

**I MACCABEES 10-12**  
**JONATHAN RULES THE NATION**

<sup>1</sup>In the one hundred sixtieth year Alexander Epiphanes, son of Antiochus, landed and occupied Ptolemais. They welcomed him, and there he began to reign. <sup>2</sup>When King Demetrius heard of it, he assembled a very large army and marched out to meet him in battle. <sup>3</sup>Demetrius sent Jonathan a letter in peaceable words to honour him; <sup>4</sup>for he said to himself, "Let us act first to make peace with him before he makes peace with Alexander against us, <sup>5</sup>for he will remember all the wrongs that we did to him and to his brothers and his nation." <sup>6</sup>So Demetrius gave him authority to recruit troops, to equip them with arms, and to become his ally; and he commanded that the hostages in the citadel should be released to him.

<sup>7</sup>Then Jonathan came to Jerusalem and read the letter in the hearing of all the people and of those in the citadel. <sup>8</sup>They were greatly alarmed when they heard that the king had given him authority to recruit troops. <sup>9</sup>But those in the citadel released the hostages to Jonathan, and he returned them to their parents. <sup>10</sup>And Jonathan took up residence in Jerusalem and began to rebuild and restore the city. <sup>11</sup>He directed those who were doing the work to build the walls and encircle Mount Zion with squared stones, for better fortification; and they did so.

<sup>12</sup>Then the foreigners who were in the strongholds that Bacchides had built fled; <sup>13</sup>all of them left their places and went back to their own lands. <sup>14</sup>Only in Beth-zur did some remain who had forsaken the law and the commandments, for it served as a place of refuge.

In late 153 or early 153, Alexander (commonly known as Alexander Balas, which appears to be related to the Hebrew Ba'al: lord) landed at Ptolemais (see map page 63), claiming to be a son of Antiochus IV and the rightful heir to the Syrian throne. His challenging of his cousin, Demetrius I, had the support of King Eumenes of Pergamum (see 8:8), and of the Roman senate.

Demetrius was unpopular with the Syrian army. This made it impossible for him to move against Alexander. He made concessions to Jonathan in the hope of winning his support.

The garrison in Jerusalem felt betrayed by Demetrius and released the hostages as directed (verse 9; see 9:53).

Jonathan took up residence in Jerusalem and rebuilt the defences destroyed by Lysias in 163 (see 6:62).

The foreigners defending the garrisons set up by Bacchides throughout Judea and Samaria (see 9:50-52) abandoned their posts and returned home. The local Hellenizers remained, and the garrisons were not taken till Simon was ruler in Judea (see 11:66; 13:43; 13:49-53).

The Jewish law governing appointment to the office of high priest was respected by the Persians. Since Antiochus IV dismissed Onias III in 175, and appointed his brother Jason, it had become a political appointment. Menelaus followed Jason in 172 and was high priest till 163. Alcimus followed and held the office from 163-159. There was a vacancy from 159-152. Then in October 152 on the feast of booths, Jonathan accepted the appointment by Alexander (verse 20).

The author of 1Maccabees supports the holding of this office by the Hasmonaeans. The author of 2Maccabees, following Jason of Cyrene, saw the Hasmonaeans as usurpers, appointed, not by God, but by foreign Gentile rulers.

Though Jonathan was of a priestly family (see 2:1), he did not belong to a high priestly family. The legitimate high priest, Onias IV, was in Egypt at Leontopolis. We are not told how the Jewish population responded to Jonathan's taking on the role. After seven years during which the office was vacant, some were probably pleased, especially as Jonathan, with his brothers, had led the rebellion against the Hellenizers. Others did not accept a high priest appointed in this way.

A 'King's Friend' (verse 20), was a member of an exclusive group who helped the king govern.

<sup>15</sup>King Alexander heard of all the promises that Demetrius had sent to Jonathan, and he heard of the battles that Jonathan and his brothers had fought, of the brave deeds that they had done, and of the troubles that they had endured. <sup>16</sup>So he said, "Shall we find another such man? Come now, we will make him our friend and ally." <sup>17</sup>And he wrote a letter and sent it to him, in the following words: <sup>18</sup>"King Alexander to his brother Jonathan, greetings. <sup>19</sup>We have heard about you, that you are a mighty warrior and worthy to be our Friend. <sup>20</sup>And so we have appointed you today to be the high priest of your nation; you are to be called the king's Friend and you are to take our side and keep friendship with us." He also sent him a purple robe and a golden crown.

<sup>21</sup>So Jonathan put on the sacred vestments in the seventh month of the one hundred sixtieth year, at the festival of booths, and he recruited troops and equipped them with arms in abundance.

Demetrius increases his offer

**22**When Demetrius heard of these things he was distressed and said, **23**“What is this that we have done? Alexander has gotten ahead of us in forming a friendship with the Jews to strengthen himself. **24**I also will write them words of encouragement and promise them honour and gifts, so that I may have their help.” **25**So he sent a message to them in the following words: “King Demetrius to the nation of the Jews, greetings. **26**Since you have kept your agreement with us and have continued your friendship with us, and have not sided with our enemies, we have heard of it and rejoiced. **27**Now continue still to keep faith with us, and we will repay you with good for what you do for us. **28**We will grant you many immunities and give you gifts.

**29**“I now free you and exempt all the Jews from payment of tribute and salt tax and crown levies, **30**and instead of collecting the third of the grain and the half of the fruit of the trees that I should receive, I release them from this day and henceforth. I will not collect them from the land of Judah or from the three districts added to it from Samaria and Galilee, from this day and for all time.

