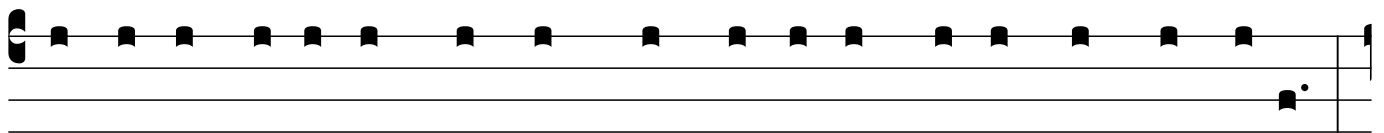
cause we have died for his laws." After him, the third was the victim of their



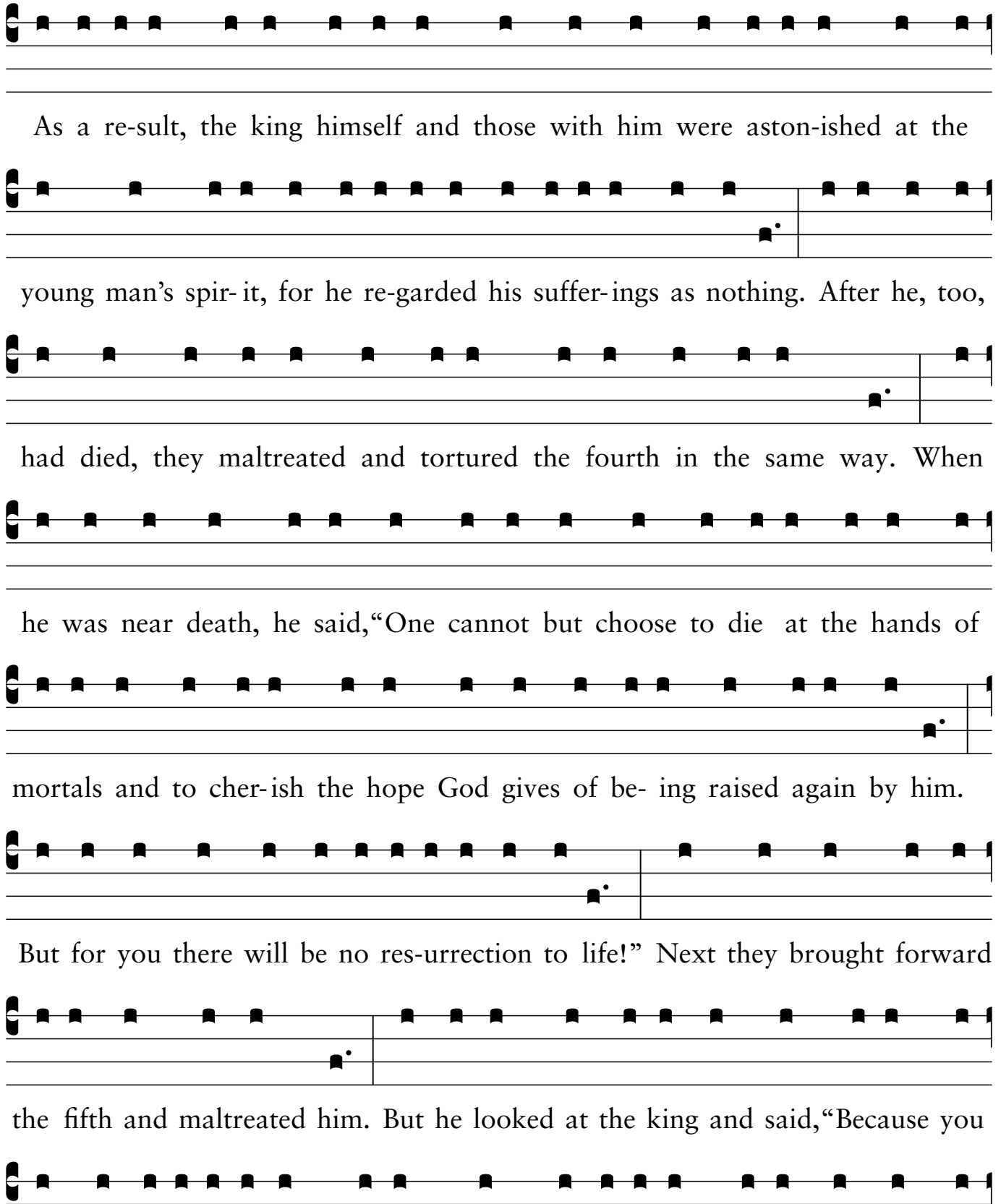
sport. When it was demanded, he quickly put out his tongue and courageously



