

Week 41, Lecture 135.¹ 2 Maccabees 13.

A Brief Overview of the Story of the Maccabees.

I think of the story of the Rededication of the Temple as the center of a 3-part story.

Part 1, Preliminary Events. The first part of the story concerns the events after the death of Alexander the Great. At first Israel was under the relatively benign rule of the Ptolemies of Egypt. After the Seleucids, located in Syria, gained control of Israel there was more pressure to Hellenize (adopt Greek ways). Many Jews (especially the urban elites) were comfortable with Hellenization. There was, however, resistance, especially among the rural population. Under Antiochus IV there was a severe persecution of the Jews. Resistance to the Seleucids began under Mattathias. After his death his son Judas Maccabee continued the fight.

Part 2, The Rededication of the Temple. Antiochus IV dies and the Temple is rededicated in 164 B.C. However, a Seleucid garrison maintained control of the Acra, the fortress in Jerusalem.

Part 3a, The Story of Judas after the Rededication of the Temple.

The rest of 2 Maccabees (10:10-15:39) is dedicated to the struggles of Judas Maccabee until his death.

So far we have covered chapters 10, 11, and 12.

The goal for today is to cover chapters 13, 14, and 15, finishing 2 Maccabees.

Part 3b, After the Death of Judas Maccabee. 1 Maccabees 9-16 continues the story after the death of Judas.

1 Maccabees 9-12 tell the story of the leadership of Jonathan Maccabee

1 Maccabees 13-15 tell the story of the leadership of Simon Maccabee.

2 Maccabees 13, The Second Expedition of Lysias. (Main Divisions by Doran)²

1. Introduction, the Death of Menelaus 13:1-8
2. The Engagement with Lysias at Modein 13:9-17
3. Antiochus V's Treaty. 13:18-26

Scripture Version³

13:1-8, Introduction. [No need to read the passage aloud. Give Summary.]

In the 149th year Judas was told that Antiochus Eupator was coming with a great force into Judea,² and with him Lysias his guardian and ruler of his affairs, each having a Greek force of 110,000 infantry, 5,300 horsemen, 22 elephants, and 300 chariots armed with hooks.³ Menelaus also joined them, and with great hypocrisy encouraged Antiochus, not for the welfare of the country, but because he hoped to be established in [NJB translates "restored to"] office.⁴ But the King of kings moved Antiochus' mind against this scoundrel. When Lysias informed the king that this man was the cause of all the trouble, he commanded that he be brought to Berea, and be put to death by the customary manner in that place.⁵ Now there was in that place a tower 75 feet (50 cubits) high, full of ashes, and it had a circular rim which on every side sloped down steeply into the ashes.⁶ There they all push to destruction anyone condemned of sacrilege or who had committed any other serious crime.⁷ That wicked man died such a death, not having so much as burial in the earth -- and that most justly.⁸ Since he had committed many sins against the altar, whose fire and ashes were holy, he received his death in ashes.

¹ Lectures numbered consecutively. This is this week's 1st lecture, but its number reflects its place in the **total** sequence.

² Robert Doran, "The Second Book of Maccabees," *New Interpreter's Bible* (Abingdon, 1996), Vol. 4, pp.278-282.

³ The English is based on Brenton's 19th century version, accessed via *BibleWorks*. At times I modify it to make it more literal. I have also Americanized (honour > honor) and updated (followeth > follows) the spelling.

Verse 1. 149th Year. This corresponds to 163/162 B.C.⁴

Ancient calendars often did not begin in January. Therefore there is often “overlap” in the years of our system. This would be the year after the death of Antiochus IV and the rededication of the Temple (164 B.C.).

Summary. The boy King Antiochus V and his guardian, General Lysias, arrive with a huge army.

Menelaus, a hellenizing Jew appointed High Priest by Antiochus IV, joins them.

God (“the King of kings”) turns the mind of the 9 or 10 year-old King against Menelaus.

I suspect God did this through Lysias.

Menelaus is condemned to be executed by being thrown into a huge pile of ashes.

