

# Source Texts for the Defiling of the Temple

## Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* Book 12, Chapter 5, secs. 3-5

3. King Antiochus returning out of Egypt for fear of the Romans, made an expedition against the city Jerusalem; and when he was there, in the hundred and forty-third year of the kingdom of the Seleucidse, he took the city without fighting, those of his own party opening the gates to him. And when he had gotten possession of Jerusalem, he slew many of the opposite party; and when he had plundered it of a great deal of money, he returned to Antioch.

4. Now it came to pass, after two years, in the hundred forty and fifth year, on the twenty-fifth day of that month which is by us called Chasleu, and by the Macedonians Apelleus, in the hundred and fifty-third olympiad, that the king came up to Jerusalem, and, pretending peace, he got possession of the city by treachery; at which time he spared not so much as those that admitted him into it, on account of the riches that lay in the temple; but, led by his covetous inclination, [for he saw there was in it a great deal of gold, and many ornaments that had been dedicated to it of very great value,] and in order to plunder its wealth, he ventured to break the league he had made. So he left the temple bare, and took away the golden candlesticks, and the golden altar [of incense], and table [of shew-bread], and the altar [of burnt-offering]; and did not abstain from even the veils, which were made of fine linen and scarlet. He also emptied it of its secret treasures, and left nothing at all remaining; and by this means cast the Jews into great lamentation, for he forbade them to offer those daily sacrifices which they used to offer to God, according to the law. And when he had pillaged the whole city, some of the inhabitants he slew, and some he carried captive, together with their wives and children, so that the multitude of those captives that were taken alive amounted to about ten thousand. He also burnt down the finest buildings; and when he had overthrown the city walls, he built a citadel in the lower part of the city, for the place was high, and overlooked the temple; on which account he fortified it with high walls and towers, and put into it a garrison of Macedonians. However, in that citadel dwelt the

impious and wicked part of the [Jewish] multitude, from whom it proved that the citizens suffered many and sore calamities. And when the king had built an idol altar upon God's altar, he slew swine upon it, and so offered a sacrifice neither according to the law, nor the Jewish religious worship in that country. He also compelled them to forsake the worship which they paid their own God, and to adore those whom he took to be gods; and made them build temples, and raise idol altars in every city and village, and offer swine upon them every day. He also commanded them not to circumcise their sons, and threatened to punish any that should be found to have transgressed his injunction. He also appointed overseers, who should compel them to do what he commanded. And indeed many Jews there were who complied with the king's commands, either voluntarily, or out of fear of the penalty that was denounced. But the best men, and those of the noblest souls, did not regard him, but did pay a greater respect to the customs of their country than concern as to the punishment which he threatened to the disobedient; on which account they every day underwent great miseries and bitter torments; for they were whipped with rods, and their bodies were torn to pieces, and were crucified, while they were still alive, and breathed. They also strangled those women and their sons whom they had circumcised, as the king had appointed, hanging their sons about their necks as they were upon the crosses. And if there were any sacred book of the law found, it was destroyed, and those with whom they were found miserably perished also.

5. When the Samaritans saw the Jews under these sufferings, they no longer confessed that they were of their kindred, nor that the temple on Mount Gerizim belonged to Almighty God. This was according to their nature, as we have already shown.

# 1 Maccabees

## Alexander the Great

**1** After Alexander son of Philip, the Macedo'nian, who came from the land of Kittim, had defeated<sup>[a]</sup> Darius, king of the Persians and the Medes, he succeeded him as king. (He had previously become king of Greece.) **2** He fought many battles, conquered strongholds, and put to death the kings of the earth. **3** He advanced to the ends of the earth, and plundered many nations. When the earth became quiet before him, he was exalted, and his heart was lifted up. **4** He gathered a very strong army and ruled over countries, nations, and princes, and they became tributary to him.

**5** After this he fell sick and perceived that he was dying. **6** So he summoned his most honored officers, who had been brought up with him from youth, and divided his kingdom among them while he was still alive. **7** And after Alexander had reigned twelve years, he died.

**8** Then his officers began to rule, each in his own place. **9** They all put on crowns after his death, and so did their sons after them for many years; and they caused many evils on the earth.

