

II MACCABEES 10:9 – 13:26
JUDAS MACCABAEUS
& ANTIOCHUS V 164-161

⁹Such then was the end of Antiochus, who was called Epiphanes. ¹⁰Now we will tell what took place under Antiochus Eupator, who was the son of that ungodly man, and will give a brief summary of the principal calamities brought about by the wars. ¹¹This man, when he succeeded to the kingdom, appointed a certain Lysias to be chief minister of the empire, and Protarchos to be governor of Coele-syria and Phoenicia.

¹²The reason for the appointment of Protarchos was as follows. Ptolemy, who was called Makron, took the lead in showing justice to the Jews because of the wrong that had been done to them, and attempted to maintain peaceful relations with them. ¹³As a result he was accused before Eupator by the king's Friends. He heard himself called a traitor at every turn, because he had deserted his post in Cyprus, which Philometor had entrusted to him, and had gone over to Antiochus Epiphanes. Unable to command the respect due his office, he took poison and ended his life.

Antiochus 'Eupator' ('born of a noble sire') was probably only nine years old when he succeeded his father on the throne of Syria as Antiochus V.

This is the first time in 2Maccabees that we have heard of Lysias, the chief governor of the territories between the Euphrates and the Egyptian frontier (1Maccabees 3:32). This included Coele-syria and Phoenicia. The author of 1Maccabees correctly puts the first campaign of Lysias and the subsequent negotiations (2Maccabees 11:1-21, 27 – 12:2) during the reign of Antiochus IV (see 1Maccabees 4:26-35). 1Maccabees 3:33 and 6:17 has Lysias putting Antiochus V on the throne. This is another example of the author of 2Maccabees' lack of interest in the sequence of events.

Ptolemy Makron ('long-head') was probably the son and successor of the Ptolemy who was the local governor of Coele-syria and Phoenicia (see 2Maccabees 4:45; 8:8; and 1Maccabees 3:38). He was the Egyptian governor of Cyprus, but when Antiochus IV invaded Cyprus in 168 he switched sides. If, as is likely, he was part of the peace proposals of 164 described in 11:13-21, 27-38, this may have made him vulnerable when Antiochus V became king. In any case, we are told that he committed suicide. Protarchos replaced him.

Gorgias was governor of Idumaea. He was stationed at Jamnia on the Mediterranean coast west of Jerusalem (see map page 37). His mercenaries probably came from the same area, from the Hellenistic cities such as Joppa and Marisa (map page 37). One 'important stronghold' (verse 15) would have been Hebron, south of Beth-zur (see 1Maccabees 5:65).

See 1Maccabees 5:3-5 for another version of the Idumaeen campaign.

1Maccabees 5:18-20, 55-62 speaks of Joseph, son of Zacharias, and Azarias. Simon is in Galilee. In his attempt to leave out the details and provide a summary, the author of 2Maccabees does not succeed in giving an accurate history of events. He seems more interested in distinguishing those who are faithful (and so successful) from those who are not. He also wants to discredit Simon by linking him with the discredited Joseph and Zacchaeus. This is consistent with his opposition to the dynastic claims of the Hasmonaean family.

The numbers killed (verse 23) are clearly inflated for effect.

¹⁴When Gorgias became governor of the region, he maintained a force of mercenaries, and at every turn kept attacking the Jews. ¹⁵At the same time, the Idumeans, who had control of important strongholds, were harassing the Jews; they welcomed those who were banished from Jerusalem, and endeavored to keep up the war.

¹⁶Maccabeus and his forces, after making solemn supplication and imploring God to fight on their side, rushed to the strongholds of the Idumeans.

¹⁷Attacking them vigorously, they gained possession of the places, and beat off all who fought upon the wall, and slaughtered those whom they encountered, killing no fewer than twenty thousand.

¹⁸Nine thousand or more of the enemy took refuge in two very strong towers well equipped to withstand a siege,

¹⁹Maccabeus left Simon and Joseph, and also Zacchaeus and his troops, a force sufficient to besiege them; and he himself set off for places where he was more urgently needed. ²⁰But those with Simon, who were money-hungry, were bribed by some of those who were in the towers, and on receiving seventy thousand drachmas let some of them slip away. ²¹When word of what had happened came to Maccabeus, he gathered the leaders of the people, and accused these men of having sold their kindred for money by setting their enemies free to fight against them. ²²Then he executed these men who had turned traitor, and immediately captured the two towers. ²³Having success at arms in everything he undertook, he destroyed more than twenty thousand in the two strongholds.

