

1 MACCABEES 1

- 1** After Alexander son of Philip, the Macedonian, who came from the land of Kittim, had defeated King Darius of the Persians and the Medes, he succeeded him as king. (He had previously become king of Greece.)
- 2** He fought many battles, conquered strongholds, and put to death the kings of the earth.
- 3** He advanced to the ends of the earth, and plundered many nations. When the earth became quiet before him, he was exalted, and his heart was lifted up.
- 4** He gathered a very strong army and ruled over countries, nations, and princes, and they became tributary to him.
- 5** After this he fell sick and perceived that he was dying.
- 6** So he summoned his most honored officers, who had been brought up with him from youth, and divided his kingdom among them while he was still alive.
- 7** And after Alexander had reigned twelve years, he died.
- 8** Then his officers began to rule, each in his own place.
- 9** They all put on crowns after his death, and so did their descendants after them for many years; and they caused many evils on the earth.
- 10** From them came forth a sinful root, Antiochus Epiphanes, son of King Antiochus; he had been a hostage in Rome. He began to reign in the one hundred thirty-seventh year of the kingdom of the Greeks.
- 11** In those days certain renegades came out from Israel and misled many, saying, "Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles around us, for since we separated from them many disasters have come upon us."
- 12** This proposal pleased them,
- 13** and some of the people eagerly went to the king, who authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles.
- 14** So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom,
- 15** and removed the marks of circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant. They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil.
- 16** When Antiochus saw that his kingdom was established, he determined to become king of the land of Egypt, in order that he might reign over both kingdoms.
- 17** So he invaded Egypt with a strong force, with chariots and elephants and cavalry and with a large fleet.
- 18** He engaged King Ptolemy of Egypt in battle, and Ptolemy turned and fled before him, and many were wounded and fell.
- 19** They captured the fortified cities in the land of Egypt, and he plundered the land of Egypt.
- 20** After subduing Egypt, Antiochus returned in the one hundred forty-third year. He went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force.
- 21** He arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils.
- 22** He took also the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off.
- 23** He took the silver and the gold, and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasures that he found.
- 24** Taking them all, he went into his own land. He shed much blood, and spoke with great arrogance.
- 25** Israel mourned deeply in every community,
- 26** rulers and elders groaned, young women and young men became faint, the beauty of the women faded.
- 27** Every bridegroom took up the lament; she who sat in the bridal chamber was mourning.
- 28** Even the land trembled for its inhabitants, and all the house of Jacob was clothed with shame.
- 29** Two years later the king sent to the cities of Judah a chief collector of tribute, and he came to Jerusalem with a large force.
- 30** Deceitfully he spoke peaceable words to them, and they believed him; but he suddenly fell upon the city, dealt it a severe blow, and destroyed many people of Israel.

31 He plundered the city, burned it with fire, and tore down its houses and its surrounding walls.
32 They took captive the women and children, and seized the livestock.
33 Then they fortified the city of David with a great strong wall and strong towers, and it became their citadel.
34 They stationed there a sinful people, men who were renegades. These strengthened their position;
35 they stored up arms and food, and collecting the spoils of Jerusalem they stored them there, and became a great menace,
36 for the citadel became an ambush against the sanctuary, an evil adversary of Israel at all times.
37 On every side of the sanctuary they shed innocent blood; they even defiled the sanctuary.
38 Because of them the residents of Jerusalem fled; she became a dwelling of strangers; she became strange to her offspring, and her children forsook her.
39 Her sanctuary became desolate like a desert; her feasts were turned into mourning, her sabbaths into a reproach, her honor into contempt.
40 Her dishonor now grew as great as her glory; her exaltation was turned into mourning.
41 Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people,
42 and that all should give up their particular customs.
43 All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the sabbath.
44 And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land,
45 to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane sabbaths and festivals,
46 to defile the sanctuary and the priests,
47 to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and other unclean animals,
48 and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane,
49 so that they would forget the law and change all the ordinances.
50 He added, "And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die."
51 In such words he wrote to his whole kingdom. He appointed inspectors over all the people and commanded the towns of Judah to offer sacrifice, town by town.
52 Many of the people, everyone who forsook the law, joined them, and they did evil in the land;
53 they drove Israel into hiding in every place of refuge they had.
54 Now on the fifteenth day of Chislew, in the one hundred forty-fifth year, they erected a desolating sacrilege on the altar of burnt offering. They also built altars in the surrounding towns of Judah,
55 and offered incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets.
56 The books of the law that they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire.
57 Anyone found possessing the book of the covenant, or anyone who adhered to the law, was condemned to death by decree of the king.
58 They kept using violence against Israel, against those who were found month after month in the towns.
59 On the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar that was on top of the altar of burnt offering.
60 According to the decree, they put to death the women who had their children circumcised,
61 and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers' necks.
62 But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food.
63 They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die.
64 Very great wrath came upon Israel.

