

# 2 MACCABEES

## 1

### The First Letter to the Jewish People in Egypt

**1** "From the Jewish people in Jerusalem and Judea.  
To the Jewish people in Egypt.  
Greetings!

**2** "May God make you successful. May he remember the promise<sup>a</sup> that he made to his faithful servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **3** May he fill all of you with the desire to worship him and with the courage to do everything he wants you to do. **4** May he make you willing to follow his teachings and commands, and may he give you peace. **5** May he hear your prayers, restore your relationship with him, and never abandon you in times of trouble. **6** We are praying for you here in Jerusalem.

**7** "In the year 143 B.C., when Demetrius II was king [of Syria], we, the Jewish people [in Jerusalem and Judea], wrote the following message to you: 'After Jason and his followers rebelled against the holy land and the kingdom **8** and after he and his followers set fire to the temple gateway and murdered innocent people, we experienced a lot of suffering and distress. So we prayed to the Lord, and the Lord heard us. Then we offered sacrifices and grain offerings, lit the lights on the lamp stand, and set out the bread of the presence.' **9** So we want you to celebrate the Days of Dedication in the month of Chislev as you would celebrate the Festival of Booths."

**10** This letter was written in the year 124 B.C.

### The Second Letter to the Jewish People in Egypt

"From the Jewish people in Jerusalem and Judea, the Jewish council, and Judas.  
To Aristobulus, a descendant of the anointed priests and teacher of King Ptolemy, and to the Jewish people in Egypt.  
Greetings and good health!

**11** "We are very thankful to God because he saved us from many dangerous situations when he fought for us in our battle against King Antiochus IV. **12** God threw out of Jerusalem the people who fought against it. **13** Their leader Antiochus arrived in Persia with an army that looked as though it couldn't be stopped. Yet, he and some of his soldiers were cut to pieces in the temple of the goddess Nanea by her priests, who had deceived them. **14** Antiochus had gone with his friends to the temple of the goddess. He acted as though he wanted to marry her so that he could get from her temple treasury a large amount of money as a wedding gift. **15** When Nanea's priests set out the money, Antiochus and a few of his soldiers went into her temple complex. As soon as Antiochus entered the temple, the priests closed the temple doors. **16** Then they removed a secret panel in the ceiling and threw stones, which struck Antiochus and his soldiers like bolts of lightning. After Antiochus and his soldiers were dead, the priests cut up the bodies and threw the heads to the people outside. **17** Praise God for everything, especially for punishing those evil people.

### How the Altar Fire Was Brought Back to Jerusalem

**18** "We're going to celebrate the cleansing of the temple on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Chislev. We want to make this very clear to you. Then you, too, can celebrate the Days of Dedication (that is, the Days of the Fire) as you would celebrate the Festival of Booths. You should celebrate these days at the same time that Nehemiah, who rebuilt the temple and the altar, offered sacrifices.

**19** "When our ancestors were taken as prisoners to Persia, some devout priests secretly took with them some fire from the altar. They hid the fire in a dry cistern. Then they covered up the cistern so that no

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<sup>a</sup> 1:2 Or "covenant."

one else could ever find it. **20** Many years later, when God decided the time was right, the Persian king authorized Nehemiah to go back to Jerusalem. Nehemiah sent descendants of those priests to get the fire and bring it back to Jerusalem. When they returned, the priests told Nehemiah that they didn't find any fire but only a thick liquid. So Nehemiah ordered them to get the liquid out of the cistern and bring it back to Jerusalem. **21** When the priests offered a sacrifice, Nehemiah ordered them to sprinkle the liquid on the wood and on the sacrifice. **22** So the priests did that. Later, the sun, which had been hidden behind the clouds, came out, and the sacrifice burst into flames. Everyone was amazed. **23** While the fire was burning up the sacrifice, the priests and everyone else prayed. Jonathan led the prayer, and Nehemiah repeated it with everyone else.

**24** "The prayer went like this:

'Lord, Lord, you are God. You created everything. You are awesome, strong, merciful, and just. You are the only king, and you are kind. **25** You alone provide for everyone. You are the only one who is almighty, eternal, and just. You rescue Israel from all its troubles. You chose our ancestors and set them apart as holy. **26** Accept this sacrifice, which we offer on behalf of all your people Israel. Watch closely over us, the people who belong to you, and make us holy. **27** Gather together our people, who have been scattered everywhere. Free those who are slaves in foreign countries. Care for those who are despised and detested. Make foreign people realize that you are our God. **28** Torture those who are arrogant and those who violently oppress us. **29** Bring your people to your holy place, as Moses said you would.'

**30** "Then the priests sang hymns. **31** After the sacrifice was burned, Nehemiah ordered the priests to pour the rest of the liquid on some large stones. **32** As soon as the priests did this, a flame shot up. But the flame went out because the fire on the altar overpowered it. **33** People found out about this and told the Persian king that a liquid had been found in the place where the exiled priests had hidden the fire. They said that Nehemiah and his followers had used the liquid to burn the sacrifice. **34** After the king had verified the report, he made the place into a shrine and put a fence around it. **35** The king made a lot of money from this shrine, and he shared the money with Nehemiah and his followers. **36** Nehemiah and his followers called this liquid *nephthar*. Nephthar means 'cleansing.' But most people called it *naphtha*.

2

## How Jeremiah Prepared the People for Exile

**1** "We have learned from our records that the prophet Jeremiah ordered the priests who were being led into exile to take the fire from the altar along with them. We have already told you about this. **2** We have also learned from our records that Jeremiah gave the captives a copy of Moses' Teachings and told them not to forget the Lord's commands. He also told them not to let the false gods that they would see lead them astray, gods which were gold and silver statues with decorations. **3** Jeremiah said many other things like this, and he urged the captives to continue to follow Moses' Teachings. **4** "We have also learned from our records that Jeremiah, after receiving a message from God, ordered that the tent of meeting and the ark of the promise should be given to him. Then he took them to the mountain where Moses saw the land God had promised our ancestors. **5** On the mountain Jeremiah found a cave. He put the tent, the ark, and the incense altar inside the cave. Then he sealed the entrance. **6** Later, some of his followers tried to go back and mark the way, but they couldn't find it. **7** When Jeremiah found out what they had done, he reprimanded them and said, 'No one will find the cave until God gathers his people together again and shows them his mercy. **8** At that time, the Lord will reveal where these things are. The Lord's glory and the cloud will appear again as they did in the time of Moses and as they did when Solomon asked God to make the temple a very holy place.'

## How Solomon Celebrated the Dedication of the Temple

**9** "We have also learned from our records that Solomon, who was a wise man, offered a sacrifice of dedication after the temple was completed. **10** Just as Moses prayed to the Lord and fire came from the

sky and burned up the sacrifices, so Solomon prayed and fire came and completely burned his offerings.

**11** (Moses had said, 'Because the offering for sin had not been eaten, it was consumed by fire.')

**12** Solomon celebrated the dedication for eight days.<sup>b</sup>

## How Nehemiah Established a Library

**13** "Nehemiah's records and memoirs report the same things. They also report how Nehemiah established a library and collected books about the kings, books written by the prophets, and David's writings. He also collected letters from kings about the gifts they had dedicated to the temple. **14** Similarly, Judas collected all the books that had been lost because of the war we just fought. We have these books with us now. **15** So if you ever need any of them, you can send someone to get them.

## An Invitation to Celebrate the Cleansing of the Temple

**16** "Since we are about to celebrate the cleansing of the temple, we are writing to urge you, too, to celebrate this holiday. **17** God has saved all of his people. He has given us back our land, kingdom, priesthood, and holy way of life **18** as he promised us in Moses' Teachings. He has rescued us from many disasters and has cleansed the temple. So we can be confident that God will show us his mercy soon and that he will gather us to his holy place from everywhere in the world."

## The Writer's Goal: A Summary of the Work of Jason of Cyrene

**19** Jason of Cyrene wrote five books, which contain stories about Judas Maccabeus and his brothers, the cleansing of the world's greatest temple, and the dedication of that temple's altar. **20** In addition, Jason's five books contain stories about the wars against Antiochus Epiphanes and his son Eupator **21** and about the miraculous things that appeared in the sky to those who fought bravely and enthusiastically for the Jewish religion. Even though the Jewish forces didn't have many soldiers, they regained control of their entire country and chased out the foreigners. **22** They also regained control of the temple that is famous throughout the world, freed the city of Jerusalem, and reestablished Moses' Teachings, which were about to be abolished. They accomplished all these things because the Lord was merciful and kind to them. **23** So I will attempt to summarize in one book everything that Jason of Cyrene wrote in his five books.

**24** I have noticed how many statistics there are and the difficulties that exist because of the large amounts of material available to those who want to read about these historical events. **25** So I've taken into consideration those who read for pleasure and those who want something easy to memorize as they pursue wisdom. I've tried to write in a way that will benefit everyone who reads this book. **26** Summarizing Jason's five books is stressful. It's a project that demands hard work and sleepless nights. **27** Summarizing his work is like holding a banquet and trying to please everyone. It's not an easy job. Nevertheless, I will gladly put up with the stress to hear the public say, "Thank you." **28** I will leave the exact details to the original author and try to provide an organized summary of the events. **29** I'm not like a builder of a new house. He must consider every single detail of the structure that he's building. But I compare myself to a painter. He is only concerned with painting and decorating the house. **30** Every author who writes a history book must know his entire subject and investigate every detail. **31** But the person who summarizes the text should be excused if he leaves out details and doesn't investigate the facts. **32** Therefore, I'll begin my story at this point since I've already said enough. There is no sense in making the introduction long while trying to summarize the history itself.

# 3

## The Story of Heliodorus

**1** Because the chief priest Onias was a devout man who hated evil, people lived in the holy city of Jerusalem in perfect peace and followed Moses' Teachings faithfully. **2** Even foreign kings honored the temple and added to its beauty by donating their best gifts to it. **3** In fact, King Seleucus of Syria paid all the expenses for the sacrifices from the revenues he collected.

**4** But a man named Simon, who was from Bilgah's family, had been appointed chief administrator of the temple. Simon had an argument with the chief priest Onias over who should run the city market. **5** When he realized he wasn't going to win his argument with Onias, he went to see Apollonius, who was Thraseus' son. Apollonius was the governor of Coelesyria and Phoenicia at that time.

<sup>b</sup> 2:12 Meaning of verses 11 and 12 uncertain.

**6** Simon informed Apollonius that Jerusalem's treasury was so full of money that no one knew how much there was because the money couldn't be counted. He told Apollonius that the money wasn't designated for sacrifices and that it could be placed under the king's control.

**7** After that, Apollonius met with the king. He told the king the secret information that Simon had given him. The king ordered Heliodorus, his chief of state, to get the money. **8** Heliodorus immediately left for Jerusalem. He gave the impression that he was touring the cities of Coelesyria and Phoenicia to inspect them. But he was really doing what the king ordered him to do.