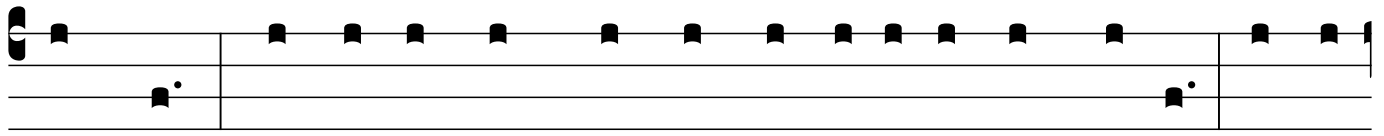
stretched forth his hands and said nobly, "I got these from heaven, and because



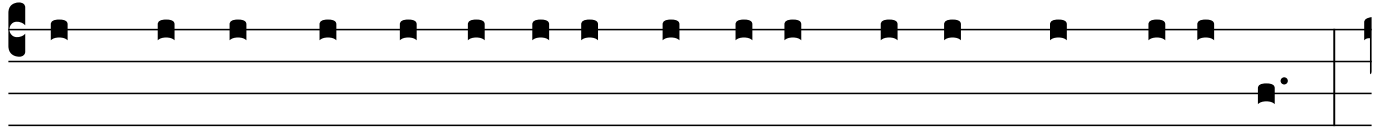
of his laws I disdain them, and from him I hope to get them back again."



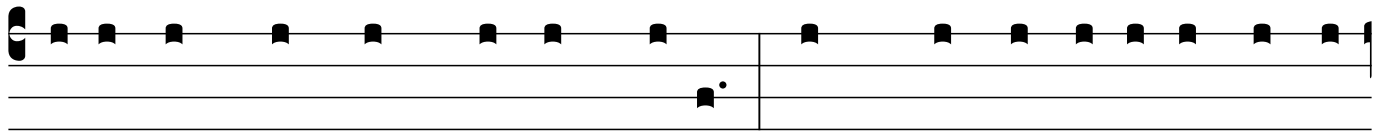
As a re-sult, the king himself and those with him were aston-ished at the young man's spir-it, for he re-garded his suffer-ings as nothing. After he, too, had died, they maltreated and tortured the fourth in the same way. When he was near death, he said, "One cannot but choose to die at the hands of mortals and to cher-ish the hope God gives of be-ing raised again by him. But for you there will be no res-urrection to life!" Next they brought forward the fifth and maltreated him. But he looked at the king and said, "Because you have author-i-ty among mortals, though you also are mortal, you do what



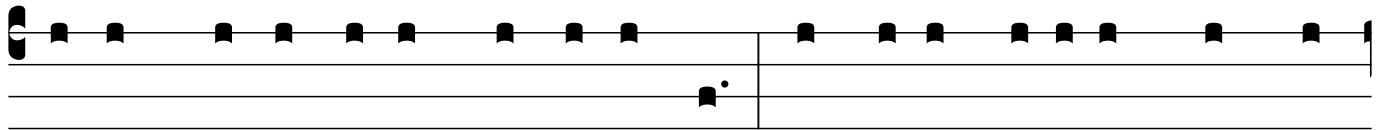
you please. But do not think that God has forsak-en our people. Keep on,



