

Week 38, Lecture 120.¹ The Purification of the Temple, Version 1. 1 Macc 4:36-61

4:36-40. Then Judas and his brethren said, Behold, our enemies have been crushed: let us go up to cleanse and dedicate **the sanctuary**.³⁷ So the whole army assembled, and went up to mount Sion.³⁸ And when they saw the sanctuary desolate, and the altar profaned, and the gates burned, and shrubs growing in the courts as in a forest or as on one of the mountains, and the priests' chambers pulled down,³⁹ they rent their garments, and made great lamentation, and threw ashes upon their heads;⁴⁰ they fell prostrate to the ground, and sounded an alarm with the trumpets, and cried toward **Heaven**.²

36. The Sanctuary: Literally, “the holy [things]” OR “the holies” *ta hagia*

Most English translations render this plural phrase by a singular.

NETS translates “the holy **places**” and gives a note saying, i.e., “the temple.”

Later tradition will use the Hebrew expression *ha-maqom*, “the place” as synonymous with the temple.

In fact the expression “the place” (Greek *ho topos*) is used 2 Macc 2:18 to describe the temple.

I am not sure why the neuter plural is used here. The Greek word for “place” (*topos*) is masculine.³

40. Heaven. Capitalized, following NABRE & RSV. This is a reverent shortening of “the God of heaven.” The full expression will occur in 4:54.

Echoes of the Prophets. The passage echoes prophetic descriptions of the destruction of Jerusalem.

4:41-51. Then Judas appointed certain men **to fight against those that were in the fortress**, until he had cleansed the sanctuary.⁴² So he chose blameless priests, devoted to the law:⁴³ They cleansed the sanctuary, and carried out the defiled stones to an unclean place.⁴⁴ And they consulted what to do with the altar of burnt offerings, which had been defiled;⁴⁵ They thought it best to pull it down, lest it should be a reproach to them, because the Gentiles had defiled it, and so they pulled it down.⁴⁶ They also put the [defiled] stones aside on the mountain of the temple in a suitable place, until there should come a **prophet** to show what should be done with them.⁴⁷ Then they took **intact** stones, according to the law, and built a new altar like the former one.⁴⁸ They rebuilt the sanctuary, and the things that were within the **temple**, and sanctified the courts.⁴⁹ They also made new holy vessels, and into the temple they brought the candlestick, and the altar of incense, and the table.⁵⁰ And upon the altar they burned incense, and they lit the lamps that were upon the candlestick, and these were shining in the **temple**.⁵¹ Furthermore they set the loaves upon the table, and spread out the veils, and finished all the works which they had undertaken.

41. Those in the Fortress. Judas and his allies are not in complete control of Jerusalem.

The king's troops are occupying the main citadel, the Acra, and will be there for some time to come.

For this reason, the priests cleansing the sanctuary need protection.

In verses 60-61 Judas will station a garrison on Mt. Zion, but this garrison will not be in the Acra.

¹ Lectures are numbered consecutively. Although this is this week's first lecture, its number reflects its place in the **total** sequence.

² The English is based on Brenton's 19th century version, accessed via *BibleWorks*. At times I modify it considerably to make it more literal and more contemporary. I have also Americanized (honour > honor) and updated (followeth > follows) the spelling.

³ The phrase “holy of holies” (Greek *hagia hagiōn*) is used in Heb 9:3 to refer to the innermost tent of the desert tabernacle. However, the phrase in the OT **never** refers to a **dwelling** even once! Rather it always refers to holy **foods** or holy **objects** (Lev 6:10,18,22; 7:1,6; 10:12,17; 14:13; 1 Chr 23:13; Ezek 43:12 -- this list gives every OT reference to *hagia hagiōn*). In the LXX *hagia hagiōn* (literally “holy [things] of holy [things]”) translates *qodesh qodašim* (literally, “a holy thing of holy things”) which most translations render “most holy.” Why the Hebrew singular *qodesh* is rendered by the Greek plural *hagia* escapes me! Although many translations render this “the sanctuary” (Brenton's LXX, NETS, Douay, NAB, NABRE, NJB, RSV, NRSV) I am beginning to wonder if “**let us go up to cleanse and dedicate the HOLY THINGS**” would be a better translation. Take this suggestion from a “New Testament guy” with a grain of salt.

