



1 MACCABEES, CHAPTER 2

Mattathias and His Sons.

- 1 In those days Mattathias, son of John, son of Simeon, a priest of the family of Joarib,**a** left Jerusalem and settled in Modein.*
- 2 He had five sons: John, who was called Gaddi;
- 3 Simon, who was called Thassi;
- 4 Judas, who was called Maccabeus;
- 5 Eleazar, who was called Avaran; and Jonathan, who was called Apphus.
- 6 When he saw the sacrileges that were being committed in Judah and in Jerusalem,
- 7 he said:

“Woe is me! Why was I born

to see the ruin of my people,

the ruin of the holy city—

To dwell there

as it was given into the hands of enemies,

the sanctuary into the hands of strangers?
- 8 Her temple has become like a man disgraced,

9 her glorious vessels carried off as spoils,
Her infants murdered in her streets,
her youths by the sword of the enemy. **b**

10 What nation has not taken its share of her realm,
and laid its hand on her spoils?

11 All her adornment has been taken away.
Once free, she has become a slave.

12 We see our sanctuary laid waste,
our beauty, our glory.
The Gentiles have defiled them!

13 Why are we still alive?"

14 Then Mattathias and his sons tore their garments, put on sackcloth, and mourned bitterly.

Pagan Worship Refused and Resisted.

15 The officers of the king in charge of enforcing the apostasy came to the city of Modein to make them sacrifice.

16 Many of Israel joined them, but Mattathias and his sons drew together.

17 Then the officers of the king addressed Mattathias: "You are a leader, an honorable and great man in this city, supported by sons and kindred.

18 Come now, be the first to obey the king's command, as all the Gentiles and Judeans and those who are left in Jerusalem have done. Then you and your sons shall be numbered among the King's Friends,* and you and your sons shall be honored with silver and gold and many gifts."

- 19** But Mattathias answered in a loud voice: “Although all the Gentiles in the king’s realm obey him, so that they forsake the religion of their ancestors and consent to the king’s orders,
- 20** yet I and my sons and my kindred will keep to the covenant of our ancestors.
- 21** Heaven forbid that we should forsake the law and the commandments.
- 22** We will not obey the words of the king by departing from our religion in the slightest degree.”
- 23** As he finished saying these words, a certain Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer sacrifice on the altar in Modein according to the king’s order.
- 24** When Mattathias saw him, he was filled with zeal; his heart was moved and his just fury was aroused; he sprang forward and killed him upon the altar.
- 25** At the same time, he also killed the messenger of the king who was forcing them to sacrifice, and he tore down the altar.
- 26** Thus he showed his zeal for the law, just as Phinehas did with Zimri, son of Salu.**c**
- 27** Then Mattathias cried out in the city, “Let everyone who is zealous for the law and who stands by the covenant follow me!”
- 28** Then he and his sons fled to the mountains, leaving behind in the city all their possessions.**d**
- 29** At that time many who sought righteousness and justice went out into the wilderness* to settle there,
- 30** they and their children, their wives and their animals, because misfortunes pressed so hard on them.
- 31** It was reported to the officers and soldiers of the king who were in the

City of David, in Jerusalem, that those who had flouted the king's order had gone out to secret refuges in the wilderness.

- 32** **e** Many hurried out after them, and having caught up with them, camped opposite and prepared to attack them on the sabbath.
- 33** The pursuers said to them, "Enough of this! Come out and obey the king's command, and you will live."
- 34** But they replied, "We will not come out, nor will we obey the king's command to profane the sabbath."
- 35** Then the enemy attacked them at once.
- 36** But they did not retaliate; they neither threw stones, nor blocked up their secret refuges.
- 37** They said, "Let us all die in innocence; heaven and earth are our witnesses that you destroy us unjustly."
- 38** So the officers and soldiers attacked them on the sabbath, and they died with their wives, their children and their animals, to the number of a thousand persons.
- 39** When Mattathias and his friends heard of it, they mourned deeply for them.
- 40** They said to one another, "If we all do as our kindred have done, and do not fight against the Gentiles for our lives and our laws, they will soon destroy us from the earth."
- 41** So on that day they came to this decision: "Let us fight against anyone who attacks us on the sabbath, so that we may not all die as our kindred died in their secret refuges."
- 42** Then they were joined by a group of Hasideans,* mighty warriors of Israel, all of them devoted to the law.
- 43** And all those who were fleeing from the persecutions joined them and supported them.
- 44**

44 They gathered an army and struck down sinners in their wrath and the lawless in their anger, and the survivors fled to the Gentiles for safety.

