

THE FIRST BOOK OF MACCABEES

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Chapter One

“After Alexander, son of Philip the Macedonian, who came from the land of Kittim (Greece), had defeated King Darius of the Persians and the Medes, he succeeded him as king. (He had previously become King of Greece.) He fought many battles, conquered strongholds and put to death the kings of the Earth. He advanced to the ends of the Earth and plundered many nations. When the Earth became quiet before him he was exalted and his heart was lifted up. He gathered a very strong army and ruled over countries, nations, and princes and they became tributary to him.

After this he fell sick and perceived that he was dying. So he summoned his most honored officers who had been brought up with him from youth and divided his kingdom among them while he was still alive. After Alexander had reigned twelve years, he died. Then his officers began to rule, each in his own place. They all put on crowns after his death, and so did their descendants after them for many years and they caused many evils on the Earth.

From them came forth a sinful root, Antiochus Epiphanes, son of King Antiochus. He had been a hostage in Rome. He began to reign in the 137th year of the Kingdom of the Greeks. In those days certain Jewish renegades came out from Israel and misled many saying,

‘Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles around us, for since we separated from them many disasters have come upon us.’

This proposal pleased them and some of the people, eager, went to the king who authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles. So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem according to Gentile custom and removed the marks of circumcision (cf. 1st Cor. 7:18) and abandoned the Holy Covenant. They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil.

When Antiochus saw that his kingdom was es-

tablished, he determined to become King of Egypt in order that he might reign over both kingdoms. So he invaded Egypt with a strong force, with chariots, elephants, cavalry and with a large fleet. He engaged King Ptolemy of Egypt in battle and Ptolemy turned and fled before him, and many were wounded and fell. They captured the fortified cities in the land of Egypt and he plundered the land of Egypt.

After subduing Egypt, Antiochus returned in the 143rd year (167 BC). He went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force. He arrogantly entered the Temple and took the gold Altar, the gold Lampstand for the light and all its utensils. He also took the gold Table for the Bread before God’s Presence, the gold cups for drink offerings, the bowls, the gold censers, the curtain, the crowns and the gold decoration on the front of the Temple. He stripped it all off and he took the silver, the gold and the costly vessels, along with any hidden treasures that he found. Taking them all he went into his own land. He shed much blood and spoke with great arrogance.

Israel mourned deeply in every community; rulers and elders groaned, young women and young men became faint, and the beauty of the women faded. Every bridegroom took up the lament; she who sat in the bridal chamber was mourning. Even the land trembled for its inhabitants and all the House of Jacob was clothed with shame.

Two years later (165 BC) the king sent to the cities of Judah a chief collector of tribute and he came to Jerusalem with a large force. Deceitfully, he spoke peaceable words to them and they believed him, but he suddenly fell upon the city, dealt it a severe blow and killed many people of Israel. He plundered the city, burned it with fire and tore down its houses and its surrounding walls. They took captive the women and children and seized the livestock. Then they fortified the City of David with a great strong wall and strong towers and it became their Citadel.

They stationed there a sinful people, men who were Jewish renegades. These strengthened their position; they stored up arms and food, and collecting the spoils of Jerusalem they stored them there and became a great menace, for the Citadel became an ambush against the Temple, an evil adversary of Israel at all times.

On every side of the Temple they shed innocent

blood; they even defiled the Temple. Because of them the residents of Jerusalem fled. She became a dwelling of strangers. She became strange to her offspring and her children forsook her. Her Temple became desolate like a desert. Her Feasts were turned into mourning, her Sabbaths into a reproach, her honor into contempt. Her dishonor now grew as great as her glory. Her exaltation was turned into mourning.

Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people and that all should give up their particular customs. All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; sacrificing to idols and profaning the Sabbath.

The king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah. He directed them to follow customs strange to the land; to forbid whole burnt sacrifices and drink offerings in the Temple, to profane Sabbaths and Festivals, to defile the Temple and the priests, to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and other unclean animals and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, so that they would forget the Law (Torah; Mosaic Law) and change all the ordinances. He added,

‘And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die.’

In such words he wrote to his whole kingdom. He appointed inspectors over all the people and commanded the towns of Judah to offer sacrifice of a pig, town by town. Many of the people, everyone who forsook Torah, joined them and they did evil in the land. They drove Israel into hiding in every place of refuge they had.

Now on the 15th day of Kisleb, in the 145th year (165 BC), they erected a desolating sacrilege on the Altar of whole burnt Sacrifice. They also built altars in the surrounding towns of Judah and offered incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets. Any scroll of Torah that they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire. Anyone found possessing the Scroll of the Covenant or anyone who adhered to Torah was condemned to death by decree of the king.

They kept using violence against Israel, against

those who were found month after month in the towns. On the 25th day of the month, they offered sacrifice on the altar that was on top of the Altar of whole burnt Sacrifice. According to the decree, they put to death the women who had their sons circumcised and their families and those who circumcised them. They even hung the [dead] infants from their mothers’ necks, and then murdered the mothers, pushing them off high cliffs. Many in Israel, though, stood firm *and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean meat*. They chose to die rather than to be defiled by unclean meat or to profane the Holy Covenant, and they did die. Much wrath came upon Israel.” (1st Maccabees 1:1-64)

Chapter Two

“In those days Mattathias, son of John, son of Simeon, a priest of the family of Yo’ariv, moved from Jerusalem and settled in Modein. He had five sons, John surnamed Gaddi, Simon called Thassi, Judah called Maccabee, Eleazar called Avaran and Jonathan called Apphus. He saw the blasphemies being committed in Judah and Jerusalem, and said,

‘Alas! Why was I born to see this, the ruin of my people, the ruin of the Holy City, and to live there when it was given over to the enemy, the Temple given over to aliens? Her Temple has become like a person without honor. Her glorious vessels have been carried into exile. Her infants have been killed in her streets, and her youths by the sword of the foe. What nation has not inherited her palaces and has not seized her spoils? All her adornment has been taken away. No longer free, she has become a slave, and behold! Our Holy Place, our beauty and our glory, has been laid waste. The Gentiles have profaned it. Why should we live any longer?’

Then Mattathias and his sons tore their clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned greatly.

The king’s officers who were enforcing the apostasy came to the town of Modein to make them offer sacrifice. Many from Israel came to them, and Mattathias and his sons were assembled. Then the king’s officers spoke to Mattathias, saying,

‘You are a leader, honored and great in this town and supported by sons and brothers.

Now be the first to come and do what the king commands, as all the Gentiles and the people of Judah and those that are left in Jerusalem have done. Then you and your sons will be numbered among the Friends of the King, and you and your sons will be honored with silver and gold and many gifts.’

Mattathias answered and said in a loud voice,

‘Even if all the nations that live under the rule of the king obey him and have chosen to obey his commandments, everyone of them abandoning the religion of their Fathers, I and my sons and my brothers will continue to live by the Covenant of our Fathers! Far be it from us to desert Torah! We will not obey the king’s words by turning aside from our religion to the right hand or to the left!’

When he had finished speaking these words a Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer sacrifice on the altar in Modein, according to the king’s command. When Mattathias saw it his heart was stirred and he burned with zeal. He gave vent to his righteous anger and he ran and killed him on the altar. At the same time he killed the king’s officer who was forcing them to sacrifice and he tore down the altar. Thus he burned with zeal for Torah, just as Phinehas did against Zimri, son of Salu (Numbers 25).

Then Mattathias cried out in the town with a loud voice, saying,

‘Let every one who is zealous for Torah and supports the Covenant come out with me!’
(cf. Exodus 32)

Then he and his sons fled to the hills and left all that they had in the town.

At that time many who were seeking righteousness and justice went down to the wilderness to live there; they, their sons, their wives and their livestock because troubles pressed heavily upon them. It was reported to the king’s officers and to the troops in Jerusalem, the City of David, that those who had rejected the king’s command had gone down to the hiding places in the wilderness. Many pursued them and overtook them. They encamped opposite them and prepared for battle against them on the Sabbath. They said to them,

“Enough of this! Come out and do what the

king commands, and you will live!”