1 MACCABEES 2

- 1** In those days Mattathias son of John son of Simeon, a priest of the family of Joarib, moved from Jerusalem and settled in Modein.
- 2** He had five sons, John surnamed Gaddi,
- 3** Simon called Thassi,
- 4** Judas called Maccabeus,
- 5** Eleazar called Avaran, and Jonathan called Apphus.
- 6** He saw the blasphemies being committed in Judah and Jerusalem,
- 7** and said, "Alas! Why was I born to see this, the ruin of my people, the ruin of the holy city, and to live there when it was given over to the enemy, the sanctuary given over to aliens?"
- 8** Her temple has become like a person without honor;
- 9** her glorious vessels have been carried into exile. Her infants have been killed in her streets, her youths by the sword of the foe.
- 10** What nation has not inherited her palaces and has not seized her spoils?
- 11** All her adornment has been taken away; no longer free, she has become a slave.
- 12** And see, our holy place, our beauty, and our glory have been laid waste; the Gentiles have profaned them.
- 13** Why should we live any longer?"
- 14** Then Mattathias and his sons tore their clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourned greatly.
- 15** The king's officers who were enforcing the apostasy came to the town of Modein to make them offer sacrifice.
- 16** Many from Israel came to them; and Mattathias and his sons were assembled.
- 17** Then the king's officers spoke to Mattathias as follows: "You are a leader, honored and great in this town, and supported by sons and brothers.
- 18** Now be the first to come and do what the king commands, as all the Gentiles and the people of Judah and those that are left in Jerusalem have done. Then you and your sons will be numbered among the Friends of the king, and you and your sons will be honored with silver and gold and many gifts."
- 19** But Mattathias answered and said in a loud voice: "Even if all the nations that live under the rule of the king obey him, and have chosen to obey his commandments, everyone of them abandoning the religion of their ancestors,
- 20** I and my sons and my brothers will continue to live by the covenant of our ancestors.
- 21** Far be it from us to desert the law and the ordinances.
- 22** We will not obey the king's words by turning aside from our religion to the right hand or to the left."
- 23** When he had finished speaking these words, a Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer sacrifice on the altar in Modein, according to the king's command.
- 24** When Mattathias saw it, he burned with zeal and his heart was stirred. He gave vent to righteous anger; he ran and killed him on the altar.
- 25** At the same time he killed the king's officer who was forcing them to sacrifice, and he tore down the altar.
- 26** Thus he burned with zeal for the law, just as Phinehas did against Zimri son of Salu.
- 27** Then Mattathias cried out in the town with a loud voice, saying: "Let every one who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me!"
- 28** Then he and his sons fled to the hills and left all that they had in the town.
- 29** At that time many who were seeking righteousness and justice went down to the wilderness to live there,
- 30** they, their sons, their wives, and their livestock, because troubles pressed heavily upon them.
- 31** And it was reported to the king's officers, and to the troops in Jerusalem the city of David, that those who had rejected the king's command had gone down to the hiding places in the wilderness.
- 32** Many pursued them, and overtook them; they encamped opposite them and prepared for battle against them on the sabbath day.
- 33** They said to them, "Enough of this! Come out and do what the king commands, and you will live."