**9** When Heliodorus arrived in Jerusalem, he was given a friendly welcome by the chief priest and the citizens. Heliodorus told them about the information he had received from Simon and about the real reason he had come to Jerusalem. Then he asked them if this information was true. **10** The chief priest explained that some of the money belonged to widows and orphans **11** and that some belonged to Hyrcanus, who was Tobias' son and was a very important man. The chief priest told Heliodorus that, contrary to what the evil Simon had said, the total amount of money in the treasury was only 30,000 pounds of silver and 15,000 pounds of gold. **12** The chief priest said that it would be unthinkable to treat unfairly the people who trusted this holy place. After all, these people believed that the temple, which is honored throughout the world, is the safest place to keep their money.

**13** Because of the orders that he had from the king, Heliodorus said that he had no choice. He had to take the money for the king's treasury. **14** So he set aside a day when he could enter the temple to supervise the counting of the money.

All the people in the city were very distressed. **15** The priests wore their robes and bowed on the ground in front of the altar. They prayed to the LORD,<sup>c</sup> who had made the laws about deposits, and asked him to guard the money that the people had deposited in the temple. **16** Everyone who saw the chief priest became very upset. The expression on the chief priest's face showed just how distressed he was. **17** His body trembled with fear, and everyone could see how much he was suffering. **18** People ran out of their houses and joined together in prayer because the temple was about to be dishonored. **19** Women, wearing only skirts made out of sackcloth, gathered in the streets. Unmarried girls, who were not allowed to leave their homes, ran to their front doors, went to their balconies, or watched from their windows. **20** All of them stretched out their hands toward heaven as they prayed. **21** It was pitiful to see all these people on their knees with their faces touching the ground and to see the chief priest so distressed.

**22** As the people prayed to the Almighty Lord and asked him to protect the money that had been deposited in the temple, **23** Heliodorus began to carry out the king's plan. **24** But the Lord (the ruler who controls the spirits and every power) made a miracle happen in the temple treasury when Heliodorus arrived with his bodyguards. Everyone who was brave enough to go with Heliodorus was terrified by God's power when they saw this awesome miracle. In fact, they became timid and cowardly **25** because they saw a horse and a rider. The horse had on a beautiful harness, and the rider was frightening. The horse reared up and attacked Heliodorus with its front hoofs. The rider's armor looked as though it was made of gold. **26** Then two young men appeared to Heliodorus. These men were very strong, extremely handsome, and well-dressed. They stood on opposite sides of Heliodorus and whipped him repeatedly. **27** Suddenly, Heliodorus fainted and fell to the ground. His men picked him up, put him on a stretcher, **28** and carried him out. This man, who had just entered the treasury with many assistants and all his bodyguards, was now totally helpless. All of them realized that God's power caused these things to happen.

**29** Heliodorus lay there. He couldn't talk, and he didn't have any hope of recovering from what God had done to him. **30** But the Jews praised the Lord because he had taken care of his temple in a miraculous way. Because the Almighty Lord had appeared, the temple courtyard, which only a short time earlier had been filled with fear and confusion, was now filled with happiness and celebration.

**31** Some of Heliodorus' friends went quickly to Onias. They asked Onias to beg the Most High to spare the life of Heliodorus, who was about to die. **32** The chief priest was afraid that the king might think the Jewish people had done this terrible thing to Heliodorus. So he offered a sacrifice for Heliodorus' recovery. **33** While the chief priest was offering the sacrifice to make peace with God for Heliodorus' sins, the two young men appeared to Heliodorus again. Wearing the same clothes as before, they stood next to him and said, "Thank the chief priest Onias. Because of him, the Lord has allowed you to live. **34** You were whipped by the LORD, so tell everyone about his magnificent power." After the two young men said this, they disappeared.

**35** Then Heliodorus offered a sacrifice and made some impressive vows to the Lord, who had saved his life. He said goodbye to Onias and returned with his army to the king. **36** He told everyone about the things he had seen the Almighty God do.

**37** Then the king asked Heliodorus, "Who would be the best person to send on the next mission to Jerusalem?"

Heliodorus replied, **38** "Send someone who is your enemy or someone who is plotting against your government. He'll come back to you, if he's lucky enough to survive a whipping. There's some kind of divine power there **39** because the God of heaven watches over that place and helps it. He beats to death everyone who tries to harm it."

**40** This is the end of the story about Heliodorus and about how the temple treasury was protected.

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<sup>c</sup> 3:15 Greek "Heaven." The author of 2 Maccabees uses the word *Heaven* in place of God's name, the LORD.

# 4

## Onias Goes to the King for Help

<sup>1</sup> Simon continued to spread lies about Onias. (As mentioned earlier, Simon was the one who informed Apollonius about the money and betrayed his own country.) Simon claimed that Onias was the one who assaulted Heliodorus and caused these terrible things to happen to him. <sup>2</sup> Onias had helped Jerusalem, protected his own people, and was devoted to Moses' Teachings. Yet, Simon had the nerve to accuse him of plotting against the government. <sup>3</sup> Simon's hatred became so vicious that he even had one of his followers murder people.

<sup>4</sup> Onias realized that his rivalry with Simon had become dangerous. He also realized that Apollonius, who was Menestheus' son and the governor of Coelestria and Phoenicia, was encouraging Simon to become more hostile. <sup>5</sup> So Onias went to see the king. He didn't intend to accuse any of his own people but to work for the public and private welfare of everyone. <sup>6</sup> He knew that without the king's intervention the government would be unable to maintain peace and that Simon would continue his senseless behavior.

## Jason Becomes Chief Priest

<sup>7</sup> Later, Seleucus died, and Antiochus IV, who was also called Epiphanes, succeeded him as king. At that time Jason, Onias' brother, became chief priest in an underhanded way. <sup>8</sup> He met with the king and promised him 27,000 pounds of silver as well as an additional 6,000 pounds from other public revenue. <sup>9</sup> Jason also promised the king another 11,250 pounds if the king would allow him to build a gymnasium with a center for training young men. He asked the king for permission to record the names of people in Jerusalem who wanted to become citizens of Antioch. <sup>10</sup> The king approved Jason's request.

When Jason gained control, he immediately forced the Jewish people to live the way the Greeks lived. <sup>11</sup> Jason took away the special privileges that John, Eupolemus' father, had secured for the Jews from earlier kings. (Eupolemus was the man who led a group of ambassadors to Rome to establish friendly relations with the Romans and to make an alliance with them.) In addition, Jason put an end to Jewish traditions and introduced new traditions that were contrary to Moses' Teachings. <sup>12</sup> He gladly built a gymnasium next to the fortress in Jerusalem and educated the finest young men by making them exercise in the nude. <sup>13</sup> Jason was an extremely wicked man who wasn't fit to be chief priest. So because Jason introduced foreign traditions, the desire for the Greek way of life reached an all-time high. <sup>14</sup> Priests were no longer eager to serve at the altar. They despised the temple and didn't care about the sacrifices. But when they heard the gym bell, they would rush to enjoy the wrestling matches, which were contrary to Moses' Teachings. <sup>15</sup> They thought that everything their ancestors honored was worthless and that being Greek was the best thing in the world. <sup>16</sup> That's why they eventually found themselves in serious trouble. The Greeks, whom they wanted to be like and whose way of life they envied, became their enemies and oppressed them. <sup>17</sup> Those who violate God's laws will be severely punished, as we will see from the following events.

<sup>18</sup> When the king was present in the city of Tyre for the athletic competition that was held every four years, <sup>19</sup> Jason sent some ambassadors there. Jason, who was a disgusting man, chose from Jerusalem men who claimed to be citizens of Antioch. These men brought 300 silver coins to pay for the sacrifice offered to Hercules. But they thought it was wrong to use the money to pay for this kind of a sacrifice. So they chose to spend the money on something else. <sup>20</sup> Instead of using Jason's money on the sacrifice to Hercules, the men spent the money on the construction of battleships.

<sup>21</sup> When Apollonius, Menestheus' son, was sent to Egypt for a special meeting called by King Philometor, Antiochus IV was informed that Philometor had become an enemy of his government. So because Antiochus was concerned about his own safety, he didn't stop when he arrived in the city of Joppa. He continued to Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> Jason and the citizens of Jerusalem gave Antiochus a royal welcome. They escorted Antiochus into the city with torches and loud cheering. Later, when Antiochus and his army left for Phoenicia, the citizens escorted him out of Jerusalem in the same way.

## Menelaus Replaces Jason as Chief Priest

<sup>23</sup> Three years later, Jason sent Menelaus to bring money to the king. (Menelaus was the brother of Simon, who was mentioned earlier.) He was also sent to complete negotiations with the king on important business matters. <sup>24</sup> But when Menelaus was introduced to the king, he made himself look like a person who had authority. Then, outbidding Jason by 22,500 pounds of silver, he purchased the position of chief priest for himself. <sup>25</sup> After the king appointed him chief priest, Menelaus returned to Jerusalem. He had no qualifications to be the chief priest. But he did have the temper of a cruel tyrant and was as ferocious as a wild animal. <sup>26</sup> So Jason, who had taken his own brother's position in an underhanded way, was replaced in an underhanded way by someone else. Jason was forced to flee to the country of Ammon. <sup>27</sup> Menelaus held on to the position of chief priest, but he never made any of the regular

payments that he had promised the king. <sup>28</sup> Sostratus, the commander of the fortress in Jerusalem, kept demanding Menelaus to make the payments, since Sostratus was in charge of collecting the money. So eventually the king summoned both of them because neither of them made the payments. <sup>29</sup> While they were gone, Menelaus appointed his brother Lysimachus as chief priest, and Sostratus appointed Crates, the commander of the Cyprian army, to be in charge of the fortress in Jerusalem.

## Menelaus Has Onias Murdered

<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, the citizens of Tarsus and Mallus revolted against the king because their cities had been given as a gift to Antiochis, the king's concubine. <sup>d31</sup> So the king quickly went to settle the problem. He left Andronicus, a high-ranking official, in charge. <sup>32</sup> But Menelaus, thinking that the time was right, stole gold utensils from the temple and gave some of them as a present to Andronicus. Menelaus sold the rest of the utensils to people in Tyre and other nearby cities. <sup>33</sup> When Onias found out about this, he left Jerusalem and went to hide in a safe place at Daphne near the city of Antioch. At Daphne he began to make the public aware of what Menelaus had done. <sup>34</sup> Because of this, Menelaus secretly met with Andronicus and urged him to kill Onias. So Andronicus went to visit Onias. He deceived Onias by shaking his hand and promising not to hurt him, and he persuaded Onias to come out of hiding, even though Onias was very suspicious. Then, with no respect for justice, Andronicus immediately killed Onias.

<sup>35</sup> As a result, not only Jews but also many people from other nations were horrified and angry that Onias had been murdered unjustly. <sup>36</sup> When the king returned to Antioch from Cilicia, the Jews in the city and the Greeks who also detested the senseless murder made an appeal to him. <sup>37</sup> Antiochus became very sad. He was so sorrowful that he began to cry, because Onias was a sensible man who had lived a very good life. <sup>38</sup> Antiochus became so furious that he immediately stripped Andronicus of his royal position, tore off his clothes, and led him naked through the entire city to the exact spot where he had done this evil thing to Onias. There Antiochus killed that bloodthirsty murderer. So the Lord gave Andronicus the punishment he deserved.

