

## ***Introduction to the Apocrypha – 1 Maccabees Session Seven – “Hasmonean Dynasty”***



*John Hyrcanus*

### ***The Author/Historian of First Maccabees; Where Was the Citadel?; Geography of Judea; The First Book of Maccabees (Chapters 14, 15 and 16)***

#### ***The Author/Historian of First Maccabees***

The author of 1 Maccabees emerges with credit as a serious historian. The material of 1 Maccabees is well organized and structured, its chronology is based on official dates, its sequence is for the most part coherent and reliable. The author has made good use of the sources available, in the section devoted to Judas relying partly on what were probably oral accounts of Judas’s exploits, and in the section devoted to Jonathan, Simon and John, making much use of archival material and official records. It is true that, as we have seen, these letters and documents show signs of editorial adjustment. However, the Seleucid correspondence is basically authentic, though Demetrius I’s letter to Jonathan has been heavily reworked and Antiochus VII’s letter to Simon has acquired a “Hebraic veneer”. The Roman treaty of chapter 8 and the contents of the letter of Lucius are authentic enough, though there remain problems with the dating and sequence of the missions to Rome. The Spartan correspondence is another matter. Here the author of 1 Maccabees has used a pre-existing but fictional letter as the basis for reconstructing appropriate correspondence and has clumsily integrated it into the account of diplomatic dealings with Rome. The decree honouring Simon has been slightly edited to link up with historical details already given in the text.

Thus apart from Demetrius I's letter, into which the historian has brought forward fundamental negotiating points from the later letters of Demetrius II, presumably believing that these concerns were urgent from the start of negotiations, and the Spartan correspondence, which is partly invented for the occasion, the author has done nothing more than edit the available documentary sources into the text. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the author often has to incorporate accounts of campaigns and other events for which he has no certain or precise date into his story – for example, the early campaigns of Judas in Chs. 3 – 4, the campaigns against neighboring peoples in chapter 5, the mission to Rome in Ch. 8, and the campaigns of Jonathan in Galilee and Syria in Chs. 11 and 12. Many individual stories about Judas and Jonathan, probably deriving from oral tradition, had no precise date attached to them, and the author had to work out how best to fit things together within a framework mainly supplied by official Seleucid dates. The author was a responsible historian, properly concerned to present the story in as orderly a way as possible, and can be credited with considerable historical objectivity and width of vision. For example, he offers a comparatively balanced picture of the political concerns of the Seleucids and Romans. The author recognizes the value of the Romans and the Spartans to the Jews, and some knowledge of the cities and politics of the wider Hellenistic world. 1 Maccabees is the work of a convinced nationalist, who sees the history of the Maccabean age as a continuation of the earlier history of Israel as seen in the books of Kings and Chronicles, but who is equally aware of both the difficulties and advantages of Jewish relationships abroad.

It is unlikely that the historian of 1 Maccabees knew of the work of the Epitomist (author of 2 Maccabees) or of his source, Jason of Cyrene, and it is important to try to understand the picture given by 1 Maccabees without confusion from 2 Maccabees. We have available to us two separate interpretations of the history of the Maccabean family and era. It is clear that the modern historian must treat the ancient historian of 1 Maccabees with great respect.

– *edited from 1 Maccabees* by John R. Bartlett, Bloomsbury Publishing, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, England, 1998

### ***Where was the Citadel?***

The text of 1 Maccabees says, “Then they fortified the city of David with a great strong wall and strong towers, and it became their citadel.” (Macc. 1:33) But we are not told exactly where it was built in Jerusalem. It was thought to be south of the Temple in what is called the Lower City. Josephus described the location in the *Antiquities of the Jews*:

...and when he had overthrown the city walls, he built a citadel [Greek: Acra] in the lower part of the city, for the place was high, and overlooked the

temple; on which account he fortified it with high walls and towers, and put into it a garrison of Macedonians. However, in that citadel dwelt the impious and wicked part of the multitude, from whom it proved that the citizens suffered many and sore calamities.