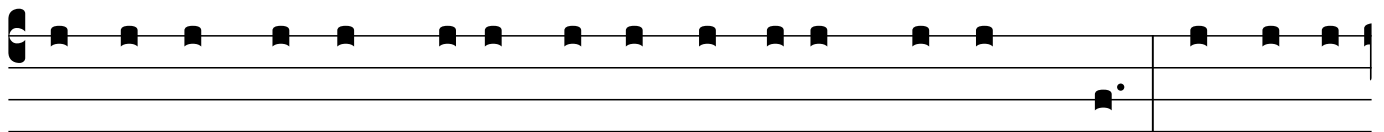
and see how his mighty power will torture you and your descendants!”



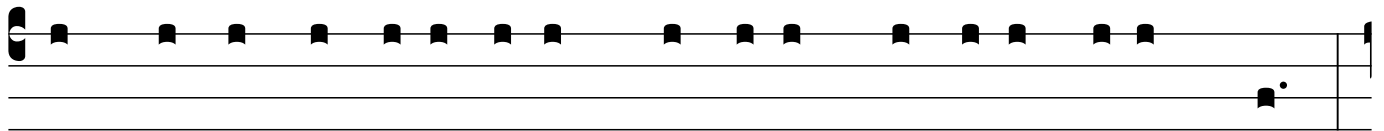
After him they brought forward the sixth. And when he was about to die,



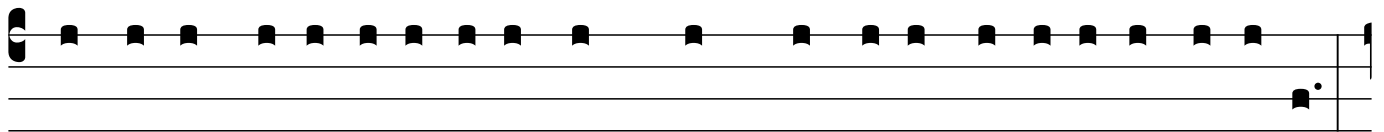
he said, “Do not de-ceive yourself in vain. For we are suffer-ing these things



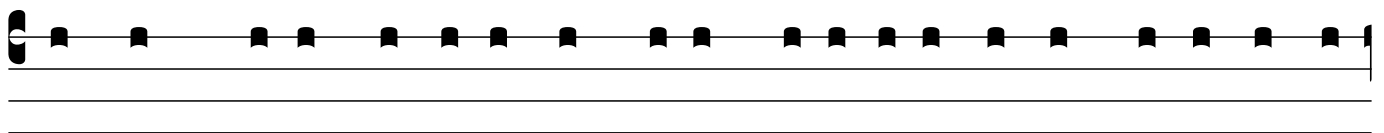
on our own account because of our sins against our own God. But do not



think that you will go unpun-ished for hav-ing tried to fight against God!”



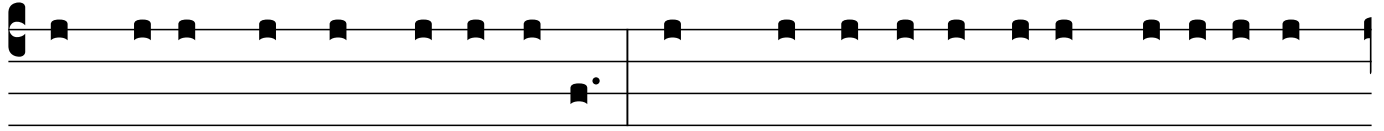
The mother was especial-ly admirable and worthy of hon-or-able memo-ry.



