

Name: Michael Perez

Document Title: 1 Maccabees

Written Assignments #2

First Impressions

1. What are your first impressions?

As I was reading the first page of the document, I read about Alexander the Great. I have heard and learned about him numerous times in the past. Yet, one thing that drew my attention was that it says in 1:3, "*When the earth became quiet before him, he was exalted, and his heart was lifted up.*" God had permitted Alexander to conquer many nations yet his heart was filled with pride. But two verses later, we see Alexander get sick and he perceived that he was dying. I honestly believe this to be the hand of the Lord. This fulfills what the Lord says in Isaiah 13:11, "*And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.*" I don't remember Alexander dying due to sickness but I was reminded through 1 Maccabees. Another impression that I have is that the 12 men that Alexander had placed to rule 12 divisions of his kingdom wouldn't end very well. I would imagine that one would rise up and want to take all twelve regions for himself and kill the rest. I say this because power can really corrupt a person if they let it.

2. What kind of document is it (letter, prayer, historical account, apocalypse, testament, narrative, etc.)? How do you know?

This document is a historical account. One of the biggest clues that brought me to this conclusion is that it gives dates of when events occurred. For example, Antiochus Epiphanes started to reign in the year 137 of the kingdom of the Greeks. Another example is when Antiochus returned to Jerusalem in the 143rd year or when on the 50th day of Chislev, in the year 145, there was a sacrilegious offering on the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem. This document is also a narrative since we have the narrator speaking in the document.

Looking More Closely

1. Read through the document carefully. Make a list of any unusual words, phrases, or concepts.

One thing that jumps out at me is how this document doesn't mention the Lord's name. It doesn't say God or Yahweh but rather refers to God as He and Savior. Jews speak this way in referring to God as a way to demonstrate reverence to God for they know that God's Name is holy and cannot be in the lips of sinners.

2. Is there a date on it? If so, what is it? If not, are there any other clues within the document that might indicate when it was written?

Yes, the document specifies that the events described in it took place from 104-63 B.C.E.

3. Is there a location indicated? What is it?

This document mentions Egypt when Antiochus plundered it and captured it (1:16-19). This document also mentions Jerusalem a lot (1:29-40).

4. Who wrote or created the document? How can you tell?

The document doesn't mention the creator of it.

5. For whom was the document written or created? How do you know?

I believe that this document was written for Jews and even for proselytes of Judaism. I know this because this reveals the fight that Judas Maccabees and others had to go through in order to remain faithful to the covenant of Yahweh even though that meant dying for it. This obviously cannot be intended for those who aren't Jewish or a part of the Jewish religion, it wouldn't concern such people.

6. What is the purpose of the document? What made you think this?

The purpose of this document is to encourage readers, who are almost 100% Jewish, to remain faithful to the law of God despite living in a country that is plagued with wickedness, injustice, perversion, and many other ungodly things. In other words, to those faithful Jews suffering persecution for their faith in Yahweh. What made me think this is that in the document we are seeing the occupation of Greece over Israel and many other nations and how they are inculcating their system of doing things while

erasing the ones countries have had for centuries. This is something that Israel had experienced in the past with the Babylonian exile during the time of Nebuchadnezzar. So the story of Judas Maccabees can surely be a reminder that it is worth dying for the law of God and not bowing down to the system of the world.

Thinking Further

1. What do you think the writer thought was the most important information to convey? Why?

The most important information the author thought about conveying was to stay faithful to God no matter the consequences that may bring. The reason why I say this is because we see how Israel in its majority surrenders itself to the ways of the pagan Gentiles and worships other gods and adopts Gentile customs in order to remain alive. Yet, there was a faithful remnant that decided to keep God's Law at all costs and fought against the enemy in honor of God and His covenant with Israel.

2. Does the document convey a certain tone?

I would say that the tone of this document is encouraging. I say this because we are being led through the story of the Jewish people who were being abused and killed unjustly and were forced to deny Yahweh. Yet we are told of a family who took no for an answer and demonstrated valiancy and zeal for God and His law to the point of fighting back with the little they had and how God gave them victory. This conveys a tone of encouragement, encouraging other fellow Jews to step up for the faith and covenant of their ancestors.

3. Can you tell the point of view of the writer? Is it objective?

I would say that the writer's point of view is one that is against the actions of the gentile nations as they would slaughter the lives of the innocent, particularly of the Jews, including children. In other words, the writer describes the events with an attitude of disapproval. I would also add that the point of view of the author is one of approval as well in regard to Judas and those of his armies as they fight back against the evil of the gentiles.

