



# Story

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## THE BAD GUYS


In the Greek calendar year 137, just after Alexander the Great, an evil ruler named Antiochus Epiphanes, known also as Antiochus the Illustrious, came to power. The last 'Old Testament' prophets had prophesied years ago, and many years would pass before John and Yeshua were born.



The 'in' thing was to be like the Greeks. Some evil Israelis worshipped the Greek false gods and participated in the barbaric *gymnasia* (playing games to the death and exercising naked, for example). They tried to convince Israelis to forsake the *Torah*, the teaching given by Moses, to violate the Sabbath (by ignoring it or working on it), and do things against the faith and fear of God.

The wicked Antiochus Epiphanes wanted to expand his kingdom, so he

warred with Egypt  and won. He then attacked Jerusalem, the city where Yehovah will place His Name. He came into Yehovah's Temple,<sup>1</sup> stripped it of its beautiful and important items (including the gold incense

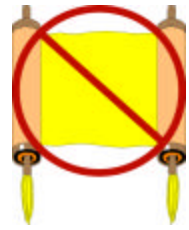
altar and the seven-branched Menorah ) , and slaughtered many Israelis thinking they would not be faithful to the alliance he had made with them.

A very wicked man named Yashon became the Israeli High Priest by making a deal with Antiochus. He called Antiochus to bring troops because some Israelis fought against the *gymnasia* and all its evils. This resulted in a slaughter of Jews.

The Israelis were confused and upset about their friends and relatives being killed. They realized that Israel had sinned against Yehovah, and

Yehovah was angry with her. The Temple's valuables were gone, and it was in a mess. Yehovah's Sacrifices ceased.

King Antiochus commanded all his kingdoms that all peoples must become one culture. Everyone must turn from his own country's laws to obey only his laws. He commanded all Israelis to abolish the Torah and to ignore Yehovah and His Laws. All had to worship Antiochus's idols. He commanded Israeli priests



to sacrifice pigs on Yehovah's altars, and Israelis to eat pork. Yehovah had commanded the Israelis to not eat pork and to sacrifice only certain animals (like cows and bulls, lambs, rams, goats, and so on). Sacrificing pigs was definitely **not** allowed.

Yehovah's covenant with Israel included circumcising their boy children. Antiochus commanded the Israelis to not circumcise their children. Anyone caught obeying the Law of Yehovah was put to death! Many children and parents were killed in terrible ways because they chose to be faithful to the Law of God and to walk in His fear.

## THE GOOD GUYS

In the small village of *Modin* lived a man whose name was *Matat-Yahu*. MatatYahu had five sons: YoKHanan, Shimon, Yehudah, Eleazar, and YoNatan. They heard and saw all the terrible things King Antiochus did to the Israelis, and Israeli traitors who wanted Israel to be like all the other pagan nations. MatatYahu knew tolerating such terrible sin to stay alive was worse than dying fighting it.

## THE FIGHT

King Antiochus sent men to MatatYahu to convince him to obey his commands. They told him to sacrifice a pig and eat it. He replied that even if everyone else forsook the Torah of Yehovah and obeyed these evil

commandments, he, his sons and others with him refused to obey the king. MatatYahu and his family chose to obey God.<sup>2</sup>

When he finished saying this, another Jewish man approached the altar to obey the king by sacrificing a pig because he feared Antiochus more than Yehovah. When MatatYahu saw this, he ran up and killed him before he



had the chance to do the sacrifice. He then killed King Antiochus's messenger! MatatYahu called every Israeli who loved the Torah and feared God to come and follow him. They went out into the



Israeli desert. Others joined him knowing they would be killed if they obeyed God, unless they left their cities and homes. They could live Godly in the deserts.



King Antiochus sent men to fight with the Israelis on Shabbat (the Sabbath). Some Israelis thought fighting a war on the Sabbath was work, and therefore against the Torah, and they let themselves be killed. MatatYahu and his men were very upset by this slaughter, and decided they would not let themselves be slaughtered. From now on, whether on Shabbat or not, they would defend themselves. The Law of God does not stop anyone from defending himself or from fighting a war on the Sabbath.

Many terrible things were done against the Jews. One mother saw her seven sons killed by being boiled to death after their tongues and fingers were cut off because they refused to disobey the Torah by eating pork. Each son was very brave. All were forced to watch as each one was killed this way. "But the mother was marvelous above all and worthy of honourable memory. For when she saw her seven sons slain within one day, she took it with good courage because of the Hope that she had in Yehovah. Indeed she exhorted every one of them in her own language ... and said unto them, 'I cannot tell how you came into my womb, for I didn't give you breath or life, and I was not the one who formed the members of

every one of you. And certainly the Creator of the world who formed the generation of man and uncovered the beginning of all things will also of His own mercy give you breath and life again because you ... [care more for the Torah than for yourselves].”

The king tried to convince this mother to save her last son by counseling him to reject the Torah. She begged her son not to fear the tormentor, but to choose death so that she would receive him again in mercy with his brethren. He replied to the king that he would not obey the commandment of the king, but the Torah given by Moses. He warned the king that he would not escape the hands of God. He spoke many things, and ended with this: “I, as my brethren, offer up my body and life for the laws of our fathers, beseeching God that he would speedily be merciful unto our race, and that you by torments and plagues may confess that He alone is God, and that in me and my brothers, the wrath of the Almighty, which is justly brought upon all our race, may cease.” The youngest brother died undefiled, putting his whole trust in Yehovah. Their mother was then killed.