## Lysimachus Is Killed

<sup>39</sup> Lysimachus had taken many gold utensils from the temple in Jerusalem with Menelaus' knowledge. When the news about this spread outside Jerusalem, a mob gathered to confront Lysimachus because many gold utensils had already been sold outside the country. <sup>40</sup> Eventually, the crowds became enraged, so Lysimachus sent about 3,000 fully armed soldiers to attack them brutally. A very old and stupid man named Auranus led the soldiers. <sup>41</sup> But when the crowds realized that the soldiers attacking them were sent by Lysimachus, they picked up stones, blocks of wood, or ashes that were lying around. Then they wildly threw them at Lysimachus' men. <sup>42</sup> They killed some soldiers, wounded many others, and forced the rest to flee. They even killed Lysimachus, the temple robber, next to the temple treasury.

## Menelaus Is Acquitted

<sup>43</sup> Menelaus was brought to trial because of what had happened. <sup>44</sup> When the king arrived in the city of Tyre, the Jewish council sent three men to present its case in his court. <sup>45</sup> Menelaus knew that he wasn't going to win his case. So he bribed Ptolemy, Dorymenes' son, with a lot of money to have the king rule in his favor. <sup>46</sup> Ptolemy took the king outside the courtroom and into a hallway, as if they were taking a break, and got the king to change his mind. <sup>47</sup> The king acquitted Menelaus, who had caused all the trouble, and sentenced the three men to death. Even the uncivilized Scythians would have acquitted these three poor men because the men were innocent. <sup>48</sup> So the three men, who had spoken in defense of their city, its villages, and the holy utensils, were quickly killed, even though they were innocent. <sup>49</sup> As a result, even the citizens of Tyre showed how much they detested the execution of these men by generously paying for their funeral. <sup>50</sup> Menelaus remained chief priest because of the greedy people who were in power. He grew more wicked than ever and became the number one enemy of his own people.

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## Antiochus IV Makes a Second Attack on Egypt

<sup>1</sup> Around this time, Antiochus IV began to make his second attack on Egypt. <sup>2</sup> For nearly 40 days everyone in Jerusalem could see cavalymen galloping across the sky. The cavalymen had uniforms and weapons made with gold. They rode in companies, were fully armed, and had their swords drawn. <sup>3</sup> The cavalry troops formed battle lines, and they attacked and counterattacked each

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<sup>d</sup> 4:30 A concubine is considered a wife except she has fewer rights under the law.

other. Shields were waving, spears were sailing, and arrows were flying through the sky. The troops' equipment glistened, and they had every kind of weapon imaginable. <sup>4</sup> So everyone in Jerusalem prayed that this miraculous sight would prove to be a good sign.

## Jason Attacks Jerusalem

<sup>5</sup> When a false report spread that Antiochus had died, Jason took more than 1,000 soldiers and suddenly attacked the city of Jerusalem. Jason and his soldiers forced the troops who were stationed on the city wall to retreat, and he eventually captured the city. Menelaus escaped into the fortress for protection. <sup>6</sup> But Jason showed no mercy and kept killing his own people. He didn't realize that gaining a victory over one's own people is really self-defeating. He thought he was winning a victory over his enemies, not his own people. <sup>7</sup> But Jason didn't gain control of the government. He was forced to flee again into Ammonite territory. In the end, his scheme brought him nothing but disgrace.

<sup>8</sup> Eventually, his life came to a miserable end. Someone brought criminal charges against him to an Arab ruler named Aretas. So Jason fled from city to city. Everyone tried to hunt him down. People hated him because he rebelled against Moses' Teachings. They despised him because he had publicly executed people from his own country. So he was forced to go to Egypt. <sup>9</sup> Later, he took a ship to Sparta. He hoped to find a safe place to live among the Spartans, who were related to him. Finally, this man, who had forced many people to go into exile, died in exile in Sparta. <sup>10</sup> This man, who had left many people without a burial, had no one to mourn for him. He didn't even have a funeral, and he wasn't placed in his ancestors' tomb.

## Antiochus Attacks Jerusalem—1 Maccabees 1:20-63

<sup>11</sup> When King Antiochus heard what had happened, he thought that all the people in Judea had revolted. This made the king as angry as a wild animal. So he left Egypt, attacked Jerusalem, and captured it. <sup>12</sup> He ordered his soldiers to show no mercy to anyone, kill everyone they met, and slaughter those who retreated into their houses. <sup>13</sup> So the soldiers put to death young and old people alike. They killed women and children, and they slaughtered young girls and infants. <sup>14</sup> In three days 80,000 people were lost: Half were killed in combat, and the rest were sold as slaves.

<sup>15</sup> Even after the city had been captured and many citizens were killed, Antiochus still was not satisfied. So he had the nerve to enter the holiest temple in the world. Menelaus, who had betrayed Moses' Teachings and his own country, was his guide. <sup>16</sup> With his bloodstained and unholy hands, Antiochus took away the holy utensils and the gifts that other kings had given to add to the beauty and honor of the temple.

<sup>17</sup> Antiochus was so arrogant that he didn't realize the Lord was allowing the temple to be dishonored. At this time the Lord was angry because the people of Jerusalem had sinned. <sup>18</sup> But if the people hadn't sinned so much, Antiochus would have been immediately whipped and carried out of the temple. He would have been punished because of his arrogance just like Heliodorus, whom King Seleucus had sent to inspect the treasury. <sup>19</sup> Certainly, the Lord didn't choose his people for the sake of his holy place. He chose his holy place for the sake of his people. <sup>20</sup> That's why the holy place shared in the people's bad times and later took part in their good times. The holy place, which had been abandoned when the Almighty was angry, was restored again in all its glory when the great Lord restored his people's relationship with him.

<sup>21</sup> So Antiochus carried away 135,000 pounds [of precious metals] from the temple and hurried back to the city of Antioch. He was so arrogant and his imagination was so wild that he thought he could sail on land and walk on water. <sup>22</sup> He left the following administrators in Judea to harass the people. In Jerusalem he left Philip, who was a Phrygian by birth and was more vicious than Antiochus. <sup>23</sup> At Mount Gerizim he left Andronicus. In addition to these men, he also left Menelaus in Jerusalem. Menelaus was worse than the other men because he arrogantly used his authority against his own people.

## Antiochus Sends Apollonius to Attack Jerusalem

Antiochus grew to hate the Jewish people more and more. <sup>24</sup> So he sent Apollonius, the commander of the Mysians, with an army of 22,000 soldiers to attack the Jewish people. He ordered Apollonius to slaughter all the men and to sell the women and children as slaves. <sup>25</sup> When Apollonius arrived in Jerusalem, he acted as though he were on a peace mission. But on a holy day of worship, a day when the Jews must not work, he ordered an inspection of his troops. <sup>26</sup> When the Jewish people came out of the city to watch, he killed all of them. After that, he ran into the city with his soldiers and killed so many people that dead bodies were scattered all over.

<sup>27</sup> But Judas Maccabeus and a group of about nine men had already left the city and gone into the mountains where no one could find them. They survived like animals by eating plants so that they wouldn't become unclean.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>e</sup> 5:27 "Unclean" refers to anything that Moses' Teachings say is not presentable to God.

## 6

## Antiochus IV Tries to Destroy Jewish Traditions

<sup>1</sup> A short time later King Antiochus IV sent Geron, an Athenian, to force the Jews to abandon their ancestors' traditions and stop following God's Teachings. <sup>2</sup> In addition, Antiochus ordered Geron to dishonor the temple in Jerusalem and the temple on Mount Gerizim. Geron renamed the temple in Jerusalem after Zeus, the god of Mount Olympus, and renamed the temple on Mount Gerizim after Zeus, the Friend of Strangers. This was something the people of that region wanted anyway.

<sup>3</sup> The terrible things that happened were intensely cruel and disgusting. <sup>4</sup> In the temple courtyard foreigners did immoral things and held wild parties. Men spent their free time with prostitutes and had sex with women inside the holy areas of the temple. They brought forbidden things into the temple courtyard <sup>5</sup> and even placed on the altar many offerings that Moses' Teachings didn't allow. <sup>6</sup> People weren't able to observe the day of worship, celebrate traditional festivals, or even admit that they were Jews.

<sup>7</sup> Every month, when the king's birthday was celebrated, the Jews were cruelly forced to celebrate too. They were forced to eat meat that was sacrificed to false gods. Also, when the festival of the god Dionysus was celebrated, the Jews were forced to wear ivy wreaths on their heads and march in the parade.

<sup>8</sup> Based on a suggestion that was made by the citizens of Ptolemais, a decree was published in the neighboring Greek cities. The decree required all the Greeks to force the Jews to eat meat that was sacrificed to false gods <sup>9</sup> and to kill all the Jews who refused to adopt the Greek way of life. So the Jews were experiencing difficult times. <sup>10</sup> For example, two Jewish women were arrested because they had their children circumcised. Then, after the women were paraded around the city with their babies hanging from their necks, they were thrown off the city wall. <sup>11</sup> Some Jewish people gathered together secretly in nearby caves to observe a day of worship. But someone told Philip about them, and Philip burned them to death. These Jewish people were so devoted to honoring that most holy day that they didn't try to defend themselves.

<sup>12</sup> I want to encourage the people who read this book not to get depressed by the terrible things that happened. You need to realize that these punishments from God were not intended to destroy our people, but to teach them. <sup>13</sup> In fact, when God punishes evil people immediately, instead of waiting a long time, it's a sign of God's rich kindness. <sup>14</sup> The Lord waits patiently to punish other nations. He doesn't punish them until their sins have gotten out of control. But that's not the way he deals with us. <sup>15</sup> The Lord punishes us before our sins get out of control. <sup>16</sup> He never stops showing us his mercy. Although he teaches us with disasters, he never abandons us, his people. <sup>17</sup> Let everything I've just said serve as a reminder to you. Now let's continue our story.

## The Story of Eleazar

<sup>18</sup> There was a high-ranking scribe named Eleazar who was a very handsome old man. He was being forced to open his mouth and eat some pork. <sup>19</sup> But he preferred to die an honorable death rather than live an unclean <sup>f</sup> life. <sup>20</sup> He chose to be tortured to death. So he spit out the pork. Let this be an example for everyone. He endured this torture because he was willing to give up his life rather than eat something that shouldn't even be tasted.

<sup>21</sup> Some men who had known Eleazar for a long time were in charge of a sacrifice that was contrary to Moses' Teachings. These men took Eleazar aside, and in private they urged him to bring his own meat, meat that was proper for him to eat. They wanted Eleazar to pretend that he was eating the pork as the king had ordered. <sup>22</sup> Because Eleazar was an old friend of theirs, the men told him that if he did this, they would do a favor for him and not put him to death.

<sup>23</sup> But Eleazar made a wise decision. His decision was based on his maturity, dignity, experience, and the fact that he had lived an honorable life ever since he was young. But most importantly, Eleazar's decision was based on the holy teachings that God had given. He immediately refused their plan and said, "Send me to my grave! <sup>24</sup> It's not right for an old man like me to deceive anyone. I don't want a lot of young people to think that I've taken up a foreign religion when I'm 90 years old. <sup>25</sup> If I pretend to eat pork, just to live a few more years, I'll lead many young people astray and become morally unclean for the rest of my life. <sup>26</sup> I may escape the punishment you've planned for me. But whether I live or die, I won't be able to escape the punishment of the Almighty God. <sup>27</sup> So if I die bravely now, I'll show that I deserved to live as long as I have. <sup>28</sup> Also, I'll leave the young people an honorable example of how to give their lives willingly and nobly for the sake of our honored and holy teachings."