²⁴Timothy (the first of that name to be defeated by the Jews) gathered a tremendous force of mercenaries and collected the cavalry from Asia in no small number. He came on, intending to take Judea by storm.

²⁵As he drew near, Maccabeus and his men sprinkled dust on their heads and girded their loins with sackcloth, in supplication to God.

²⁶Falling upon the steps before the altar, they implored him to be gracious to them and to be an enemy to their enemies and an adversary to their adversaries, as the law declares.

²⁷Rising from their prayer they took up their arms and advanced a considerable distance from the city; and when they came near the enemy they halted. ²⁸Just as dawn was breaking, the two armies joined battle, the one having as pledge of success and victory not only their valour but also their reliance on the Lord, while the other had only their own rage to lead them into battle.

²⁹When the battle became fierce, there appeared to the enemy from heaven five resplendent men on horses with golden bridles, and they were leading the Jews. ³⁰Two of them took Maccabeus between them, and shielding him with their own armour and weapons, they kept him from being wounded. They showered arrows and thunderbolts on the enemy, so that, confused and blinded, they were thrown into disorder and cut to pieces. ³¹Twenty thousand five hundred were slaughtered, besides six hundred cavalry.

It appears that there were two leaders called Timothy who attacked the Jews. One waged war in Gilead, east of the Jordan, using mercenaries from the Arab tribes (see 12:10 and 1Maccabees 5:39). That Timothy was twice defeated (1Maccabees 5:9-44). This parallels 2Maccabees 12:10-25, and is described also in 8:30-33.

The other Timothy waged war in Ammon, also east of the Jordan. That campaign ended with the capture of Jazer (see 1Maccabees 5:6-8). Here in 10:32-38, 2Maccabees describes a campaign in which Gazara (should this be the Jazer, east of the Jordan, of 1Maccabees 5:8?) is taken and Timothy meets his death.

Here again, the author of 2Maccabees underlines the piety of Judas and his followers (verses 25-26). The law (verse 26) is stated in Exodus 23:22.

The apparition of verses 29-30 recalls the apparition in the temple when Heliodorus tried to rob the treasury (see 3:25-26), and the apparition in the heavens when Antiochus IV resolved to attack Egypt (see 5:2-3).

If 'Gazara'(verse 32) is correct, the author is accrediting Judas with a victory that rightly belongs to Simon (see 1Maccabees 13:43). It is likely that it should read Jazer (see comment on the previous page). There is no other evidence that Timothy campaigned west of the Jordan.

The author of 1Maccabees does not distinguish between the Timothy on 5:6-8 and the other Timothy of 5:11-44.

³²Timothy himself fled to a stronghold called Gazara, especially well garrisoned, where Chaereas was commander. ³³Maccabaeus and his men were happy with this, and they besieged the fort for four days. ³⁴The men within, relying on the strength of the place, kept blaspheming terribly and uttering wicked words. ³⁵At dawn of the fifth day, twenty young men in the army of Maccabaeus, fired with anger because of the blasphemies, bravely stormed the wall and with savage fury cut down everyone they met. ³⁶Others who came up in the same way wheeled around against the defenders and set fire to the towers; they kindled fires and burned the blasphemers alive. Others broke open the gates and let in the rest of the force, and they occupied the city. ³⁷They killed Timothy, who was hiding in a cistern, and his brother Chaereas, and Apollophanes. ³⁸When they had accomplished these things, with hymns and thanksgivings they blessed the Lord who shows great kindness to Israel and gives them the victory.

¹Very soon after this, Lysias, the king's guardian and kinsman, who was in charge of the government, angered by what had happened, ²gathered about eighty thousand infantry and all his cavalry and came against the Jews. He intended to make the city a home for Greeks, ³and to levy tribute on the temple as he did on the sacred places of the other nations, and to put up the high priesthood for sale annually. ⁴He took no account whatever of the power of God, but was elated with his ten thousands of infantry, and his thousands of cavalry, and his eighty elephants. ⁵In-vading Judea, he approached Beth-zur, which was a fortified place about thirty ks from Jerusalem, and pressed it hard. ⁶When Maccabeus and his men got word that Lysias was besieging the strongholds, they and all the people, with lamentations and tears, prayed the Lord to send a good angel to save Israel. ⁷Maccabeus himself was the first to take up arms, and he urged the others to risk their lives with him to aid their kindred. Then they eagerly rushed off together. ⁸And there, while they were still near Jerusalem, a horseman appeared at their head, clothed in white and brandishing weapons of gold. ⁹And together they all praised the merciful God, and were strengthened in heart, ready to assail not only humans but the wildest animals or walls of iron. ¹⁰They advanced in battle order, having their heavenly ally, for the Lord had mercy on them. ¹¹They hurled themselves like lions against the enemy, and laid low eleven thousand of them and sixteen hundred cavalry, and forced all the rest to flee. ¹²Most of them got away stripped and wounded, and Lysias himself escaped by disgraceful flight.

