

FEASTS (Moedim): Chanukah Six: 6 Candles (Feast of Dedication).

Chanukah Six: 6 Candles (Feast of Dedication) 29-Kislev.

Chunukah 6:

Numbers 7:42-47.

42 On the sixth day, Eliasaph the son of Deuel, prince of the children of Gad
43 gave his offering: one silver platter, the weight of which was one hundred thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a meal offering;
44 one golden ladle of ten shekels, full of incense;
45 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering;
46 one male goat for a sin offering;
47 and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Eliasaph the son of Deuel.

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(2 Maccabees 5:1-27 NAB-A) :

. Jason Tries to Regain Control. .

About this time Antiochus sent his second expedition into Egypt. It then happened that all over the city, for nearly forty days, there appeared horsemen charging in midair, clad in garments interwoven with gold--companies fully armed with lances and drawn swords; squadrons of cavalry in battle array, charges and countercharges on this side and that, with brandished shields and bristling spears, flights of arrows and flashes of gold ornaments, together with armor of every sort. Therefore all prayed that this vision might be a good omen. But when a false rumor circulated that Antiochus was dead, Jason gathered fully a thousand men and suddenly attacked the city. As the defenders on the walls were forced back and the city was finally being taken, Menelaus took refuge in the citadel. Jason then slaughtered his fellow citizens without mercy, not realizing that triumph over one's own kindred was the greatest failure, but imagining that he was winning a victory over his enemies, not his fellow countrymen. Even so, he did not gain control of the government, but in the end received only disgrace for his treachery, and once again took refuge in the country of the Ammonites. At length he met a miserable end. Called to account before Aretas, king of the Arabs, he fled from city to city, hunted by all men, hated as a transgressor of the Torah, abhorred as the butcher of his country and his countrymen. After being driven into Egypt, he crossed the sea to the Spartans, among whom he hoped to find protection because of his relations with them. There he who had exiled so many from their country perished in exile; and he who had cast out so many to lie unburied went unmourned himself with no funeral of any kind or any place in the tomb of his ancestors. When these happenings were reported to the king, he thought that Judea was in revolt. Raging like a wild animal, he set out from Egypt and took Jerusalem by storm. He ordered his soldiers to cut down without mercy those whom they met and to slay those who took refuge in their houses. There was a massacre of young and old, a killing of women and children, a slaughter of virgins and infants. In the space of three days, eighty thousand were lost, forty thousand meeting a violent death, and the same number being sold into slavery.

. Pillage of the Temple. .

Not satisfied with this, the king dared to enter the holiest temple in the world; Menelaus, that traitor both to the Torah and to his country, served as guide. He laid his impure hands on the sacred vessels and gathered up with profane hands the votive offerings made by other kings for the advancement, the glory, and the honor of the Place. Puffed up in spirit, Antiochus did not realize that it was because of the sins of the city's inhabitants that YHWH was angry for a little while and hence disregarded the holy Place. If they had not become entangled in so many sins, this man, like Heliodorus, who was sent by King Seleucus to inspect the treasury, would have been flogged and turned back from his presumptuous action as soon as he approached. YHWH, however, had not chosen the people for the sake of the Place, but the Place for the sake of the people. Therefore, the Place itself, having shared in the people's misfortunes, afterward participated in their good fortune; and what the Almighty had forsaken in his anger was restored in all its glory, once the great Sovereign became reconciled. Antiochus carried off eighteen hundred talents from the temple, and hurried back to Antioch. In his arrogance he planned to make the land navigable and the sea passable on foot, so carried away was he with pride. But he left governors to harass the nation: at Jerusalem, Philip, a Phrygian by birth, and in character more cruel than the man who appointed him; at

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Mount Gerizim, Andronicus; and besides these, Menelaus, who lorded it over his fellow citizens worse than the others did. Out of hatred for the Jewish citizens, the king sent Appollonius, commander of the Mysians, at the head of an army of twenty-two thousand men, with orders to kill all the grown men and sell the women and young men into slavery. When this man arrived in Jerusalem, he pretended to be peacefully disposed and waited until the holy day of the sabbath; then, finding the Jews refraining from work, he ordered his men to parade fully armed. All those who came out to watch, he massacred, and running through the city with armed men, he cut down a large number of people. But Judas Maccabeus and about nine others withdrew to the wilderness, where he and his companions lived like wild animals in the hills, continuing to eat what grew wild to avoid sharing the defilement.

!! End of The Chapter.

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(2 Maccabees 6:1-31 NAB-A) :

. The Suppression of Judaism. .