## Antiochus Epiphanes and Renegade Jews

**10** From them came forth a **sinful root**, Anti'ochus Epiph'anes, son of Anti'ochus the king; he had been a hostage in Rome. He began to reign in the one hundred and thirty-seventh year of the kingdom of the Greeks.

**11** In those days lawless men came forth from Israel, and misled many, saying, "Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles round about us, for since we separated from them many evils have come upon us." **12** This proposal pleased them, **13** and some of the people eagerly went to the king. **He authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles.** **14** So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom, **15** and **removed the marks of circumcision**, and abandoned the holy covenant. They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil.

## Antiochus in Egypt

<sup>16</sup>When Anti'ochus saw that his kingdom was established, he determined to become king of the land of Egypt, that he might reign over both kingdoms. <sup>17</sup>So he invaded Egypt with a strong force, with chariots and elephants and cavalry and with a large fleet. <sup>18</sup>He engaged Ptol'emy king of Egypt in battle, and Ptol'emy turned and fled before him, and many were wounded and fell. <sup>19</sup>And they captured the fortified cities in the land of Egypt, and he plundered the land of Egypt.

## Persecution of the Jews

<sup>20</sup>After subduing Egypt, Anti'ochus returned in the one hundred and forty-third year. He went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force. <sup>21</sup>He arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils. <sup>22</sup>He took also the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off. <sup>23</sup>He took the silver and the gold, and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasures which he found. <sup>24</sup>Taking them all, he departed to his own land.

He committed deeds of murder,  
and spoke with great arrogance.

<sup>25</sup>Israel mourned deeply in every community,

<sup>26</sup> rulers and elders groaned,  
maidens and young men became faint,  
the beauty of the women faded.

<sup>27</sup>Every bridegroom took up the lament;  
she who sat in the bridal chamber was mourning.

<sup>28</sup>Even the land shook for its inhabitants,  
and all the house of Jacob was clothed with shame.

## The Occupation of Jerusalem

<sup>29</sup>Two years later the king sent to the cities of Judah a chief collector of tribute, and he came to Jerusalem with a large force. <sup>30</sup>Deceitfully he spoke peaceable words to them, and they believed him; but he suddenly fell upon the city, dealt it a severe blow, and destroyed many people of Israel. <sup>31</sup>He plundered the city, burned it with fire, and tore

down its houses and its surrounding walls. <sup>32</sup> And they took captive the women and children, and seized the cattle. <sup>33</sup> Then they fortified the city of David with a great strong wall and strong towers, and it became their citadel. <sup>34</sup> And they stationed there a sinful people, lawless men. These strengthened their position; <sup>35</sup> they stored up arms and food, and collecting the spoils of Jerusalem they stored them there, and became a great snare.

<sup>36</sup> It became an ambush against the sanctuary,  
an evil adversary of Israel continually.

<sup>37</sup> On every side of the sanctuary they shed innocent blood;  
they even defiled the sanctuary.

<sup>38</sup> Because of them the residents of Jerusalem fled;  
she became a dwelling of strangers;  
she became strange to her offspring,  
and her children forsook her.

<sup>39</sup> Her sanctuary became desolate as a desert;  
her feasts were turned into mourning,  
her sabbaths into a reproach,  
her honor into contempt.

<sup>40</sup> Her dishonor now grew as great as her glory;  
her exaltation was turned into mourning.

## Installation of Gentile Cults

<sup>41</sup> Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, <sup>42</sup> and that each should give up his customs. <sup>43</sup> All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the sabbath. <sup>44</sup> And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, <sup>45</sup> to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane sabbaths and feasts, <sup>46</sup> to defile the sanctuary and the priests, <sup>47</sup> to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and unclean animals, <sup>48</sup> and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, <sup>49</sup> so that they should forget the law and change all the ordinances. <sup>50</sup> "And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die."

<sup>51</sup> In such words he wrote to his whole kingdom. And he appointed inspectors over all the people and commanded the cities of Judah to offer sacrifice, city by city. <sup>52</sup> Many of

the people, every one who forsook the law, joined them, and they did evil in the land; <sup>53</sup> they drove Israel into hiding in every place of refuge they had.