But they said,

“We will not come out, nor will we do what the king commands, and so profane the Sabbath day!”

Then the enemy quickly attacked them, but they did not answer them or hurl a stone at them or block up their hiding places, for they said,

“Let us all die in our innocence—Heaven and Earth testify for us that you are killing us unjustly!”

So they attacked them on the Sabbath and they died with their wives, children and livestock, about 1,000 people.¹

When Mattathias and his friends learned of it they mourned for them deeply, and all said to their neighbors,

‘If we all do as our brothers have done and refuse to fight with the Gentiles for our lives and for our ordinances, they will quickly destroy us from the Earth.’

So they made this decision that day,

‘Let us fight against anyone who comes to attack us on the Sabbath day. Let us not all die as our brothers died in their hiding places.’

Then there united with them a company of Hasi-deans, mighty warriors of Israel, all who offered themselves willingly for Torah, and all who became fugitives to escape their troubles joined them and reinforced them. They organized an army and struck down (Jewish) sinners in their anger and (Jewish) renegades in their wrath. The survivors fled to the Gentiles for safety.

Mattathias and his friends went around and tore down the altars. They forcibly circumcised all the uncircumcised boys that they found within the borders of Israel. They hunted down the arrogant and the work prospered in their hands. They rescued the Law out of the hands of the Gentiles and kings,

¹ Their theology wasn’t biblical. It seems that Joshua fought on the Sabbath (Josh. 6:1-21). It was most likely the 7th day Sabbath that God commanded him to encircle the city seven times and then shout, and the walls came tumbling down, and Israel fought the pagan people of Jericho and Israel won.

and they never let the sinner gain the upper hand. Now the days drew near for Mattathias to die, and he said to his sons,

‘Arrogance and scorn have now become strong. It is a time of ruin and furious anger. Now my sons, show zeal for Torah and give your lives for the Covenant of our Fathers.’

‘Remember the deeds of the Fathers which they did in their generations and you will receive great honor and an everlasting name. Was not Abraham found faithful when tested and it was reckoned to him as righteousness? Joseph, in the time of his distress, kept the commandment and became Lord of Egypt. Phineas, our Father, because he was deeply zealous, received the Covenant of everlasting priesthood. Joshua, because he fulfilled the commandment, became a judge in Israel. Caleb, because he testified in the assembly, received an inheritance in the Land. David, because he was merciful, inherited the Throne of the Kingdom forever. Elijah, because of great zeal for the Law, was taken up into the Heavens. Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael believed and were saved from the flames, and Daniel, because of his innocence, was delivered from the mouth of the lions.’

‘Observe, from generation to generation, that none of those who put their trust in Him will lack strength. Do not fear the words of sinners, for their splendor will turn into dung and worms. Today they are exalted, but tomorrow they will not be found because they will have returned to the dust and their plans will have perished. My sons, be courageous and grow strong in Torah, for by it you will gain honor!’

‘Here is your brother Simeon who, I know is wise in counsel. Always listen to him. He shall be your Father. Judah Maccabee has been a mighty warrior from his youth. He shall command the army for you and fight the battle against the peoples. You shall rally around you, all who observe Torah, and avenge the wrong done to your people. Pay back the Gentiles in full and obey the Commandments of Torah.’

Then he blessed them and was gathered to his

Fathers. He died in the 146th year (164 BC) and was buried in the tomb of his Fathers at Modein and all Israel mourned for him with great lamentation.” (1st Mac. 2:1-70)

Chapter Three

“Then his son Judah, who was called Maccabee, took command in his place. All his brothers and all who had joined his father helped him. They gladly fought for Israel. He extended the glory of his people. Like a giant he put on his breastplate; he bound on his armor of war and waged battles, protecting the camp by his sword. He was like a lion in his deeds, like a lion’s cub roaring for prey. He searched out and pursued those who broke the Law and he burned those who troubled his people. Law breakers shrank back for fear of him and all the evildoers were confounded, and deliverance prospered by his hand.

He embittered many kings, but he made Jacob glad by his deeds, and his memory is blessed forever. He went through the cities of Judah and he destroyed the ungodly out of the land. Thus he turned away wrath from Israel. He was renowned to the ends of the Earth and he gathered in those who were perishing.

Apollonius now gathered together Gentiles and a large force from Samaria to fight against Israel. When Judah learned of it he went out to meet him and he defeated and killed him. Many were wounded and fell and the rest fled. Then they seized their spoils and Judah took the sword of Apollonius and used it in battle the rest of his life.

When Seron, the commander of the Syrian army, heard that Judah had gathered a large company, including a body of faithful soldiers who stayed with him and went out to battle, he said,

‘I will make a name for myself and win honor in the kingdom. I will make war on Judah and his companions who scorn the king’s command.’

Once again a strong army of godless men went up with him to help him, to take vengeance on Israel. When he approached the ascent of Beit Horon, Judah went out to meet him with a small company, but when they saw the army coming to meet them,

they said to Judah,

‘How can we, few as we are, fight against so great and so strong a multitude? And we are faint, for we have eaten nothing today.’

Judah replied,

‘It’s easy for many to be hemmed in by few, for in the sight of Heaven there is no difference between saving by many or by few. It’s not on the size of the army that victory in battle depends, but strength comes from Heaven. They come against us in great insolence and lawlessness to destroy us, our wives and our children, and to despoil us, but we fight for our lives and our laws. God Himself will crush them before us. As for you, do not be afraid of them!’

When he finished speaking, he rushed suddenly against Seron and his army and they were crushed before him. They pursued them down the descent of Beit Horon to the plain; 800 of them fell and the rest fled into the land of the Philistines. Then Judah and his brothers began to be feared and terror fell on the Gentiles all around them. His fame reached the king, and the Gentiles talked of the battles of Judah.

When King Antiochus heard these reports he was very angry and he sent and gathered all the forces of his kingdom, a very strong army. He opened his coffers and gave a year’s pay to his forces and ordered them to be ready. Then he saw that the money in the treasury was exhausted and that the revenues from the country were small because of the dissension and disaster that he had caused in the land by abolishing the laws that had existed from the earliest days. He feared that he might not have such funds as he had before for his expenses and for the gifts that he used to give more lavishly than preceding kings. He was greatly perplexed in mind, but then he determined to go to Persia and collect the revenues from those regions and raise a large fund.

He left Lysias, a distinguished man of royal lineage, in charge of the king’s affairs, from the river Euphrates to the borders of Egypt. Lysias was also to take care of his son, Antiochus, until he returned, and he turned over to Lysias half of his forces and the elephants, and gave him orders about all that he wanted done. As for the residents of Judah and

Jerusalem, Lysias was to send a force against them to wipe out and destroy the strength of Israel and the remnant of Jerusalem. He was to banish the memory of them from the place, settle aliens in all their territory and distribute their land by lot. Then the king took the remaining half of his forces and left Antioch, his capital, in the 147th year (163 BC). He crossed the Euphrates River and went through the upper provinces.

Lysias chose Ptolemy, son of Dorymenes, and Nicanor and Gorgias, able men among the Friends of the King, and sent with them 40,000 infantry and 7,000 cavalry to go into the land of Judah and destroy it, as the king had commanded. So they set out with their entire force and when they arrived they encamped near Emmaus in the plain. When the traders of the region heard what was said to them they took silver and gold in immense amounts, and fetters, and went to the camp to get the Jews for slaves. Forces from Syria and the land of the Philistines also joined with them.

Now Judah and his brothers saw that misfortunes had increased and that the forces were encamped in their territory. They also learned what the king had commanded to do to the people to cause their final destruction, but they said to one another,

‘Let us restore the ruins of our people and fight for our people and the Temple!’

So the congregation assembled to be ready for battle and to pray and ask for mercy and compassion. Jerusalem was uninhabited like a wilderness; not one of her sons went in or out. The Temple was trampled down and Gentiles held the Citadel. It was a lodging place for them. Joy was taken from Jacob; the flute and the harp ceased to play.