Different Treatment for Different Stones

The stones that had been part of **pagan altars** were thrown out into an “unclean place” (v. 43). However, the stones for the altar of burnt offerings had been used for true worship of the true God **but** these stones had then been defiled by having swine sacrificed on them. So these stones are put aside on in a special place until a prophet can advise them (vv. 44-46).

46. The Coming of a Prophet.

Some interpret this eschatologically, as referring to the “end times.” This would be a reference to the “prophet like Moses” promised in Deut 18:15.

Doran argues that there is no reason to interpret it in this manner.

. . . the author of 1 Maccabees expects the proper restoration of a normal functioning community, and such communities have a prophet. The phrase . . . envisions that when God sends a prophet, as God had promised for every generation (Deut 18:15–19), the prophet will solve all the knotty problems. The author longs for the restoration of the time when the full functioning community of Judah had priests, kings, and prophets, with the prophet functioning as a counterweight to the power of the king . . .⁴

47. “Intact” stones. NABRE “uncut.”

The Torah specifies that the stones used to make the altar cannot be fashioned by human stone cutters.

48. The **Temple**.

Literally, “the house,” *oikos*. Probably short for “house of God.”

By contrast, the word “temple” in v. 50 accurately renders the Greek word *naos*.

More on the word “temple” in the next lecture.

4:52-59. They rose early in the morning on the **twenty-fifth day** of the ninth month, which is the month of **Kislev**, in the **hundred forty-eighth year**,⁵³ and offered sacrifice according to the law upon the new altar of burnt offerings, which they had made.⁵⁴ At the very time and on the very day the Gentiles had profaned it, exactly then was it rededicated with songs, lyres, harps, and cymbals.⁵⁵ All the people fell prostrate, worshipping and praising **the God of heaven**, who had granted them success.⁵⁶ And so they kept the dedication of the altar eight days and offered burnt offerings with gladness, and sacrificed a sacrifice of deliverance and of praise.⁵⁷ They also decorated the front of the temple with crowns of gold, and with shields; and they restored the gates and the chambers, and furnished doors for them.⁵⁸ Thus was there very great gladness among the people, because an end to the reproach of the Gentiles **was brought about**.⁵⁹ Moreover Judas and his brethren with the whole congregation of Israel decided that the days of the dedication of the altar should be kept with joy and gladness at this time each year for the duration eight days beginning with the twenty-fifth day of the month of Kislev.

V. 52. Kislev 25, Year 148 (of Greek Rule) = December 14, 164 B.C. (NABRE note to this verse).

The years of “Greek Rule” begin with the successors of Alexander the Great.

Kislev is a month on a **lunar** calendar. On a lunar calendar the 14th day is **always the full moon**.

So as the moon’s cycle changes with respect to our solar calendar, the date of Hanukkah will change.

It will always be near Christmas, give or take a couple of weeks.

V. 54, the day of purification: **the exact anniversary of the defilement**. Demonstration of God’s Providence

Actually, in 2 Macc 10:3, it is **2 years**.

In 1 Macc 1:54; 4:52 it is **3 years**.

Daniel 12:7 has **3 ½ years**.⁵

⁴ Robert Doran, “The First Book of Maccabees,” in *New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 4 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 72. For a different view, see John Collins, *Daniel, 1-2 Maccabees*, Old Testament Message, vol. 15 (Michael Glazier, 1981), p. 183. Collins argues for the eschatological interpretation, stating that “there had been no authoritative prophets for many centuries.”

⁵ I am indebted to Doran (“Second Maccabees,” *NIB*. 4. 257) for this tip. I have checked out the references.

The dating is symbolic; it is not an exact historical statement.

55, The God of heaven. Here the full phrase is used. (Point inadvertently omitted from Lecture).

