



Archdiocese of St. Louis
Office of Sacred Worship
Lectio Divina Bible
The First Book of Maccabees

First Maccabees can be divided as follows:

- I. Crisis and Response (1:1–2:70)
- II. The Maccabean Revolt
- III. Leadership of Judas Maccabeus (3:1–9:22)
- IV. Leadership of Jonathan (9:23–12:53)
- V. Leadership of Simon (13:1–16:24)



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**I. Crisis and Response
1 Maccabees, chapter 1**

From Alexander to Antiochus.

After Alexander the Macedonian, Philip's son, who came from the land of Kittim, had defeated Darius, king of the Persians and Medes, he became king in his place, having first ruled in Greece. He fought many battles, captured fortresses, and put the kings of the earth to death. He advanced to the ends of the earth, gathering plunder from many nations; the earth fell silent before him, and his heart became proud and arrogant. He collected a very strong army and won dominion over provinces, nations, and rulers, and they paid him tribute. But after all this he took to his bed, realizing that he was going to die. So he summoned his noblest officers, who had been brought up with him from his youth, and divided his kingdom among them while he was still alive. Alexander had reigned twelve years when he died.

So his officers took over his kingdom, each in his own territory, and after his death they all put on diadems, and so did their sons after them for many years, multiplying evils on the earth. There sprang from these a sinful offshoot, Antiochus Epiphanes, son of King Antiochus, once a hostage at Rome. He became king in the one hundred and thirty-seventh year of the kingdom of the Greeks.

II. Leadership of Judas Maccabeus

Lawless Jews.

In those days there appeared in Israel transgressors of the law who seduced many, saying: "Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles all around us; since we separated from them, many evils have come upon us." The proposal was agreeable; some from among the people promptly went to the king, and he authorized them to introduce the ordinances of the Gentiles. Thereupon they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem according



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to the Gentile custom. They disguised their circumcision and abandoned the holy covenant; they allied themselves with the Gentiles and sold themselves to wrongdoing.

Antiochus in Egypt.

When his kingdom seemed secure, Antiochus undertook to become king of the land of Egypt and to rule over both kingdoms. He invaded Egypt with a strong force, with chariots, elephants and cavalry, and with a large fleet, to make war on Ptolemy, king of Egypt. Ptolemy was frightened at his presence and fled, and many were wounded and fell dead. The fortified cities in the land of Egypt were captured, and Antiochus plundered the land of Egypt.

Robbery of the Temple.

After Antiochus had defeated Egypt in the one hundred and forty-third year, he returned and went up against Israel and against Jerusalem with a strong force. He insolently entered the sanctuary and took away the golden altar, the lampstand for the light with all its utensils, the offering table, the cups and bowls, the golden censers, and the curtain. The cornices and the golden ornament on the facade of the temple—he stripped it all off. And he took away the silver and gold and the precious vessels; he also took all the hidden treasures he could find. Taking all this, he went back to his own country. He shed much blood and spoke with great arrogance.

And there was great mourning throughout all Israel, and the rulers and the elders groaned. Young women and men languished, and the beauty of the women faded. Every bridegroom took up lamentation, while the bride sitting in her chamber mourned, And the land quaked on account of its inhabitants, and all the house of Jacob was clothed with shame.

Attack and Occupation.

Two years later, the king sent the Mysian commander to the cities of Judah, and he came to Jerusalem with a strong force. He spoke to them deceitfully in peaceful terms, and they believed him. Then he attacked the city suddenly, in a great onslaught, and destroyed many of the people in Israel. He plundered the city and set fire to it, demolished its houses and its surrounding walls. And they took captive the women and children, and seized the animals. Then they built up the City of David with a high, strong wall and strong towers, and it became their citadel. There they installed a sinful race, transgressors of the law, who fortified themselves inside it. They stored up weapons and provisions, depositing there the plunder they had collected from Jerusalem, and they became a great snare.

The citadel became an ambush against the sanctuary, and a wicked adversary to Israel at all times. They shed innocent blood around the sanctuary; they defiled the sanctuary. Because of them the inhabitants of Jerusalem fled away, she became the abode of strangers. She became a stranger to her own offspring, and her children forsook her. Her sanctuary became desolate as a wilderness; her feasts were turned into mourning, Her sabbaths to shame, her honor to contempt. As her glory had been, so great was her dishonor: her exaltation was turned into mourning.

Religious Persecution.

Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, and abandon their particular customs. All the Gentiles conformed to the command of the king, and many Israelites delighted in his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the sabbath.



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The king sent letters by messenger to Jerusalem and to the cities of Judah, ordering them to follow customs foreign to their land; to prohibit burnt offerings, sacrifices, and libations in the sanctuary, to profane the sabbaths and feast days, to desecrate the sanctuary and the sacred ministers, to build pagan altars and temples and shrines, to sacrifice swine and unclean animals, to leave their sons uncircumcised, and to defile themselves with every kind of impurity and abomination; so that they might forget the law and change all its ordinances. Whoever refused to act according to the command of the king was to be put to death.

In words such as these he wrote to his whole kingdom. He appointed inspectors over all the people, and he ordered the cities of Judah to offer sacrifices, each city in turn. Many of the people, those who abandoned the law, joined them and committed evil in the land. They drove Israel into hiding, wherever places of refuge could be found.

On the fifteenth day of the month Kislev, in the year one hundred and forty-five, the king erected the desolating abomination upon the altar of burnt offerings, and in the surrounding cities of Judah they built pagan altars. They also burned incense at the doors of houses and in the streets. Any scrolls of the law that they found they tore up and burned. Whoever was found with a scroll of the covenant, and whoever observed the law, was condemned to death by royal decree.

So they used their power against Israel, against those who were caught, each month, in the cities. On the twenty-fifth day of each month they sacrificed on the pagan altar that was over the altar of burnt offerings. In keeping with the decree, they put to death women who had their children circumcised, and they hung their babies from their necks; their families also and those who had circumcised them were killed. But many in Israel were determined and resolved in their hearts not to eat anything unclean; they preferred to die rather than to be defiled with food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die. And very great wrath came upon Israel.



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1 Maccabees, chapter 2

Mattathias and His Sons.

In those days Mattathias, son of John, son of Simeon, a priest of the family of Joarib, left Jerusalem and settled in Modein. He had five sons: John, who was called Gaddi; Simon, who was called Thassi; Judas, who was called Maccabeus; Eleazar, who was called Avaran; and Jonathan, who was called Apphus. When he saw the sacrileges that were being committed in Judah and in Jerusalem, he said: "Woe is me! Why was I born to see the ruin of my people, the ruin of the holy city—To dwell there as it was given into the hands of enemies, the sanctuary into the hands of strangers?"

Her temple has become like a man disgraced, her glorious vessels carried off as spoils, Her infants murdered in her streets, her youths by the sword of the enemy. What nation has not taken its share of her realm, and laid its hand on her spoils? All her adornment has been taken away. Once free, she has become a slave. We see our sanctuary laid waste, our beauty, our glory. The Gentiles have defiled them! Why are we still alive?"

Then Mattathias and his sons tore their garments, put on sackcloth, and mourned bitterly.

Pagan Worship Refused and Resisted.

The officers of the king in charge of enforcing the apostasy came to the city of Modein to make them sacrifice. Many of Israel joined them, but Mattathias and his sons drew together. Then the officers of the king addressed Mattathias: "You are a leader, an honorable and great man in this city, supported by sons and kindred. Come now, be the first to obey the king's command, as all the Gentiles and Judeans and those who are left in Jerusalem have done. Then you and your sons shall be numbered among the King's Friends, and you and your sons shall be honored with silver and gold and many gifts."



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But Mattathias answered in a loud voice: “Although all the Gentiles in the king’s realm obey him, so that they forsake the religion of their ancestors and consent to the king’s orders, yet I and my sons and my kindred will keep to the covenant of our ancestors. Heaven forbid that we should forsake the law and the commandments. We will not obey the words of the king by departing from our religion in the slightest degree.”

As he finished saying these words, a certain Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer sacrifice on the altar in Modein according to the king’s order. When Mattathias saw him, he was filled with zeal; his heart was moved and his just fury was aroused; he sprang forward and killed him upon the altar. At the same time, he also killed the messenger of the king who was forcing them to sacrifice, and he tore down the altar. Thus he showed his zeal for the law, just as Phinehas did with Zimri, son of Salu.

Then Mattathias cried out in the city, “Let everyone who is zealous for the law and who stands by the covenant follow me!” Then he and his sons fled to the mountains, leaving behind in the city all their possessions. At that time many who sought righteousness and justice went out into the wilderness to settle there, they and their children, their wives and their animals, because misfortunes pressed so hard on them.

It was reported to the officers and soldiers of the king who were in the City of David, in Jerusalem, that those who had flouted the king’s order had gone out to secret refuges in the wilderness. Many hurried out after them, and having caught up with them, camped opposite and prepared to attack them on the sabbath.

The pursuers said to them, “Enough of this! Come out and obey the king’s command, and you will live.” But they replied, “We will not come out, nor will we obey the king’s command to profane the sabbath.” Then the enemy attacked them at once. But they did not retaliate; they neither threw stones, nor blocked up their secret refuges. They said, “Let us all die in innocence; heaven and earth are our witnesses that you destroy us unjustly.” So the officers and soldiers attacked them on the sabbath, and they died with their wives, their children and their animals, to the number of a thousand persons.

When Mattathias and his friends heard of it, they mourned deeply for them. They said to one another, “If we all do as our kindred have done, and do not fight against the Gentiles for our lives and our laws, they will soon destroy us from the earth.” So on that day they came to this decision: “Let us fight against anyone who attacks us on the sabbath, so that we may not all die as our kindred died in their secret refuges.”

Then they were joined by a group of Hasideans, mighty warriors of Israel, all of them devoted to the law. And all those who were fleeing from the persecutions joined them and supported them. They gathered an army and struck down sinners in their wrath and the lawless in their anger, and the survivors fled to the Gentiles for safety.

Mattathias and his friends went about and tore down the pagan altars; they also forcibly circumcised any uncircumcised boys whom they found in the territory of Israel. They put to flight the arrogant, and the work prospered in their hands. They saved the law from the hands of the Gentiles and of the kings and did not let the sinner triumph.

Farewell of Mattathias.



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When the time came for Mattathias to die, he said to his sons: “Arrogance and scorn have now grown strong; it is a time of disaster and violent wrath. Therefore, my children, be zealous for the law and give your lives for the covenant of our ancestors.

“Remember the deeds that our ancestors did in their times, and you shall win great honor and an everlasting name. Was not Abraham found faithful in trial, and it was credited to him as righteousness? Joseph, when in distress, kept the commandment, and he became master of Egypt. Phinehas our ancestor, for his burning zeal, received the covenant of an everlasting priesthood. Joshua, for executing his commission, became a judge in Israel. Caleb, for bearing witness before the assembly, received an inheritance in the land. David, for his loyalty, received as a heritage a throne of eternal kingship. Elijah, for his burning zeal for the law, was taken up to heaven. Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael, for their faith, were saved from the fire. Daniel, for his innocence, was delivered from the mouths of lions. And so, consider this from generation to generation, that none who hope in Heaven shall fail in strength. Do not fear the words of sinners, for their glory ends in corruption and worms. Today exalted, tomorrow not to be found, they have returned to dust, their schemes have perished. Children! be courageous and strong in keeping the law, for by it you shall be honored.

“Here is your brother Simeon who I know is a wise counselor; listen to him always, and he will be a father to you. And Judas Maccabeus, a mighty warrior from his youth, shall be the leader of your army and wage the war against the nations. Gather about you all who observe the law, and avenge your people. Pay back the Gentiles what they deserve, and observe the precepts of the law.”

Then he blessed them, and he was gathered to his ancestors. He died in the year one hundred and forty-six, and was buried in the tombs of his ancestors in Modein, and all Israel mourned him greatly.



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**III. Leadership of Judas Maccabeus
1 Maccabees, chapter 3**

Judas and His Early Victories.