After Eleazar said this, he immediately went to be tortured. <sup>29</sup> The same men who had been kind to him earlier were now unkind to him because they thought that everything he just said was foolish. <sup>30</sup> When Eleazar had been beaten and was about to die, he groaned and said, "The Lord in his holy knowledge obviously knows that I could have avoided dying. Even though my body has been beaten and I'm in terrible pain, I gladly suffer because I fear him."

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<sup>f</sup> 6:19 "Unclean" refers to anything that Moses' Teachings say is not presentable to God.

**31** So this is the way that Eleazar died. His death served as an example of honor and virtue. Eleazar's death will be remembered not only by young people, but also by most of the people in his nation.

7

## The Story of a Mother and Her Seven Sons

**1** After the incident with Eleazar, the king had a Jewish mother and her seven sons arrested. He tried to force them to eat pork by whipping and torturing them. (Eating pork is contrary to Moses' Teachings.) **2** Then one of the sons spoke for all of them. He asked the king, "What do you want from us? You know that we'd rather die than disobey what our ancestors taught us."

**3** The king became furious. He ordered his soldiers to heat up frying pans and kettles until they were red hot. **4** His soldiers did this immediately. Then the king ordered his soldiers to cut out the tongue of the son who had spoken, to scalp him, and to cut off his hands and feet. The son's mother and the rest of his brothers were forced to watch. **5** Next, the king ordered his soldiers to take the helpless son, put him in one of the pans, and fry him alive. As clouds of smoke drifted from the pan toward his mother and brothers, they encouraged each other to die bravely. They said, **6** "The Lord God is watching over us. He truly has compassion on us. Moses made this clear when he wrote a song that testified against his people. Moses said, 'The Lord will have compassion on his servants.' "

**7** After the first brother died in the way just described, the king's soldiers brought the second brother forward. They began to mock and torture him in the same way. They grabbed his hair and tore off his scalp. Then they said to him, "Eat some pork, or we will tear your body apart!"

**8** He replied in his native language, "Never!" So he was tortured just like the first brother. **9** Just before he died, he said to the king, "You're cruel and vicious! You may be able to kill us now, but the king of the universe will bring us back to life. Then we'll live forever because we died for the sake of his teachings."

**10** After him, the third brother was mocked and tortured. When the king's soldiers demanded that he stick out his tongue, he quickly did. He courageously held out his hands **11** and said bravely, "The LORD<sup>g</sup> gave me my tongue and my hands, but compared to his teachings, they mean nothing to me. Besides, I'm confident that he will give them back to me again." **12** The king and his soldiers were surprised at the young man's courage, because the young man didn't care how much he suffered.

**13** After this brother died, the king's soldiers began to torture the fourth brother in the same cruel way. **14** When he was about to die, he said to the king, "I've chosen to let you kill me and to believe that God will bring me back to life again. You, too, will be brought back to life—a life of shame and disgrace!"<sup>h</sup>

**15** Next, the king's soldiers brought forward the fifth brother and treated him cruelly. **16** But he looked directly at the king and said, "You have authority to do whatever you want, even though you're mortal. But don't think that God has abandoned the people of Israel. **17** Wait! You'll see! God will use his awesome power to torture you and your descendants."

**18** After him, the king's soldiers brought the sixth brother forward. When he was about to die, he said to the king, "Don't be fooled! It's our own fault that we're suffering like this. We've sinned against our God. That's why these shocking things are happening to us. **19** But don't think that you'll go unpunished for trying to fight against God."

**20** The mother was a remarkable woman and deserves special mention. She saw her seven sons die in a single day. Yet, she held up courageously because she trusted the Lord. **21** She encouraged each of her sons in their native language. She was so courageous that she expressed herself very bravely by saying to them, **22** "I don't know how you came to life in my womb. I didn't give any of you your breath or life or make you what you are. **23** The Creator of the universe did these things. He formed humans in the beginning and designed everything that exists. He will mercifully give your life and your breath back to you because you consider his teachings to be more important than your own lives."

**24** King Antiochus felt that the mother was being disrespectful to him. He thought what she said was insulting. Since the youngest brother was still alive, Antiochus kept making him offers. He even promised with an oath that he would make him rich and that people would envy him. The king also promised to give the young man the title "Friend of the King" and entrust him with public duties if the young man would abandon his ancestors' traditions. **25** But the young man didn't pay any attention to the king. So the king summoned the mother and urged her to advise her son to save himself. **26** After much urging by the king, she agreed to persuade her son. **27** However, she leaned over, whispered in her son's ear, and mocked the cruel tyrant. She said to her son in their native language, "Son, have mercy on me. I carried you in my womb for nine months and nursed you for three years. I raised you and took care of you. **28** My child, I want you to take a good look at the earth, the sky, and everything that's in them. I want you to realize

<sup>g</sup> 7:11 Greek "Heaven." The author of 2 Maccabees uses the word *Heaven* in place of God's name, the LORD.

<sup>h</sup> 7:14 Or "But you will never be brought back to life!"

that God made those things and people out of nothing. <sup>29</sup> So don't be afraid of the king, that public executioner. Prove that you're like your brothers. Die willingly so that God will mercifully give you back to me along with your brothers."

<sup>30</sup> While she was still speaking, the young man said, "What are all of you waiting for? I won't obey the king's order. I'll only obey the teachings that God gave my ancestors through Moses. <sup>31</sup> You've come up with all kinds of terrible things to do to the Hebrews, but you'll never escape God's punishment. <sup>32</sup> We, the Hebrew people, are suffering because of our sins. <sup>33</sup> Even though our living Lord has been angry with us for a little while and is punishing and disciplining us, he will certainly restore our relationship with him again. <sup>34</sup> You wicked man! You're the most disgusting person that ever lived. Don't be a fool and arrogantly believe that you can oppose the LORD's children. <sup>35</sup> You'll never escape the judgment of the Almighty, who sees everything. <sup>36</sup> My brothers, who suffered for a little while, are now enjoying everlasting life because of God's promise. <sup>i</sup> But you will receive the punishment you deserve for your arrogance because God will judge you. <sup>37</sup> I'm about to give up my body and my life, as my brothers did, for the sake of our ancestors' traditions. I pray that God will show mercy to our nation quickly and that he will use trials and plagues to force you to acknowledge that he is the only God. <sup>38</sup> I also pray that, through my brothers and me, the Almighty will put an end to his anger, anger which our entire nation deserved."

<sup>39</sup> The king became bitter and furious. He treated the young man worse than his brothers because the young man treated him with contempt. <sup>40</sup> The young man, trusting the Lord completely, died without becoming unclean. <sup>j</sup>

<sup>41</sup> The mother died last, after her sons.

<sup>42</sup> This should completely clear up matters about the severe tortures the Jews faced and about how rulers tried to force them to eat meat that was sacrificed to false gods.

## 8

### Judas Organizes an Army—1 Maccabees 3:1-26

<sup>1</sup> Judas Maccabeus and his followers secretly entered villages. They asked their relatives and those who had remained faithful to the Jewish religion to join them and help them. As a result, they recruited about 6,000 men. <sup>2</sup> Then they prayed to the Lord. They asked him to watch over his people, whom all the nations despised, to have pity on his temple, which evil people had dishonored, <sup>3</sup> and to have mercy on Jerusalem, which was being destroyed and was about to be leveled. They also asked him to hear those who were being murdered and were calling to him for help, <sup>4</sup> to remember the innocent babies who had died violent deaths, to take revenge on those who had insulted his name, and to show his hatred of evil.

<sup>5</sup> As soon as Judas organized his army, the foreigners were unable to defeat him, because the Lord now showed his mercy instead of his anger to the Jewish people. <sup>6</sup> Judas would sneak into enemy cities and villages and set them on fire. He regained control of important locations and soundly defeated many enemy troops. <sup>7</sup> He found that the best time for him to attack was at night. People everywhere talked about his courage.

### Nicanor Invades Judea—1 Maccabees 3:38-41

<sup>8</sup> Philip saw that Judas was gradually making progress and that Judas was winning battles more frequently. So Philip wrote a letter to Ptolemy, who was the governor of Coesyrria and Phoenicia. He requested military help for the king's government. <sup>9</sup> Ptolemy quickly appointed Nicanor to help Philip. Nicanor was Patroclus' son and one of those who held the title "Most Important Friend of the King." Ptolemy sent Nicanor to Judea with an army made up of more than 20,000 foreign soldiers from every nation. Nicanor's mission was to get rid of every Jew in Judea. Ptolemy also appointed Gorgias to go with him. Gorgias was a general who had a lot of military experience. <sup>10</sup> Nicanor planned to sell Jewish prisoners as slaves so that he could pay off the 150,000 pounds of silver that the king owed the Romans in taxes. <sup>11</sup> So he immediately sent the cities along the coast an invitation to come and buy Jewish slaves. He promised to sell 90 slaves for 75 pounds of silver. However, he had no idea that the Almighty was about to punish him.

<sup>12</sup> Judas heard that Nicanor was coming to Judea with an army. When he shared this information with his soldiers, <sup>13</sup> those who were cowards and didn't believe that God would punish their enemies left camp and ran away. <sup>14</sup> The rest sold everything they owned. Then they got together and prayed to the Lord, "Rescue us! Before the fighting has even started, that evil man Nicanor has sold us as slaves. <sup>15</sup> If you're not willing to rescue us for our sake, rescue us for the sake of the promises <sup>k</sup> that you made to our ancestors and for the sake of your awe-inspiring name by which they were called."

<sup>i</sup> 7:36 Or "covenant."

<sup>j</sup> 7:40 "Unclean" refers to anything that Moses' Teachings say is not presentable to God.

<sup>k</sup> 8:15 Or "covenants."

**16** Judas gathered the 6,000 men he had recruited and encouraged them not to panic when they saw the enemy soldiers or to become afraid of the large number of foreigners who were about to attack them for no reason. Instead, he encouraged them to fight bravely **17** and to focus on how their enemies had dishonored the holy place, how they had mocked and tortured the citizens of Jerusalem, and especially how they had tried to destroy the Jewish way of life. **18** Then he said, "Our enemies trust their weapons and their courage. But we trust the Almighty God. With a single command, the Almighty God can defeat the enemy that is coming to attack us and even the entire world."

**19** In addition, Judas reminded them about some of the times when God helped their ancestors. In the time of Sennacherib, 185,000 enemy soldiers were killed. **20** In the battle against the Galatians that took place in Babylonia, 8,000 Jews and 4,000 Macedonians fought the Galatians. Yet, when the Macedonians were having difficulties, the LORD<sup>l</sup> helped those 8,000 Jews to destroy 120,000 Galatians and to take a lot of loot besides.