4. What is the writer's attitude about Israel's God or the nations' gods? How can you tell?

The writer's attitude about Israel's God is one of worship, praise, and reverence. One way I can tell is that nowhere in this document, is the name God or Lord used. God is always referred to as "He", "Savior" or "Heaven". Jews never write this way because they don't love God but rather the opposite. They fear God greatly and don't want to have His Name in their mouths for it is holy. And they rather refer to the Lord as simply He or our Savior or Heaven which refers to God who is in heaven.

5. What is the writer's attitude toward "Jews"?

The writer's attitude toward Jews is one of approval in regard to those who are faithful to God's Law. A perfect example is 1:62-63, "*62 But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. 63 They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die.*" The writer also does disapprove of the Jews who forsook their faith in Yahweh and submitted to the pagan religion of the wicked Antiochus. We see a great example in 2:23-25, "*23 When he had finished speaking these words, a Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer sacrifice on the altar in Modein, according to the king's command. 24 When Mattathias saw it, he burned with zeal and his heart was stirred. He gave vent to righteous anger; he ran and killed him on the altar. 25 At the same time he killed the king's officer who was forcing them to sacrifice, and he tore down the altar.*"

6. What is the writer's attitude about "non-Jews" or those ruling over them? How can you tell?

At the beginning of the document, the writer speaks about Alexander the Great in a way that is almost giving him recognition for all his accomplishments and conquests. But as the narrator continues, we see how people like Antiochus start to arise and wreak havoc on the people of Israel, slaughtering them and forcing them to do things that are wicked. The writer speaks about these events with an attitude of grief and disapproval. Overall, the writer's attitude towards Gentiles is negative since they are the ones who are killing Jews, worshipping Idols, and sacrificing to those idols on God's altar in Jerusalem. It is so much so that in the document the Jews who forsook God are titled apostate Jews.

7. What does the writer believe about the Torah (the Law)?

The writer believes that the Law or Torah is perfect and holy and should be obeyed at all costs. The writer mentions that when Mattathias was dying, he told his children to be zealous for the law of God and to give their lives for the covenant of God with Israel (2:50). And when comes it to the Jews who denied their Jewish faith and adapted to the Gentiles customs and religion, the writer specifies that they not only joined with the Gentiles but they sold themselves to do evil (1:15). Such evil which obviously contradicts the Law of God.

8. What other customs or institutions of Judaism do the writers mention? What is his attitude toward these customs or institutions?

The writer mentions plenty of times the altar of the Lord. When Antiochus took over Israel, he forced all Jews to bow down to his pagan religion and were forbidden to sacrifice to the Lord but to false gods instead. Jewish boys were also forbidden to get circumcised. The writer's attitude toward these customs is that they should be obeyed and respected and to defile them as Antiochus did is sacrilegious.

9. What is the attitude of the writer toward morality or natural law? How can you tell?

The general audience that the writer has in mind is the Jewish people. He most definitely has an expectation for these people to demonstrate morality and the Torah is the epitome of morality. Yet we see how many Jews compromised morality and righteousness and this is looked at with displeasure. But when it comes to the attitude of the author toward morality and natural law, he is one who upholds morality. He speaks about the shedding of innocent blood and how even children were hung from their mother's necks (1:61). I would imagine the writer writing this with grief and even anger because I felt horrible reading what the Jews went through in this time in history and I can only imagine what the writer felt as he wrote these things.

10. Does the document remind you of any biblical event, character, or book of the Bible? What made you think of those events, characters, or biblical books?

One person that Judas Maccabees reminds me of is Jehu. Jehu was one of the kings of Israel (Northern Kingdom) and was used by God to completely destroy the lineage of Ahab and remove all Baal worship in the nation.

Summary Statement: How does this document give insight into the beliefs and concerns of Jews for the historical period being investigated? How does it add to what the textbooks say about the period?

This document reveals that Jews during the 2nd temple period were concerned about maintaining themselves obedient to the Lord despite having fellow Jewish brethren falling away to the Gentile system.

1 and 2 Maccabees reveal how a group of courageous Jews, led by Matthias would lead a revolt against the Greek pagan system that had conquered and plagued their homeland and caused many to fall away from God. This revolution had been caused by a burning zeal in the hearts of these men to no longer see their people and the Lord's Name be abused and disrespected. The revolution would later be handed down to Judas Maccabeus to continue and they would cleanse their land, Israel, from pagan worship, kill those who had slaughtered their people, and profane the name of the Lord.