58, Was Brought About. A divine passive?

Significantly the author does **not** say, “Judas brought about the end to the reproach of the Gentiles.”

Not all passive verbs are “divine,” of course, but I suspect this one is.

4:60-61, Ongoing Defense of Jerusalem.

At that time also they built up Mount Sion with high walls and strong towers round about, lest the Gentiles should come and tread it down as they had done before. ⁶¹ And he stationed a garrison there to hold it, and fortified Beth-zur to preserve it; that the people might have a defense against Idumea.

Collins comments on the “realism” of the Maccabees here.

It is not enough to believe that God will protect Mt. Zion, although they surely believed that he would. It is also necessary to station a garrison there. Recent history had shown that God did not always protect it. The Maccabees believed that God helps those who help themselves. ⁶

Week 38, Lecture 121. The Purification of the Temple, Version 2. 2 Macc 10:1-9

10:1-9. Now Maccabeus and his company, the Lord guiding them, recovered the **temple** and the city: ² But the altars which the **Gentiles** had built in the marketplace and also the shrines, they pulled down. ³ And having cleansed the **temple** they made another altar, and **striking [flint]stones** and getting fire from them, they offered sacrifices after **a two-year lapse**, and set forth incense, and lights, and showbread. ⁴ When that was done, they fell **prostrate**, and besought the Lord that there might come no more into such troubles; but if they sinned any more against him, that he himself would chasten them with mercy, and that they might not be delivered over to blasphemous and barbarous Gentiles. ⁵ Now upon the same day that the strangers profaned the **temple**, on the very same day it was cleansed again, even the twenty-fifth day of the same month, which is Kislev. ⁶ And they kept the eight days with gladness, as on the feast of Tabernacles, remembering that not long before they had held the feast of Tabernacles wandering in the mountains and caves like beasts. ⁷ Therefore bearing branches, beautiful boughs, and palms as well, they sang psalms to him that had granted them success in cleansing his place. ⁸ They also decreed by a public ordinance and vote, that every year those days should be observed by the whole nation of the Jews. ⁹ And this was the end of Antiochus, called Epiphanes.

V. 1. Different Greek Words behind “Temple” in English.

The word is **hieron** – related to our word “hier-archy.” The word in verses 3 & 5 is **naos**.

Both words occur in the NT, and both words occur in 1 & 2 Maccabees

Words for “Temple” in 1 & 2 Maccabees		
Greek Word	1Maccabees	2 Maccabees
hieron	7x	25x
naos	6x	5x

1 Maccabees uses both words about equally; 2 Maccabees has a preference for *hieron*.

2. Gentiles. In 1 Maccabees, the English word “Gentiles” often renders *ta ethnē*, literally “the nations.” Here it renders *allo-phuloi*, literally, “those of other tribes.”

⁶ John Collins, *Daniel, 1-2 Maccabees*, Old Testament Message, vol. 15 (Michael Glazier, 1981), p. 184.

In earlier parts of the LXX, the word *alophuloi* often refers to the Philistines. This word would relate the story of Judas to the story of the great king David.

Fire from Flintstones. The fires that had been burning in the temple had been used for pagan sacrifices. This fire has to be pure; it has to come from a “new beginning.” To this day some liturgical purists insist our Easter fire should be struck from flint and steel. If the pastor is inept, and the service starts 45 minutes late, so be it!

4. “Prostrate. In 1 Maccabees (previous lecture) the word “prostrate” translates the literal phrase “on the faces.” Here it translates the phrase “on (their) belly.” This is the **only place** the phrase occurs in the entire Greek Bible.

Verse 9. Summary statement of the end of Antiochus

The death, and the punishment leading up to it, had been described in gruesome detail in chapter 9. Does the summary go here, or with the next passage? Bibles paragraph it differently. I will repeat it when we begin the section on the successor of Antiochus IV, in 2 Macc 10:10.

Week 38, Lecture 122. The Legend of the Fire. 2 Macc 1:18-2:18

Post-Lecture Note. This lecture went longer than planned; I have therefore divided it.