34 But they said, "We will not come out, nor will we do what the king commands and so profane the sabbath day."

35 Then the enemy quickly attacked them.

36 But they did not answer them or hurl a stone at them or block up their hiding places,

37 for they said, "Let us all die in our innocence; heaven and earth testify for us that you are killing us unjustly."

38 So they attacked them on the sabbath, and they died, with their wives and children and livestock, to the number of a thousand persons.

39 When Mattathias and his friends learned of it, they mourned for them deeply.

40 And all said to their neighbors: "If we all do as our kindred have done and refuse to fight with the Gentiles for our lives and for our ordinances, they will quickly destroy us from the earth."

41 So they made this decision that day: "Let us fight against anyone who comes to attack us on the sabbath day; let us not all die as our kindred died in their hiding places."

42 Then there united with them a company of Hasideans, mighty warriors of Israel, all who offered themselves willingly for the law.

43 And all who became fugitives to escape their troubles joined them and reinforced them.

44 They organized an army, and struck down sinners in their anger and renegades in their wrath; the survivors fled to the Gentiles for safety.

45 And Mattathias and his friends went around and tore down the altars;

46 they forcibly circumcised all the uncircumcised boys that they found within the borders of Israel.

47 They hunted down the arrogant, and the work prospered in their hands.

48 They rescued the law out of the hands of the Gentiles and kings, and they never let the sinner gain the upper hand.

49 Now the days drew near for Mattathias to die, and he said to his sons: "Arrogance and scorn have now become strong; it is a time of ruin and furious anger.

50 Now, my children, show zeal for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of our ancestors.

51 "Remember the deeds of the ancestors, which they did in their generations; and you will receive great honor and an everlasting name.

52 Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness?

53 Joseph in the time of his distress kept the commandment, and became lord of Egypt.

54 Phinehas our ancestor, because he was deeply zealous, received the covenant of everlasting priesthood.

55 Joshua, because he fulfilled the command, became a judge in Israel.

56 Caleb, because he testified in the assembly, received an inheritance in the land.

57 David, because he was merciful, inherited the throne of the kingdom forever.

58 Elijah, because of great zeal for the law, was taken up into heaven.

59 Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael believed and were saved from the flame.

60 Daniel, because of his innocence, was delivered from the mouth of the lions.

61 "And so observe, from generation to generation, that none of those who put their trust in him will lack strength.

62 Do not fear the words of sinners, for their splendor will turn into dung and worms.

63 Today they will be exalted, but tomorrow they will not be found, because they will have returned to the dust, and their plans will have perished.

64 My children, be courageous and grow strong in the law, for by it you will gain honor.

65 "Here is your brother Simeon who, I know, is wise in counsel; always listen to him; he shall be your father.

66 Judas Maccabeus has been a mighty warrior from his youth; he shall command the army for you and fight the battle against the peoples.

67 You shall rally around you all who observe the law, and avenge the wrong done to your people.

68 Pay back the Gentiles in full, and obey the commands of the law."

69 Then he blessed them, and was gathered to his ancestors.

70 He died in the one hundred forty-sixth year and was buried in the tomb of his ancestors at Modein. And all Israel mourned for him with great lamentation.

1 MACCABEES 8

1 Now Judas heard of the fame of the Romans, that they were very strong and were well-disposed toward all who made an alliance with them, that they pledged friendship to those who came to them,

2 and that they were very strong. He had been told of their wars and of the brave deeds that they were doing among the Gauls, how they had defeated them and forced them to pay tribute,

3 and what they had done in the land of Spain to get control of the silver and gold mines there,

4 and how they had gained control of the whole region by their planning and patience, even though the place was far distant from them. They also subdued the kings who came against them from the ends of the earth, until they crushed them and inflicted great disaster on them; the rest paid them tribute every year.

5 They had crushed in battle and conquered Philip, and King Perseus of the Macedonians, and the others who rose up against them.