— *Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 12:252–253 (93 c.e.)*

Researchers with the Israel Antiquities Authority announced in November 2015 that they had found the remnants of a fortress used by the Seleucid Greek king Antiochus Epiphanes in his siege of Jerusalem in 168 BCE. A section of fortification was discovered under the Givati parking lot in the City of David south of the Old City walls and the Temple Mount. The fortification is believed to have been part of a system of defenses known as the Akra fortress, built by Antiochus as he sought to quell a Jewish priestly rebellion centered on the Temple. “This stronghold controlled all means of approach to the Temple, and cut the Temple off from the southern parts of the city. The many coins dating from the reign of Antiochus IV [Epiphanes] to that of Antiochus VII [Sidetes] and the large number of wine jars (amphorae) that were imported from the Aegean region to Jerusalem and were found at the site bear witness to the citadel’s age, as well as to the non-Jewish identity of its inhabitants.”

**The Akra, Epiphanes' lost stronghold in Jerusalem, November 3, 2015. Credit: IAA, courtesy**



1 Maccabees tells us that Simon built a wall around the citadel that prevented its inhabitants from getting in or out – essentially a siege wall that ultimately starved the Seleucid soldiers who had no access to food, and finally surrendered in 141. The surrender of the citadel is described in 1 Maccabees 13:49 – 52:

*49 Those who were in the citadel at Jerusalem were prevented from going in and out to buy and sell in the country. So they were very hungry, and many of them perished from famine. 50 Then they cried to Simon to make peace with them, and he did so. But he expelled them from there and cleansed the citadel from its pollutions. 51 On the twenty-third day of the second month, in the one hundred seventy-first year, the Jews entered it with praise and palm branches, and with harps and cymbals and stringed instruments, and with hymns and songs, because a great enemy had been crushed and removed from Israel. 52 Simon decreed that every year they should celebrate this day with rejoicing. He strengthened the fortifications of the temple hill alongside the citadel, and he and his men lived there.*



1903 map of Jerusalem, identifying the Acra (citadel) with the entire south eastern hill (Wikipedia)

According to Josephus, Simon razed the citadel after ousting its inhabitants, and then quarried the hill on which it had stood to render it lower than the temple, purge the city of its evil memory and deny it to any future occupier of Jerusalem.

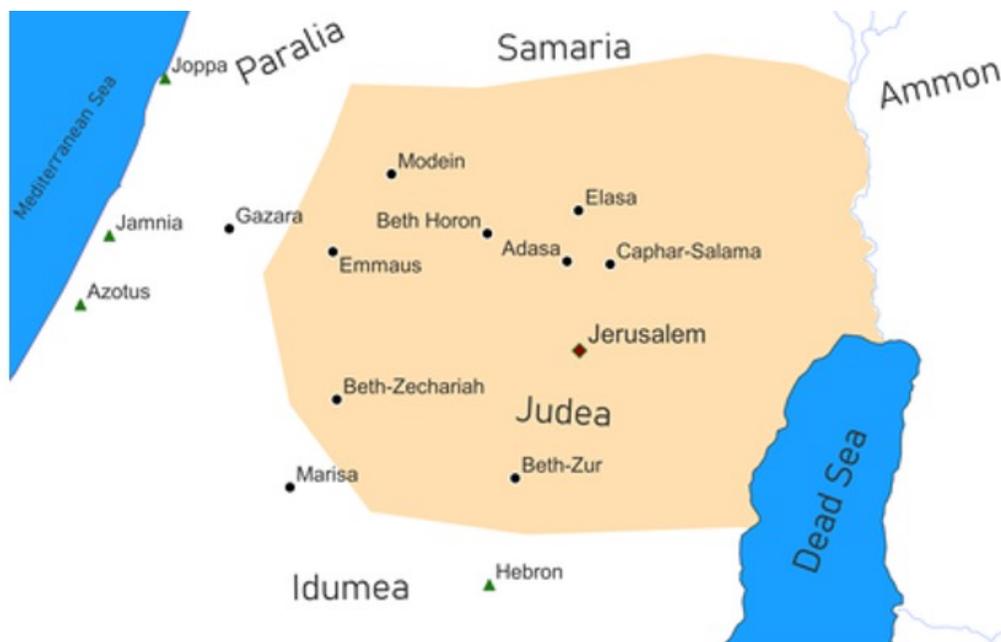
However, in Chapter 15, Antiochus VII demands the citadel be returned to him, indicating that it still stood:

*28 He sent to him Athenobius, one of his Friends, to confer with him, saying, "You hold control of Joppa and Gazara and the citadel in Jerusalem; they are cities of my kingdom."*

It is possible that Simon tore the citadel down after this demand, or that his son John tore it down in the next few years, but it no longer seemed to exist in the later part of John Hyrcanus reign.