This unsuccessful campaign of Lysias took place in late 165 and early 164 while Antiochus IV was campaigning in the east (see 1Maccabees 4:28-35). Antiochus had handed over the government to Lysias to rule in his absence.

Beth-zur is north of Hebron (see map page 37).

2Maccabees highlights the prayer that went before engaging the enemy (verse 6; see also 1Maccabees 4:30-33).

Another apparition (see commentary on 10:29-30).

Lysias, like Nicanor, is saved only by shamefully running away (see 8:34-35).

These negotiations, which appear to have taken place early in 164 (verse 21) did not bring lasting peace. The retaking of the sanctuary by Judas and the campaigns in Gilead and Galilee re-opened hostilities.

'Hebrews'(verse 13; see 7:31; 15:37) focuses on religion rather than nationality. 2Maccabees, once again, stresses divine support for the Jews.

'John'(verse 17) might be Judas's brother (see 1Maccabees 2:2). 'Absalom'(verse 17) could be the Absalom who supported the Maccabees (see 1Maccabees 11:70; 13:11).

'Dioscorus'(verse 21) is a Cretan name for the third month (June). It might, however, be meant to read 'Dios', the Macedonian name for the seventh month (October), or even 'Dystros', the Macedonian name for the eleventh month (February).

¹³As he was not without intelligence, he pondered over the defeat that had befallen him, and realized that the Hebrews were invincible because the mighty God fought on their side. So he sent to them ¹⁴and persuaded them to settle everything on just terms, promising that he would persuade the king, putting pressure on him to show friendship to them. ¹⁵Maccabeus, having regard for the common good, agreed to all that Lysias urged. For the king granted every request in behalf of the Jews which Maccabeus delivered to Lysias in writing.

¹⁶The letter written to the Jews by Lysias was to this effect: "Lysias to the people of the Jews, greetings.

¹⁷John and Absalom, who were sent by you, have delivered your signed communication and have asked about the matters indicated in it.

¹⁸I have informed the king of everything that needed to be brought before him, and he has agreed to what was possible. ¹⁹If you will maintain your goodwill toward the government, I will endeavor in the future to help promote your welfare.

²⁰And concerning such matters and their details, I have ordered these men and my representatives to confer with you. ²¹Farewell. The one hundred forty-eighth year, Dioscorinthius twenty-fourth."

²²The king's letter ran thus: "King Antiochus to his brother Lysias, greetings. ²³Now that our father has gone on to the gods, we desire that the subjects of the kingdom be undisturbed in caring for their own affairs. ²⁴We have heard that the Jews do not consent to our father's change to Greek customs, but prefer their own way of living and ask that they may be allowed to follow their own customs. ²⁵Accordingly, since we choose that this nation also should be free from disturbance, our decision is that their temple be restored to them and that they shall live according to the customs of their ancestors. ²⁶You will do well, therefore, to send word to them and give them pledges of friendship, so that they may know our policy and be of good cheer and go on happily in the conduct of their own affairs."

²⁷To the nation the king's letter was as follows: "King Antiochus to the senate of the Jews and to the other Jews, greetings. ²⁸If you are well, it is as we desire. We also are in good health. ²⁹Menelaus has informed us that you wish to return home and look after your own affairs. ³⁰Therefore those who go home by the thirtieth of Xanthicus will have our pledge of friendship and full permission ³¹for 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. ³²And I have also sent Menelaus to encourage you. ³³Farewell. The one hundred forty-eighth year, Xanthicus fifteenth."

The letter of verses 22-26 is from Antiochus V. It belongs to the situation described in 13:23 (and in 1Maccabees 6:5-63), and dates from early in 162BC.

Advised by Lysias, the king is restoring the privileges enjoyed by the Jews under Antiochus IV's predecessors.