6 They also had defeated Antiochus the Great, king of Asia, who went to fight against them with one hundred twenty elephants and with cavalry and chariots and a very large army. He was crushed by them;

7 they took him alive and decreed that he and those who would reign after him should pay a heavy tribute and give hostages and surrender some of their best provinces,

8 the countries of India, Media, and Lydia. These they took from him and gave to King Eumenes.

9 The Greeks planned to come and destroy them,

10 but this became known to them, and they sent a general against the Greeks and attacked them. Many of them were wounded and fell, and the Romans took captive their wives and children; they plundered them, conquered the land, tore down their strongholds, and enslaved them to this day.

11 The remaining kingdoms and islands, as many as ever opposed them, they destroyed and enslaved;

12 but with their friends and those who rely on them they have kept friendship. They have subdued kings far and near, and as many as have heard of their fame have feared them.

13 Those whom they wish to help and to make kings, they make kings, and those whom they wish they depose; and they have been greatly exalted.

14 Yet for all this not one of them has put on a crown or worn purple as a mark of pride,

15 but they have built for themselves a senate chamber, and every day three hundred twenty senators constantly deliberate concerning the people, to govern them well.

16 They trust one man each year to rule over them and to control all their land; they all heed the one man, and there is no envy or jealousy among them.

17 So Judas chose Eupolemus son of John son of Accos, and Jason son of Eleazar, and sent them to Rome to establish friendship and alliance,

18 and to free themselves from the yoke; for they saw that the kingdom of the Greeks was enslaving Israel completely.

19 They went to Rome, a very long journey; and they entered the senate chamber and spoke as follows:

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

21 The proposal pleased them,

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

23 "May all go well with the Romans and with the nation of the Jews at sea and on land forever, and may sword and enemy be far from them.

24 If war comes first to Rome or to any of their allies in all their dominion,

- 25** the nation of the Jews shall act as their allies wholeheartedly, as the occasion may indicate to them.
- 26** To the enemy that makes war they shall not give or supply grain, arms, money, or ships, just as Rome has decided; and they shall keep their obligations without receiving any return.
- 27** In the same way, if war comes first to the nation of the Jews, the Romans shall willingly act as their allies, as the occasion may indicate to them.
- 28** And to their enemies there shall not be given grain, arms, money, or ships, just as Rome has decided; and they shall keep these obligations and do so without deceit.
- 29** Thus on these terms the Romans make a treaty with the Jewish people.
- 30** If after these terms are in effect both parties shall determine to add or delete anything, they shall do so at their discretion, and any addition or deletion that they may make shall be valid.
- 31** "Concerning the wrongs that King Demetrius is doing to them, we have written to him as follows, "Why have you made your yoke heavy on our friends and allies the Jews?"
- 32** If now they appeal again for help against you, we will defend their rights and fight you on sea and on land.'
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2 MACCABEES 10

- 1** Now Maccabeus and his followers, the Lord leading them on, recovered the temple and the city;
- 2** they tore down the altars that had been built in the public square by the foreigners, and also destroyed the sacred precincts.
- 3** They purified the sanctuary, and made another altar of sacrifice; then, striking fire out of flint, they offered sacrifices, after a lapse of two years, and they offered incense and lighted lamps and set out the bread of the Presence.
- 4** When they had done this, they fell prostrate and implored the Lord that they might never again fall into such misfortunes, but that, if they should ever sin, they might be disciplined by him with forbearance and not be handed over to blasphemous and barbarous nations.
- 5** It happened that on the same day on which the sanctuary had been profaned by the foreigners, the purification of the sanctuary took place, that is, on the twenty-fifth day of the same month, which was Chislev.
- 6** They celebrated it for eight days with rejoicing, in the manner of the festival of booths, remembering how not long before, during the festival of booths, they had been wandering in the mountains and caves like wild animals.
- 7** Therefore, carrying ivy-wreathed wands and beautiful branches and also fronds of palm, they offered hymns of thanksgiving to him who had given success to the purifying of his own holy place.
- 8** They decreed by public edict, ratified by vote, that the whole nation of the Jews should observe these days every year.
- 9** Such then was the end of Antiochus, who was called Epiphanes.
- 10** Now we will tell what took place under Antiochus Eupator, who was the son of that ungodly man, and will give a brief summary of the principal calamities of the wars.
- 11** This man, when he succeeded to the kingdom, appointed one Lysias to have charge of the government and to be chief governor of Coelesyria and Phoenicia.
- 12** Ptolemy, who was called Macron, took the lead in showing justice to the Jews because of the wrong that had been done to them, and attempted to maintain peaceful relations with them.
- 13** As a result he was accused before Eupator by the king's Friends. He heard himself called a traitor at every turn, because he had abandoned Cyprus, which Philometor had entrusted to him, and had gone over to Antiochus Epiphanes. Unable to command the respect due his office, he took poison and ended his life.
- 14** When Gorgias became governor of the region, he maintained a force of mercenaries, and at every turn kept attacking the Jews.
- 15** Besides this, the Idumeans, who had control of important strongholds, were harassing the Jews; they received those who were banished from Jerusalem, and endeavored to keep up the war.