Then they gathered together and went to Mitzpah, opposite Jerusalem, because Israel formerly had a place of prayer in Mitzpah. They fasted that day, put on sackcloth and sprinkled ashes on their heads and tore their clothes. They opened the Scroll of the Law to inquire into those matters about which the Gentiles consulted the likenesses of their gods. They also brought the vestments of the priesthood, and the first fruits and the tithes, and they stirred up the Nazirites, who had completed their days, and they cried aloud to Heaven saying,

‘What shall we do with these? Where shall

we take them? Your Temple is trampled down and profaned, and your priests mourn in humiliation, and here the Gentiles are assembled against us to destroy us! You know what they plot against us. How will we be able to withstand them if You do not help us?’

Then they sounded the shofars and gave a loud shout. After this Judah appointed leaders of the people in charge of thousands and hundreds, fifties and tens. Those who were building houses or were about to be married, or were planting a vineyard, or were fainthearted, he told to go home according to Torah (Dt. 20:1-9). Then the army marched out and encamped to the south of Emmaus and Judah said,

‘Arm yourselves and be courageous! Be ready early in the morning to fight with these Gentiles who have assembled against us to destroy us and our Temple. It’s better for us to die in battle than to see the misfortunes of our nation and of the Temple, but as His will in Heaven may be, so shall He do!’” (1st Mac. 3:1-60)

Chapter Four

“Now Gorgias took 5,000 infantry and 1,000 picked cavalry, and this division moved out by night to fall upon the camp of the Jews and attack them suddenly. Men from the Citadel were his guides, but Judah heard of it, and he and his men moved out to attack the king’s force in Emmaus,² while the division was still absent from the camp. When Gorgias entered the camp of Judah by night, he found no one there, so he looked for them in the hills because he said, ‘These men are running away from us.’

At daybreak Judah appeared in the plain with 3,000 men, but they did not have armor and swords such as they desired and they saw the camp of the Gentiles, strong and fortified, with cavalry all around it and these men were trained in war, but

² This is the Emmaus that Yeshua walked with two of His disciples and revealed Himself to them (Lk. 24:13f.), when He blessed His Father and broke the matza (unleavened bread), for it was the Sunday of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. He became known to them in the breaking of the matza, which symbolizes Him being crucified. See [Why Matza?](#)

Judah said to those who were with him,

‘Do not fear their numbers or be afraid when they charge! Remember how our Fathers were saved at the Red Sea when Pharaoh with his forces pursued them, and now, let us cry to Heaven, to see whether He will favor us and remember His Covenant with our Fathers and crush this army before us today! Then all the Gentiles will know that there is One who redeems and saves Israel!’

When the foreigners looked up and saw them coming against them they went out from their camp to battle. Then the men with Judah blew their shofars and engaged in battle. The Gentiles were crushed and fled into the plain and all those in the rear fell by the sword. They pursued them to Gazara (Gezer) and to the plains of Idumea and to Azotus and Jamnia, and 3,000 of them fell. Then Judah and his force turned back from pursuing them and he said to the people,

‘Do not be greedy for plunder for there is a battle before us. Gorgias and his force are near us in the hills, but stand now against our enemies and fight them and afterward seize the plunder boldly.’

Just as Judah was finishing this speech a detachment appeared coming out of the hills. They saw that their army had been put to flight and that the Jews were burning the camp, for the smoke that was seen showed what had happened. When they perceived this they were greatly frightened and when they also saw the army of Judah drawn up in the plain for battle, they all fled into the land of the Philistines. Then Judah returned to plunder the camp and they seized a great amount of gold and silver, cloth dyed blue and sea purple, and great riches. On their return they sang Psalms and praises to Heaven:³

‘He is good and His faithful forgiving loving kindness endures forever!!!’

Thus, Israel had a great deliverance that day! Those of the Gentiles who escaped went and reported to Lysias all that had happened. When he heard it he was perplexed and discouraged, for things had not happened in Israel as he had intended, nor had they

³ *Heaven* is a euphemism for God.

turned out as the king had ordered. The next year he mustered 60,000 picked infantry and 5,000 cavalry to subdue them. They came into Idumea and encamped at Beit Tzur (House of the Rock) and Judah met them with 10,000 men. When he saw that their army was strong, he prayed saying,

‘Blessed are You, oh Savior of Israel, who crushed the attack of the mighty warrior by the hand of your servant David, and gave the camp of the Philistines into the hands of Jonathan, son of Saul, and of the man who carried his armor! Hem in this army by the hand of Your people Israel, and let them be ashamed of their troops and their cavalry! Fill them with cowardice! Melt the boldness of their strength! Let them tremble in their destruction! Strike them down with the sword of those who love You and let all who know Your Name praise you with Psalms!’

Then both sides attacked and there fell of the army of Lysias 5,000 men. They fell in action. When Lysias saw the rout of his troops and observed the boldness that inspired those of Judah, and how ready they were either to live or to nobly die, he withdrew to Antioch and enlisted mercenaries in order to invade Judah again with an even larger army.

Then Judah and his brothers said,

‘Behold! Our enemies are crushed! Let us go up to *cleanse the Temple and dedicate it!*’

So all the army assembled and went up to Mount Zion. There they saw the Temple desolate, *the Altar profaned* and the gates burned. In the courts they saw bushes sprung up as in a thicket or as on one of the mountains. They also saw the chambers of the priests in ruins. Then they tore their clothes and mourned with great lamentation. They sprinkled themselves with ashes and fell face down on the ground, and when the signal was given with the shofars, they cried out to the Heavens.

Then Judah detailed men to fight against those in the Citadel until he had cleansed the Temple. He chose blameless priests devoted to Torah and they cleansed the Temple and removed the defiled stones to an unclean place. They deliberated what to do about the Altar of whole burnt sacrifice, which had been profaned. They thought it best to tear it down

so that it would not be a lasting shame to them, that the Gentiles had defiled it. So they tore down the Altar and stored the stones in a convenient place on the Temple Mount, until a prophet should come to tell them what to do with it. Then they took unhewn stones, as Torah directs (Ex. 20:25) and built a new Altar like the former one. They also rebuilt the Temple and the interior of the Temple and consecrated the courts. They made new holy vessels and brought the Lampstand, the Altar of Incense and the Table of the Bread in His Presence into the Temple. Then they offered incense on the Altar of Incense and lit the lamps on the Lampstand and these gave light in the Temple. They placed the Bread on the Table and hung up the veils. Thus they finished all the work they had undertaken.

Early in the morning on the 25th day of the 9th month, which is the month of Kislev, in the 148th year (162 BC), they rose and offered sacrifice, as Torah directs (Ex. 29:38-46), on the new Altar of whole burnt sacrifice that they had built. At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, it was dedicated with songs and harps and lutes and cymbals. All the people fell on their faces and worshiped and blessed the God of Heaven who had prospered them.

They celebrated the dedication of the Altar for 8 days and joyfully offered whole burnt sacrifices. They offered a sacrifice of communion (‘oneness with God’) and a thanksgiving sacrifice. They decorated the front of the Temple with gold crowns and small shields. They restored the gates and the chambers for the priests and fitted them with doors. There was great joy among the people and the disgrace brought by the Gentiles was removed.

Then Judah and his brothers and all the Assembly of Israel determined that every year at that season, the days of dedication of the Altar should be observed with joy and gladness for 8 days, beginning with the 25th day of the month of Kislev.

At that time they fortified Mount Zion with high walls and strong towers all around to keep the Gentiles from coming and trampling them down as they had done before. Judah stationed a garrison there to guard it. He also fortified Beit Tzur (House of the Rock) to guard it, so that the people might have a stronghold that faced Idumea.” (1st Maccabees 4:1-61)

Chapter Five

“When the Gentiles all around heard that the Altar had been rebuilt, and the Temple dedicated, as it was before, they became very angry and they determined to destroy the descendants of Jacob who lived among them. They began to kill and destroy the people, but Judah made war on the descendants of Esau in Idumea at Akrabattene because they kept lying in wait for Israel. He dealt them a heavy blow and humbled them and despoiled them.