## Judas Defeats Nicanor—1 Maccabees 3:55-4:27

**21** By saying these things to his soldiers, Judas made them courageous and willing to die for their traditions and their country. Then he divided his army into four divisions. **22** He appointed his brothers Simon, Joseph, and Jonathan as commanders. Each of them was in charge of one division and was assigned 1,500 soldiers. **23** (In addition, Eleazar was present.)<sup>m</sup> After Judas had read to his soldiers from the holy book, he gave them this password: "God will help us." Then, as commander of the first division, Judas attacked Nicanor.

**24** The Almighty fought for Judas and his soldiers, and they slaughtered more than 9,000 enemy troops. They wounded and disabled many of Nicanor's troops and forced the rest of them to flee. **25** They took the money from the very people who had come to buy them as slaves. After they had chased the enemy far away, they returned because it was getting late. **26** It was the evening before a day of worship, so they didn't continue to chase the enemy. **27** After they had collected weapons from the enemy soldiers who were dead and had stripped them of their valuables, they observed the day of worship. They praised the Lord and thanked him for guiding them safely through that day and showing his mercy to them again. **28** After the day of worship was over, they gave some of the valuables they had taken to widows, orphans, and those who had been tortured. Then they divided what was left among themselves and their children. **29** When they had finished doing this, they prayed together and asked their merciful Lord to restore their relationship with him.

## Judas Defeats Timothy and Bacchides

**30** Later, Judas and his troops fought against the soldiers of Timothy and Bacchides. They killed more than 20,000 enemy soldiers and gained control of some very strong fortifications. They divided a lot of loot and gave shares equal to their own to orphans, widows, old people, and those who had been tortured. **31** They collected the enemy's weapons and carefully stored all of them in important locations, but they took the rest of the loot to Jerusalem. **32** They killed one of Timothy's commanding officers. This officer was a very wicked man who had caused the Jewish people a lot of suffering.

**33** While people were celebrating the victory throughout the country, those who had set fire to the temple gates were burned to death by Judas and his soldiers. One of the men who was burned to death was Callisthenes, who had hidden in a small house. So he received the punishment he deserved for the evil thing he had done.

**34** So Nicanor, the disgusting man who had brought 1,000 slave traders to buy Jewish prisoners, **35** was humiliated with the Lord's help by the very people he looked down on. He took off his official uniform and escaped through the open country all by himself like a runaway slave until he reached the city of Antioch. The only thing he did successfully was to destroy his own army. **36** This man once thought he could raise enough money to pay Roman taxes by selling Jewish prisoners in Jerusalem. Instead, he ended up spreading the news that the Jews had a God who defended them, and that because the Jews followed the teachings their God gave them, they couldn't be defeated.

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<sup>l</sup> 8:20 Greek "Heaven." The author of 2 Maccabees uses the word *Heaven* in place of God's name, the LORD.

<sup>m</sup> 8:23 Greek meaning of this sentence uncertain.

## The Lord Punishes Antiochus IV

### —1 Maccabees 6:1-7; 2 Maccabees 1:11-17

<sup>1</sup> About this same time, Antiochus made a disorderly retreat from Persia. <sup>2</sup> Here's the reason he retreated: Antiochus had entered a city called Persepolis. He tried to rob its temples and take over the city. But large mobs of citizens armed themselves and attacked him. The citizens defeated Antiochus and his army and forced them to retreat in shame. <sup>3</sup> While Antiochus was near the city of Ecbatana, he heard what had happened to Nicanor and Timothy's troops. <sup>4</sup> He became absolutely furious. So he decided to take out his anger on the Jews for the defeat he had just suffered. He ordered his chariot driver not to stop until they had reached Jerusalem. He said arrogantly, "When I arrive in Jerusalem, I'll turn it into a Jewish cemetery." But the LORD<sup>n</sup> wasn't about to let him go unpunished.

<sup>5</sup> The Lord, the God of Israel, sees everything. He struck Antiochus with an incurable disease that no one could see. As soon as Antiochus finished speaking, he suffered intense cramps and severe stomach pains. <sup>6</sup> This was the perfect punishment for a man who had caused many people so much pain. <sup>7</sup> Yet, that didn't stop him from being conceited. He was as arrogant as ever and began threatening to do violent things to the Jews. He even ordered his chariot driver to go faster. But as the chariot raced along, he fell out. He fell so hard that his entire body was in pain. <sup>8</sup> A few seconds earlier, this man thought he could order around the waves in the sea, and he bragged that he was more than a mere human. He even thought that he could weigh the peaks of mountains on a scale. But when he fell to the ground and was carried off on a stretcher, God's power became clear to everyone. <sup>9</sup> This evil man's body crawled with worms. He lived in pain and agony, and his skin rotted away. The entire army became sick because of the smell that came from his body. <sup>10</sup> No one could stand to carry him because he smelled so bad. This was the man who, only a short time earlier, thought that he could take hold of the stars.

### Antiochus Makes a Vow to the Lord—1 Maccabees 6:8-17

<sup>11</sup> At this point Antiochus became humble. He became less arrogant and came to his senses because he was in constant pain due to God's punishment. <sup>12</sup> When he couldn't stand the smell of his own body anymore, he said, "It's right for people to place themselves under God's authority. Mortals shouldn't think that they are God's equal." <sup>13</sup> Then this disgusting man made vows to the Lord, who would no longer show him mercy. Antiochus vowed <sup>14</sup> that he would declare Jerusalem, the holy city, to be a free city. This is the city he was in a hurry to level and make into a Jewish cemetery. <sup>15</sup> He also vowed that he would give all the Jewish citizens the same rights as the Athenian citizens. Previously, he thought that the Jews didn't deserve to be buried and planned to leave their bodies and their children's bodies for the wild animals and birds to eat. <sup>16</sup> Antiochus, who had looted the holy temple, vowed that he would make it even more beautiful than it had been, that he would give back many more holy utensils than he had taken, and that he would fund the sacrifices out of his own money. <sup>17</sup> In addition to all this, he vowed to follow the Jewish way of life and to travel all over the world and tell everyone about God's power.

### Antiochus Writes a Letter to the Jews

<sup>18</sup> Antiochus' pain wouldn't go away because God was giving him the punishment he deserved. Antiochus lost all hope of recovering, so he wrote the following letter to the Jews to win their favor:

<sup>19</sup> "From Antiochus, king and general.  
To the honorable Jewish people.  
Greetings, good health, and prosperity!

<sup>20</sup> "I hope that you and your children are in good health and that everything is going well for you. I have confidence in the LORD, <sup>21</sup> and I warmly remember the way you have honored me and have shown me your loyalty.

"As I was returning from Persia, I became seriously ill. So I think I should make arrangements for the general well-being of everyone. <sup>22</sup> I haven't given up hope of recovering. Actually, I'm confident that I will recover from my illness. <sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, I remember that my father used to appoint a successor whenever he marched inland <sup>24</sup> so that people would know who was left in charge of the government.

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<sup>n</sup> 9:4 Greek "Heaven." The author of 2 Maccabees uses the word *Heaven* in place of God's name, the LORD.

So if anything unexpected happened or if some terrible news came back, the people throughout the kingdom wouldn't be worried. **25** In addition, I know very well that the rulers along the borders of my kingdom are watching for an opportunity to take over my kingdom and are waiting to see what will happen to me. That's why I've appointed my son Antiochus V to be king. On a number of occasions, I have officially put him in charge of the kingdom to serve most of you when I traveled to the inland territories. (I've enclosed a copy of a letter that I wrote to him.) **26** So I encourage you to talk in public and in private about the good things I have done for you. Also, I ask each of you to continue to be loyal to me and my son. **27** I'm certain that he will be kind and fair to you and will follow my policies closely."

**28** So this murderer, who slandered God, suffered as intensely as he made other people suffer. He died a miserable death in the mountains of a foreign country. **29** Philip, who had been his friend since childhood, was going to carry his body home. But because Philip was afraid of Antiochus' son, he went to Egypt and stayed with Ptolemy Philometor.

## 10

### Judas and His Soldiers Cleanse the Temple

#### —1 Maccabees 4:36-61

**1** With the Lord guiding them, Judas and his soldiers regained control of the temple and the city of Jerusalem. **2** They tore down the altars and the worship sites that the foreigners<sup>o</sup> had built in the marketplace. **3** They cleansed the temple and made another altar. Then they made a fire, offered sacrifices, and burned incense for the first time in two years. They lit the lights on the lamp stand and set out the bread of the presence. **4** After they had done these things, they bowed with their faces touching the ground and prayed to the Lord. They asked him never to allow these terrible things to happen to them again. They asked him not to punish them so severely if they ever sinned again or to hand them over to uncivilized foreigners who would ridicule them.

**5** The temple was cleansed on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Chislev. This was the same day and the same month in which the foreigners had dishonored it. **6** People joyfully celebrated for eight days, as they did during the Festival of Booths. They remembered how only a short time ago they had spent the Festival of Booths living in mountains and caves like wild animals. **7** That's why they held leafy tree branches, other beautiful branches, and palm branches as they offered hymns of praise to God, who had successfully cleansed his own temple. **8** The people took a vote and unanimously passed a law that required the entire Jewish nation to observe these days every year.

**9** So Antiochus IV, who was also called Epiphanes, died under these circumstances.

### Ptolemy Macron Commits Suicide

**10** Now I'll tell you about what took place while Antiochus V, who was also called Eupator, was king. I'll give a brief summary of the main disasters that resulted from his wars. Antiochus Eupator was the son of that evil man Antiochus Epiphanes. **11** When Eupator became king, he appointed a man named Lysias to be chief of state and a man named Protarchus to be governor of Coelesyria and Phoenicia. **12** This is the reason that Protarchus was appointed governor: Ptolemy, who was called Macron, was the first governor to treat the Jewish people fairly. He managed them peacefully to make up for the terrible things that had been done to them. **13** Because of this, the king's friends brought accusations against him to Eupator. Everywhere that Ptolemy went, people called him a traitor because he deserted the island of Cyprus, which Philometor had put him in charge of, and went to serve Antiochus Epiphanes. Because he lost the people's respect,<sup>p</sup> he committed suicide by drinking poison.

### Judas Defeats the Idumeans

#### —1 Maccabees 5:1-8

**14** When Gorgias became governor of the region north of Judea, he always kept an army of hired soldiers ready for battle and attacked the Jews every chance he could. **15** At the same time, the Idumeans had control of important fortifications [south of Judea] and continually harassed the Jews. They tried to start wars by taking in Jewish traitors who had fled from Jerusalem. **16** But Judas and his soldiers prayed to God and asked him to fight for them. Then they attacked the Idumean fortifications **17** with such force that they gained control of them. They forced those who were stationed on the wall to retreat and slaughtered everyone who got in their way. They killed more than 20,000 people.

<sup>o</sup> 10:2 Greek "the Philistines."

<sup>p</sup> 10:13 Greek meaning uncertain.

**18** At least 9,000 men fled into two well-fortified towers, which were equipped to withstand any attack. **19** Judas had to go to some other places that needed him more urgently. So he left Simon and Joseph behind, along with Zacchaeus and his troops. These men had enough soldiers to carry out an attack on the fortified towers. **20** But Simon had some soldiers who would do anything for money. They accepted bribes from some of the enemy soldiers in the towers. After they had received 70,000 silver coins from these soldiers, they let them get away. **21** When someone told Judas what had happened, he held a meeting with the Jewish leaders. At this meeting he accused these men of selling their brothers for money because they had allowed their enemies to go free and to fight them another day. **22** So he killed these men because they had betrayed their people. Then he immediately captured the two towers. **23** Judas was always successful in war, and in his attack against the two fortifications, he killed more than 20,000 soldiers.

