

## **2 Maccabees 1**

### **A Letter to the Jews in Egypt**

1 From the Jews of Jerusalem and Judea to those in Egypt, warm greetings.

<sup>2</sup> May God be good to you and keep the covenant he made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, his faithful servants. <sup>3</sup> May he fill each of you with the desire to worship him and to do his will eagerly with all your heart and soul. <sup>4</sup> May he enable you to understand his Law and his commands. May he give you peace, <sup>5</sup> answer your prayers, forgive your sins, and never abandon you in times of trouble. <sup>6</sup> Here in Judah we are now praying for you.

<sup>7</sup> In the year 169, <sup>[a]</sup> when Demetrius the Second was king of Syria, we wrote to tell you about the persecution and the hard times that came upon us in the years after Jason revolted against authority in the Holy Land. <sup>8</sup> Jason and his men set fire to the Temple gates and slaughtered innocent people. Then we prayed to the Lord and he answered our prayers. So we sacrificed animals, gave offerings of grain, lit the lamps in the Temple, and set out the sacred loaves. <sup>9</sup> This is why we urge you to celebrate in the month of Kislev a festival similar to the Festival of Shelters. Written in the year 188. <sup>[b]</sup>

### **A LETTER TO ARISTOBULUS**

#### **The Death of King Antiochus**

<sup>10</sup> From the Jews of Jerusalem and Judea, the Jewish Senate, and Judas, to Aristobulus, a descendant of priests and the teacher of King Ptolemy, and to the Jews in Egypt, greetings and good health.

<sup>11</sup> We thank God because he saved us from great danger. We were like men ready to fight against a king, <sup>12</sup> but God drove the enemy from our holy city. <sup>13</sup> When King Antiochus arrived in Persia, his army seemed impossible to defeat, but they were cut to pieces in the temple of the goddess Nanea by an act of treachery on the part of her priests. <sup>14</sup> King Antiochus had gone to the temple with some of his most trusted advisers, so that he might marry the goddess and then take away most of the temple treasures as a wedding gift. <sup>15</sup> After the priests had laid out the treasure, he and a few of his men went into the temple to collect it. But the priests closed the doors behind him <sup>16</sup> and stoned him and his men from trap doors hidden in the ceiling. Then they cut up the bodies and threw the heads to the people outside. <sup>17</sup> Praise God for punishing those evil men! Praise him for everything!

#### **Fire Consumes Nehemiah's Sacrifice**

<sup>18</sup> On the twenty-fifth day of the month of Kislev we will celebrate the Festival of Rededication just as we celebrate the Festival of Shelters. We thought it important to remind you of this, so that you too may celebrate this festival. In this way you will remember how fire appeared when Nehemiah offered sacrifices after he had rebuilt the

Temple and the altar. <sup>19</sup> At the time when our ancestors were being taken to exile in Persia, a few devout priests took some fire from the altar and secretly hid it in the bottom of a dry cistern. They hid the fire so well that no one ever discovered it. <sup>20</sup> Years later, when it pleased God, the Persian emperor sent Nehemiah back to Jerusalem, and Nehemiah told the descendants of those priests to find the fire. They reported to us that they had found no fire but only some oily liquid. Nehemiah then told them to scoop some up and bring it to him. <sup>21</sup> When everything for the sacrifice had been placed on the altar, he told the priests to pour the liquid over both the wood and the sacrifice. <sup>22</sup> After this was done and some time had passed, the sun appeared from behind the clouds, and suddenly everything on the altar burst into flames. Everyone looked on in amazement. <sup>23</sup> Then, while the fire was consuming the sacrifice, Jonathan the High Priest led the people in prayer, and Nehemiah and all the people responded.

### **Nehemiah's Prayer**

<sup>24</sup> Nehemiah's prayer went something like this:

Lord God, Creator of all things, you are awesome and strong, yet merciful and just. You alone are king. No one but you is kind; <sup>25</sup> no one but you is gracious and just. You are almighty and eternal, forever ready to rescue Israel from trouble. You chose our ancestors to be your own special people. <sup>26</sup> Accept this sacrifice which we offer on behalf of all Israel; protect your chosen people and make us holy. <sup>27</sup> Free those who are slaves in foreign lands and gather together our scattered people. Have mercy on our people, who are mistreated and despised, so that all other nations will know that you are our God. <sup>28</sup> Punish the brutal and arrogant people who have oppressed us, <sup>29</sup> and then establish your people in your holy land, as Moses said you would.

### **The Persian Emperor Hears about the Fire**

<sup>30</sup> Then the priests sang hymns. <sup>31</sup> After the sacrifices had been consumed, Nehemiah gave orders for the rest of the liquid to be poured over some large stones. <sup>32</sup> Immediately a fire blazed up, but it was extinguished by a flame from the fire on the altar.

<sup>33</sup> News of what had happened spread everywhere. The Persian emperor heard that a liquid had been found in the place where the priests had hidden the altar fire, just before they were taken into exile. He also heard that Nehemiah and his friends had used this liquid to burn the sacrifice on the altar. <sup>34</sup> When the emperor investigated the matter and found out that this was true, he had the area fenced off and made into a shrine. <sup>35</sup> It became a substantial source of income for him, and he used the money for gifts to anyone who was in his good favor. <sup>36</sup> Nehemiah and his friends called the liquid *nephthar* which means purification, but most people call it naphtha.

## **2 Maccabees 2**

### **Jeremiah Hides the Tent of the Lord's Presence**

<sup>2</sup> We know from the records that Jeremiah the prophet instructed the people who were being taken into exile to hide some of the fire from the altar, as we have just mentioned.

<sup>2</sup> We also know that he taught them God's Law and warned them not to be deceived by the ornamented gold and silver idols which they would see in the land of their exile.

<sup>3</sup> And then he urged them never to abandon the Law.

<sup>4</sup> These same records also tell us that Jeremiah, acting under divine guidance, commanded the Tent of the Lord's Presence and the Covenant Box to follow him to the mountain where Moses had looked down on the land which God had promised our people. <sup>5</sup> When Jeremiah got to the mountain, he found a huge cave and there he hid the Tent of the Lord's Presence, the Covenant Box, and the altar of incense. Then he sealed up the entrance.

<sup>6</sup> Some of Jeremiah's friends tried to follow him and mark the way, but they could not find the cave. <sup>7</sup> When Jeremiah learned what they had done, he reprimanded them, saying,

No one must know about this place until God gathers his people together again and shows them mercy. <sup>8</sup> At that time he will reveal where these things are hidden, and the dazzling light of his presence will be seen in the cloud, as it was in the time of Moses and on the occasion when Solomon prayed that the Temple might be dedicated in holy splendor.

### **How Solomon Celebrated the Festival**

<sup>9</sup> We are also told how the wise King Solomon offered a sacrifice of dedication at the completion of the Temple, <sup>10</sup> and that when he prayed, fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifices, just as it had done earlier when Moses prayed. <sup>11</sup> Moses had explained that the sin offering was consumed by fire because it was not eaten. <sup>12</sup> Solomon celebrated the festival for eight days.

### **Nehemiah's Library**

<sup>13</sup> These same facts are found in the royal records and in the memoirs of Nehemiah, who established a library and collected the writings of David, letters of the kings concerning offerings, and books about the kings and prophets. <sup>14</sup> Judas also collected the books that had been scattered because of the war, and we still have them. <sup>15</sup> If you ever need any of these books, let us know, and we will send them.

### **An Invitation to Celebrate the Festival**

<sup>16</sup> Since we are about to celebrate the Festival of Rededication, we are writing to you, advising you to celebrate it as well. <sup>17</sup> God has saved all his people and has restored to all of us our holy land, the kingship, the priesthood, and the Temple services, <sup>18</sup> just as he promised in his Law. He has rescued us from terrible evils and has purified the Temple, and we are confident that in his mercy he will soon gather us to his holy Temple from every nation under the sun.

## **Author's Preface**

<sup>19</sup> **Jason of Cyrene has recorded in five volumes the story of Judas Maccabeus and his brothers, the purification of the great Temple, and the dedication of its altar.** <sup>20</sup> **He has described the battles with Antiochus Epiphanes and with his son Eupator,** <sup>21</sup> **and he has told of the heavenly visions that appeared to those who fought bravely and enthusiastically to defend Judaism. Our forces were few in number, but they plundered the entire country and routed the heathen forces.** <sup>22</sup> **They recaptured the Temple famous throughout the world, liberated Jerusalem, and restored the laws that were in danger of being abolished. They were able to do all these things because the Lord was merciful and kind to them.**

<sup>23</sup> **I will now try to summarize in a single book the five volumes written by Jason.** <sup>24</sup> The number of details and the bulk of material can be overwhelming for anyone who wants to read an account of the events. <sup>25</sup> But I have attempted to simplify it for all readers; those who read for sheer pleasure will find enjoyment and those who want to memorize the facts will not find it difficult. <sup>26</sup> Writing such a summary is a difficult task, demanding hard work and sleepless nights. <sup>27</sup> It is as difficult as preparing a banquet that people of different tastes will enjoy. But I am happy to undergo this hardship in order to please my readers. <sup>28</sup> I will leave the matter of details to the original author and attempt to give only a summary of the events. <sup>29</sup> I am not the builder of a new house who is concerned with every detail of the structure, but simply a painter whose only concern is to make the house look attractive. <sup>30</sup> The historian must master his subject, examine every detail, and then explain it carefully, <sup>31</sup> but whoever is merely writing a summary should be permitted to give a brief account without going into a detailed discussion. <sup>32</sup> So then, without any further comment, I will begin my story. It would be foolish to write such a long introduction that the story itself would have to be cut short.

## 2 Maccabees 3

### The Argument between Onias and Simon

3 When Onias<sup>[a]</sup> was High Priest in Jerusalem, the holy city enjoyed peace and prosperity, and its laws were strictly obeyed, because he was devout and hated evil. <sup>2</sup> The kings of Syria and Egypt honored the Temple and presented it with expensive gifts, <sup>3</sup> and King Seleucus,<sup>[b]</sup> ruler of all Asia, even used to pay the costs of the Temple sacrifices from the revenues he collected.

<sup>4</sup> But a man by the name of Simon, of the tribe of Bilgah,<sup>[c]</sup> the chief administrative official of the Temple, lost an argument he had with Onias over the regulations governing the city market. <sup>5</sup> At this time Apollonius son of Thraseus was the governor of Greater Syria. Simon went to him <sup>6</sup> and said that there was so much money in the Temple treasury that it could not be counted, and since the money was not needed for sacrifices, it might as well be placed under the king's control.

### Heliodorus Is Sent to Jerusalem

<sup>7</sup> When Apollonius met with the king, he told him about the money, and the king ordered Heliodorus, his chief minister, to get it for him. <sup>8</sup> Heliodorus set out at once on his mission, but he claimed that he was only making a tour of inspection of the cities of Greater Syria. <sup>9</sup> After he had arrived in Jerusalem and had been warmly received by the High Priest, he explained the real reason for his visit and asked if what he had been told was true. <sup>10-11</sup> The High Priest then stated that Simon, that devil of a man, had not been telling the truth. There was indeed some money in the Temple treasury, but part of it was set aside for widows and orphans and part of it belonged to Hyrcanus son of Tobias, a very important man. He also pointed out that the total amount was only 30,000 pounds of silver and 15,000 pounds of gold. <sup>12</sup> He added that it was absolutely impossible that anyone should be permitted to take the money of those people who had placed their trust in the sanctity and safety of this world-famous Temple.

### Heliodorus Plans to Enter the Temple

<sup>13</sup> But Heliodorus insisted that the money should be taken for the royal treasury, as the king had ordered. <sup>14</sup> So he set a day and went into the Temple to supervise the counting of the money. This caused an uproar throughout the entire city. <sup>15</sup> Priests, wearing their priestly robes, threw themselves face downward before the altar and begged God to keep the money safe, since he had given the laws designed to protect the money that people deposited in the Temple. <sup>16</sup> It was heartbreaking to see the High Priest. His face turned pale, revealing the agony of his soul, <sup>17</sup> and his body was trembling with fear, reflecting the pain in his heart. <sup>18</sup> People ran from their houses to join together in prayer that the Temple might not be defiled. <sup>19</sup> Women, wearing nothing but skirts of sackcloth, crowded the streets. Young girls whose parents had never allowed them to be seen in public ran to the gates or to the walls of the city, or just stared out of their windows. <sup>20</sup> But wherever they went, they lifted their hands to God in prayer. <sup>21</sup> What a pitiful sight it was to see the

High Priest in such great agony and frustration and to see everyone in the city confused and lying face down on the ground.

## **The Lord Protects His Temple**

<sup>22</sup> While everyone was begging the Lord Almighty to protect the money that had been entrusted to his care, <sup>23</sup> Heliodorus went on with his plan. <sup>24</sup> But at the very moment that he and his bodyguards arrived at the treasury, the Lord of all supernatural powers caused such a vision to appear that everyone who had dared to enter with Heliodorus was panic-stricken and weak with fear at this display of the Lord's power. <sup>25</sup> In the vision they saw a horse and a rider. The horse had a richly decorated bridle, and its rider, dressed in gold armor, was frightening. Suddenly the horse rushed at Heliodorus, then reared up and struck at him with its hoofs. <sup>26</sup> Heliodorus also saw two unusually strong and handsome young men, wearing very fine clothes. They stood on either side of him and beat him unmercifully. <sup>27</sup> He immediately fell to the ground unconscious, and his men put him on a stretcher <sup>28</sup> and carried him out. Only a moment earlier this man had entered the treasury with a large group of men, including all his bodyguards, but now he was being carried away helpless. So they all<sup>[d]</sup> openly acknowledged the mighty power of God.

## **Onias Prays for Heliodorus' Recovery**

<sup>29</sup> Heliodorus lay there unable to speak and without hope of recovery from this demonstration of God's power. <sup>30</sup> But the Jews praised Almighty God because he had miraculously protected his Temple and had brought great happiness where only minutes before there had been fear and confusion. <sup>31</sup> Some of Heliodorus' friends quickly asked Onias the High Priest to pray that the Most High would spare the life of this man who was at the point of death. <sup>32</sup> So the High Priest offered a sacrifice in the hope that God would save Heliodorus, for he did not want the king to think that the Jews had done this to the man he had sent. <sup>33</sup> While Onias was offering the sacrifice, the two young men, wearing the same clothes as before, again appeared to Heliodorus and said,

Be grateful to the High Priest; the Lord has spared your life because of him. <sup>34</sup> Remember that it was the Lord of heaven who punished you. Now go and tell everyone of his great power.

When they had said this, they disappeared.

## **Heliodorus Praises God**

<sup>35</sup> So Heliodorus offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made many promises, because the Lord had spared his life. Then he said good-bye to Onias and returned with his army to the king. <sup>36</sup> There he told everyone what the Lord, the most powerful of all gods, had done.

<sup>37</sup> When the king asked Heliodorus who would be the best man to send on the next mission to Jerusalem, Heliodorus replied,

<sup>38</sup> If you have an enemy or know of someone plotting against your government, send

him. He will come back badly beaten, if he comes back at all, for some strange power from God is at work there.<sup>39</sup> The God of heaven watches over the Temple; he strikes down and destroys anyone who comes to harm it.

<sup>40</sup> That is the story of how the Temple treasury was protected from Heliodorus.

## Footnotes

1. [2 Maccabees 3:1](#) *onias*: This is Onias the Third, son of Simon the Second (see 4.4-6; Si 50.1-21).
2. [2 Maccabees 3:3](#) *seleucus*: This is Seleucus the Fourth, known as Philopator, son of Antiochus the Third, 187–175 B.C.
3. [2 Maccabees 3:4](#) Some ancient translations Bilgah (see [Ne 12.5,18](#)); Greek Benjamin.
4. [2 Maccabees 3:28](#) they all; some manuscripts have he.

## 2 Maccabees 4

### Simon Accuses Onias

4 But Simon (mentioned earlier as the one who informed Apollonius about the money and brought trouble on the nation) also lied about Onias, claiming that he was responsible for the attack on Heliodorus and for the difficulties that followed.<sup>2</sup> He dared to accuse Onias of plotting against the government—Onias who not only had made donations to Jerusalem and had protected the Temple, but who was eager to see that all our laws were obeyed.<sup>3-4</sup> Apollonius son of Menestheus, the governor of Greater Syria, encouraged Simon in every evil thing he did, and Simon's opposition finally grew so strong that one of his trusted followers committed several murders. Onias realized how dangerous the situation had become,<sup>5</sup> so he went to the king, not for the purpose of making accusations against his own people, but for the common good of all Jews, both in their private and public lives.<sup>6</sup> He realized that without the king's cooperation there was no hope for peace, and Simon would keep on with his foolishness.

### Jason Introduces Greek Customs

<sup>7</sup> Later, when King Seleucus died and Antiochus (known as Epiphanes) became king, Jason the brother of Onias became High Priest by corrupt means.<sup>8</sup> He went to see<sup>[a]</sup> the king and offered him 27,000 pounds of silver with 6,000 more pounds to be paid later.<sup>9</sup> Jason also offered him an additional 11,250 pounds of silver for the authority to establish a stadium where young men could train and to enroll the people of Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch.<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>10</sup> The king gave his approval, and just as soon as Jason took over the office of High Priest, he made the people of Jerusalem change to the Greek way of life. <sup>11</sup> He began by abolishing the favors that John had secured for the Jews from previous Syrian kings. (John was the father of the Eupolemus who later went to Rome to make an alliance and to establish ties of friendship.) Jason also did away with our Jewish customs and introduced new customs that were contrary to our Law. <sup>12</sup> With great enthusiasm he built a stadium near the Temple hill and led our finest young men to adopt the Greek custom of participating in athletic events. <sup>13</sup> Because of the unrivaled wickedness of Jason, that ungodly and illegitimate High Priest, the craze for the Greek way of life and for foreign customs reached such a point <sup>14</sup> that even the priests lost all interest in their sacred duties. They lost interest in the Temple services and neglected the sacrifices. Just as soon as the signal was given, they would rush off to take part in the games that were forbidden by our Law. <sup>15</sup> They did not care about anything their ancestors had valued; they prized only Greek honors. <sup>16</sup> And this turned out to be the source of all their troubles, for the very people whose ways they admired and whose customs they tried to imitate became their enemies and oppressed them. <sup>17</sup> It is a serious thing to disregard God's Law, as you will see from the following events.

### **Jerusalem under Syrian Influence**

<sup>18</sup> Once when the king was present for the athletic games that were held every five<sup>[c]</sup> years in the city of Tyre, <sup>19</sup> that worthless Jason sent some men there from Jerusalem, who were also enrolled as citizens of Antioch, to take 22,500 pounds of silver to pay for a sacrifice to the god Hercules. But even these men did not think it was fitting to use such a large sum of money for a sacrifice, and <sup>20</sup> so the money originally intended as a sacrifice to Hercules was used for the construction of warships.

<sup>21</sup> When Apollonius son of Menestheus was sent to Egypt to attend the crowning of Philometor as king, Antiochus learned that Philometor was opposed to his policies. Antiochus became concerned about the security of his own kingdom, so he went to Joppa and then on to Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> There he was welcomed with great splendor by Jason and the people of the city who went out to greet him, shouting and carrying torches. From Jerusalem Antiochus led his army to Phoenicia.

### **Menelaus Becomes High Priest**

<sup>23</sup> Three years later, Jason sent Menelaus (brother of the Simon<sup>[d]</sup> mentioned earlier) to take some money to the king and to get his decision on several important matters. <sup>24</sup> But when he stood before the king, Menelaus impressed him with his show of authority and offered 22,500 pounds of silver more than Jason had offered for his appointment to the office of High Priest. <sup>25</sup> As a result Menelaus returned to Jerusalem with papers from the king, confirming him as High Priest. But he possessed no other qualifications; he had the temper of a cruel tyrant and could be as fierce as a wild animal. <sup>26</sup> So Jason, who had cheated his own brother out of the office of High Priest, was now forced to flee to the land of Ammon. <sup>27</sup> Menelaus continued to be High Priest, but he never paid any of the money he had promised the king. <sup>28</sup> However, Sostratus, the captain of the fort in



Jerusalem, kept demanding the money, since it was his responsibility to collect it. So finally, the two men were summoned to appear before the king concerning the matter.<sup>29</sup> Menelaus left his brother Lysimachus as acting High Priest, while Sostratus left the fort under the command of Crates, the commander of the mercenary troops from Cyprus.

### **The Murder of Onias**

<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, there was a revolt in the Cilician cities of Tarsus and Mallus, because the king had given those cities to Antiochis, his mistress.<sup>31</sup> So the king left Andronicus, one of his high officials, in command, while he hurried off to Cilicia to restore order.

<sup>32</sup> Menelaus took advantage of this opportunity and presented Andronicus with some of the gold objects he had removed from the Temple in Jerusalem. He had already sold some of them to the city of Tyre and to other nearby cities.<sup>33</sup> When Onias heard about this, he fled for safety to a temple at Daphne near the city of Antioch and openly accused Menelaus.<sup>34</sup> Then Menelaus secretly persuaded Andronicus to kill Onias. So Andronicus went to Onias and deceived him with a friendly greeting and with promises of safety. Although Onias was suspicious, Andronicus finally lured him away from the safety of the temple and immediately murdered him in cold blood.

### **Andronicus Is Punished**

<sup>35</sup> The Jews and Gentiles were very angry because Onias had been murdered.<sup>36</sup> So when the king returned from the territory of Cilicia, the Jews of Antioch went to him and protested against this senseless killing. Many Gentiles felt the same way about the crime.<sup>37</sup> King Antiochus was deeply grieved and was so filled with sorrow that he was moved to tears when he recalled the wisdom and self-control that Onias had shown throughout his life.<sup>38</sup> Antiochus became so angry that he tore off Andronicus' royal robe, stripped him naked, and marched him around the city to the very spot where Onias had been murdered. Then Antiochus had this bloodthirsty murderer put to death. This was how the Lord gave him the punishment he deserved.

### **Lysimachus Is Killed**

<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, with the support of his brother Menelaus, Lysimachus had on numerous occasions robbed the Jerusalem Temple and had taken many of its gold objects. When word of this spread around, crowds began to gather in protest against Lysimachus.<sup>40</sup> Finally, the crowds were becoming dangerous and were beginning to get out of control, so Lysimachus sent 3,000 armed men to attack them. They were led by Auranus, a man as stupid as he was old.<sup>41</sup> When the Jews in the Temple courtyard realized what was happening, they picked up rocks, pieces of wood, or simply handfuls of ashes from the altar and threw them at Lysimachus and his men in the confusion.<sup>42</sup> They killed a few of Lysimachus' men, wounded many of them, and all the rest ran for their lives. Lysimachus himself, that temple robber, was killed near the Temple treasury.

### **Menelaus Is Brought to Trial**

<sup>43</sup> Because of this incident Menelaus was brought to trial. <sup>44</sup> When the king came to the city of Tyre, the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem sent three men to bring charges against Menelaus. <sup>45</sup> When Menelaus saw that he was losing the case, he offered Ptolemy son of Dorymenes a large bribe to persuade the king to decide in his favor. <sup>46</sup> Ptolemy then asked the king to go outside the courtroom with him, as though to get some fresh air, and there he persuaded him to change his mind <sup>47</sup> and declare Menelaus innocent of the charges against him. So Menelaus was set free, although he had caused the trouble; but the three men, whom even the cruel Scythians would have declared innocent, were sentenced to death. <sup>48</sup> The three men had spoken in defense of Jerusalem, its people,<sup>[e]</sup> and the sacred objects stolen from the Temple, but they were quickly and unjustly executed. <sup>49</sup> Some of the people of Tyre, however, showed their disgust with this crime and their respect for these men by giving them a splendid funeral. <sup>50</sup> Menelaus stayed on in his position because of the greed of those in power. He grew more evil every day and became the worst enemy of his own people.

## Footnotes

1. [2 Maccabees 4:8](#) went to see; or wrote to.
2. [2 Maccabees 4:9](#) the people...Antioch; or the men of Jerusalem as supporters of King Antiochus.
3. [2 Maccabees 4:18](#) five; or four.
4. [2 Maccabees 4:23](#) *simon*: See 3.4.
5. [2 Maccabees 4:48](#) its people; some manuscripts also have the surrounding villages.

## 2 Maccabees 5

### Visions of a Battle

<sup>1</sup> About this time Antiochus the Fourth made a second attack against Egypt. <sup>2</sup> For nearly forty days people all over Jerusalem saw visions of cavalry troops in gold armor charging across the sky. The riders were armed with spears and their swords were drawn. <sup>3</sup> They were lined up in battle against one another, attacking and counterattacking. Shields were clashing, there was a rain of spears, and arrows flew through the air. All the different kinds of armor and the gold bridles on the horses flashed in the sunlight. <sup>4</sup> Everyone in the city prayed that these visions might be a good sign.

### Jason Attacks Jerusalem

<sup>5</sup> When a false report began to spread that Antiochus had died, Jason took more than a thousand men and suddenly attacked Jerusalem. They drove back those stationed on the city walls and finally captured the city. Menelaus fled for safety to the fort, near the Temple hill, <sup>6</sup> while Jason and his men went on slaughtering their fellow Jews without

mercy. Jason did not realize that success against one's own people is the worst kind of failure. He even considered his success a victory over enemies, rather than a defeat of his own people.<sup>7</sup> But Jason did not take over the government. Instead he was forced to flee once again to the territory of the Ammonites, and in the end his evil plot brought him nothing but shame and disgrace,<sup>8</sup> and he died in misery. Aretas, the ruler of the Arabs, imprisoned him; he was looked upon as a criminal and despised because he had betrayed his own people; everyone was hunting for him, and he had to run from town to town. He fled to Egypt for safety,<sup>9</sup> then to Greece, hoping to find refuge among the Spartans, who were related to the Jews. Finally, this man, who had forced so many others to flee from their own country, died as a fugitive in a foreign land.<sup>10</sup> Jason had killed many people and left their bodies unburied, but now his own death was unmourned. He was not given a funeral or even buried with his ancestors.

## **Antiochus Attacks Jerusalem**

<sup>11</sup> When the news of what had happened in Jerusalem reached Antiochus, he thought the whole country of Judea was in revolt, and he became as furious as a wild animal. So he left Egypt and took Jerusalem by storm,<sup>12</sup> giving his men orders to cut down without mercy everyone they met and to slaughter anyone they found hiding in the houses.

<sup>13</sup> They murdered everyone—men and women, boys and girls; even babies were butchered.<sup>14</sup> Three days later Jerusalem had lost 80,000 people: 40,000 killed in the attack and at least that many taken away to be sold as slaves.

<sup>15</sup> But Antiochus was still not satisfied. He even dared to enter the holiest Temple in all the world, guided by Menelaus, who had become a traitor both to his religion and to his people.<sup>16</sup> With his filthy and unholy hands, Antiochus swept away the sacred objects of worship and the gifts which other kings had given to increase the glory and honor of the Temple.<sup>17</sup> He was so thrilled with his conquest that he did not realize that the Lord had let his holy Temple be defiled because the sin of the people of Jerusalem had made him angry for a while.<sup>18</sup> If the people of Jerusalem had not been involved in so many sins, Antiochus would have been punished immediately and prevented from taking such a foolish action. He would have suffered the same fate as Heliodorus, who was sent by King Seleucus to inspect the treasury.<sup>19</sup> But the Lord did not choose his people for the sake of his Temple; he established his Temple for the sake of his people.<sup>20</sup> So the Temple shared in the people's suffering but also later shared in their prosperity. The Lord abandoned it when he became angry, but restored it when his anger had cooled down.

## **Another Attack against Jerusalem**

<sup>21</sup> Antiochus took 135,000 pounds of silver from the Temple and hurried off to Antioch. Such was his arrogance that he felt he could make ships sail across dry land or troops march across the sea.<sup>22</sup> He appointed governors to cause trouble for the people. In Jerusalem he placed Philip, a man from Phrygia who was more evil than Antiochus himself.<sup>23</sup> At Mount Gerizim he placed Andronicus. In addition to these, there was

Menelaus, who mistreated his fellow Jews far worse than the governors did. Antiochus hated the Jews so much <sup>24</sup> that he sent an army of 22,000 mercenary troops from Mysia to Jerusalem under the command of a man named Apollonius, with orders to kill every man in the city and to sell the women and boys as slaves. <sup>25</sup> Apollonius arrived in Jerusalem, pretending to be on a peace mission. Then on a Sabbath, when all the Jews were observing the day of rest, he led his troops, who were fully armed, in a parade outside the city. <sup>26</sup> Suddenly he commanded his men to kill everyone who had come out to see them. They rushed into the city and murdered a great many people.

<sup>27</sup> But Judas Maccabeus and about nine others escaped into the barren mountains, where they lived like wild animals. In order not to defile themselves, they ate only plants which they found growing there.

## 2 Maccabees 6

### The Jews Are Persecuted Because of Their Faith

6 Not long after that, the king sent an elderly Athenian<sup>[a]</sup> to force the Jews to abandon their religion and the customs of their ancestors. <sup>2</sup> He was also to defile their Temple by dedicating it to the Olympian god Zeus.<sup>[b]</sup> The temple on Mount Gerizim was to be officially named

Temple of Zeus the God of Hospitality, as the people who lived there had requested.

<sup>3</sup> The oppression was harsh and almost intolerable. <sup>4</sup> Gentiles filled the Temple with drinking parties and all sorts of immorality. They even had intercourse with prostitutes there. Forbidden objects were brought into the Temple, <sup>5</sup> and the altar was covered with detestable sacrifices prohibited by our Law. <sup>6</sup> It was impossible to observe the Sabbath, to celebrate any of the traditional festivals, or even so much as to admit to being a Jew.

<sup>7</sup> Each month when the king's birthday was celebrated, the Jews were compelled by brute force to eat the intestines of sacrificial animals. Then, during the festival in honor of the wine god Dionysus, they were required to wear ivy wreaths on their heads and march in procession. <sup>8</sup> On the advice of Ptolemy,<sup>[c]</sup> the neighboring Greek cities were also instructed to require Jews to eat the sacrifices; <sup>9</sup> they were told to put to death every Jew who refused to adopt the Greek way of life. It was easy to see that hard times were ahead.

<sup>10</sup> For example, two women were arrested for having their babies circumcised. They were paraded around the city with their babies hung from their breasts; then they were thrown down from the city wall. <sup>11</sup> On another occasion, Philip was told that some Jews had gathered in a nearby cave to observe the Sabbath in secret. Philip attacked and burned them all alive. They had such respect for the Sabbath that they would not fight to defend themselves.

## **The Lord Punishes and Shows Mercy**

<sup>12</sup> I beg you not to become discouraged as you read about the terrible things that happened. Consider that this was the Lord's way of punishing his people, not of destroying them. <sup>13</sup> In fact, it is a sign of kindness to punish a person immediately for his sins, rather than to wait a long time. <sup>14</sup> The Lord does not treat us as he does other nations: he waits patiently until they have become deeply involved in sin before he punishes them, <sup>15</sup> but he punishes us before we have sinned too much. <sup>16</sup> So the Lord is always merciful to us, his own people. Although he punishes us with disasters, he never abandons us. <sup>17</sup> I have made these few observations by way of reminder. We will now get on with the story.

## **Eleazar Dies for His Faith**

<sup>18</sup> There was an elderly and highly respected teacher of the Law by the name of Eleazar, whose mouth was being forced open to make him eat pork. <sup>19-20</sup> But he preferred an honorable death rather than a life of disgrace. So he spit out the meat and went willingly to the place of torture, showing how people should have courage to refuse unclean food, even if it costs them their lives. <sup>21-22</sup> Those in charge of the sacrifice had been friends of Eleazar for a long time, and because of this friendship they told him privately to bring meat that was lawful for him to eat. He need only pretend to eat the pork, they said, and in this way he would not be put to death.

<sup>23</sup> But Eleazar made a decision worthy of his gray hair and advanced age. All his life he had lived in perfect obedience to God's holy laws, so he replied,

Kill me, here and now. <sup>24</sup> Such deception is not worthy of a man of my years. Many young people would think that I had denied my faith after I was ninety years old. <sup>25</sup> If I pretended to eat this meat, just to live a little while longer, it would bring shame and disgrace on me and lead many young people astray. <sup>26</sup> For the present I might be able to escape what you could do to me, but whether I live or die, I cannot escape Almighty God. <sup>27</sup> If I die bravely now, it will show that I deserved my long life. <sup>28</sup> It will also set a good example of the way young people should be willing and glad to die for our sacred and respected laws.

As soon as he said these things, he went <sup>[d]</sup> off to be tortured, <sup>29</sup> and the very people who had treated him kindly a few minutes before, now turned against him, because they thought he had spoken like a madman. <sup>30</sup> When they had beaten him almost to the point of death, he groaned and said,

The Lord possesses all holy knowledge. He knows I could have escaped these terrible sufferings and death, yet he also knows that I gladly suffer these things, because I fear him.

<sup>31</sup> So Eleazar died. But his courageous death was remembered as a glorious example, not only by young people, but by the entire nation as well.

## Footnotes

1. [2 Maccabees 6:1](#) elderly Athenian; or an elder of Athens, or Athenaios the elder, or Geron an Athenian; some manuscripts have an elderly Antiochean; or an elder of Antioch.
2. [2 Maccabees 6:2](#) *zeus*: The supreme god of the Greeks; Mount Olympus was thought to be his home.
3. [2 Maccabees 6:8](#) Ptolemy (see 4.45); some manuscripts have the people of Ptolemais.
4. [2 Maccabees 6:28](#) went; some manuscripts have was dragged.

## 2 Maccabees 7

### A Mother and Her Sons Die for Their Faith

7 On another occasion a Jewish mother and her seven sons were arrested. The king was having them beaten to force them to eat pork.<sup>2</sup> Then one of the young men said,

What do you hope to gain by doing this? We would rather die than abandon the traditions of our ancestors.

<sup>3</sup>This made the king so furious that he gave orders for huge pans and kettles to be heated red hot,<sup>4</sup> and it was done immediately. Then he told his men to cut off the tongue of the one who had spoken and to scalp him and chop off his hands and feet, while his mother and six brothers looked on.<sup>5</sup> After the young man had been reduced to a helpless mass of breathing flesh, the king gave orders for him to be carried over and thrown into one of the pans. As a cloud of smoke streamed up from the pan, the brothers and their mother encouraged one another to die bravely, saying,<sup>6</sup>

The Lord God is looking on and understands our suffering. Moses made this clear when he wrote a song condemning those who had abandoned the Lord. He said, The Lord will have mercy on those who serve him.

<sup>7</sup>After the first brother had died in this way, the soldiers started amusing themselves with the second one by tearing the hair and skin from his head. Then they asked him,

Now will you eat this pork, or do you want us to chop off your hands and feet one by one?

<sup>8</sup>He replied in his native language,

I will never eat it! So the soldiers tortured him, just as they had the first one,<sup>9</sup> but with his dying breath he cried out to the king,

You butcher! You may kill us, but the King of the universe will raise us from the dead and give us eternal life, because we have obeyed his laws.

<sup>10</sup> The soldiers began entertaining themselves with the third brother. When he was ordered to stick out his tongue, he quickly did so. Then he bravely held out his hands <sup>11</sup> and courageously said,

God gave these to me. But his laws mean more to me than my hands, and I know God will give them back to me again. <sup>12</sup> The king and those with him were amazed at his courage and at his willingness to suffer.

<sup>13</sup> After he had died, the soldiers tortured the fourth one in the same cruel way, <sup>14</sup> but his final words were,

I am glad to die at your hands, because we have the assurance that God will raise us from death. But there will be no resurrection to life for you, Antiochus!

<sup>15</sup> When the soldiers took the fifth boy and began torturing him, <sup>16</sup> he looked the king squarely in the eye and said,

You have the power to do whatever you want with us, even though you also are mortal. But do not think that God has abandoned our people. <sup>17</sup> Just wait. God will use his great power to torture you and your descendants.

<sup>18</sup> Then the soldiers took the sixth boy, and just before he died he said,

Make no mistake. We are suffering what we deserve, because we have sinned against our God. That's why all these terrible things are happening to us. <sup>19</sup> But don't think for a minute that you will avoid being punished for fighting against God.

<sup>20</sup> The mother was the most amazing one of them all, and she deserves a special place in our memory. Although she saw her seven sons die in a single day, she endured it with great courage because she trusted in the Lord. <sup>21</sup> She combined womanly emotion with manly courage and spoke words of encouragement to each of her sons in their native language.

<sup>22</sup> I do not know how your life began in my womb, she would say, I was not the one who gave you life and breath and put together each part of your body.

<sup>23</sup> It was God who did it, God who created the universe, the human race, and all that exists. He is merciful and he will give you back life and breath again, because you love his laws more than you love yourself.

<sup>24</sup> Antiochus was sure that the mother was making fun of him, so he did his best to convince her youngest son to abandon the traditions of his ancestors. He promised not only to make the boy rich and famous, but to place him in a position of authority and to give him the title

Friend of the King. <sup>25</sup> But the boy paid no attention to him, so Antiochus tried to persuade the boy's mother to talk him into saving his life, <sup>26</sup> and after much persuasion she agreed to do so. <sup>27</sup> Leaning over her son, she fooled the cruel tyrant by saying in her native language,

My son, have pity on me. Remember that I carried you in my womb for nine months and nursed you for three years. I have taken care of you and looked after all your needs up to the present day.<sup>28</sup> So I urge you, my child, to look at the sky and the earth. Consider everything you see there, and realize that God made it all from nothing, just as he made the human race.<sup>29</sup> Don't be afraid of this butcher. Give up your life willingly and prove yourself worthy of your brothers, so that by God's mercy I may receive you back with them at the resurrection.

<sup>30</sup> Before she could finish speaking, the boy said,

King Antiochus, what are you waiting for? I refuse to obey your orders. I only obey the commands in the Law which Moses gave to our ancestors.<sup>31</sup> You have thought up all kinds of cruel things to do to our people, but you won't escape the punishment that God has in store for you.<sup>32-33</sup> It is true that our living Lord is angry with us and is making us suffer because of our sins, in order to correct and discipline us. But this will last only a short while, for we are still his servants, and he will forgive us.<sup>34</sup> But you are the cruelest and most disgusting thing that ever lived. So don't fool yourself with illusions of greatness while you punish God's people.<sup>35</sup> There is no way for you to escape punishment at the hands of the almighty and all-seeing God.<sup>36</sup> My brothers suffered briefly because of our faithfulness to God's covenant, but now they have entered eternal life.<sup>[a]</sup> But you will fall under God's judgment and be punished as you deserve for your arrogance.<sup>37</sup> I now give up my body and my life for the laws of our ancestors, just as my brothers did. But I also beg God to show mercy to his people quickly and to torture you until you are forced to acknowledge that he alone is God.<sup>38</sup> May my brothers and I be the last to suffer the anger of Almighty God, which he has justly brought upon our entire nation.

<sup>39</sup> These words of ridicule made Antiochus so furious that he had the boy tortured even more cruelly than his brothers.<sup>40</sup> And so the boy died, with absolute trust in the Lord, never unfaithful for a minute.

<sup>41</sup> Last of all, the mother was put to death.

<sup>42</sup> But I have said enough about the Jews being tortured and being forced to eat the intestines of sacrificial animals.

## Footnotes

1. [2 Maccabees 7:36](#) briefly...life; or briefly, but now they have entered eternal life because of our covenant with God.



## 2 Maccabees 8

### Judas Maccabeus Revolts

8 Judas Maccabeus and his friends went secretly from village to village until they had gathered a force of about 6,000 Jewish men who had remained faithful to their religion. <sup>2</sup>They begged the Lord to help his people, now trampled under foot by all nations, to take pity on the Temple, now defiled by pagans, <sup>3</sup> and to have mercy on Jerusalem, now destroyed and almost leveled to the ground. <sup>4</sup> They also asked the Lord to show his hatred of evil by taking revenge on those who were murdering his people, mercilessly slaughtering innocent children, and saying evil things against the Lord.

<sup>5</sup> When Judas had finally organized his forces, the Gentiles were unable to stand against him, because the Lord's anger against Israel had now turned to mercy. <sup>6-7</sup> Judas would make sudden attacks on towns and villages and burn them. He captured strategic positions and routed many enemy troops, finding that he was most successful at night. People everywhere spoke of his bravery.

### Ptolemy Sends Nicanor to Attack Judas

<sup>8</sup> When Philip, governor of Jerusalem, realized that Judas was gaining ground little by little and that his victories were becoming more and more frequent, he wrote a letter to Ptolemy, governor of Greater Syria, requesting his help in defending the royal interests. <sup>9</sup> Ptolemy immediately appointed Nicanor son of Patroclus, who was also in the closest circle of the King's Friends, and sent him with more than 20,000 troops of various nationalities to wipe out the entire Jewish race. Ptolemy also appointed Gorgias, a general of wide military experience, to go with him. <sup>10</sup> King Antiochus owed the Romans 150,000 pounds of silver; Nicanor planned to pay off the debt by selling Jewish prisoners of war as slaves.

<sup>11</sup> So he at once sent word to the towns along the coast, informing them that he would be selling Jews for less than a pound of silver each. But he did not know of the judgment that Almighty God had in store for him.

### Judas Learns of Nicanor's Plans

<sup>12</sup> Judas learned that Nicanor was advancing with his army toward Judea, so he informed his men. <sup>13</sup> Some were cowardly and did not believe in the justice of God, and they ran away as fast as they could. <sup>14</sup> But others sold all their remaining possessions so that the Lord would consider them worthy to be saved from the godless Nicanor, who had sold them as slaves even before the battle had taken place. <sup>15</sup> They prayed that if God was not willing to do this for their sake alone, he might be willing to rescue them because of the covenants he had made with their ancestors, and because he, the great and wonderful God, had called them to be his people. <sup>16</sup> Judas brought together all 6,000 of his men and encouraged them not to be frightened or to flee in panic at the sight of the large number

of Gentile troops who were marching against them without cause. Instead they should fight bravely,<sup>17</sup> never forgetting the crimes the Gentiles had committed against the Temple and how they had made Jerusalem suffer terribly and had done away with Jewish traditions.

<sup>18</sup> They rely on their weapons and their daring, Judas said, but we trust in Almighty God, who is able to destroy not only these troops, but, if necessary, the entire world, with a mere nod of his head.

<sup>19</sup> Then Judas went on to remind them of the ways God had helped their ancestors: during the time of Sennacherib 185,000 of the enemy had been destroyed;<sup>20</sup> and once in Babylonia 8,000 Jews came to the aid of 4,000 Macedonians, defeating 120,000 Galatians and taking a great deal of loot, all because of God's help.

### **Judas Defeats Nicanor**

<sup>21</sup> Judas' words encouraged his men and made them willing to die for their religion and their country. He then divided his army into four divisions<sup>22</sup> of about 1,500 men each, with himself and his brothers Simon, Joseph, and Jonathan each in charge of a division.<sup>23</sup> After ordering Eleazar to read aloud<sup>[a]</sup> from the holy book, he gave his men the battle cry:

God will help us, and personally led the attack against Nicanor.

<sup>24</sup> Almighty God fought on their side, and they killed more than 9,000 of the enemy. They wounded many others and put the entire enemy army to flight.<sup>25</sup> They seized the money from the people who had come to buy them as slaves. Then they pursued the enemy a long way, until they had to return,<sup>26</sup> because it was almost time for the Sabbath to begin.<sup>27</sup> When they had collected the enemy's weapons and looted the dead, they celebrated the Sabbath, praising the Lord and giving thanks to him, because he had brought them safely to that day and had given them the first sign of his mercy.<sup>28</sup> When the Sabbath was over, they gave some of the loot to the victims of persecution and to the widows and orphans; then they divided the rest among their own families.<sup>29</sup> Afterward they joined together in prayer to the merciful Lord, asking him to look favorably upon his servants.

### **Judas Defeats Timothy and Bacchides**

<sup>30</sup> The Jews later fought against the forces of Timothy and Bacchides and killed more than 20,000 of them. They captured some very high fortresses and took a lot of loot, which they divided equally among themselves and the widows, orphans, old men, and the victims of persecution.<sup>31</sup> They carefully collected all the enemy's weapons and stored them in strategic places, but the rest of the loot was taken to Jerusalem.<sup>32</sup> They executed the commanding officer of Timothy's forces, a godless man who had caused the Jews much suffering.<sup>33</sup> While celebrating their victory in the city of their ancestors, they burned alive those men who had set fire to the Temple gates. The dead included

Callisthenes, who had hidden in a small house; and so he received the punishment he deserved for his evil deeds.

<sup>34</sup> In this way, the evil Nicanor, who had brought a thousand merchants to buy the Jews, <sup>35</sup> was defeated with the help of the Lord by the very people he despised so much. He threw off his splendid uniform and fled all alone like a runaway slave, until he reached Antioch. He had succeeded only in destroying his entire army. <sup>36</sup> This man, who had tried to pay a debt to Rome by selling the people of Jerusalem, showed that the Jews could not be defeated. God was their mighty Defender, because they obeyed the laws he had given them.

## Footnotes

1. [2 Maccabees 8:23](#) Probable text After...aloud; Greek unclear.

## 2 Maccabees 9

### The Lord Punishes Antiochus

9 About this time Antiochus was retreating in disorder from Persia, <sup>2</sup> where he had entered the city of Persepolis and had attempted to rob a temple and take control of the city. The people took up arms and attacked Antiochus, forcing his army to retreat in disgrace. <sup>3</sup> When he reached Ecbatana, he was told what had happened to the forces of Nicanor and Timothy. <sup>4</sup> He became furious and decided to make the Jews pay for the defeat he had suffered. So he ordered his chariot driver not to stop until they reached Jerusalem. With great arrogance he said,

I will turn Jerusalem into a graveyard full of Jews.

But he did not know that he was heading straight for God's judgment. <sup>5</sup> In fact, as soon as he had said these words, the all-seeing Lord, the God of Israel, struck him down with an invisible but fatal blow. He was seized with sharp intestinal pains for which there was no relief— <sup>6</sup> a fitting punishment for the man who had tortured others in so many terrible ways! <sup>7</sup> But this in no way caused him to give up his pride. Instead he became more arrogant than ever, and breathing out fiery threats against the Jews, he gave orders to drive even faster. As a result he fell out of his chariot with such a thud that it made every bone in his body ache. <sup>8</sup> His arrogant pride made him think he had the superhuman strength to make ocean waves obey him and to weigh high mountains on a pair of scales. But suddenly he fell flat on the ground and had to be carried off on a stretcher, a clear sign to everyone of God's power. <sup>9</sup> Even the eyes of this godless man were crawling with worms and he lived in terrible pain and agony. The stink was so bad that his entire army was sickened, <sup>10</sup> and no one was able to come close enough to carry him around. Yet only a short while before, he thought he could take hold of the stars.

## **Antiochus Makes a Promise to God**

<sup>11</sup> Antiochus was deeply depressed and suffered constant pain because of the punishment that God had brought on him, so he finally came to his senses and gave up his arrogant pride. <sup>12</sup> Then, when he could no longer endure his own stink, he said,

It is right that all mortals should be subject to God and not think that they are his equal.

<sup>13</sup> The time of the Lord's mercy had come to an end for Antiochus, but this worthless man made the Lord a promise: <sup>14</sup>

I once intended to level Jerusalem to the ground and make that holy city a graveyard full of Jews, he said,

but now I declare it a free city. <sup>15</sup> I had planned to throw out the dead bodies of the Jews and their children for the wild animals and the birds to eat, for I did not consider them worth burying. But now I intend to grant them the same privileges as the citizens of Athens enjoy. <sup>16</sup> I once looted the Temple and took its sacred utensils, but I will fill it with splendid gifts and with better utensils than before, and I will pay the cost of the sacrifices from my own resources. <sup>17</sup> Besides all this, I will become a Jew myself and go wherever people live, telling them of God's power.

## **Antiochus' Letter to the Jews**

<sup>18</sup> Antiochus was in despair and could find no relief from his pain, because God was punishing him as he deserved, so he wrote the following letter to the Jews:

<sup>19</sup> King Antiochus to the Jews, my most distinguished subjects. Warm greetings and best wishes for your health and prosperity.

<sup>20</sup> I hope that you and your families are in good health and that all goes well with you. My hope is in God, <sup>21</sup> and I remember with a deep sense of joy the respect and kindness that you have shown me.

On my way home from Persia I fell violently ill, and so I thought it best to begin making plans for the general welfare of the people. <sup>22</sup> I have not given up hopes of getting well; in fact I am fully confident that I will recover. <sup>23</sup> But I recall that my father used to appoint a successor whenever he went on a military campaign east of the Euphrates. <sup>24</sup> He did this so that if something unexpected happened, or if some bad news came back, then his subjects would not be afraid, for they knew who had been left in command. <sup>25</sup> Also, I know how the rulers along the frontiers of my kingdom are constantly on the lookout for any opportunity that may come along. That is why I have appointed my son Antiochus to succeed me as king. I have frequently entrusted him to your care and recommended him to you when I went on my regular visits to the provinces east of the Euphrates. (He is receiving a copy of the letter which follows.) <sup>26</sup> Now I strongly urge each of you to keep in mind the good things that I have done for you, both individually and as a nation, and to continue in your good will toward me and my son. <sup>27</sup> I am confident that he will treat you with fairness and kindness, just as I have always done.

<sup>28</sup> And so, this murderer, who had cursed God, suffered the same terrible agonies he had brought on others, and then died a miserable death in the mountains of a foreign land.

<sup>29</sup> One of his close friends, Philip, took his body home; but, because he was afraid of Antiochus' son, he went on to King Ptolemy Philometor of Egypt.

## **2 Maccabees 10**

### **The Rededication of the Temple**

10 Judas Maccabeus and his followers, under the leadership of the Lord, recaptured the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> They tore down the altars which foreigners had set up in the marketplace and destroyed the other places of worship that had been built. <sup>3</sup> They purified the Temple and built a new altar. Then, with new fire started by striking flint, they offered sacrifice for the first time in two years, burned incense, lighted the lamps, and set out the sacred loaves. <sup>4</sup> After they had done all this, they lay face down on the ground and prayed that the Lord would never again let such disasters strike them. They begged him to be merciful when he punished them for future sins and not hand them over any more to barbaric, pagan Gentiles. <sup>5</sup> They rededicated the Temple on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Kislew, the same day of the same month on which the Temple had been desecrated by the Gentiles. <sup>6</sup> The happy celebration lasted eight days, like the Festival of Shelters, and the people remembered how only a short time before, they had spent the Festival of Shelters wandering like wild animals in the mountains and living in caves. <sup>7</sup> But now, carrying green palm branches and sticks decorated with ivy, they paraded around, singing grateful praises to him who had brought about the purification of his own Temple. <sup>8</sup> Everyone agreed that the entire Jewish nation should celebrate this festival each year.

### **Ptolemy Macron Commits Suicide**

<sup>9</sup> The days of Antiochus Epiphanes had come to an end. <sup>10</sup> Now we will tell about Antiochus Eupator, the son of this godless man, and give a summary of the evil effects of his wars. <sup>11</sup> When he became king he appointed a man by the name of Lysias to be in charge of the affairs of state and to be chief governor of Greater Syria, <sup>12</sup> replacing Ptolemy Macron, who had been the first governor to treat the Jews fairly. Macron had established peaceful relations with them in an attempt to make up for the wrongs they had suffered. <sup>13</sup> As a result the King's Friends went to Eupator and accused Macron of treachery, because he had abandoned the island of Cyprus, which King Philometor of Egypt had placed under his command, and had gone over to Antiochus Epiphanes. In fact, everyone called Macron a traitor. No longer able to maintain the respect that his office demanded, he committed suicide by taking poison.

## **Judas Maccabeus Defeats the Idumeans**

<sup>14</sup> When Gorgias became governor of Idumea, he kept a force of mercenaries and attacked the Jews at every opportunity. <sup>15</sup> Not only this, but the Idumeans themselves controlled certain strategic fortresses and were constantly harassing the Jews. They welcomed those who fled from Jerusalem and did everything they could to keep the country in a perpetual state of war. <sup>16</sup> So Judas Maccabeus and his men, after offering prayers for God's help, rushed out and made a vigorous attack against the Idumean fortresses. <sup>17</sup> They beat back those who were defending the walls and captured the fortresses, killing everyone they found, a total of about 20,000 people.

<sup>18</sup> About 9,000 of the enemy, however, managed to take refuge in two easily defended forts, with everything they needed to withstand a siege. <sup>19</sup> Judas had to go on to some other places in the country, where he was more urgently needed, but he left behind Simon and Joseph, together with Zacchaeus and his men. This force was large enough to continue the siege, <sup>20</sup> but some of Simon's men were greedy, and when they were offered 140 pounds of silver, they let some of the enemy escape from the forts. <sup>21</sup> When Judas heard what had happened, he called together the leaders of his troops and accused those men of selling their brothers by setting their enemies free to fight against them. <sup>22</sup> Then he executed the traitors and immediately captured the two forts. <sup>23</sup> Judas was always successful in battle, and in his assault on those two forts he killed more than 20,000 men.

## **Judas Defeats Timothy**

<sup>24</sup> Timothy, who had been defeated by the Jews once before, had gathered a large number of cavalry from Asia and a tremendous force of mercenary troops and was now advancing to take Judea by armed attack. <sup>25</sup> But as the enemy forces were approaching, Judas and his men prayed to God. They put on sackcloth, threw dirt on their heads, <sup>26</sup> and lay face downward on the steps of the altar, begging God to help them by fighting against their enemies, as he had promised in his Law.

<sup>27</sup> When they had finished praying, they took up their weapons, went out a good distance from Jerusalem, and stopped for the night not far from the enemy. <sup>28</sup> At daybreak the two armies joined in battle. The Jewish forces depended upon both their bravery and their trust in the Lord for victory, while the enemy relied only on their ability to fight fiercely. <sup>29</sup> When the fighting was at its worst, the enemy saw five handsome men riding on horses with gold bridles and leading the Jewish forces. <sup>30</sup> These five men surrounded Judas, protecting him with their own armor and showering the enemy with arrows and thunderbolts. The enemy forces then became so confused and bewildered that they broke ranks, and the Jews cut them to pieces, <sup>31</sup> slaughtering 20,500 infantry and 600 cavalry.

<sup>32</sup> Timothy himself escaped to the strongly defended fort of Gezer, where his brother Chaereas was in command. <sup>33</sup> Judas and his men besieged the fort for four days with great enthusiasm, <sup>34</sup> but those inside trusted to the security of their positions and shouted all sorts of terrible insults against the Jews and their God. <sup>35</sup> At dawn on the fifth day, twenty of Judas' men, burning with anger at these insults, bravely climbed the wall and with

savage fury chopped down everyone they met.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, others climbed the walls on the other side of the fort and set the towers on fire. Many of the enemy were burned to death as the flames spread. A third force broke down the gates and let in the rest of Judas' men to capture the city.<sup>37</sup> Timothy had hidden in a cistern, but they killed him, as well as his brother Chaereas and Apollophanes.

<sup>38</sup> When it was over, the Jews celebrated by singing hymns and songs of thanksgiving to the Lord, who had shown them great kindness and had given them victory.

## **2 Maccabees 11**

### **Judas Maccabeus Defeats Lysias**

11 Not long after Timothy was defeated, Lysias, the King's guardian and relative, and head of the government, heard what had happened. He became angry<sup>2</sup> and led 80,000 infantry and all his cavalry against the Jews with the intention of turning Jerusalem into a Greek city.<sup>3</sup> The Temple would be taxed, as were all Gentile places of worship, and the office of High Priest would be up for sale each year.<sup>4</sup> Lysias was so pleased with his tens of thousands of infantry, his thousands of cavalry, and his eighty elephants that he failed to take into account the power of God.<sup>5</sup> He invaded Judea and attacked the fort of Bethzur, about twenty miles south of Jerusalem.

<sup>6</sup> When Judas and his men heard that Lysias was laying siege to their forts, they and all the people cried and wept, begging the Lord to send a good angel to save them.<sup>7</sup> Judas was the first to take up his weapons, and he urged the others to join him in risking their lives to help the other Jews. So with great eagerness they all set out together.<sup>8</sup> But they had not gone far from Jerusalem, when suddenly they noticed they were being led by a horseman dressed in white and carrying gold weapons.<sup>9</sup> Immediately all of them together thanked God for his mercy; he had made them brave enough to attack not only men, but even the most savage animals or even walls of iron.<sup>10</sup> So they marched in battle formation, and with them went the one whom the Lord in his mercy had sent to fight on their side.<sup>11</sup> Then they charged into the enemy like lions, killing 11,000 infantry and 1,600 cavalry, and forcing the rest to run for their lives.<sup>12</sup> Most of those who ran were wounded and had lost their weapons, and Lysias himself managed to escape only because he ran away like a coward.

### **Lysias Makes Peace with the Jews**

<sup>13</sup> Lysias was no fool. As he thought about the defeat he had suffered, he realized it was because the mighty God had fought for the Jews, making it impossible for them to be defeated. So he sent a message to the Jews,<sup>14</sup> trying to persuade them to agree to a just settlement and promising to do all he could to make the king friendly toward them.<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Judas Maccabeus considered what would be best for the people, and so he agreed to all the proposals Lysias had made, since the king had granted every written request that Judas had presented to Lysias. <sup>[b]</sup>

## **The Letter of Lysias to the Jews**

<sup>16</sup> Here is a copy of the letter which Lysias wrote to the Jews:

Lysias to the Jewish people, greetings. <sup>17</sup> Your representatives John and Absalom have delivered to me the official document you sent with them, and they have asked me to agree to what is contained in it. <sup>18</sup> I have informed the king of the matters that needed to be brought to his attention, and he has agreed to do whatever is possible. <sup>19</sup> If you continue to be loyal to the government, I will do everything I can in the future to benefit your nation. <sup>20</sup> I have instructed your representatives and mine to meet with you to discuss the details of these matters. <sup>21</sup> May all go well with you. Dated the twenty-fourth day of the month of Dioscorinthius in the year 148. <sup>[c]</sup>

## **The King's Letter to Lysias**

<sup>22</sup> Here is a copy of the King's letter:

King Antiochus to the honorable Lysias, greetings. <sup>23</sup> Now that my father has gone to be with the gods, I want the subjects of my kingdom to conduct their own affairs without interference. <sup>24</sup> I understand that the Jews do not wish to adopt the Greek way of life, as my father had intended, but prefer their own way of life and have requested that they be allowed to live according to their own customs. <sup>25</sup> Since I desire that they live undisturbed like the other nations in my empire, I hereby decree that their Temple be restored to them and that they be allowed to live according to the customs of their ancestors. <sup>26</sup> Please inform them of this decision and assure them of my friendship, so that they may conduct their own affairs in peace, without anything to worry about.

<sup>27</sup> Here is a copy of the king's letter to the Jewish people:

King Antiochus to the Jewish leaders and all the Jews, greetings. <sup>28</sup> I hope that all is going well for you. I am in good health. <sup>29</sup> Menelaus has informed me of your desire to return home and attend to your own affairs. <sup>30</sup> So then, those of you who return home by the thirtieth of the month of Xanthicus may rest assured that you have nothing to fear. <sup>31</sup> You may continue to observe your food laws and other laws, as you used to do, and no Jew will be punished for any crime done in ignorance. <sup>32</sup> I am sending Menelaus to set your minds at ease. <sup>33</sup> May all go well with you. Dated the fifteenth day of the month of Xanthicus in the year 148. <sup>[d]</sup>



## The Letter of the Romans to the Jews

<sup>34</sup>The Romans also sent the Jews the following letter:

Quintus Memmius and Titus Manius, representatives of the Romans, to the Jews, greetings. <sup>35</sup>We are in complete agreement with all that has been granted to you by the honorable Lysias. <sup>36</sup>We are now on our way to Antioch, so please examine carefully those matters that Lysias referred to the king. Then send a reply to us immediately so that we can represent your best interests before him. Do this as soon as you can, <sup>37</sup>without delay, so that we may know what you have decided. <sup>38</sup>May all go well with you. Dated the fifteenth day of the month of Xanthicus in the year 148.

### Footnotes

1. [2 Maccabees 11:14](#) to do...them; Greek unclear.
2. [2 Maccabees 11:15](#) since...Lysias; or and the king granted every written request that Judas presented to Lysias.
3. [2 Maccabees 11:21](#) *the year 148*: This corresponds to 164 B.C.
4. [2 Maccabees 11:33](#) *the year 148*: This corresponds to 164 B.C.

## 2 Maccabees 12

### The Jews of Joppa Are Murdered

12 When the peace agreement between the Jews and the Syrians was completed, Lysias returned to the king, and the Jews went back to their farming. <sup>2</sup>But some of the local governors, Timothy and Apollonius son of Gennaesus, as well as Hieronymus and Demophon, would not let them live in peace; and neither would Nicanor, the commander of the mercenaries from Cyprus.

<sup>3</sup>About this time, the people of Joppa did a cruel thing to the Jews of their city. They pretended to be friendly to the Jews and invited them and their families to go sailing with them on ships they had provided. <sup>4</sup>Since all the people of the town had decided to do this, the Jews suspected nothing and accepted the invitation out of a feeling of good will. But when they were out at sea, the people of Joppa drowned all two hundred of them.

<sup>5</sup>As soon as Judas heard of this inhuman thing that had been done to those Jews, he informed his men. <sup>6</sup>After they had prayed to God, the just judge, they attacked the murderers. Under cover of darkness they set fire to the harbor, burning all the ships, and killing everyone they found hiding there. <sup>7</sup>The gates of the city were locked, so Judas withdrew; but he was determined to return at some other time and wipe out everyone living there.

<sup>8</sup> Judas heard that the people of Jamnia had plans to kill the Jews of their city also. <sup>9</sup> So he attacked Jamnia at night, setting fire to its harbor and the ships there. The flames could be seen as far as Jerusalem, thirty miles away.

### **Judas' Victories in the Region of Gilead**

<sup>10</sup> When Judas and his men were about a mile away from Jamnia on their way to meet Timothy in battle, they were attacked by more than 5,000 Arabs, supported by 500 cavalry. <sup>11</sup> It was a hard fight, but with the help of God they defeated these desert tribesmen, who then asked to be on friendly terms with the Jews, promising to give them some livestock and offering to help them in other ways as well. <sup>12</sup> Judas thought their friendship might prove useful in many ways, so he agreed to make peace with them; after that the Arabs returned to their tents.

<sup>13</sup> Judas also attacked the heavily fortified walled city of Caspin. The people who lived there were a mixed population of Gentiles <sup>14</sup> who relied on the strength of their walls and felt confident that they had enough food stored up to last through a siege. So they made fun of Judas and his men, shouting out insults against them and profanities against their God. <sup>15</sup> But the Jews prayed to the Almighty Lord of the universe, who had torn down the walls of Jericho in the days of Joshua without using battering rams or siege weapons. Then they made a fierce attack against the wall <sup>16</sup> and because it was God's will, they captured the city. The Jews slaughtered so many people that a nearby lake, which was about a quarter of a mile wide, seemed to be overflowing with blood.

### **Judas Defeats Timothy's Army**

<sup>17</sup> From the city of Caspin, Judas and his men marched about 95 miles, until they came to the Jewish settlement of Charax, near the city of Tob. <sup>18</sup> But they did not find Timothy there, because he had already left the region. He had been able to do nothing there except leave behind a strong garrison in one place. <sup>19</sup> Two of Judas' generals, Dositheus and Sosipater, attacked the garrison and killed all 10,000 men stationed there. <sup>20</sup> Then Judas divided his army into several divisions, placing Dositheus and Sosipater each in command of a division, and hurried after Timothy, who had a force of 120,000 infantry and 2,500 cavalry. <sup>21</sup> When Timothy found out that Judas was coming after him, he sent the women and the children on ahead with the baggage to the city of Karnaim, which was almost impossible to besiege or even to reach, because of the narrow passes that led up to it. <sup>22</sup> But at the moment that Judas' first division came into sight, the enemy forces were thrown into panic by a vision sent by God, who sees everything. In terror they began to run wildly about and many of them were wounded by the swords of their own men. <sup>23</sup> So Judas and his men pursued them as hard as they could, killing at least 30,000 of the enemy. <sup>24</sup> Timothy himself was captured by the troops of Dositheus and Sosipater. But he was very shrewd and managed to convince them that many of their relatives were his prisoners and would be put to death if anything happened to him. <sup>25</sup> Finally, after he had promised to send their relatives home safely, they let him go free.

## **Judas Wins Other Victories**

<sup>26</sup> Next, Judas attacked the city of Karnaim and the temple of the goddess Atargatis there, killing 25,000 people <sup>27</sup> and completely destroying both the city and the temple. Then he attacked the fortified city of Ephron where Lysias and <sup>[a]</sup> people of all nationalities were living. Strong young men took up their positions in front of the walls and fought bravely, while inside the city were stored large quantities of military supplies and weapons. <sup>28</sup> But the Jews prayed for help to the Lord, who crushes the power of his enemies. So they captured the city and killed about 25,000 people. <sup>29</sup> From there they hurried on to the city of Beth Shan, seventy-five miles north of Jerusalem. <sup>30</sup> The Jews there told Judas how kindly the people of the city had treated them, especially during hard times. <sup>31</sup> So Judas and his men thanked the people and urged them to show the same good will toward the Jews in the future. Then they left for Jerusalem, where they arrived shortly before the Harvest Festival.

## **Judas Defeats Gorgias**

<sup>32</sup> After Pentecost (as the Harvest Festival is called in Greek) Judas and his men quickly marched out against Gorgias, the governor of Idumea, <sup>33</sup> who met them with 3,000 infantry and 400 cavalry. <sup>34</sup> In the battle that followed, a few Jews were killed. <sup>35</sup> Then a Jew from the city of Tob, <sup>[b]</sup> a powerful cavalry soldier by the name of Dositheus, grabbed Gorgias by his cloak and started dragging him away by brute force, intending to take the worthless man alive. But suddenly one from the Thracian cavalry rushed at Dositheus and chopped off his arm, allowing Gorgias to escape to the city of Marisa.

<sup>36</sup> By now the Jewish men under the command of Esdrias had been fighting for a long time and were exhausted. So Judas prayed that the Lord would show that he was on their side and in command of their troops. <sup>37</sup> Then, while Judas sang a hymn in his native language as a battle cry, the Jews made a surprise attack against Gorgias and his men and put them to flight.

## **Prayers for Those Killed in Battle**

<sup>38</sup> After the battle Judas led his men to the town of Adullam. It was the day before the Sabbath, so they purified themselves according to Jewish custom and then observed the holy day. <sup>39</sup> By the following day it was urgent that they gather up the bodies of the men who had been killed in battle and bury them in their family tombs. <sup>40</sup> But on each of the dead, hidden under their clothes, they found small images of the gods worshiped in Jamnia, which the Law forbids Jews to wear. Everyone then knew why these men had been killed. <sup>41</sup> So they praised the ways of the Lord, the just judge, who reveals what is hidden, <sup>42</sup> and they begged him that this sin might be completely blotted out. Then, Judas, that great man, urged the people to keep away from sin, because they had seen for themselves what had happened to those men who had sinned. <sup>43</sup> He also took up a collection from all his men, totaling about four pounds of silver, and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering. Judas did this noble thing because he believed in the resurrection of the dead. <sup>44</sup> If he had not believed that the dead would be raised, it would

have been foolish and useless to pray for them. <sup>45</sup> In his firm and devout conviction that all of God's faithful people would receive a wonderful reward, Judas made provision for a sin offering to set free from their sin those who had died.

## Footnotes

1. [2 Maccabees 12:27](#) Lysias and; some manuscripts do not have these words.
2. [2 Maccabees 12:35](#) a Jew from the city of Tob; some manuscripts have one of Bacenor's men.

## 2 Maccabees 13

### Good News Translation

#### Menelaus Is Put to Death

13 In the year 149<sup>[a]</sup> Judas Maccabeus and his followers found out that Antiochus Eupator was marching against Judea with a large army <sup>2</sup> and that Lysias, the young king's guardian and the head of his government, was with him. They<sup>[b]</sup> had a force of Greek troops consisting of 110,000 infantry, 5,300 cavalry, 22 elephants, and 300 chariots with sharp blades attached to their wheels.

<sup>3</sup> Menelaus, trying to take advantage of the situation, went over to their side and urged them on, not because he was concerned for the country, but because he hoped to be confirmed as High Priest. <sup>4</sup> But God, the King of kings, made Antiochus furious with Menelaus. Lysias proved to Antiochus that this criminal had been the source of all his troubles, so Antiochus ordered him to be taken to the city of Berea and put to death in the way that it was done there. <sup>5</sup> In that city there is a tower about 75 feet high. It is filled with ashes, and all around the inside of the tower is a platform sloping down into the ashes. <sup>6</sup> People accused of crimes against the gods or of any other serious crime are taken there and thrown down to their death. <sup>7</sup> Menelaus was put to death in that way, without even having the privilege of a burial, <sup>8</sup> and that was just what he deserved. He had often profaned the sacred ashes of the altar fire in the Temple, and now he met his death in ashes.

#### A Battle Near the City of Modein

<sup>9</sup> King Antiochus arrogantly continued his barbaric invasion of Judah, intending to deal with the Jews more harshly than his father had ever done. <sup>10</sup> When Judas learned of this, he told the people to pray to the Lord day and night, because they were in danger of losing their Law, their country, and their holy Temple. As never before, they needed his help and protection <sup>11</sup> to keep their newly restored country from falling into the hands of godless Gentiles. <sup>12</sup> For three days the people did nothing but lie face down on the

ground, fasting and crying, begging the merciful Lord for his help. Then Judas spoke words of encouragement to the people, urging them to get ready for action.

<sup>13</sup> Afterward, Judas met privately with the Jewish leaders and decided to march out with God's help to battle against the king, rather than to wait for Antiochus to invade Judea and besiege Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> Then, leaving the outcome of the battle to the Creator of the world, Judas encouraged his men to fight bravely and to be willing to die for their laws, the Temple, Jerusalem, their country, and their whole way of life. They set up camp near the city of Modein. <sup>15</sup> Judas gave his men the battle cry,

Victory comes from God, and that night, with a picked force of his bravest young men, he attacked the area near the king's tent and killed as many as 2,000 men. They also stabbed to death<sup>[g]</sup> the lead elephant and its keeper. <sup>16</sup> Everyone in camp was terrified and in panic when Judas and his men finally left victoriously <sup>17</sup> just before dawn. The help and protection of the Lord had made all this possible.

### **Antiochus the Fifth Makes a Treaty with the Jews**

<sup>18</sup> This taste of Jewish daring was enough to convince King Antiochus that he had to find some better way of capturing the Jewish positions. <sup>19</sup> He attacked the strong Jewish fort of Bethzur, but was repeatedly beaten back and finally defeated. <sup>20</sup> Judas sent supplies to the men who were defending the fort, <sup>21</sup> but a Jewish soldier by the name of Rhodocus gave some secret information to the enemy. He was found out, however, caught, and put to death. <sup>22</sup> The king made a second attempt to come to terms with the people of Bethzur, and when he had reached an agreement with them, he withdrew his forces. Then he went to attack Judas, but again he was defeated. <sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, Philip had been left at Antioch in charge of the government, but King Antiochus learned that he had revolted. The king did not know what to do, so he initiated peace talks with the Jews, agreed to their terms, and promised to be just in his treatment of them. To put the treaty into effect, he offered a sacrifice, gave a generous gift to show his respect for the Temple, <sup>24</sup> and graciously received Judas Maccabeus. After that, the king appointed Hegemonides to be governor of the territory between the cities of Ptolemais and Gerar, <sup>25</sup> and then he himself went on to Ptolemais. The people there were angry because of the treaty he had made with the Jews—so angry, in fact, that they wanted the treaty canceled. <sup>26</sup> But Lysias made a public speech, defending the treaty as well as he could. After he had calmed the people down and convinced them that he was right, he returned to Antioch.

In this way King Antiochus' invasion was turned into a retreat.

### **Footnotes**

1. [2 Maccabees 13:1](#) *the year 149*: This corresponds to 163 B.C.
2. [2 Maccabees 13:2](#) They; Greek unclear.
3. [2 Maccabees 13:15](#) Probable text stabbed to death; Greek unclear.

## 2 Maccabees 14

### Good News Translation

#### Alcimus Speaks against Judas

<sup>14</sup> Three years later, Judas and his men learned that Demetrius son of Seleucus had sailed into the port of Tripolis with a powerful army and a fleet. <sup>2</sup> It was reported that he had killed King Antiochus and his guardian Lysias and had taken over the country.

<sup>3</sup> There was a man by the name of Alcimus, who had formerly been High Priest but who had gladly adopted the Greek way of life during the revolt. Realizing that he could never again be High Priest and fearful of what the Jews might do to him, <sup>4</sup> he went to see King Demetrius in the year 151. <sup>[a]</sup> On this occasion he presented the king with a gold crown and a palm branch, together with some olive branches traditionally presented to the Temple, but he said nothing about his plans. <sup>5</sup> Later, however, he got the chance to put his foolish plans into effect when Demetrius summoned him to a meeting of his advisers and asked him what the Jews were intending to do.

Alcimus said,

<sup>6</sup> The followers of Judas Maccabeus think of themselves as devout and patriotic; they love war and are constantly inciting the people to rebellion and will never leave the nation in peace. <sup>7</sup> It is their fault that I no longer hold the glorious position of High Priest, to which I am entitled by birth. And so I have come here, <sup>8</sup> primarily out of a genuine concern for your interests as king, but also out of consideration for my own people, for the foolish policies of Judas and his followers have brought terrible suffering on our entire nation. <sup>9</sup> When Your Majesty has examined all the details of these matters, please act in your usual kind and generous manner to relieve the oppression of our nation and its people. <sup>10</sup> As long as Judas is alive, it will be impossible for our nation to enjoy peace.

#### Demetrius Sends Nicanor to Attack Judas

<sup>11</sup> As soon as Alcimus had finished his speech, the other advisers quickly seized this opportunity to arouse Demetrius' anger against Judas, because they also hated him. <sup>12</sup> So King Demetrius immediately appointed Nicanor, who was the commander of his elephant forces, to be governor of Judea, and sent him there <sup>13</sup> with orders to kill Judas, scatter his followers, and make Alcimus High Priest of the greatest Temple in all the world. <sup>14</sup> All the foreigners in Judea, who had fled from Judas' attacks, now rushed to join forces with Nicanor, because they thought that any defeat or trouble that came to the Jews would be to their own advantage.

<sup>15</sup> The Jews heard that Nicanor was attacking and that the foreigners in their country were giving him their support. So they threw dirt on themselves and prayed to their God, who had chosen their nation as his possession forever and had never failed to help them in time of need. <sup>16</sup> Then Judas, their leader, gave the orders, and they immediately marched out to engage the enemy in battle near the village of Adasa. <sup>[b]</sup> <sup>17</sup> Judas' brother Simon was

fighting Nicanor but was gradually losing the battle because of an unexpected move on the part of the enemy.<sup>18</sup> However, when Nicanor heard how bravely and courageously Judas and his men were fighting for their country, he decided not to settle the matter in battle.<sup>19</sup> Instead, he sent Posidonius, Theodotus, and Mattathias to make a treaty with the Jews.

<sup>20</sup> After the terms of the treaty had been worked out in detail, Nicanor informed his troops, and they unanimously agreed.<sup>21</sup> Then a day was set on which the leaders would meet in private. Ceremonial chairs were brought out from each camp and set up.<sup>22</sup> Judas had taken the precaution of placing battle-ready troops in strategic places, in case of sudden treachery on the part of the enemy. But the two leaders had a friendly meeting.<sup>23</sup> Nicanor stayed on in Jerusalem for some time after that. He did not mistreat the Jews in any way, and even sent away the people who had come over to his side.<sup>24</sup> The two men became the best of friends, and Judas was Nicanor's constant companion.<sup>25</sup> Nicanor urged him to marry and start a family. So Judas did this and settled down to a peaceful life.

### **Nicanor Turns against Judas**

<sup>26</sup> When Alcimus noticed how well Nicanor and Judas were getting along, he obtained a copy of the treaty and went to see King Demetrius. He told the king that Nicanor was disloyal to the government, because he had appointed the traitor Judas to be his successor.<sup>27</sup> These false accusations infuriated the king, and in his anger he wrote to Nicanor, informing him that he was dissatisfied with the treaty and ordering him to arrest Judas Maccabeus and send him to Antioch at once.

<sup>28</sup> When this message reached Nicanor, he was hurt and didn't know what to do, because he did not like having to break an agreement with a man who had kept his part of the bargain.<sup>29</sup> Yet it was impossible for him to ignore the king's command, so he began looking for a way to trap Judas.<sup>30</sup> Judas, however, noticed that Nicanor was becoming hostile and rude toward him, and he knew that this was a bad sign. So he gathered a large number of his followers and went into hiding.

<sup>31</sup> When Nicanor realized that Judas had outsmarted him, he went to the great and holy Temple at the time when the priests were offering sacrifice and ordered them to surrender Judas to him.<sup>32</sup> But the priests declared under oath that they had no idea where Judas was hiding.<sup>33</sup> Then Nicanor raised his right arm in the direction of the Temple and made a solemn threat:

If you do not hand Judas over to me as a prisoner, I will level God's Temple to the ground, demolish this altar, and on this spot build a glorious temple to Dionysus.<sup>34</sup> Then he left, and immediately the priests lifted their arms toward heaven and prayed to God, the faithful Defender of our nation:<sup>35</sup>  
Lord, you are in need of nothing, yet it has pleased you to place your Temple here and to live among us.<sup>36</sup> You alone are holy, and your Temple has only recently been purified, so now protect its holiness forever.

## Razis Dies for His Country

<sup>37</sup> One of the leaders in Jerusalem, a man by the name of Razis, was denounced to Nicanor. It was said that he had helped his people in many ways and was so highly respected by them that he was known as the Father of the Jews. <sup>38</sup> During the early days of the revolution he had risked his life for Judaism and had been brought to trial because of his loyalty. <sup>39</sup> Wanting to show clearly how much he disliked the Jews, Nicanor sent more than 500 soldiers to arrest Razis, <sup>40</sup> because he thought his arrest would be a crippling blow to the Jews. <sup>41</sup> The soldiers were about to capture the tower where Razis had gone. They were forcing open the gates to the courtyard, and the order had been given to set the door on fire. Razis realized there was no escape, so he tried to commit suicide with his sword, <sup>42</sup> preferring to die with honor rather than suffer humiliation at the hands of evil men.

<sup>43</sup> Under the pressure of the moment, Razis misjudged the thrust of the sword, and it did not kill him. So, while the soldiers were swarming into the room, he rushed to the wall and jumped off like a brave hero into the crowd below. <sup>44</sup> The crowd quickly moved back, and he fell in the space they left. <sup>45</sup> Still alive, and burning with courage, he got up, and with blood gushing from his wounds, he ran through the crowd and finally climbed a steep rock. <sup>46</sup> Now completely drained of blood, he tore out his intestines with both hands and threw them at the crowd, and as he did so, he prayed for the Lord of life and breath to give them back to him. That was how he died.

## Footnotes

1. [2 Maccabees 14:4](#) *the year 151*: This corresponds to 161 B.C.
2. [2 Maccabees 14:16](#) Probable text Adasa; Greek Dessau.

## 2 Maccabees 15

### Good News Translation

#### Nicanor's Cruel Plan

15 Nicanor learned that Judas and his men were in the region of Samaria, and so he decided to attack them on a Sabbath, when he could do so without any danger to himself. <sup>2</sup> The Jews who were forced to accompany his army begged him not to do such a cruel and savage thing, but to respect the day that the all-seeing God had honored and made the most holy of all days. <sup>3</sup> Then Nicanor, the lowest creature on earth, asked if there was some sovereign ruler in heaven who had commanded them to honor the Sabbath. <sup>4</sup> And the Jews replied,

Yes; the living Lord, who rules in heaven, commanded us to honor the Sabbath.



<sup>5</sup> But Nicanor answered,

I am the ruler on earth, and I order you to take up your weapons and to do what the king commands. However, he did not succeed in carrying out his cruel plan.

## **Judas Prepares His Troops for Battle**

<sup>6</sup> In his arrogance Nicanor had boasted that he would set up a monument in honor of his victory over Judas. <sup>7</sup> But Judas was fully confident that the Lord would help him, <sup>8</sup> so he urged his men not to be afraid of the enemy. He encouraged them to remember how the Almighty had helped them in times past and to rest assured that he would give them victory this time also. <sup>9</sup> He renewed their hope by reading to them from the Law and the Prophets and by reminding them of the battles they had already won. <sup>10</sup> When his men were ready for battle, he gave them their orders and at the same time pointed out how the Gentiles could not be trusted, because they never kept their treaties. <sup>11</sup> He armed all his men, not by encouraging them to trust in shields and spears, but by inspiring them with courageous words. He also lifted their morale by telling them about his dream, a kind of vision that they could trust in.

<sup>12</sup> He told them that he had seen a vision of Onias, the former High Priest, that great and wonderful man of humble and gentle disposition, who was an outstanding orator and who had been taught from childhood how to live a virtuous life. With outstretched arms Onias was praying for the entire Jewish nation. <sup>13</sup> Judas then saw an impressive white-haired man of great dignity and authority. <sup>14</sup> Onias said:

This is God's prophet Jeremiah, who loves the Jewish people and offers many prayers for us and for Jerusalem, the holy city.

<sup>15</sup> Then Jeremiah stretched out his right hand and gave Judas a gold sword, saying as he did so,

<sup>16</sup> This holy sword is a gift from God. Take it and destroy your enemies.

<sup>17</sup> The eloquent words that Judas spoke encouraged everyone to be brave, and inspired boys to fight like men. Their city, their religion, and their Temple were in danger. So the Jews made up their minds not to waste any time, but to make a daring attack against the enemy and bravely decide their fate in hand-to-hand combat. <sup>18</sup> They were not so concerned about their own families and relatives as they were about their sacred Temple. <sup>19</sup> And the people who had to stay in Jerusalem were deeply concerned about how a battle on open ground would turn out.

## **The Defeat and Death of Nicanor**

<sup>20</sup> Everyone was waiting to see who would win the battle. The enemy troops were already moving forward, with their cavalry on each side of them, and their elephants placed in strategic positions. <sup>21</sup> Judas Maccabeus looked at the huge enemy force, the variety of their weapons, and their fierce elephants. Then he raised his hands toward heaven and

prayed to the Lord, who works miracles, because he knew that the Lord gives victory to those who deserve it, not to those who have a strong army. <sup>22</sup> Judas said:

Lord, when Hezekiah was king of Judah, you sent your angel, who killed 185,000 of King Sennacherib's men. <sup>23</sup> Now once again, Lord of heaven, send your good angel to make our enemies shake and tremble with fear. <sup>24</sup> With your great power, destroy these people who have slandered you and have come out to attack your chosen people. So Judas ended his prayer.

<sup>25</sup> Nicanor and his army moved forward to the sound of trumpets and battle songs, <sup>26</sup> but Judas and his men went into battle calling on God for help. <sup>27</sup> So by fighting with their hands and praying to God in their hearts, the Jews killed more than 35,000 of the enemy. How grateful they were for the help they had received from God! <sup>28</sup> When the battle was over and they were going home celebrating their victory, they noticed Nicanor in full armor lying dead on the battlefield. <sup>29</sup> Then with loud shouts they praised the Lord in their native language.

<sup>30</sup> Judas Maccabeus, who had always fought with all his body and soul for his own people, never losing the patriotism of his youth, ordered his men to cut off Nicanor's head and right arm and to take them to Jerusalem. <sup>31</sup> When they arrived in the city, he called together all the people, stationed the priests before the altar, and sent for the men in the fort. <sup>32</sup> He showed them the head of the evil Nicanor and the arm which that wicked man had arrogantly stretched out against the sacred Temple of the Almighty God. <sup>33</sup> Then he cut out the tongue of that godless man, promising to feed it bit by bit to the birds and to hang up his head opposite the Temple, as evidence of what his foolishness did for him. <sup>34</sup> Everyone there looked up to heaven and praised the Lord, who had revealed his power and had kept his Temple from being defiled. <sup>35</sup> Judas hung Nicanor's head from the wall of the fort, as a clear proof to everyone of the Lord's help. <sup>36</sup> By unanimous vote it was decided that this day would never be forgotten, but would be celebrated each year on the eve of Mordecai's Day,<sup>[a]</sup> which is the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, called Adar in Aramaic.

## Concluding Words

<sup>37</sup> That is how things turned out for Nicanor. The city of Jerusalem remained in the possession of the Jewish people from that time on, so I will end my story here. <sup>38</sup> If it is well written and to the point, I am pleased; if it is poorly written and uninteresting, I have still done my best. <sup>39</sup> We know it is unhealthy to drink wine or water alone, whereas wine mixed with water makes a delightfully tasty drink. So also a good story skillfully written gives pleasure to those who read it. With this I conclude.

## Footnotes

1. [2 Maccabees 15:36](#) *mordecai's day*: The Festival of Purim (see [Es 9.17-22](#)).

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<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Maccabees%2010&version=GNT>

## **Good News Translation**