**31**Jerusalem and its environs, its tithes and its revenues, shall be holy and free from tax. **32**I release also my control of the citadel in Jerusalem and give it to the high priest, so that he may station in it men of his own choice to guard it. **33**And everyone of the Jews taken as a captive from the land of Judah into any part of my kingdom, I set free without payment; and let all officials cancel also the taxes on their livestock.

**34**“All the festivals and sabbaths and new moons and appointed days, and the three days before a festival and the three after a festival – let them all be days of immunity and release for all the Jews who are in my kingdom. **35**No one shall have authority to exact anything from them or annoy any of them about any matter.

Demetrius is desperate to have Judea’s support against his rival Alexander. Notice that he addresses the nation, not Jonathan (verse 25). He wants to attract the support of the Hellenizers as well as the Hasmonaean party. He speaks of the office of high priest (verse 32), but does not take sides as to who might exercise that office.

The grain harvest was in spring, the fruit harvest in autumn (verse 30).

The three districts are Ephraim, Lydda and Ramathaim (11:34). The temple sanctuary is granted special privileges of immunity (verse 31). The citadel was the last vestige of Syrian power to disappear (see 13:49-53).

Demetrius’s offer is too generous to be believed (see verse 46).

Instead of conscripting Jews into the army, Demetrius I invites them to be paid mercenaries (verse 36).

Ptolemais (verse 39) was Alexander's headquarters (see 10:1).

In verses 44-45 Demetrius goes to extraordinary lengths to win over the Maccabees, but all to no avail. They simply did not trust him (verse 46). They favoured Alexander.

The successes of the Hasmonaeans came from their religious zeal, but also from their ambition. Perhaps more than anything it was due to rivalry between the two families who vied for control of Syria.

**<sup>36</sup>“Let Jews be enrolled in the king’s forces to the number of thirty thousand men, and let the maintenance be given them that is due to all the forces of the king. <sup>37</sup>Let some of them be stationed in the great strongholds of the king, and let some of them be put in positions of trust in the kingdom. Let their officers and leaders be of their own number, and let them live by their own laws, just as the king has commanded in the land of Judah.**

**<sup>38</sup>“As for the three districts that have been added to Judea from the country of Samaria, let them be annexed to Judea so that they may be considered to be under one ruler and obey no other authority than the high priest. <sup>39</sup>Ptolemais and the land adjoining it I have given as a gift to the sanctuary in Jerusalem, to meet the necessary expenses of the sanctuary. <sup>40</sup>I also grant fifteen thousand shekels of silver yearly out of the king’s revenues from appropriate places. <sup>41</sup>And all the additional funds that the government officials have not paid as they did in the first years, they shall give from now on for the service of the temple. <sup>42</sup>Moreover, the five thousand shekels of silver that my officials have received every year from the income of the services of the temple, this too is cancelled, because it belongs to the priests who minister there. <sup>43</sup>And all who take refuge at the temple in Jerusalem, or in any of its precincts, because they owe money to the king or are in debt, let them be released and receive back all their property in my kingdom.**

**<sup>44</sup>“Let the cost of rebuilding and restoring the structures of the sanctuary be paid from the revenues of the king. <sup>45</sup>And let the cost of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and fortifying it all around, and the cost of rebuilding the walls in Judea, also be paid from the revenues of the king.”**

**<sup>46</sup>When Jonathan and the people heard these words, they did not believe or accept them, because they remembered the great wrongs that Demetrius had done in Israel and how much he had oppressed them. <sup>47</sup>They favoured Alexander, because he had been the first to speak peaceable words to them, and they remained his allies all his days.**

**<sup>48</sup>Now King Alexander assembled a large force and encamped opposite Demetrius. <sup>49</sup>When the two kings met in battle, the army of Alexander fled. Demetrius pursued him, but Alexander's army rallied. <sup>50</sup>The battle raged fiercely until the sun set, and on that day Demetrius fell.**

**<sup>51</sup>Then Alexander sent ambassadors to Ptolemy king of Egypt with the following message: <sup>52</sup>"I have returned to my kingdom and have taken my seat on the throne of my ancestors. I have established my rule, defeated Demetrius, and gained control of our country. <sup>53</sup>I met him in battle, and he and his army were crushed by us, and we have taken our seat on the throne of his kingdom. <sup>54</sup>Now therefore let us establish friendship with one another; give me your daughter as my wife, and I will become your son-in-law, and will make gifts to you and to her in keeping with your position."**

**<sup>55</sup>Ptolemy the king replied and said, "Happy was the day on which you returned to the land of your ancestors and took your seat on the throne of their kingdom. <sup>56</sup>And now I will do for you as you wrote, but meet me at Ptolemais, so that we may see one another, and I will become your father-in-law, as you have said." <sup>57</sup>So Ptolemy set out from Egypt, he and his daughter Cleopatra, and came to Ptolemais in the one hundred sixty-second year. <sup>58</sup>King Alexander met him, and Ptolemy gave him his daughter Cleopatra in marriage, and celebrated her wedding at Ptolemais with great pomp, as kings do.**

Verses 48-50 tell the story of the battle between Alexander and Demetrius in the summer of 151. Alexander, son of Antiochus IV, was the victor. His cousin, Demetrius I, son of Antiochus IV's older brother, Seleucus IV, was killed. We are not told where the battle took place.

In verses 51-54 Alexander proposes an alliance with Ptolemy VI of Egypt to be sealed by his marrying Ptolemy's daughter. The author mentions this as it appeared to be a fulfilment of the prophecy found in Daniel 2:43-44.