Then his son Judas, who was called Maccabeus, took his place. All his brothers and all who had joined his father supported him, and they gladly carried on Israel's war.

He spread abroad the glory of his people, and put on his breastplate like a giant. He armed himself with weapons of war; he fought battles and protected the camp with his sword. In his deeds he was like a lion, like a young lion roaring for prey. He pursued the lawless, hunting them out, and those who troubled his people he destroyed by fire. The lawless were cowed by fear of him, and all evildoers were dismayed. By his hand deliverance was happily achieved, and he afflicted many kings. He gave joy to Jacob by his deeds, and his memory is blessed forever. He went about the cities of Judah destroying the renegades there. He turned away wrath from Israel, was renowned to the ends of the earth; and gathered together those who were perishing.

Then Apollonius gathered together the Gentiles, along with a large army from Samaria, to fight against Israel. When Judas learned of it, he went out to meet him and struck and killed him. Many fell wounded, and the rest fled. They took their spoils, and Judas took the sword of Apollonius and fought with it the rest of his life.

But Seron, commander of the Syrian army, heard that Judas had mustered an assembly of faithful men ready for war. So he said, "I will make a name for myself and win honor in the kingdom. I will wage war against Judas and his followers, who have despised the king's command." And again a large company of renegades advanced with him to help him take revenge on the Israelites. When he reached the ascent of Beth-horon, Judas went out to meet him with a few men. But when they saw the army coming against them, they said to



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Judas: “How can we, few as we are, fight such a strong host as this? Besides, we are weak since we have not eaten today.” But Judas said: “Many are easily hemmed in by a few; in the sight of Heaven there is no difference between deliverance by many or by few; for victory in war does not depend upon the size of the army, but on strength that comes from Heaven. With great presumption and lawlessness they come against us to destroy us and our wives and children and to despoil us; but we are fighting for our lives and our laws. He will crush them before us; so do not fear them.” When he finished speaking, he rushed suddenly upon Seron and his army, who were crushed before him. He pursued Seron down the descent of Beth-horon into the plain. About eight hundred of their men fell, and the rest fled to the land of the Philistines. Then Judas and his brothers began to be feared, and dread fell upon the Gentiles about them. His fame reached the king, and the Gentiles talked about the battles of Judas.

The King’s Strategy.

When King Antiochus heard these reports, he was filled with rage; so he ordered that all the forces of his kingdom be gathered, a very strong army. He opened his treasury, gave his soldiers a year’s pay, and commanded them to be prepared for anything. But then he saw that this exhausted the money in his treasury; moreover the tribute from the province was small because of the dissension and distress he had brought upon the land by abolishing the laws which had been in effect from of old. He feared that, as had happened once or twice, he would not have enough for his expenses and for the gifts that he was accustomed to give with a lavish hand—more so than all previous kings. Greatly perplexed, he decided to go to Persia and levy tribute on those provinces, and so raise a large sum of money.

He left Lysias, a noble of royal descent, in charge of the king’s affairs from the Euphrates River to the frontier of Egypt, and commissioned him to take care of his son Antiochus until his return. He entrusted to him half of his forces, and the elephants, and gave him instructions concerning everything he wanted done. As for the inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem, Lysias was to send an army against them to crush and destroy the power of Israel and the remnant of Jerusalem and efface their memory from the place. He was to settle foreigners in all their territory and distribute their land by lot.

The king took the remaining half of the army and set out from Antioch, his capital, in the year one hundred and forty-seven; he crossed the Euphrates River and went through the provinces beyond.

Preparations for Battle.

Lysias chose Ptolemy, son of Dorymenes, and Nicanor and Gorgias, powerful men among the King’s Friends, and with them he sent forty thousand foot soldiers and seven thousand cavalry to invade and ravage the land of Judah according to the king’s orders. Setting out with their whole force, they came and pitched their camp near Emmaus in the plain. When the merchants of the region heard of their prowess, they came to the camp, bringing a huge sum of silver and gold, along with fetters, to buy the Israelites as slaves. A force from Edom and from Philistia joined with them.

Judas and his brothers saw that evils had multiplied and that armies were encamped within their territory. They learned of the orders which the king had given to destroy and utterly wipe out the people. So they said to one another, “Let us raise our people from their ruin and fight for them and for our sanctuary!”

The assembly gathered together to prepare for battle and to pray and ask for mercy and compassion.



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Jerusalem was uninhabited, like a wilderness; not one of her children came in or went out. The sanctuary was trampled on, and foreigners were in the citadel; it was a habitation for Gentiles. Joy had disappeared from Jacob, and the flute and the harp were silent.

Thus they assembled and went to Mizpah near Jerusalem, because formerly at Mizpah there was a place of prayer for Israel. That day they fasted and wore sackcloth; they sprinkled ashes on their heads and tore their garments. They unrolled the scroll of the law, to learn about the things for which the Gentiles consulted the images of their idols. They brought with them the priestly garments, the first fruits, and the tithes; and they brought forward the nazirites who had completed the time of their vows. And they cried aloud to Heaven: “What shall we do with these, and where shall we take them? For your sanctuary has been trampled on and profaned, and your priests are in mourning and humbled. Now the Gentiles are gathered together against us to destroy us. You know what they plot against us. How shall we be able to resist them unless you help us?” Then they blew the trumpets and cried out loudly.

After this Judas appointed officers for the people, over thousands, over hundreds, over fifties, and over tens. He proclaimed that those who were building houses, or were just married, or were planting vineyards, and those who were afraid, could each return home, according to the law. Then the army moved off, and they camped to the south of Emmaus. Judas said: “Arm yourselves and be brave; in the morning be ready to fight these Gentiles who have assembled against us to destroy us and our sanctuary. It is better for us to die in battle than to witness the evils befalling our nation and our sanctuary. Whatever is willed in heaven will be done.”



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1 Maccabees, chapter 4

Victory over Gorgias.

Now Gorgias took five thousand infantry and a thousand picked cavalry, and this detachment set out at night in order to fall upon the camp of the Jews in a surprise attack. Some from the citadel were his guides. Judas heard of it and himself set out with his soldiers to attack the king's army at Emmaus while these forces were still scattered away from the camp. During the night Gorgias came into the camp of Judas, and found no one there; so he sought them in the mountains, saying, "They are fleeing from us."

But at daybreak Judas appeared in the plain with three thousand men; furthermore, they lacked the helmets and swords they wanted. They saw the army of the Gentiles, strong, breastplated, and flanked with cavalry, and made up of experienced soldiers. Judas said to the men with him: "Do not fear their numbers or dread their attack. Remember how our ancestors were saved in the Red Sea, when Pharaoh pursued them with an army. So now let us cry to Heaven in the hope that he will favor us, remember the covenant with our ancestors, and destroy this army before us today.

All the Gentiles shall know that there is One who redeems and delivers Israel." When the foreigners looked up and saw them marching toward them, they came out of their camp for battle. The men with Judas blew the trumpet, and joined the battle. They crushed the Gentiles, who fled toward the plain. Their whole rear guard fell by the sword, and they were pursued as far as Gazara and the plains of Idumaea, to Azotus and Jamnia. About three thousand of their men fell.

When Judas and the army returned from the pursuit, he said to the people: "Do not be greedy for plunder; for there is a fight ahead of us, and Gorgias and his army are near us on the mountain. But now stand firm against our enemies and fight them. Afterward you can freely take the plunder."



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As Judas was finishing this speech, a detachment appeared, looking down from the mountain. They saw that their army had been put to flight and their camp was burning. The smoke they saw revealed what had happened. When they realized this, they completely lost heart; and when they also saw the army of Judas in the plain ready to attack, they all fled to the land of the foreigners.

Then Judas went back to plunder the camp, and they took much gold and silver, cloth dyed blue and marine purple, and great treasure. As they returned, they were singing hymns and glorifying Heaven, “who is good, whose mercy endures forever.” Thus Israel experienced a great deliverance that day.

Victory over Lysias.

But those of the foreigners who had escaped went and told Lysias all that had occurred. When he heard it he was disturbed and discouraged, because things had not turned out in Israel as he intended and as the king had ordered.

So the following year he gathered together sixty thousand picked men and five thousand cavalry, to fight them. They came into Idumea and camped at Beth-zur, and Judas met them with ten thousand men. Seeing that the army was strong, he prayed thus:

“Blessed are you, Savior of Israel, who crushed the attack of the mighty one by the hand of your servant David and delivered the foreign camp into the hand of Jonathan, the son of Saul, and his armor-bearer. Give this army into the hands of your people Israel; make them ashamed of their troops and their cavalry. Strike them with cowardice, weaken the boldness of their strength, and let them tremble at their own destruction. Strike them down by the sword of those who love you, that all who know your name may sing your praise.”

Then they engaged in battle, and about five thousand of Lysias’ army fell in hand-to-hand fighting. When Lysias saw the tide of the battle turning, and the increased boldness of Judas, whose men were ready either to live or to die nobly, he withdrew to Antioch and began to recruit mercenaries so as to return to Judea with greater numbers.

Purification and Rededication of the Temple.

Then Judas and his brothers said, “Now that our enemies have been crushed, let us go up to purify the sanctuary and rededicate it.” So the whole army assembled, and went up to Mount Zion. They found the sanctuary desolate, the altar desecrated, the gates burnt, weeds growing in the courts as in a thicket or on some mountain, and the priests’ chambers demolished. Then they tore their garments and made great lamentation; they sprinkled their heads with ashes and prostrated themselves. And when the signal was given with trumpets, they cried out to Heaven.

Judas appointed men to attack those in the citadel, while he purified the sanctuary. He chose blameless priests, devoted to the law; these purified the sanctuary and carried away the stones of the defilement to an unclean place. They deliberated what ought to be done with the altar for burnt offerings that had been desecrated. They decided it best to tear it down, lest it be a lasting shame to them that the Gentiles had defiled it; so they tore down the altar. They stored the stones in a suitable place on the temple mount, until the coming of a prophet who could determine what to do with them.



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Then they took uncut stones, according to the law, and built a new altar like the former one. They also repaired the sanctuary and the interior of the temple and consecrated the courts. They made new sacred vessels and brought the lampstand, the altar of incense, and the table into the temple. Then they burned incense on the altar and lighted the lamps on the lampstand, and these illuminated the temple. They also put loaves on the table and hung up the curtains. Thus they finished all the work they had undertaken.

They rose early on the morning of the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, that is, the month of Kislev, in the year one hundred and forty-eight, and offered sacrifice according to the law on the new altar for burnt offerings that they had made. On the anniversary of the day on which the Gentiles had desecrated it, on that very day it was rededicated with songs, harps, lyres, and cymbals. All the people prostrated themselves and adored and praised Heaven, who had given them success.

For eight days they celebrated the dedication of the altar and joyfully offered burnt offerings and sacrifices of deliverance and praise. They ornamented the facade of the temple with gold crowns and shields; they repaired the gates and the priests' chambers and furnished them with doors.

There was great joy among the people now that the disgrace brought by the Gentiles was removed. Then Judas and his brothers and the entire assembly of Israel decreed that every year for eight days, from the twenty-fifth day of the month Kislev, the days of the dedication of the altar should be observed with joy and gladness on the anniversary.

At that time they built high walls and strong towers around Mount Zion, to prevent the Gentiles from coming and trampling it as they had done before. Judas also placed a garrison there to protect it, and likewise fortified Beth-zur, that the people might have a stronghold facing Idumea.



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1 Maccabees, chapter 5

Victories over Hostile Neighbors.

When the nations round about heard that the altar had been rebuilt and the sanctuary restored as before, they were enraged. So they decided to destroy the descendants of Jacob who were among them, and they began to kill and eradicate the people. Then Judas attacked the Edomites at Akrabattene in Idumea, because they were blockading Israel; he dealt them a heavy blow, humbled and despoiled them. He also remembered the malice of the Baeonites, who had become a snare and a stumbling block to the people by ambushing them along the roads. He forced them to take refuge in towers, which he besieged; he put them under the ban and burned down their towers along with all who were in them. Then he crossed over to the Ammonites, where he found a strong army and a large body of people with Timothy as their leader. He fought many battles with them, routed them, and struck them down. After seizing Jazer and its villages, he returned to Judea.

