

## Week 33, Lecture 101.<sup>1</sup> Antiochus Despoils the Temple, 1 Macc 1:16-28.

**War in Egypt. 16-19.** And the kingdom was ready in the sight of Antiochus, and he undertook to become king of the land of Egypt so that he might rule over the two kingdoms. <sup>17</sup> And he invaded Egypt with a heavily armed host, with chariots and elephants and a large fleet. <sup>18</sup> And he made war against Ptolemy, king of Egypt, and Ptolemy turned from before him and fled, and many fell wounded. <sup>19</sup> And they seized the fortified cities in the land of Egypt, and he took the spoils of the land of Egypt (NETS). <sup>2</sup>

### Some historical background.

We read about the alliances and battles of the “King of the North” and the “King of the South” in Daniel 11. The boy-king Ptolemy VI of Egypt was actually the nephew of Antiochus, the son of his sister. When the regents of the Ptolemaic boy king moved to invade Seleucid territory, Antiochus reacted. He probably intended to function personally as his nephew’s regent, thus protecting his southern border. The author of 1 Maccabees does not mention that Antiochus might have felt threatened. He simply portrays him as hungry for power

**Antiochus in Jerusalem, Verse 20.** And Antiochus returned after conquering Egypt in **the one hundred forty-third year** and went up against Israel and went up against Hierosolyma with a heavily armed host.

143<sup>rd</sup> year. A note to the NRSV gives this as **169. B.C.**

<sup>21</sup> And he entered the holy precinct with arrogance and took the golden altar and the lamp stand for the light and all its utensils <sup>22</sup> and the table of presentation and the libation bowls and the saucers and the golden censers **and the veil** and the crowns, and he stripped off all the gold ornamentation on the façade of the shrine. <sup>23</sup> And he took the silver and the gold and the precious vessels, and he took the hidden treasures, which he found. <sup>24</sup> And taking everything, he left for his own land (NETS)

**“Entered the Sanctuary.”** Writing about one of the Ptolemies, **3 Maccabees** has no problem with this.

When he [King Ptolemy] arrived in Hierosolyma, he sacrificed to the supreme God, bestowed favors and performed what was befitting that place. Directly upon entering the place he was struck by its beauty and excellence. (3 Macc 1:9 NETS)

So entering the sanctuary was okay for a king; only the Holy of Holies was off limits (3 Macc 1:11).

Antiochus did not violate this rule. Josephus says the Roman **Pompey** was the 1<sup>st</sup> non-Jew to enter the Holy of Holies. However, if **the veil** mentioned in v. 22 were the one in front of the Holy of Holies, that would have been sacrilegious.

### No reason given for this attack.

Doran suggests that from the author’s perspective, this was because the Jews had violated the covenant.<sup>3</sup> Recall, verse 15 was about an operation to disguise circumcision.

### Probably not singling out the Jews.

Babylonian records report that he robbed the Esagil (a temple) in Babylon.

The Greek historian Polybius reports that Antiochus robbed temples.<sup>4</sup>

The raid on the Temple in Jerusalem was part of his policy to increase his revenues.

For a more recent example, consider Henry VIII’s confiscation of Catholic Church properties.

Often political rulers have political reasons for actions that the pious find religiously offensive.

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<sup>1</sup> Lectures are numbered consecutively. Although this is this week’s first lecture, its number reflects its place in the **total** sequence.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all quotations in this week’s lectures are from the [NETS](#), copyright 2007 by the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Inc.

<sup>3</sup> Doran, *1 Maccabees*, 34.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

### 24b-28, A Dirge/ Lament

- [He both]<sup>5</sup> carried out murder  
and spoke with great arrogance.  
<sup>25</sup> And there was great mourning in Israel,  
in every place of theirs.  
<sup>26</sup> And rulers and elders groaned,  
virgins and young men weakened,  
and the beauty of the women was deformed.  
<sup>27</sup> Every bridegroom took up lamentation;  
she who sat in the bridal chamber was in mourning.  
<sup>28</sup> And the land quaked for those dwelling in it,  
and all the house of Iakob was clothed with shame. (NETS)

### Remarks on Hebrew Poetry

Several translations<sup>6</sup> and commentators<sup>7</sup> see these verses as poetry.

