

## Week 36, Lecture 113.<sup>1</sup> The First Victories of Judas, 1 Macc 3:1-37.

### Procedure NOT RECORDED

Trying to go through 1 & 2 Maccabees in **strict chronological order** would involve many switches back and forth.

2 Macc 8:1-7

1 Maccabees 3

2 Maccabees 8:8-36 [except 30-33, which would belong later]

Instead, I am going to take larger blocks of material from roughly the same time periods.

There are some “big problems.”

1 Maccabees records the rededication of the Temple (chapter 4) **before** the death of Antiochus IV (chapter 6).

2 Maccabees records the rededication of the Temple (chapter 10) **after** the death of Antiochus IV (chapter 9).

The commentators think that, in this case, the order of 2 Maccabees is better.

I hope to have a new (prospective!) “Order of Procedure” for you soon.

### Current Plan

1a) Follow 1 Maccabees up to the point of the rededication of the Temple (1 Maccabees 3:1-4:35) – **Today?**

1b) Follow 2 Maccabees up to the same point (2 Maccabees 8).

2a) Give the story of the death of Antiochus IV as found in 1 Macc 6:1-17

2b) Give the story of the death of Antiochus IV as found in 2 Maccabees 9.

3a) Give the story of the rededication of the Temple in 1 Maccabees 10

**Cutting out my scripture reading** reduced the length of the lecture from 22 minutes to just over 14 minutes.

You may want to read the scriptures ahead of time. Or you may **pause the lecture** at suggested points.

If any online users want to give me feedback about this option (**pro or con**), feel free to send me an e-mail.

### Lecture Begins Here: Summary

Mattathias has died. He has appointed his sons Simon & Judas to lead the people.

The role of Simon is analogous to that of Moses; the role of Judas is analogous to that of Joshua, Moses’ general.

**1 Macc 3:1-2.** Then Judas his son, who was called Maccabeus, took command in his place. <sup>2</sup> All his brothers and all who had joined his father helped him; they gladly fought for Israel.

### Praise of Judas, 1 Macc 3:3-9 **Please pause the lecture to read the scripture.**<sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup> He extended the glory of his people. Like a giant he **put on his breastplate**;  
he girded on his armor of war and waged battles,  
protecting the host by his sword.

<sup>4</sup> He was like a lion in his deeds,  
like a lion's cub roaring for prey.

<sup>5</sup> He searched out and pursued the **lawless**;  
he **burned** those who **troubled his people**.

<sup>6</sup> **Lawless** men shrank back for fear of him;  
all the evildoers were confounded;  
and deliverance prospered by his hand.

<sup>7</sup> He embittered many kings,  
but he made Jacob glad by his deeds,  
and his memory is blessed for ever.

<sup>8</sup> He went through the cities of Judah;  
he destroyed the **ungodly** out of the land;  
thus he turned away **wrath** from Israel.

<sup>9</sup> He was renowned to the ends of the earth;  
he gathered in those who were perishing.

<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> To keep the lecture length manageable, I have cut out my reading of the RSV translation.

### 3, put on his breastplate

As early as Homer's Iliad bards used stock descriptions of warriors arming themselves.

The director of *Troy* does a good job going back & forth between Hector & Achilles. These "stock scenes," once memorized, could be used over and over again.

### V. 5 & 6, the "lawless" who "trouble Israel."

These are probably fellow Jews who do not agree with the approach of the Maccabees.

Those who "trouble Israel" are Israelites!

Ahab accuses Elijah of troubling Israel, and Elijah says that Ahab is the true "troubler of Israel" (1 Kings 18:18)

In Joshua 7, the "troubler of Israel" is Achan, who ignored the prohibition of taking booty.

The NABRE emphasizes this by rendering the "ungodly" (*asebēs*) of v. 8 as "renegades."

### V. 6, Judas "burned" the enemy. Probably an allusion to Elijah

He called down fire from heaven in his contest with the priests of Baal.

He also called fire down on 2 captains & their 50 men who had been sent to arrest him (2 Kings 1).

### V. 7, his memory. Unlike 2 Maccabees, the author of 1 Maccabees does not have hope for resurrection.

The traditional hope "being remembered" by the people is the reward for his heroes.

### V.8,wrath. This is the anger of the Lord because of Israel's sin. (Deuteronomistic theology).

### Victory over Apollonius

<sup>10</sup> But Apollonius gathered together Gentiles and a large force from Samaria to fight against Israel. <sup>11</sup> When Judas learned of it, he went out to meet him, and he defeated and killed him. Many were wounded and fell, and the rest fled. <sup>12</sup> Then they seized their spoils; and Judas took the sword of Apollonius, and used it in battle the rest of his life.

First victory recorded.

Apollonius, 2 Maccabees mentions 3 people named Apollonius. 1 Maccabees does not tell us which one it is. <sup>3</sup>

### Took the sword of Apollonius. This recalls the story of David & Goliath.

David beheads Goliath with his own sword. Later it is kept at the sanctuary (1 Sam 21:9; 22:10)

There will be more references & allusions to David in the stories of Judas.