Ptolemy VI had been defeated in 193 by his uncle Antiochus IV. He gave asylum to Jews who opposed Syria, and it was during his reign that a Jewish colony and temple under the high priest Onias IV was established at Leontopolis, just south of the Nile Delta.

Ptolemy agreed to the alliance. In having the marriage of his daughter, Cleopatra, take place in Ptolemais (verse 56), and not in Egypt, he was making it look as though Alexander was his protégé. The marriage took place in 151BC (the 'one hundred sixty-second year' of the reign of the Seleucids in Syria, verse 57).

Alexander and Ptolemy are both keen to have Jonathan's support.

The Hellenizing party in Judea is not happy (verse 61).

Jonathan is now not only high priest, but military and civil governor of Judea as a province within the Syrian empire (verse 65).

**<sup>59</sup>King Alexander wrote to Jonathan to come and meet him. <sup>60</sup>So he went with pomp to Ptolemais and met the two kings; he gave them and their Friends silver and gold and many gifts, and found favour with them. <sup>61</sup>A group of malcontents from Israel, renegades, gathered together against him to accuse him; but the king paid no attention to them. <sup>62</sup>The king gave orders to take off Jonathan's garments and to clothe him in purple, and they did so. <sup>63</sup>The king also seated him at his side; and he said to his officers, "Go out with him into the middle of the city and proclaim that no one is to bring charges against him about any matter, and let no one annoy him for any reason." <sup>64</sup>When his accusers saw the honour that was paid him, in accord with the proclamation, and saw him clothed in purple, they all fled. <sup>65</sup>Thus the king honoured him and enrolled him among his chief Friends, and made him general and governor of the province. <sup>66</sup>Jonathan returned to Jerusalem well pleased with his success.**

<sup>67</sup>In the one hundred sixty-fifth year Demetrius son of Demetrius came from Crete to the land of his ancestors. <sup>68</sup>When King Alexander heard of it, he was greatly distressed and returned to Antioch. <sup>69</sup>And Demetrius appointed Apollonius the governor of Coele-syria, and he assembled a large force and encamped against Jamnia. Then he sent the following message to the high priest Jonathan:

<sup>70</sup>“You are the only one to rise up against us, and I have fallen into ridicule and disgrace because of you. Why do you assume authority against us in the hill country? <sup>71</sup>If you now have confidence in your forces, come down to the plain to meet us, and let us match strength with each other there, for I have with me the power of the cities. <sup>72</sup>Ask and learn who I am and who the others are that are helping us. People will tell you that you cannot stand before us, for your ancestors were twice put to flight in their own land. <sup>73</sup>And now you will not be able to withstand my cavalry and such an army in the plain, where there is no stone or pebble, or place to flee.”

<sup>74</sup>When Jonathan heard the words of Apollonius, his spirit was aroused. He chose ten thousand men and set out from Jerusalem, and his brother Simon met him to help him. <sup>75</sup>He encamped before Joppa, but the people of the city closed its gates, for Apollonius had a garrison in Joppa. <sup>76</sup>So they fought against it, and the people of the city became afraid and opened the gates, and Jonathan gained possession of Joppa.

<sup>77</sup>When Apollonius heard of it, he mustered three thousand cavalry and a large army, and went to Azotus as though he were going farther. At the same time he advanced into the plain, for he had a large troop of cavalry and put confidence in it.

Demetrius II, son of Demetrius I, had been living in Cnidus (see 15:23) on the south-west coast of today's Turkey. He recruited mercenaries on Crete and landed in Cilicia in the spring of 147. His plan seems to have been to attack Alexander from north and south, hence Apollonius's camp in Jamnia (see map page 63).

He is unhappy with Jonathan for having sided, not with his father, Demetrius I, but with his father's rival, Alexander.

Apollonius taunts Jonathan reminding him that Judas was twice defeated: at Beth-zacharia (see 6:47) and at Alasa (see 9:6-19).

Jonathan, with the help of his brother Simon, accepts the challenge (verses 74-76).



Jonathan is honouring his alliance with Ptolemy by opposing the presence of Apollonius on the southern coast of Palestine. He is also honouring his alliance with Alexander by attempting to safeguard Alexander's southern flank. At first he appears to fall into Apollonius's trap (verses 79-80). However, by sheer determination, Jonathan manages to neutralise the effect of the cavalry and win victory.

For Azotus and Askelon see the map page 63.

Ekron is a strategic city on the road from Jerusalem. Jonathan gave it to Joppa. His area of control is expanding.

**<sup>78</sup>Jonathan pursued him to Azotus, and the armies engaged in battle.**

**<sup>79</sup>Now Apollonius had secretly left a thousand cavalry behind them.**

**<sup>80</sup>Jonathan learned that there was an ambush behind him, for they surrounded his army and shot arrows at his men from early morning until late afternoon. <sup>81</sup>But his men stood fast, as Jonathan had commanded, and the enemy's horses grew tired.**

**<sup>82</sup>Then Simon brought forward his force and engaged the phalanx in battle (for the cavalry was exhausted); they were overwhelmed by him and fled, <sup>83</sup>and the cavalry was dispersed in the plain. They fled to Azotus and entered Beth-dagon, the temple of their idol, for safety. <sup>84</sup>But Jonathan burned Azotus and the surrounding towns and plundered them; and he set fire to the temple of Dagon, and those who had taken refuge in it. <sup>85</sup>The number of those who fell by the sword, with those burned alive, came to eight thousand.**

**<sup>86</sup>Then Jonathan left there and encamped against Askalon, and the people of the city came out to meet him with great pomp.**