Not long after this the king sent an Athenian senator to force the Jews to abandon the customs of their ancestors and live no longer by the Torah of Elohim; also to profane the temple in Jerusalem and dedicate it to Olympian Zeus, and that on Mount Gerizim to Zeus the Hospitable, as the inhabitants of the place requested. This intensified the evil in an intolerable and utterly disgusting way. The Gentiles filled the temple with debauchery and revelry; they amused themselves with prostitutes and had intercourse with women even in the sacred court. They also brought into the temple things that were forbidden, so that the altar was covered with abominable offerings prohibited by the Torah. A man could not keep the sabbath or celebrate the traditional feasts, nor even admit that he was a Jew. Moreover, at the monthly celebration of the king's birthday the Jews had, from bitter necessity, to partake of the sacrifices, and when the festival of Dionysus was celebrated, they were compelled to march in his procession, wearing wreaths of ivy. At the suggestion of the citizens of Ptolemais, a decree was issued ordering the neighboring Greek cities to act in the same way against the Jews: oblige them to partake of the sacrifices, and put to death those who would not consent to adopt the customs of the Greeks. It was obvious, therefore, that disaster impended. Thus, two women who were arrested for having circumcised their children were publicly paraded about the city with their babies hanging at their breasts and then thrown down from the top of the city wall. Others, who had assembled in nearby caves to observe the sabbath in secret, were betrayed to Philip and all burned to death. In their respect for the holiness of that day, they had scruples about defending themselves.

. Providential Significance of the Persecution. .

Now I beg those who read this book not to be disheartened by these misfortunes, but to consider that these chastisements were meant not for the ruin but for the correction of our nation. It is, in fact, a sign of great kindness to punish sinners promptly instead of letting them go for long. Thus, in dealing with other nations, YHWH patiently waits until they reach the full measure of their sins before he punishes them; but with us he has decided to deal differently, in order that he may not have to punish us more severely later, when our sins have reached their fullness. He never withdraws his mercy from us. Although he disciplines us with misfortunes, he does not abandon his own people. Let these words suffice for recalling this truth. Without further ado we must go on with our story.

. The Martyrdom of Eleazar. .

Eleazar, one of the foremost scribes, a man of advanced age and noble appearance, was being forced to open his mouth to eat pork. But preferring a glorious death to a life of defilement, he spat out the meat, and went forward of his own accord to the instrument of torture, as men ought to do who have the courage to reject the food which it is unlawful to taste even for love of life. Those in charge of that unlawful ritual meal took the man aside privately, because of their long acquaintance with him, and urged him to bring meat of his own providing, such as he could legitimately eat, and to pretend to be eating some of the meat of the sacrifice prescribed by the king; in this way he would escape the death penalty, and be treated kindly because of their old friendship with him. But he made up his mind in a noble manner, worthy of his years, the dignity of his

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advanced age, the merited distinction of his gray hair, and of the admirable life he had lived from childhood; and so he declared that above all he would be loyal to the holy Torah given by Elohim. He told them to send him at once to the abode of the dead, explaining: "At our age it would be unbecoming to make such a pretense; many young men would think the ninety-year-old Eleazar had gone over to an alien religion. Should I thus dissimulate for the sake of a brief moment of life, they would be led astray by me, while I would bring shame and dishonor on my old age. Even if, for the time being, I avoid the punishment of men, I shall never, whether alive or dead, escape the hands of the Almighty. Therefore, by manfully giving up my life now, I will prove myself worthy of my old age, and I will leave to the young a noble example of how to die willingly and generously for the revered and holy Torah." He spoke thus, and went immediately to the instrument of torture. Those who shortly before had been kindly disposed, now became hostile toward him because what he had said seemed to them utter madness. When he was about to die under the blows, he groaned and said: "YHWH in his holy knowledge knows full well that, although I could have escaped death, I am not only enduring terrible pain in my body from this scourging, but also suffering it with joy in my soul because of my devotion to him." This is how he died, leaving in his death a model of courage and an unforgettable example of virtue not only for the young but for the whole nation.

!! End of The Chapter.

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(2 Maccabees 7:1-42 NAB-A) :

. The Martyrdom of Seven Brothers. .