This would have been welcomed by Judas, but not by the hellenizing Jews who wanted to be part of their surrounding culture, freed from the restrictions of the Torah.

The king's letter to the Jewish senate is dated 12th March 164BC. 'Xanthicus' is the Macedonian name for the twelfth month (March). If the letter is genuine it must have been written by Antiochus IV while campaigning in the east, and before his illness (see 9:4-10).

'Menelaus' was high priest from 172 to 163. He was leader of the hellenizers. Both the hellenizers and the Syrians were hoping to weaken Judas's position by granting an amnesty to those who lay down their arms and returned home peacefully.

This letter carries the same date as the preceding one (12th March 164). The Seleucid dating hardly fits a letter from Rome. The only way the legates could know the contents of Antiochus's letter to the Jewish senate would be if Antiochus consulted Rome before sending it. This, too, is unlikely.

The author of 2Maccabees may have heard of Titus Manlius Torquatus who was consul in 165, and was in Egypt in 165. There was a Manius Sergius who was an envoy to Antiochus IV from Rome in 164.

At this time Rome was not yet in a position to exert pressure in Syria.

Mentioning 'Timothy' here (verse 2) underlines the authors lack of interest in chronology. We have already been told of his death (see 10:37). The others are mentioned only here, unless this is the Nicanor of 1Maccabees 3:38). We have already heard of mercenaries from Cyprus (see 4:29).

³⁴The Romans also sent them a letter, which read thus: "Quintus Memmius and Titus Manius, Roman legates, to the Jewish people, greetings.

³⁵With regard to what Lysias the kinsman of the king has granted you, we also give consent. ³⁶But as to the matters that he decided are to be referred to the king, as soon as you have considered them, send some one promptly so that we may make proposals appropriate for you. For we are on our way to Antioch.

³⁷Therefore make haste and send messengers so that we may have your judgment. ³⁸Farewell. The one hundred forty-eighth year, Xanthicus fifteenth."

^{12:1}When this agreement had been reached, Lysias returned to the king, and the Jews went about their farming.

²But some of the governors in various places, Timothy and Apollonius son of Gennaeus, 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.

³The people of Joppa committed the following atrocity. 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; ⁴and 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.

⁵When Judas heard of the cruelty visited on his compatriots, he gave orders to his men ⁶and, calling upon God, the righteous judge, attacked the murderers of his kindred. He set fire to the harbour by night, burned the boats, and massacred those who had taken refuge there. ⁷Then, because the city's gates were closed, he withdrew, intending to come again and root out the whole community of Joppa. ⁸But learning that the people in Jamnia meant in the same way to wipe out the Jews who were living among them, ⁹he 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.

Joppa was a port town on the Mediterranean coast. In pre-exilic times it was part of Philistia. Jamnia was about 17ks south of Joppa and a few ks inland (see map page 35). At this time neither were controlled by the Jewish freedom fighters.

1Maccabees 5:24-54 records another version of this campaign, which took place in 163BC. The author of 2Maccabees has included this episode from another context. 10:37 has already recorded the death of Timothy, and the location is in northern Transjordan, nowhere near Jamnia.

1Maccabees 5:39 speaks of Timothy's Arab mercenaries.

It is clear from verses 14-16 that the author's interest is in the religious dimension of the campaign.

¹⁰When they had gone more than a mile from there, on their march against Timothy, at least five thousand Arabs with five hundred cavalry attacked them. ¹¹After a hard fight, Judas and his companions, with God's help, were victorious. The defeated nomads begged Judas to grant them pledges of friendship, promising to give him livestock and to help his people in all other ways. ¹²Judas, realizing that they might indeed be useful in many ways, agreed to make peace with them; and after receiving assurances from him they went back to their tents.

¹³He also attacked a certain town that was strongly fortified with earthworks and walls, and inhabited by all sorts of Gentiles. Its name was Caspin. ¹⁴The defenders, relying on the strength of the walls and on their supply of provisions, behaved most insolently toward Judas and his men, railing at them and even blaspheming and saying unholy things. ¹⁵But Judas and his men, calling upon the great Sovereign of the world, who without battering rams or engines of war overthrew Jericho in the days of Joshua, rushed furiously upon the walls. ¹⁶They took the town by the will of God, and slaughtered untold numbers, so that the adjoining lake, a quarter of a mile wide, appeared to be running over with blood.

