

The Death of Judas Maccabeus

1 Maccabees 8:1 – 9:22

by Don Falkos

copyright 2018 Donald Falkos Storytelling LLC

Judas Maccabeus heard that the Romans were a very strong nation; that they were friendly and open to alliances; that they were kind and supportive of those who came to them asking for help. He was told their leadership was congenial and suffered no infighting or jealousy whatsoever.

This image of Rome did not exactly jibe with reality. The Romans were ruthless in war, and instead of cultivating peace on behalf of the peoples they conquered they imposed peace under their own rules, which included vicious retribution for any infringement. Their leaders were constantly battling each other for power, and assassination for political gain was a common occurrence.

Nevertheless, Judas sought and won an alliance with Rome. The terms of the agreement were hammered out by his representatives and inscribed on two bronze tablets.

King Demetrius sent Bacchides with half his army to replace the defeated Nicanor in the struggle against the Maccabean Revolt. The force Bacchides led against them was so large, three quarters of the Judean army deserted the night before battle. Still, Judas said to his men, "We will never run from a fight. If it's our time to die, let's die bravely and with honor."

Both armies sounded the attack. The Judeans were grossly outnumbered. They comported themselves well and kept up the fight all day long. But the ultimate outcome was inevitable. When Judas Maccabeus fell, all his surviving men fled. Judea had lost a brave warrior, a great man.