

MACCABAEUS

A Feature Screenplay Excerpt

Based on actual events.

© 2026 Project Maccabaeus. All rights reserved.

This public excerpt may be shared in its complete, unaltered form for noncommercial purposes.

All other rights reserved. No adaptation, sale, production, or unauthorized use of the screenplay is permitted without written permission.

BLACK SCREEN.

QUOTE APPEARS:

Return to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope. Even today I declare that I will render double unto thee.

For I bend Judah for Me like a bow. I have filled Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a hero.

And the Lord shall appear over them, and His arrows shall go forth like lightning. The Lord God shall sound the ram's horn, and He shall go with whirlwinds of the south.

- ZECHARIAH 9:12-14

FADE IN:

EXT. JERUSALEM STREETS - DAY

Seleucid-occupied Jerusalem. Jews, Syrians, Greeks, and travelers from across the empire crowd the marketplace beneath foreign banners.

SUPER: "Jerusalem, 178 B.C.E."

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

A great darkness had fallen upon the
Land of Israel.

HELIODORUS, a middle-aged Syrian nobleman with a shrewd face and arrogant bearing, cuts through the market on horseback. A small cavalry escort follows, forcing merchants and bystanders aside.

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

After Alexander, his generals crowned themselves kings, and their sons after them. Judaea became a prize to be fought over by more powerful nations.

Heliodorus does not slow as frightened locals clear a path.

EXT. TEMPLE GATE - DAY

Heliodorus and his men dismount before the Temple. The horses snort and stamp against the stone. ONIAS III, High Priest of Israel, hurries forward in white linen robes and matching turban. He is nervous, but trying not to show it.

ONIAS

Lord Heliodorus. Shalom aleichem, Your Excellency. We were not expecting you.

HELIODORUS

If I wished to be expected, priest, I would have sent word.

ONIAS

Of course. My apologies. To what do we owe the privilege?

HELIODORUS

The treasury.

Onias' face tightens.

ONIAS

His Majesty's tribute is collected with care.

HELIODORUS

It is not your people's ability to collect money that concerns me.

ONIAS

My lord?

HELIODORUS

We have it on good information that this Temple holds wealth far beyond the needs of the community, and that the surplus has gone unreported.

ONIAS

The treasury holds what is needed for the Sanctuary, the daily offerings, and tzedakah for the poor.

Heliodorus snorts. He starts toward the entrance with his men. Onias steps into his path.

ONIAS

No. You cannot go in there.

Heliodorus' BODYGUARD pins Onias to the wall with the shaft of his spear.

ONIAS

This is hallowed ground. You cannot march armed men into God's House.

HELIODORUS

I was sent by order of His Majesty King Seleucus.

Another priest emerges from the gathering crowd: JASON, Onias' brother, smoother, better dressed, and eager to be useful.

JASON

Forgive him, my lord.

He turns sharply to Onias.

JASON

Be silent, brother.

ONIAS

You would let them trample the inner sanctum?

JASON

If God did not want guests in His house, He would not have given Judaea into their hands.

Onias is stunned silent. Heliodorus resumes his march.

ONIAS

Your Excellency, you do not understand.

HELIODORUS

No, priest. You do not understand. I am going into that treasury. And if I detect the slightest impropriety, I will seize whatever is rightfully ours.

He leans closer.

HELIODORUS

A few boot prints will be the least of your worries.

INT. TEMPLE INNER CHAMBER - DAY

Heliodorus steps inside. The noise behind him dies. His guards are gone. The priests are gone. A wall of ethereal blue flame crackles across the doorway. A linen-clad RIDER sits astride a rearing horse. On either side stands an AVENGING ANGEL, each wielding a whip of living lightning. Heliodorus draws his sword. A whip cracks. Lightning tears the air. Heliodorus drops to his knees. The Rider dismounts. It is ZECHARIAH, the voice of our narrator, a golden sword in his hand.