He also remembered the wickedness of the sons of Baeon, who were a trap and a snare to the people and ambushed them on the highways. They were shut up by him in their towers. He encamped against them, vowed their complete destruction and burned with fire their towers and all who were in them.

Then he crossed over to attack the Ammonites, where he found a strong band and many people, with Timothy as their leader. He engaged in many battles with them and they were crushed before him. He also took Jazer and its villages and then he returned to Judah.

Now the Gentiles in Gilead gathered together against the Jews who lived in their territory, and planned to destroy them, but they fled to the stronghold of Dathema, and sent to Judah and his brothers a letter that said,

‘The Gentiles around us have gathered together to destroy us. They are preparing to come and capture the stronghold to which we have fled, and Timothy is leading their forces. Now, then, come and rescue us from their hands for many of us have fallen and all our brethren who were in the land of Tov have been killed. The enemy has captured their wives, children and goods, and have destroyed about 1,000 people there.’

While the letter was still being read, other messengers with their garments torn, came from Galilee and made a similar report. They said that the people of Ptolemais, Tyre, Sidon and all Galilee of the Gentiles had gathered together against them ‘to annihilate us.’ When Judah and the people heard these messages a great assembly was called to determine what they should do for their brethren

who were in distress and were being attacked by enemies. Then Judah said to his brother Simon,

‘Choose your men and go and rescue your brethren in Galilee. My brother Jonathan and I will go to Gilead.’

Judah left Joseph, son of Zechariah, and Azariah, a leader of the people, with the rest of the forces in Judah to guard it. He gave them this command:

‘Take charge of this people, but do not engage in battle with the Gentiles until we return.’

Then 3,000 men were assigned to Simon to go to Galilee, and 8,000 to Judah for Gilead.

Simon went to Galilee and fought many battles against the Gentiles and the Gentiles were crushed before him. He pursued them to the gate of Ptolemais. As many as 3,000 of the Gentiles fell and he despoiled them. Then he took the Jews of Galilee and Arbatta, with their wives and children and all they possessed, and led them to Judah with great rejoicing.

Judah Maccabee and his brother Jonathan crossed the Jordan and made 3 days’ journey into the wilderness. They encountered the Nabateans, who met them peaceably and told them all that had happened to their brethren in Gilead:

‘Many of them have been shut up in Bozrah and Bosor, in Alema and Chaspho, Maked and Carnaim’—all these towns were strong and large, ‘and some have been shut up in the other towns of Gilead. The enemy is getting ready to attack the strongholds tomorrow, and capture and destroy all these people in a single day.’

Then Judah and his army quickly turned back by the wilderness road to Bozrah and he took the town and killed every male by the edge of the sword. Then he seized all its spoils and burned it with fire. He left the place at night and they went all the way to the stronghold of Dathema. At dawn they looked out and saw a large company, which could not be counted, carrying ladders and engines of war to capture the stronghold, and attacking the Jews within.

Judah saw that the battle had begun and that the cry of the town went up to Heaven, with shofars and loud shouts, and he said to the men of his forces,

‘Fight today for your brethren!’

Then he came up behind them in three companies, who sounded their shofars and cried aloud in prayer. When the army of Timothy realized that it was Judah Maccabee they fled before him and he dealt them a heavy blow. As many as 8,000 of them fell that day.

Next he turned to Ma’apha and fought against it and took it. He killed every male in it, plundered it and burned it with fire. From there he marched on and took Chaspho, Maked, Bosor and the other towns of Gilead.

After these things Timothy gathered another army and encamped opposite Rafon, on the other side of the stream. Judah sent men to spy out the camp and they reported to him,

‘All the Gentiles around us have gathered to him. It’s a very large force. They also have hired Arabs to help them, and they are encamped across the stream, ready to come and fight against you.’

Judah went to meet them. Now as Judah and his army drew near to the stream of water, Timothy said to the officers of his forces,

‘If he crosses over to us first, we will not be able to resist him, for he will surely defeat us, but if he shows fear and camps on the other side of the river, we will cross over to him and defeat him.’

When Judah approached the stream of water, he stationed the officers of the army at the stream and gave them this command,

‘Permit no one to encamp, but make them all enter the battle!’

Then he crossed over against them first and the whole army followed him. All the Gentiles were defeated before him and they threw away their arms and fled into the sacred precincts at Carnaim, but he took the town and burned the pagan sacred precincts with fire, together with all who were in them. Thus, Carnaim was conquered. They could stand before Judah no longer.

Then Judah gathered together all the Jews in Gilead, the small and the great, with their wives and children and goods, a very large company, to go to the land of Judah. They came to Efron. This was a

large and very strong town on the road, and they could not go around it, to the right or to the left. They had to go through it, but the people of the town shut them out and blocked up the gates with stones. Judah sent them this friendly message,

‘Let us pass through your land to get to our land. No one will do you harm. We will simply pass by on foot.’

They refused to open to him. Then Judah ordered proclamation to be made to the army that all should encamp where they were. The men of the forces encamped and he fought against the town all that day and all the night, and the town was delivered into his hands. He destroyed every male by the edge of the sword, and razed and plundered the town. Then he passed through the town over the bodies of the dead.

They crossed the Jordan into the large plain before Beit Shan. Judah kept rallying the laggards and encouraging the people all the way until he came to the land of Judah. They went up to Mount Zion with joy and gladness and offered whole burnt sacrifices because they had returned in safety. Not one of them had fallen.

While Judah and Jonathan were in Gilead, and their brother Simon was in Galilee before Ptolemais, Joseph, son of Zechariah, and Azariah, the commanders of the forces, heard of their brave deeds and of the heroic war they had fought. So they said,

‘Let us also make a name for ourselves! Let us go and make war on the Gentiles around us!’

So they issued orders to the men of the forces that were with them and marched against Jamnia. Gorgias and his men came out of the town to meet them in battle. Then Joseph and Azariah were routed and were pursued to the borders of Judah. As many as 2,000 of the people of Israel fell that day. Thus the people suffered a great rout because, thinking to do a brave deed, they did not listen to Judah and his brothers. For they did not belong to the family of those men through whom deliverance was given to Israel.

The man Judah and his brothers were greatly honored in all Israel and among all the Gentiles wherever their names were heard. People gathered to them and praised them.

Then Judah and his brothers went out and fought the descendants of Esau in the land to the south. He struck Hebron and its villages and tore down its strongholds and burned its towers on all sides.

Then he marched off to go into the land of the Philistines and passed through Marisa. On that day some priests, who wished to do a brave deed, fell in battle, for they went out to battle unwisely, but Judah turned aside to Azotus, in the land of the Philistines. He tore down their altars, and the carved images of their gods he burned with fire. He plundered the towns and returned to the land of Judah.” (1st Mac. 5:1-68)

Chapter Six

“King Antiochus was going through the upper provinces when he heard that Elymais in Persia was a city famed for its wealth in silver and gold. Its temple was very rich, containing gold shields, breastplates and weapons left there by Alexander, son of Philip the Macedonian king, who first reigned over the Greeks. So he came and tried to take the city and plunder it, but he could not because his plan had become known to the citizens and they withstood him in battle. So he fled in great disappointment and left to return to Babylon.

Then someone came to him in Persia and reported that the armies that had gone into Judah had been routed and that Lysias had gone first with a strong force, but had turned and fled before the Jews, and that the Jews had grown strong from the arms, supplies and abundant spoils that they had taken from the armies they had cut down. They had torn down the abomination that he had erected on the Altar in Jerusalem, and they had surrounded the Sanctuary with high walls as before, and also, Beit Tzur, his town.

When the king heard this news he was astounded and badly shaken. He took to his bed and became sick from disappointment because things had not turned out for him as he had planned. He lay there for many days because deep disappointment continually gripped him and he realized that he was dying. So he called all his Friends and said to them,

“Sleep has departed from my eyes and I am downhearted with worry. I said to myself, ‘To what distress I have come! And into what a

great flood I am now plunged! For I was kind and beloved in my power.’”