Liberation of Jews in Galilee and Gilead.

The Gentiles in Gilead assembled to destroy the Israelites who were in their territory; these then fled to the stronghold of Dathema. They sent a letter to Judas and his brothers saying: "The Gentiles around us have assembled against us to destroy us, and they are preparing to come and seize this stronghold to which we have fled. Timothy is the leader of their army. Come at once to rescue us from them, for many of us have fallen. All our kindred who were in the territory of the Tobiads have been killed; the Gentiles have captured their wives, their children and their goods, and they have slain there about a thousand men."

While they were reading this letter, suddenly other messengers, with garments torn, arrived from Galilee to deliver a similar message: that "the inhabitants of Ptolemais, Tyre, and Sidon, and the whole of Gentile Galilee have joined forces to destroy us." When Judas and the people heard this, a great assembly convened to consider what they should do for their kindred who were in distress and being attacked by enemies.



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Judas said to his brother Simon: “Choose men for yourself, and go, rescue your kindred in Galilee; my brother Jonathan and I will go to Gilead.” He left Joseph, son of Zechariah, and Azariah, leader of the people, with the rest of the army in Judea to guard it.

He commanded them, “Take charge of these people, but do not join battle against the Gentiles until we return.” Three thousand men were allotted to Simon to go into Galilee, and eight thousand men to Judas, for Gilead. Simon went into Galilee and fought many battles with the Gentiles. They were crushed before him, and he pursued them to the very gate of Ptolemais. About three thousand of the Gentiles fell, and he gathered their spoils. He took with him the Jews who were in Galilee and in Arbatta, with their wives and children and all that they had, and brought them to Judea with great rejoicing.

Rescue in Gilead.

Judas Maccabeus and his brother Jonathan crossed the Jordan and marched for three days through the wilderness. There they met some Nabateans, who received them peaceably and told them all that had happened to their kindred in Gilead:

“Many of them are shut up in Bozrah, in Bosor near Alema, in Chaspho, Maked, and Carnaim”—all of these are large, fortified cities—“and some are shut up in other cities of Gilead. Tomorrow their enemies plan to attack the strongholds and to seize and destroy all these people in one day.”

Thereupon Judas suddenly changed direction with his army, marched across the wilderness to Bozrah, and captured the city. He put every male to the sword, took all their spoils, and set fire to the city. He led his army from that place by night, and they marched toward the stronghold. When morning came, they looked ahead and saw a countless multitude, with ladders and machines for capturing the stronghold, beginning to attack. When Judas perceived that the struggle had begun and that the noise of the battle was resounding to heaven with trumpet blasts and loud shouting, he said to the men of his army, “Fight for our kindred today.”

He came up behind them with three columns blowing their trumpets and crying out in prayer. When the army of Timothy realized that it was Maccabeus, they fled before him, and he inflicted on them a great defeat. About eight thousand of their men fell that day. Then he turned toward Alema and attacked and captured it; he killed every male, took spoils, and burned it down. From there he moved on and took Chaspho, Maked, Bosor, and the other cities of Gilead.

After these events Timothy assembled another army and camped opposite Raphon, on the other side of the wadi. Judas sent men to spy on the camp, and they reported to him: “All the Gentiles around us have rallied to him, making a very large force; they have also hired Arabians to help them, and have camped beyond the wadi, ready to attack you.” So Judas went forward to meet them.

As Judas and his army were approaching the flowing wadi, Timothy said to the officers of his army: “If he crosses over to us first, we shall not be able to resist him; he will certainly defeat us. But if he is hesitant and camps on the other side of the river, we will cross over to him and defeat him.”

But when Judas reached the flowing wadi, he stationed the officers of the people beside it and gave them this order: “Do not allow anyone to encamp; all must go into battle.” He was the first to cross to the attack, with



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all the people behind him, and all the Gentiles were crushed before them. They threw away their arms and fled to the temple enclosure at Carnaim. But Judas' troops captured the city and burnt the temple enclosure with all who were in it. So Carnaim was subdued, and Judas met with no more resistance.

Return to Jerusalem.

Then Judas assembled all the Israelites, great and small, who were in Gilead, with their wives and children and their goods, a very large company, to go into the land of Judah. When they reached Ephron, a large and strongly fortified city along the way, they found it impossible to go around it on either the right or the left; they would have to march right through it. But the people in the city shut them out and blocked up the gates with stones. Then Judas sent them this peaceful message: "Let us cross your territory in order to reach our own; no one will harm you; we will only march through." But they would not open to him.

So Judas ordered a proclamation to be made in the camp that everyone should take up positions where they were. When the men of the army took up their positions, he assaulted the city all that day and night, and it was delivered into his hand. He put every male to the sword, leveled the city, took spoils and passed through it over the slain.

Then they crossed the Jordan to the great plain in front of Beth-shan; and Judas kept gathering the stragglers and encouraging the people the whole way, until he reached the land of Judah. They ascended Mount Zion in joy and gladness and sacrificed burnt offerings, because not one of them had fallen; they had returned in safety.

Joseph and Azariah Defeated.

In those days when Judas and Jonathan were in the land of Gilead, and Simon his brother was in Galilee opposite Ptolemais, Joseph, son of Zechariah, and Azariah, the leaders of the army, heard about the brave deeds and the fighting that they were doing. They said, "Let us also make a name for ourselves by going out and fighting against the Gentiles around us."

They gave orders to those of their army who were with them, and marched against Jamnia. But Gorgias and his men came out of the city to meet them in battle. Joseph and Azariah were routed and were pursued to the frontiers of Judea, and about two thousand Israelites fell that day. It was a great setback for the people, because they had not obeyed Judas and his brothers, thinking that they would do brave deeds. But they were not of the family through whom Israel's deliverance was given.

Victories at Hebron and Azotus.

The valiant Judas and his brothers were greatly honored in all Israel and among all the Gentiles, wherever their name was heard; and people gathered about them and praised them.

Then Judas and his brothers went out and attacked the Edomites in the land toward the south; he took Hebron and its villages, and he destroyed its strongholds and burned the towers around it. He then set out for the land of the foreigners and passed through Marisa. On that day some priests fell in battle who had gone out rashly to fight in their desire to do brave deeds. Judas then turned toward Azotus in the land of the foreigners. He destroyed their altars and burned the carved images of their gods; and after plundering their cities he returned to the land of Judah.



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1 Maccabees, chapter 6

As King Antiochus passed through the eastern provinces, he heard that in Persia there was a city, Elam, famous for its wealth in silver and gold, and that its temple was very rich, containing gold helmets, breastplates, and weapons left there by the first king of the Greeks, Alexander, son of Philip, king of Macedon. He went therefore and tried to capture and loot the city. But he could not do so, because his plan became known to the people of the city who rose up in battle against him. So he fled and in great dismay withdrew from there to return to Babylon.

While he was in Persia, a messenger brought him news that the armies that had gone into the land of Judah had been routed; that Lysias had gone at first with a strong army and been driven back; that the people of Judah had grown strong by reason of the arms, wealth, and abundant spoils taken from the armies they had cut down; that they had pulled down the abomination which he had built upon the altar in Jerusalem; and that they had surrounded with high walls both the sanctuary, as it had been before, and his city of Beth-zur.

When the king heard this news, he was astonished and very much shaken. Sick with grief because his designs had failed, he took to his bed. There he remained many days, assailed by waves of grief, for he thought he was going to die.

So he called in all his Friends and said to them: "Sleep has departed from my eyes, and my heart sinks from anxiety. I said to myself: 'Into what tribulation have I come, and in what floods of sorrow am I now! Yet I was kindly and beloved in my rule.' But I now recall the evils I did in Jerusalem, when I carried away all the vessels of silver and gold that were in it, and for no cause gave orders that the inhabitants of Judah be destroyed. I know that this is why these evils have overtaken me; and now I am dying, in bitter grief, in a foreign land."



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Then he summoned Philip, one of his Friends, and put him in charge of his whole kingdom. He gave him his diadem, his robe, and his signet ring, so that he might guide the king's son Antiochus and bring him up to be king. So King Antiochus died there in the one hundred and forty-ninth year. When Lysias learned that the king was dead, he set up the king's son Antiochus, whom he had reared as a child, to be king in his place; and he gave him the title Eupator.

Siege of the Citadel.

Those in the citadel were hemming Israel in around the sanctuary, continually trying to harm them and to strengthen the Gentiles. And so Judas planned to destroy them, and assembled the people to besiege them.

So in the one hundred and fiftieth year they assembled and besieged the citadel, for which purpose he constructed platforms and siege engines. But some of the besieged escaped, and some renegade Israelites joined them. They went to the king and said:

“How long will you fail to do justice and to avenge our kindred? We agreed to serve your father and to follow his orders and obey his edicts. And for this our own people have become our enemies; they have put to death as many of us as they could find and have seized our inheritances. They have acted aggressively not only against us, but throughout their whole territory. Look! Today they have besieged the citadel in Jerusalem in order to capture it, and they have fortified the sanctuary and Beth-zur. Unless you act quickly to prevent them, they will do even worse things than these, and you will not be able to stop them.”

Campaign against Judas.

When the king heard this he was enraged, and he called together all his Friends, the officers of his army, and the commanders of the cavalry. Mercenary forces also came to him from other kingdoms and from the islands of the seas. His army numbered a hundred thousand footsoldiers, twenty thousand cavalry, and thirty-two elephants trained for war. They passed through Idumea and camped before Beth-zur. For many days they attacked it; they constructed siege engines, but the besieged made a sortie and burned these, and they fought bravely.

Battle of Beth-zechariah.

Then Judas marched away from the citadel and moved his camp to Beth-zechariah, opposite the king's camp. The king, rising before dawn, moved his force hastily along the road to Beth-zechariah; and the troops prepared for battle and sounded the trumpet. They made the elephants drunk on the juice of grapes and mulberries to get them ready to fight. The beasts were distributed along the phalanxes, each elephant having assigned to it a thousand men in coats of mail, with bronze helmets on their heads, and five hundred picked cavalry. These accompanied the beast wherever it was; wherever it moved, they moved too and never left it. Each elephant was outfitted with a strong wooden tower, fastened to it by a harness; each tower held three soldiers who fought from it, besides the Indian driver. The remaining cavalry were stationed on one or the other of the two flanks of the army, to harass the enemy and to be protected by the phalanxes. When the sun shone on the gold and bronze shields, the mountains gleamed with their brightness and blazed like flaming torches. Part of the king's army spread out along the heights, while some were on low ground, and they marched forward steadily in good order. All who heard the noise of their numbers, the tramp of their marching, and the clanging of the arms, trembled; for the army was very great and strong.



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Judas with his army advanced to fight, and six hundred men of the king's army fell. Eleazar, called Avaran, saw one of the beasts covered with royal armor and bigger than any of the others, and so he thought the king was on it. He gave up his life to save his people and win an everlasting name for himself. He dashed courageously up to it in the middle of the phalanx, killing men right and left, so that they parted before him. He ran under the elephant, stabbed it and killed it. The beast fell to the ground on top of him, and he died there. But when Judas' troops saw the strength of the royal army and the ardor of its forces, they retreated from them.

The Siege of Jerusalem.

Some of the king's army went up to Jerusalem to attack them, and the king established camps in Judea and at Mount Zion. He made peace with the people of Beth-zur, and they evacuated the city, because they had no food there to enable them to withstand a siege, for that was a sabbath year in the land. The king took Beth-zur and stationed a garrison there to hold it. For many days he besieged the sanctuary, setting up platforms and siege engines, fire-throwers, catapults and mechanical bows for shooting arrows and projectiles. The defenders countered by setting up siege engines of their own, and kept up the fight a long time. But there were no provisions in the storerooms, because it was the seventh year, and the reserves had been eaten up by those who had been rescued from the Gentiles and brought to Judea.