The author sees poetic justice here, because Menelaus had defiled the holy ashes of the altar with pagan sacrifices.

Is this passage out of order?

Collins suggests that executing Menelaus would have made more sense **after** the Seleucids had decided to make peace. Executing their “own man” suggests that the empire is growing weary of this fight, and wants to make a deal.⁵

13:9-17, The Engagement with Lysias at Modein. [No need to read the passage aloud. Give Summary.]

Now the king came with a barbarous and arrogant mind to do far worse to the Jews than had been done in his father's time. ¹⁰ When Judas perceived this, he commanded the multitude to call upon the Lord night and day, that now more than ever, he would help them -- since they were about to be deprived of their law, their country, and the holy temple-- ¹¹ and that he would not allow the people that had only recently been revived to be subjects [again] to blasphemous Gentiles. ¹² So when they had all done this together, and beseeched the merciful Lord with weeping and fasting, and lying prostrate upon the ground three days long, Judas, having exhorted them, commanded them to get ready. ¹³ But Judas privately, along with the elders, determined, before the king's host should enter Judea and take the city, to go forth and settle the matter in battle by the help of the Lord. ¹⁴ So when he had committed all to the Creator of the world, and exhorted his soldiers to fight valiantly up to death for the laws, the temple, the city, the country, and the commonwealth, he camped by **Modein**: ¹⁵ And having given the watchword to his troops, “Victory belongs to God,” he went with the most bravest elite young men into the king's pavilion by night, and slew in the camp about 2,000 men, and the leading elephant with all that were upon him. ¹⁶ Finally, they filled the camp with fear and tumult, and departed rejoicing. ¹⁷ This was done at the break of the day through the protecting help of the Lord.

Summary of 13:9-17. When Judas sees the intentions of the enemy he orders 3 days of prayer and fasting

Judas borrows from the playbook of Gideon, and orders a guerilla style attack in the pre-dawn darkness.

This results in the death of 2,000 of the enemy, and considerable confusion among the rest (over 100,000 more).

The engagement takes place near **Modein** (v. 14), the home town of the Maccabees.

Modein is mentioned 8 times in 1 Maccabees, but only here in 2 Maccabees.

General Comment by Doran

The account of the engagement with Lysias is colored by the theological stance of the author. With God on their side, the Jews are invincible and Judea cannot be overrun. **So what was really a defeat for the Jews at Beth-zachariah (1 Macc 6:32–47), resulting in the Seleucids regaining control of Jerusalem (1 Macc 6:48–62), is depicted as a victory for the Jews instead.** ⁶

13:18-26, Antiochus V's Treaty.

Now the king, having had had a taste of the valor of the Jews, tried to take their positions by strategy. ⁹ He marched toward Beth-zur, which was a stronghold of the Jews, but he was driven back; he failed; he lost men.

²⁰ So Judas sent supplies (lit. “the necessities”) to those inside. ²¹ But Rhodocus, who was in the army of the Jews, betrayed secrets to the enemy. Therefore he was sought out; he was caught and imprisoned. ²² The king negotiated with those in Beth-zur a second time, shook hands, departed, attacked those with Judas, and was overcome. ²³ He heard that Philip, who was left over the affairs in Antioch, was acting insanely. He was

⁴ Note to the NABRE, 2 Macc 13:1; the NRSV note reads simply “163 B.C.”

⁵ Collins, *1-2 Maccabees*, 342.

⁶ Doran, “Second Maccabees,” in *NIB*, vol. 4, 281.

confounded. He summoned the Jews, submitted himself, swore fair conditions to everyone, and agreed to them. He offered sacrifice, honored the temple, and showed generosity toward the place. ²⁴ He even recognized Maccabeus; made him principal governor from Ptolemais to Gerar. ²⁵ He came to Ptolemais. The people there were upset about the treaty; for they were angry about it; they wished to set aside the provisions.⁷ ²⁶ Lysias went up to the platform, said as much as possible in defense of the cause. He persuaded and pacified them, and having allayed their concerns, returned to Antioch. Thus the details of the king's arrival and departure played out.