**<sup>87</sup>He and those with him then returned to Jerusalem with a large amount of booty. <sup>88</sup>When King Alexander heard of these things, he honoured Jonathan still more; <sup>89</sup>and he sent to him a golden buckle, such as it is the custom to give to the King's Kinsmen. He also gave him Ekron and all its environs as his possession.**

Ptolemy takes over the Mediterranean coast

**<sup>1</sup>Then the king of Egypt gathered a huge army, countless as the sand by the seashore, and many ships; and he tried to get possession of Alexander's kingdom by trickery and add it to his own kingdom. <sup>2</sup>He set out for Syria with peaceable words, and the people of the towns opened their gates to him and went to meet him, for King Alexander had commanded them to meet him, since he was Alexander's father-in-law. <sup>3</sup>But when Ptolemy entered the towns he stationed forces as a garrison in each town.**

**<sup>4</sup>When he approached Azotus, they showed him the burnt-out temple of Dagon, and Azotus and its suburbs destroyed, and the corpses lying about, and the charred bodies of those whom Jonathan had burned in the war, for they had piled them in heaps along his route. <sup>5</sup>They also told the king what Jonathan had done, to throw blame on him; but the king kept silent.**

**<sup>6</sup>Jonathan met the king at Joppa with pomp, and they greeted one another and spent the night there. <sup>7</sup>And Jonathan went with the king as far as the river called Eleutherus; then he returned to Jerusalem.**

**<sup>8</sup>So King Ptolemy gained control of the coastal cities as far as Seleucia by the sea, and he kept devising wicked designs against Alexander. <sup>9</sup>He sent envoys to King Demetrius, saying, "Come, let us make a covenant with each other, and I will give you in marriage my daughter who was Alexander's wife, and you shall reign over your father's kingdom. <sup>10</sup>I now regret that I gave him my daughter, for he has tried to kill me." <sup>11</sup>He threw blame on Alexander because he coveted his kingdom. <sup>12</sup>So he took his daughter away from him and gave her to Demetrius. He was estranged from Alexander, and their enmity became manifest.**

**<sup>13</sup>Then Ptolemy entered Antioch and put on the crown of Asia. Thus he put two crowns on his head, the crown of Egypt and that of Asia.**

To complicate matters, Egypt enters the scene. Ptolemy VI of Egypt takes advantage of Demetrius's military loss (10:77ff) and Alexander's ineffectual rule, to take over control of the Mediterranean coast of Coele-syria (Palestine and Phoenicia). Initially Alexander had no reason to suspect Ptolemy, his father-in-law (see 10:51ff).

See 10:84 for Jonathan's destruction of Azotus (see map page 63).

Jonathan marched with Ptolemy as far as the river Eleutherus, the southern border of Syria (verses 6-7; map page 81). He knew that his strength lay in playing one king off against the other, not in taking sides in military conflict.

Having consolidated his power on the coast as far as Antioch, Ptolemy changes allegiance from Alexander to Demetrius II.

With over-reaching ambition Ptolemy thought to add the crown of Asia to that of Egypt (verse 13). The historical record claims that Ptolemy was welcomed in Antioch.

Alexander had returned to Antioch from Ptolemais (see 10:68; map page 81) in 147. He went into Cilicia the following year, and in his absence Ptolemy took Antioch. It was probably in 145 that Alexander tried to win back Antioch. Alexander lost the battle and headed south and east, hoping to find protection. His death there, and the death of Ptolemy from wounds received in the battle, left a vacuum for Demetrius II to fill. His father, Demetrius I was killed in 150. The son, Demetrius II, ruled Syria from 145 to 138BC, though his rule was challenged by his rival Antiochus VI who claimed the title of king the same year (see page 79).

**<sup>14</sup>King Alexander was in Cilicia at that time, because the people of that region were in revolt. <sup>15</sup>When Alexander heard of it, he came against him in battle. Ptolemy marched out and met him with a strong force, and put him to flight. <sup>16</sup>So Alexander fled into Arabia to find protection there, and King Ptolemy was triumphant. <sup>17</sup>Zabdiel the Arab cut off the head of Alexander and sent it to Ptolemy. <sup>18</sup>But King Ptolemy died three days later, and his troops in the strongholds were killed by the inhabitants of the strongholds. <sup>19</sup>So Demetrius became king in the one hundred sixty-seventh year.**

**<sup>20</sup>At this time Jonathan assembled the Judeans to attack the citadel in Jerusalem, and he built many engines of war to use against it. <sup>21</sup>But certain renegades who hated their nation went to the king and reported to him that Jonathan was besieging the citadel. <sup>22</sup>When he heard this he was angry, and as soon as he heard it he set out and came to Ptolemais; and he wrote Jonathan not to continue the siege, but to meet him for a conference at Ptolemais as quickly as possible.**

**<sup>23</sup>When Jonathan heard this, he gave orders to continue the siege. He chose some of the elders of Israel and some of the priests, and put himself in danger, <sup>24</sup>for he went to the king at Ptolemais, taking silver and gold and clothing and numerous other gifts. And he won his favor. <sup>25</sup>Although certain renegades of his nation kept making complaints against him, <sup>26</sup>the king treated him as his predecessors had treated him; he exalted him in the presence of all his Friends. <sup>27</sup>He confirmed him in the high priesthood and in as many other honours as he had formerly had, and caused him to be reckoned among his chief Friends.**

The deaths of Alexander and Ptolemy VI gave Jonathan an opportunity to attack the citadel in Jerusalem.