54 Few men remained in the sanctuary because the famine was too much for them; the rest scattered, each to his own home.

Peace Treaty.

Lysias heard that Philip, whom King Antiochus, before his death, had appointed to train his son Antiochus to be king, had returned from Persia and Media with the army that accompanied the king, and that he was seeking to take over the government. So he hastily decided to withdraw. He said to the king, the leaders of the army, and the soldiers: "We are growing weaker every day, our provisions are scanty, the place we are besieging is strong, and it is our duty to take care of the affairs of the kingdom. Therefore, let us now come to terms with these people and make peace with them and all their nation. Let us grant them freedom to live according to their own laws as formerly; it was on account of their laws, which we abolished, that they became enraged and did all these things."

The proposal pleased the king and the leaders; he sent peace terms to the Jews, and they accepted. So the king and the leaders swore an oath to them, and on these terms the Jews evacuated the fortification. But when the king entered Mount Zion and saw how the place was fortified, he broke the oath he had sworn and gave orders to tear down the encircling wall. Then he departed in haste and returned to Antioch, where he found Philip in control of the city. He fought against him and took the city by force.



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1 Maccabees, chapter 7

Expedition of Bacchides and Alcimus.

In the one hundred and fifty-first year, Demetrius, son of Seleucus, set out from Rome, arrived with a few men at a coastal city, and began to rule there. As he was entering the royal palace of his ancestors, the soldiers seized Antiochus and Lysias to bring them to him. When he was informed of this, he said, "Do not show me their faces." So the soldiers killed them, and Demetrius assumed the royal throne.

Then all the lawless men and renegades of Israel came to him. They were led by Alcimus, who desired to be high priest. They made this accusation to the king against the people: "Judas and his brothers have destroyed all your friends and have driven us out of our land. So now, send a man whom you trust to go and see all the destruction Judas has wrought on us and on the king's territory, and let him punish them and all their supporters."

So the king chose Bacchides, one of the King's Friends, who ruled the province of West-of-Euphrates, a great man in the kingdom, and faithful to the king. He sent him and the renegade Alcimus, to whom he granted the high priesthood, with orders to take revenge on the Israelites. They set out and, on arriving in the land of Judah with a great army, sent messengers who spoke deceitfully to Judas and his brothers in peaceful terms. But these paid no attention to their words, seeing that they had come with a great army. A group of scribes, however, gathered about Alcimus and Bacchides to ask for a just agreement. The Hasideans were the first among the Israelites to seek peace with them, for they said, "A priest of the line of Aaron has come with the army, and he will not do us any wrong." He spoke with them peacefully and swore to them, "We will not seek to injure you or your friends." So they trusted him. But he arrested sixty of them and killed them in one day, according to the words that he wrote:



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“The flesh of your faithful, and their blood they have spilled all around about Jerusalem, and no one was left to bury them.”

Then fear and dread of them came upon all the people, who said: “There is no truth or justice among them; they violated the agreement and the oath that they swore.”

Bacchides withdrew from Jerusalem and camped in Beth-zaiton. He had many of the men who deserted to him arrested and some of the people. He killed them and threw them into a great cistern. He handed the province over to Alcimus, leaving troops to help him, while he himself returned to the king.

Alcimus struggled to maintain his high priesthood, and all those who were troubling the people gathered about him. They took possession of the land of Judah and caused great distress in Israel. When Judas saw all the evils that Alcimus and those with him were bringing upon the Israelites, even more than the Gentiles had, he went about all the borders of Judea and took revenge on the men who had deserted, preventing them from going out into the country. But when Alcimus saw that Judas and his followers were gaining strength and realized that he could not resist them, he returned to the king and accused them of grave crimes.

Defeat of Nicanor.

Then the king sent Nicanor, one of his honored officers, who was a bitter enemy of Israel, with orders to destroy the people. Nicanor came to Jerusalem with a large force and deceitfully sent to Judas and his brothers this peaceable message: “Let there be no fight between me and you. I will come with a few men to meet you face to face in peace.”

So he came to Judas, and they greeted one another peaceably. But Judas’ enemies were prepared to seize him. When he became aware that Nicanor had come to him with deceit in mind, Judas was afraid of him and would not meet him again. When Nicanor saw that his plan had been discovered, he went out to fight Judas near Capharsalama. About five hundred men of Nicanor’s army fell; the rest fled to the City of David.

After this, Nicanor went up to Mount Zion. Some of the priests from the sanctuary and some of the elders of the people came out to greet him peaceably and to show him the burnt offering that was being sacrificed for the king. But he mocked and ridiculed them, defiled them, and spoke arrogantly. In a rage he swore: “If Judas and his army are not delivered to me at once, when I return victorious I will burn this temple down.” He went away in great anger. The priests, however, went in and stood before the altar and the sanctuary. They wept and said: “You have chosen this house to bear your name, to be a house of prayer and supplication for your people. Take revenge on this man and his army, and let them fall by the sword. Remember their blasphemies, and do not let them continue.”

Nicanor left Jerusalem and camped at Beth-horon, where the Syrian army joined him. But Judas camped in Adasa with three thousand men. Here Judas uttered this prayer: “When they who were sent by the king blasphemed, your angel went out and killed a hundred and eighty-five thousand of them. In the same way, crush this army before us today, and let the rest know that Nicanor spoke wickedly against your sanctuary; judge him according to his wickedness.”

The armies met in battle on the thirteenth day of the month Adar. Nicanor’s army 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



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weapons and fled. The Jews pursued them a day's journey from Adasa to near Gazara, blowing the trumpets behind them as signals. From all the surrounding villages of Judea people came out and outflanked them. They turned them back, and all the enemies fell by the sword; not a single one escaped.

Then the Jews collected the spoils and the plunder; they cut off Nicanor's head and his right arm, which he had lifted up so arrogantly. These they brought and displayed in the sight of Jerusalem. The people rejoiced greatly, and observed that day as a day of much joy. They decreed that it should be observed every year on the thirteenth of Adar. And so for a few days the land of Judah was at rest.



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1 Maccabees, chapter 8

Eulogy of the Romans.

Judas had heard of the reputation of the Romans. They were valiant fighters and acted amiably to all who took their side. They established a friendly alliance with all who applied to them. He was also told of their battles and the brave deeds that they performed against the Gauls, conquering them and forcing them to pay tribute; and what they did in Spain to get possession of the silver and gold mines there. By planning and persistence they subjugated the whole region, although it was very remote from their own. They also subjugated the kings who had come against them from the far corners of the earth until they crushed them and inflicted on them severe defeat. The rest paid tribute to them every year. Philip and Perseus, king of the Macedonians, and the others who opposed them in battle they overwhelmed and subjugated. Antiochus the Great, king of Asia, who fought against them with a hundred and twenty elephants and with cavalry and chariots and a very great army, was defeated by them. They took him alive and obliged him and the kings who succeeded him to pay a heavy tribute, to give hostages and to cede Lycia, Mysia, and Lydia from among their best provinces. The Romans took these from him and gave them to King Eumenes.

When the Greeks planned to come and destroy them, the Romans discovered it, and sent against the Greeks a single general who made war on them. Many were wounded and fell, and the Romans took their wives and children captive. They plundered them, took possession of their land, tore down their strongholds and reduced them to slavery even to this day.

All the other kingdoms and islands that had ever opposed them they destroyed and enslaved; with their friends, however, and those who relied on them, they maintained friendship. They subjugated kings both near and far, and all who heard of their fame were afraid of them. Those whom they wish to help and to make kings, they make kings; and those whom they wish, they depose; and they were greatly exalted.



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Yet with all this, none of them put on a diadem or wore purple as a display of grandeur. But they made for themselves a senate chamber, and every day three hundred and twenty men took counsel, deliberating on all that concerned the people and their well-being. They entrust their government to one man every year, to rule over their entire land, and they all obey that one, and there is no envy or jealousy among them.

Treaty with the Romans.

So Judas chose Eupolemus, son of John, son of Accos, and Jason, son of Eleazar, and sent them to Rome to establish friendship and alliance with them. He did this to lift the yoke from Israel, for it was obvious that the kingdom of the Greeks was subjecting them to slavery.

After making a very long journey to Rome, the envoys entered the senate chamber and spoke as follows: “Judas, called Maccabeus, and his brothers, with the Jewish people, have sent us to you to establish alliance and peace with you, and to be enrolled among your allies and friends.” The proposal pleased the Romans, and this is a copy of the reply they inscribed on bronze tablets and sent to Jerusalem, to remain there with the Jews as a record of peace and alliance: “May it be well with the Romans and the Jewish nation at sea and on land forever; may sword and enemy be far from them.

But if war is first made on Rome, or any of its allies in any of their dominions, the Jewish nation will fight along with them wholeheartedly, as the occasion shall demand; and to those who wage war they shall not give or provide grain, weapons, money, or ships, as seems best to Rome. They shall fulfill their obligations without receiving any recompense.

In the same way, if war is made first on the Jewish nation, the Romans will fight along with them willingly, as the occasion shall demand, and to those who attack them there shall not be given grain, weapons, money, or ships, as seems best to Rome. They shall fulfill their obligations without deception. On these terms the Romans have made an agreement with the Jewish people. But if both parties hereafter agree to add or take away anything, they shall do as they choose, and whatever they shall add or take away shall be valid.

“Moreover, concerning the wrongs that King Demetrius is doing to them, we have written to him thus: ‘Why have you made your yoke heavy upon our friends and allies the Jews? If they petition against you again, we will enforce justice and make war on you by sea and land.’”



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1 Maccabees, chapter 9

Invasion of Judah.

When Demetrius heard that Nicanor and his army had fallen in battle, he again sent Bacchides and Alcimus into the land of Judah, along with the right wing of his army. They took the road to Galilee, and camping opposite the ascent at Arbela, they captured it and killed many people. In the first month of the one hundred and fifty-second year, they encamped against Jerusalem. Then they set out for Berea with twenty thousand men and two thousand cavalry. Judas, with three thousand picked men, had camped at Elasa. When they saw the great number of the troops, they were very much afraid, and many slipped away from the camp, until only eight hundred of them remained.

When Judas saw that his army was melting away just as the battle was imminent, he was brokenhearted, because he had no time to gather them together. In spite of his discouragement he said to those who remained: "Let us go forward to meet our enemies; perhaps we can put up a good fight against them." They tried to dissuade him, saying: "We certainly cannot. Let us save our own lives now, and come back with our kindred, and then fight against them. Now we are too few." But Judas said: "Far be it from me to do such a thing as to flee from them! If our time has come, let us die bravely for our kindred and not leave a stain upon our honor!"

Death of Judas.

Then the army of Bacchides moved out of camp and took its position for combat. The cavalry were divided into two squadrons, and the slingers and the archers came on ahead of the army, and in the front line were all the best warriors. Bacchides was on the right wing. Flanked by the two squadrons, the phalanx attacked as they blew their trumpets. Those who were on Judas' side also blew their trumpets. The earth shook with the noise of the armies, and the battle raged from morning until evening. When Judas saw that Bacchides was on



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the right, with the main force of his army, all the most stouthearted rallied to him, and the right wing was crushed; Judas pursued them as far as the mountain slopes. But when those on the left wing saw that the right wing was crushed, they closed in behind Judas and those with him. The battle became intense, and many on both sides fell wounded. Then Judas fell, and the rest fled.

Jonathan and Simon took their brother Judas and buried him in the tomb of their ancestors at Modein. All Israel wept for him with great lamentation. They mourned for him many days, and they said, “How the mighty one has fallen, the savior of Israel!” The other acts of Judas, his battles, the brave deeds he performed, and his greatness have not been recorded; but they were very many.

IV. Leadership of Jonathan

Jonathan Succeeds Judas.