Most verses of Hebrew poetry have two parts; some have three.

Hebrew poetry is marked by various types of parallelism.

The parallel structure makes it possible (& often necessary) to understand **words that have been omitted**.

**Step Parallelism.** The following line completes the thought of the previous line, or modifies the structure.

- <sup>24b</sup> [He both] carried out murder  
**and spoke with great arrogance.**  
  
<sup>26</sup> And rulers and elders groaned,  
virgins and young men weakened,  
**and the beauty of the women was deformed.**

**Synonymous Parallelism:** the lines convey a similar meaning.

The majority of the lines in this poem fall into this category. I have highlighted the elements which are in parallel.

A **red font** shows a thought that is implicit. Part of the power of Hebrew poetry is its highly “compressed” nature.

- <sup>25</sup> And there was great mourning in Israel,  
[there was great mourning] in every place of theirs.  
  
<sup>28</sup> And the land quaked for those dwelling in it,  
and all the house of Iakob was clothed with shame [for those dwelling in it].

The parallel thoughts **mutually interpret** each other.

“All the house of Iakob” makes specific “the land.”

“Quaked” and “was clothed with shame” are two different images for the same experience.

They are **not sequential events**.

**Antithetic Parallelism.** The lines express contrasting ideas. [no examples in this poem]

**Where do we find Hebrew Poetry?** Of course it is found in Psalms.

Many are not aware that most of Proverbs and the greatest part of Job are in poetic form.

Furthermore, all of the **oracles** in the writings of the prophets are poetic.

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<sup>5</sup> I have slightly modified the NETS to make the poetic structure more clear. The NETS reads simply “and” instead of “He both.” I will not bore you with the grammatical justification, but my translation qualifies as “very literal.”

<sup>6</sup> NRSV & NETS regard the poem as including 24b-28. NAB regards 24b as prose, and 25-28 as poetry.

<sup>7</sup> E.g., Collins, Doran, McEleney.

### Function of Poetry in the Story

Doran (34) compares the use of poetry here with how the canticles function in the Lucan Infancy Narrative. The Canticles of Zechariah, Mary, & Simeon provide an atmosphere of OT piety.

A similar effect is achieved here; however, the amount of poetry is significantly less than we find in Luke!

## Week 33, Lecture 102. Antiochus Despoils the Temple, 2 Macc 5:1-21

In this lecture we will take a look at the same events as narrated by 2 Maccabees.

**Background information, V. 1.** About this time Antiochus made his second invasion of Egypt.

### Antiochus invade Egypt twice.

The first invasion was in 170-169. 1 Maccabees places Antiochus' raid on the Jerusalem Temple after this first war. The second invasion of Egypt was in 168 B.C. 2 Maccabees places Antiochus' raid on the Temple after this 2<sup>nd</sup> war. Certainty is impossible, but most commentators think that 1 Maccabees is more historically correct.

**Heavenly Portents, 2-4.** And it happened that, for almost forty days, there appeared over all the city golden-clad cavalry charging through the air, in companies fully armed with lances and drawn daggers-- <sup>3</sup> troops of cavalry drawn up, attacks and counterattacks made on this side and on that, brandishing of shields, massing of spears, hurling of missiles, the flash of golden trappings and armor of all kinds. <sup>4</sup> Therefore everyone prayed that the apparition might prove to have been a good omen (NETS).

**Hellenistic Historiography. Josephus reports heavenly portents** before the Jewish War vs. Rome.

Thus there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year. <sup>290</sup> Thus also, before the Jews' rebellion, and before those commotions which preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month of Xanthikos [Nisan -- ca. April], and at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone around the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright daytime; which lasted for half an hour. <sup>291</sup> This light seemed to be a good sign to the unskilful, but was so interpreted by the sacred scribes as to portend those events that followed immediately upon it.<sup>8</sup>

***In Hoc Signo Vincas.* Recall also the well-known story about Constantine.**

Before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge he had a vision of a heavenly cross.