16 But Maccabeus and his forces, after making solemn supplication and imploring God to fight on their side, rushed to the strongholds of the Idumeans.

17 Attacking them vigorously, they gained possession of the places, and beat off all who fought upon the wall, and slaughtered those whom they encountered, killing no fewer than twenty thousand.

18 When at least nine thousand took refuge in two very strong towers well equipped to withstand a siege,

19 Maccabeus left Simon and Joseph, and also Zacchaeus and his troops, a force sufficient to besiege them; and he himself set off for places where he was more urgently needed.

20 But those with Simon, who were money-hungry, were bribed by some of those who were in the towers, and on receiving seventy thousand drachmas let some of them slip away.

21 When word of what had happened came to Maccabeus, he gathered the leaders of the people, and accused these men of having sold their kindred for money by setting their enemies free to fight against them.

22 Then he killed these men who had turned traitor, and immediately captured the two towers.

23 Having success at arms in everything he undertook, he destroyed more than twenty thousand in the two strongholds.

24 Now Timothy, who had been defeated by the Jews before, gathered a tremendous force of mercenaries and collected the cavalry from Asia in no small number. He came on, intending to take Judea by storm.

25 As he drew near, Maccabeus and his men sprinkled dust on their heads and girded their loins with sackcloth, in supplication to God.

26 Falling upon the steps before the altar, they implored him to be gracious to them and to be an enemy to their enemies and an adversary to their adversaries, as the law declares.

27 And rising from their prayer they took up their arms and advanced a considerable distance from the city; and when they came near the enemy they halted.

28 Just as dawn was breaking, the two armies joined battle, the one having as pledge of success and victory not only their valor but also their reliance on the Lord, while the other made rage their leader in the fight.

29 When the battle became fierce, there appeared to the enemy from heaven five resplendent men on horses with golden bridles, and they were leading the Jews.

30 Two of them took Maccabeus between them, and shielding him with their own armor and weapons, they kept him from being wounded. They showered arrows and thunderbolts on the enemy, so that, confused and blinded, they were thrown into disorder and cut to pieces.

31 Twenty thousand five hundred were slaughtered, besides six hundred cavalry.

32 Timothy himself fled to a stronghold called Gazara, especially well garrisoned, where Chaereas was commander.

33 Then Maccabeus and his men were glad, and they besieged the fort for four days.

34 The men within, relying on the strength of the place, kept blaspheming terribly and uttering wicked words.

35 But at dawn of the fifth day, twenty young men in the army of Maccabeus, fired with anger because of the blasphemies, bravely stormed the wall and with savage fury cut down everyone they met.

36 Others who came up in the same way wheeled around against the defenders and set fire to the towers; they kindled fires and burned the blasphemers alive. Others broke open the gates and let in the rest of the force, and they occupied the city.

37 They killed Timothy, who was hiding in a cistern, and his brother Chaereas, and Apollophanes.

38 When they had accomplished these things, with hymns and thanksgivings they blessed the Lord who shows great kindness to Israel and gives them the victory.