

The Abomination of Desolation of Mount Zion by Syria

Volume 6 Chronicle 2017100401

Page 1 of 6

Text: Josephus The Antiquities of the Jews Book 12 Chapter 7.6 (page 328)

Desolation came to pass according to the prophecy of Daniel, which was given four hundred and eight years before; for he declared the Macedonians would dissolve that worship [for some time].

Text: Daniel 11:31 ASV

And forces shall stand on his part, and they shall profane the sanctuary, even the fortress, and shall take away the continual burnt offering, and they shall set up the abomination that maketh desolate.

Text: Daniel 12:11 ASV

From the time that the continual burnt offering shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand and two hundred and ninety days.

Abomination making Mount Zion desolate are prophetic words fulfilled more than once! That fatal day was come, according to the revolution of ages; 25 Chislev reckons 16 December in 167 B.C. Swine's flesh was offered on the altar of Zeus at Jerusalem temple.

More than two thousand years ago, the land of Judea, the land we now call Israel, was ruled by Syrian Greeks. The emperor Antiochus reigned. The Syrians called him Epiphanes the Illustrious, but the Jews called him Epimanes the Madman. For he ruled with cruelty and terror over a mighty empire.

Antiochus believed that he was a god, with godlike powers. He had priests who served him and placed his statue in a favored position among the many idols in their temples.

Because Antiochus admired Greek culture, all his subjects were forced to follow Greek customs, and give up their own ways of doing things. They read Greek books and acted in Greek plays. They built gymnasiums, where they held imitations of Greek games. They adopted Greek names. And they worshiped Greek gods.

Even some of the Jewish nobles in Jerusalem, the capital city, began

to copy the Greeks in every way, hoping to win the Emperor's favor.

Now Jason, the Jewish High Priest, tried valiantly to keep Judaism alive as the religion of the people, and still obey the Emperor's commands. But when war broke out between Syria and Egypt, Antiochus suspected Jason of being friendly to the enemy. Jason was stripped of his holy office, and a new High Priest, Menelaus, was appointed.

The Jews hated Menelaus. They knew him to be evil, and not worthy of being a priest of God. So when word was spread that Antiochus had been slain in battle, Jason gathered an army of one thousand men. They laid siege to Jerusalem, and forced the false priest Menelaus to flee. Now the Jews could worship their beloved leader Jason.

Antiochus, however, had not been slain after all. When the news of Jason's daring rebellion reached him, he led his great army to Jerusalem. He commanded his soldiers to execute anyone suspected of disloyalty. In his rage, Antiochus entered the Holy Temple on Mount Zion, despoiled it, and carried off its sacred treasures. Thousand of innocent Jews were slain. Jerusalem was left desolate.

Now Antiochus issued new and more dreadful commands. Every one of his subjects was to bow in worship before the Greek gods, or forfeit his life. Antiochus knew that if he was to succeed in destroying the Jews as a people, he must destroy their religion first. Their religion was the cord that bound them together; he had to break it. For the route to Egypt ran through Judea. An army marching to do battle with the Egyptians had to pass through the land of the Jews. Therefore their loyalty was necessary for the emperor to feel safe on his throne.

All the peoples of the vast realm submitted to the new decree. But the Jews refused. They were true to the faith of their fathers. Then the angry king ordered his army into the field, to root out this strange belief in the Jewish God.

Antiochus' soldiers overran Jerusalem. They halted the service in the Temple. They placed a statue of Zeus, god of the Greeks, on the altar.

They pillaged and murdered. If a woman was found lighting candles on the eve of the Sabbath, she was executed. If a man was discovered teaching his son the laws of Judaism, they paid with their lives.

A widow named Hannah lived with her seven sons, all of them true and loyal Jews. The king's men found them observing the Sabbath. One by one, beginning with the eldest, they were ordered to bow down before heathen idols. One by one, they refused. And one by one, before their mother's eyes they were beheaded. Finally only the youngest, a lad of six, remained. But even he would not bow down, and he too died for his faith.

In the small town of Modin, in the Judean hills, dwelt an old man named Mattathias, and his five sons: John, Simeon, Eleazar, Jonathan, and Judah. When the emperor's decree reached Modin, Mattathias and his sons vowed to never desert their religion and their God. The old man mourned the desecration of the beloved Temple: Why did I live to see the misery of my people and of Jerusalem?

When the king's officers arrived in Modin to enforce obedience, they went to Mattathias. They asked him, as a leader of the village, to be the first to offer a sacrifice to the Greek idols. They knew the villagers would follow his example. They promised him rich gifts of silver and gold, and the favor of the emperor.

Mattathias gave them his answer, "Though all nations must obey the king and fall away from the religions of their fathers, yet must I and my sons walk in the way of the Lord. We will not forsake the Law!"