### ***Geography of Judea***

The First Book of Maccabees describes a great many cities and towns, some of which no longer exist (or exist with a different name). Geographic boundaries change over time. At the end of Solomon's reign, Judah extended well south of Hebron, but the areas north of Jerusalem were part of Benjamin and Ephraim. The northern kingdom of Israel included Joppa (Jaffa) and Dor on the coast of the Mediterranean, but Judah did not have seaport until Simon conquered Joppa. The map below shows the boundaries of Judea during the time of the Maccabean revolt.



***Map of Judea***

The broader map on the next page shows Antioch (northeast coast of the Mediterranean Sea) which was the western capital of the Seleucid Empire. In chapter 14, we read about the Parthian King Arsaces who captured Demetrius II. The Parthians had moved to the west to control much of what had been the Seleucid Empire at the time of Antiochus IV.

Opis, shown on the map near the western border of the Parthian Empire, was on the Tigris River. Opis no longer exists, and it is unknown exactly where it was located. Babylon was immediately south of Opis on the Euphrates River.

Damascus is northeast of Jerusalem, east of Galilee – 120 miles east of what is now Beirut, Lebanon. The Ptolemaic Empire was primarily the area of Egypt at the time of the Maccabean revolt. Alexandria was founded by Alexander the Great in 332 b.c.e. It was the capital of Egypt from its founding until 642 c.e.

Sparta was the land mass in pink jutting out into the Mediterranean on the far-left side of the map – roughly where the “R” in “Roman Empire” is located. Rome was farther west – not shown on this map. (Rome was not an empire, but a republic, at the time of the Maccabean revolt.) Antiochus VII Sides was born in Side, in Pamphylia. Side was on the coast of the Mediterranean, just east of the base of the second letter “E” in “Roman Empire” on the map below.



## ***1 Maccabees – Chapters 14, 15, and 16***

### ***Chapter 14***

<sup>1</sup> In the one hundred seventy-second year King Demetrius assembled his forces and marched into Media to obtain help, so that he could make war against Trypho. <sup>2</sup> When King Arsaces of Persia and Media heard that Demetrius had invaded his territory, he sent one of his generals to take him alive. <sup>3</sup> The general went and defeated the army of Demetrius, and seized him and took him to Arsaces, who put him under guard.

<sup>4</sup> The land had rest all the days of Simon.

He sought the good of his nation;  
his rule was pleasing to them,  
as was the honor shown him, all his days.

<sup>5</sup> To crown all his honors he took Joppa for a harbor,  
and opened a way to the isles of the sea.

<sup>6</sup> He extended the borders of his nation,  
and gained full control of the country.

<sup>7</sup> He gathered a host of captives;  
he ruled over Gazara and Beth-zur and the citadel,  
and he removed its uncleanness from it;  
and there was none to oppose him.

<sup>8</sup> They tilled their land in peace;  
the ground gave its increase,  
and the trees of the plains their fruit.

<sup>9</sup> Old men sat in the streets;  
they all talked together of good things,  
and the youths put on splendid military attire.

<sup>10</sup> He supplied the towns with food,  
and furnished them with the means of defense,  
until his renown spread to the ends of the earth.

<sup>11</sup> He established peace in the land,  
and Israel rejoiced with great joy.

<sup>12</sup> All the people sat under their own vines and fig trees,  
and there was none to make them afraid.

<sup>13</sup> No one was left in the land to fight them,  
and the kings were crushed in those days.

<sup>14</sup> He gave help to all the humble among his people;  
he sought out the law,  
and did away with all the renegades and outlaws.

<sup>15</sup> He made the sanctuary glorious,  
and added to the vessels of the sanctuary.

<sup>16</sup> It was heard in Rome, and as far away as Sparta, that Jonathan had died, and they were deeply grieved. <sup>17</sup> When they heard that his brother Simon had become high

priest in his stead, and that he was ruling over the country and the towns in it, <sup>18</sup> they wrote to him on bronze tablets to renew with him the friendship and alliance that they had established with his brothers Judas and Jonathan. <sup>19</sup> And these were read before the assembly in Jerusalem.