Review: 2 letters prefixed to 2 Maccabees.⁷ Both are addressed to Jews of Alexandria, Egypt 2 Macc 1:1-9, The “First” Letter. This letter appears first in the text, but it was written later than the second letter. Its date puts it at 124 B.C. We will deal with it later in the course.

2 Macc 1:10-2:18, The “Second” Letter. This letter mentions the death of Antiochus and purification of the Temple.

If genuine, it appears to have been written between 164-160 B.C., during lifetime of Judas. The letters appear to be added sometime after 124 B.C.

Structure of the “Second” Letter

1:10-17, The Letter to Aristobulus – We did this last time

Introductory Matters (10-12); Death of Antiochus (13-16); Editorial Comment (17)

1:18-2:18, The Holiness of the Jerusalem Temple.⁸

1:18-36, Discussion of Fire at time of Nehemiah

2:1-8, Section on Jeremiah

2:9-12, A Comparison of Moses and Solomon

2:13-15 Nehemiah Finds a Library; Judas Imitates Him

2:16-18 Conclusions

1:18-36, Discussion of Fire at time of Nehemiah

1:18-23. Whereas we are intending to keep the purification of the **temple** (*hieron*) upon the twenty-fifth day of the month of Kislev, we thought it necessary to notify you of this, that you also might celebrate the **feast of Tabernacles**, and of the **Fire** when Nehemiah, who built the temple and the altar, offered sacrifice.¹⁹ For when our fathers were led into Persia, the priests that were then devout taking the fire of the altar secretly hid it in an hollow cistern without water, where they sealed it up, so that the place would be unknown to all.²⁰ Now after many years, when it pleased God, Nehemiah, being commissioned by the king of Persia, sent some of the descendants of those priests that had hid it to the fire.²¹ But when they told us they found no fire, but thick **water**; then he commanded them to draw it up, and to bring it. Now when the sacrifices had been brought, Nehemiah commanded the priests to

⁷ Robert Doran, “The Second Book of Maccabees,” in *New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 4 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 253-255.

⁸ Doran, “Second Maccabees,” *NIB* 4.196.

sprinkle the wood and the things laid thereupon with the **water**.²² When this was done, and a time came that the sun, previously hidden by clouds, shone, a great fire was kindled, so that all marveled.²³ And the priests offered prayer while the sacrifice was being consumed -- both the priests, and everyone -- Jonathan beginning, and the rest answering, as Nehemiah [did].

V 18. Nehemiah's role

Nehemiah, the rebuilder of the temple: he rebuilt the **walls** of Jerusalem, but the **Temple** had been rebuilt by Zerubbabel almost a century before. (Note to NABRE)

The history is hazy, and the Greek is obscure. Compare these two translations:

RSV. . . that you also may celebrate the feast of booths and the feast of the fire **given** when Nehemiah, who built the temple and the altar, offered sacrifices.

NABRE. . . that you too may celebrate the feast of Booths and of the fire **that appeared** when Nehemiah, the rebuilder of the temple and the altar, offered sacrifices.

The problem is that neither the word "**given**" nor the phrase "**that appeared**" is in the Greek! And without some such phrase, the Greek is gibberish.⁹

Feast of **Tabernacles** / Feast of **Fire**

Tabernacles is a **Fall** Feast. Hanukkah is a **Winter** feast.

The author reports an unhistorical legend about Nehemiah at Tabernacles (Booths / Succoth)

In this unhistorical legend there is miraculous fire

The author wants to suggest that Hanukkah is a "great feast" like the traditional feast of Tabernacles.

The Jews in Egypt have apparently never heard of Hanukkah, so he has to explain it to them.

Comments from Collins

The legend wishes to suggest that the worship of the temple in the second century BCE is the worship of Solomon, Nehemiah, and Jeremiah, and therefore proper, . . . The miraculous preservation of the fire indicates the approval of God.