We look in vain during this period for any consistent loyalty. Earlier Jonathan was against Demetrius I (see 10:67-87). Now Demetrius II needs Jonathan's support against Egypt, and Jonathan needs the support of the king of Syria, as he still had work to do against the Hellenizing Jews.

Demetrius was not happy that Jonathan was besieging the citadel in Jerusalem, but his need for Jonathan was such that he decided in his favour, and conferred on him all the positions that had been granted by earlier kings.

The concessions made by Demetrius II confirm the concessions offered by his father, Demetrius I (see 10:25-45). The original concessions were not accepted by Jonathan, as he did not trust Demetrius (see 10:46). At that stage Jonathan sided with Alexander.

This time Jonathan accepted the offer, adding Samaria (map page 63) to Judea, the coastal district and Gilead. Note that Demetrius II did not offer to remove the garrison in the citadel in Jerusalem.

Demetrius addresses his letter to Jonathan and to the nation (verse 30). This is the first example in extant literature of a letter addressed in this way. Lasthenes (verse 31) was the general of Demetrius's Cretan mercenaries (see 10:67).

In verse 34 Demetrius is allowing taxes to go to the support of the temple and the temple cult.

**<sup>28</sup>Jonathan asked the king to free Judea and the three districts of Samaria from tribute, and promised him three hundred talents. <sup>29</sup>The king consented, and wrote a letter to Jonathan about all these matters. Its contents were as follows:**

**<sup>30</sup>"King Demetrius to his brother Jonathan and to the nation of the Jews, greetings. <sup>31</sup>This copy of the letter that we wrote concerning you to our kinsman Lasthenes we have written to you also, so that you may know what it says. <sup>32</sup>King Demetrius to his father Lasthenes, greetings. <sup>33</sup>We have determined to do good to the nation of the Jews, who are our friends and fulfill their obligations to us, because of the goodwill they show toward us. <sup>34</sup>We have confirmed as their possession both the territory of Judea and the three districts of Aphairema and Lydda and Rathamin; the latter, with all the region bordering them, were added to Judea from Samaria. To all those who offer sacrifice in Jerusalem we have granted release from the royal taxes that the king formerly received from them each year, from the crops of the land and the fruit of the trees. <sup>35</sup>And the other payments henceforth due to us of the tithes, and the taxes due to us, and the salt pits and the crown taxes due to us—from all these we shall grant them release. <sup>36</sup>And not one of these grants shall be canceled from this time on forever. <sup>37</sup>Now therefore take care to make a copy of this, and let it be given to Jonathan and put up in a conspicuous place on the holy mountain."**

Jonathan comes to Demetrius's aid

<sup>38</sup>When King Demetrius saw that the land was quiet before him and that there was no opposition to him, he dismissed all his troops, all of them to their own homes, except the foreign troops that he had recruited from the islands of the nations. So all the troops who had served under his predecessors hated him.

<sup>39</sup>A certain Trypho had formerly been one of Alexander's supporters; he saw that all the troops were grumbling against Demetrius. So he went to Yamliku the Arab, who was bringing up Antiochus, the young son of Alexander, <sup>40</sup>and insistently urged him to hand Antiochus over to him, to become king in place of his father. He also reported to Yamliku what Demetrius had done and told of the hatred that the troops of Demetrius had for him; and he stayed there many days.

<sup>41</sup>Now Jonathan sent to King Demetrius the request that he remove the troops of the citadel from Jerusalem, and the troops in the strongholds; for they kept fighting against Israel.

<sup>42</sup>Demetrius sent this message back to Jonathan: "Not only will I do these things for you and your nation, but I will confer great honour on you and your nation, if I find an opportunity.

<sup>43</sup>Now then you will do well to send me men who will help me, for all my troops have revolted." <sup>44</sup>So Jonathan sent three thousand stalwart men to him at Antioch, and when they came to the king, the king rejoiced at their arrival.

<sup>45</sup>Then the people of the city assembled within the city, to the number of a hundred and twenty thousand, and they wanted to kill the king.

<sup>46</sup>But the king fled into the palace. Then the people of the city seized the main streets of the city and began to fight. <sup>47</sup>So the king called the Jews to his aid, and they all rallied around him and then spread out through the city; and they killed on that day about one hundred thousand.

<sup>48</sup>They set fire to the city and seized a large amount of spoil on that day, and saved the king.

It was Lasthenes, Demetrius's chief minister, who disbanded the army, except for the Cretan mercenaries whom he commanded. The troops were unhappy at being dismissed.

Trypho (a nickname meaning 'the magnificent') was a soldier in the army of Alexander, who appointed him governor of Antioch. Antiochus VI was Alexander's son (verse 39), grandson of Antiochus IV, and nephew of Antiochus V.

In the hour of Demetrius's need Jonathan requested the removal of the citadel garrison, which was still there in spite of earlier promises (see 10:32), and Jonathan's attempt to take it by force (see 11:20). Demetrius pretended to accede to his request, and Jonathan led his army to Antioch and saved the beleaguered Demetrius.

We are used to kings breaking their word when it suited them. As soon as Demetrius's position is secured, he withdrew his promises (verses 52-53).

When Trypho returned with the young boy Antiochus, Demetrius cannot call on Jonathan's help again, having been unfaithful to his word. Trypho claimed the throne for Antiochus VI, who in 145 was only three or four years old. He immediately confirmed Jonathan's position in Judea. Demetrius fled to Seleucia and attempted to rule Cilicia and the area along the Mediterranean coast. Hence the significance of Antiochus's appointment of Simon (verse 59). The 'ladder of Tyre' (verse 59) was a road between the sea and the cliffs, which separated the coast of Ptolemais from that of Tyre (see map page 81).