### Victory over Seron, 1 Macc 3:13-26. Please stop the lecture to read the scripture.

<sup>13</sup> Now when Seron, the commander of the Syrian army, heard that Judas had gathered a large company, including a body of faithful men who stayed with him and went out to battle, <sup>14</sup> he said, "I will make a name for myself and win honor in the kingdom. I will make war on Judas and his companions, who scorn the king's command." <sup>15</sup> And again a strong army of ungodly men went up with him to help him, to take vengeance on the sons of Israel. <sup>16</sup> When he approached the ascent of Bethhoron, Judas went out to meet him with a small company. <sup>17</sup> But when they saw the army coming to meet them, they said to Judas, "How can we, few as we are, fight against so great and strong a multitude? And we are faint, for we have eaten nothing today." <sup>18</sup> Judas replied, "It is easy for many to be hemmed in by few, for in the sight of Heaven there is no difference between saving by many or by few. <sup>19</sup> It is not on the size of the army that victory in battle depends, but strength comes from Heaven. <sup>20</sup> They come against us in great pride and lawlessness to destroy us and our wives and our children, and to despoil us; <sup>21</sup> but we fight for our lives and our laws. <sup>22</sup> He himself will crush them before us; as for you, do not be afraid of them." <sup>23</sup> When he finished speaking, he rushed suddenly against Seron and his army, and they were crushed before him. <sup>24</sup> They pursued them down the descent of Bethhoron to the plain; eight hundred of them fell, and the rest fled into the land of the Philistines. <sup>25</sup> Then Judas and his brothers began to be feared, and terror fell upon the Gentiles round about them. <sup>26</sup> His fame reached the king, and the Gentiles talked of the battles of Judas.

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<sup>3</sup> Doran, "1 Maccabees," *NIB*. 4. 55-56.

**16, “Ungodly.”** (*asebēs*). Again, NABRE renders the word “renegades.” At least some of these men are Jews!

**17, Few vs. Many.** This is a theme of the Deuteronomistic Historian beloved of this author. The most famous example is the story of Gideon (Judges 7) who is ordered to pare down the size of his army. **The LORD’S Command to Gideon, Judg 7:2.** *The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, ‘My own hand has delivered me.’*

**VV. 18-19, “Heaven.”** 1 Maccabees never uses the word “God” or “Lord.” Rather, he refers to “**Heaven.**” Military strategy in this Battle: Upper Beth Horon & Lower Beth Horon are at two ends of a narrow pass. In such terrain, the great numbers of the enemy will not be decisive.

**V. 24, Land of the Philistines.** The phrasing is **anachronistic**. Philistines no longer live there. This is another “connection” of Judas Maccabeus to the story of David and his victories.

**The Seleucid Response: Lysias Prepares for Battle, 1 Macc 3:27-37. Please stop the lecture to read the scripture.**

<sup>27</sup> When king Antiochus heard these reports, he was greatly angered; and he sent and gathered all the forces of his kingdom, a very strong army. <sup>28</sup> And he **opened his coffers** and gave a year’s pay to his forces, and ordered them to be ready for any need. <sup>29</sup> Then he saw that the money in the treasury was exhausted, and that the revenues from the country were small because of the dissension and disaster which he had caused in the land by abolishing the laws that had existed from the earliest days. <sup>30</sup> He feared that he might not have such funds as he had before for his expenses and for the gifts which he used to give more lavishly than preceding kings. <sup>31</sup> He was greatly perplexed in mind, and **determined to go to Persia** and collect the revenues from those regions and raise a large fund. <sup>32</sup> He left Lysias, a distinguished man of royal lineage, in charge of the king’s affairs from the river Euphrates to the borders of Egypt. <sup>33</sup> Lysias was also to take care of **Antiochus his son** until he returned. <sup>34</sup> And he turned over to Lysias half of his troops and the elephants, and gave him orders about all that he wanted done. As for the residents of Judea and Jerusalem, <sup>35</sup> Lysias was to send a force against them to **wipe out and destroy** the strength of Israel and the remnant of Jerusalem; he was to banish the memory of them from the place, <sup>36</sup> settle aliens in all their territory, and distribute their land. <sup>37</sup> Then the king took the remaining half of his troops and departed from Antioch his capital in the **one hundred and forty-seventh year**. He crossed the Euphrates river and went through the upper provinces.

**V. 28, Opened his Coiffers (quote from Doran)**

According to the author of 1 Maccabees, the Jewish uprising is the determining factor of all the policies of the Seleucid king. **In reality, the small Jewish revolutionary force was no match for the Seleucid army. Even the author of 1 Maccabees must admit that, whenever the Seleucid army is fully directed against Judea, it is victorious (1 Macc 6:33–54; 9:1–17).** **In fact, Antiochus IV mustered his forces to take effective control of the eastern satrapies, and not because of the revolt led by Judas,** which was dealt with by Lysias, a subordinate.<sup>4</sup>

**Antiochus his son.** This would be Antiochus V, who was 7 years old at this time.

**V. 35, Wipe out and destroy.** The author portrays this as an effort to totally exterminate the Jewish people. However, there were Jews who supported the Seleucids -- including the high priest Menelaus, appointed by Antiochus.

**147<sup>th</sup> year (of the Seleucid rule) = 165 B.C.**

**Week 36, Lecture 114. Judas Clears the Way to Jerusalem, 1 Macc 3:38-4:35.**

**Cutting out my scripture reading reduced this lecture from 27:42 to 16:26**

**You may want to read the scriptures ahead of time. Or you may **pause the lecture** at suggested points.**

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Doran, “The First Book of Maccabees,” in *New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 4 (Abingdon Press, 1994–2004), 59.