ZECHARIAH

דע לפני מי אתה עומד

SUBTITLES

Know before Whom you stand.

Zechariah raises the sword. Heliodorus rises with it, helpless, his arms and legs locked in place.

HELIODORUS

In the name of the king, I order you to release me.

Zechariah smiles without warmth.

ZECHARIAH

You stand in the House of the Living God, yet issue proclamations in the name of a dead man?

HELIODORUS

How dare you speak of the emperor that way. My men shall—

Heliodorus gasps for air.

ZECHARIAH

Your men have left you.

With a flick of his wrist, Zechariah releases him. Heliodorus collapses. Zechariah crosses to him.

ZECHARIAH

Your emperor would steal bread from widows and orphans and call it tribute.

He leans close.

ZECHARIAH

He who sows injustice will reap bloodshed.

Heliodorus trembles.

ZECHARIAH

The Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.

A whisper now.

ZECHARIAH

Go, dog. Tell this to your master.

Zechariah turns away. Heliodorus convulses. The blue flame vanishes. The chamber erupts back into noise. Soldiers and priests rush to Heliodorus' aid. A PHYSICIAN pushes through the crowd.

INT. PRIVATE RESIDENCE - DAY

Heliodorus lies in bed, pale and slick with sweat. The Physician watches over him. Heliodorus wakes with a start.

PHYSICIAN

He's awake.

Heliodorus' Bodyguard approaches, followed by Onias.

ONIAS

Your Excellency, thank God you are all right. Our physicians have—

Heliodorus waves him away. His soldiers hustle Onias out.

HELIODORUS

(to Bodyguard)

What happened?

BODYGUARD

You collapsed, my lord.

HELIODORUS

The rider. The angels. Where were you?

The Bodyguard hesitates.

BODYGUARD

There was no rider.

Heliodorus stares at him.

BODYGUARD

You entered the chamber, struck your head, and began convulsing. The physician said—

PHYSICIAN

Epilepsis, my lord.

The room stills.

HELIODORUS

You think I have gone mad.

Heliodorus tries to rise. The Bodyguard reaches to stop him.

BODYGUARD

My lord, you need time to recover.

HELIODORUS

Remove your hand from me, or I shall have it removed from you.

The Bodyguard withdraws. Heliodorus swings his legs over the side of the bed, still shaking.

HELIODORUS

Gather the men.

A beat.

HELIODORUS

We return to Antioch at once.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. SELEUCID PALACE, ANTIOCH - NIGHT

Greco-Syrian nobility drift across palace terraces while servants hurry around them.

SUPER: "Palace of King Seleucus IV, Antioch, Syria"

SELEUCUS (O.S.)

You had but one task.

CUT TO:

INT. ROYAL DINING CHAMBER - NIGHT

KING SELEUCUS IV enters, furious, followed by HELIODORUS, wan and hollow-eyed. A palace guard stands outside the chamber. Seleucus dismisses him with a flick of the wrist, wanting the humiliation kept private.

SELEUCUS

The foremost minister of the great Syrian-Greek Empire. Escorted by my own elite soldiers. And somehow some Hebrew priests managed to overpower you.

HELIODORUS

Your Majesty, it was not the Jews.

SELEUCUS

Sorcery, then?

HELIODORUS

No, my lord.

A flicker of torchlight catches in a polished serving plate. Heliodorus' eyes snap to it. For an instant, he is back inside the Temple. A horse screams. A blade of blue flame. Then he is here again.

HELIODORUS

This was different. Something beyond mortal ken.

Seleucus studies him with contempt, then sits at a royal table covered in delicacies. He takes up a golden RHYTON, its spout shaped like a bull's head, dips it into a bowl of wine, and seals the spout with his thumb.

SELEUCUS

Nonsense. You failed in your charge, and now you seek to appease me with wild stories of angels.

HELIODORUS

I saw what stood between us and the treasury.

SELEUCUS

You found priests and shadows.