Harsh Critique by Doran

This chapter shows again the power of a historian to determine the way history is written. Guided by his worldview that Torah-observant Jews could not be defeated by any enemy, the author of 2 Maccabees has selected his facts, embellished them, and distorted what actually happened. [think of "alternative facts" in today's news!] . . . Have we looked at our religion's past through rose-colored spectacles and not attempted to see what drove our opponents or to empathize with their views? If we begin every discussion with the entrenched view that we are right and our opponents are wrong, how can we ever advance beyond conflict? ⁸

Ecumenical Reflections-- inspired by Doran's remarks. Time changes our perspectives.

Problems with outdated catechetical materials, e.g., from the 1950's.

Lack of diversity in the pictures. We took lack of diversity for granted back then!

Ecumenical perspective. Protestants used to be "heretics & schismatics." Now "separated brothers & sisters."

Week 41, Lecture 136.2 Maccabees 14.

2 Maccabees 14 (Main Divisions by Doran)⁹

1. Introduction 14:1-2
2. Nicanor's Expedition 14:3-25
3. The Change in Nicanor 14:26-36
4. The Razis Affair 14:37-46

14:1-2, Introduction.

After three years Judas was informed that Demetrius the son of Seleucus, having entered the harbor of Tripolis with a great power and navy, ² had taken the country, and killed Antiochus, and Lysias his guardian.

After 3 Years. The NRSV note places this in 161 B.C. The NABRE note gives the date as 162/161 B.C.

Demetrius. This story has its parallel in 1 Maccabees 7. Recall that Demetrius was the eldest son of King Seleucus IV. Antiochus (eventually IV) was the brother of Seleucus IV. He lived as a hostage in Rome for many years.

Seleucus eventually sent Demetrius to Rome to replace Antiochus as hostage.

While Antiochus was returning home, he received word that his brother Seleucus had died.

Instead of doing the "honorable thing" -- returning to Rome so that Demetrius could become king --

Antiochus hurried home, and became Antiochus IV, leaving his nephew Demetrius in Rome.

After the death of Antiochus IV, Demetrius managed to escape from Rome.

When he arrived home he had the boy-king Antiochus V executed, along with his guardian, General Lysias.

14:3-25, Nicanor's Expedition. [No need to read the passage aloud. Give Summary.]

14:3-17. Now a certain Alcimus, who had been high priest, and who had defiled himself willingly in the times of their mingling with the Gentiles, seeing that he could save himself by no means, nor have any more access to the holy altar, ⁴ went to king Demetrius in the hundred and fifty-first year. He presented him with a crown of gold, a

⁷ The NRSV note says, "The meaning of the Greek is uncertain." I agree. This is the best I can do.

⁸ Doran, "Second Maccabees," in *NIB*, vol. 4, 283.

⁹ Doran, "Second Maccabees," in *NIB*, vol. 4, 283-287.

palm, and also some of the boughs which were used solemnly in the temple. Then he held his peace [the rest of] that day. ⁵ However, having gotten an opportunity to further his foolish enterprise, and being called into counsel by Demetrius, and asked how the Jews stood affected, and what they intended, he answered: ⁶ "Those of the Jews called Hasideans, whose captain is Judas Maccabeus, nourish war and are seditious, and will not let the rest be in peace. ⁷ Therefore I, being deprived of my ancestral honor -- I mean the high priesthood -- have now come here. ⁸ First of all [I came] indeed because of the genuine care I have for matters pertaining to the king; and secondly, because I am concerned for the good of my own countrymen. Our entire nation is in no small misery through the foolish dealings of those people. ⁹ Therefore, O king, since you know all this, take good care of the country and our nation, which is pressed on every side, according to the mercy that you readily show to everyone. ¹⁰ For as long as Judas lives, it is not possible that the state should be quiet. ¹¹ This was no sooner said about him, when others of the king's Friends, being maliciously set against Judas, angered Demetrius even more. ¹² Immediately calling Nicanor, who had been master of the elephants, and making him governor over Judea, he dispatched him, ¹³ commanding him to slay Judas, to scatter them that were with him, and to make Alcimus high priest of the great temple. ¹⁴ Then the pagans, who had fled Judea to get away from Judas, flocked to Nicanor, imagining that harm and calamity for the Jews would be for their benefit. ¹⁵ Now when the Jews heard of Nicanor's arrival, and that the pagans were also against them, they cast earth upon their heads, and made supplication to him that had established his people for ever, and who always helps his portion with a manifestation of his presence. ¹⁶ So at the order of the captain they immediately departed from there, and approached them at the town of Dessau. ¹⁷ Now Simon, Judas' brother, had joined battle with Nicanor, but was somewhat disturbed through the sudden silence of his enemies.