¹⁷Advancing about one hundred and sixty kilometres from there, they came to Charax, to the Jews who are called Toubiani. ¹⁸They did not find Timothy in that region, for he had by then left the district without accomplishing anything, though in one place he had left a very strong garrison. ¹⁹Dositheus and Sosipater, who were captains under Maccabeus, marched out and destroyed those whom Timothy had left in the stronghold, more than ten thousand men. ²⁰Maccabeus arranged his army in divisions, set men in command of the divisions, and hurried after Timothy, who had with him one hundred twenty thousand infantry and two thousand five hundred cavalry. ²¹When Timothy learned of the approach of Judas, he sent off the women and the children and also the baggage to a place called Carnaim; for that place was hard to besiege and difficult of access because of the narrowness of all the approaches. ²²But when Judas's first division appeared, terror and fear came over the enemy at the manifestation to them of him who sees all things. In their flight they rushed headlong in every direction, so that often they were injured by their own men and pierced by the points of their own swords. ²³Judas pressed the pursuit with the utmost vigour, putting the sinners to the sword, and destroyed as many as thirty thousand.

²⁴Timothy himself fell into the hands of Dositheus and Sosipater and their men. With great guile he begged them to let him go in safety, because he held the parents of most of them, and the brothers of some, to whom no consideration would be shown. ²⁵And when with many words he had confirmed his solemn promise to restore them unharmed, they let him go, for the sake of saving their kindred.

The author continues his account of the campaign in Gilead in northern Transjordan (see 1Maccabees 5:24-44 and map page 37).

Verses 20-25 describe a battle prior to the capture of Carnaim. 1Maccabees 5:37-43 sets this battle across a ravine at Raphon, just north of Carnaim.

The Yarmuk and its tributaries made the approaches to Carnaim difficult.

Another apparition in the heavens? (verse 22; see 10:29-30).

‘Atargatis’(verse 26) was a Syrian goddess, consort of the Syrian god, Haddad. She personified the fertility associated with water.

Scythopolis was the Greek name for Bethshan, on the east of the Jordan across from Ephron (see map page 37).

The ‘festival of weeks’(verse 31), also called the pilgrimage festival of harvest (Exodus 23:16) marked the beginning of the wheat harvest, seven weeks (fifty days) after Passover (hence the Greek name ‘Pentecost’(see verse 32).

²⁶Then Judas marched against Carnaim and the temple of Atargatis, and slaughtered twenty-five thousand people. ²⁷After the rout and destruction of these, he marched also against Ephron, a fortified town where Lysias lived with multitudes of people of all nationalities. Stalwart young men took their stand before the walls and made a vigorous defence; and great stores of war engines and missiles were there.

²⁸But the Jews called upon the Sovereign who with power shatters the might of his enemies, and they got the town into their hands, and killed as many as twenty-five thousand of those who were in it.

²⁹Setting out from there, they hastened to Scythopolis, which is seventy-five miles from Jerusalem.

³⁰But 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, ³¹they 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.

³²After the festival called Pentecost, they hurried against Gorgias, the governor of Idumea, ³³who came out with three thousand infantry and four hundred cavalry. ³⁴When they joined battle, it happened that a few of the Jews fell. ³⁵But 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.

³⁶As 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. ³⁷In 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.

³⁸Then Judas assembled his army and went to the city of Adullam. As the seventh day was coming on, they purified themselves according to the custom, and kept the sabbath there.

Gorgias has already been mentioned (see 8:9; 10:14). This is the first mention of Idumea in 2Maccabees. It was the hellenistic name for the region to the south of Judea. It was occupied by the descendants of the ancient Edomites who were driven west by the Nabataean Arabs. Its main centre was Hebron, and, at this time in stretched into the southern part of ancient Philistia.

On Dositheus see 12:19 and 24.

Thrace is east of the Bosphorus. On Marisa see 1Maccabees 5:66 (see map page 37).

'Esdris' (verse 36) is mentioned only here.

Once again the author wants to highlight the piety of Judas and his men (verse 37).

Adullam is 15ks north-east of Marisa.

They purified themselves, having been in contact with blood and the dead (see Numbers 31:13-30).

The author (drawing perhaps on the original history of Jason of Cyrene) finds a religious explanation for the deaths of ‘few Jews’ who fell in battle (see verse 34). They were wearing ‘sacred tokens of the idols’ (verse 40). The law forbade worship of foreign gods (see Deuteronomy 7:25-26).