## Judas Defeats Timothy

**24** Now Timothy, whom the Jews had defeated once before, recruited a very large army and brought together many cavalrymen from Syria. Then he marched toward Judea, intending to attack it. **25** As he was getting closer, Judas and his soldiers sprinkled dust on their heads, put on sackcloth, and prayed to God. **26** They faced the altar and knelt in front of it. They asked God to be merciful to them and to be an enemy to their enemies and an opponent to their opponents as he promised in Moses' Teachings.

**27** After they had finished praying, they grabbed their weapons and marched a long distance from the city. When they got close to the enemy, they stopped. **28** Then, just as the sun was coming up, the two armies attacked each other. The Jewish soldiers trusted the Lord to give them courage and success because he had promised to protect them and give them victory. But the enemy soldiers trusted their own fury to lead them into battle.

**29** When the battle became fierce, the enemy saw five distinguished men in the sky. The five men were riding on horses that had gold bridles, and they were leading the Jews into battle. **30** These men surrounded Judas, shielded him with their weapons, and kept him from getting wounded. They shot arrows and thunderbolts at the enemy, and the enemy became confused and blinded. Because they were thrown into confusion, many enemy soldiers were killed. **31** A total of 20,500 enemy soldiers were slaughtered as well as 6,000 cavalrymen.

**32** Timothy fled to a fortification called Gazara. Gazara was a very strong fort, where Chaereas was the commander. **33** Judas and his soldiers were very happy that Timothy fled there, and they surrounded the fort for four days. **34** The troops inside the fort were confident that it was secure. So they insulted Judas and his soldiers and said terrible things to them. **35** On the fifth day, when the sun came up, 20 of Judas' young soldiers, who were very angry because of the insults, bravely attacked the troops stationed on the wall. With the fury of a wild animal, they killed everyone who got in their way. **36** While the troops inside the fort were distracted, some of Judas' other soldiers climbed the wall just as the 20 had done. They set the towers on fire, started other fires, and burned to death those who had insulted them. Another group of soldiers broke through the gates, let the rest of the soldiers in, and took over the city. **37** Some of Judas' soldiers found Timothy hiding in a cistern and killed him, his brother Chaereas, and Apollophanes. **38** When the attack was over, Judas and his soldiers sang hymns of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, who had been very kind to the people of Israel and had given them the victory.

# 11

## Judas Defeats Lysias—1 Maccabees 4:26-35

**1** A short time later, Lysias became very angry when he learned what had happened to Timothy. Lysias was the king's guardian and the chief of state, and he held the title "Relative of the King." **2** He gathered about 80,000 soldiers and all his cavalry and went to fight the Jews. He intended to make Jerusalem a Greek settlement, **3** to tax the temple (as he did the temples in other nations), and to put the office of chief priest up for sale every year. **4** But he had no idea how powerful God was. He was arrogant because he had tens of thousands of infantrymen, thousands of cavalrymen, and 80 elephants. **5** So Lysias invaded Judea. When he arrived at Beth Zur, he began a series of attacks against it. Beth Zur was a fortified city about 20 miles from Jerusalem.

**6** Judas and his soldiers heard that Lysias was attacking their fortifications. So Judas, his soldiers, and the people of Israel prayed to the Lord. They asked him to send an angel to rescue Israel. They were mourning and crying as they prayed. **7** Judas was the first man to grab his weapons. He encouraged the others to risk their lives with him to help the Jewish people in Beth Zur. Then they eagerly left Jerusalem together. **8** While they were still near Jerusalem, a horseman miraculously appeared and began to lead them. The horseman wore white clothes and was waving weapons that were made of gold. **9** All of the soldiers praised God for his mercy. They became courageous and ready to fight not only humans but also wild animals. They were also ready to attack walls, even if the walls were made of iron. **10** Now that the Lord had shown his mercy to them, they marched in battle formation and were confident that God would fight for them from heaven. **11** They charged the enemy like ferocious lions and killed 11,000 soldiers and 1,600

cavalrymen. They forced the rest of the enemy soldiers to flee. <sup>12</sup> Most of the soldiers who escaped left their weapons behind and were wounded. Lysias escaped by running away in disgrace.

## Lysias Makes an Agreement With the Jews

### —1 Maccabees 6:56-61

<sup>13</sup> Lysias wasn't stupid. As he thought over the defeat he had just suffered, he realized that the Hebrews couldn't be beaten because the mighty God fought for them. So Lysias sent a message to the Jews. <sup>14</sup> He tried to persuade them to agree to a fair settlement. He promised that he would pressure the king and try to persuade him to become their friend. <sup>15</sup> Since Judas was concerned about what was best for everyone, he agreed to all the proposals that Lysias made. Eventually, the king granted every written request that Judas submitted to Lysias about the Jews.

## Lysias' Letter to the Jewish People

<sup>16</sup> This is a copy of the letter that Lysias wrote to the Jews:

On the twenty-fourth day of the month of Dioscorinthius, in the year 164 B.C.  
From Lysias.  
To the Jewish people.  
Greetings!

<sup>17</sup> Your messengers, John and Absalom, have delivered your signed document, and they've asked me to comment on the items contained in it. <sup>18</sup> I have informed the king about everything that needed to be brought to his attention. He has agreed to do whatever he can. <sup>19</sup> So if you continue to be loyal to the government, I'll try in the future to help you get everything you want. <sup>20</sup> I have asked your messengers and my representatives to discuss the details with you.

<sup>21</sup> Sincerely,

Lysias

## The King's Letters

<sup>22</sup> This is a copy of King Antiochus' letter:

From King Antiochus V.  
To my dear friend Lysias.  
Greetings!

<sup>23</sup> Now that my father King Antiochus IV has gone to be with the gods, I don't want to disturb the citizens in my kingdom by telling them how to live their private lives. <sup>24</sup> I've heard that the Jewish people don't approve of my father's demand that they must live like Greeks. They prefer their own way of life and are asking for my permission to live by their own customs. <sup>25</sup> Since I don't want to disturb these people, I have decided to restore their temple and to allow them to follow their ancestors' customs. <sup>26</sup> It would be a good idea for you to tell them about my decision and to reach an agreement with them. Then they'll know what my policy is, and they'll gladly live the way they want to.

<sup>27</sup> This is a copy of the letter that the king sent to the Jewish nation:

On the fifteenth day of the month of Xanthicus, in the year 164 B.C.  
From King Antiochus V.  
To the Jewish council and to the rest of the Jewish people.  
Greetings!

<sup>28</sup> I hope that you're well. I'm in good health. <sup>29</sup> Menelaus has told me that you want to return home. <sup>30</sup> So I'll agree to pardon all those who return by the thirtieth of this month. <sup>31</sup> Then you can enjoy your own food and customs as you used to do. None of you will be bothered in any way for the mistakes you made in the past. <sup>32</sup> I have sent Menelaus to reassure you.

<sup>33</sup> Sincerely,

King Antiochus

## The Romans' Letter to the Jewish People

**34** This is a copy of the letter that the Romans sent to the Jewish people:

On the fifteenth day of the month of Xanthicus, in the year 164 B.C.  
From the Roman ambassadors Quintus Memmius and Titus Manius.  
To the Jewish people.  
Greetings!

**35** We approve of everything that Lysias, who holds the title "Relative of the King," has agreed to do for you. **36** Review the matters that Lysias has decided to bring to the king's attention. Then send someone immediately to tell us how you would like us to resolve these matters with the king. We're about to leave for Antioch to see the king. **37** So send messengers quickly so that we can find out what you want us to do.

**38** Sincerely,

Ambassadors Memmius and Manius

12

## Judas Attacks the Cities of Joppa and Jamnia

**1** When Lysias and the Jews had reached an agreement, Lysias went back to the king, and the Jews went back to farming. **2** But many of the region's military leaders—Apollonius, who was Gennaueus' son, Timothy, Hieronymous, Demophon, and Nicanor, the commander of the troops from Cyprus—wouldn't allow the Jews to live in peace.

**3** Even the people who lived in the city of Joppa did something terrible to the Jews. They invited the Jews who lived in Joppa to go sailing on boats that they had provided. The Jews took their wives and children along because they didn't think the people of Joppa intended to do something bad to them. **4** The Jews didn't suspect anything because the people of Joppa had voted to extend this invitation to them. So the Jews accepted the invitation because they wanted to live peacefully with the people of Joppa. While they were out at sea, the people of Joppa drowned more than 200 of the Jews.

**5** When Judas heard about the cruel way his people were treated, he summoned his soldiers. **6** After they had prayed to God, who judges fairly, they went to Joppa and attacked those who had murdered his people. During the night, Judas set fire to the harbor, burned boats, and killed everyone who fled to the harbor for safety. **7** The city's gates were closed, so he left. But he intended to return and kill everyone who lived in Joppa.

**8** Later, Judas heard that the people in the city of Jamnia wanted to get rid of the Jews there in the same way. **9** So he attacked the people of Jamnia during the night and set their harbor and fleet on fire. The fire was so bright that it could be seen in Jerusalem, which was 30 miles away.

## Judas Attacks the City of Caspin—1 Maccabees 5:9-54

**10** Judas and his soldiers left Jamnia and marched to meet Timothy in battle. When they were about a mile away from Jamnia, they were attacked by more than 5,000 Arabs and 500 cavalrymen. **11** The battle was fierce, but with God's help Judas and his soldiers won the battle. The Arabs asked Judas to make a peace treaty with them. They promised to give Judas cattle and to help him and his soldiers in other ways. **12** Judas thought that the Arabs could be useful in many ways, so he agreed to make a peace treaty with them. After both sides shook hands, the Arabs returned to their tents.

**13** Judas also attacked Caspin. Caspin was a heavily fortified city that was surrounded by walls. The population of Caspin was made up of people from many races. **14** The people inside the city were confident that the city walls would protect them and that the food supply wouldn't run out. So they treated Judas and his soldiers cruelly. They shouted at them, insulted them, and used obscene language. **15** But Judas and his soldiers prayed to God, who is the great ruler of the universe and who tore down Jericho's walls at the time of Joshua without using battering rams or large weapons. Then they fiercely attacked the city walls **16** and captured the city because that was what God wanted. They slaughtered so many people that a nearby lake, which was about a quarter of a mile wide, appeared to be overflowing with blood.