‘But now I remember the wrong I did in Jerusalem. I seized all its vessels of silver and gold and I sent to destroy the inhabitants of Judah without good reason. I know that it is because of this that these misfortunes have come upon me. And here I am, perishing of bitter disappointment in a strange land.’

Then he called for Philip, one of his Friends and made him ruler over all his kingdom. He gave him the crown and his robe and the signet so that he might guide his son, Antiochus, and bring him up to be king. Thus, King Antiochus died there in the 149th year (161 BC). When Lysias learned that the king was dead he set up Antiochus, the king’s son, to reign. Lysias had brought him up from boyhood. He named him Eupator. Meanwhile the garrison in the Citadel kept hemming Israel in around the Temple. They were trying in every way to harm them and strengthen the Gentiles. Judah, therefore, resolved to destroy them and assembled all the people to besiege them. They gathered together and besieged the Citadel in the 150th year (160 BC). He built siege towers and other engines of war, but some of the garrison escaped from the siege and some of the ungodly Jews joined them. They went to the king and said,

‘How long will you fail to do justice and to avenge our brethren? We were happy to serve your father, to live by what he said and to follow his commands. For this reason the sons of our people besieged the Citadel and became hostile to us. Moreover, they have put to death as many of us as they have caught and they have seized our inheritances.’

‘It’s not against us alone that they have stretched out their hands. They have also attacked all the lands on their borders. And see! Today they have encamped against the Citadel in Jerusalem to take it. They have fortified both the Temple and Beit Tzur. Unless you quickly prevent them, they will do greater things still, and you will not be able to stop them.’

The king was enraged when he heard this. He assembled all his Friends, the commanders of his forces and those in authority. Mercenary forces also

came to him from other kingdoms and from the islands of the sea. The number of his forces was 100,000 foot soldiers, 20,000 horsemen and 32 warrior elephants. They came through Idumea and encamped against Beit Tzur, and for many days they fought and built engines of war, but the Jews sallied out and burned these with fire and fought courageously.

Then Judah marched away from the Citadel and encamped at Beit Zechariah (House of Remembrance), opposite the camp of the king. Early in the morning the king set out and took his army by a forced march along the road to Beit Zechariah, and his troops made ready for battle and sounded their trumpets. They offered the elephants the juice of grapes and mulberries to arouse them for battle. They distributed the animals among the phalanxes.

With each elephant they stationed 1,000 men armed with coats of mail and with brass helmets on their heads and 500 picked horsemen were assigned to each beast. These took their position beforehand wherever the animal was—wherever it went, they went with it and they never left it. On the elephants were wooden towers, strong and covered. They were fastened on each animal by special harness, and on each were four armed men who fought from there, and also its Indian driver. The rest of the cavalry were stationed on either side, on the two flanks of the army to harass the enemy, while being themselves protected by the phalanxes. When the sun shone on the shields of gold and brass, the hills were ablaze with them and they gleamed like flaming torches.

Now a part of the king's army was spread out on the high hills, and some troops were on the plain, and they advanced steadily and in good order. All who heard the noise made by their multitude, by the marching of the multitude and the clanking of their arms, trembled, for the army was very large and strong, but Judah and his army advanced to the battle and 600 of the king's army fell.

Now Eleazar, called Avaran, saw that one of the animals was equipped with royal armor. It was taller than all the others and he supposed that the king was on it. So he gave his life to save his people and to win for himself an everlasting name. He courageously ran into the midst of the phalanx to reach it. He killed men right and left and they parted before

him on both sides. He got under the elephant, stabbed it from beneath and killed it, but it fell to the ground upon him and he died.

When the Jews saw the royal might and the fierce attack of the forces, they turned away in flight. The soldiers of the king's army went up to Jerusalem against them and the king encamped in Judah and at Mount Zion. He made peace with the people of Beit Tzur and they evacuated the town because they had no provisions there to withstand a siege, since it was a sabbatical year for the land (Lev. 25:1-7). So the king took Beit Tzur and stationed a guard there to hold it. Then he encamped before the Temple for many days. He set up siege towers, engines of war to throw fire and stones, machines to shoot arrows and catapults.

The Jews also made engines of war to match theirs and fought for many days, but they had no food in storage because it was the seventh year. Those who had found safety in Judah from the Gentiles had consumed the last of the stores. Only a few men were left in the Temple. The rest scattered to their own homes because the famine proved too much for them.

Then Lysias heard that Philip, whom King Antiochus, while still living, had appointed to bring up his son, Antiochus, to be king, had returned from Persia and Media with the forces that had gone with the king, and that he was trying to seize control of the government. So he quickly gave orders to withdraw and said to the king, to the commanders of the forces and to the troops,

'Daily we grow weaker, our food supply is scant, the place against which we are fighting is strong and the affairs of the kingdom press urgently on us. Now then, let us come to terms with these people and make peace with them and with all their nation. Let us agree to let them live by their laws as they did before, for it was on account of their laws that we abolished that they became angry and did all these things.'

The speech pleased the king and the commanders and he sent to the Jews an offer of peace and they accepted it. So the king and the commanders gave them their oath. On these conditions the Jews evacuated the stronghold, but when the king entered Mount Zion and saw what a strong fortress the

place was, he broke the oath he had sworn and gave orders to tear down the wall all around. Then he set off in haste and returned to Antioch. He found Philip in control of the city, but he fought against him and took the city by force.” (1st Mac. 6:1-63)

Chapter Seven

“In the 151st year (159 BC), Demetrius, son of Seleucus, set out from Rome, sailed with a few men to a town by the sea and there began to reign. As he was entering the royal palace of his ancestors the army seized Antiochus and Lysias to bring them to him, but when this act became known to him, he said, ‘Do not let me see their faces!’ So the army killed them and Demetrius took his seat on the throne of his kingdom.

Then there came to him all the Jewish renegades and godless men of Israel. They were led by Alcimus who wanted to be High Priest. They brought to the king this accusation against the people:

‘Judah and his brothers have destroyed all your Friends and have driven us out of our land. Now then, send a man whom you trust. Let him go and see all the ruin that Judah has brought on us and on the land of the king and let him punish them and all who help them.’

So the king chose Bacchides, one of the king’s Friends, governor of the province beyond the Euphrates River. He was a great man in the kingdom and was faithful to the king. He sent him, and with him he sent the ungodly Alcimus, whom he made High Priest, and he commanded him to take vengeance on the Jews. So they marched away and came with a large force into the land of Judah and he sent messengers to Judah and his brothers with peaceable, but treacherous words, but they paid no attention to their words, for they saw that they had come with a large force.

Then a group of scribes appeared in a body before Alcimus and Bacchides to ask for just terms. The Hasideans were first among the Jews to seek peace from them for they said,

‘A priest of the line of Aaron has come with the army, and he will not harm us.’

Alcimus spoke peaceable words to them and swore this oath to them, ‘We will not seek to injure you or

your friends.’ So they trusted him, but he seized sixty of them and killed them in one day, in accordance with the word that was written,

‘The flesh of your faithful ones and their blood they poured out all around Jerusalem and there was no one to bury them.’

Then the fear and dread of them fell on all the people, for they said,

‘There is no truth or justice in them, for they have violated the agreement and the oath that they swore.’

Then Bacchides withdrew from Jerusalem and encamped in Beit Zait (House of Olives), and he sent and seized many of the men who had deserted to him, and some of the people, and killed them and threw them into a large pit. He placed Alcimus in charge of the country and left with him a force to help him. Then Bacchides went back to the king.

Alcimus struggled to maintain his high priesthood and all who were troubling their people joined him. They gained control of the land of Judah and did great damage in Israel. Judah saw all the wrongs that Alcimus and those with him had done among the Jews. It was more than the Gentiles had done. So Judah went out into all the surrounding parts of Judah, taking vengeance on those who had deserted, and preventing those in the city from going out into the country. When Alcimus saw that Judah and those with him had grown strong, and realized that he could not withstand them, he returned to the king and brought malicious charges against them.