He had his soldiers paint crosses on their shields.

Eventually he made Christianity the official religion of his empire.

The author of 2 Maccabees is using well-known techniques of Hellenistic historiography.

**Rumors, & Disputes, 5-10.** <sup>5</sup> When a false rumor arose that Antiochus was dead, Jason took no fewer than a thousand men and suddenly made an assault on the city.

Even with our modern means of communications, rumors and misinformation are easy in the "fog of battle." Recall that Jason had bribed his way to the high-priesthood, but then been out-bid by Menelaus.

**Verses 6-7a.** When the troops on the wall had been forced back and at last the city was being taken, Menelaus took refuge in the acropolis. <sup>6</sup> But Jason kept relentlessly slaughtering his compatriots, not realizing that success at the cost of one's kindred is the greatest misfortune but imagining that he was setting up trophies of victory over enemies and not over compatriots. <sup>7</sup> He did not, however, gain control of the government;

We are not told why Jason did not succeed. Presumably the garrison was well supplied, and could await reinforcement.

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<sup>8</sup> Josephus, *Jewish War*, 6:289-291, accessed via *BibleWorks*. The portents continue to paragraph 309.

**Verses 7b -9.** in the end he got only disgrace from his conspiracy and fled again into the Ammanitis [Ammonites, in other translations].<sup>8</sup> Finally he met a miserable end. Accused<sup>a</sup> before Aretas the ruler of the Arabs, fleeing from city to city, pursued by everyone, hated as a rebel against the laws and abhorred as the executioner of his country and his compatriots, he was cast ashore in Egypt.<sup>9</sup> There he, who had driven many from their own country into exile, died in exile, having embarked to go to the Spartans in hope of finding protection because of their kinship.<sup>10</sup> He who had cast out many to lie unburied had no one to mourn for him; he had no funeral of any sort and no place in his ancestral tomb. (NETS)

**“Fast Forward.”** Here the author leaves the immediate story line to do a “fast forward” to the ultimate end of Jason. He does this to give a “moral of the story.” The wicked are always punished. The punishment fits the crime. This is characteristic of his style. After making this moral point, he returns to the story.

**Antiochus Attacks Jerusalem, 11-16.**<sup>11</sup> When news of what had happened reached the king, he took it to mean that **Judea was in revolt**. So, raging inwardly, he left Egypt and took the city by force.

**Judea in Revolt.** Was this a totally unreasonable assumption on his part?

Jason, the high priest he had deposed, had returned to Jerusalem;

His latest appointee (Menelaus) had taken refuge in the acropolis with his garrison.

This garrison in Jerusalem was under siege by Jason.

Recall that 1 Maccabees made no mention of intra-Jewish strife before the arrival of Antiochus.

1 Maccabees had portrayed this simply as “foreigners vs. Jews.”

2 Maccabees helps us see the actual situation was more complex.

**Verses 12-14.** He commanded his soldiers to cut down relentlessly everyone they met and to kill those who went into their houses.<sup>13</sup> Then there were massacres of young and old, destruction of women and children, slayings of virgins and infants.<sup>14</sup> Within the total of three days **eighty thousand** were destroyed, forty thousand in hand-to-hand fighting, and as many were sold into slavery as were killed.

Commentators say the numbers are exaggerated.

**Verses 15-16, the Temple Despoiled.** Not content with this, Antiochus dared to enter the most holy temple in all the world, guided by Menelaus, who had become a traitor both to the laws and to his country,<sup>16</sup> taking the sacred vessels with his polluted hands and pulling down with profane hands the votive offerings that other kings had made to enhance the glory and honor of the place. (NETS)

We have seen that robbing temples is “par for the course” for Antiochus. Also, he is being portrayed as Nebuchadnezzar (who stole the Temple vessels), and as Belshazzar, who drank from them in the story of the “handwriting on the wall” (Daniel 5).