**<sup>49</sup>When the people of the city saw that the Jews had gained control of the city as they pleased, their courage failed and they cried out to the king with this entreaty: <sup>50</sup>"Grant us peace, and make the Jews stop fighting against us and our city."**

**<sup>51</sup>And they threw down their arms and made peace. So the Jews gained glory in the sight of the king and of all the people in his kingdom, and they returned to Jerusalem with a large amount of spoil.**

**<sup>52</sup>So King Demetrius sat on the throne of his kingdom, and the land was quiet before him. <sup>53</sup>But he broke his word about all that he had promised; he became estranged from Jonathan and did not repay the favours that Jonathan had done him, but treated him very harshly.**

**<sup>54</sup>After this Trypho returned, and with him the young boy Antiochus who began to reign and put on the crown. <sup>55</sup>All the troops that Demetrius had discharged gathered around him; they fought against Demetrius, and he fled and was routed. <sup>56</sup>Trypho captured the elephants and gained control of Antioch. <sup>57</sup>Then the young Antiochus wrote to Jonathan, saying, "I confirm you in the high priesthood and set you over the four districts and make you one of the king's Friends." <sup>58</sup>He also sent him gold plate and a table service, and granted him the right to drink from gold cups and dress in purple and wear a gold buckle. <sup>59</sup>He appointed Jonathan's brother Simon governor from the Ladder of Tyre to the borders of Egypt.**

**<sup>60</sup>Then Jonathan set out and travelled beyond the river and among the towns, and all the army of Syria gathered to him as allies. When he came to Askalon, the people of the city met him and paid him honour. <sup>61</sup>From there he went to Gaza, but the people of Gaza shut him out. So he besieged it and burned its suburbs with fire and plundered them. <sup>62</sup>Then the people of Gaza pleaded with Jonathan, and he made peace with them, and took the sons of their rulers as hostages and sent them to Jerusalem. He passed through the country as far as Damascus.**

**<sup>63</sup>Jonathan heard that the officers of Demetrius had come to Kadesh in Galilee with a large army, intending to remove him from office. <sup>64</sup>He went to meet them, but left his brother Simon in the country. <sup>65</sup>Simon encamped before Beth-zur and fought against it for many days and hemmed it in. <sup>66</sup>Then they asked him to grant them terms of peace, and he did so. He removed them from there, took possession of the town, and set a garrison over it.**

**<sup>67</sup>Jonathan and his army encamped by the waters of Gennesaret. Early in the morning they marched to the plain of Hazor, <sup>68</sup>and there in the plain the army of the foreigners met him; they had set an ambush against him in the mountains, but they themselves met him face to face. <sup>69</sup>Then the men in ambush emerged from their places and joined battle. <sup>70</sup>All the men with Jonathan fled; not one of them was left except Mattathias son of Absalom and Judas son of Chalphi, commanders of the forces of the army. <sup>71</sup>Jonathan tore his clothes, put dust on his head, and prayed. <sup>72</sup>Then he turned back to the battle against the enemy and routed them, and they fled. <sup>73</sup>When his men who were fleeing saw this, they returned to him and joined him in the pursuit as far as Kadesh, to their camp, and there they encamped. <sup>74</sup>As many as three thousand of the foreigners fell that day. And Jonathan returned to Jerusalem.**

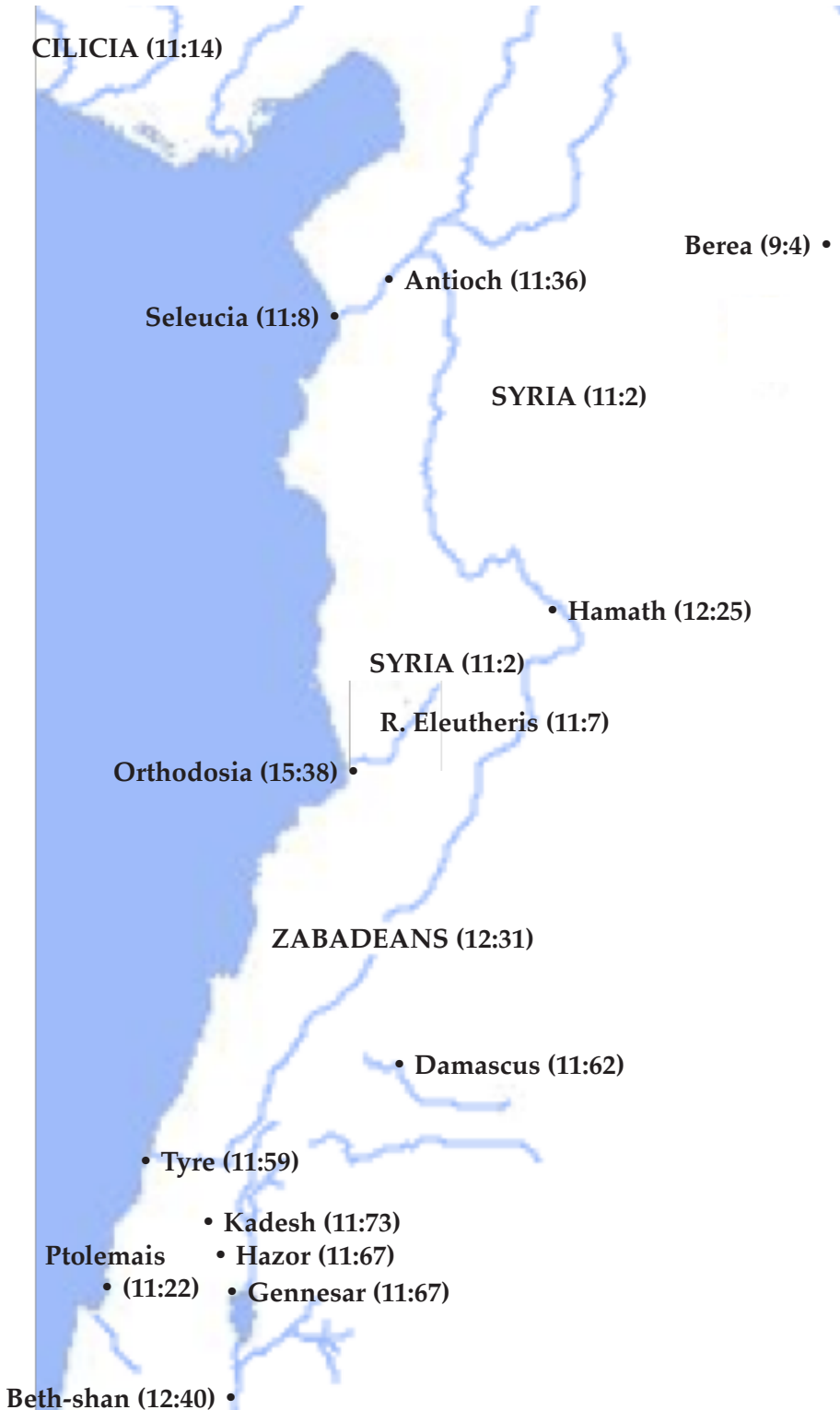
Antiochus VI was still a child, so his protector, Trypho, was effectively in command of the realm. He appears to have used Jonathan to win over Gilead (verse 60). From there he went along the coast from Askalon and Gaza (see map opposite), and north as far as Damascus.