Summary of 14:3-17. King Demetrius, urged by the hellenizing high priest Alcimus, sends Nicanor to destroy Judas. Nicanor decides to rely on diplomacy. He respects Judas, and becomes genuinely fond of him.

14:18-25. Nevertheless Nicanor, hearing of the valor of those who were with Judas, and the courageousness that they had to fight for their country, decided not settle the matter by the sword. ¹⁹ Therefore he sent Posidonius, Theodotus, and Mattathias to make peace. ²⁰ So when they had taken much advice about it, and each leader had shared the information with his followers, and it appeared that they were all of one mind, they consented to the treaty, ²¹ and set a day to meet by themselves. When the day came, and chairs were set up for both of them, ²² Judas placed armed men ready in suitable places, lest some treachery should be suddenly practiced by the enemy. Thus they held a peace conference. ²³ Afterward Nicanor lived in Jerusalem, and did no harm. Rather he sent away the people that came flocking unto him. ²⁴ And he did not want to have Judas out of his sight, because he was genuinely fond of the man. ²⁵ He even suggested to him to **get married and to have children. So Judas married, settled down, and lived an ordinary life.**

Successful Diplomacy. Nicanor is here portrayed as a successful diplomat.

He has persuaded the warrior Judas to lay down his arms, and to become a family man.

Judas is portrayed as accepting the friendly advice of this diplomat.

14:26-36, The Change in Nicanor. [No need to read the passage aloud. Give Summary.]

14:26-30. But Alcimus, noticing the good will that was between them, and considering the treaty that had been made, came to Demetrius, and told him that Nicanor was not loyal toward the state because he had designated Judas, a traitor to the realm, to be his successor. ²⁷ Then the king in a rage, provoked by the accusations of the scoundrel, wrote to Nicanor, signifying that he was much displeased with the treaty, and commanding him to send Maccabeus as prisoner to Antioch quickly. ²⁸ When this came to Nicanor's notice, he was very upset, and took it hard that he would have to make void the treaty which had been agreed upon, since the man (Judas) was not at fault. ²⁹ But because there was no opposing the king, he bided his time to accomplish this matter by a stratagem. ³⁰ However, when Maccabeus saw that Nicanor began to act more austere toward him, and that he was addressing him more roughly than had been customary, perceiving that such sour behavior came not of good, he gathered together quite a few of his men, and withdrew from Nicanor.

Summary of vv. 26-30. The wicked Jewish priest Alcimus poisons the mind of King Demetrius against Judas. He implies that Nicanor is not being loyal to the king. King Demetrius sends a letter insisting that Nicanor arrest Judas. Nicanor is faced with a moral dilemma, and decides he has to "follow orders."

14:31-36. But Nicanor, knowing that he had been cleverly outwitted by the man, went into the great and holy temple, and commanded the priests, who were offering their usual sacrifices, to hand the man over to him. ³² And when they swore that they could not tell him where the man he was looking for was, ³³ he stretched out his right hand toward the temple, and made the following oath: "If you will not hand over Judas to me as a prisoner, I will flatten this temple of God to the ground. I will break down the altar, and erect a splendid temple to Bacchus." ³⁴ After these words he departed. Then the priests lifted up their hands toward heaven, and besought him that was

ever a defender of their nation, saying: ³⁵ “You, O Lord of all things, who have need of nothing, were pleased that the temple of your dwelling should be among us. ³⁶ So now, Holy One, Lord of all holiness, keep forever undefiled this house, which lately was cleansed [and silence every unrighteous mouth].”