<sup>54</sup> Now on the fifteenth day of Chislew, in the one hundred and forty-fifth year, <sup>a</sup> they erected a **desolating sacrilege [or “abomination of desolation”]** upon the altar of burnt offering. They also built altars in the surrounding cities of Judah, <sup>55</sup> and burned incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets. <sup>56</sup> *The books of the law which they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire.* <sup>57</sup> *Where the book of the covenant was found in the possession of any one, or if any one adhered to the law, the decree of the king condemned him to death.* <sup>58</sup> *They kept using violence against Israel, against those found month after month in the cities.* <sup>59</sup> *And on the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar which was upon the altar of burnt offering.* <sup>60</sup> *According to the decree, they put to death the women who had their children circumcised,* <sup>61</sup> *and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers’ necks.*

<sup>62</sup> But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. <sup>63</sup> They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die. <sup>64</sup> And very great wrath came upon Israel.

## Mattathias and His Sons

**2** In those days Mattathi’as the son of John, son of Sim’eon, a priest of the sons of Jo’arib, moved from Jerusalem and settled in Mo’de-in. <sup>2</sup> He had five sons, John surnamed Gaddi, <sup>3</sup> Simon called Thassi, <sup>4</sup> **Judas called Maccabe’us**, <sup>5</sup> Elea’zar called Av’aran, and Jonathan called Apphus. <sup>6</sup> He saw the blasphemies being committed in Judah and Jerusalem, <sup>7</sup> and said,

“Alas! Why was I born to see this,  
the ruin of my people, the ruin of the holy city,  
and to dwell there when it was given over to the enemy,  
the **sanctuary given over to aliens?**

<sup>8</sup> Her temple has become like a man without honor;  
<sup>9</sup> her glorious vessels have been carried into captivity.  
Her babes have been killed in her streets,  
her youths by the sword of the foe.

<sup>10</sup>What nation has not inherited her palaces  
and has not seized her spoils?

<sup>11</sup>All her adornment has been taken away;  
no longer free, she has become a slave.

<sup>12</sup>And behold, our holy place, our beauty,  
and our glory have been laid waste;  
the Gentiles have profaned it.

<sup>13</sup>Why should we live any longer?"

<sup>14</sup>And Mattathi'as and his sons *rent their clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourned greatly.*

## Pagan Worship Refused

<sup>15</sup>Then the king's officers who were enforcing the apostasy came to the city of Mo'de-in to make them offer sacrifice. <sup>16</sup>Many from Israel came to them; and Mattathi'as and his sons were assembled. <sup>17</sup>Then the king's officers spoke to Mattathi'as as follows: "You are a leader, honored and great in this city, and supported by sons and brothers. <sup>18</sup>Now be the first to come and do what the king commands, as all the Gentiles and the men of Judah and those that are left in Jerusalem have done. Then you and your sons will be numbered among the friends of the king, and you and your sons will be honored with silver and gold and many gifts."

<sup>19</sup>But Mattathi'as answered and said in a loud voice: "Even if all the nations that live under the rule of the king obey him, and have chosen to do his commandments, departing each one from the religion of his fathers, <sup>20</sup>yet I and my sons and my brothers will live by the covenant of our fathers. <sup>21</sup>Far be it from us to desert the law and the ordinances. <sup>22</sup>We will not obey the king's words by turning aside from our religion to the right hand or to the left."

<sup>23</sup>When he had finished speaking these words, a Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer sacrifice upon the altar in Mo'de-in, according to the king's command. <sup>24</sup>When Mattathi'as saw it, he burned with zeal and his heart was stirred. He gave vent to righteous anger; he ran and killed him upon the altar. <sup>25</sup>At the same time he killed the king's officer who was forcing them to sacrifice, and he tore down the altar. <sup>26</sup>Thus he burned with zeal for the law, as Phin'ehas did against Zimri the son of Salu.

<sup>27</sup>Then Mattathi'as cried out in the city with a loud voice, saying: "Let every one who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me!" <sup>28</sup>And he and his sons fled to the hills and left all that they had in the city.