<sup>20</sup> This is a copy of the letter that the Spartans sent:

“The rulers and the city of the Spartans to the high priest Simon and to the elders and the priests and the rest of the Jewish people, our brothers, greetings. <sup>21</sup> The envoys who were sent to our people have told us about your glory and honor, and we rejoiced at their coming. <sup>22</sup> We have recorded what they said in our public decrees, as follows, ‘Numenius son of Antiochus and Antipater son of Jason, envoys of the Jews, have come to us to renew their friendship with us. <sup>23</sup> It has pleased our people to receive these men with honor and to put a copy of their words in the public archives, so that the people of the Spartans may have a record of them. And they have sent a copy of this to the high priest Simon.’”

<sup>24</sup> After this Simon sent Numenius to Rome with a large gold shield weighing one thousand minas, to confirm the alliance with the Romans.

<sup>25</sup> When the people heard these things they said, “How shall we thank Simon and his sons? <sup>26</sup> For he and his brothers and the house of his father have stood firm; they have fought and repulsed Israel’s enemies and established its freedom.” <sup>27</sup> So they made a record on bronze tablets and put it on pillars on Mount Zion.

This is a copy of what they wrote: “On the eighteenth day of Elul, in the one hundred seventy-second year, which is the third year of the great high priest Simon, <sup>28</sup> in Asaramel, in the great assembly of the priests and the people and the rulers of the nation and the elders of the country, the following was proclaimed to us:

<sup>29</sup> “Since wars often occurred in the country, Simon son of Mattathias, a priest of the sons of Joarib, and his brothers, exposed themselves to danger and resisted the enemies of their nation, in order that their sanctuary and the law might be preserved; and they brought great glory to their nation. <sup>30</sup> Jonathan rallied the nation, became their high priest, and was gathered to his people. <sup>31</sup> When their enemies decided to invade their country and lay hands on their sanctuary, <sup>32</sup> then Simon rose up and fought for his nation. He spent great sums of his own money; he armed the soldiers of his nation and paid them wages. <sup>33</sup> He fortified the towns of Judea, and Beth-zur on the borders of Judea, where formerly the arms of the enemy had been stored, and he placed there a garrison of Jews. <sup>34</sup> He also fortified Joppa, which is by the sea, and Gazara, which is on the borders of Azotus, where the enemy formerly lived. He settled Jews there, and provided in those towns whatever was necessary for their restoration.

<sup>35</sup> “The people saw Simon’s faithfulness and the glory that he had resolved to win for his nation, and they made him their leader and high priest, because he had done all

these things and because of the justice and loyalty that he had maintained toward his nation. He sought in every way to exalt his people. <sup>36</sup> In his days things prospered in his hands, so that the Gentiles were put out of the country, as were also those in the city of David in Jerusalem, who had built themselves a citadel from which they used to sally forth and defile the environs of the sanctuary, doing great damage to its purity. <sup>37</sup> He settled Jews in it and fortified it for the safety of the country and of the city, and built the walls of Jerusalem higher.

<sup>38</sup> "In view of these things King Demetrius confirmed him in the high priesthood, <sup>39</sup> made him one of his Friends, and paid him high honors. <sup>40</sup> For he had heard that the Jews were addressed by the Romans as friends and allies and brothers, and that the Romans had received the envoys of Simon with honor.

<sup>41</sup> "The Jews and their priests have resolved that Simon should be their leader and high priest forever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise, <sup>42</sup> and that he should be governor over them and that he should take charge of the sanctuary and appoint officials over its tasks and over the country and the weapons and the strongholds, and that he should take charge of the sanctuary, <sup>43</sup> and that he should be obeyed by all, and that all contracts in the country should be written in his name, and that he should be clothed in purple and wear gold.

<sup>44</sup> "None of the people or priests shall be permitted to nullify any of these decisions or to oppose what he says, or to convene an assembly in the country without his permission, or to be clothed in purple or put on a gold buckle. <sup>45</sup> Whoever acts contrary to these decisions or rejects any of them shall be liable to punishment."

<sup>46</sup> All the people agreed to grant Simon the right to act in accordance with these decisions. <sup>47</sup> So Simon accepted and agreed to be high priest, to be commander and ethnarch of the Jews and priests, and to be protector of them all. <sup>48</sup> And they gave orders to inscribe this decree on bronze tablets, to put them up in a conspicuous place in the precincts of the sanctuary, <sup>49</sup> and to deposit copies of them in the treasury, so that Simon and his sons might have them.