Summary of vv. 31-36. Nicanor demands that the priests reveal the location of Judas.

When they say that they do not have that information, he stretches out his hand toward the Temple.

He pronounces an oath to destroy the Temple if Judas is not turned over to him.

The priests respond with prayer to God. For 2 Maccabees, prayer is more important than military tactics.

14:37-46, The Razis Affair

³⁷ Now a certain Razis, one of the elders of Jerusalem, was denounced to Nicanor. A lover of his countrymen, and a man of very good report, he was called a father of the Jews because of his good will. ³⁸ For in the previous times of **non-mingling**, **he had been accused of Judaism**, and did boldly zealously risk his body and soul for the religion of the Jews. ³⁹ So Nicanor, wishing to demonstrate the hate he had for the Jews, sent more than five hundred soldiers to arrest him. ⁴⁰ He thought by arresting him he would do the Jews much harm. ⁴¹ Now when the multitude was about to take the tower, and had violently broken down the outer gate, and calling for fire to burn the (inner) gates, Razis about to be captured, fell upon his sword, ⁴² **preferring to die nobly**, than to fall into the hands of the wicked, and to die in a way unworthy of his noble birth. ⁴³ However, missing his stroke through haste, with the multitude rushing through the doors, he ran boldly up to the wall, and bravely cast himself down into their midst. ⁴⁴ But they quickly withdrawing and making room, he fell down into the middle of the empty space. ⁴⁵ Still breathing, inflamed with anger, he arose; and enduring the gushing of blood from his terrible wounds, passing through the middle of the throng on the run; and standing upon a steep rock, ⁴⁶ his blood completely drained from him, seizing his entrails with his hands, he hurled them at the crowd, calling upon the Lord of life and spirit to restore them to him. Thus he died.

14:38. Textual Problem. Does it say **amixia**, “**no mixing**” or **ameixia** “**revolt**”?¹⁰

In former times when there was **no mingling** [with the Gentiles] (KJA, RSV, NRSV, NETS)

In the days before **the revolt** (NABRE)

In the early days of **the revolt** (NAB, NJB)

Accused of “Judaism.” This book is probably the **first literary work** to use the word “Judaism.”

Judaism (*Ioudaismos*) it appears only here and in 2 Macc 2:21 and 8:1.

It also appears in 4 Macc 4:26, considered canonical by some Orthodox Christians. (later than 2 Maccabees)

The word is used only twice in the NT, both times by Paul in Galatians (1:13-14).

In the OT there is **no Hebrew equivalent**.

The earliest ancestors were “Hebrews.”

The twelve tribes were “Israel / Israelites.”

Only when **Judah** was the “last tribe standing” could “**Judaism**” become a word.

The words “Jew” / “Judaism” are closer in Greek than in English: **Ioudaios** / **Ioudaismos**

v. 42, Preferring to Die Nobly. There is no condemnation of suicide in the Bible.

Our author says he acted “nobly,” *eu-genōs*. He thus places him in the same class as the aged martyr Eleazar.

In 6:31 the death of this martyr is an example of “nobility” (*gennaiotēs*).

1 Sam 31:4 recalls the suicide of Saul without a negative comment on its morality.

The commandment “you shall not **kill**” is literally “you shall not **murder**.”

Jewish theology, while very “pro-life,” is more tolerant of suicide in extreme circumstances than Catholic theology.

Two Images of Resurrection in the OT. (A point I have made before.)

The first image is “crassly physical.” The martyrs in chapter 5 hope to get their hands and tongues back.

Here, Razis dies with the hope of getting his intestines back.

¹⁰ The Göttingen Septuagint (2008) and the critical edition by Swete (1909) both read **amixias**. Dorans’s commentary in the Hermeneia series accepts this reading. I have accessed them via *Logos*. Jerome’s Vulgate reads **continentiae**. The Leiden Peshitta, also accessed via *Logos*, reads **ḥwlṭn** (*ḥultānā*, commingling, fellowship). The edition by Rahlfs (1935, 1979) reads **ameixia**.