In verses 63-66 we learn that Jonathan went to fight Demetrius in Galilee, while Simon captured Beth-zur (see 9:51; 10:14), and established there a Jewish fortress protecting Judea from the south. This was in the summer of 144,

As the author presents the battle it was a resounding victory for Jonathan, in response to his prayer.

However, Jonathan returned to Jerusalem and was prevented by Demetrius from linking up with Trypho (verse 74).





<sup>1</sup>Jonathan saw that the time was favourable for him, so he chose men and sent them to Rome to confirm and renew the friendship with them. <sup>2</sup>He also sent letters to the same effect to the Spartans and to other places. <sup>3</sup>They went to Rome and entered the senate chamber and said, "The high priest Jonathan and the Jewish nation have sent us to renew the former friendship and alliance with them." <sup>4</sup>And the Romans gave them letters to the people in every place, asking them to provide for the envoys safe conduct to Judea.

<sup>5</sup>This is a copy of the letter that Jonathan wrote to the Spartans: <sup>6</sup>"The high priest Jonathan, the senate of the nation, the priests, and the rest of the Jewish people to their brothers the Spartans, greetings. <sup>7</sup>Already in time past a letter was sent to the high priest Onias from Arius, who was king among you, stating that you are our brothers, as the appended copy shows. <sup>8</sup>Onias welcomed the envoy with honour, and received the letter, which contained a clear declaration of alliance and friendship. <sup>9</sup>Therefore, though we have no need of these things, since we have as encouragement the holy books that are in our hands, <sup>10</sup>we have undertaken to send to renew our family ties and friendship with you, so that we may not become estranged from you, for considerable time has passed since you sent your letter to us. <sup>11</sup>We therefore remember you constantly on every occasion, both at our festivals and on other appropriate days, at the sacrifices that we offer and in our prayers, as it is right and proper to remember brothers. <sup>12</sup>And we rejoice in your fame.

When Judas appealed to Rome in 161BC (see 8:17-32), Rome was pre-occupied in the west. Things had changed by 146BC, after the destruction of Carthage and Corinth.

With her rivals humbled by Rome, Sparta stood alone with some level of independence.

It appears that in 144 Jonathan ruled with the help of the senate (Sanhedrin) and priests (verse 6; see 7:33; 11:23).

Correspondence between Onias I and Arius of Sparta c. 300BC is unlikely. Josephus (*Antiquities* xii 4.10) links the correspondence with Onias III, a century later.

The 'holy books' (verse 9) are the law, the prophets and the writings (see the Preface to Ben Sira, writing c. 180BC).

For the claim of 'help that comes from Heaven' (verse 15), see 3:18-22 and 3:42 - 4:25).

The kind of speculative fiction expressed in verse 21 was typical of the time. Smaller kingdoms dreamed up all kinds of connections to help achieve patronage.

<sup>13</sup>But as for ourselves, many trials and many wars have encircled us; the kings around us have waged war against us. <sup>14</sup>We were unwilling to annoy you and our other allies and friends with these wars, <sup>15</sup>for we have the help that comes from Heaven for our aid, and so we were delivered from our enemies, and our enemies were humbled. <sup>16</sup>We therefore have chosen Numenius son of Antiochus and Antipater son of Jason, and have sent them to Rome to renew our former friendship and alliance with them. <sup>17</sup>We have commanded them to go also to you and greet you and deliver to you this letter from us concerning the renewal of our family ties. <sup>18</sup>And now please send us a reply to this."