## Chapter 15

<sup>1</sup> Antiochus, son of King Demetrius, sent a letter from the islands of the sea to Simon, the priest and ethnarch of the Jews, and to all the nation; <sup>2</sup> its contents were as follows: "King Antiochus to Simon the high priest and ethnarch and to the nation of the Jews, greetings. <sup>3</sup> Whereas certain scoundrels have gained control of the kingdom of our ancestors, and I intend to lay claim to the kingdom so that I may restore it as it formerly was, and have recruited a host of mercenary troops and have equipped warships, <sup>4</sup> and intend to make a landing in the country so that I may proceed against those who have destroyed our country and those who have devastated many cities in my kingdom, <sup>5</sup> now therefore I confirm to you all the tax remissions that the kings before me have granted you, and a release from all the other payments from which they have released you. <sup>6</sup> I permit you to mint your own coinage as money for your country, <sup>7</sup> and I grant freedom to Jerusalem and the

sanctuary. All the weapons that you have prepared and the strongholds that you have built and now hold shall remain yours. <sup>8</sup> Every debt you owe to the royal treasury and any such future debts shall be canceled for you from henceforth and for all time. <sup>9</sup> When we gain control of our kingdom, we will bestow great honor on you and your nation and the temple, so that your glory will become manifest in all the earth.”

<sup>10</sup> In the one hundred seventy-fourth year Antiochus set out and invaded the land of his ancestors. All the troops rallied to him, so that there were only a few with Trypho. <sup>11</sup> Antiochus pursued him, and Trypho came in his flight to Dor, which is by the sea; <sup>12</sup> for he knew that troubles had converged on him, and his troops had deserted him. <sup>13</sup> So Antiochus encamped against Dor, and with him were one hundred twenty thousand warriors and eight thousand cavalry. <sup>14</sup> He surrounded the town, and the ships joined battle from the sea; he pressed the town hard from land and sea, and permitted no one to leave or enter it.

<sup>15</sup> Then Numenius and his companions arrived from Rome, with letters to the kings and countries, in which the following was written: <sup>16</sup> “Lucius, consul of the Romans, to King Ptolemy, greetings. <sup>17</sup> The envoys of the Jews have come to us as our friends and allies to renew our ancient friendship and alliance. They had been sent by the high priest Simon and by the Jewish people <sup>18</sup> and have brought a gold shield weighing one thousand minas. <sup>19</sup> We therefore have decided to write to the kings and countries that they should not seek their harm or make war against them and their cities and their country, or make alliance with those who war against them. <sup>20</sup> And it has seemed good to us to accept the shield from them. <sup>21</sup> Therefore if any scoundrels have fled to you from their country, hand them over to the high priest Simon, so that he may punish them according to their law.”

<sup>22</sup> The consul wrote the same thing to King Demetrius and to Attalus and Ariarathes and Arsaces, <sup>23</sup> and to all the countries, and to Sampsames, and to the Spartans, and to Delos, and to Myndos, and to Sicyon, and to Caria, and to Samos, and to Pamphylia, and to Lycia, and to Halicarnassus, and to Rhodes, and to Phaselis, and to Cos, and to Side, and to Aradus and Gortyna and Cnidus and Cyprus and Cyrene. <sup>24</sup> They also sent a copy of these things to the high priest Simon.

<sup>25</sup> King Antiochus besieged Dor for the second time, continually throwing his forces against it and making engines of war; and he shut Trypho up and kept him from going out or in. <sup>26</sup> And Simon sent to Antiochus two thousand picked troops, to fight for him, and silver and gold and a large amount of military equipment. <sup>27</sup> But he refused to receive them, and broke all the agreements he formerly had made with Simon, and became estranged from him. <sup>28</sup> He sent to him Athenobius, one of his Friends, to confer with him, saying, “You hold control of Joppa and Gazara and the citadel in Jerusalem; they are cities of my kingdom. <sup>29</sup> You have devastated their territory, you have done great damage in the land, and you have taken possession of many places in my kingdom. <sup>30</sup> Now then, hand over the cities that you have seized and the tribute money of the places that you have conquered outside the borders of

Judea; <sup>31</sup> or else pay me five hundred talents of silver for the destruction that you have caused and five hundred talents more for the tribute money of the cities. Otherwise we will come and make war on you.”

<sup>32</sup> So Athenobius, the king’s Friend, came to Jerusalem, and when he saw the splendor of Simon, and the sideboard with its gold and silver plate, and his great magnificence, he was amazed. When he reported to him the king’s message, <sup>33</sup> Simon said to him in reply: “We have neither taken foreign land nor seized foreign property, but only the inheritance of our ancestors, which at one time had been unjustly taken by our enemies. <sup>34</sup> Now that we have the opportunity, we are firmly holding the inheritance of our ancestors. <sup>35</sup> As for Joppa and Gazara, which you demand, they were causing great damage among the people and to our land; for them we will give you one hundred talents.”

