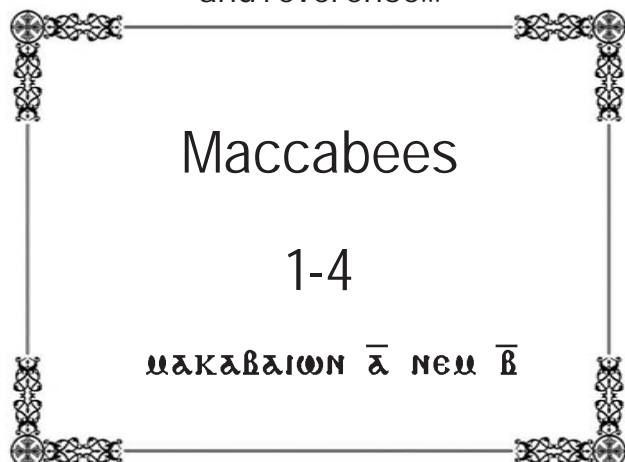




Esdras 2 is unrelated to Esdras 1 and writings include life after death and the suffering of the righteous, “The righteous therefore can endure difficult circumstances.” (2 Esdras 7:18)

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Victorious Battles, Resurrection of the Dead, and Sainthood

The name Maccabee means “hammer” and is attributed to Judas, the third son of the priest Mattathias in the Books of Maccabees. Judas was the first leader of the revolt against the Seleucid kings who were adamantly trying to Hellenize the Jews in Jerusalem. The battles began when Antiochus IV removed money and precious goods from the temple stirring the faithful Jews to attempt to remove the Hellenizers who would in turn try to conquer the Jews. While the name Maccabees was first applied to Judas, traditionally the name has also been applied to Judas’ brothers, his supporters and other Jewish leaders of that time period.

I Maccabees was written about 100 B.C. in the Hebrew language and while the author is unknown, he was most likely a Palestinian Jew very learned in the traditions and writings of Judaism. His aim in writing was to reveal how God had saved his people Israel through the family of Mattathias and his three sons, Judas, Jonathan and Simon and also through his grandson, John Hyrcanus. He also expresses the doctrine of Israel’s loyalty to God and their worship exclusively of Him and their obedience to His commandments. He goes on to condemn, not the Seleucid kings trying to wipe out Judaism, but most of



Maccabees desecrates the Temple

all the lawless Jews who were adversaries of Judas and his brothers.

Written in Greek, II Maccabees is not a sequel to I Maccabees and differs in many other respects. I Maccabees covers the time period from the reign of Antiochus IV (175 B.C.) until the accession of John Hyrcanus I (134 B.C.) While II Maccabees covers Jewish history from the time of the high priest Onias III and King Seleucus IV (180 B.C.) until the defeat of Nicanor’s army (161 B.C.).

II Maccabees begins with two letters that were sent by the Jews in Jerusalem to Jews in Egypt. They mention the observance of the feast commemorating the purification of the temple. The purpose of the writer is to give theological interpretation of the historical events during this period. There is less emphasis on the actual feats of Judas Maccabeus and more emphasis on the evidence of God’s aid in the miraculous victories. II Maccabees also mentions the doctrines on the resurrection of the dead in the last days and also the intercession of saints in Heaven for people living on earth.

III Maccabees is not related to the first two Maccabees. Its’ writings tell of the Egyptian king Ptolemy IV’s attempt to kill all the Jews in his country during the 3rd Century. The king ordered the Jews to be gathered together. Once together the king had hundreds of elephants which were to trample them to their death. Two angels of the Lord intervened and rescued the Jews. The frightened king repented and became a protector of the Jews.

IV Maccabees is not related to the first three books. It speaks primarily on the power of reason to rule passion.✱