**Judas Prepares to Battle Ptolemy, Nicanor, & Gorgias, 1 Macc 3:38-60. Please stop lecture & read vv. 38-44.**

**1 Macc 3:38-44.** Lysias chose Ptolemy the son of Dorymenes, and Nicanor and Gorgias, mighty men among the friends of the king, <sup>39</sup> and sent with them **forty thousand infantry and seven thousand cavalry** to go into the land of Judah and destroy it, as the king had commanded. <sup>40</sup> so they departed with their entire force, and when they arrived they encamped near Emmaus in the plain. <sup>41</sup> When the traders of the region heard what was said to them, they took silver and gold in immense amounts, and fetters, and went to the camp to get the sons of Israel for slaves. And forces from **Syria** and the land of the Philistines joined with them. <sup>42</sup> Now Judas and his brothers saw that misfortunes had increased and that the forces were encamped in their territory. They also learned what the king had commanded to do to the people to cause their final destruction. <sup>43</sup> But they said to one another, "Let us repair the destruction of our people, and fight for our people and the sanctuary." <sup>44</sup> And the congregation assembled to be ready for battle, and to pray and ask for **mercy** and compassion.

**Lysias.**

1 Maccabees represents Lysias, the Emperor's second-in-command as personally taking charge of affairs at this point.

2 Maccabees gives a different story.

**2Macc 8:8.** When Philip saw that the man was gaining ground little by little, and that he was pushing ahead with more frequent successes, he wrote to Ptolemy, the governor of Coelesyria and Phoenicia, for aid to the king's government.

**40,000 infantry, 7,000 cavalry.** Again 2 Maccabees gives a different story.

**2 Macc 8:9.** And Ptolemy promptly appointed Nicanor the son of Patroclus, one of the king's chief friends, and sent him, in command of no fewer than **twenty thousand** Gentiles of all nations, to wipe out the whole race of Judea. He associated with him Gorgias, a general and a man of experience in military service.

2 Maccabees does not mention cavalry. In any case, Cavalry would not be of much use in the Judean hills.

**V. 41, "Syria" NABRE, "Edom"**

The NABRE translator suspects the original translator has mistaken original **Edom** for **Aram** אַרַם אֲרָם  
The old NAB read Idumea, the name for Edom in NT times.

**V. 43, Mercy *hesed*, "covenant fidelity.**

Recall Psalm 136, where God's *hesed* results in the destruction of Sihon and Og.

The Hebrew *hesed* is rendered by: "mercy" (NABRE; Douay [Vulgate *misericordia*]); NETS [LXX *eleos*])  
"love" (NAB);

"faithful love (NJB); "loyal love" (NET); "steadfast love" (RSV, NRSV)

**Please stop the lecture to read 1 Macc 3:45-53.**

**A Lament.** <sup>45</sup> Jerusalem was uninhabited like a wilderness; not one of her children went in or out.  
The sanctuary was trampled down, and the sons of aliens held the citadel;  
it was a lodging place for the Gentiles.

Joy was taken from Jacob; the flute and the harp ceased to play.

<sup>46</sup> So they assembled and went to **Mizpah**, opposite Jerusalem, because Israel formerly had a place of prayer in Mizpah. <sup>47</sup> They fasted that day, put on sackcloth and sprinkled ashes on their heads, and rent their clothes. <sup>48</sup> **And they opened the book of the law to inquire into those matters about which the Gentiles were consulting the images of their idols.** <sup>49</sup> They also brought the **garments** of the priesthood and the **first fruits** and the tithes, and they stirred up **the Nazirites** who had **completed their days**; <sup>50</sup> and they cried aloud to **Heaven**, saying,

**Their Prayer.** "What shall we do with these? Where shall we take them? <sup>51</sup> Thy sanctuary is trampled down and profaned, and thy priests mourn in humiliation. <sup>52</sup> And behold, the Gentiles are assembled against us to destroy us; thou knowest what they plot against us. <sup>53</sup> How will we be able to withstand them, if thou dost not help us?"

**Mizpah, a substitute Jerusalem**

Verse 45 -- lament for Jerusalem

Verse 46 -- Mizpah, about 8 miles north of Jerusalem, "a former place of prayer"

In the time of the Judges Jephthah had consulted YHWH at Mizpah

Verse 49, "first fruits" were brought only to Jerusalem

V. 49, Normally "Nazirites" could complete their vows only in Jerusalem

### Verse 48 (Comment by Doran)

This verse is extremely difficult to translate. The NRSV translation, “to inquire into those matters about which the Gentiles consulted the likenesses of their gods,” not only is difficult to justify grammatically, but also suggests an analogy between the Torah and idol worship that the author of 1 Maccabees would have been unlikely to make. . . . A better translation of this verse would be: “**They unrolled the book of the Torah concerning those things about which they were inquiring, namely, the Gentiles and the likenesses of their idols**”<sup>5</sup>

### My own translation of 3:48

And they spread open the book of the law concerning which things the Gentiles habitually consulted their images of their idols.

### NABRE Translation & Note to verse 48

They unrolled the scroll of the law, to learn about the things for which the Gentiles consulted the images of their idols.

[3:48] To learn . . . idols: favorable omens for the coming battle. **A contrast is intended between the idol worship of the pagans and the consultation of the word of God by the Jews**; cf. 2Ma 8:23.