An **image less crass** is found in Daniel 12:1-3. There those who rise are compared to stars. Unlike contemporary science -- “we are star stuff” -- ancient science considered heavenly matter “different.” Everything “sub-lunar” consisted of mixtures of 4 things: earth, air, fire, water. Heavenly bodies were thought to be essentially different, a “**fifth essence**” (cf. “**quint-essential**”).

In the **NT story** of the **dispute of Jesus with the Sadducees**, Jesus appears to take the view of Daniel. He compares those who rise to “angels in heaven” (Matt 22:30 || Mark 12:25)

The Lucan parallel (20:36) reads “equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection

This is a “Remember the Alamo” Story. It is similar to the story of Eleazar killing a battle elephant (1 Macc 6:46). When a historian can report no victory, sometimes the best course is to record a noble defeat.

Week 41, Lecture 137. 2 Maccabees 15.

2 Maccabees 15 (Main Divisions by Doran)¹¹

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|---------------------------------|----------|------------------------|----------|
| 1. Nicanor’s Arrogance | 15:1-5 | 2. Battle Preparations | 15:6-10 |
| 3. The Vision of Judas | 15:11-16 | 4. The Battle | 15:20-27 |
| 5. The Dismemberment of Nicanor | 15:28-36 | 6. The Epilogue | 15:37-39 |

15:1-5, Nicanor’s Arrogance. [No need to read the passage aloud. Give Summary.]

But Nicanor, hearing that Judas and his troops were in the area of Samaria, decided to attack them in safety on the day of rest. ² However, the Jews that were forced to go with him said, “By no means destroy so cruelly and barbarously, but give honor to that day, which he, that sees all things, has honored with holiness above all other days.” ³ Then the triple-wicked scoundrel demanded, if there were a mighty one in heaven, that had commanded the sabbath day to be kept. ⁴ And when they said, “It is the living Lord himself, a mighty one in heaven, who commanded the seventh day to be kept,” ⁵ he said, “And I am also a mighty one -- upon earth, and I command you to take up arms, and to do the king’s business.” All the same, he did not succeed in carrying out his cruel plan.

Summary of 15:1-5. Nicanor plans to attack on the Sabbath. Jews drafted into his army object. They warn him of “a mighty one in heaven” who commands that the Sabbath be honored. He retorts that he is “a mighty one -- upon earth,” and gives orders to attack.

15:6-10, Battle Preparations. [No need to read the passage aloud. Give Summary.]

⁶ So Nicanor in exceeding pride and arrogance decided to set up a public monument of his victory over Judas and his troops. ⁷ But Maccabeus remained continuously confident in his hope to receive help from the Lord. ⁸ Therefore he exhorted his men not to fear the coming of the Gentiles against them, but to remember the help which in former times they had received from Heaven, and now to expect the victory and aid, which would come to them from the Almighty. ⁹ And so encouraging them from the Law and the Prophets, and reminding them of the battles that they had previously won, he filled them with enthusiasm. ¹⁰ And when he had stirred up their courage, he gave his orders, while pointing out the **treachery of the Gentiles**, and their **breach of oaths**.

Summary of 15:6-10. The preparations for battle are fairly standard. We have seen them before. The Gentiles are overconfident. Judas and his men rely on God’s help. V. 10, Judas’ portrayal of the **treachery** of the Gentiles and their **breach of oaths** is interesting. This might show that he was aware of fellow Jews who were willing to negotiate.

15:11-16, The Vision of Judas. [No need to read vv. 11-14 aloud. Give Summary.]

Summary of vv. 11-14. Judas narrates a vision. He sees the holy priest Onias and a second heavenly figure.

¹¹ Doran, “Second Maccabees,” in *NIB*, vol. 4, 288-297.

Onias introduces Judas to Jeremiah.