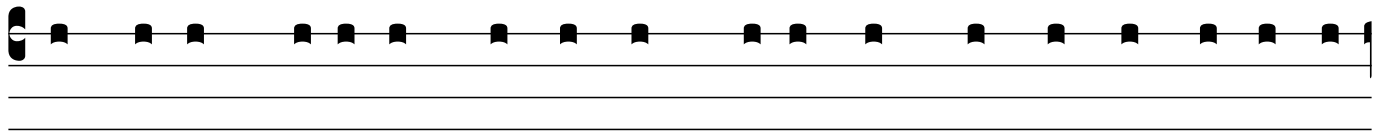
Although she saw her sev-en sons per-ish within a single day, she bore it with



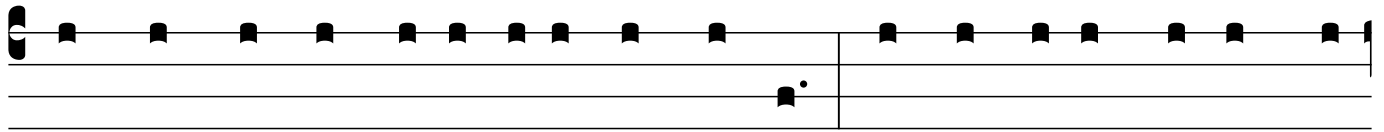
good courage because of her hope in the Lord. She encouraged each of them



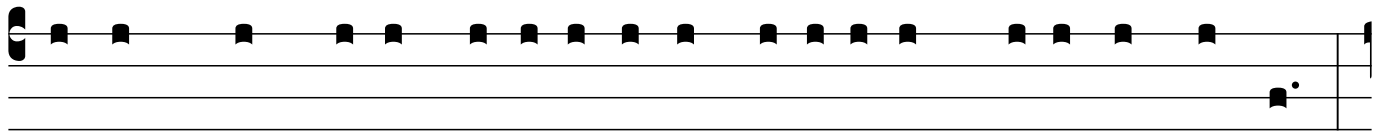
in the language of their ancestors. Filled with a noble spirit, she reinforced



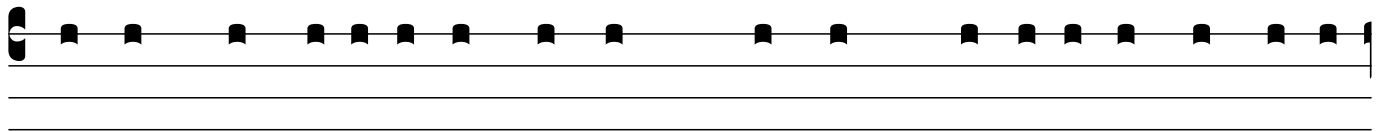
her woman's reasoning with a man's courage and said to them, "I do not



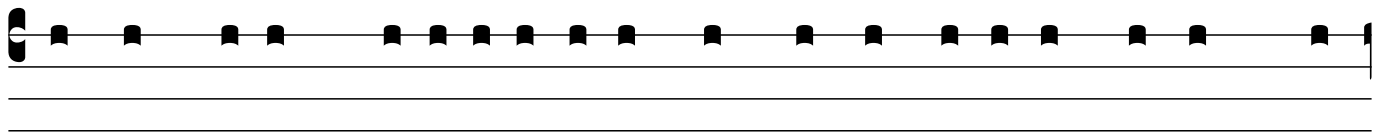
know how you came into being in my womb. It was not I who gave you



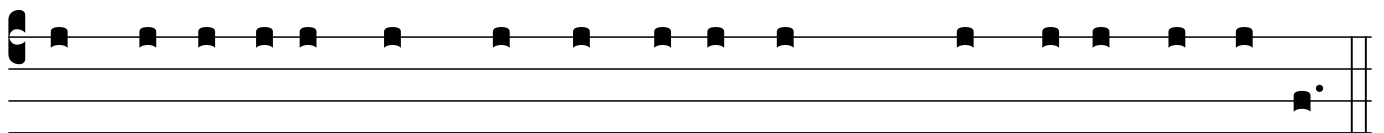
life and breath nor I who set in order the elements within each of you.



Therefore the Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of human-



kind and devised the origin of all things, in his mercy gives life and breath



back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws."