

THE WAR FOR JEWISH RELIGIOUS FREEDOM RESUMES

163 [DURING THE SPRING] According to an official letter recorded in 2 Maccabees 11:27-33, the new Seleucid king, Antiochus V, had agreed to let the Jews return peacefully to their customs.

“To the nation the king’s letter was as follows:

“King Antiochus to the senate of the Jews and to the other Jews, greetings.

“If you are well, it is as we desire. We also are in good health.

“Menelaus¹ has informed us that you wish to return home and look after your own affairs. Therefore those who go home by the thirtieth of Xanthicus² will have our pledge of friendship and full permission for the Jews to enjoy their own food and laws, just as formerly, and none of them shall be molested in any way for what may have been done in ignorance. And I have also sent Menelaus to encourage you.

“Farewell. The one hundred forty-eighth year, Xanthicus fifteenth³.”

Considering all the casualties the Jewish army of Judas Maccabee had inflicted upon them, the Gentiles living in the regions around Judea were not so willing to let bygones be bygones. Their reprisals resulted in even more Jewish military action.

“But some of the governors in various places, Timothy and Apollonius son of Gennaesus, as well as Hieronymus and Demophon, and in addition to these Nicanor the governor of Cyprus, would not let them live quietly and in peace.

“And the people of Joppa did so ungodly a deed as this: they invited the Jews who lived among them to embark, with their wives and children, on boats that they had provided, as though there were no ill will to the Jews; and this was done by public vote of the city. When they accepted, because they wished to live peaceably and suspected nothing, the people of Joppa took them out to sea and drowned them, at least two hundred.

“When Judas heard of the cruelty visited on his compatriots, he gave orders to his men and, calling upon God, the righteous judge, attacked the murderers of his kindred. He set fire to the harbor by night, burned the boats, and massacred those who had taken refuge there. Then, because the city’s gates were closed, he withdrew, intending to come again and root out the whole community of Joppa.

“But learning that the people in Jamnia⁴ meant in the same way to wipe out the Jews who were living among them, he attacked the Jamnites by night and set fire to the harbor and the fleet, so that the glow of the light was seen in Jerusalem, thirty miles distant.”

2 Maccabees 12:1-9

¹ This is the same Menelaus who had bribed his way into the High Priesthood nearly a decade earlier. He appears to be functioning as the emissary of Antiochus V to the Jews.

² FRI/SAT 14/15 MAY 163 BC.

³ THU/FRI 29/30 APR 163 BC.

⁴ Located on the Mediterranean coast, about 12 miles south of Joppa.

163 [DURING THE SPRING] Prior to Pentecost (early June), Judas engaged and killed a significant portion of the Gentile forces gathering east of the Jordan for an attack. It should be noted that he remained at peace with those Gentiles not directly threatening Judaism.

“Setting out from there, they hastened to Scythopolis,⁵ which is seventy-five miles from Jerusalem. But when the Jews who lived there bore witness to the goodwill that the people of Scythopolis had shown them and their kind treatment of them in times of misfortune, they thanked them and exhorted them to be well disposed to their race in the future also.

“Then they went up to Jerusalem, as the festival of weeks was close at hand.”

2 Maccabees 12:29-31

After Pentecost he turned his attention against the invading Gentile army of Idumea (Edom).

“After the festival called Pentecost, they hurried against Gorgias, the governor of Idumea, who came out with three thousand infantry and four hundred cavalry. When they joined battle, it happened that a few of the Jews fell.

“But a certain Dositheus, one of Bacenor’s men, who was on horseback and was a strong man, caught hold of Gorgias, and grasping his cloak was dragging him off by main strength, wishing to take the accursed man alive, when one of the Thracian cavalry bore down on him and cut off his arm; so Gorgias escaped and reached Marisa.

“As Esdris and his men had been fighting for a long time and were weary, Judas called upon the Lord to show himself their ally and leader in the battle. In the language of their ancestors he raised the battle cry, with hymns; then he charged against Gorgias’s troops when they were not expecting it, and put them to flight.”

“Then Judas assembled his army and went to the city of Adullam.⁶ As the seventh day was coming on, they purified themselves according to the custom, and kept the sabbath there.

“On the next day, as had now become necessary, Judas and his men went to take up the bodies of the fallen and to bring them back to lie with their kindred in the sepulchres of their ancestors. Then under the tunic of each one of the dead they found sacred tokens of the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbids the Jews to wear. And it became clear to all that this was the reason these men had fallen.

“So they all blessed the ways of the Lord, the righteous judge, who reveals the things that are hidden; and they turned to supplication, praying that the sin that had been committed might be wholly blotted out. The noble Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened as the result of the sin of those who had fallen. He also took up a collection, man by man, to the amount of two thousand drachmas of silver, and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering.

“In doing this he acted very well and honorably, taking account of the resurrection. For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, so that they might be delivered from their sin.”

2 Maccabees 12:32-45

⁵ Located about 15 miles south of the Sea of Galilee.

⁶ Located about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem.

162 [LATE WINTER/EARLY SPRING] Judas Maccabee received intelligence that Antiochus V had assembled a huge military task force and was advancing along the Mediterranean coast with the intent of attacking Jerusalem.

“In the one hundred forty-ninth year⁷ word came to Judas and his men that Antiochus Eupator was coming with a great army against Judea, and with him Lysias, his guardian, who had charge of the government. Each of them had a Greek force of one hundred ten thousand infantry, five thousand three hundred cavalry, twenty-two elephants, and three hundred chariots armed with scythes.

“Menelaus also joined them and with utter hypocrisy urged Antiochus on, not for the sake of his country’s welfare, but because he thought that he would be established in office. But the King of kings aroused the anger of Antiochus against the scoundrel; and when Lysias informed him that this man was to blame for all the trouble,⁸ he ordered them to take him to Beroea and to put him to death by the method that is customary in that place. For there is a tower there, fifty cubits high, full of ashes, and it has a rim running around it that on all sides inclines precipitously into the ashes. There they all push to destruction anyone guilty of sacrilege or notorious for other crimes. By such a fate it came about that Menelaus the lawbreaker died, without even burial in the earth. And this was eminently just; because he had committed many sins against the altar whose fire and ashes were holy, he met his death in ashes. 2 Maccabees 13:1-8

In accordance with his character, Judas responded by appealing to God for assistance in attacking the invading forces, denying them easy access to Jerusalem.

“The king with barbarous arrogance was coming to show the Jews things far worse than those that had been done in his father’s time. But when Judas heard of this, he ordered the people to call upon the Lord day and night, now if ever to help those who were on the point of being deprived of the law and their country and the holy temple, and not to let the people who had just begun to revive fall into the hands of the blasphemous Gentiles. When they had all joined in the same petition and had implored the merciful Lord with weeping and fasting and lying prostrate for three days without ceasing, Judas exhorted them and ordered them to stand ready.

“After consulting privately with the elders, he determined to march out and decide the matter by the help of God before the king’s army could enter Judea and get possession of the city. So, committing the decision to the Creator of the world and exhorting his troops to fight bravely to the death for the laws, temple, city, country, and commonwealth, he pitched his camp near Modein.⁹ He gave his troops the watchword, “God’s victory,” and with a picked force of the bravest young men, he attacked the king’s pavilion at night and killed as many as two thousand men in the camp. He stabbed the leading elephant and its rider. In the end they filled the camp with terror and confusion and withdrew in triumph. This happened, just as day was dawning, because the Lord’s help protected him.” 2 Maccabees 13:9-17

Stung by Judas’ surprise attack, Antiochus V swung southward, into northern Idumea, before pressing northward toward Jerusalem.

“They came through Idumea and encamped against Beth-zur,¹⁰ and for many days they fought and built engines of war; but the Jews sallied out and burned these with fire, and fought courageously.”

1 Maccabees 6:31

⁷ The Jews counted the 149th Seleucid Year as Spring 163 BC to Spring 162 BC.

⁸ Menelaus was the non-Aaronic High Priest who, as an advisor to Antiochus IV, had promoted the abandonment of Judaism & the forced adoption of Greek culture. In the mind of Lysias, Menelaus’ advice was the root cause for all the turmoil of the Maccabean revolt, a point of view easily accepted by Antiochus V.

⁹ Modein marks the start of an uphill approach toward Jerusalem from the west.

¹⁰ Beth-zur was a fortified city about 15 miles south, south-west of Jerusalem, protecting access to it from the south.

162 [SPRING] As the new Jewish year began & with Antiochus V's forces circling around from the south, Judas decided it was time to root out the Gentiles & traitorous Jews barricaded within the citadel right next to the Temple. The survivors appealed to Antiochus V for revenge against what they claimed was religious Jewish aggression led by Judas Maccabee.

“Meanwhile the garrison in the citadel kept hemming Israel in around the sanctuary. They were trying in every way to harm them and strengthen the Gentiles. Judas therefore resolved to destroy them, and assembled all the people to besiege them. They gathered together and besieged the citadel in the one hundred fiftieth year;¹¹ and he built siege towers and other engines of war. But some of the garrison escaped from the siege and some of the ungodly Israelites joined them.

“They went to the king and said, “How long will you fail to do justice and to avenge our kindred? We were happy to serve your father, to live by what he said, and to follow his commands. For this reason the sons of our people besieged the citadel and became hostile to us; moreover, they have put to death as many of us as they have caught, and they have seized our inheritances. It is not against us alone that they have stretched out their hands; they have also attacked all the lands on their borders. And see, today they have encamped against the citadel in Jerusalem to take it; they have fortified both the sanctuary and Beth-zur; unless you quickly prevent them, they will do still greater things, and you will not be able to stop them.”

“The king was enraged when he heard this. He assembled all his Friends, the commanders of his forces and those in authority. Mercenary forces also came to him from other kingdoms and from islands of the seas. The number of his forces was one hundred thousand foot soldiers, twenty thousand horsemen, and thirty-two elephants accustomed to war. 1 Maccabees 6:18-30

One of Judas' most tragic personal losses took place during the battle near Beth-zachariah.

“Then Judas marched away from the citadel and encamped at Beth-zachariah, opposite the camp of the king. Early in the morning the king set out and took his army by a forced march along the road to Beth-zachariah, and his troops made ready for battle and sounded their trumpets. They offered the elephants the juice of grapes and mulberries, to arouse them for battle. They distributed the animals among the phalanxes; with each elephant they stationed a thousand men armed with coats of mail, and with brass helmets on their heads; and five hundred picked horsemen were assigned to each beast. These took their position beforehand wherever the animal was; wherever it went, they went with it, and they never left it. On the elephants were wooden towers, strong and covered; they were fastened on each animal by special harness, and on each were four armed men who fought from there, and also its Indian driver. The rest of the cavalry were stationed on either side, on the two flanks of the army, to harass the enemy while being themselves protected by the phalanxes. When the sun shone on the shields of gold and brass, the hills were ablaze with them and gleamed like flaming torches.

“Now a part of the king's army was spread out on the high hills, and some troops were on the plain, and they advanced steadily and in good order. All who heard the noise made by their multitude, by the marching of the multitude and the clanking of their arms, trembled, for the army was very large and strong. But Judas and his army advanced to the battle, and six hundred of the king's army fell. Now Eleazar, called Avaran, saw that one of the animals was equipped with royal armor. It was taller than all the others, and he supposed that the king was on it. So he gave his life to save his people and to win for himself an everlasting name. He courageously ran into the midst of the phalanx to reach it; he killed men right and left, and they parted before him on both sides. He got under the elephant, stabbed it from beneath, and killed it; but it fell to the ground upon him and he died. When the Jews saw the royal might and the fierce attack of the forces, they turned away in flight.” 1 Maccabees 6:32-47

¹¹ The Jews counted the 150th Seleucid Year as Spring 162 BC to Spring 161 BC.

162 [SPRING] Being committed to the keeping of the law, Judas Maccabee would have insured that the Jewish Sabbatical year was observed from the fall of 164 until the fall 163. The grain fields planted in the fall of 163 would not have been ready for harvest until the late spring & early summer of 162. This made Jewish resistance of Antiochus V's invasion much more difficult since their grain supplies from the harvest of 164 were nearly gone.

“The soldiers of the king’s army went up to Jerusalem against them, and the king encamped in Judea and at Mount Zion. He made peace with the people of Beth-zur, and they evacuated the town because they had no provisions there to withstand a siege, since it was a sabbatical year for the land. So the king took Beth-zur and stationed a guard there to hold it.

“Then he encamped before the sanctuary for many days. He set up siege towers, engines of war to throw fire and stones, machines to shoot arrows, and catapults. The Jews also made engines of war to match theirs, and fought for many days. But they had no food in storage, because it was the seventh year; those who had found safety in Judea from the Gentiles had consumed the last of the stores. Only a few men were left in the sanctuary; the rest scattered to their own homes, for the famine proved too much for them.” 1 Maccabees 6:48-54

Before he could completely subjugate them, a political crisis in Antioch forced Antiochus V to make hasty peace with Judas Maccabee & the Jews.

“Then Lysias heard that Philip, whom King Antiochus while still living had appointed to bring up his son Antiochus to be king, had returned from Persia and Media with the forces that had gone with the king, and that he was trying to seize control of the government. So he quickly gave orders to withdraw, and said to the king, to the commanders of the forces, and to the troops, “Daily we grow weaker, our food supply is scant, the place against which we are fighting is strong, and the affairs of the kingdom press urgently on us. Now then let us come to terms with these people, and make peace with them and with all their nation. Let us agree to let them live by their laws as they did before; for it was on account of their laws that we abolished that they became angry and did all these things.”

“The speech pleased the king and the commanders, and he sent to the Jews an offer of peace, and they accepted it. So the king and the commanders gave them their oath. On these conditions the Jews evacuated the stronghold.

“But when the king entered Mount Zion and saw what a strong fortress the place was, he broke the oath he had sworn and gave orders to tear down the wall all around.” 1 Maccabees 6:55-62

“He received Maccabeus, left Hegemonides as governor from Ptolemais to Gerar, and went to Ptolemais. The people of Ptolemais were indignant over the treaty; in fact they were so angry that they wanted to annul its terms. Lysias took the public platform, made the best possible defense, convinced them, appeased them, gained their goodwill, and set out for Antioch. This is how the king’s attack and withdrawal turned out.” 2 Maccabees 13:24-26

“Then he set off in haste and returned to Antioch. He found Philip in control of the city, but he fought against him, and took the city by force.” 1 Maccabees 6:63

161 A major shift of power occurred in the Seleucid Empire.

“In the one hundred fifty-first year¹² Demetrius¹³ son of Seleucus set out from Rome, sailed with a few men to a town by the sea, and there began to reign. As he was entering the royal palace of his ancestors, the army seized Antiochus and Lysias to bring them to him. But when this act became known to him, he said, “Do not let me see their faces!” So the army killed them, and Demetrius took his seat on the throne of his kingdom.” 1 Maccabees 7:1-4

One of the first Jews to petition Demetrius was Alcimus, a descendant of Aaron who wanted to be declared by the king as the new Jewish High Priest. He was clearly more interested in exercising earthly power than in providing spiritual leadership.

“Then there came to him all the renegade and godless men of Israel; they were led by Alcimus, who wanted to be high priest. They brought to the king this accusation against the people: “Judas and his brothers have destroyed all your Friends, and have driven us out of our land. Now then send a man whom you trust; let him go and see all the ruin that Judas has brought on us and on the land of the king, and let him punish them and all who help them.”

“So the king chose Bacchides, one of the king’s Friends, governor of the province Beyond the River; he was a great man in the kingdom and was faithful to the king. He sent him, and with him he sent the ungodly Alcimus, whom he made high priest; and he commanded him to take vengeance on the Israelites. So they marched away and came with a large force into the land of Judah; and he sent messengers to Judas and his brothers with peaceable but treacherous words. But they paid no attention to their words, for they saw that they had come with a large force.

“Then a group of scribes appeared in a body before Alcimus and Bacchides to ask for just terms. The Hasideans were first among the Israelites to seek peace from them, for they said, “A priest of the line of Aaron has come with the army, and he will not harm us.”

“Alcimus spoke peaceable words to them and swore this oath to them, “We will not seek to injure you or your friends.” So they trusted him; but he seized sixty of them and killed them in one day, in accordance with the word that was written, “The flesh of your faithful ones and their blood they poured out all around Jerusalem, and there was no one to bury them.”

“Then the fear and dread of them fell on all the people, for they said, “There is no truth or justice in them, for they have violated the agreement and the oath that they swore.”

“Then Bacchides withdrew from Jerusalem and encamped in Beth-zaiton. And he sent and seized many of the men who had deserted to him, and some of the people, and killed them and threw them into a great pit. He placed Alcimus in charge of the country and left with him a force to help him; then Bacchides went back to the king.

“Alcimus struggled to maintain his high priesthood, and all who were troubling their people joined him. They gained control of the land of Judah and did great damage in Israel.

“And Judas saw all the wrongs that Alcimus and those with him had done among the Israelites; it was more than the Gentiles had done. So Judas went out into all the surrounding parts of Judea, taking vengeance on those who had deserted and preventing those in the city from going out into the country.

“When Alcimus saw that Judas and those with him had grown strong, and realized that he could not withstand them, he returned to the king and brought malicious charges against them.”

1 Maccabees 7:5-25

¹² The Jews counted the 151st Seleucid Year as Spring 161 BC to Spring 160 BC.

¹³ This Demetrius was the 10-year old nephew whom Antiochus IV had usurped back in 175 BC. He was now 25 years old and more than ready to take his rightful place upon his father’s throne.

161 [PROBABLY LATER IN THE YEAR] Alcimus petitioned Demetrius for further support of his High Priesthood.

“Now a certain Alcimus, who had formerly been high priest but had willfully defiled himself in the times of separation, realized that there was no way for him to be safe or to have access again to the holy altar, and went to King Demetrius in about the one hundred fifty-first year,¹⁴ presenting to him a crown of gold and a palm, and besides these some of the customary olive branches from the temple. During that day he kept quiet. But he found an opportunity that furthered his mad purpose when he was invited by Demetrius to a meeting of the council and was asked about the attitude and intentions of the Jews.

“He answered: “Those of the Jews who are called Hasideans, whose leader is Judas Maccabeus, are keeping up war and stirring up sedition, and will not let the kingdom attain tranquility. Therefore I have laid aside my ancestral glory—I mean the high priesthood—and have now come here, first because I am genuinely concerned for the interests of the king, and second because I have regard also for my compatriots. For through the folly of those whom I have mentioned our whole nation is now in no small misfortune. Since you are acquainted, O king, with the details of this matter, may it please you to take thought for our country and our hard-pressed nation with the gracious kindness that you show to all. For as long as Judas lives, it is impossible for the government to find peace.”

“When he had said this, the rest of the king’s Friends, who were hostile to Judas, quickly inflamed Demetrius still more. He immediately chose Nicanor, who had been in command of the elephants, appointed him governor of Judea, and sent him off with orders to kill Judas and scatter his troops, and to install Alcimus as high priest of the great temple.

“And the Gentiles throughout Judea, who had fled before Judas, flocked to join Nicanor, thinking that the misfortunes and calamities of the Jews would mean prosperity for themselves.” 2 Maccabees 14:3-14

1 Maccabees 7 & 2 Maccabees 14 disagree as to the motives behind the actions of Nicanor once he arrived in Judea – the former, that he intentionally deceived Judas with offers of peace & the latter, that he genuinely wanted peace but was forced to break his vows to Judas by pressure from King Demetrius & High Priest Alcimus. However, both books agree that Nicanor ended up threatening the Temple should Judas not surrender.

“...he stretched out his right hand toward the sanctuary, and swore this oath: “If you do not hand Judas over to me as a prisoner, I will level this shrine of God to the ground and tear down the altar, and build here a splendid temple to Dionysus.” Having said this, he went away.

“Then the priests stretched out their hands toward heaven and called upon the constant Defender of our nation, in these words: “O Lord of all, though you have need of nothing, you were pleased that there should be a temple for your habitation among us; so now, O holy One, Lord of all holiness, keep undefiled forever this house that has been so recently purified.”” 2 Maccabees 14:33-36

¹⁴ The Jews counted the 151st Seleucid Year as Spring 161 BC to Spring 160 BC.

160 **12*13**¹⁵ When the battle between Judas & Nicanor finally took place, the latter “lost his head.”

“When all were now looking forward to the coming issue, and the enemy was already close at hand with their army drawn up for battle, the elephants strategically stationed and the cavalry deployed on the flanks, Maccabeus, observing the masses that were in front of him and the varied supply of arms and the savagery of the elephants, stretched out his hands toward heaven and called upon the Lord who works wonders; for he knew that it is not by arms, but as the Lord decides, that he gains the victory for those who deserve it.

“He called upon him in these words: “O Lord, you sent your angel in the time of King Hezekiah of Judea, and he killed fully one hundred eighty-five thousand in the camp of Sennacherib. So now, O Sovereign of the heavens, send a good angel to spread terror and trembling before us. By the might of your arm may these blasphemers who come against your holy people be struck down.” With these words he ended his prayer.

“Nicanor and his troops advanced with trumpets and battle songs, but Judas and his troops met the enemy in battle with invocations to God and prayers. So, fighting with their hands and praying to God in their hearts, they laid low at least thirty-five thousand, and were greatly gladdened by God’s manifestation. When the action was over and they were returning with joy, they recognized Nicanor, lying dead, in full armor. Then there was shouting and tumult, and they blessed the Sovereign Lord in the language of their ancestors.

“Then the man who was ever in body and soul the defender of his people, the man who maintained his youthful goodwill toward his compatriots, ordered them to cut off Nicanor’s head and arm and carry them to Jerusalem. When he arrived there and had called his compatriots together and stationed the priests before the altar, he sent for those who were in the citadel. He showed them the vile Nicanor’s head and that profane man’s arm, which had been boastfully stretched out against the holy house of the Almighty. He cut out the tongue of the ungodly Nicanor and said that he would feed it piecemeal to the birds and would hang up these rewards of his folly opposite the sanctuary. And they all, looking to heaven, blessed the Lord who had manifested himself, saying, “Blessed is he who has kept his own place undefiled!”

“Judas hung Nicanor’s head from the citadel, a clear and conspicuous sign to everyone of the help of the Lord. And they all decreed by public vote never to let this day go unobserved, but to celebrate the thirteenth day of the twelfth month—which is called Adar in the Aramaic language—the day before Mordecai’s day.”¹⁶ 2 Maccabees 15:20-36

¹⁵ WED/THU 13/14 February, 160 BC.

¹⁶ The Feast of Purim = 12*14 (Esther 9:17).

160 Judas decided it was time to reach out to the mighty nation of the Romans for assistance. It was his invitation to enter this treaty which drew the Romans into the region. 1 Maccabees 8:20-32 records the details of the treaty.

“Judas, who is also called Maccabeus, and his brothers and the people of the Jews have sent us to you to establish alliance and peace with you, so that we may be enrolled as your allies and friends.”

“The proposal pleased them, and this is a copy of the letter that they wrote in reply, on bronze tablets, and sent to Jerusalem to remain with them there as a memorial of peace and alliance:

“May all go well with the Romans and with the nation of the Jews at sea and on land forever, and may sword and enemy be far from them. If war comes first to Rome or to any of their allies in all their dominion, the nation of the Jews shall act as their allies wholeheartedly, as the occasion may indicate to them. To the enemy that makes war they shall not give or supply grain, arms, money, or ships, just as Rome has decided; and they shall keep their obligations without receiving any return.

“In the same way, if war comes first to the nation of the Jews, the Romans shall willingly act as their allies, as the occasion may indicate to them. And to their enemies there shall not be given grain, arms, money, or ships, just as Rome has decided; and they shall keep these obligations and do so without deceit. Thus on these terms the Romans make a treaty with the Jewish people. If after these terms are in effect both parties shall determine to add or delete anything, they shall do so at their discretion, and any addition or deletion that they may make shall be valid.

“Concerning the wrongs that King Demetrius is doing to them, we have written to him as follows, ‘Why have you made your yoke heavy on our friends and allies the Jews? If now they appeal again for help against you, we will defend their rights and fight you on sea and on land.’ ”

160 [SPRING] It is interesting to note that after Judas reached out to the pagan Romans for assistance, things immediately began to go wrong in his war with the Seleucid Empire.

“When Demetrius heard that Nicanor and his army had fallen in battle, he sent Bacchides and Alcimus into the land of Judah a second time, and with them the right wing of the army. They went by the road that leads to Gilgal and encamped against Mesaloth in Arbela, and they took it and killed many people. In the first month of the one hundred fifty-second year¹⁷ they encamped against Jerusalem; then they marched off and went to Berea with twenty thousand foot soldiers and two thousand cavalry.

“Now Judas was encamped in Elasa, and with him were three thousand picked men. When they saw the huge number of the enemy forces, they were greatly frightened, and many slipped away from the camp, until no more than eight hundred of them were left. When Judas saw that his army had slipped away and the battle was imminent, he was crushed in spirit, for he had no time to assemble them. He became faint, but he said to those who were left, “Let us get up and go against our enemies. We may have the strength to fight them.”

“But they tried to dissuade him, saying, “We do not have the strength. Let us rather save our own lives now, and let us come back with our kindred and fight them; we are too few.”

“But Judas said, “Far be it from us to do such a thing as to flee from them. If our time has come, let us die bravely for our kindred, and leave no cause to question our honor.”

1 Maccabees 9:1-10

¹⁷ The Jews counted the 152nd Seleucid Year as Spring 160 BC to Spring 159 BC.

160 [SPRING] Judas was killed in battle the very next time he engaged the enemy.

“Then the army of Bacchides marched out from the camp and took its stand for the encounter. The cavalry was divided into two companies, and the slingers and the archers went ahead of the army, as did all the chief warriors. Bacchides was on the right wing. Flanked by the two companies, the phalanx advanced to the sound of the trumpets; and the men with Judas also blew their trumpets. The earth was shaken by the noise of the armies, and the battle raged from morning until evening.

“Judas saw that Bacchides and the strength of his army were on the right; then all the stouthearted men went with him, and they crushed the right wing, and he pursued them as far as Mount Azotus. When those on the left wing saw that the right wing was crushed, they turned and followed close behind Judas and his men.

“The battle became desperate, and many on both sides were wounded and fell. Judas also fell, and the rest fled.

“Then Jonathan and Simon took their brother Judas and buried him in the tomb of their ancestors at Modein, and wept for him. All Israel made great lamentation for him; they mourned many days and said, “How is the mighty fallen, the savior of Israel!”

“Now the rest of the acts of Judas, and his wars and the brave deeds that he did, and his greatness, have not been recorded, but they were very many.” 1 Maccabees 9:11-22