

The Cleansing of the Temple

1 Maccabees 3 – 4

2 Maccabees 8

2 Maccabees 10:1-8

by Don Falkos

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After the death of Mattathias, his son Judas took over leadership. Through decades of diligence this family earned legitimacy as a new political power, which took on the family name – The Hasmonean Dynasty.

Judas was a warrior, known as Judas Maccabeus, meaning Judas the Hammer. The rebellion he led became known as the Maccabean Revolt. Judas was ruthless toward those who attacked his people as well as toward fellow Jews who disobeyed God's Law. He encouraged his forces to trust in God and often took them into battle against armies many times their number. Yet time and time again they were victorious.

King Antiochus commissioned Lysias to completely destroy the Jews of Judea. He made multiple attempts but was always cunningly outwitted by Judas Maccabeus. On one occasion, when Lysias left camp with a small force to attack Judas, Judas got wind of the plan. He went with his entire army and wiped out everyone Lysias had left behind. Meanwhile, Lysias found no one in the Judean camp. He went home to Antioch in disgrace.

Having established himself as a force to reckon with, Judas went to Jerusalem. He set up defenses and organized the cleansing and restoration of the Temple of the Lord. For three years the Temple had been unused having been defiled by pagan sacrifices of unclean animals. With the Temple once again a proper place for worship, a sacrifice was made and an eight-day festival ensued – a celebration that was to be repeated every year in memory of the rededication of God's Temple. This annual celebration became known as Hanukkah.