## Judas Defeats Timothy's Army—1 Maccabees 5:37-44

**17** From Caspin, Judas and his soldiers marched 95 miles until they arrived at a camp where a group of Jews called the Toubiani lived. **18** They didn't find Timothy there because he had already left the region. Timothy had failed in his mission there, but

in one place he did leave behind some soldiers in a strong fortification. <sup>19</sup> So Dositheus and Sosipater, two of Judas' commanders, marched to the fortification and killed more than 10,000 soldiers whom Timothy had stationed there. <sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, Judas divided his army into divisions, appointed one commander for each division, and went to attack Timothy, who had 120,000 soldiers and 2,500 cavalrymen with him. <sup>21</sup> When Timothy heard that Judas was coming, he sent the women, the children, and their personal belongings to a place called Karnaim. Karnaim was hard to attack and difficult to get to because every path that led to it was narrow. <sup>22</sup> As soon as Judas' first division appeared at Karnaim, the enemy soldiers became terrified because God, who sees everything, made a miraculous sight appear. As a result, the enemy soldiers scattered wildly in every direction and even wounded each other with their own swords. <sup>23</sup> Judas pursued those sinners with a vengeance and slaughtered about 30,000 of them. <sup>24</sup> Timothy was captured by the soldiers of Dositheus and Sosipater. But he cleverly demanded to be released unharmed. He told them that he held most of their parents and relatives as prisoners and that, if he wasn't released, all of them would be killed. <sup>25</sup> Timothy promised several times to release their parents and relatives unharmed. So the soldiers let him go free because they wanted to save their relatives.

## Judas Defeats Other Enemies—1 Maccabees 5:45-54

<sup>26</sup> Then Judas attacked Karnaim, destroyed the temple of the goddess Atargatis, and slaughtered 25,000 people. <sup>27</sup> After he had destroyed Karnaim and the temple, he attacked Ephron. Ephron was a fortified city where many foreign people lived. Strong young soldiers were stationed in front of the city walls and fought bravely. Inside the city there were large supplies of weapons. <sup>28</sup> The Jews prayed to God, the ruler who can destroy the enemy's confidence. They captured the city and killed about 25,000 people. <sup>29</sup> Judas and his army left Ephron and marched to the city of Scythopolis, which was 75 miles from Jerusalem. <sup>30</sup> The Jews who lived there assured Judas that the citizens of Scythopolis were kind to them and had helped them in times of trouble. <sup>31</sup> So Judas and his soldiers thanked the citizens of Scythopolis and encouraged them to continue to be kind to the Jews. Then Judas and his army went to Jerusalem. They arrived when the Festival of Weeks was about to begin.

## Judas Defeats Gorgias

<sup>32</sup> When the Festival of Weeks (which is also called Pentecost) was over, Judas and his army attacked Gorgias, the governor of Idumea. <sup>33</sup> Gorgias met them with 3,000 soldiers and 400 cavalrymen. <sup>34</sup> When the battle began, a few Jews were killed. <sup>35</sup> A strong cavalryman named Dositheus, who was one of the Toubiani, caught up with Gorgias. He grabbed Gorgias' cape and began to drag him away forcefully because he wanted to take that disgusting man alive. But a Thracian cavalryman attacked Dositheus and cut off his arm, and Gorgias escaped to the city of Marisa. <sup>36</sup> Judas prayed to the Lord for a man named Esdris and for his soldiers because they had been fighting a long time and were tired. Judas prayed that the Lord would appear and lead them in the battle. <sup>37</sup> He sang hymns in his native language as a battle cry. Then he made a surprise attack on Gorgias' troops and defeated them. <sup>38</sup> Then Judas and his soldiers went to the city of Adullam. The day of worship was about to begin. So they cleansed themselves, in keeping with the Jewish custom, and observed the day of worship.

## Judas Prays and Offers a Sacrifice for the Dead

<sup>39</sup> The next day, when Jewish law allowed them to work, Judas' soldiers went to get the bodies of the men who had been killed in battle. They wanted to place them with their relatives in their ancestors' tombs. <sup>40</sup> But they found religious objects inside the clothes of each dead man, objects used by those who worship the gods of Jamnia. Moses' Teachings don't allow Jewish people to possess these kinds of objects. Now everyone knew why these men were killed in battle. <sup>41</sup> Judas and his soldiers praised the Lord for what he had done. The Lord had been a fair judge and had revealed what these men had tried to hide. <sup>42</sup> They prayed to the Lord and asked him to forgive the sin that these men had committed. Judas, who was an honorable man, encouraged his soldiers to be sure not to commit any sins. After all, they had seen with their own eyes what had happened to the men who had sinned. <sup>43</sup> In addition, Judas took up a collection from all his soldiers. He collected about 2,000 silver coins and sent them to Jerusalem. The money was used to pay for a sacrifice for the sin these men had committed. He did this honorable thing because he believed that dead people would come back to life. <sup>44</sup> If he didn't believe that dead people would come back to life, it wouldn't have made any sense to pray for them. <sup>45</sup> Because Judas was holy and devout, he focused on the wonderful reward that is waiting [in heaven] for devout people who die. So he made a peace offering to the Lord for the men who had died in battle so that they might be forgiven for the sin they had committed.

## 13

## Menelaus Is Executed

<sup>1</sup> In the year 163 B.C., Judas and his soldiers heard that King Antiochus V, who was also called Eupator, was coming with a large army to attack Judea. <sup>2</sup> They also heard that Lysias, who was the king's guardian and the chief of state, was with him. Antiochus and Lysias were coming with a Greek army made up of 110,000 infantrymen, 5,300 cavalrymen, 22 elephants, and 300 chariots with sharp blades attached to the wheels.

<sup>3</sup> Menelaus, thinking only of himself, met with Antiochus and Lysias and encouraged Antiochus to attack Judea. Menelaus didn't care about his country's safety. He cared only about being appointed to office. <sup>4</sup> But God, the King of kings, made Antiochus angry at this sinner. Lysias explained to the king that all of the troubles in Judea were Menelaus' fault. So the king ordered some of his soldiers to take Menelaus to the city of Beroea and to kill him by the regular method of execution used there. <sup>5</sup> Beroea had a tower that was 75 feet high and was filled with ashes. A platform went around the top of the tower and sloped steeply into the ashes. <sup>6</sup> People who were guilty of stealing from a temple or of other serious crimes were taken to the top of the tower and pushed into the ashes, where they died. <sup>7</sup> That's how Menelaus, a man who didn't follow Moses' Teachings, died. He [sank into the pile of ashes, suffocated, and] didn't even reach the ground. <sup>8</sup> Menelaus got exactly what he deserved. Because he had committed many sins against the altar, whose fire and ashes are holy, he died in ashes.

## Judas Attacks the King's Headquarters

<sup>9</sup> As King Antiochus and his army marched toward Judea, the king became more arrogant and hostile. He intended to show the Jews that he could treat them much worse than his father had ever done. <sup>10</sup> When Judas heard about this, he ordered the people to pray day and night that the Lord would help them now more than ever because they were about to have their laws, their country, and their holy temple taken away. <sup>11</sup> Judas also ordered them to pray that the Lord would not let his people, who were starting to recover, fall under the control of those evil foreigners. <sup>12</sup> For three days everyone prayed the same prayer together. They cried, fasted, and prayed to the merciful Lord with their faces touching the ground. Then Judas encouraged them and ordered them to be ready for battle.

<sup>13</sup> After meeting privately with the Jewish leaders, Judas decided to settle the matter with God's help by fighting the king's army before it invaded Judea and took control of Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> He left the outcome of the battle to God, the creator of the universe, and encouraged his soldiers to fight bravely and to be willing to die for their laws, temple, city, country, and way of life. Then they set up camp near the city of Modein. <sup>15</sup> He gave his soldiers this password: "God will give us the victory." After he had chosen the best young fighting men, he attacked the king's headquarters at night. Judas and his soldiers killed about 2,000 enemy troops there. They even stabbed to death the lead elephant and its driver. <sup>16</sup> As a result, the enemy troops became terrified and confused. Because Judas and his soldiers had successfully completed their mission, they left. <sup>17</sup> All this happened before sunrise because the Lord helped and protected Judas.

## King Antiochus V Makes a Peace Treaty With the Jews

### —1 Maccabees 6:48-63

<sup>18</sup> King Antiochus got a taste of how bold the Jews could be. So he tried various ways to take over the positions they held. <sup>19</sup> For example, the city of Beth Zur was a strong Jewish fortification. So he attacked Beth Zur over and over again. But every time he attacked, he was defeated. He kept making raids against Beth Zur. But every time he made a raid, he lost the battle. <sup>20</sup> Judas sent supplies to the soldiers inside the fort. <sup>21</sup> But a Jewish soldier named Rhodocus passed on some secret information to the enemy. Some of Judas' soldiers searched for Rhodocus, caught him, and executed him. <sup>22</sup> Because the soldiers in Beth Zur outfought King Antiochus, Antiochus offered them a peace treaty, which they accepted. Then he left there, attacked Judas and his soldiers, and lost the battle. <sup>23</sup> Afterward, he heard that Philip, his chief of state, had rebelled against him in Antioch. The king was stunned. He had peace talks with the Jews, agreed to their demands, and swore an oath to uphold their rights. After an agreement was reached, he offered a sacrifice and honored the temple with generous gifts. <sup>24</sup> He gave Judas his approval and left Hegemonides as governor of the territory extending from Ptolemais to Gerar. <sup>25</sup> Then he went to Ptolemais. The citizens of Ptolemais were angry about the agreement Antiochus had made with the Jews. In fact, they were so mad that they wanted the agreement to be canceled. <sup>26</sup> Lysias spoke in public and defended the king's actions as well as he could. Because he was so convincing, he calmed the people down and gained their support. Then the king left for Antioch.

So this ends the story of the king's attack on Judea and his return to Antioch.

## 14

## King Demetrius Sends Nicanor to Attack Judea

### —1 Maccabees 7:1-21

**1** Three years later, Judas and his soldiers heard that Seleucus' son Demetrius had sailed into the harbor at Tripolis with a fleet and a powerful army. **2** They also heard that Demetrius had killed King Antiochus V and his guardian Lysias and had gained control of the country.

**3** A man named Alcimus was a former chief priest who had willingly made himself unclean<sup>q</sup> during a time of war. He realized that the Jews wanted to kill him and that he would never be able to approach the holy altar again. **4** So he went to King Demetrius in the year 161 B.C. and presented the king with a gold crown, a palm branch, and some customary gifts from the temple. Alcimus said nothing to the king that day.

**5** But later, Alcimus got a chance to work out a foolish plan that he had. Demetrius invited him to an official meeting and asked him what he thought about the situation in Judea. Alcimus replied, **6** "Judas Maccabeus is the leader of a group of Jewish people called the Hasidim. These are the people who keep fighting, rebelling, and preventing your kingdom from having peace.

**7** Because of them, I no longer hold the honored position of chief priest, which I am entitled to by birth. I have two reasons for being here today: **8** First, I'm genuinely concerned about your interests, Your Majesty. Secondly, I'm concerned about my own people. The whole Jewish nation is in an unfortunate position because of the foolish actions of Judas and his followers, whom I mentioned earlier.

**9** But I'm sure you are fully aware of all these things, Your Majesty. So please treat my nation and its troubled people with the same kindness that you show to everyone. **10** As long as Judas is alive, your government will never have peace."

**11** When Alcimus finished speaking, the king's friends, who hated the things that Judas was doing, quickly got Demetrius even more irritated with Judas. **12** So Demetrius immediately appointed Nicanor, who was in charge of his army's elephants, as the governor of Judea. Demetrius sent Nicanor to Judea **13** and ordered him to kill Judas, scatter Judas' troops, and appoint Alcimus as chief priest of the world's greatest temple. **14** The foreigners whom Judas had banished from Judea joined Nicanor in large numbers. They thought that a defeat to the Jewish nation would be to their advantage.