It also happened that seven brothers with their mother were arrested and tortured with whips and scourges by the king, to force them to eat pork in violation of Elohim's Torah. One of the brothers, speaking for the others, said: "What do you expect to achieve by questioning us? We are ready to die rather than transgress the Torah of our ancestors." At that the king, in a fury, gave orders to have pans and caldrons heated. While they were being quickly heated, he commanded his executioners to cut out the tongue of the one who had spoken for the others, to scalp him and cut off his hands and feet, while the rest of his brothers and his mother looked on. When he was completely maimed but still breathing, the king ordered them to carry him to the fire and fry him. As a cloud of smoke spread from the pan, the brothers and their mother encouraged one another to die bravely, saying such words as these: "YHWH Elohim is looking on, and he truly has compassion on us, as Moses declared in his canticle, when he protested openly with the words, 'And he will have pity on his servants.'" When the first brother had died in this manner, they brought the second to be made sport of. After tearing off the skin and hair of his head, they asked him, "Will you eat the pork rather than have your body tortured limb by limb?" Answering in the language of his forefathers, he said, "Never!" So he too in turn suffered the same tortures as the first. At the point of death he said: "You accursed fiend, you are depriving us of this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up to live again forever. It is for his Torah that we are dying." After him the third suffered their cruel sport. He put out his tongue at once when told to do so, and bravely held out his hands, as he spoke these noble words: "It was from Heaven that I received these; for the sake of his Torah I disdain them; from him I hope to receive them again." Even the king and his attendants marveled at the young man's courage, because he regarded his sufferings as nothing. After he had died, they tortured and maltreated the fourth brother in the same way. When he was near death, he said, "It is my choice to die at the hands of men with the Elohim-given hope of being restored to life by him; but for you, there will be no resurrection to life." They next brought forward the fifth brother and maltreated him. Looking at the king, he said: "Since you have power among men, mortal though you are, do what you please. But do not think that our nation is forsaken by Elohim. Only wait, and you will see how his great power will torment you and your descendants." After him they brought the sixth brother. When he was about to die, he said: "Have no vain illusions. We suffer these things on our own account, because we have sinned against our Elohim; that is why such astonishing things have happened to us. Do not think, then, that you will go unpunished for having dared to fight against Elohim." Most admirable and worthy of everlasting remembrance was the mother, who saw her seven sons perish in a single day, yet bore it courageously because of her hope in YHWH! Filled with a noble spirit that stirred her womanly heart with manly courage, she exhorted each of them in the language of their forefathers with these words: "I do not know how you came into existence in my womb; it was not I who gave you the breath of life, nor was it I who set in order the elements of which each of you is composed. Therefore, since it is the Creator of the universe who shapes each man's beginning, as he brings about the origin of everything, he, in his mercy, will give you back both breath and life, because you now disregard yourselves for the sake of his Torah." Martyrdom of Mother and Sons Antiochus, suspecting insult in her words, thought he was being ridiculed. As the youngest brother was still alive, the king appealed to him, not with mere words, but with promises on oath, to make him rich and happy if he would abandon his ancestral customs: he would make him his Friend and entrust him with high office.

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When the youth paid no attention to him at all, the king appealed to the mother, urging her to advise her boy to save his life. After he had urged her for a long time, she went through the motions of persuading her son. In derision of the cruel tyrant, she leaned over close to her son and said in their native language: "Son, have pity on me, who carried you in my womb for nine months, nursed you for three years, brought you up, educated and supported you to your present age. I beg you, child, to look at the heavens and the earth and see all that is in them; then you will know that Elohim did not make them out of existing things; and in the same way the human race came into existence. Do not be afraid of this executioner, but be worthy of your brothers and accept death, so that in the time of mercy I may receive you again with them." She had scarcely finished speaking when the youth said: "What are you waiting for? I will not obey the king's command. I obey the command of the Torah given to our forefathers through Moses. But you, who have contrived every kind of affliction for the Hebrews, will not escape the hands of Elohim. We, indeed, are suffering because of our sins. Though our living YHWH treats us harshly for a little while to correct us with chastisements, he will again be reconciled with his servants. But you, wretch, vilest of all men! do not, in your insolence, concern yourself with unfounded hopes, as you raise your hand against the children of Heaven. You have not yet escaped the judgment of the almighty and all-seeing Elohim. My brothers, after enduring brief pain, have drunk of never-failing life, under Elohim's covenant, but you, by the judgment of Elohim, shall receive just punishments for your arrogance. Like my brothers, I offer up my body and my life for our ancestral Torah, imploring Elohim to show mercy soon to our nation, and by afflictions and blows to make you confess that he alone is Elohim. Through me and my brothers, may there be an end to the wrath of the Almighty that has justly fallen on our whole nation." At that, the king became enraged and treated him even worse than the others, since he bitterly resented the boy's contempt. Thus he too died undefiled, putting all his trust in YHWH! The mother was last to die, after her sons. Enough has been said about the sacrificial meals and the excessive cruelties.

!! End of The Chapter.

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(2 Maccabees 8:1-36 NAB-A) :

. The Revolt of Judas Maccabeus. .