**Editorial Comments, 17-21.**<sup>17</sup> Antiochus was **elated in spirit**, and did not perceive that the Lord was angered for a little while because of the sins of those who dwelt in the city, and that therefore he was disregarding the holy place.

**“Elated in spirit.”** The purpose of the author is to highlight excessive human pride – always bad in ancient histories! This will form a “frame” with **“his mind was elated”** in v. 21.

**Verse 18.** But if it had not happened that they were involved in many sins, this man would have been scourged and turned back from his rash act as soon as he came forward, just as Heliodorus was, whom Seleucus the king sent to inspect the treasury.

Now we see the purpose of the earlier story of Heliodorus being punished for his disrespect for the Temple.

**The author’s theology is “Deuteronomistic.”**

When God’s people are faithful, they are rewarded; when they disregard the covenant, they are punished. This theology underlies Deuteronomy, and the DH (Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings)

**Verse 19.** But the Lord did not choose the nation for the sake of the holy place, but the place for the sake of the nation.

The insight behind this verse is much the same as the pronouncement of Jesus:

“The Sabbath is made for people, not people for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28 & parallels)

**Verse 20.** Therefore the place itself shared in the misfortunes that befell the nation and afterward participated in its benefits; and what was forsaken in the wrath of the Almighty was restored again in all its glory when the great Lord became reconciled.

More deuteronomistic theology.

**Verse 21.** So Antiochus carried off eighteen hundred talents from the temple, and hurried away to Antioch, thinking in his arrogance that he could **sail on the land and walk on the sea**, because **his mind was elated**. (RSV).<sup>9</sup>

**V. 21. “his mind was elated.”** This closes the “frame” that began in v. 17.

A “frame” is one way that ancient authors emphasize their main point.

They did not have **bold type or highlighting!**

**V. 21, “sail on the land and walk on the sea.”**

The author of 2 Maccabees is borrowing from the Greek historian Herodotus.

The Persian King Xerxes had invaded Greece (492-490 B.C.).

He had ships make a pontoon bridge across the Hellespont to get his army across (“walk on water”)

He had a canal dug through Mount Athos to keep the fleet close to the army (“sail on land”)

Herodotus derides the pride of the Persian Emperor, thinking he could “walk on water and sail on land.”

About 300 years later, the author of 2 Maccabees uses this same language

**My Dissertation.** I came across these passages when I was doing my dissertation.

I wrote on the historical origin of the story of Jesus walking on the sea.

Scholars in the History-of-Religions school had proposed these accounts as the source for the Gospel story.

(This was one of several theories of the origin of the story that I argued against before presenting my own.)

However, the main purpose of these stories is to symbolically describe human pride that leads to disaster.

It is unlikely that any evangelist would draw on such a famous negative story to portray Jesus!

My main task in my dissertation was to argue that these stories about **walking on the sea** were **not** NT background!

### **Summary.**

At this point (169 BC) relations between the Jews and the Seleucids have been deteriorating for 6 years.

Antiochus IV had begun his reign in 175 B.C.

Under Antiochus III, relations had been good. This king had given funds to adorn & repair the Temple

Political considerations made it wise for this Seleucid king to be on good terms with the Jews.

Now the situation was different. There was a real threat to his southern border.

Regents of the boy-king Ptolemy, with hope of aid from Rome, had actually moved against his territory.

He was also under pressure from Rome & its allies in Asia Minor.

He felt the pressure to raise funds, and was robbing temples throughout his empire. He is angry at the revolt of Jason.

There has been considerable Hellenization, with the cooperation of the upper classes in the city of Jerusalem.

However, at this point, there has not been any **religious persecution**. That situation will soon change.

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<sup>9</sup> These verses are from the RSV. I choose this translation because it (along with the NRSV and the NAB) is a more literal rendition of verse 21 than NETS.