After the death of Judas, the lawless raised their heads in every part of Israel, and all kinds of evildoers appeared. In those days there was a very great famine, and the country deserted to them. Bacchides chose renegades and made them masters of the country. These sought out and hunted down the friends of Judas and brought them to Bacchides, who punished and derided them. There was great tribulation in Israel, the like of which had not been since the time prophets ceased to appear among them.

Then all the friends of Judas came together and said to Jonathan: “Ever since your brother Judas died, there has been no one like him to lead us against our enemies, both Bacchides and those of our nation who are hostile to us. Now therefore we have chosen you today to be our ruler and leader in his place, to fight our battle.” From that moment Jonathan accepted the leadership, and took the place of Judas his brother.

Bacchides Pursues Jonathan.

When Bacchides learned of it, he sought to kill him. But Jonathan and his brother Simon and all who were with him discovered this, and they fled to the wilderness of Tekoa and camped by the waters of the pool of Asphar.

Jonathan sent his brother as leader of the convoy to implore his friends, the Nabateans, to let them deposit with them their great quantity of baggage. But the tribe of Jambri from Medaba made a raid and seized and carried off John and everything he had. After this, word was brought to Jonathan and his brother Simon: “The tribe of Jambri are celebrating a great wedding, and with a large escort they are bringing the bride, the daughter of one of the great princes of Canaan, from Nadabath.”

Remembering the blood of John their brother, they went up and hid themselves under cover of the mountain. As they watched there appeared a noisy throng with much baggage; then the bridegroom and his friends and kinsmen had come out to meet them with tambourines and musicians with their instruments. Jonathan and his party rose up against them from their ambush and killed them. Many fell wounded; the rest fled toward the mountain; all their spoils were taken. Thus the wedding was turned into mourning, and the sound of their music into lamentation. Having taken their revenge for the blood of their brother, they returned to the marshes of the Jordan.

When Bacchides heard of it, he came on the sabbath to the banks of the Jordan with a large force. Then Jonathan said to his companions, “Let us rise up now and fight for our lives, for today is not like yesterday



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and the day before. The battle is before us, behind us are the waters of the Jordan, on either side of us, marsh and thickets; there is no way of escape.

Cry out now to Heaven so that you may be delivered from the hand of our enemies.” When they joined battle, Jonathan raised his hand to strike Bacchides, but Bacchides backed away from him. Jonathan and those with him jumped into the Jordan and swam across to the other side, but the enemy did not pursue them across the Jordan. About a thousand men on Bacchides’ side fell that day.

On returning to Jerusalem, Bacchides built strongholds in Judea: the Jericho fortress, as well as Emmaus, Beth-horon, Bethel, Timnath, Pharathon, and Tephon, with high walls and gates and bars. In each he put a garrison to harass Israel. He fortified the city of Beth-zur, Gazara and the citadel, and put troops in them and stores of provisions. He took as hostages the sons of the leading people of the country and put them in custody in the citadel at Jerusalem.

In the one hundred and fifty-third year, in the second month, Alcimus ordered the wall of the inner court of the sanctuary to be torn down, thus destroying the work of the prophets. But he only began to tear it down. Just at that time Alcimus was stricken, and his work was interrupted; his mouth was closed and he was paralyzed, so that he could no longer utter a word or give orders concerning his household. Alcimus died in great agony at that time. Seeing that Alcimus was dead, Bacchides returned to the king, and the land of Judah was at rest for two years.

Then all the lawless took counsel and said: “Jonathan and those with him are living in peace and security. Now then, let us have Bacchides return, and he will capture all of them in a single night.” So they went and took counsel with him. When Bacchides was setting out with a large force, he sent letters secretly to all his allies in Judea, telling them to seize Jonathan and his companions. They were not able to do this, however, because their plan became known. In fact, Jonathan’s men seized about fifty of the men of the country who were leaders in the conspiracy and put them to death.

Then Jonathan and those with him, along with Simon, withdrew to Bethbasi in the wilderness; he rebuilt its ruins and fortified it. When Bacchides learned of this, he gathered together his whole force and sent word to those who were in Judea. He came and camped before Bethbasi, and constructing siege engines, he fought against it for many days.

Leaving his brother Simon in the city, Jonathan, accompanied by a small group of men, went out into the countryside. He struck down Odomera and his kindred and the tribe of Phasiron in their encampment; these men had begun to attack and they were going up with their forces. Simon and those with him then sallied forth from the city and set fire to the siege engines. They fought against Bacchides, and he was crushed. They caused him great distress, because the enterprise he had planned was in vain. He was enraged with the lawless men who had advised him to invade the province. He killed many of them and resolved to return to his own country.

Jonathan learned of this and sent ambassadors to agree on peace with him and to obtain the release of the prisoners. He agreed to do as Jonathan asked. He swore an oath to him that he would never try to do him any harm for the rest of his life; and he released to him the prisoners he had previously taken from the land of Judah. Thereupon he returned to his own land and never came into their territory again.



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Then the sword ceased from Israel. Jonathan settled in Michmash; he began to judge the people and he eliminated the renegades from Israel.



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1 Maccabees, chapter 10

Jonathan Becomes High Priest.

In the one hundred and sixtieth year, Alexander Epiphanes, son of Antiochus, came up and took Ptolemais. They accepted him as king and he began to reign there. When King Demetrius heard of it, he mustered a very large army and marched out to engage him in battle. Demetrius sent a letter to Jonathan written in peaceful terms, to exalt him; for he said: "Let us be the first to make peace with him, before he makes peace with Alexander against us, since he will remember all the wrongs we have done to him, his brothers, and his nation." So Demetrius authorized him to gather an army and procure arms as his ally; and he ordered that the hostages in the citadel be released to him.

Accordingly, Jonathan went to Jerusalem and read the letter to all the people and to those who were in the citadel. They were struck with fear when they heard that the king had given him authority to gather an army. Those in the citadel released the hostages to Jonathan, and he gave them back to their parents. Thereafter Jonathan dwelt in Jerusalem, and began to build and restore the city. He ordered those doing the work to build the walls and to encircle Mount Zion with square stones for its fortification, and they did so. The foreigners in the strongholds that Bacchides had built took flight; all of them left their places and returned to their own lands. Only in Beth-zur did some remain of those who had abandoned the law and the commandments, for it was a place of refuge.

Jonathan Supports Alexander.

King Alexander heard of the promises that Demetrius had made to Jonathan; he was also told of the battles and brave deeds of Jonathan and his brothers and of the troubles that they had endured. He said, "Shall we ever find another man like him? Let us now make him our friend and ally."



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So he sent Jonathan a letter written in these terms: “King Alexander sends greetings to his brother Jonathan. We have heard of you, that you are a mighty warrior and worthy to be our friend. We have therefore appointed you today to be high priest of your nation; you are to be called the King’s Friend, and you are to look after our interests and preserve friendship with us.” He also sent him a purple robe and a crown of gold. Jonathan put on the sacred vestments in the seventh month of the one hundred and sixtieth year at the feast of Booths, and he gathered an army and procured many weapons.

A Letter from Demetrius to Jonathan.

When Demetrius heard of these things, he was distressed and said: “Why have we allowed Alexander to get ahead of us by gaining the friendship of the Jews and thus strengthening himself? I too will write them encouraging words and offer honors and gifts, so that they may support me.” So he sent them this message: “King Demetrius sends greetings to the Jewish nation. We have heard how you have kept the treaty with us and continued in our friendship and not gone over to our enemies, and we are glad. Continue, therefore, to keep faith with us, and we will reward you with favors in return for what you do in our behalf.

We will grant you many exemptions and will bestow gifts on you. “I now free you and exempt all the Jews from the tribute, the salt tax, and the crown levies. Instead of collecting the third of the grain and the half of the fruit of the trees that should be my share, I renounce the right from this day forward. Neither now nor in the future will I collect them from the land of Judah or from the three districts annexed from Samaria. Let Jerusalem and her territory, her tithes and her tolls, be sacred and free from tax. I also yield my authority over the citadel in Jerusalem, and I transfer it to the high priest, that he may put in it such men as he shall choose to guard it.

Every Jew who has been carried into captivity from the land of Judah into any part of my kingdom I set at liberty without ransom; and let all their taxes, even those on their cattle, be canceled. Let all feast days, sabbaths, new moon festivals, appointed days, and the three days that precede each feast day, and the three days that follow, be days of immunity and exemption for all Jews in my kingdom. No one will have authority to exact payment from them or to harass any of them in any matter. “Let thirty thousand Jews be enrolled in the king’s army and allowances be given them, as is due to all the king’s soldiers.

Let some of them be stationed in the king’s principal strongholds, and of these let some be given positions of trust in the affairs of the kingdom. Let their superiors and their rulers be chosen from among them, and let them follow their own laws, as the king has commanded in the land of Judah. “Let the three districts that have been added to Judea from the province of Samaria be annexed to Judea so that they may be under one rule and obey no other authority than the high priest. Ptolemais and its confines I give as a present to the sanctuary in Jerusalem for the necessary expenses of the sanctuary. I make a yearly personal grant of fifteen thousand silver shekels out of the royal revenues, taken from appropriate places. All the additional funds that the officials did not hand over as they had done in the first years shall henceforth be handed over for the services of the temple. Moreover, the dues of five thousand silver shekels that used to be taken from the revenue of the sanctuary every year shall be canceled, since these funds belong to the priests who perform the services. All who take refuge in the temple of Jerusalem or in any of its precincts, because of money they owe the king, or because of any other debt, shall be released, together with all the goods they possess in my kingdom. The cost of rebuilding and restoring the structures of the sanctuary shall be covered out of the royal revenue. Likewise, the cost of building the walls of Jerusalem and fortifying it all around, and of building walls in Judea, shall be donated from the royal revenue.”



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When Jonathan and the people heard these words, they neither believed nor accepted them, for they remembered the great evil that Demetrius had done in Israel, and the great tribulation he had brought upon them. They therefore decided in favor of Alexander, for he had been the first to address them peaceably, and they remained his allies for the rest of his life.

Then King Alexander gathered together a large army and encamped opposite Demetrius. The two kings joined battle, and when the army of Demetrius fled, Alexander pursued him, and overpowered his soldiers. He pressed the battle hard until sunset, and Demetrius fell that day.

Treaty of Ptolemy and Alexander.

Alexander sent ambassadors to Ptolemy, king of Egypt, with this message: “Now that I have returned to my realm, taken my seat on the throne of my ancestors, and established my rule by crushing Demetrius and gaining control of my country—for I engaged him in battle, he and his army were crushed by us, and we assumed his royal throne—let us now establish friendship with each other. Give me now your daughter for my wife; and as your son-in-law, I will give to you and to her gifts worthy of you.”

King Ptolemy answered in these words: “Happy the day on which you returned to the land of your ancestors and took your seat on their royal throne! I will do for you what you have written; but meet me in Ptolemais, so that we may see each other, and I will become your father-in-law as you have proposed.”

So Ptolemy with his daughter Cleopatra set out from Egypt and came to Ptolemais in the one hundred and sixty-second year. There King Alexander met him, and Ptolemy gave him his daughter Cleopatra in marriage. Their wedding was celebrated at Ptolemais with great splendor according to the custom of kings.

King Alexander also wrote to Jonathan to come and meet him. So he went with pomp to Ptolemais, where he met the two kings and gave them and their friends silver and gold and many gifts and thus won their favor. Some villainous men of Israel, transgressors of the law, united against him to accuse him, but the king paid no heed to them.

The king ordered Jonathan to be divested of his garments and to be clothed in royal purple; and so it was done. The king also had him seated at his side. He said to his magistrates: “Go with him to the center of the city and make a proclamation that no one is to bring charges against him on any grounds or be troublesome to him for any reason.”

When his accusers saw the honor paid to him according to the king’s proclamation, and him clothed in purple, they all fled. And so the king honored him, enrolling him among his Chief Friends, and he made him governor and chief of the province. So Jonathan returned in peace and happiness to Jerusalem.

Jonathan Defeats Apollonius.