Judas Maccabeus and his companions entered the villages, secretly, summoned their kinsmen, and by also enlisting others who remained faithful to Judaism, assembled about six thousand men. They implored YHWH to look kindly upon his people, who were being oppressed on all sides; to have pity on the temple, which was profaned by godless men; to have mercy on the city, which was being destroyed and about to be leveled to the ground; to hearken to the blood that cried out to him; to remember the criminal slaughter of innocent children and the blasphemies uttered against his name; and to manifest his hatred of evil. Once Maccabeus got his men organized, the Gentiles could not withstand him, for YHWH's wrath had now changed to mercy. Coming unexpectedly upon towns and villages, he would set them on fire. He captured strategic positions, and put to flight a large number of the enemy. He preferred the nights as being especially helpful for such attacks. Soon the fame of his valor spread everywhere. When Philip saw that Judas was gaining ground little by little and that his successful advances were becoming more frequent, he wrote to Ptolemy, governor of Coelestria and Phoenicia, to come to the aid of the king's government. Ptolemy promptly selected Nicanor, son of Patroclus, one of the Chief Friends, and sent him at the head of at least twenty thousand armed men of various nations to wipe out the entire Jewish race. With him he associated Gorgias, a professional military commander, well-versed in the art of war. Nicanor planned to raise the two thousand talents of tribute owed by the king to the Romans by selling captured Jews into slavery. So he immediately sent word to the coastal cities, inviting them to buy Jewish slaves and promising to deliver ninety slaves for a talent-- little did he dream of the punishment that was to fall upon him from the Almighty.

. Preparation for Battle. .

When Judas learned of Nicanor's advance and informed his companions about the approach of the army, the cowardly and those who lacked faith in Elohim's justice deserted and got away. But the others sold everything they had left, and at the same time besought YHWH to deliver those whom the ungodly Nicanor had sold before even meeting them. They begged YHWH to do this, if not for their sake, at least for the sake of the covenants made with their forefathers, and because they themselves bore his holy, glorious name. Maccabeus assembled his men, six thousand strong, and exhorted them not to be panic-stricken before the enemy, nor to fear the large number of the Gentiles attacking them unjustly, but to fight courageously, keeping before their eyes the Torahless outrage perpetrated by the Gentiles against the holy Place and the affliction of the humiliated city, as well as the subversion of their ancestral way of life. "They trust in weapons and acts of daring," he said, "but we trust in almighty Elohim, who can by a mere nod destroy not only those who attack us, but the whole world." He went on to tell them of the times when help had been given their ancestors: both the time of Sennacherib, when a hundred and eighty-five thousand of his men were destroyed, and the time of the battle in Babylonia against the Galatians, when only eight thousand Jews fought along with four thousand Macedonians; yet when the Macedonians were hard pressed, the eight thousand routed one hundred and twenty thousand and took a great quantity of booty, because of the help they received from Heaven.

. Judas Defeats Nicanor. .

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With such words he encouraged them and made them ready to die for their Torah and their country. Then Judas divided his army into four, placing his brothers, Simon, Joseph, and Jonathan, each over a division, assigning to each fifteen hundred men. (There was also Eleazar.) After reading to them from the holy book and giving them the watchword, "The Help of Elohim," he himself took charge of the first division and joined in battle with Nicanor. With the Almighty as their ally, they killed more than nine thousand of the enemy, wounded and disabled the greater part of Nicanor's army, and put all of them to flight. They also seized the money of those who had come to buy them as slaves. When they had pursued the enemy for some time, they were obliged to return by reason of the late hour, it was the day before the sabbath, and for that reason they could not continue the pursuit. They collected the enemy's arms and stripped them of their spoils, and then observed the sabbath with fervent praise and thanks to YHWH who kept them safe for that day on which he let descend on them the first dew of his mercy. After the sabbath, they gave a share of the booty to the persecuted and to widows and orphans; the rest they divided among themselves and their children. When this was done, they made supplication in common, imploring the merciful YHWH to be completely reconciled with his servants.

. Judas Defeats Timothy and Bacchides. .

They also challenged the forces of Timothy and Bacchides, killed more than twenty thousand of them, and captured some very high fortresses. They divided the enormous plunder, allotting half to themselves and the rest to the persecuted, to orphans, widows, and the aged. They collected the enemies' weapons and carefully stored them in suitable places; the rest of the spoils they carried to Jerusalem. They also killed the commander of Timothy's forces, a most wicked man, who had done great harm to the Jews. While celebrating the victory in their ancestral city, they burned both those who had set fire to the sacred gates and Callisthenes, who had taken refuge in a little house; so he received the reward his wicked deeds deserved. The accursed Nicanor, who had brought the thousand slave dealers to buy the Jews, after being humbled through YHWH's help by those whom he had thought of no account, laid aside his fine clothes and fled alone across country like a runaway slave, until he reached Antioch. He was eminently successful in destroying his own army. So he who had promised to provide tribute for the Romans by the capture of the people of Jerusalem testified that the Jews had a champion, and that they were invulnerable for the very reason that they followed the Torah laid down by him.

!! End of The Chapter.

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!! End of Today's FEAST and Related Scriptures! Praise Yah! (HNV-yet version, in the public domain.)