**2Macc 8:23.** There was also Eleazar. After reading to them from the holy book and giving them the watchword, “The help of God,” Judas himself took charge of the first division and joined in battle with Nicanor. (NABRE)

It is possible that the Scriptures are being used as talisman, a “lucky charm.”

Doran’s translation is possible, but See the priestly garments / vestments mentioned in v. 49

### Cried to “Heaven.”

The author of 1 Maccabees never uses the word “God” or “Lord” anywhere in his book.

I double-checked this remark from a commentator with software.

### Final Preparations. **Please stop the lecture to read the 1 Mac 3:54-60.**

<sup>54</sup> Then they sounded the trumpets and gave a loud shout. <sup>55</sup> After this Judas appointed leaders of the people, in charge of **thousands and hundreds and fifties and tens**. <sup>56</sup> And he said to those who were building houses, or were betrothed, or were planting vineyards, or were fainthearted, that each should return to his home, according to the law. <sup>57</sup> Then the army marched out and encamped to the south of Emmaus. <sup>58</sup> And Judas said, “Gird yourselves and be valiant. Be ready early in the morning to fight with these Gentiles who have assembled against us to destroy us and our sanctuary. <sup>59</sup> It is better for us to die in battle than to see the misfortunes of our nation and of the sanctuary. <sup>60</sup> But as his will in heaven may be, so he will do.” (1 Ma. 3:1-60 RSV)

### V. 55. 1000’s, 100’s, 50’s, 10’s.

Doran this follows the division of the entire people by Moses, following Jethro’s advice (Exod 18:21,25)

The division in 2 Maccabees is different<sup>6</sup>

2Macc 8:22. And joined with himself his own brethren, leaders of each band, to wit Simon, and Joseph, and Jonathan, **giving each one fifteen hundred men**. (Brenton’s Translation, via *BibleWorks*)

### V, 56 Reducing the Size of the Army [Omitted from the lecture.]

We have seen this theme before. Victory depends on God’s will, not the size of the army. Recall Gideon!

### Judas Battles Gorgias, 1 Maccabees 4:1-25. **Please stop the lecture to read the scripture.**

Now Gorgias took five thousand infantry and a thousand picked cavalry, and this division moved out by night <sup>2</sup> to fall upon the camp of the Jews and attack them suddenly. **Men from the citadel** were his guides. <sup>3</sup> But Judas heard of it, and he and his mighty men moved out to attack the king’s force in Emmaus <sup>4</sup> while the division was still absent from the camp. <sup>5</sup> When Gorgias entered the camp of Judas by night, he found no one there, so he

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<sup>5</sup> Doran, “The First Book of Maccabees,” in *New Interpreter’s Bible*, 4 (Abingdon, 1994–2004), 63-64.

<sup>6</sup> Doran, “1 Maccabees,” 65.

looked for them in the hills, because he said, "These men are fleeing from us." <sup>6</sup> At daybreak Judas **appeared in the plain** with three thousand men, but they did **not have armor and swords** such as they desired. <sup>7</sup> And they saw the camp of the Gentiles, strong and fortified, with cavalry round about it; and these men were trained in war. <sup>8</sup> But Judas said to the men who were with him, "Do not fear their numbers or be afraid when they charge. <sup>9</sup> Remember how our fathers were saved at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh with his forces pursued them. <sup>10</sup> And now let us cry to **Heaven**, to see whether he will favor us and remember **his covenant** with our fathers and crush this army before us today. <sup>11</sup> Then all the Gentiles will know **that there is one who redeems and saves Israel.**" <sup>12</sup> When the foreigners looked up and saw them coming against them, <sup>13</sup> they went forth from their camp to battle. Then the men with Judas blew their trumpets <sup>14</sup> and engaged in battle. The Gentiles were crushed and fled into the plain, <sup>15</sup> and all those in the rear fell by the sword. They pursued them to Gazara, and to the plains of Idumea, and to Azotus and Jamnia; and three thousand of them fell. <sup>16</sup> Then Judas and his force turned back from pursuing them, <sup>17</sup> and he said to the people,

**Speech of Judas.** "Do not be greedy for plunder, for there is a battle before us; <sup>18</sup> Gorgias and his force are near us in the hills. But stand now against our enemies and fight them, and afterward seize the plunder boldly."

<sup>19</sup> Just as Judas was finishing this speech, a detachment appeared, coming out of the hills. <sup>20</sup> They saw that their army had been put to flight, and that the Jews were burning the camp, for the smoke that was seen showed what had happened. <sup>21</sup> When they perceived this they were greatly frightened, and when they also saw the army of Judas drawn up in the plain for battle, <sup>22</sup> they all fled into the land of the **Philistines**. <sup>23</sup> Then Judas returned to plunder the camp, and they seized much gold and silver, and cloth dyed blue and sea purple, and great riches. <sup>24</sup> On their return they sang hymns and praises to **Heaven**, for he is good, **for his mercy endures for ever.** <sup>25</sup> Thus Israel had a great deliverance that day.

**V. 2, Men from the Citadel.** Doran regards these as "probably Jews who were not of Judas' persuasion."<sup>7</sup>

**V. 6. No Armor or Swords.** The emphasis is on the power of God.

**V. 6. "in the plain!"** Here they have good reason to fear the cavalry.

The Israelites had traditionally used their hilly terrain to their own advantage.