## Week 33, Lecture 103. Appolonius Attacks Jerusalem, 2 Macc 5:22-26; 1 Macc 1:29-35

**Review & Intro.** In 2 Macc 5:1-21 we read how Antiochus attacked Jerusalem, and despoiled the Temple.

Here is the **Summary** I gave when we last met, some time ago.

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**We pick up the story in 2 Macc 5:22-26 [Post Lecture Note: I will deal with v. 27 in Lecture 105]**

<sup>22</sup> He left governors to oppress the people: at Hierosolyma, Philip, by birth a Phrygian and in character more barbarous than the man who appointed him; <sup>23</sup> and on Garizim<sup>a</sup>, Andronicus, and besides these Menelaus, who lorded it over the citizens worse than the others did because of his malice toward the Judean citizens. <sup>24</sup> Antiochus sent Apollonius, the **captain of the Mysians**, with an army of twenty-two thousand and ordered him to kill all the grown men and to sell the women and boys as slaves. <sup>25</sup> When this man arrived in Hierosolyma, he pretended to be peaceably disposed and waited until the holy sabbath day; then, finding the Judeans not at work, he ordered his troops to parade under arms. <sup>26</sup> He put to the sword all those who came out to see them, then rushed into the city with his armed warriors and killed great numbers of people (NETS).

### Captain of the Mysians

1 Mac 1:29 **Chief** collector-of-tribute || 2 Macc 5:24 **Captain** of-the-Mysians

**śar hammûsîm** שַׂר הַמוֹסִים **śar hammûsîm** שַׂר הַמִּיִּסִים

2 Maccabees was originally written in Hebrew. It appears the Greek translator has misread the Hebrew.

He has mistaken a *vav* ך for a *yod* ך. <sup>10</sup>

This is very easy to do, especially if a scribe's handwriting was sloppy -- if he wrote the *vav* too short!

Little details like this are important for some big debates, e.g., the **verbal dictation theory** of biblical inspiration.

**Motivation for attack?** No motivation is given in 2 Maccabees.

For apparently no reason Antiochus decided to "oppress the people," to kill the men and enslave the women & boys.

Doran notes that the motivation in 1 Maccabees (see below) is to install & fortify a Seleucid garrison in Jerusalem.

1 Maccabees dates this event a couple of years after Antiochus' invasion of Egypt.

This invasion ended with his humiliation by the Romans.

The installation of the garrison is thus an attempt by Antiochus to shore up his southern border

vs. a Ptolemaic Egypt now allied with Rome.

**Here is the version in 1 Maccabees**

**1 Macc 1:29-35. 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. <sup>30</sup> 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

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<sup>10</sup> Doran, "First Maccabees," *NIB*, vol. 4. p. 36.

Israel. <sup>31</sup> He plundered the city, burned it with fire, and **tore down** its houses and its **surrounding walls**. <sup>32</sup> And they took captive the women and children, and seized the cattle. <sup>33</sup> Then they fortified the city of David with a great strong wall and strong towers, and it became their **citadel**. <sup>34</sup> And they stationed there a **sinful people, lawless men**. These strengthened their position; <sup>35</sup> they stored up arms and food, and collecting the spoils of Jerusalem they stored them there, and became a great snare.(RSV)

**Comments.** Two years later. This would be **167 B.C.**<sup>11</sup>

Tore down walls: typical treatment of a city considered to be rebellious. Fortified citadel.

Chief Collector of Tribute. Usually identified with Apollonius, whom we saw in 2 Macc 5:24.

Apollonius there is called the “captain of the Mysians.” I’ve already commented on that.

**Sinful People.** Doran argues that “sinful people” is an echo of Isaiah 1:4 “Ah, sinful nation.”

Isaiah was chastising unfaithful **Israel!** Doran sees here a reference **Jewish** supporters, as well as foreign troops.<sup>12</sup>

Collins and McEleney give a similar interpretation.