The legend arose because some Jews in the post-exilic period had doubts as to whether the restored temple had the same status as the old one. These doubts must have been especially acute in the second century BCE when the temple had been profaned, not only by the Syrians, but by the illegitimate Jewish high priests.¹⁰

V. 20 & 21, "**Water**." RSV, NRSV, NAB, NABRE all render the Greek *hydōr* by "fluid."

This is some flammable petroleum product. This will become clear in verse 36.

I looked at several Greek dictionaries, and could find no support for this translation.

That is, *hydōr* does not appear to be used anywhere else (biblically or extra-biblically) to describe a petroleum product. Perhaps the use of the term is meant to evoke the struggle of Elijah and the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18.

1:24-29, The Prayer. And this was the manner of the prayer:

Address. Lord, Lord God, the Creator of all, the Fearsome, Strong, Righteous, and Merciful, the only and gracious King,²⁵ the only Bountiful One, the only Just One, both Ruler-of-all and Everlasting, the One who delivers Israel from every evil, the One who chose the ancestors, and sanctified them,

Requests.²⁶ Receive the sacrifice on behalf of your entire people Israel, and preserve your own portion, and sanctify it.²⁷ Gather those of us who are scattered, free those enslaved among the Gentiles; look upon those despised and abhorred; and let the Gentiles know that you are our God.

²⁸ Punish the oppressors, insolent with pride.²⁹ Plant your people again in your holy place, as Moses said.

⁹ Doran (ibid.) agrees: "Verse 18 is very difficult to translate, as the Greek is very elliptical and requires that something be added to the text to make it intelligible."

¹⁰ Collins, *Daniel, 1-2 Maccabees*, p. 275.

Prayer Structure. The prayer begins with a lengthy address to God, followed by requests.

The address is a lengthy series of epithets.

The requests are for the **entire** Jewish nation -- not just those living in Judea. (broadening legitimacy!)

The structure is similar to the collect prayers of the Roman liturgy.

O God who [does certain things]

Grant that [insert requests]

Through Christ [conclusion that leads to “Amen.”]

Sometimes the Roman liturgy is formal, but we cannot hold a candle to Greeks when it comes to piling up adjectives!

[See Wisd 7:21-22, where **21 adjectives** describe Wisdom’s “spirit!” Then the description goes a few more verses.]

V. 29, Reference to Moses. NABRE Note: Exod 15:17; Deut 30:3-5. (include this section in both as “overlap”)

The goal of all of this is to support the legitimacy of the Second Temple. (11:17, [Divide Lecture Here](#))

The Story about the Miraculous Fire Concludes

1:30-36. ³⁰ And the priests were singing psalms of thanksgiving. ³¹ Now when the materials of the sacrifice were consumed, Nehemiah commanded the **water** [fluid] that was left over to be poured on very large stones. ³² When this was done, there was kindled a flame: but it was consumed by the light shining back from the altar. ³³ So when this matter became known, it was told to the king of Persia, that in the place, where the priests who had been led away had hidden the fire, there appeared **water**, with which Nehemiah had purified the sacrifices. ³⁴ After investigating the matter, the king, enclosing the place, made it sacred (*hieros*). ³⁵ And the king used to take and share many gifts with those upon whom he had favor. ³⁶ And those with Nehemiah called this thing **nephthar**, which means a cleansing, but by many it is called **naphtha**. [*nephthai*, usually spelled *naphtha*]

Verse 32. What happened to the mysterious “water?”

I breathed a sigh of relief when I read Doran’s comment.

The Greek of vv. 31–32 is difficult [so I’m not the only one having trouble!], but the meaning seems to be that, with the sacrifices resumed and the eternal fire burning again, the naphtha has served its purpose and is consumed.¹¹

V. 35 Seems to be “beside the point.” Is the text corrupt?

Goldstein suggests that the text has become corrupt, and that only one manuscript has the correct reading.

The king took large sums of money and distributed them **to Nehemiah and his followers**.¹²

Doran emends the text to read:

Those on whom the king was bestowing much money, used to accept and share [it].¹³

Remarks on Textual Criticism.

Textual criticism is counter-intuitive!

Problem: Ancient scribes were just like we are. They wanted their Bible to make sense!