In the one hundred and sixty-fifth year, Demetrius, son of Demetrius, came from Crete to the land of his ancestors. When King Alexander heard of it he was greatly troubled, and returned to Antioch. Demetrius set Apollonius over Coelesyria. Having gathered a large army, Apollonius encamped at Jamnia. From there he sent this message to Jonathan the high priest:



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“You are the only one who resists us. I am laughed at and put to shame on your account. Why are you exercising authority against us in the mountains? If you have confidence in your forces, come down now to us in the plain, and let us test each other’s strength there; for the forces of the cities are on my side. Inquire and find out who I am and who the others are who are helping me. People are saying that you cannot make a stand against us because your ancestors were twice put to flight in their own land. Now you too will be unable to withstand our cavalry and such a force as this in the plain, where there is not a stone or a pebble or a place to flee.”

When Jonathan heard the message of Apollonius, he was provoked. Choosing ten thousand men, he set out from Jerusalem, and Simon his brother joined him to help him. He encamped near Joppa, but the people of the city shut him out because Apollonius had a garrison in Joppa. When they attacked it, the people of the city became afraid and opened the gates, and so Jonathan took possession of Joppa.

When Apollonius heard of it, he drew up three thousand cavalry and a large force of infantry. He marched toward Azotus as though he were going on through, but at the same time he was advancing into the plain, because he had such a large number of cavalry to rely on. Jonathan pursued him toward Azotus, and the armies engaged in battle. Apollonius, however, had left a thousand cavalry in hiding behind them. Jonathan discovered that there was an ambush behind him; his army was surrounded. From morning until evening they showered his troops with arrows. But his troops held their ground, as Jonathan had commanded, while the enemy’s horses became tired out. Then Simon brought forward his force, and engaged the phalanx in battle. Since the cavalry were exhausted, the phalanx was crushed by him and fled, while the cavalry too were scattered over the plain. They fled to Azotus and entered Beth-dagon, the temple of their idol, to save themselves. But Jonathan burned and plundered Azotus with its neighboring towns, and destroyed by fire both the temple of Dagon and those who had taken refuge in it. Those who fell by the sword, together with those who were burned alive, came to about eight thousand.

Then Jonathan left there and encamped at Askalon, and the people of that city came out to meet him with great pomp. Jonathan and those with him then returned to Jerusalem, with much spoil. When King Alexander heard of these events, he accorded new honors to Jonathan. He sent him a gold buckle, such as is usually given to King’s Kinsmen; he also gave him Ekron and all its territory as a possession.



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1 Maccabees, chapter 11

Alliance of Ptolemy and Demetrius II.

Then the king of Egypt gathered forces as numerous as the sands of the seashore, and many ships; and he sought by deceit to take Alexander's kingdom and add it to his own. He set out for Syria with peaceful words, and the people in the cities opened their gates to welcome him, as King Alexander had ordered them to do, since Ptolemy was his father-in-law. But when Ptolemy entered the cities, he stationed a garrison of troops in each one. As they neared Azotus, they showed him the temple of Dagon destroyed by fire, Azotus and its suburbs demolished, corpses lying about, and the charred bodies of those burned in the war, for they had heaped them up along his route.

They told the king what Jonathan had done in order to denigrate him; but the king said nothing. Jonathan met the king with pomp at Joppa, and they greeted each other and spent the night there. Jonathan accompanied the king as far as the river called Eleutherus and then returned to Jerusalem. And so King Ptolemy took possession of the cities along the seacoast as far as Seleucia by the sea, plotting evil schemes against Alexander all the while. He sent ambassadors to King Demetrius, saying: "Come, let us make a covenant with each other; I will give you my daughter whom Alexander has married, and you shall reign over your father's kingdom. I regret that I gave him my daughter, for he has sought to kill me." He was criticizing Alexander, however, because he coveted his kingdom. After taking his daughter away, Ptolemy gave her to Demetrius and broke with Alexander; the enmity between them was now evident. Then Ptolemy entered Antioch and assumed the crown of Asia; thus he set upon his head two crowns, that of Egypt and that of Asia.

Deaths of Alexander and Ptolemy.



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Now King Alexander was in Cilicia at that time, because the people of that region had revolted. When Alexander heard the news, he came against Ptolemy in battle. Ptolemy marched out and met him with a strong force and routed him. When Alexander fled to Arabia to seek protection, King Ptolemy was triumphant. Zabdiel the Arabian cut off Alexander's head and sent it to Ptolemy. But three days later King Ptolemy himself died, and his troops in the strongholds were killed by the inhabitants of the strongholds. Thus Demetrius became king in the one hundred and sixty-seventh year.

Alliance of Jonathan and Demetrius II.

In those days Jonathan gathered together the people of Judea to attack the citadel in Jerusalem, and they set up many siege engines against it.

But some transgressors of the law, enemies of their own nation, went to the king and informed him that Jonathan was besieging the citadel. When Demetrius heard this, he was enraged; and as soon as he heard it, he set out and came to Ptolemais. He wrote to Jonathan to discontinue the siege and to meet him for a conference at Ptolemais as soon as possible.

On hearing this, Jonathan ordered the siege to continue. He selected some elders and priests of Israel and put himself at risk. Taking with him silver, gold and apparel, and many other presents, he went to the king at Ptolemais, and found favor with him. Although certain renegades of his own nation kept on bringing charges against him, the king treated him just as his predecessors had done and exalted him in the presence of all his Friends. He confirmed him in the high priesthood and in the other honors he had previously held, and had him enrolled among his Chief Friends.

Jonathan asked the king to exempt Judea and the three districts of Samaria from tribute, promising him in return three hundred talents. The king agreed and wrote a letter to Jonathan about all these matters as follows: "King Demetrius sends greetings to his brother Jonathan and to the Jewish nation. We are sending you, for your information, a copy of the letter that we wrote to Lasthenes our Kinsman concerning you.

'King Demetrius sends greetings to his father Lasthenes. Upon the Jewish nation, who are our friends and observe their obligations to us, we have decided to bestow benefits because of the good will they show us. Therefore, we confirm their possession, not only of the territory of Judea, but also of the three districts of Aphairema, Lydda, and Ramathaim. These districts, together with all their dependencies, are hereby transferred from Samaria to Judea for those who offer sacrifices in Jerusalem in lieu of the royal taxes the king used to receive yearly from the produce of earth and trees. From payment of the other things that would henceforth be due to us, namely, the tithes and taxes, as well as the salt tax, and the crown tax—from all these we grant them release. Henceforth and forever not one of these provisions shall ever be revoked. See to it, therefore, that a copy of these instructions be made and given to Jonathan. Let it be displayed on the holy mountain in a conspicuous place.'"

The Intrigue of Trypho.

When King Demetrius saw that the land was peaceful under his rule and that he had no opposition, he dismissed his entire army, each to his own home, except the foreign troops which he had hired from the islands of the nations. So all the soldiers who had served under his predecessors became hostile to him. When a certain Trypho, who had previously supported Alexander, saw that all the troops were grumbling against Demetrius, he went to Imalkue the Arabian, who was raising Alexander's young son Antiochus.



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Trypho kept urging Imalkue to hand over the boy to him, so that he might succeed his father as king. He told him of all that Demetrius had done and of the hostility his soldiers had for him; and he remained there for many days.

Jonathan Aids Demetrius II.

Meanwhile Jonathan sent the request to King Demetrius to withdraw the troops in the citadel from Jerusalem and from the other strongholds, for they were constantly waging war on Israel. Demetrius, in turn, sent this word to Jonathan: “I will do not only this for you and your nation, but I will greatly honor you and your nation when I find the opportunity. Now, therefore, you will do well to send men to fight for me, because all my troops have revolted.”

So Jonathan sent three thousand good fighting men to him at Antioch. When they came to the king, he was delighted over their arrival. The populace, one hundred and twenty thousand strong, massed in the center of the city in an attempt to kill the king. So the king took refuge in the palace, while the populace gained control of the main streets of the city and prepared for battle. Then the king called the Jewish force to his aid. They all rallied around him and spread out through the city. On that day they killed about a hundred thousand in the city.

At the same time, they set the city on fire and took much spoil. Thus they saved the king. When the populace saw that the Jewish force controlled the city, they lost courage and cried out to the king in supplication, “Extend the hand of friendship to us, and make the Jews stop attacking us and the city.” So they threw down their weapons and made peace. The Jews thus gained honor in the eyes of the king and all his subjects, and they became renowned throughout his kingdom. Finally, they returned to Jerusalem with much plunder.

But when King Demetrius was sure of his royal throne, and the land was peaceful under his rule, he broke all his promises and became estranged from Jonathan. Instead of repaying Jonathan for all the favors he had received from him, he caused him much distress.

Alliance of Jonathan and Antiochus VI.

After this, Trypho returned and brought with him the young boy Antiochus, who became king and put on the diadem. All the soldiers whom Demetrius had discharged rallied around Antiochus and fought against Demetrius, who was routed and fled.

Trypho captured the elephants and occupied Antioch. Then young Antiochus wrote to Jonathan: “I confirm you in the high priesthood and appoint you ruler over the four districts, and to be one of the King’s Friends.” He also sent him gold dishes and a table service, gave him the right to drink from gold cups, to dress in royal purple, and to wear a gold buckle. Likewise, he made Jonathan’s brother Simon governor of the region from the Ladder of Tyre to the borders of Egypt.

Campaigns of Jonathan and Simon.

Jonathan set out and traveled through the province of West-of-Euphrates and its cities, and all the forces of Syria espoused his cause as allies. When he arrived at Askalon, the citizens welcomed him with pomp. But when he set out for Gaza, the people of Gaza shut him out. So he besieged it, and burned and plundered its suburbs. Then the people of Gaza appealed to Jonathan, and he granted them terms of peace. He took the



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sons of their leaders as hostages and sent them to Jerusalem. He then traveled on through the province as far as Damascus.

War with Demetrius.

Jonathan heard that the generals of Demetrius had come with a strong force to Kadesh in Galilee, intending to remove him from office.

So he went to meet them, leaving his brother Simon in the province. Simon encamped against Beth-zur, attacked it for many days, and shut in the inhabitants. They appealed to him, and he granted them terms of peace. He expelled them from the city, took possession of it, and put a garrison there.

Meanwhile, Jonathan and his army pitched their camp near the waters of Gennesaret, and at daybreak they went to the plain of Hazor. There the army of the foreigners met him on the plain. Having first detached an ambush in the mountains, this army mounted a frontal attack. Then those in ambush rose out of their places and joined in the battle. All of Jonathan's men fled; no one stayed except the army commanders Mattathias, son of Absalom, and Judas, son of Chalphi. Jonathan tore his clothes, threw dust on his head, and prayed. Then he went back to the battle and routed them, and they fled. Those of his men who were running away saw it and returned to him; and with him they pursued the enemy as far as their camp in Kadesh, and there they encamped. About three thousand of the foreign troops fell on that day. Then Jonathan returned to Jerusalem.



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1 Maccabees, chapter 12

Alliances with Rome and Sparta.

When Jonathan saw that the time was right, he chose men and sent them to Rome to confirm and renew the friendship with the Romans. He also sent letters to the Spartans and other places to the same effect. After reaching Rome, the men entered the senate chamber and said, "The high priest Jonathan and the Jewish people have sent us to renew the friendship and alliance of earlier times with them." The Romans gave them letters addressed to authorities in various places, with the request to provide them with safe conduct to the land of Judah.

This is a copy of the letter that Jonathan wrote to the Spartans: "Jonathan the high priest, the senate of the nation, the priests, and the rest of the Jewish people send greetings to their brothers the Spartans. Long ago a letter was sent to the high priest Onias from Arius, who then reigned over you, stating that you are our brothers, as the attached copy shows.