The DH was at pains to point out that the LORD could fight on the plains as well!

**1Kings 20:23.** And the servants of the king of Syria said to him, "**Their gods are gods of the hills**, and so they were stronger than we; **but let us fight against them in the plain**, and surely we shall be stronger than they.

Of course the pagans who reason this way are soundly defeated!

This tradition goes back at least as far as the "Song of Deborah" (Judges 5) -- very **ancient** poetry!

The themes of the DH seem to have inspired the author of 1 Maccabees.

**"Covenant" (v. 10) & "Mercy" (v. 24)**

These themes are related. "Mercy" *hesed* is fidelity to covenant obligations.

This can inspire religious people to fight.

However, the theology that **"God is on our side" has dangers!**

2. The claim "God is with us" brings its own problems. **German soldiers in Hitler's army went into battle with "God is with us" inscribed on their belt buckles.** Such an attitude raises the stakes, since it polarizes a situation into us versus them, where only one side can be right . . . One can see the problem in the way Judas is portrayed as searching out lawbreakers, burning those who troubled his people, and destroying the ungodly . . . Who determines what is ungodly? The zeal of Judas here prefigures that of the **Inquisition** in tracking down **heretics**, or of those who sought out "**witches**" in **Puritan Massachusetts**. Judas has gone over from defensive action, from acting so as to be able to serve God in his own way, to offensive action, destroying anyone who does not agree with his interpretation of how the law should be obeyed.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Doran, "1 Maccabees," *NIB*. 4. 66.

<sup>8</sup> Doran, "1 Maccabees," *NIB*. 4. 58.

**Judas Battles Lysias, 1 Macc 4:26-35. Please stop the lecture to read the scripture.**

<sup>26</sup> Those of the foreigners who escaped went and reported to Lysias all that had happened. <sup>27</sup> When he heard it, he was perplexed and discouraged, for things had not happened to Israel as he had intended, nor had they turned out as the king had commanded him. <sup>28</sup> But **the next year** he mustered sixty thousand picked infantrymen and five thousand cavalry to subdue them. <sup>29</sup> They came into Idumea and encamped at Bethzur, and Judas met them with ten thousand men. <sup>30</sup> When he saw that the army was strong, he prayed, saying,

**The Prayer of Judas.** "Blessed art thou, O Savior of Israel, who didst crush the attack of the mighty warrior by the hand of **thy servant David**, and didst give the camp of the **Philistines** into the hands of Jonathan, the son of Saul, and of the man who carried his armor. <sup>31</sup> So do thou hem in this army by the hand of thy people Israel, and let them be ashamed of their troops and their cavalry. <sup>32</sup> Fill them with cowardice; melt the boldness of their strength; let them tremble in their destruction. <sup>33</sup> Strike them down with the sword of those who love thee, and let all who know thy name praise thee with hymns."

<sup>34</sup> Then both sides attacked, and there fell of the army of Lysias five thousand men; they fell in action. <sup>35</sup> And when Lysias saw the **rout** of his troops and observed the boldness which inspired those of Judas, and how ready they were either to live or to die nobly, he departed to Antioch and enlisted mercenaries, to invade Judea again with an even larger army. (RSV)

v. 28, **"The Next Year."** When we look at 2 Maccabees we will see some material 1 Maccabees has omitted. . . . we learn that Antiochus IV, at the prompting of the high priest Menelaus, offered amnesty to the Jews in March 164 BCE, by which they could enjoy their own laws as formerly . . . Lysias and Ptolemy Macron seem to have been brokers to the peace terms . . . These peace negotiations would have taken place during this time covered by the phrase "the next year." **The author of 1 Maccabees makes no mention of these negotiations because he insists on painting his Jewish enemies, as well as Lysias and Antiochus, as implacably opposed to Judas and true Judaism.**<sup>9</sup>

vv. 30-33**The Prayer of Judas.** More allusions to David. Judas is a "new David." Perhaps a Messiah figure.

V. 35, **Rout.** Doran says it is actually more of an "organized withdrawal."

In reality, Lysias, as vice regent, may have received news of Antiochus IV's death and decided to return to Antioch to act as regent for Antiochus V. This is not suggested by the author of 1 Maccabees, . . .<sup>10</sup>

1 Maccabees will not tell the story of the death of Antiochus until **after** the Temple is purified.

**Preview of Coming Attractions**

After this, 1 Maccabees will tell the story of the rededication of the Temple, beginning in 4:36

In the next lectures, we will see how 2 Maccabees covers the events of 1 Macc 3:1-4:35.

We will then look at the accounts of the death of Antiochus IV in both books.

Then we will come back to 1 Macc 4:36 to continue the story of the rededication of the Temple.

**Week 36b , Lecture 115. Preparations for Battle against Nicanor, 2 Macc 8:1-20**

**Introduction**

In 1 Maccabees we have seen the story of the first victories of Judas Maccabeus that opened the way to Jerusalem 2 Maccabees 8 tells approximately the same story.

Judas last appeared at the end of chapter 5, before the narratives of the deaths of the martyrs in chapters 6 & 7.

The author noted that Judas had withdrawn to the wilderness with a group of about 9 others.

Literary effect: those reading the stories of bloody persecution are aware that help is nearby.