Athenobius did not answer him a word, <sup>36</sup> but returned in wrath to the king and reported to him these words, and also the splendor of Simon and all that he had seen. And the king was very angry.

<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile Trypho embarked on a ship and escaped to Orthosia. <sup>38</sup> Then the king made Cendebeus commander-in-chief of the coastal country, and gave him troops of infantry and cavalry. <sup>39</sup> He commanded him to encamp against Judea, to build up Kedron and fortify its gates, and to make war on the people; but the king pursued Trypho. <sup>40</sup> So Cendebeus came to Jamnia and began to provoke the people and invade Judea and take the people captive and kill them. <sup>41</sup> He built up Kedron and stationed horsemen and troops there, so that they might go out and make raids along the highways of Judea, as the king had ordered him.

## ***Chapter 16***

<sup>1</sup> John went up from Gazara and reported to his father Simon what Cendebeus had done. <sup>2</sup> And Simon called in his two eldest sons Judas and John, and said to them: “My brothers and I and my father’s house have fought the wars of Israel from our youth until this day, and things have prospered in our hands so that we have delivered Israel many times. <sup>3</sup> But now I have grown old, and you by Heaven’s mercy are mature in years. Take my place and my brother’s, and go out and fight for our nation, and may the help that comes from Heaven be with you.”

<sup>4</sup> So John chose out of the country twenty thousand warriors and cavalry, and they marched against Cendebeus and camped for the night in Modein. <sup>5</sup> Early in the morning they started out and marched into the plain, where a large force of infantry and cavalry was coming to meet them; and a stream lay between them. <sup>6</sup> Then he and his army lined up against them. He saw that the soldiers were afraid to cross the stream, so he crossed over first; and when his troops saw him, they crossed over after him. <sup>7</sup> Then he divided the army and placed the cavalry in the center of the infantry, for the cavalry of the enemy were very numerous. <sup>8</sup> They sounded the trumpets, and Cendebeus and his army were put to flight; many of them fell

wounded and the rest fled into the stronghold. <sup>9</sup> At that time Judas the brother of John was wounded, but John pursued them until Cendebeus reached Kedron, which he had built. <sup>10</sup> They also fled into the towers that were in the fields of Azotus, and John burned it with fire, and about two thousand of them fell. He then returned to Judea safely.

<sup>11</sup> Now Ptolemy son of Abubus had been appointed governor over the plain of Jericho; he had a large store of silver and gold, <sup>12</sup> for he was son-in-law of the high priest. <sup>13</sup> His heart was lifted up; he determined to get control of the country, and made treacherous plans against Simon and his sons, to do away with them. <sup>14</sup> Now Simon was visiting the towns of the country and attending to their needs, and he went down to Jericho with his sons Mattathias and Judas, in the one hundred seventy-seventh year, in the eleventh month, which is the month of Shebat. <sup>15</sup> The son of Abubus received them treacherously in the little stronghold called Dok, which he had built; he gave them a great banquet, and hid men there. <sup>16</sup> When Simon and his sons were drunk, Ptolemy and his men rose up, took their weapons, rushed in against Simon in the banquet hall and killed him and his two sons, as well as some of his servants. <sup>17</sup> So he committed an act of great treachery and returned evil for good.

<sup>18</sup> Then Ptolemy wrote a report about these things and sent it to the king, asking him to send troops to aid him and to turn over to him the towns and the country. <sup>19</sup> He sent other troops to Gazara to do away with John; he sent letters to the captains asking them to come to him so that he might give them silver and gold and gifts; <sup>20</sup> and he sent other troops to take possession of Jerusalem and the temple hill. <sup>21</sup> But someone ran ahead and reported to John at Gazara that his father and brothers had perished, and that "he has sent men to kill you also." <sup>22</sup> When he heard this, he was greatly shocked; he seized the men who came to destroy him and killed them, for he had found out that they were seeking to destroy him.

<sup>23</sup> The rest of the acts of John and his wars and the brave deeds that he did, and the building of the walls that he completed, and his achievements, <sup>24</sup> are written in the annals of his high priesthood, from the time that he became high priest after his father.

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