15:11-14. Thus he armed every one of them, not so much with defense of shields and spears, as with comforting and good words: and beside that, he told them a dream worthy to be believed, a **sort of waking vision**, which did not a little to cheer them up. ¹² And this was his vision: **Onias**, who had been high priest, a virtuous and a good man, reverend in conversation, gentle in condition, well spoken also, and raised from childhood in all points of virtue, holding up his hands prayed for the whole body of the Jews. ¹³ This done, in like manner there appeared a man with gray hair, very glorious, who was of a wonderful and excellent majesty. ¹⁴ Then Onias spoke, saying, "This is a lover of the brethren, who prays much for the people, and for the holy city, namely, **Jeremiah** the prophet of God." **Read v. 15 aloud.**

¹⁵ Thereupon Jeremiah holding forth his right hand gave to Judas a sword of gold, and in giving it spoke thus, ¹⁶ "Take this holy sword, a gift from God, with the which you shall wound the enemy."

Summary of 17-21. The followers of Judas are encouraged,

They march out to battle to defend the Temple, more concerned for it than even for their own families.

Those left behind in the city join in prayer. **No need to read following verses aloud.**

¹⁷ Thus being well comforted by the words of Judas, which were very good, and able to stir them up to valor, and to encourage the hearts of the young men, they determined not to pitch camp, but courageously to set upon them, and manfully to decide the issue in battle, because the city, the sanctuary, and the temple were in danger. ¹⁸ For the concern that they had for their wives, their children, their brothers and sisters, and relatives, was of least importance to them; rather, the greatest and principal fear was for the holy temple. ¹⁹ Those left behind in the city endured no less anxiety, being alarmed about the conflict in the open country.

V. 11. Sort of waking vision. The NRSV note states "Meaning of Gk uncertain."

LSJ (Liddell, Scott, Jones) give two meanings for *hupar*. One is "waking vision," as opposed to dream, *onar*. The other meaning is adverbial, "in reality, actually."

This word never occurs in the NT, and this is the **only** occurrence in the entire Greek OT.

Such reports are one of the main differences between 2 Maccabees and the more "sober history" of 1 Maccabees.

V. 12, Onias. Recall that this high priest was praised in 2 Maccabees 3.

Because of his holiness, God did not allow the Temple to be defiled by Heliodorus.

In 2 Maccabees 4 he is slandered and replaced by Hellenizers who bribe the king.

Jeremiah. Collins' observations are interesting. Jer 50:35-38 contains an oracle of a "sword against Babylon."

This is probably why our author has chosen him for this heavenly vision.

But Collins finds the use of Jeremiah as ironic -- probably unintentionally!

Jeremiah preached against resistance to the Babylonians. He had been accused of destroying the morale of the troops.

Collins observes: "No biblical figure would be less apt to endorse the Maccabees."¹²

15:20-26, The Battle. The description of the battle scene is fairly standard up to the prayer of Judas in v. 22.

15:20-21. And now, when as all looked what should be the trial, and the enemies had already come near, and the army was set in array, and the beasts suitably placed, and the horsemen set in wings, ²¹ Maccabeus seeing the coming of the multitude, and the various preparations of armor, and the fierceness of the beasts, stretched out his hands toward heaven, and called upon the Lord who works wonders, knowing that victory comes not by arms, but even as it seems good to him, he gives it to such as are worthy:

Read this section aloud.

15:22-26. Therefore in his prayer he said something like this: "O Lord, you sent your angel in the time of **Hezekiah**, king of Judea, and slew in the army of **Sennacherib** a 180,000. ²³ So now, O Lord of heaven, send a good angel before us to strike fear and dread upon them. ²⁴ And through the might of your arm let those be stricken with terror, who come against your holy people to blaspheme." Thus he ended. ²⁵ Then Nicanor and those with him advanced with trumpets and songs. ²⁶ But Judas and his company encountered the enemy with invocation and prayer.

¹² Collins, *1-2 Maccabees*, 356.