However, they had died fighting to replace Syrian domination with the kingdom God was raising up, the kingdom of independent Judea. Judas is portrayed by the author of 2Maccabees as believing that they should, therefore, be part of the people God would raise up to share ‘the splendid reward that is laid up for those who sleep in godliness’ (verse 45). This would require that they be forgiven for their sin. Hence the collection for a reparation sacrifice to be offered in the temple. A more likely reason for the sacrifice is so that the army would not be punished because of the sins of the fighters who died.

This links back to the belief expressed earlier in the account of the heroic deaths of the mother and her children (chapter 7; see also Daniel 12:1-3).

³⁹On 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. ⁴⁰Under 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. ⁴¹So they all blessed the ways of the Lord, the righteous judge, who reveals the things that are hidden; ⁴²and 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. ⁴³He 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 honourably, taking account of the resurrection. ⁴⁴For 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. ⁴⁵But 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.

¹In the one hundred forty-ninth year word came to Judas and his men that Antiochus Eupator was coming with a great army against Judea, ²and 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.

³Menelaus 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. ⁴But 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, he ordered them to take him to Beroea and to put him to death by the method that is customary in that place. ⁵For 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. ⁶There they all push to destruction anyone guilty of sacrilege or notorious for other crimes. ⁷By such a fate it came about that Menelaus the lawbreaker died, without even burial in the earth. ⁸And 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.

It is the year 163 (one hundred forty ninth year of the the Seleucid rule in Syria). For this campaign see 1Maccabees 6:18-63. Antiochus V is only about twelve years old, and still under the guardianship of Lysias (verse 2).

The scythes on the chariot wheels (verse 2) prevented foot soldiers from getting close to the chariot.

Menelaus had obtained the position of high priest by bribery. He was a leader of the hellenizing Jews and held the office from 172 to 163,

Apparently, Lysias saw that the policy of using force in an attempt to annihilate Judas and his followers was not working, so he had Menelaus assassinated at Beroea (see map page 81).

The Jews were without a high priest from 163-161.

1Maccabees does not describe Judas's preparation to meet Antiochus V and Lysias.

Typically 2Maccabees highlights prayer (verses 10-12; compare 1Maccabees 3:44-47).

This is the only time Modein (verse 14) is mentioned in 2Maccabees. In 1Maccabees it is where Mattathias and his sons went when they left Jerusalem and began their revolt (see 1Maccabees 2:1). It lay on the edge of the plain of Ajalon, the route that an army heading south down to coastal plain would use to approach Jerusalem.

Stabbing the elephant reminds us of the heroic action of Judas's brother, Eleazar, recorded in 1Maccabees 6:43-46.

⁹The king with barbarous arrogance was coming to show the Jews things far worse than those that had been done in his father's time. ¹⁰But 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, ¹¹and not to let the people who had just begun to revive fall into the hands of the blasphemous Gentiles. ¹²When 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.

¹³After 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. ¹⁴So, 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. ¹⁵He 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. ¹⁶In the end they filled the camp with terror and confusion and withdrew in triumph. ¹⁷This happened, just as day was dawning, because the Lord's help protected him.

A treaty between Antiochus V and Judas

¹⁸The king, having had a taste of the daring of the Jews, tried stratagems in attacking their positions. ¹⁹He advanced against Beth-zur, a strong fortress of the Jews, was turned back, attacked again, and was defeated. ²⁰Judas sent in to the garrison whatever was necessary. ²¹But Rhodocus, a man from the ranks of the Jews, gave secret information to the enemy; he was sought for, caught, and killed. ²²The king negotiated a second time with the people in Beth-zur, gave pledges, received theirs, withdrew, attacked Judas and his men, was defeated.

²³He got word that Philip, who had been left in charge of the government in Antioch, had revolted. In dismay, he called in the Jews, agreed to their terms, and swore to observe all their rights, and after this settlement offered a sacrifice, honoured the sanctuary and its precincts, ²⁴and received Maccabeus graciously. He left Hegemonides as governor from Ptolemais to Gerar, ²⁵and 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. ²⁶Lysias took the public platform, made the best possible defence, convinced them, appeased them, gained their goodwill, and set out for Antioch. This is how the king's attack and withdrawal turned out.

This is the same campaign recorded in 1Maccabees 6:47-50, 55-63.

Thus is the only mention of Rhodocus. The name appears to be Persian.

The letter to Lysias from Antiochus V, quoted earlier (see 11:22-26) ratifies the terms of this treaty.

Gerar was near Pelusium on the Egyptian border. Hegemonides is mentioned only here.