Then the king sent Nicanor, one of his honored princes who hated and detested Israel, and he commanded him to destroy the people. So Nicanor came to Jerusalem with a large force and treacherously sent to Judah and his brothers this peaceable message,

‘Let there be no fighting between you and me. I shall come with a few men to see you face to face in peace.’

So he came to Judah and they greeted one another peaceably, but the enemy was preparing to kidnap Judah. It became known to Judah that Nicanor had come to him with treacherous intent, and he was afraid of him and would not meet him again. When Nicanor learned that his plan had been disclosed he went out to meet Judah in battle near Caphar-

Salama. About 500 of the army of Nicanor fell and the rest fled into the City of David.

After these events Nicanor went up to Mount Zion. Some of the priests from the Temple and some of the Elders of the people came out to greet him peaceably and to show him the whole burnt sacrifices that were being offered for the king, but he mocked them and derided them and defiled them and spoke arrogantly, and in anger he swore this oath,

‘Unless Judah and his army are delivered into my hands this time, then if I return safely I will burn up this Temple.’

He went out in great anger. At this the priests went in and stood before the Altar and the Temple. They wept and said,

‘You chose this House to be called by Your Name and to be for Your people a House of prayer and supplication. Take vengeance on this man and on his army and let them fall by the sword! Remember their blasphemies and let them live no longer!’

Now Nicanor went out from Jerusalem and encamped in Beit Horon, and the Syrian army joined him. Judah encamped in Adasa with 3,000 men. Then Judah prayed and said to God,

‘When the messengers from the king spoke blasphemy, Your Messenger went out and struck down 185,000 of the Assyrians. So also crush this army before us today! Let the rest learn that Nicanor has spoken wickedly against the Temple (i.e. God), and judge him according to this wickedness.’

So the armies met in battle on the 13th day of the month of Adar. The army of Nicanor was crushed and he himself was the first to fall in the battle. When his army saw that Nicanor had fallen they threw down their arms and fled. The Jews pursued them a day’s journey, from Adasa as far as Gazara, and as they followed they kept sounding the battle call on the shofars. People came out of all the surrounding villages of Judah and they outflanked the enemy and drove them back to their pursuers so that they all fell by the sword. Not even one of them was left! Then the Jews seized the spoils and the plunder. They cut off Nicanor’s head and the right hand that he had so arrogantly stretched out, and

brought them and displayed them just outside Jerusalem. The people rejoiced greatly and celebrated that day as a day of great gladness. They decreed that this day should be celebrated each year on the 13th day of Adar. So the land of Judah had rest for a few days.” (1st Maccabees 7:1-50)

Chapter Eight

“Now Judah heard of the fame of the Romans, that they were very strong and were well-disposed toward all who made an alliance with them, pledging friendship to those who came to them. He had been told of their wars and of the brave deeds that they were doing among the Gauls, how they had defeated them and forced them to pay tribute and what they had done in the land of Spain, to get control of the silver and gold mines there, and how they had gained control of the whole region by their planning and patience, even though the place was far distant from them. They also subdued the kings who came against them from the ends of the Earth, until they crushed them and inflicted great disaster on them. The rest paid them tribute every year.

They had crushed in battle and conquered Philip, and King Perseus of the Macedonians, and others who rose up against them. They also defeated Antiochus the Great, King of Asia, who went to fight against them with 120 elephants, and with cavalry, chariots and a very large army. He was crushed by them. They took him alive and decreed that he and those who would reign after him, should pay a heavy tribute, and give hostages and surrender some of their best provinces; the countries of India, Media and Lydia. These they took from him and gave to King Eumenes. The Greeks planned to come and destroy them, but this became known to them, and they sent a general against the Greeks and attacked them. Many of them were wounded and fell and the Romans took captive their wives and children. They plundered them, conquered the land, tore down their strongholds and enslaved them to this day.

The remaining kingdoms and islands, as many as ever opposed them, they destroyed and enslaved, but with their friends and those who rely on them, they have kept friendship. They have subdued kings far and near and as many as have heard of their fame have feared them. Those whom they wish to

help and to make kings, they make kings, and those whom they wish, they depose. They have been greatly exalted. Yet, for all this, not one of them has put on a crown or worn purple as a mark of pride, but they have built for themselves a senate chamber and every day, 320 senators constantly deliberate concerning the people, to govern them well. They trust one man each year to rule over them and to control all their land. They all heed the one man and there is no envy or jealousy among them.

So, Judah chose Eupolemus, son of John, son of Accos, and Jason, son of Eleazar, and sent them to Rome to establish friendship and alliance, and to free themselves from the yoke. For they saw that the kingdom of the Greeks was enslaving Israel completely. They went to Rome, a very long journey, and they entered the senate chamber and spoke as follows:

‘Judah, who is also called Maccabee, and his brothers, and the people of the Jews, have sent us to you to establish alliance and peace with you, so that we may be enrolled as your allies and friends.’

The proposal pleased them, and this is a copy of the letter that they wrote in reply, on bronze tablets and sent to Jerusalem to remain with them there as a memorial of peace and alliance:

‘May all go well with the Romans and with the nation of the Jews, at sea and on land forever, and may sword and enemy be far from them. If war comes first to Rome, or to any of their allies in all their dominion, the nation of the Jews shall act as their allies wholeheartedly, as the occasion may indicate to them.

To the enemy that makes war they shall not give or supply grain, arms, money or ships, just as Rome has decided. They shall keep their obligations without receiving any return. In the same way, if war comes first to the nation of the Jews, the Romans shall willingly act as their allies, as the occasion may indicate to them.’

‘To their enemies there shall not be given grain, arms, money or ships, just as Rome has decided. They shall keep these obligations and do so without deceit. Thus, on these terms the Romans make a treaty with the

Jewish people. If after these terms are in effect both parties shall determine to add or delete anything, they shall do so at their discretion, and any addition or deletion that they may make shall be valid.’

‘Concerning the wrongs that King Demetrius is doing to them, we have written to him as follows,’

‘Why have you made your yoke heavy on our friends and allies the Jews? If now they appeal again for help against you, we will defend their rights and fight you on sea and on land.’ (1st Mac. 8:1-32)

Chapter Nine

“When Demetrius heard that Nicanor and his army had fallen in battle, he sent Bacchides and Alcimus into the land of Judah a second time, and with them the right wing of the army. They went by the road that leads to Gilgal and encamped against Mesaloth in Arbela and they took it and killed many people. In the 1st month of the 152nd year (158 BC) they encamped against Jerusalem. Then they marched off and went to Berea with 20,000 foot soldiers and 2,000 cavalry.

Now Judah was encamped in Elasa and with him were 3,000 picked men. When they saw the huge number of the enemy forces they were greatly frightened and many slipped away from the camp, until no more than 800 of them were left.

When Judah saw that his army had slipped away and the battle was imminent, he was crushed in spirit, for he had no time to assemble them. He became faint, but he said to those who were left,

‘Let us get up and go against our enemies! We may have the strength to fight them!’

They tried to dissuade him, saying,

‘We do not have the strength. Let us rather save our own lives now and let us come back with our kindred and fight them. We are too few.’

Judah said,

‘Far be it from us to do such a thing as to flee from them. If our time has come, let us die

bravely for our kindred and leave no cause to question our honor.’

Then the army of Bacchides marched out from the camp and took its stand for the encounter. The cavalry was divided into two companies and the slingers and the archers went ahead of the army as did all the chief soldiers. Bacchides was on the right wing. Flanked by the two companies, the phalanx advanced to the sound of the trumpets, and the men with Judah blew their shofars. The Earth shook from the noise of the armies and the battle raged from morning until evening.

Judah saw that Bacchides and the strength of his army were on the right. Then all the stouthearted men went with him and they crushed the right wing, and he pursued them as far as Mount Azotus. When those on the left wing saw that the right wing was crushed, they turned and followed close behind Judah and his men. The battle became desperate and many on both sides were wounded and fell. Judah also fell, and the rest fled.