<sup>29</sup>Then many who were seeking righteousness and justice went down to the wilderness to dwell there, <sup>30</sup>they, their sons, their wives, and their cattle, because evils pressed heavily upon them. <sup>31</sup>And it was reported to the king's officers, and to the troops in Jerusalem the city of David, that men who had rejected the king's command had gone down to the hiding places in the wilderness. <sup>32</sup>Many pursued them, and overtook them; they encamped opposite them and prepared for battle against them on the sabbath day. <sup>33</sup>And they said to them, "Enough of this! Come out and do what the king commands, and you will live." <sup>34</sup>But they said, "We will not come out, nor will we do what the king commands and so profane the sabbath day." <sup>35</sup>Then the enemy hastened to attack them. <sup>36</sup>But they did not answer them or hurl a stone at them or block up their hiding places, <sup>37</sup>for they said, "Let us all die in our innocence; heaven and earth testify for us that you are killing us unjustly." <sup>38</sup>So they attacked them on the sabbath, and they died, with their wives and children and cattle, to the number of a thousand persons.

<sup>39</sup>When Mattathi'as and his friends learned of it, they mourned for them deeply. <sup>40</sup>And each said to his neighbor: "If we all do as our brethren have done and refuse to fight with the Gentiles for our lives and our ordinances, they will quickly destroy us from the earth." <sup>41</sup>So they made this decision that day: "Let us fight against every man who comes to attack us on the sabbath day; let us not all die as our brethren died in their hiding places."

## Counter-Attack

<sup>42</sup>Then there united with them a company of *Haside'ans*, mighty warriors of Israel, every one who offered himself willingly for the law. <sup>43</sup>And all who became fugitives to escape their troubles joined them and reinforced them. <sup>44</sup>They organized an army, and struck down sinners in their anger and lawless men in their wrath; the survivors fled to the Gentiles for safety. <sup>45</sup>And Mattathi'as and his friends went about and tore down the altars; <sup>46</sup>they forcibly circumcised all the uncircumcised boys that they found within the borders of Israel. <sup>47</sup>They hunted down the arrogant men, and the work prospered in their hands. <sup>48</sup>They rescued the law out of the hands of the Gentiles and kings, and they never let the sinner gain the upper hand.



## The Last Words of Mattathias

<sup>49</sup>Now the days drew near for Mattathi'as to die, and he said to his sons: "Arrogance and reproach have now become strong; it is a time of ruin and furious anger. <sup>50</sup>*Now, my children, show zeal for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of our fathers.*

<sup>51</sup>"Remember the deeds of the fathers, which they did in their generations; and receive great honor and an everlasting name. <sup>52</sup>Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness? <sup>53</sup>Joseph in the time of his distress kept the commandment, and became lord of Egypt. <sup>54</sup>Phin'ehas our father, because he was deeply zealous, received the covenant of everlasting priesthood. <sup>55</sup>Joshua, because he fulfilled the command, became a judge in Israel. <sup>56</sup>Caleb, because he testified in the assembly, received an inheritance in the land. <sup>57</sup>David, because he was merciful, inherited the throne of the kingdom for ever. <sup>58</sup>Eli'jah because of great zeal for the law was taken up into heaven. <sup>59</sup>Hanani'ah, Azari'ah, and Mish'a-el believed and were saved from the flame. <sup>60</sup>Daniel because of his innocence was delivered from the mouth of the lions.

<sup>61</sup>"And so observe, from generation to generation, that none who put their trust in him will lack strength. <sup>62</sup>Do not fear the words of a sinner, for his splendor will turn into dung and worms. <sup>63</sup>Today he will be exalted, but tomorrow he will not be found, because he has returned to the dust, and his plans will perish. <sup>64</sup>My children, be courageous and grow strong in the law, for by it you will gain honor.

<sup>65</sup>"Now behold, I know that Sim'eon your brother is wise in counsel; always listen to him; he shall be your father. <sup>66</sup>Judas Maccabe'us has been a mighty warrior from his youth; he shall command the army for you and fight the battle against the peoples. <sup>67</sup>You shall rally about you all who observe the law, and avenge the wrong done to your people. <sup>68</sup>Pay back the Gentiles in full, and heed what the law commands."

<sup>69</sup>Then he blessed them, and was gathered to his fathers. <sup>70</sup>He died in the one hundred and forty-sixth year and was buried in the tomb of his fathers at Mo'de-in. And all Israel mourned for him with great lamentation.