Result: The reading that makes the **most sense** is the **most suspect!**

One rule is: the reading that can explain all the different variants is probably the original reading.

If there was no problem with the original, there would not be all these variants (attempts to “make sense”).

Lectio difficilior potior = The more difficult reading is more likely (literally, “more powerful”).

¹¹ Doran, “The Second Book of Maccabees,” *NIB*, vol. 4 (Abingdon Press, 1996), 198.

¹² Jonathan A. Goldstein, *II Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 41A, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 155.

⁸ [This is a condensed version of Doran’s note -- see next reference] The text here is very difficult. The singular verb, with the king as subject, does not make much sense. . . . If one reads the third person plural verbs . . . , with [certain manuscripts] . . . one could translate [as I have].

¹³ Robert Doran, *2 Maccabees: A Critical Commentary*, Hermeneia (Fortress Press, 2012), 47.

2:1-8, Section on Jeremiah

Jeremiah and the Sacred Fire. It is also found in the records that Jeremiah the prophet commanded the deportees to take some of the **fire**, as it has been indicated, ² and how that the prophet, having given them the law, charged the deportees not to forget the commandments of the Lord, and that they should not err in their minds, when they see images of silver and gold and their ornamentation. ³ And saying other such things he exhorted them, that the law should not depart from their hearts.

This section identifies the miraculous fire found by post-exilic Nehemiah with pre-exilic Jeremiah. This provides continuity between the First Temple (of Solomon) and the Second Temple.

Jeremiah and the Ark, 4-8. It was also contained in the same writing, that the prophet, having received an oracle, commanded the tabernacle and the ark to go with him, as he went forth to the mountain, where Moses climbed up, and saw the heritage of God. ⁵ And when Jeremiah came there, he found a hollow cave, and he placed inside it the tabernacle, and the ark, and the altar of incense, and sealed up the door. ⁶ Now some of those that followed him came to mark the way, but they could not find it. ⁷ When Jeremiah realized this, he rebuked them, saying, 'As for that place, it shall be unknown until the time that God gather his people again together, and becomes merciful.' ⁸ Then the Lord shall show them these things, and the glory of the Lord shall appear, and the cloud also, as it appeared for Moses, and as when Solomon desired that the place might be greatly sanctified.

A Possible Objection

Someone might claim that Solomon's Temple had the Ark, the original altar of incense & the (desert) tabernacle. Therefore the Second Temple is not as great as Solomon's Temple.

The answer is: it is God's will that these things remain hidden until he is ready to reveal their location.

Post-Lecture addition. All of this, of course, is total fiction. The ark and the other Temple treasures were probably either destroyed when the Temple burned, or were taken as booty to Babylon. However, imagining this passage as historical can lead to great Indiana Jones movies!

2:9-12, A Comparison of Moses and Solomon

It was also explained, that he being wise offered a sacrifice of dedication, and of the completion of the temple. ¹⁰ Just as Moses also prayed to the Lord, and fire came down from heaven, and consumed the sacrifices: just so Solomon prayed too, and the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offerings. ¹¹ And Moses said, Because it was not eaten, the [offering] for sin was consumed [by flames]. ¹² So Solomon also observed the eight days.

We have more parallels with the Hanukkah "Feast of Fire."

When the Tabernacle in the wilderness was first dedicated, God sent fire from heaven (Lev 9:24).

When Solomon dedicated the first temple, God sent fire from heaven (2 Chr 7:1, **but not 1 Kgs 8:54-62¹⁴**).

Like Solomon's original 8-day celebration, the Maccabean Re-Dedication (Hanukkah) lasts 8 days.

2:13-15 Nehemiah Finds a Library; Judas Imitates Him

The same things also were reported in the writings and commentaries of Nehemiah; and how he founding a library gathered together the acts of the kings, and the prophets, and of David, and the epistles of kings concerning the votive offerings. ¹⁴ In like manner also Judas gathered together all those things that were lost by reason of the war we had, and they remain in our possession, ¹⁵ So if you have need of them, send carriers to get them for you.