45 Mattathias and his friends went about and tore down the pagan altars;

46 they also forcibly circumcised any uncircumcised boys whom they found in the territory of Israel.

47 They put to flight the arrogant, and the work prospered in their hands.

48 They saved the law from the hands of the Gentiles and of the kings and did not let the sinner triumph.

Farewell of Mattathias.

49 When the time came for Mattathias to die, he said to his sons:
“Arrogance and scorn have now grown strong; it is a time of disaster and violent wrath.

50 Therefore, my children, be zealous for the law and give your lives for the covenant of our ancestors.

51 “Remember the deeds that our ancestors did in their times,
and you shall win great honor and an everlasting name.

52 Was not Abraham found faithful in trial,
and it was credited to him as righteousness?**f**

53 Joseph, when in distress, kept the commandment,
and he became master of Egypt.**g**

54 Phinehas our ancestor, for his burning zeal,
received the covenant of an everlasting priesthood.**h**

55 Joshua, for executing his commission,

became a judge in Israel. **i**

56 Caleb, for bearing witness before the assembly,
received an inheritance in the land. **j**

57 David, for his loyalty,
received as a heritage a throne of eternal kingship. **k**

58 Elijah, for his burning zeal for the law,
was taken up to heaven. **l**

59 Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael, for their faith,
were saved from the fire. **m**

60 Daniel, for his innocence,
was delivered from the mouths of lions. **n**

61 And so, consider this from generation to generation,
that none who hope in Heaven shall fail in strength.

62 Do not fear the words of sinners,
for their glory ends in corruption and worms. **o**

63 Today exalted, tomorrow not to be found,
they have returned to dust,
their schemes have perished.

64 Children! be courageous and strong in keeping the law,
for by it you shall be honored.

- 65 “Here is your brother Simeon who I know is a wise counselor; listen to him always, and he will be a father to you.
- 66 And Judas Maccabeus, a mighty warrior from his youth, shall be the leader of your army and wage the war against the nations.
- 67 Gather about you all who observe the law, and avenge your people.
- 68 Pay back the Gentiles what they deserve, and observe the precepts of the law.”
- 69 Then he blessed them, and he was gathered to his ancestors.
- 70 He died in the year one hundred and forty-six,* and was buried in the tombs of his ancestors in Modein, and all Israel mourned him greatly.

* [2:1] **Modein**: a village about twenty miles northwest of Jerusalem, the family’s ancestral home (see 2:70; 9:19).

* [2:18] **The King’s Friends**: a regular order of nobility at Hellenistic courts (see 10:65; 11:27).

* [2:29] **The wilderness**: the sparsely inhabited mountain country southward from Jerusalem and west of the Dead Sea, in the region where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.

* [2:42] **Hasideans**: in Hebrew *hasidim*, “pious ones,” a militant religious group devoted to the strict observance of the law. They first supported the Maccabean movement, but subsequently opposed it, regarding it as too political (see 7:12–18).

* [2:70] **In the year one hundred and forty-six**: 166 B.C.

a. [2:1] 1 Chr 9:10; 24:7.

b. [2:9] Lam 2:11, 21.

c. [2:26] Nm 25:6–15; Ps 106:28–31; Sir 45:23–24; 1 Mc 2:54.

d. [2:28] 2 Mc 5:27.

e. [2:32–38] 2 Mc 6:11.

f. [2:52] Gn 15:6; 22:1–18.

g. [2:53] Gn 39:7–10; 41:39–43.

- h. [2:54] Nm 25:6–15.
- i. [2:55] Jos 1, 2, 5.
- j. [2:56] Nm 13:30; 14:6–9, 24; Jos 14:14.
- k. [2:57] 2 Sm 2:4; 7:16.
- l. [2:58] 1 Kgs 19:10, 14; 2 Kgs 2:11.
- m. [2:59] Dn 3:26.
- n. [2:60] Dn 6:23.
- o. [2:62] 2 Mc 9:5–10, 28.