## Nicanor Makes a Peace Treaty With the Jews

**15** When the Jewish troops heard that Nicanor was coming to attack them and that the banished foreigners had joined him, they sprinkled dust on their heads. They prayed to God, who had made them his own people forever, because he had helped them by showing his miraculous power. **16** Then Judas, their commander, ordered the troops to leave immediately and attack the enemy near the village of Dessau. **17** Simon, Judas' brother, was already fighting Nicanor. But Simon was slowly losing the battle because the enemy had made a surprise attack on him.

**18** When Nicanor heard how brave Judas and his soldiers were and how courageously they were fighting, he was afraid to let the battle continue. **19** So he sent Posidonius, Theodotus, and Mattathias to make a peace treaty with the Jews. **20** After the terms of the peace treaty were examined in detail, Judas, the Jewish leader, discussed the terms with his soldiers. When both sides accepted all the terms, they agreed to sign the peace treaty. **21** The leaders set aside a day when they could have a private meeting together. On the day of the meeting, a chariot came from each side, and chairs were set up. **22** In strategic locations Judas placed armed men who were ready to fight, because he was afraid that the enemy might suddenly double-cross him. However, the meeting went well for both leaders.

**23** Nicanor spent some time in Jerusalem. He did nothing that made people suspicious. He even sent away the mobs of foreigners that had joined him. **24** He always had Judas with him because he truly liked him. **25** He urged Judas to get married and start a family. So Judas got married, settled down, and led a normal life.

## Nicanor Turns Against Judas

**26** When Alcimus saw how well Judas and Nicanor were getting along with each other, he got a copy of the peace treaty and went to see King Demetrius. He told the king that Nicanor was undermining the government because he had appointed Judas, who was plotting against the kingdom, to take his place. **27** The false charges brought against Nicanor by that corrupt man Alcimus made the king furious. So the king wrote a letter to Nicanor. In the letter he stated that he was displeased with the terms of the peace treaty, and he ordered Nicanor to arrest Judas and bring him as quickly as possible to Antioch.

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<sup>q</sup> 14:3 "Unclean" refers to anything that Moses' Teachings say is not presentable to God.

<sup>28</sup> When Nicanor read the king's letter, he was upset. He hated to break an agreement with a man who had done nothing wrong. <sup>29</sup> But since he couldn't disobey the king, he looked for a way to capture Judas by surprise. <sup>30</sup> Judas noticed that Nicanor was beginning to treat him harshly and was becoming rude during their regular meetings. Judas knew that something was wrong. So he gathered many of his followers and hid from Nicanor.

<sup>31</sup> When Nicanor realized that Judas had outsmarted him, he went to the world's greatest and holiest temple. While the priests were offering the regular sacrifices, he ordered them to hand over Judas. <sup>32</sup> The priests swore with an oath that they didn't know where Judas was. <sup>33</sup> So Nicanor held out his hand, pointed at the temple, and swore this oath: "If you don't hand over Judas to me, I'll level God's temple, tear down the altar, and build a magnificent temple to Dionysus in this place."

<sup>34</sup> After Nicanor said these terrible things, he left. The priests stretched out their hands toward heaven and prayed to God, who had always defended the Jewish nation. They prayed, <sup>35</sup> "Lord, you rule everything. Even though you've never needed anything, you chose to live among us in your temple. <sup>36</sup> Holy One, Lord of everything that is holy, keep this temple, which has just been cleansed, from ever being dishonored again."

## The Story of Razis

<sup>37</sup> Someone told Nicanor about a man named Razis, who was one of Jerusalem's leaders. Razis loved his people, had a very good reputation, and was called "the Father of the Jews" because of his loyalty. <sup>38</sup> In the early days of the war, someone had accused him of following the Jewish religion, because he had risked his life out of devotion to it. <sup>39</sup> Nicanor wanted everyone to see how much he hated the Jews. So he sent more than 500 soldiers to arrest Razis. <sup>40</sup> Nicanor thought that by arresting Razis, he could destroy the morale of the Jews. <sup>41</sup> Nicanor's soldiers were about to capture the house where Razis lived. They were trying to force the courtyard gate open and were calling for someone to make a fire to burn down the doors of his house. Razis realized that he was surrounded, so he tried to commit suicide by falling on his sword. <sup>42</sup> He wanted to die with honor rather than be arrested by these sinners and have them humiliate him. <sup>43</sup> But because everything was happening so quickly, he failed to fall directly on his sword and kill himself. As the soldiers were rushing through the doorway, Razis ran up onto the roof of his house and bravely jumped off toward the soldiers below. <sup>44</sup> But the soldiers quickly stepped back, and he landed in the open space they had created. <sup>45</sup> Still alive and very angry, Razis got up. Even though blood was spurting out of his body and he was badly wounded, he ran through the crowd of soldiers and climbed on top of a high rock. <sup>46</sup> Having lost a lot of blood, he tore out his intestines with both hands and threw them at the soldiers. As he did this, he prayed that the Lord of life and breath would give these body parts back to him someday. That's the way Razis died.

15

## Nicanor's Cruel Plan

<sup>1</sup> Nicanor heard that Judas and his soldiers were in the region of Samaria. So he planned to attack them on a day of worship so that his own army wouldn't suffer any casualties. <sup>2</sup> Nicanor had forced some Jews to accompany his army. These Jews told Nicanor not to be cruel and uncivilized by attacking on a day of worship, but to honor the day of worship, the day that God, who sees everything, has specially chosen and set apart as holy.

<sup>3</sup> Nicanor, who was a disgusting man, asked them, "Is there actually a ruler in heaven who has ordered the Jews to observe the day of worship?"

<sup>4</sup> The Jews replied, "Yes! The Lord, who lives in heaven, is the ruler who has ordered us to worship on the seventh day of the week."

<sup>5</sup> Nicanor said, "I am a ruler on earth, and I order you to grab your weapons and do what the king wants." Despite everything he said, Nicanor didn't carry out his cruel plan.

## Judas Encourages His Soldiers

<sup>6</sup> Nicanor, carried away by his arrogance, planned to set up a monument after his victory over Judas. <sup>7</sup> But Judas never stopped believing that the Lord would help him. <sup>8</sup> He continually encouraged his soldiers not to be afraid when the enemy attacked. He told them to remember that the LORD<sup>r</sup> had helped them in the past and to expect the Almighty to give them a victory now. <sup>9</sup> He motivated his soldiers by reading from Moses' Teachings and the Prophets and by reminding them of the battles they had already won.

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<sup>r</sup> 15:8 Greek "Heaven." The author of 2 Maccabees uses the word *Heaven* in place of God's name, the LORD.

**10** After he got them ready to fight, he gave them their orders. At the same time, he reminded them that the foreigners had broken their promises and couldn't be trusted. **11** With the things he said, Judas armed each of his soldiers with courage. In addition, he told them about one of his dreams, a dream that made the soldiers happy and confident.

**12** This is Judas' dream: Judas saw the former chief priest Onias, who was a perfect gentleman, modest, gentle, and a good speaker and who had been trained from childhood to lead a devout life. Onias was stretching out his hands toward heaven and praying for the entire Jewish nation. **13** Then Judas saw another man in his dream. The man had gray hair, looked very impressive, and had a lot of authority. **14** Onias said, "This is Jeremiah, God's prophet. He loves the people of Israel and prays constantly for them and for Jerusalem, the holy city."

**15** Jeremiah held out his right hand and presented Judas with a gold sword. As Jeremiah was giving the sword to Judas, he said, **16** "Take this sword. It's a holy gift from God. With this sword you will destroy your enemies."

**17** Judas encouraged his soldiers with powerful words, so the soldiers were determined to do their best. The boys had as much courage as the men. Because Jerusalem, the holy place, and the temple courtyards were in danger, his soldiers decided not to march into battle. Instead, they decided to charge the enemy bravely and to settle the battle by engaging in hand-to-hand combat. **18** Their biggest concern was no longer their families and relatives but the holy temple. **19** The people left in Jerusalem were terrified. They were worried about the battle that was going to take place in the open country.

## Nicanor Is Killed in Battle

**20** Everyone was waiting to see how the battle would turn out. The enemy forces were approaching. The troops were in battle formation, the elephants were placed in strategic positions, and the cavalry was riding at each end of the battle line. **21** As the large enemy forces approached, Judas noticed the different kinds of weapons they had and how fierce their elephants were. Then he stretched out his hands toward heaven and prayed to the Lord, who performs miracles. He knew that battles weren't decided by weapons but by the Lord and that the Lord gives the victory to those who deserve it. **22** Judas prayed, "Lord, when Hezekiah was king of Judea, you sent your angel to Sennacherib's camp and your angel killed 185,000 of his soldiers. **23** Ruler of heaven, send an angel ahead of us now to make our enemies tremble with fear. **24** Use your mighty power to strike down those who have insulted you and have come to attack your holy people." Then Judas ended his prayer.

**25** As Nicanor's army advanced, his soldiers blew trumpets and sang battle songs. **26** But the soldiers in Judas' army prayed as they went into battle. **27** They prayed to God, engaged in hand-to-hand combat, and killed more than 35,000 enemy soldiers. Afterward, they were very happy that God had appeared and helped them.

**28** When the battle was over and Judas and his soldiers were celebrating on their way home, they found Nicanor lying dead on the ground with all his armor on. **29** So they praised the ruler of heaven in their native language with loud shouts. **30** Their leader Judas had dedicated his entire life to defending his people and had been devoted to them ever since he was young. He ordered his soldiers to cut off Nicanor's head and right hand and to take them to Jerusalem. **31** When Judas arrived in Jerusalem, he called the Jewish people together. He made the priests stand in front of the altar, and he summoned the men who were in the fortress. **32** Then Judas showed them the head of that disgusting man Nicanor and the hand which that evil man had held out so arrogantly against the holy temple of the Almighty God. **33** In addition, Judas cut out Nicanor's tongue since Nicanor had said so many terrible things. Judas promised to feed Nicanor's tongue piece by piece to the birds and to hang Nicanor's hand in front of the temple as a punishment for Nicanor's senseless behavior. **34** All the people praised the Lord, who had appeared and helped them, and the sky echoed with their praise. They said, "Praise the Lord because he didn't allow his temple to be dishonored."

**35** Judas hung Nicanor's head from the fortress wall. Everyone who saw it knew that it was a sign of the Lord's help. **36** No one wanted this day to be forgotten. So the people took a vote and unanimously passed a law to celebrate the thirteenth day of the twelfth month every year. (The twelfth month is called Adar in the Aramaic language.) This new holiday fell on the day before Mordecai's Day, which is the Festival of Purim. **37** This is how everything turned out for Nicanor. From that time on, the Hebrew people remained in control of Jerusalem. So here is where I'll end my book.

## The Writer's Conclusion

**38** If my book is cleverly organized and well-written, that's what I tried to do. If the book is only average or poorly-written, that's the best I could do. **39** Drinking only wine or only water can make a person sick. But when wine and water are mixed together, a sweet and pleasant flavor is produced. In the same way, a book that is cleverly organized with interesting stories pleases those who read it. This is the end of my book.