Then Jonathan and Simon took their brother Judah and buried him in the tomb of their Fathers at Modein and wept for him. All Israel made great lamentation for him. They mourned many days and said,

‘How the mighty have fallen! The savior of Israel!’

Now the rest of the acts of Judah and his wars and the brave deeds that he did and his greatness, have not been recorded, but they were many.

After the death of Judah the Jewish renegades emerged in all parts of Israel. All the wrongdoers reappeared. In those days a great famine occurred and the country went over to their side. Bacchides chose the godless Jews and put them in charge of the country. They made inquiry and searched for the friends of Judah, and brought them to Bacchides, who took vengeance on them and made sport of them. There was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them.

Then all the friends of Judah assembled and said to Jonathan,

‘Since the death of your brother Judah there has been no one like him to go against our enemies and Bacchides, and to deal with

those of our nation who hate us. Now, therefore, we have chosen you today to take his place as our ruler and leader, to fight our battle.’

So Jonathan accepted the leadership at that time in place of his brother Judah.

When Bacchides learned of this he tried to kill him, but Jonathan and his brother Simon and all who were with him heard of it and they fled into the wilderness of Tekoa and camped by the water of the pool of Asphar. Bacchides found this out on the Sabbath day, and he, with all his army, crossed the Jordan with a large force to the banks of the Jordan. Jonathan said to those with him,

‘Let us get up now and fight for our lives, for today things are not as they were before. Look! The battle is in front of us and behind us! The water of the Jordan is on this side and on that with marsh and thicket. There is no place to turn. Cry out now to Heaven that you may be delivered from the hands of our enemies!’

The battle began and Jonathan stretched out his hand to strike Bacchides, but he eluded him and went to the rear. Then Jonathan and the men with him leapt into the Jordan and swam across to the other side and the enemy didn’t cross the Jordan to attack them. About 1,000 of Bacchides’ men fell that day.

Then Bacchides returned to Jerusalem and built strong cities in Judah: the fortress in Jericho and Emmaus, Beit Horon, Bethel, Timnath, Pharathon and Tephon with high walls, gates and bars. He placed garrisons in them to harass Israel. He also fortified the towns of Beit Tzur, Gazara and the Citadel, and in them he put troops and stores of food. He took the sons of the leading men of the land as hostages and put them under guard in the Citadel at Jerusalem.

In the 153rd year (157 BC), in the 2nd month, Alcimus gave orders to tear down the wall of the inner court of the Temple. He tore down the work of the Prophets, but he only began to tear it down, for at that time Alcimus was stricken and his work was hindered. His mouth was stopped and he was paralyzed, so that he could no longer say a word or give commands concerning his house. Alcimus died

Chapter Ten

at that time in great agony. When Bacchides saw that Alcimus was dead, he returned to the king and the land of Judah had rest for two years.

Then all the lawless Jews plotted and said,

‘See! Jonathan and his men are living in quiet and confidence. So, now let us bring Bacchides back and he will capture them all in one night.’

They went and consulted with him. He started to come with a large force and secretly sent letters to all his allies in Judah, telling them to seize Jonathan and his men, but they were unable to do it because their plan became known. Jonathan’s men seized about fifty of the men of the country who were leaders in this treachery and killed them.

Then Jonathan, with his men and Simon, withdrew to Beit Basi in the wilderness. He rebuilt the parts of it that had been demolished and they fortified it. When Bacchides learned of this he assembled all his forces and sent orders to the men of Judah. Then he came and encamped against Beit Basi. He fought against it for many days and made machines of war.

Jonathan left his brother Simon in the town while he went out into the country, but he went with only a few men. He struck down Odomera and his kindred and the people of Phasiron in their tents. Then he began to attack and went into battle with his forces. Simon and his men sallied out from the town and set fire to the machines of war. They fought with Bacchides and he was crushed by them. They pressed him very hard, for his plan and his expedition had been in vain. He was very angry at the renegades who had counseled him to come into the country and he killed many of them. Then he decided to go back to his own land.

When Jonathan learned of this he sent ambassadors to him to make peace with him and obtain release of the captives. He agreed, and did as he said. He swore to Jonathan that he would not try to harm him as long as he lived. He restored to him the captives whom he had taken previously from the land of Judah, and then he turned and went back to his own land and did not come again into their territory. Thus, the sword ceased from Israel. Jonathan settled in Michmash and began to judge the people and he destroyed the godless out of Israel.” (1st Maccabees 9:1-73)

“In the 160th year (150 BC), Alexander Epiphanes, son of Antiochus, landed and occupied Ptolemais. They welcomed him and there he began to reign. When King Demetrius heard of it, he assembled a very large army and marched out to meet him in battle. Demetrius sent Jonathan a letter in peaceable words to honor him, for he said to himself,

‘Let us act first to make peace with him before he makes peace with Alexander against us, for he will remember all the wrongs that we did to him and to his brothers and his nation.’

So Demetrius gave him authority to recruit troops, to equip them with arms and to become his ally. He also commanded that the hostages in the Citadel should be released to him.

Then Jonathan came to Jerusalem and read the letter in the hearing of all the people and of those in the Citadel. They were greatly alarmed when they heard that the king had given him authority to recruit troops, but those in the Citadel released the hostages to Jonathan and he returned them to their parents. Jonathan took up residence in Jerusalem and began to rebuild and restore the city. He directed those who were doing the work to build the walls and encircle Mount Zion with squared stones for better fortification, and they did so.

Then the foreigners who were in the strongholds that Bacchides had built fled. All of them left their places and went back to their own lands. Only in Beit Tzur did some remain who had forsaken Torah and the Commandments, for it served as a place of refuge.

Now King Alexander heard of all the promises that Demetrius had sent to Jonathan and he heard of the battles that Jonathan and his brothers had fought, and of the brave deeds that they had done and of the troubles that they had endured. So he said,

‘Shall we find another such man? Come now and we will make him our friend and ally.’

He wrote a letter and sent it to him, in the following words:

‘King Alexander to his brother Jonathan:’

‘Greetings! We have heard about you, that you are a mighty warrior and worthy to be our friend. So we have appointed you today to be the High Priest of your nation. You are to be called the King’s Friend and you are to take our side and keep friendship with us.’

He also sent him a purple robe and a gold crown. So Jonathan put on the sacred vestments in the seventh month of the 160th year (150 BC), at the Feast of Tabernacles. He also recruited troops and equipped them with arms in abundance. When Demetrius heard of these things he was distressed and said,

‘What is this that we have done? Alexander has gotten ahead of us in forming a friendship with the Jews to strengthen himself. I also will write them words of encouragement and promise them honor and gifts, so that I may have their help.’

So he sent a message to them in the following words:

‘King Demetrius to the nation of the Jews, greetings! Since you have kept your agreement with us and have continued your friendship with us, and have not sided with our enemies, we have heard of it and rejoiced. Now continue still to keep faith with us, and we will repay you with good for what you do for us. We will grant you many immunities and give you gifts.’

‘I now free you and exempt all the Jews from payment of tribute and salt tax and crown levies, and instead of collecting the third of the grain and the half of the fruit of the trees that I should receive, I release them from this day, and henceforth. I will not collect them from the land of Judah or from the three districts added to it from Samaria and Galilee, from this day and for all time. Jerusalem and its environs, its tithes and its revenues, shall be holy and free from tax.’

‘I release also my control of the Citadel in Jerusalem and give it to the High Priest, so that he may station in it men of his own choice to guard it, and everyone of the Jews taken as a captive from the land of Judah into any part of my kingdom, I set free without payment, and let all officials cancel also the

taxes on their livestock. All the festivals, Sabbaths, New Moons and appointed days, and the three days before a festival and the three after a festival—let them all be days of immunity and release for all the Jews who are in my kingdom. No one shall have authority to exact anything from them or annoy any of them about any matter.’