HELIODORUS

I found power.

SELEUCUS

You found fear.

HELIODORUS

Yes.

Seleucus studies him, amused despite himself.

HELIODORUS

But not theirs.

Seleucus' smile dies.

SELEUCUS

Your incompetence in this matter is
inexcusable. And your failure could not
have come at a worse time. We are
behind in our tribute to Rome. That
wealth the Jews are hoarding would have
replenished our own treasury.

HELIODORUS

Your Majesty, I--

Seleucus angrily shushes him, as if disciplining a child. He
lets wine pour from the rhyton into his mouth, then grabs a few
morsels of food and chews with vulgar impatience.

SELEUCUS

My son Demetrius remains a political
hostage. And now rumors of this debacle
in Jerusalem have already begun
infecting the troops with your
cowardice.

Heliodorus stares at the bull-headed vessel in Seleucus' hand.
His breathing changes.

HELIODORUS

(under his breath)

Even an ox knows his owner...

Seleucus stops chewing.

SELEUCUS

What did you say?

Heliodorus' hair is damp with sweat. His hands tremble. But his
eyes are clear.

HELIODORUS

Even an ox knows his owner. An ass, his
master's trough.

SELEUCUS

You return from Judea speaking like one
of them.

HELIODORUS

No.

He looks up.

HELIODORUS

I return from Judea alive.

Seleucus studies him, unnerved despite himself.

SELEUCUS

I am king.

A terrible stillness comes over Heliodorus.

HELIODORUS

Not before Him.

Seleucus' eyes flash with murderous rage. He starts for the door. Heliodorus moves first. He wrenches the golden rhyton from Seleucus' hand and drives its bull-headed spout into the king's mouth, knocking him back into his seat. Wine splashes. Or blood. Seleucus claws at the vessel, gagging, pinned against the wall. Heliodorus looms over him, trembling now not with fear, but with something larger than fear.

HELIODORUS

You have eyes, yet do not see. You have ears, yet do not hear.

He leans closer.

HELIODORUS

But you will.

Heliodorus seizes Seleucus by the hair with one hand. With the other, he lifts the wine pitcher. His voice drops into a low, almost ceremonial cadence.

HELIODORUS

מה טובו אוהליך יעקב משכנותיך ישראל

SUBTITLES

How goodly are your tents, O Jacob,
your dwellings, O Israel!

He pours wine into the rhyton. Seleucus convulses beneath him, choking as the red liquid fills the vessel and spills down his throat. The king is trapped, immobilized as Heliodorus was in the Temple. Heliodorus' eyes are open, lucid, terrible. His voice takes on a raspy, otherworldly quality – not madness, but judgment passing through a broken vessel.

HELIODORUS

אם שנותי ברק חרבי ותאחז במשפט ידי אשיב
נקם לצרי ולמשנאי אשלם

SUBTITLES

When I sharpen My glittering sword,
and My hand grasps judgment, I will
bring vengeance upon My adversaries
and repay those who hate Me.

Heliodorus slams the back of Seleucus' head against the wall. The tile cracks. He does it again. Seleucus' hands weaken.

HELIODORUS

אשכיר חצי מדם וחרבי תאכל בשר

SUBTITLES

I will make Mine arrows drunk with
blood, and My sword shall consume
flesh.

One last blow. Seleucus goes still. The rhyton remains lodged in his mouth. Wine and blood drip from the bull's head. Heliodorus releases him. The king's body spills heavily to the floor. Silence. Heliodorus stands over him, garments stained red, shaking violently now. The palace guards burst in and stop at the sight of the dead king. Heliodorus does not resist. He whispers, almost weeping:

HELIODORUS

הרנינו גוים עמו כי דם עבדיו יקום ונקם
ישיב לצריו וכפר אדמתו עמו

SUBTITLES

Sing out praise, O nations, for His
people. For He will avenge the blood
of His servants.