Hezekiah vs. Sennacherib. The reference is to the defeat of the Assyrian king in the time of Isaiah, 8th century B.C. The story is told in 2 Kings 18 & 19. A parallel version, often word-for-word, is in Isaiah 36 & 37.

The theological reasoning is: God has saved us in the past! He can save us today!

15:27-36, The Dismemberment of Nicanor. [No need to read the passage aloud. Give Summary.]

²⁷ So that fighting with their hands, and praying to God with their hearts, they slew no less than 35,000 men: for through the appearance of God they were greatly cheered. ²⁸ Now when the battle was over, returning again with joy, they discovered that Nicanor lay dead in his armor. ²⁹ Then they made a great shout and a noise, praising the Almighty in their own language. ³⁰ And Judas, who was ever the chief defender of the citizens both in body and mind, and who continued his love toward his countrymen all his life, commanded to cut off Nicanor's head, and his hand along with his shoulder, and bring them to Jerusalem. ³¹ So when he was there, and called his countrymen together, and set the priests before the altar, he sent for them that were in the tower, ³² And showed them vile Nicanor's head, and the hand of that blasphemer, which with arrogant bragging he had stretched out against the holy temple of the Almighty. ³³ And when he had cut out the tongue of that ungodly Nicanor, he commanded them to give it by pieces to the birds, and to hang up the reward of his madness before the temple. ³⁴ So every man praised to the heaven the glorious Lord, saying, "Blessed be he who has kept his own Place undefiled. ³⁵ He also hung Nicanor's head upon the tower, an evident and manifest sign to everyone of the Lord's help. ³⁶ And they ordained all with a common decree in no case to let that day pass without solemnity, but to celebrate **the thirtieth day of the twelfth month, which in the Syrian tongue is called Adar**, the day before Mordecai's day.

Summary. Judas and his troops are victorious. The author sees poetic justice in the gory details.

After the battle they find the corpse of Nicanor. They cut off his head and his right arm to bring to Jerusalem.

The tongue that had spoken against the Temple is cut out and fed to the birds.

Collins observes that this story is particularly poignant if Nicanor & Judas had actually been friends (chap. 14).

Dismembering Enemies. David severed the head of Goliath, and brought it to Jerusalem (1 Sam 17:54).

Judith displays the head of General Holofernes on the wall of her village (Judith 14:1; 11).

The Philistines cut off Saul's head and hung his body on the wall of Bethshan (1 Sam 31:9-10).¹³

Collins cautions that desire for bloody vengeance is not confined to Jews.

Similar passages are found in the Book of Revelation.¹⁴

Rev. 14:20 has a vision of the blood of the "bad guys" flowing as deep as the bridle of a horse!

V. 36, the 13th of Adar, Mordecai's Day.

Adar is the last month of the Babylonian-Jewish lunar calendar. It corresponds to February-March.

The year begins with the month of Nisan (corresponds to March-April) the month of Passover - Easter.

This overlap shows why our years B.C., which begin in **January**, often refer to two years in the Babylonian system.

Mordecai is one of the heroes in the book of Esther.

The use of "Mordecai's Day" as a reference point shows that our author considered the feast well established.¹⁵

15:37-39, The Epilogue.

³⁷ Thus went it with Nicanor: and from that time the Hebrews had the city in their power. And here will I make an end. ³⁸ And if I have done well, and as is fitting the story, that is what I desired: but if poorly and mediocre, **it is the best I could do.** ³⁹ For just as it is hurtful to drink wine or water alone; but wine mingled with water is pleasant, and delights the taste: even so speech finely framed delights the ears of those who read the story. And here shall be an end.

Reflections on Biblical Inspiration. Do these sound like the words of an author who is "taking dictation" from God?

He does not seem conscious of divine assistance. He does not claim that his work is perfect, containing no errors.

He would not blame God for the shortcomings of his work. He says simply "**It is the best I could do.**"

¹³ Doran, "Second Maccabees," in *NIB*, vol. 4, 297.

¹⁴ Collins, *1-2 Maccabees*, 356.

¹⁵ Doran, "Second Maccabees," in *NIB*, vol. 4, 297.