**8:1-7, The Rise of Judas.** Then Judas Maccabeus, and they that were with him, went privily into the towns, and called their **kinsfolks** together, and took unto them all such as continued in ~~the Jews' religion~~ **Judaism**, and

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<sup>9</sup> Doran, "1 Maccabees," *NIB*, 4. 68.

<sup>10</sup> Doran, "1 Maccabees," *NIB*, 4. 69.

assembled about **six thousand men**.<sup>2</sup> And they called upon the Lord, that he would look upon the people that was trodden down of all; and also pity the temple profaned of ungodly men; <sup>3</sup> And that he would have compassion upon the city, sore defaced, and ready to be made even with the ground; and hear the blood that cried unto him, <sup>4</sup> And remember the wicked slaughter of harmless infants, and the blasphemies committed against his name; and that he would shew his **hatred against the wicked**. <sup>5</sup> Now when Maccabeus had his company about him, he could not be withstood by the heathen: for **the wrath of the Lord was turned into mercy**. <sup>6</sup> Therefore he came at unawares, and burnt up towns and cities, and got into his hands the most commodious places, and overcame and put to flight no small number of his enemies. <sup>7</sup> But specially took he **advantage of the night** for such privy attempts, insomuch that the fruit of his holiness was spread every where.<sup>11</sup>

#### **V. 1, Kinsfolks, *sungeneis*, plural of *sungenēs*** (Brenton, KJA)

**kinsmen** (Douay, RSV, NAB); **kindred** (NRSV, NABRE); **fellow-countrymen** (NJB)

Doran's interpretation is the same as that of the NJB:

“most likely referring not to near relatives but to fellow Israelites of the same persuasion”<sup>12</sup>

The total number is given as 6,000. The small group of 10 has greatly increased in size.

#### **V. 1, “Judaism.”** This rare word occurs only 7 times in the Greek Bible, 4 of them in 2 Maccabees.<sup>13</sup>

It occurs once in the apocryphal 4 Maccabees. Paul uses it twice in Galatians.

**LSJ** gives no extra-biblical uses of this word.<sup>14</sup> The word appears to have been coined by the author of 2 Maccabees.

There is some irony here: our anti-Greek author is fluent enough in the language to coin a word!

All humans, in some sense, are “prisoners of their culture,” even when they oppose it.

#### **V. 4, Hatred against the wicked** (Brenton, KJA). OR: “hatred of evil” (RSV, NRSV, NAB, NABRE)

Whatever the best translation of the Greek, his philosophy was **not** to “hate the sin but love the sinner.”

Judas and his followers hated both sin and sinners! So does our author. They think that God feels just as they do.

Question: Implications for how we understand **biblical inspiration**.

#### **V. 5, From Wrath to Mercy.** V. 5 is a crucial verse.

God's anger toward his people is past; it has become mercy. This makes Judas unstoppable.

The author notes that Judas took “advantage of the night.” This is clearly a guerilla operation.

The focus of the author is not on military tactics, but on God's power.

#### **8:8-11, The Seleucids Respond** [note to self: don't read aloud the highlighted text]

##### **Summary, 8:8-9 (highlighted text)**

Philip, a local official appeals to the governor. The governor chooses Nicanor to put down the terrorists.

He sends him with 20,000 troops (it was 40,000 in 1 Maccabees). Even 20,000 is probably inflated.

1 Macc 3:38 had portrayed all of this coming from a much higher level, from Lysias (practically vice-emperor).

<sup>8</sup> So when Philip saw that this man increased by little and little, and that things prospered with him still more and more, he wrote unto Ptolemeus, the governor of Celosyria and Phenice, to yield more aid to the king's affairs. <sup>9</sup> Then forthwith choosing Nicanor the son of Patroclus, one of his special friends, he sent him with no fewer than twenty thousand of all nations under him, to root out the whole generation of the Jews; and with him he joined also Gorgias a captain, who in matters of war had great experience. <sup>10</sup> So **Nicanor** undertook to make so much money of the captive Jews, as should defray the tribute of two thousand talents, which the king was to pay to the Romans. <sup>11</sup> Wherefore immediately he sent to the cities upon the sea coast, proclaiming a sale of the captive

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<sup>11</sup> Unless otherwise specified, all scripture quotes are from Sir Lancelot Brenton's 19<sup>th</sup> century translation of the LXX, accessed via *BibleWorks*. At times I modify the translation to make it more literal.

<sup>12</sup> Doran, “2 Maccabees,” *NIB*, 4. 247.

<sup>13</sup> 2 Macc 2:1; 8:1; 14:38 (twice); 4 Macc 4:26; Gal 1:13-14.

<sup>14</sup> Liddell, Scott, Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*.

Jews, and promising that they should have ~~four score and ten~~ ninety bodies for one talent, not expecting the vengeance that was to follow upon him from the Almighty God.

**V 10, Nicanor.** This was a popular name. There are 3 in 2 Maccabees, not likely the same person. He is going to be the “main villain” in 2 Maccabees’ version of the story. His shameful flight after defeat in vv. 34-36 closes the “frame” opened here in v. 10.

### **VV. 10-11, The Slave Traders**

In 1 Maccabees, these came on their own initiative. Here they are summoned by Nicanor. 2 Maccabees relates this to the war-tribute owed to the Romans. Actually, this had already been paid off. The commentators say that 90 slaves for 1 talent would have been a “bargain.”