‘Let Jews be enrolled in the king’s forces to the number of 30,000 men, and let the maintenance be given them that is due to all the forces of the king. Let some of them be stationed in the great strongholds of the king and let some of them be put in positions of trust in the kingdom. Let their officers and leaders be of their own number and let them live by their own laws, just as the king has commanded in the land of Judah.’

‘As for the three districts that have been added to Judah from the country of Samaria, let them be annexed to Judah so that they may be considered to be under one ruler and obey no other authority than the High Priest. Ptolemais and the land adjoining it I have given as a gift to the Temple in Jerusalem, to meet the necessary expenses of the Temple. I also grant 15,000 shekels of silver yearly out of the king’s revenues from appropriate places. All the additional funds that the government officials have not paid, as they did in the first years, they shall give from now on for the service of the Temple.’

‘Moreover, the 5,000 shekels of silver that my officials have received every year from the income of the services of the Temple, this too is canceled because it belongs to the priests who minister there. All who take refuge at the Temple in Jerusalem, or in any of its precincts, because they owe money to the king or are in debt, let them be released and receive back all their property in my kingdom. Let the cost of rebuilding and restoring the structures of the Temple be paid from the revenues of the king, and let the cost of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and fortifying it all around, and the cost of rebuilding the walls in Judah, also be paid from the revenues of the king.’

When Jonathan and the people heard these words, they did not believe or accept them because they remembered the great wrongs Demetrius had done in Israel and how much he had oppressed them. They favored Alexander because he had been the first to speak peaceable words to them, and they remained his allies all his days.

Now King Alexander assembled large forces and encamped opposite Demetrius. The two kings met in battle and the army of Demetrius fled, and Alexander pursued him and defeated them. He pressed the battle strongly until the sun set and on that day Demetrius fell.

Then Alexander sent ambassadors to Ptolemy, King of Egypt with the following message:

‘I have returned to my kingdom and have taken my seat on the throne of my Fathers and established my rule—for I crushed Demetrius and gained control of our country. I met him in battle and he and his army were crushed by us, and we have taken our seat on the throne of his kingdom—now, therefore, let us establish friendship with one another. Give me now your daughter as my wife and I will become your son-in-law and will make gifts to you and to her in keeping with your position.’

Ptolemy the king replied and said,

‘Happy was the day on which you returned to the land of your Fathers and took your seat on the throne of their kingdom. Now I will do for you as you wrote. Meet me at Ptolemais so that we may see one another and I will become your father-in-law as you have said.’

So Ptolemy set out from Egypt, he and his daughter Cleopatra, and came to Ptolemais in the one 162nd year (148 BC). King Alexander met him and Ptolemy gave him his daughter Cleopatra in marriage and celebrated her wedding at Ptolemais with great pomp, as kings do. Then King Alexander wrote to Jonathan to come and meet him. So he went with pomp to Ptolemais and met the two kings. He gave them and their Friends silver and gold and many gifts, and found favor with them. A group of malcontents from Israel, Jewish renegades, gathered together against him to accuse him, but the king paid no attention to them.

The king gave orders to take off Jonathan’s garments and to clothe him in purple, and they did so. The king also seated him at his side and he said to his officers,

‘Go out with him into the middle of the city and proclaim that no one is to bring charges against him about any matter, and let no one annoy him for any reason.’

When his accusers saw the honor that was paid him in accord with the proclamation, and saw him clothed in purple, they all fled. Thus the king honored him and enrolled him among his chief Friends and made him general and governor of the province. Jonathan returned to Jerusalem in peace and gladness.

In the 165th year (145 BC), Demetrius, son of Demetrius, came from Crete to the land of his Fathers. When King Alexander heard of it, he was greatly distressed and returned to Antioch. Demetrius appointed Apollonius the governor of Coelesyria, and he assembled a large force and encamped against Jamnia. Then he sent the following message to the High Priest Jonathan:

‘You are the only one to rise up against us, and I have fallen into ridicule and disgrace because of you. Why do you assume authority against us in the hill country? If you now have confidence in your forces, come down to the plain to meet us and let us match strength with each other there, for I have with me the power of the cities. Ask and learn who I am, and who the others are that are helping us. People will tell you that you cannot stand before us, for your Fathers were twice put to flight in their own land, and now you will not be able to withstand my cavalry and such an army in the plain, where there is no stone or pebble or place to flee.’

When Jonathan heard the words of Apollonius, his spirit was aroused. He chose 10,000 men and set out from Jerusalem, and his brother Simon met him to help him. He encamped before Joppa, but the people of the city closed its gates, for Apollonius had a garrison in Joppa. So they fought against it and the people of the city became afraid and opened the gates and Jonathan gained possession of Joppa.

When Apollonius heard of it, he mustered 3,000

cavalry and a large army and went to Azotus, as though he were going farther. At the same time he advanced into the plain, for he had a large troop of cavalry and put confidence in it. Jonathan pursued him to Azotus and the armies engaged in battle.

Now Apollonius had secretly left 1,000 cavalry behind them. Jonathan learned that there was an ambush behind him, for they surrounded his army and shot arrows at his men from early morning until late afternoon, but his men stood fast, as Jonathan had commanded, and the enemy's horses grew tired.

Then Simon brought forward his force and engaged the phalanx in battle, for the cavalry was exhausted. They were overwhelmed by him and fled and the cavalry was dispersed in the plain. They fled to Azotus and entered Beit Dagon, the temple of their idol, for safety, but Jonathan burned Azotus and the surrounding towns and plundered them, and the temple of Dagon, and those who had taken refuge in it, he burned with fire. The number of those who fell by the sword, with those burned alive, came to 8,000.

Then Jonathan left there and encamped against Askalon, and the people of the city came out to meet him with great pomp.

He and those with him then returned to Jerusalem with a large amount of booty. When King Alexander heard of these things, he honored Jonathan still more. He sent to him a gold buckle, such as it is the custom to give to the King's Kinsmen. He also gave him Ekron and all its environs as his possession.” (1st Maccabees 10:1-89)⁴

⁴ Revised on Thursday, December 17, 2020.

HANUKA BLESSINGS

by Avram Yehoshua

[The Seed of Abraham](#)

ברוך אתה אבא אלהינו מלך העולם...

א. אשר קדשנו בדברו החיים ואנחנו מדליקים את האורות של חנוכה.

ב. שעשה נסים לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

ג. שהחיינו וקימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה: ישוע אנחנו אוהבים אותך.

Translation

Blessed are You, Papa God, King of the Universe...

1. א who has sanctified us by His Living Word, and we light the lights of Hanuka.⁵
2. ב who performed miracles for our Fathers in those days at this time.
3. ג who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season—Yeshua, we love You.

The transliteration of the Hebrew phrases are below. Always start off with the first phrase (*Baruch ahta*), which is the basic building block of Hebrew blessings (i.e. all Hebrew blessings begin with this phrase). So, it's the first phrase then #1א; and then #2ב; and then #3ג:

Baruch ahta Abba, elohaynu melech ha'olam...

1. א Asher kid'dih'shanu bid'var'ro ha'hi'yim vah'ah'nach'nu mahd'li'kim et ha'o'rote shel Hanuka.
2. ב Sheh'ah'sah ni'sim lah'ah'vo'tanu buy'yamim ha'hame bahz'mahn hazeh.
3. ג Sheh'heh'chey'yanu v'ki'yih'manu v'hih'gi'yanu lahz'mahn hazeh Yea'shu'ah ah'nach'nu o'ha'vim oh't'cha

Procedure

1. Sing (or read) the first blessing, and then light the lights, and then,⁶
2. Sing the next two blessings.

⁵ I've slightly revised the prayer by substituting Abba for Adonai. Also, I taken out of #1, the phrase, 'by His commandments,' and substituted, 'by His Living Word.'

⁶ For the 7th day Sabbath during the time of Hanuka, it's good to light the Hanuka candles first, and then the Sabbath lights because they 'bring in' Shabat, and of course, for the next night, wait until Sabbath is over before lighting the Hanuka lights. We're not to light any fires on Shabat (Ex. 35:1-3).

Revised on Monday, November 29, 2021.