Onias welcomed the envoy with honor and received the letter, which spoke clearly of alliance and friendship. Though we have no need of these things, since we have for our encouragement the holy books that are in our possession, we have ventured to send word to you for the renewal of brotherhood and friendship, lest we become strangers to you; a long time has passed since you sent your message to us. We, on our part, have unceasingly remembered you in the sacrifices and prayers that we offer on our feasts and other appropriate days, as it is right and proper to remember brothers. We likewise rejoice in your renown. But many tribulations and many wars have beset us, and the kings around us have attacked us. We did not wish to be troublesome to you and to the rest of our allies and friends in these wars. For we have the help of Heaven for our support, and we have been saved from our enemies, and our enemies have been humbled.



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So we have chosen Numenius, son of Antiochus, and Antipater, son of Jason, and we have sent them to the Romans to renew with them the friendship and alliance of earlier times. We have also ordered them to come to you and greet you, and to deliver to you our letter concerning the renewal of our brotherhood. Therefore, kindly send us an answer on this matter.”

This is a copy of the letter that they sent to Onias: “Arius, king of the Spartans, sends greetings to Onias the high priest. A document has been found stating that the Spartans and the Jews are brothers and that they are of the family of Abraham. Now that we have learned this, kindly write to us about your welfare. We, for our part, declare to you that your animals and your possessions are ours, and ours are yours. We have, therefore, given orders that you should be told of this.”

More Campaigns of Jonathan and Simon.

Then Jonathan heard that the officers of Demetrius had returned to attack him with a stronger army than before. So he set out from Jerusalem and met them in the territory of Hamath, giving them no opportunity to enter his province. The spies he had sent into their camp came back and reported to him that the enemy were preparing to attack them that night. Therefore, when the sun set, Jonathan ordered his men to keep watch, with their weapons at the ready for battle, throughout the night; and he set outposts around the camp. When the enemy heard that Jonathan and his men were ready for battle, their hearts sank with fear and dread. They lighted fires in their camp and then withdrew. But because Jonathan and his men were watching the campfires burning, they did not know until the morning what had happened. Then Jonathan pursued them, but he could not overtake them, for they had crossed the river Eleutherus. So Jonathan turned aside against the Arabians who are called Zabadeans, and he struck them down and plundered them. Then he broke camp, marched on toward Damascus and traveled through the whole region.

Simon also set out and traveled as far as Askalon and its neighboring strongholds. He then turned to Joppa and took it by surprise, for he heard that its people intended to hand over the stronghold to the supporters of Demetrius. He left a garrison there to guard it.

When Jonathan returned, he assembled the elders of the people, and with them he made plans for building strongholds in Judea, for making the walls of Jerusalem still higher, and for erecting a high barrier between the citadel and the city, to separate it from the city and isolate it, so that its garrison could neither buy nor sell. The people therefore gathered together to build up the city, for part of the wall of the eastern valley had collapsed. And Jonathan repaired the quarter called Chaphenatha. Simon likewise built up Adida in the Shephelah, and fortified it by installing gates and bars.

Capture of Jonathan.

Then Trypho sought to become king of Asia, assume the diadem, and do violence to King Antiochus. But he was afraid that Jonathan would not permit him, but would fight against him. Looking for a way to seize and kill him, he set out and came to Beth-shan. Jonathan marched out to meet him with forty thousand picked fighting men and came to Beth-shan. But when Trypho saw that Jonathan had arrived with a large army he was afraid to do him violence. Instead, he received him with honor, introduced him to all his friends, and gave him presents. He also ordered his friends and soldiers to obey him as they would himself. Then he said to Jonathan: “Why have you put all these people to so much trouble when we are not at war? Now pick out a few men to stay with you, send the rest to their homes, and then come with me to Ptolemais. I will hand it



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over to you together with other strongholds and the remaining troops, as well as all the officials; then I will turn back and go home. That is why I came here.”

Jonathan trusted him and did as he said. He dismissed his troops, and they returned to the land of Judah. But he kept with him three thousand men, of whom he left two thousand in Galilee while one thousand accompanied him. Then as soon as Jonathan entered Ptolemais, the people of Ptolemais closed the gates and seized him; all who had entered with him, they killed with the sword.

Then Trypho sent soldiers and cavalry to Galilee and the Great Plain to destroy all Jonathan’s men. These, upon learning that Jonathan had been captured and killed along with his companions, encouraged one another and went out in close formation, ready to fight. As their pursuers saw that they were ready to fight for their lives, they turned back. Thus all Jonathan’s men came safely into the land of Judah. They mourned Jonathan and those who were with him. They were in great fear, and all Israel fell into deep mourning.

All the nations round about sought to crush them. They said, “Now that they have no leader or helper, let us make war on them and wipe out their memory from the earth.”



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**V. Leadership of Simon
1 Maccabees, chapter 13**

Simon as Leader.

When Simon heard that Trypho was gathering a large army to invade and ravage the land of Judah, and saw that the people were trembling with terror, he went up to Jerusalem. There he assembled the people and exhorted them in these words: "You know what I, my brothers, and my father's house have done for the laws and the sanctuary; what battles and hardships we have seen. For the sake of this, for the sake of Israel, all my brothers have perished, and I alone am left. Far be it from me, then, to save my own life in any time of distress, for I am not better than my brothers. But I will avenge my nation and the sanctuary, as well as your wives and children, for out of hatred all the Gentiles have united to crush us."

As the people heard these words, their spirit was rekindled. They shouted in reply: "You are our leader in place of your brothers Judas and Jonathan. Fight our battles, and we will do everything that you tell us." So Simon mustered all the men able to fight, and hastening to complete the walls of Jerusalem, fortified it on every side. He sent Jonathan, son of Absalom, to Joppa with a strong force; Jonathan drove out the occupants and remained there.

Trypho's Deceit.

Then Trypho moved from Ptolemais with a large army to invade the land of Judah, bringing Jonathan with him as a prisoner. Simon encamped at Adida, facing the plain. When Trypho learned that Simon had succeeded his brother Jonathan, and that he intended to fight him, he sent ambassadors to him with this message: "It was on account of the money your brother Jonathan owed the royal treasury in connection with the offices that he held, that we have detained him. Now send a hundred talents of silver, and two of his sons as hostages to guarantee that when he is set free he will not revolt against us, and we will release him."



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Simon knew that they were speaking deceitfully to him. Nevertheless, for fear of provoking much hostility among the people, he sent for the money and the boys, lest the people say “Jonathan perished because I would not send Trypho the money and the boys.” So he sent the boys and the hundred talents; but Trypho broke his promise and would not release Jonathan. Next Trypho moved to invade and ravage the country. His troops went around by the road that leads to Adora, but Simon and his army moved along opposite him everywhere he went. The people in the citadel kept sending emissaries to Trypho, pressing him to come to them by way of the wilderness, and to send them provisions. Although Trypho got all his cavalry ready to go, there was a very heavy snowfall that night, and he could not go on account of the snow. So he left for Gilead. When he was approaching Baskama, he had Jonathan killed and buried him there. Then Trypho returned to his own land.

Jonathan’s Tomb.

Simon sent for the remains of his brother Jonathan, and buried him in Modein, the city of his ancestors. All Israel bewailed him with solemn lamentation, mourning over him for many days. Then Simon erected over the tomb of his father and his brothers a monument of stones, polished front and back, and raised high enough to be seen at a distance.

He set up seven pyramids facing one another for his father and his mother and his four brothers. For the pyramids he devised a setting of massive columns, which he adorned with suits of armor as a perpetual memorial, and next to the armor carved ships, which could be seen by all who sailed the sea. This tomb which he built at Modein is there to the present day.

Alliance of Simon and Demetrius II.

Trypho dealt treacherously with the young King Antiochus. He killed him and became king in his place, putting on the crown of Asia. Thus he brought much evil on the land. Simon, for his part, built up the strongholds of Judea, fortifying them all around with high towers, thick walls, and gates with bars, and he stored up provisions in the strongholds. Simon also chose men and sent them to King Demetrius to obtain for the land an exemption from taxation, since Trypho did nothing but plunder.

King Demetrius replied favorably and sent him the following letter: “King Demetrius sends greetings to Simon, high priest and friend of kings, and to the elders and the Jewish people. We have received the gold crown and the palm branch that you sent. We are ready to make a lasting peace with you and to write to our officials to grant you exemption. Whatever decrees we have made in your regard remain in force, and the strongholds that you have built you may keep.

We pardon any oversights and offenses committed up to now, as well as the crown tax that you owe. Any other tax that used to be collected in Jerusalem shall no longer be collected there. Any of you qualified for enrollment in our service may be enrolled. Let there be peace between us.” Thus in the one hundred and seventieth year, the yoke of the Gentiles was removed from Israel, and the people began to write in their records and contracts, “In the first year of Simon, great high priest, governor, and leader of the Jews.”

Simon Captures Gazara.

In those days Simon besieged Gazara and surrounded it with troops. He made a siege machine, brought it up against the city, and attacked and captured one of the towers. Those in the siege machine leaped down into



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the city and a great tumult arose there. Those in the city, together with their wives and children, went up on the wall, with their garments rent, and cried out in loud voices, begging Simon to grant them terms of peace. They said, “Treat us not according to our evil deeds but according to your mercy.” So Simon came to terms with them and did not attack them. He expelled them from the city, however, and he purified the houses in which there were idols. Then he entered the city with hymns and songs of praise.

After removing from it everything that was impure, he settled there people who observed the law. He improved its fortifications and built himself a residence.

Simon Captures the Citadel.

The people in the citadel in Jerusalem were prevented from going out into the country and back to buy or sell; they suffered greatly from hunger, and many of them died of starvation. They finally cried out to Simon, and he gave them terms of peace. He expelled them from the citadel and cleansed it of impurities.

On the twenty-third day of the second month, in the one hundred and seventy-first year, the Jews entered the citadel with shouts of praise, the waving of palm branches, the playing of harps and cymbals and lyres, and the singing of hymns and canticles, because a great enemy of Israel had been crushed. Simon decreed that this day should be celebrated every year with rejoicing. He also strengthened the fortifications of the temple mount alongside the citadel, and he and his people dwelt there. Seeing that his son John was now a grown man, Simon made him commander of all his soldiers, and he dwelt in Gazara.



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1 Maccabees, chapter 14

Capture of Demetrius II.

In the one hundred and seventy-second year, King Demetrius assembled his army and marched into Media to obtain help so that he could fight Trypho. When Arsaces, king of Persia and Media, heard that Demetrius had entered his territory, he sent one of his generals to take him alive. The general went forth and attacked the army of Demetrius; he captured him and brought him to Arsaces, who put him under guard.

Praise of Simon

The land was at rest all the days of Simon, who sought the good of his nation. His rule delighted his people and his glory all his days. As his crowning glory he took Joppa for a port and made it a gateway to the isles of the sea. He enlarged the borders of his nation and gained control of the country. He took many prisoners of war and made himself master of Gazara, Beth-zur, and the citadel. He cleansed the citadel of its impurities; there was no one to withstand him. The people cultivated their land in peace; the land yielded its produce, the trees of the field their fruit. Old men sat in the squares, all talking about the good times, while the young men put on the glorious raiment of war. He supplied the cities with food and equipped them with means of defense, till his glorious name reached the ends of the earth.

He brought peace to the land, and Israel was filled with great joy. Every one sat under his vine and fig tree, with no one to disturb them. No attacker was left in the land; the kings in those days were crushed. He strengthened all the lowly among his people and was zealous for the law; he destroyed the lawless and the wicked. The sanctuary he made splendid and multiplied its furnishings.

Alliance with Rome and Sparta.



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When people in Rome and even in Sparta heard that Jonathan had died, they were deeply grieved. But when they heard that his brother Simon had become high priest in his place and was master of the territory and its cities, they sent him inscribed tablets of bronze to renew with him the friendship and alliance that they had established with his brothers Judas and Jonathan. These were read before the assembly in Jerusalem.