MatatYahu and his men began to make raids on Israeli towns where folks were loyal to evil King Antiochus. They enforced the Torah in the territory of Israel.



MatatYahu was old, and would soon die. He called his sons, and told them this:

Pride is strong, and we are being chastised. There is much destruction, and God is very angry [with Israel]. Now, my sons, be zealous for the Torah, and give your lives for the Covenant of your fathers. Remember what the fathers did.



Remember **Abraham** who was found faithful when he was tested regarding the sacrifice of Isaac. And what he did was accounted to him righteousness!

Remember **Joseph**, who kept the commandment of God while in prison and while being much mistreated. And he was made ruler in Egypt!



**Pinkhas** our father was fervent and zealous in God, and he received the covenant of an everlasting priesthood.

**Joshua** was made a ruler in Israel because he was willing to obey Yehovah.

**Caleb** was given an inheritance because he reminded the people of the faithfulness of Yehovah. [The other Israelis in his generation were killed-off in the wilderness because of unbelief.]

**David** obtained the throne of an everlasting kingdom by His Grace.

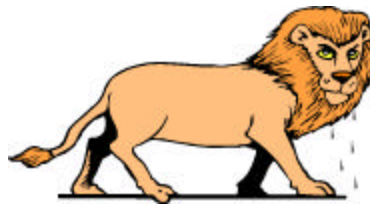


**Elijah**, who was so very zealous for the Law of God, was taken up into heaven.

**Khananyah, Azaryah and Mishael** believed God, and they were delivered out of the flame.



**Daniel** was saved from the mouth of the hungry lions because he was innocent.



And think of this: in every generation, those who trust in Yehovah have never lost strength that they needed.

And so, MatatYahu finished saying the many things he had to say. He died in the 146th year of the Greeks.

**Yehudah Maccabee** rose up in his father's place to lead the people to war against Antiochus Epiphanes.



*Maccabee* means *my hammer*. The first letter of each Hebrew word in "Mi Kamocha BaElim, Yehovah?", "Who is like unto Thee amongst the gods, Yehovah?", also makes MKBEY or MACCABEE.



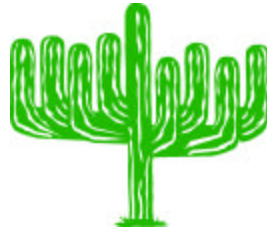
Other bad men came to fight against Yehudah, including Appollonius who was sent by King Antiochus. He and his army from Samaria attacked, but Yehudah won. (Can you see why the Jewish People resented the Samaritans who come from Samaria?) He captured and used Apollonius's sword.

Yehudah and his army grew stronger and stronger, but the Temple was still in a mess and Yehovah's sacrifices were not being offered. Evil, idolatrous priests continued sacrificing abominations on Yehovah's altar. King Antiochus heard Yehudah was winning many battles, so he sent a huge army. Yehudah asked Yehovah to give Israel a great victory, as He had done in history. Israel obtained a great deliverance that day. They thanked Yehovah for His great deliverance.

They entered Jerusalem and saw the mess and the terrible things that had been done, and they wept. They determined to take the Temple back and cleanse it. This took several years, but they won the wars. They cleansed the holy places and removed everything unclean (like remains of pigs and the altars on which pigs had been sacrificed), repairing what they could and rebuilding the rest.

Before the morning of the ninth month's 25th day, year 148 to the Greeks, they offered sacrifices according to Yehovah's Torah on a new altar. They kept the *Feast of Dedication* (the *Feast of Hanukkah*) eight days, joyfully offering sacrifices for Yehovah's Salvation and praising God. Yehudah, his brethren and all the congregation of Israel decreed that the day of the dedication of the altar should be kept with joy and gladness in its season from year to year for eight days, starting on the **25th** of **Kislev**.

What happened to wicked King Antiochus? He lost a battle in Persia (modern-day Iran). He heard that one of his leaders ran from the Jews in fear. Antiochus realized he had failed, and he became physically sick. He could not sleep. He remembered all the evils he had done in Jerusalem, how he had stripped the land and killed many innocent people. He died a terrible, painfully slow and fitting death.



A not necessarily historical tradition addresses the eight days of Hanukkah. When the Israelis came to the Temple and found it a terrible mess, they found one cruse of special oil—enough to keep the seven-branched



Menorah lit for only one day. They poured the oil into the Menorah and lit it. Preparing the special fragrant oil for the Menorah took eight full days. They began to make the oil, knowing the Menorah's flame would go out again that night, though it was supposed to be kept lit continually. According to the story, it did not go out, but stayed lit for all eight days. When the new oil was put into the Menorah, the Menorah was still lit. This is not written in the books of the Maccabees, and may be a tale.



Nine-branched oil lamps or candlesticks are used to celebrate this event. On the first night, one candle called the **Shamash**, or *servant* candle, is lit, and is then used to light the far right candle. The Shamash is used on the second night to light the second from the right and the far right candles, *etc.*, until all are lit on the eighth night. They burn down each night, and new candles replace them.

<sup>1</sup>1 Maccabees 1:23

<sup>2</sup>1 Maccabees 2:21