**Lawless men, andras para-nomous**, literally “men [males] outside the law”

Douay & KJ Apocrypha<sup>13</sup> read “**wicked men**,” NAB, “**perverse men**,” NETS “**lawless men**.”

All these translations could be construed to refer to sinful Gentiles **only**.

However, earlier in the chapter (v. 11) this phrase was used of those who came forth “**from Israel**.”

NRSV translates “**renegades**,” and NABRE “**transgressors of the law**.”

Both translations envision at least some **Jews** as belonging to the citadel garrison. I think this is more accurate.

### Week 33, Lecture 104. A Lament Over Jerusalem, 1 Macc 1:36-40 Some Remarks on Hebrew Poetry

**Some Bibles Print These Verses as prose; others as poetry.** A good case can be made for regarding it as poetry.

Hebrew poetry is characterized not by rhyme or meter, but by various form of **parallelism**.

Sometimes a few concrete illustrations are worth many words.

**1 Macc 1:36-40, A Lament / Dirge.** The NABRE does a good job on capturing the poetry

**The citadel became an ambush against the sanctuary,** **synonymous doublet**

**and a wicked adversary to Israel at all times.**

<sup>37</sup> **They shed innocent blood around the sanctuary;** **synonymous doublet**

**they defiled the sanctuary.**

<sup>38</sup> **Because of them the inhabitants of Jerusalem fled away,** **she became the abode of strangers.** **Triplet 1**

**She became a stranger to her own offspring,** **and her children forsook her.** **Trip. 2 chiasm**

<sup>39</sup> **Her sanctuary became desolate as a wilderness;** **Triplet 3, Step**

**Her feasts were turned into mourning,** **synonymous triplet**

**Her sabbaths to shame,**

**Her honor to contempt.**

<sup>40</sup> **As her glory had been, so great was her dishonor:** **synonymous doublet**

**her exaltation was turned into mourning.**

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<sup>11</sup> McEleney, “1-2 Maccabees,” *NJBC*, 426; *JBC* 1. 466.

<sup>12</sup> Doran, “First Maccabees,” 36.

<sup>13</sup> 1769 Blayney edition of the KJV, accessed via *Bibleworks*.

**Synonymous Parallelism.** Similar ideas are expressed, and mutually interpret each other. Most often this type of parallelism occurs in **doublets**, but we have one **synonymous triplet**. I have color-coded the parallel elements in the doublets & triplet to make them more obvious. I won't do them all in detail. Let's look more closely at the synonymous triplet.

### Chiasm

Notice that in simple parallelism, the parallel elements are **in the same order**.

Yellow Gray  
Yellow Gray

In a chiasm the order of the second member is reversed

Yellow Gray  
Gray Yellow

If you "connect the colors" yellow to yellow, and gray to gray, it will make an X.

What we call an "ex" looks like a capital *chi* in Greek. The name *chiasm* comes from resemblance to this Greek letter.

*Chi* = Ch in English, and is the first letter in the Greek spelling of "Christ."

χ ρ ι σ τ ο ς    c h r i s t o s

What some call a PX (Pee-Ex) is actually a *Chi -Rho* written on top of each other = Chr (abbreviation for "Christ,")



Xmas is not "taking Christ out of Christmas!" It is "abbreviating Christ in Greek!"

**Step Parallelism.** This takes what has been stated, and advances the idea another "step."

I think we have one example of this, the first part of verse 9, "Her sanctuary became desolate as a wilderness."

This takes the ideas of the **chiasm** in v. 38, and advances them to the next "step."

### Importance of Hebrew Poetry

Learning to appreciate Hebrew poetry gives greater insight into much of scripture.

Everybody knows that the Psalms and certain canticles in the OT are poetic, e.g., Song of Moses, Deborah, Hannah.

Fewer are aware that much of Proverbs is in fact poetry.

Furthermore, the **oracles** of most of the prophets are poetic.