**8:12-20, Judas’ Preparation.** He summons his men. Those that are cowardly slip away. His prayer for deliverance touches on **traditional themes**: covenant, “God’s deliverance for the sake of his name.” God will avenge the desecration of his holy city (Jerusalem) and his holy place (the Temple). Although the cowardly have slipped away, the number of his troops is still given as **6,000**. Deliverance for the “for the sake of his name.” underlies the petition of the Lord’s Prayer

Like a good leader, Judas reminds his troops of past victories. He gives two specific examples:

<sup>12</sup> Now when word was brought unto Judas of Nicanor's coming, and he had imparted unto those that were with him that the army was at hand, <sup>13</sup> **They that were fearful**, and distrusted the justice of God, fled, and **conveyed themselves away**. <sup>14</sup> Others sold all that they had left, and withal besought the Lord to deliver them, sold by the wicked Nicanor before they met together: <sup>15</sup> And if not for their own sakes, yet for the covenants he had made with their fathers, and for his holy and glorious name's sake, by which they were called. <sup>16</sup> So Maccabeus called his men together unto **the number of six thousand**, and exhorted them not to be stricken with terror of the enemy, nor to fear the great multitude of the heathen, who came wrongly against them; but to fight manfully, <sup>17</sup> And to set before their eyes the injury that they had unjustly done to the holy place, and the cruel handling of the city, whereof they made a mockery, and also the taking away of the government of their forefathers: <sup>18</sup> For they, said he, trust in their weapons and boldness; but our confidence is in the Almighty who at a beck can cast down both them that come against us, and also all the world. <sup>19</sup> Moreover, he recounted unto them what helps their forefathers had found, and how they were delivered, when under **Sennacherib** 185,000 ~~an hundred fourscore and five thousand~~ perished. <sup>20</sup> And he told them of the battle that they had in Babylon with the **Galatians**, how they came but **eight thousand** in all to the business, with four thousand **Macedonians**, and that the Macedonians being perplexed, the eight thousand destroyed an hundred and twenty thousand because of the help that they had from **heaven**, and so received a great booty.

### **Concrete example # 1, Sennacherib.**

The story of the defeat of the Assyrian King who besieged Jerusalem is found in 2 Kings 19 and Isaiah 37. According to the narrative, an angel slew 185,000. Historically, perhaps this was a plague. In any case, it was remembered as an unexpected divine deliverance.

**Concrete example # 2, Macedonians vs. Galatians.** It is not obvious why this battle would be of interest! Several translations refer to **eight thousand Jews** as the allies of the Macedonians (NRSV, NJB, NAB, NABRE). There is, however, no explicit reference to Jews in the text. I checked for manuscript variants.<sup>15</sup>

**Doran’s Explanation.** He argues that this probably refers to a battle in Asia Minor in 220 B.C. This involves emending the text from “Babylonia” to “Bagadonia.”

What this passage shows is that **Jewish soldiers served under the Seleucids**, and it supports the report of Josephus that Antiochus III transferred Jewish soldiers from Babylonia to Phrygia and Lydia [*Antiquities*, 12:147–153].<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> No manuscript variants refer to Jews in the Greek (Goettingen LXX; Swete’s LXX); the Vulgate, or the Peshitta.

This would have been about 50 years before the persecution of Antiochus IV, under Antiochus the Great. However, it does show that Jews could “assimilate” to Hellenistic society. If this is the correct explanation, this is indeed an ironic reference on the part of Judas!

### Quote from Josephus

<sup>147</sup> Moreover, this Antiochus [III] bare testimony to our piety and fidelity, in a letter of his, written when he was informed of a sedition in Phrygia and Lydia, at which time he was in the upper provinces, wherein he commanded Zeuxis, the general of his forces, and his most intimate friend, to send some of our nation [i.e., Jews] out of Babylon into Phrygia. The letter was this:-- “. . . <sup>153</sup> Take care likewise of that nation, as far as you are able, that they may not have any disturbance given them by anyone.” Now these testimonials which I have produced are sufficient to declare the friendship that Antiochus the Great bore to the Jews.<sup>17</sup>

### Remark by Goldstein.

There is nothing strange about the use of Jewish soldiers to defend the Seleucid Empire. . . . Even if the story here deals not with regular soldiers but with men conscripted in an emergency, there is no doubt that the Jews constituted a significant portion of the population of Babylonia, and they may have been preferred over other ethnic stocks for their loyalty and martial qualities.<sup>18</sup>

Even though the situation has changed greatly since the time about which Josephus wrote & our situation This shows that the Jew-vs.-Gentile approach of the author of 2 Maccabees is an oversimplification.

## Week 36b , Lecture 116. The Battle vs. Nicanor & Others Battles, 2 Macc 8:21-36.

### 8:21-29 Defeat of Nicanor

<sup>21</sup> Thus when he had made them bold with these words, and ready to die for the law and the country, he divided his army into four parts; <sup>22</sup> And joined with himself his own brethren, leaders of each band, to wit Simon, and Joseph, and Jonathan, giving each one fifteen hundred men. <sup>23</sup> Also he appointed Eleazar to read the holy book: and when he had given them this watchword, The help of God; himself [i.e., Judas] leading the first band, <sup>24</sup> And by the help of the Almighty they slew above nine thousand of their enemies, and wounded and maimed the most part of Nicanor's host, and so put all to flight; <sup>25</sup> And took their money that came to buy them, and pursued them far: but lacking time they returned: <sup>26</sup> For it was the day before the sabbath, and therefore they would no longer pursue them. <sup>27</sup> So when they had gathered their armour together, and spoiled their enemies, they occupied themselves about the sabbath, yielding exceeding praise and thanks to the Lord, who had preserved them unto that day, which was the beginning of mercy distilling upon them. <sup>28</sup> And after the sabbath, when they had given part of the spoils to the maimed, and the widows, and orphans, the residue they divided among themselves and their servants. <sup>29</sup> When this was done, and they had made a common supplication, they besought the merciful Lord to be reconciled with his servants for ever.

