



SESSION 1: BACKGROUND - READINGS

1 Maccabees 2:17-28

“Then those from the king spoke to Mattathias, saying, “You are a great and glorious leader in this city and supported by your sons and brothers. Now come, be the first to follow the decree of the king, as all the Gentiles and the men of Judah have done, and those who remain in Jerusalem; and you and your sons will be among the king’s friends, and you and your sons will be honored with silver and gold and many rewards.”

Then Mattathias answered, speaking with a loud voice, “Though all the Gentiles in the house of the kingdom of the king obey him, and each turns from the worship of their fathers and chooses to follow his commands, my sons and my brothers and I will continue in the covenant of our fathers. Far be it from us to forsake the law and the ordinances. We will not obey the words of the king and turn aside from our worship to the right or to the left.”

When he finished saying these words, a Jew came forward in the sight of everyone to sacrifice upon the altar in Modein in accordance with the king’s decree. When Mattathias saw him, he was filled with zeal, and his heart trembled and poured forth anger in judgement. Then he ran and slew him upon the altar. So he killed the king’s man who wanted to offer sacrifice at that time, and he tore down the altar. Thus he had zeal for the law, just as Phinehas had against Zambri the son of Salome.

Then Mattathias cried out with a loud voice in the city, saying, “Every one who has zeal for the law and holds to the covenant, let him follow me.” So he and his sons fled into the mountains and left behind whatever they had in the city.”

1 Maccabees 6:8-13

“When the king received this report, he was shocked and greatly shaken. He fell upon his bed and was sick with grief, because matters had not gone for him as he hoped. King Antiochus lay there several days, for deepening grief worsened his condition. He concluded he was about to die. Thus he called together his friends, saying, “Sleep has eluded my eyes, and anxiety has devastated my heart. I ask myself, ‘What is this stress I have come to, and into what sea of troubles am I immersed? For I was a kind and loved ruler.’ But now I recall the evils I did in Jerusalem; for I took all the silver and gold vessels, and sent to destroy those who lived in Judah for no good reason. I know that because of these things, evils have found me; and behold, I am perishing with deep grief in a foreign land.”