For the NT, some of the Lucan canticles, e.g., Mary's Magnificat, are built on Hebrew poetic forms.

In addition, some of the aphorisms of Jesus can be recognized as containing poetic parallelism.

## Week 33, Lecture 105. Persecution Begins, 1 Macc 1:41-64; 2 Macc 5:27

### The Edict of Antiochus 1 Macc 1:41-51a

Then the king **wrote to his whole kingdom** that all should be one people, <sup>42</sup> and that each should give up his customs. <sup>43</sup> 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. <sup>44</sup> And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, <sup>45</sup> to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane sabbaths and feasts, <sup>46</sup> to defile the sanctuary and the priests, <sup>47</sup> to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and unclean animals, <sup>48</sup> and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, <sup>49</sup> so

that they should forget the law and change all the ordinances. <sup>50</sup> "And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die." <sup>51</sup> In such words he wrote to his whole kingdom. (RSV)

### **Wrote to whole kingdom.**

All three of my commentators (Collins, Doran, McEleney) agree that there is no extra-biblical evidence for this. Rather, the efforts of Antiochus seem to be focused against the Jews.

However, it appears that **many Jews** actually **welcomed the changes.**

1 Maccabees characterizes this as **"adopting his [Antiochus'] religion,"** hardly a neutral description!

### **The Portrait of Antiochus -- Observations from Doran**

The author of 1 Maccabees paints Antiochus IV as a hubristic propagandist for his own gods and so demonizes him. All war propaganda does the same. The Germans during World War I were called "pillaging, raping Huns." All communists became tarred with the slogan "Better dead than Red." Politicians regularly accuse their opponents of being "socialist" or, inversely, "fascist." Such a temptation to demonize and to ostracize opponents as "the other" is always present when conflict or disagreement arises, but it is a tendency that should be resisted. The rhetoric of violence, of estrangement, must be eschewed if common ground is to be found among all peoples. Successful diplomatic negotiations may, in fact, hinge on treating one's opponent with respect.<sup>14</sup>

### **The King's Regulations**

Nobody has to take an oath of loyalty to a pagan god. All the regulations involve **religious practice.**

Examples: observing the sabbath, circumcision, dietary regulations, worshipping in places other than Jerusalem.

In times of stress "identity markers" take on added significance.

Many contemporary Catholic conservatives think it was a mistake to change the rule about not eating meat on Fridays.

**Reflections on Identity Markers.** What marks "identity" is often different for intellectuals and simple believers.

### **Observations by Collins**

Prior to the king's edict the conflict in Jerusalem might possibly have been seen as one between a rigid and exclusive traditionalism and a new universalistic view of Judaism which was open to Greek culture.

[**Aside.** At this point I "ad-libbed" a contemporary memory that illustrated the point Collins is making here.]

The edict, however, is itself rigidly exclusive of traditional Judaism. Jewish tradition and Hellenistic culture are now set up as mutually exclusive. The king is attempting to suppress the distinctive identity of the Jews, presumably because he saw it as a source of insubordination.<sup>15</sup>

People are now going to have to "take sides."

The traditionalists probably welcomed this development, though they certainly did not welcome the persecution!

### **Antiochus' Edict Is Put into Effect, 1 Macc 1:51b-64**

And he appointed inspectors over all the people and commanded the cities of Judah to offer sacrifice, city by city. <sup>52</sup> Many of the people, every one **who forsook the law**, joined them, and they did evil in the land; <sup>53</sup> they drove Israel into hiding in every place of refuge they had. <sup>54</sup> Now on the **15th day of Chislev, in the 145<sup>th</sup> year**, they erected a **desolating sacrilege** upon the altar of burnt offering. They also built altars in the surrounding cities of Judah, <sup>55</sup> and burned incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets. <sup>56</sup> The books of the law which they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire. <sup>57</sup> Where the book of the covenant was found in the possession of any one, or if any one adhered to the law, the decree of the king condemned him to death. <sup>58</sup> They kept using violence against Israel, against those found month after month in the cities. <sup>59</sup> And on the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar which was upon the altar of burnt offering. <sup>60</sup> According to the decree, they put to death the women who had their children circumcised, <sup>61</sup> and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers' necks. <sup>62</sup> But many in Israel stood

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Doran, "[The First Book of Maccabees](#)," in *New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 4 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994–2004), 41.