**vv. 21-22, Division of Troops.** 4 brothers, each with 1500 troops (= 6,000), and Eleazar as priest . . . the author insists that Judas calls on God for aid and that Judas’s whole family is involved in the enterprise. To this end, he divides the forces based on the number of brothers in a way that has **no parallel in Jewish or Hellenistic tactical tradition**. The concern of the author is clearly not about tactical maneuvers, for **the description of the battle takes up only one verse (v. 24)**. What is important is that God is their ally.<sup>19</sup> The mention of **sabbath** observance in vv. 26-28 underlies their piety, and a deuteronomistic theme of the author.

**V. 23. Eleazar reads.** He gives the watchword “The Help of God.” This is what his name means in Hebrew! *Eli* (my God) [is] *‘ezer* (a help).

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<sup>16</sup> Doran, “The Second Book of Maccabees,” in *NIB*, 4 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994–2004), 248. Doran discusses the matter in much greater depth in his commentary in the *Hermeneia* series.

<sup>17</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, 12:147, 153, accessed via *BibleWorks*.

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan A. Goldstein, *II Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 41A, AYB (Yale, 2008), 331.

<sup>19</sup> Doran, “The Second Book of Maccabees,” *NIB*, 4. 249.

Comment on Genesis 2: The word is used of the woman, “a help suitable for the man.” It does not mean “subordinate” or “flunky.” God can be called an *‘ezer*.

**24, The Almighty.** The author of 1 Maccabees does not mention “God” or “the Lord,” but often substitutes “Heaven.” 2 Maccabees has no problem with such direct references to God.

Here, however, he refers to “the Almighty.” Strictly speaking “Almighty” is not an accurate rendition of **Pantokratōr**. It literally means “ruler of all.” Technically, one can be “ruler of all” without being “almighty” in the strict sense. Our English comes from the Vulgate’s **Omnipotens**.

**8:30-33, Defeat of Timothy & Bacchides.** Moreover of those that were with Timotheus and Bacchides, who fought against them, they slew above twenty thousand, and very easily got high and strong holds, and divided among themselves many spoils more, and made the maimed, orphans, widows, yea, and the aged also, equal in spoils with themselves. <sup>31</sup> And when they had gathered their armour together, they laid them up all carefully in convenient places, and the remnant of the spoils they brought to Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup> They slew also Philarches, that wicked person, who was with Timotheus, and had annoyed the Jews many ways. <sup>33</sup> Furthermore at such time as they kept the feast for the victory in their country they burnt Callisthenes, that had set fire upon the holy gates, who had fled into a little house; and so he received a reward meet for his wickedness

**Not in Chronological Order.** All the commentators I looked at agree these verses are not in chronological order. I will not say, however, that they are “out of place.” The insertion here is perhaps deliberate. 1 Maccabees places the defeat of Timothy **after** the dedication of the Temple.

### **Bacchides is a separate problem!**

According to 1 Maccabees . . . Judas had no victory over Bacchides. It was in battle against Bacchides that he lost his life (1 Mac 9:18). The passing reference to him here may be intended to compensate for the embarrassment of the later defeat, **which is not mentioned at all in 2 Maccabees.**<sup>20</sup>

**The Maimed, Orphans and Widows.** The orphans and the widows are the survivors of the martyrs. “The maimed” are those who were tortured, but survived the persecution.

Early Christianity will honor “confessors” -- those who suffered for “confessing” the faith with an honor almost as great as it will bestow upon martyrs who die for the faith.

In the calendar of saints, a “confessor” is not someone who heard confessions!

### **8:34-36 The Fate of Nicanor**

As for that most ungracious Nicanor, who had brought a thousand merchants to buy the Jews, <sup>35</sup> He was through the help of the Lord brought down by them, of whom he made least account; and putting off his glorious apparel, and discharging his company, he came like a fugitive servant through the midland unto Antioch having very great dishonour, for that his host was destroyed. <sup>36</sup> Thus he, that took upon him to make good to the Romans their tribute by means of captives in Jerusalem, told abroad, **that the Jews had God to fight for them, and therefore they could not be hurt, because they followed the laws that he gave them.**

**Conclusion.** That God fights for the Jews, and they could not be overcome was not historically preached by Nicanor. Rather, the author is expressing his theology: when Jews are faithful to the covenant, they cannot be defeated. This is the traditional theology of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic Historian.

### **Coming attractions**

1 Maccabees 6:1-17, Death of Antiochus

2 Maccabees 9, Death of Antiochus

2 Macc 1:10-17, Death of Antiochus (Part of 1:10-2:18, The Second Introductory Letter)

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<sup>20</sup> Collins, “First Maccabees,” 319.