But a man without Mattathias' courage and faith was found, and he agreed to offer a sacrifice on the altar erected in the village square. As the people watched in fear, Mattathias strode forward, stabbed the traitor, struck down the king's officer, and destroyed the altar. Then, raising his sword, he cried out: "All who are for the Lord, follow me!" Then Mattathias and his sons and followers fled into the mountains, and hid in the sheltered caves among the hills.

When news of the Modin rebellion reached Jerusalem, the army marched forth to destroy the rebels. But each time they attacked, the

bare rocks and crevices seemed to open up, and brave Jews swarmed forth to defeat them. Then the generals realized this strange fact: no matter how courageously the Jews fought, they would not take up arms on the Sabbath, and Mattathias watched his followers being massacred. He called his people together, and said: "If we follow the examples of our brothers, all of us will perish. To keep Judaism alive, we must fight for it. Even on the Sabbath!"

Now Mattathias was very old, and the time drew near when he must die. He gathered his sons around him. "Be true to the Torah," he told them. "Fight for it, and if you must, give your lives for it. Your brother Judah has ever been strong and mighty. He shall be your captain, and lead you in the battle of our people." Then he blessed his sons, and died.

Judah, called the Maccabee, or hammerer, led his people, and they "fought with gladness the battle of the Lord."

It was not easy to deal with his band of fighters. One struck at them, and they rose again in another place. It was decided that the famed general Apollonius should lead his army against the Jews. They were a strong force, and had won many battles. Bold and powerful, Apollonius was certain of an easy victory. But the victory went to the Maccabees. Judah and his warriors defeated the Syrians, killed their general, and carried off his sword in triumph. From that time on, Judah wore the sword of Apollonius.

When Seron, commander of the Syrian army in Judea, heard of the death of his general Apollonius, he swore revenge. He resolved to wipe out the cave-dwelling rebels forever. He mustered a huge force and marched toward the hills.

Judah and his men met Seron's mammoth army at Beth-Horon. When the Judeans saw the approaching legions, they were frightened. They said: "How can we, who are so few, fight against so strong a host?" Judah answered them. "With the God of Heaven, it is all one to save by many or by few." Then they fell upon Seron's army with such ferocity that they routed them and sent the survivors scurrying back to

Jerusalem.

Now Antiochus gathered together all the armed force of his empire. Lysias, one of his nobles, was put in charge of the immense multitude: seven thousand horsemen and forty thousand foot soldiers and huge armored elephants. The slave dealers of neighboring nations made ready their silver and gold, to buy the vanquished children of Israel as slaves.

But Judah was a worthy leader of his people. Judah knew how to attack suddenly from the sheltering mountains. Every path, every cave, every gorge, was familiar to him. He knew how to take the enemy by surprise, strike hard, then vanish before reinforcements could overwhelm his small band. Not with the sword alone, but with strategy and skill, would Judah fight the last battle.

Patiently he waited. Now and then he sent soldiers to slip through Lysias' lines, to worry and confuse the enemy, to make them wonder where would the Macabees strike next?

He waited until Lysias' generals, Gordias and Nicanor, had divided their armies into two great forces. Then he attacked. The Judeans hurled themselves at one half of the Syrian army. The gigantic elephants, sheathed in armor, were roused to battle. Engaged and trumpeting, they carried death under their massive feet. Eleazar realized that unless the elephants were stopped, the Macabees were doomed. Dodging the arrows and spears, he plunged his lance under the elephant's armor, deep into its belly. The huge animal toppled over, crushing Eleazar beneath him.

While the bewildered Syrians watched this heroic act, the Macabees gathered new heart from the bravery of Judah's brother. They drove the enemy from the field.

Without pause, they sped to attack the other half of the invading army. The Syrians fled, leaving behind all their equipment and booty. The Macabees had won their fight for freedom at last.

In triumph and exaltation, Judah and his followers marched to the holy

city of Jerusalem. They found the Temple desecrated, its altar profaned.

The Macabeans began to cleanse the Temple. They scrubbed it clean, and polished it; they flung out the pagan idols; they tore down the profane altar and erected a new and beautiful one, according to the requirements of the Law.

The people rose up early on the morning of the 25th of Kislev, to offer thanks to God. But when the priests and Levites sought to kindle the Ner Tamid, the Eternal Light, they found only one small flask of pure oil with the seal of the High Priest. There was oil enough for one day, and it would be eight days before more oil could be ready. They lit the lamp, and the oil burned bright for eight full days. In joy and freedom, the people celebrated the dedication of the altar, and the rededication of their Holy Temple to the worship of God.

Each year, the feast of Dedication, is celebrated. Each day courage of the brave Macabees is recalled as candles commemorate the flask of oil that burned for eight days. Even Lord Jesus observed the feast of the dedication at Jerusalem: it was winter; and Jesus was walking in the temple in Solomon's porch (John 10: 22-23 ASV).

We call the feast of Dedication, Chanukah or feast of Lights. It begins by lighting the Menorah at sunset on the 24 Kislev (on or about 25 December). Another candle is lighted for eight days or through the 3 Tevet (on or about 1 January) ending the Holy Days celebration.