This is a copy of the letter that the Spartans sent: “The rulers and the city of the Spartans send greetings to Simon the high priest, the elders, the priests, and the rest of the Jewish people, our brothers. The ambassadors sent to our people have informed us of your glory and renown, and we rejoiced at their coming. In accordance with what they said we have recorded the following in the public decrees: Numenius, son of Antiochus, and Antipater, son of Jason, ambassadors of the Jews, have come to us to renew their friendship with us. The people have resolved to receive these men with honor, and to deposit a copy of their words in the public archives, so that the people of Sparta may have a record of them. A copy of this decree has been made for Simon the high priest.”

After this, Simon sent Numenius to Rome with a large gold shield weighing a thousand minas, to confirm the alliance with the Romans.

Official Honors for Simon.

When the people heard of these things, they said, “How shall we thank Simon and his sons? He and his brothers and his father’s house have stood firm and repulsed Israel’s enemies, and so have established its freedom.” So they made an inscription on bronze tablets, which they affixed to pillars on Mount Zion.

The following is a copy of the inscription: “On the eighteenth day of Elul, in the one hundred and seventy-second year, that is, the third year under Simon the great high priest in Asaramel, in a great assembly of priests, people, rulers of the nation, and elders of the region, the following proclamation was made to us:

“Since there have often been wars in our country, Simon, son of the priest Mattathias, descendant of Joarib, and his brothers have put themselves in danger and resisted the enemies of their nation, so that their sanctuary and law might be maintained, and they have thus brought great glory to their nation. Jonathan rallied the nation, became their high priest, and was gathered to his people. When their enemies sought to invade and ravage their country and to violate their sanctuary, Simon rose up and fought for his nation, spending large sums of his own money to equip his nation’s forces and give them their pay. He fortified the cities of Judea, especially the border city of Beth-zur, formerly the site of the enemy’s weaponry, and he stationed there a garrison of Jewish soldiers. He also fortified Joppa by the sea and Gazara on the border of Azotus, a place previously occupied by the enemy; these cities he settled with Jews and furnished them with all that was necessary for their restoration. When the people saw Simon’s fidelity and the glory he planned to bring to his nation, they made him their leader and high priest because of all he had accomplished and the justice and fidelity he had shown his nation. In every way he sought to exalt his people.

“In his time and under his guidance they succeeded in driving the Gentiles out of their country and those in the City of David in Jerusalem, who had built for themselves a citadel from which they used to sally forth to defile the environs of the sanctuary and inflict grave injury on its purity. In this citadel he stationed Jewish soldiers, and he strengthened its fortifications for the security of the land and the city, while he also built up the wall of Jerusalem to a greater height.



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Consequently, King Demetrius confirmed him in the high priesthood, made him one of his Friends, and conferred great honor on him. This was because he had heard that the Romans had addressed the Jews as friends, allies, and brothers, that they had received Simon's envoys with honor, and that the Jewish people and their priests had decided the following: Simon shall be their leader and high priest forever until a trustworthy prophet arises. He shall act as governor over them, and shall have charge of the sanctuary, to make regulations concerning its functions and concerning the country, its weapons and strongholds. He shall be obeyed by all. All contracts in the country shall be written in his name, and he shall be clothed in purple and gold. It shall not be lawful for any of the people or priests to nullify any of these decisions, or to contradict the orders given by him, or to convene an assembly in the country without his consent, to be clothed in purple or wear a gold buckle. Whoever acts otherwise or violates any of these prescriptions shall be liable to punishment.

“Thus all the people approved of granting Simon the right to act in accord with these decisions, and Simon accepted and agreed to be high priest, governor, and ethnarch of the Jewish people and priests, and to have authority over all.” It was decreed that this inscription should be engraved on bronze tablets, to be set up in a conspicuous place in the precincts of the sanctuary, and that copies of it should be deposited in the treasury, where they would be available to Simon and his sons.



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1 Maccabees, chapter 15

Letter of Antiochus VII.

Antiochus, son of King Demetrius, sent a letter from the islands of the sea to Simon, the priest and ethnarch of the Jews, and to all the nation, which read as follows:

"King Antiochus sends greetings to Simon, the high priest and ethnarch, and to the Jewish nation. Whereas certain villains have gained control of the kingdom of our ancestors, I intend to reclaim it, that I may restore it to its former state. I have recruited a large number of mercenary troops and equipped warships. I intend to make a landing in the country so that I may take revenge on those who have ruined our country and laid waste many cities in my kingdom. "Now, therefore, I confirm to you all the tax exemptions that the kings before me granted you and whatever other privileges they conceded to you. I authorize you to coin your own money, as legal tender in your country. Jerusalem and its sanctuary shall be free. All the weapons you have prepared and all the strongholds you have built and now occupy shall remain in your possession. All debts, present or future, due to the royal treasury shall be canceled for you, now and for all time. When we establish our kingdom, we will greatly honor you and your nation and the temple, so that your glory will be manifest in all the earth."

In the one hundred and seventy-fourth year Antiochus invaded the land of his ancestors, and all the troops rallied to him, so that few were left with Trypho. Pursued by Antiochus, Trypho fled to Dor, by the sea, realizing what troubles had come upon him now that his soldiers had deserted him. Antiochus encamped before Dor with a hundred and twenty thousand infantry and eight thousand cavalry. While he surrounded the city, his ships closed from the sea, so that he pressed it hard by land and sea and let no one go in or out.

Roman Alliance Renewed.



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Meanwhile, Numenius and his companions came from Rome with letters containing this message to various kings and countries:

“Lucius, Consul of the Romans, sends greetings to King Ptolemy. Ambassadors of the Jews, our friends and allies, have come to us to renew their earlier friendship and alliance. They had been sent by Simon the high priest and the Jewish people, and they brought with them a gold shield of a thousand minas. Therefore, we have decided to write to various kings and countries, that they are not to venture to harm them, or wage war against them or their cities or their country, and are not to assist those who fight against them. We have also decided to accept the shield from them. If, then, any troublemakers from their country take refuge with you, hand them over to Simon the high priest, so that he may punish them according to their law.”

The consul sent identical letters to Kings Demetrius, Attalus, Ariarthes and Arsaces; to all the countries—Sampsames, the Spartans, Delos, Myndos, Sicyon, Caria, Samos, Pamphylia, Lycia, Halicarnassus, Rhodes, Phaselis, Cos, Side, Aradus, Gortyna, Cnidus, Cyprus, and Cyrene. A copy of the letter was also sent to Simon the high priest.

Hostility from Antiochus VII.

When King Antiochus encamped before Dor, he assaulted it continuously both with troops and with the siege engines he had made. He blockaded Trypho by preventing anyone from going in or out. Simon sent to Antiochus’ support two thousand elite troops, together with silver and gold and much equipment. But he refused to accept the aid; in fact, he broke all the agreements he had previously made with Simon and became hostile toward him.

He sent Athenobius, one of his Friends, to confer with Simon and say: “You are occupying Joppa and Gazara and the citadel of Jerusalem; these are cities of my kingdom. You have laid waste their territories, done great harm to the land, and taken possession of many districts in my kingdom. Now, therefore, give up the cities you have seized and the tribute money of the districts you control outside the territory of Judea; or instead, pay me five hundred talents of silver for the devastation you have caused and five hundred talents more for the tribute money of the cities. If you do not do this, we will come and make war on you.”

So Athenobius, the king’s Friend, came to Jerusalem and on seeing the splendor of Simon’s court, the gold and silver plate on the sideboard, and his rich display, he was amazed. When he gave him the king’s message, Simon said to him in reply: “It is not foreign land we have taken nor have we seized the property of others, but only our ancestral heritage which for a time had been unjustly held by our enemies. Now that we have the opportunity, we are holding on to the heritage of our ancestors.

As for Joppa and Gazara, which you demand, those cities were doing great harm to our people and our country. For these we will give you a hundred talents.” Athenobius made no reply, but returned to the king in anger. When he told him of Simon’s words, of his splendor, and of all he had seen, the king fell into a violent rage.

Victory over Cendebeus.

Trypho had boarded a ship and escaped to Orthosia. Then the king appointed Cendebeus commander-in-chief of the seacoast, and gave him infantry and cavalry forces. He ordered him to encamp against Judea and to fortify Kedron and strengthen its gates, so that he could wage war on the people. Meanwhile the king went



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in pursuit of Trypho. When Cendebeus came to Jamnia, he began to harass the people and to make incursions into Judea, where he took people captive and massacred them. As the king ordered, he fortified Kedron and stationed cavalry and infantry there, so that they could go out and patrol the roads of Judea.



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Read the following passage four times.

- The first reading, simply read the scripture and pause for a minute. Listen to the passage with the ear of the heart. Don't get distracted by intellectual types of questions about the passage. Just listen to what the passage is saying to you, right now.
- The second reading, look for a key word or phrase that draws your attention. Notice if any phrase, sentence or word stands out and gently begin to repeat it to yourself, allowing it to touch you deeply. No elaboration. In a group setting, you can share that word/phrase or simply pass.
- The third reading, pause for 2-3 minutes reflecting on "*Where does the content of this reading touch my life today?*" Notice what thoughts, feelings, and reflections arise within you. Let the words resound in your heart. What might God be asking of you through the scripture? In a group setting, you can share your reflection or simply pass.
- The fourth reading, pause for 2-3 minutes reflecting on "*I believe that God wants me to today/this week.*" Notice any prayerful response that arises within you, for example a small prayer of gratitude or praise. In a group setting, you can share your reflection or simply pass.

1 Maccabees, chapter 16

John then went up from Gazara and told his father Simon what Cendebeus was doing. Simon called his two oldest sons, Judas and John, and said to them: "I and my brothers and my father's house have fought the wars of Israel from our youth until today, and many times we succeeded in saving Israel. I have now grown old, but you, by the mercy of Heaven, have come to maturity. Take my place and my brother's, and go out and fight for our nation; and may the help of Heaven be with you!"

John then mustered in the land twenty thousand warriors and cavalry. Setting out against Cendebeus, they spent the night at Modein, rose early, and marched into the plain. There, facing them, was an immense army of foot soldiers and cavalry, and between the two armies was a wadi. John and his people took their position against the enemy. Seeing that his people were afraid to cross the wadi, John crossed first. When his men saw this, they crossed over after him. Then he divided his infantry and put his cavalry in the center, for the enemy's cavalry were very numerous. They blew the trumpets, and Cendebeus and his army were routed; many of them fell wounded, and the rest fled toward the stronghold. It was then that John's brother Judas fell wounded; but John pursued them until Cendebeus reached Kedron, which he had fortified. Some took refuge in the towers on the plain of Azotus, but John set fire to these, and about two thousand of the enemy perished. He then returned to Judea in peace.

Murder of Simon and His Sons.

Ptolemy, son of Abubus, had been appointed governor of the plain of Jericho, and he had much silver and gold, being the son-in-law of the high priest. But his heart became proud and he was determined to get control of the country. So he made treacherous plans to do away with Simon and his sons. As Simon was inspecting the cities of the country and providing for their needs, he and his sons Mattathias and Judas went



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down to Jericho in the one hundred and seventy-seventh year, in the eleventh month (that is, the month Shebat).

The son of Abubus gave them a deceitful welcome in the little stronghold called Dok which he had built. He served them a sumptuous banquet, but he had his men hidden there. Then, when Simon and his sons were drunk, Ptolemy and his men sprang up, weapons in hand, rushed upon Simon in the banquet hall, and killed him, his two sons, and some of his servants. By this vicious act of treachery he repaid good with evil. Then Ptolemy wrote a report and sent it to the king, asking him to send troops to help him and to turn over to him their country and its cities.

He sent other men to Gazara to do away with John. To the army officers he sent letters inviting them to come to him so that he might present them with silver, gold, and gifts. He also sent others to seize Jerusalem and the temple mount. But someone ran ahead and brought word to John at Gazara that his father and his brothers had perished, and “Ptolemy has sent men to kill you also.”

On hearing this, John was utterly astounded. When the men came to kill him, he seized them and put them to death, for he knew that they sought to kill him. Now the rest of the acts of John, his wars and the brave deeds he performed, his rebuilding of the walls, and all his achievements—these are recorded in the chronicle of his high priesthood, from the time that he succeeded his father as high priest.