Formation of the biblical canon.

In fact, there is no mention of Nehemiah founding a library in the Book of Nehemiah.¹⁵

¹⁴ 1 Kings is earlier than 1 Chronicles, so this appears to be a **later legend**. Note how traditions and legends **grow**.

¹⁵ Doran, "Second Maccabees," *NIB*, 4. 199.

Collins notes that many scholars think that Judas Maccabee had an important role in the formation of the canon. The scriptures have played an even more fundamental role in the preservation of Jewish identity than the temple and the land. We should note that the emphasis here is **not on the content** of the books collected by Judas. The point is that **there is a collection** of representative books, and **all Jews** should have them. The scriptures, like the temple, are a symbol of unity and identity.¹⁶

2:16-18, Conclusions

Since we are about to celebrate the purification, we have written to you, and you shall do well, if you observe these days. ¹⁷ Now the God who saved all his people, and gave to all the inheritance, the kingdom, the priesthood, and the consecration, ¹⁸ as he promised in the law, will quickly have mercy upon us, and gather us out of everywhere under heaven into the holy place he has chosen: for he has delivered us out of great troubles, and has purified **the place**.

V. 18, “The Place.” Here the phrase “the Place” is used to describe the Jerusalem Temple.

This is an **absolute** use of the phrase, unlike examples in Deuteronomy:

“ . . . the place which YHWH your God will choose . . . to place his name there” (Deut 12:5, my translation)

See also: Deut 12:11, 21; 14:23, 24; 16:2, 6, 11; 26:2.

In all of these examples “the place” is **modified** by other words and phrases.

Later Jewish tradition will refer to the Jerusalem temple simply as **the Place**.

I am not sure if there is any earlier absolute reference. I’ll have to check with Rabbi Kline!

Rabbi David’s E-mail, with comments & translations from me in a blue font.

Hi Pat, The line you cite from 2 Macc seems to point to

Ps 24:3 מִי־יַעֲלֶה בְּהַר־יְהוָה וּמִי־יִקְוֶם בְּמִקְוֹם קִדְשׁוֹ:

Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in **his holy place?** (24:3 RSV)

[But! This is “modified, not absolute! PJM]

or Lev. 10:17

מִדּוּעַ לֹא־אָכַלְתֶּם אֶת־הַחֹטְאֹת בְּמִקְוֹם הַקֹּדֶשׁ כִּי קֹדֶשׁ קִדְשִׁים הוּא וְאַתֶּה נָתַן לָכֶם לְשֵׂאת אֶת־עֲוֹן הָעֹדָה לְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיהֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה:

Why have you not eaten the sin offering **in the holy place for it is most holy** (literally, **holiness of holies**) PJM.

Clearly the Maccs had in mind the temple precincts. (For the holiest spot, the word is דְּבִיר).

BUT:

The rabbis turned המקום [*ham-maqom, the place*] into a substitute for the inutterable [i.e., a substitute for the name of God which Jews man not say aloud]. Jastrow [author of a dictionary of post-biblical Jewish literature] lists it as meaning #2

2) *existence, substance; Ham-maqom the place, the Existence, the Lord . . . in circumscribing the name of the Lord, why do we call him Maqom? . . . because He is the existence (the preserver) of the world, but His world is not His existence . . .*

In Israel you can still say, perfectly innocently regarding any particular spot, when you get there: באתי אל המקום. [I have come to **the place**.] And the rabbis could use it that way too, as in "**the place** determines the condition." But a Jew greets a mourner after the funeral with the words: המקום ינחם [May *hamakom* comfort], short for “May Hamakom comfort you among the rest of the mourners of Tsion and Y'rushalayim.” You could drop המקום [*hammakom, the place*] into your next conversation with AJ Levine. She might have more to say about it.

Only one more day of Pesach. And, as usual, we have only begun to taste its gustatory delights.

Shabat shalom [A Sabbath of peace],

David

¹⁶ Collins, *Daniel, 1-2 Maccabees*, p. 277.