<sup>19</sup>This is a copy of the letter that they sent to Onias: <sup>20</sup>"King Arius of the Spartans, to the high priest Onias, greetings. <sup>21</sup>A document has come to light which shows that the Spartans and the Jews are brothers and are of the family of Abraham. <sup>22</sup>Now that we have learned this, please write us concerning your welfare; <sup>23</sup>we on our part write to you that your livestock and your property belong to us, and ours belong to you. We therefore command that our envoys report to you accordingly."

<sup>24</sup>Now Jonathan heard that the commanders of Demetrius had returned, with a larger force than before, to wage war against him. <sup>25</sup>So he marched away from Jerusalem and met them in the region of Hamath, for he gave them no opportunity to invade his own country. <sup>26</sup>He sent spies to their camp, and they returned and reported to him that the enemy were being drawn up in formation to attack the Jews by night. <sup>27</sup>So when the sun had set, Jonathan commanded his troops to be alert and to keep their arms at hand so as to be ready all night for battle, and he stationed outposts around the camp. <sup>28</sup>When the enemy heard that Jonathan and his troops were prepared for battle, they were afraid and were terrified at heart; so they kindled fires in their camp and withdrew. <sup>29</sup>But Jonathan and his troops did not know it until morning, for they saw the fires burning. <sup>30</sup>Then Jonathan pursued them, but he did not overtake them, for they had crossed the Eleutherus river. <sup>31</sup>So Jonathan turned aside against the Arabs who are called Zabadeans, and he crushed them and plundered them. <sup>32</sup>Then he broke camp and went to Damascus, and marched through all that region.

<sup>33</sup>Simon also went out and marched through the country as far as Askalon and the neighbouring strongholds. He turned aside to Joppa and took it by surprise, <sup>34</sup>for he had heard that they were ready to hand over the stronghold to those whom Demetrius had sent. And he stationed a garrison there to guard it.

<sup>35</sup>When Jonathan returned he convened the elders of the people and planned with them to build strongholds in Judea, <sup>36</sup>to build the walls of Jerusalem still higher, and to erect a high barrier between the citadel and the city to separate it from the city, in order to isolate it so that its garrison could neither buy nor sell. <sup>37</sup>So they gathered together to rebuild the city; part of the wall on the valley to the east had fallen, and he repaired the section called Chaphenatha. <sup>38</sup>Simon also built Adida in the Shephelah; he fortified it and installed gates with bolts.

Hamath is on the Orontes River in Syria (see map page 81).

Neither army took the initiative. Demetrius's troops headed west to the coast. Jonathan attacked the Zabadeans who lived in the territory 46ks north-west of Damascus (verse 31; see map page 81).

Simon marched to the coast to prevent their support of Demetrius (verses 33-34).

It is apparent from verse 35 that the Hellenizers are no longer influential in Judea.

Adida is a few ks north-west of Modein (see map page 63).

Trypho has been in effective control, since Antiochus VI was only a child. Now he wants to seize the throne. He already controlled Antioch (see 11:56). Demetrius controlled the Phoenician coast, Cilicia and Mesopotamia. Jonathan controlled the coast south of the Eleutherus River.

‘Beth-shan (verse 40), on the Jordan, controlled the Valley of Jezreel, between the mountains of Samaria and Galilee (see map page 81).

Though Jonathan remained loyal to Trypho and Antiochus VI, his power stood in the way of Trypho’s ambition. He uses Jonathan’s readiness to be flattered by honour and gifts (see 10:59-66; 11:6, 23-27) to trap him.

This time he had no reason to fear Jonathan receiving support from the king of Egypt or the king of Syria. His treachery succeeded, and Jonathan is captured (verses 46-48).

The author sees the Jews as surrounded by hostile nations determined to ‘blot out the memory of them from humankind’ (verse 53).

<sup>39</sup>Trypho now attempted to become king in Asia and put on the crown, and to raise his hand against King Antiochus. <sup>40</sup>He feared that Jonathan might not permit him to do so, but might make war on him, so he kept seeking to seize and kill him, and he marched out and came to Beth-shan. <sup>41</sup>Jonathan went out to meet him with forty thousand picked warriors, and he came to Beth-shan. <sup>42</sup>When Trypho saw that he had come with a large army, he was afraid to raise his hand against him. <sup>43</sup>So he received him with honour and commended him to all his Friends, and he gave him gifts and commanded his Friends and his troops to obey him as they would himself. <sup>44</sup>Then he said to Jonathan, “Why have you put all these people to so much trouble when we are not at war? <sup>45</sup>Dismiss them now to their homes and choose for yourself a few men to stay with you, and come with me to Ptolemais. I will hand it over to you as well as the other strongholds and the remaining troops and all the officials, and will turn around and go home. For that is why I am here.”

<sup>46</sup>Jonathan trusted him and did as he said; he sent away the troops, and they returned to the land of Judah. <sup>47</sup>He kept with himself three thousand men, two thousand of whom he left in Galilee, while one thousand accompanied him. <sup>48</sup>But when Jonathan entered Ptolemais, the people of Ptolemais closed the gates and seized him, and they killed with the sword all who had entered with him.

<sup>49</sup>Then Trypho sent troops and cavalry into Galilee and the Great Plain to destroy all Jonathan’s soldiers. <sup>50</sup>But they realized that Jonathan had been seized and had perished along with his men, and they encouraged one another and kept marching in close formation, ready for battle. <sup>51</sup>When their pursuers saw that they would fight for their lives, they turned back. <sup>52</sup>So they all reached the land of Judah safely, and they mourned for Jonathan and his companions and were in great fear; and all Israel mourned deeply. <sup>53</sup>All the nations around them tried to destroy them, for they said, “They have no leader or helper. Now therefore let us make war on them and blot out the memory of them from humankind.”