<sup>15</sup> Collins, *1-2 Maccabees*, 159-160.

firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. <sup>63</sup> They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die. <sup>64</sup> And very great wrath came upon Israel. (RSV, numbers slightly modified)

### People who “forsook the Law.”

Observations from Collins -- similar to the observations on Antiochus made by Doran.

He points out that Jason & Menelaus, who obtained the high-priesthood by bribery, were not honorable.

Yet the issues were not so black and white as 1 Maccabees presents them. The Hellenizers, those who favored acceptance of a Greek way of life, undoubtedly saw their actions as a **liberalization and updating of Judasim** [not as “forsaking the Law” PJM]. Throughout the Hellenistic world the Jews were regarded as strange and inhospitable because of the exclusivity of their religion. Many Jews who lived in the Greek-speaking world, in centers such as Alexandria in Egypt, learned to preserve their Jewish tradition in ways that down-played its differences from the surrounding culture. **The reformers in Jerusalem** must also have had some vision of Judaism as an integral part of the culture of the day.<sup>16</sup>

### One person’s “patriot” is another person’s “traitor.”

For years Catholics refused to say “Protestant **Reformation**.” Our history books recounted the “Protestant **Revolt**.”

The issue of Hellenization will be alive and well in the first century A.D.!

Tensions between Hellenistic Jews and more conservative Jews became Christian tensions!

The early Church included members from **both** of these groups.

Once Paul is arrested in Jerusalem, **Acts records no single member of the Jerusalem Church** speaking up for him.

Many conservative Jewish Christians probably thought that the “troublemaker” was getting what he deserved. Consider contemporary tensions within Catholicism.

Those who think that Vatican II “went too far,” and those who see it as a “tiny step” in the right direction!

### Verse 54, 15<sup>th</sup> of Chislev, 145<sup>th</sup> year [of the Greeks] = December 6, 167 B.C.<sup>17</sup>

### Desolating Sacrilege, a.k.a. Desolating Abomination, Abomination of Desolation

The event was setting up an altar to Zeus Olympus inside the Jerusalem Temple atop the old altar of burnt offering.

Daniel refers to the event.

**Dan 11:31.** Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the continual burnt offering. And they shall set up **the abomination that makes desolate**. (RSV)

Study of the books of Maccabees is not only helpful for understanding the world of the NT.

It is **essential** for understanding the original meaning of Daniel.

Mark uses this phrase to describe the **Roman desecration of the Temple** in 70 A.D.

**Mark 13:14.** And when you shall see **the abomination of desolation**, standing where it ought not: he that readeth let him understand: then let them that are in Judea, flee unto the mountains: (Douay)

### A Glimmer of Hope

**2 Macc 5:27.** But Judas Makkabaios, with about nine others, got away to the wilderness and kept himself and his companions alive in the mountains as wild animals do; they continued to live on what grew wild so that they might not share in the defilement. (NETS)

**Early Introduction.** By introducing Judas here, the author is skipping the story of the revolt of Mattathias.

We will read about this next time, as we look at 1 Maccabees chapter 2.

The author of 2 Maccabees is going to spend two chapters, 6 & 7, narrating the sufferings of the martyrs.

He will come back to Judas in chapter 8. The early introduction has the effect of giving the reader a “glimmer of hope.”

The reader will need this, as chapters 6 and 7 will give gory details of fearsome persecutions.

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<sup>16</sup> Collins, *Daniel, 1-2 Maccabees*, 156-157.

<sup>17</sup> NABRE, footnote to 1 Macc 1:54. Doran, “First Maccabees,” 40 makes it “about the middle of December.”