The guards seize him. Heliodorus looks past them, toward something none of them can see. They place a black bag over his head.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTIOCH PALACE - DAY

A crowd has gathered for the coronation of ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES. He wears silk robes and a gold crown with thin solar spikes.

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

With the king dead and his heir held by
Rome, Seleucus' brother claimed the
throne.

The crown is placed on Antiochus' head. The court prostrates itself.

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

Antiochus claimed for himself the title
Epiphanes - God Manifest. To the Jews,
he would become known simply as
Epimanes.

Antiochus lifts his chin, basking in worship.

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

The Mad.

CUT TO:

EXT. MODI' IN - DAY

A modest Judean village tucked among rocky hills and olive groves. Quiet. Old. Stubbornly alive.

INT. MATTATHIAS' HOUSE - DAY

MATTATHIAS sits at a wooden table, aged but vigorous, dressed in a coarse robe of sackcloth. Across from him sits PHILIP, a polished Seleucid official used to being welcomed. Two court functionaries stand behind him. A pair of soldiers linger near the doorway, close enough to be seen, far enough to preserve the fiction of courtesy. Philip smiles.

PHILIP

Rabbi Mattathias. Priest of a noble house. Leader of Modi'in.

Mattathias inclines his head, accepting the courtesy without returning the warmth.

PHILIP

Men like you are the reason His Majesty prefers persuasion to force.

MATTATHIAS

Then I am glad His Majesty remembers there is a difference.

Philip accepts the edge in the answer and glides past it.

PHILIP

The king asks only a public gesture. Nothing more.

MATTATHIAS

A gesture.

PHILIP

An offering upon the altar.

MATTATHIAS

Whose altar?

PHILIP

The king's.

Mattathias looks toward the doorway, where the soldiers wait.

MATTATHIAS

And if I decline this gesture?

PHILIP

Then others will make it. Less worthy men. Men without your learning, your lineage, your influence.

He leans in, intimate now.

PHILIP

No one asks you to abandon the Law of Moses, Rabbi. Only to show the king that Modi'in understands its place.

Mattathias says nothing.

PHILIP

Be first. Do this, and your family will be counted among the King's Friends. Peace. Wealth. Honor. Protection for your sons.

Mattathias' eyes sharpen at that last phrase.

MATTATHIAS

Protection from whom?

Philip holds the smile.

PHILIP

From the disorder that follows when good men make enemies of necessity.

Mattathias lets the words sit.

MATTATHIAS

You speak as though the matter is settled.

PHILIP

It is.

MATTATHIAS

Then you did not come to ask me.

PHILIP

I came to spare you.

A silence.

MATTATHIAS

All the nations of the king's realm may forsake the customs of their fathers.

Philip's smile fades slightly.

MATTATHIAS

But I and my sons will not offer sacrifice on that altar.

PHILIP

Will not?

MATTATHIAS

Cannot, if you prefer courtesy.

Philip exhales, disappointed but not surprised.

PHILIP

I had hoped age would make you practical.

MATTATHIAS

It has.

Philip stands. The soldiers straighten.

PHILIP

Then we will find someone more practical.

Mattathias rises with him.

MATTATHIAS

You may.

Philip pauses at the doorway.

MATTATHIAS

But do not mistake practicality for honor.

For the first time, Philip's polish cracks. Then he exits with his entourage. Mattathias remains standing until Philip's footsteps fade. Only then does his strength leave him. He lowers himself back into the chair, suddenly older. A moment of silence. Then—

NAPHTALI (O.S.)

Rebbi!

NAPHTALI, young, breathless, and dust-covered, bursts in. Mattathias is instantly himself again.

MATTATHIAS

Naphtali. Sit. Water first, then news.

NAPHTALI

No time.

MATTATHIAS

There is always time to breathe.

Naphtali tries. Fails. His panic wins.

NAPHTALI

Imperial troops have laid siege to the Temple precincts, Onias is confined to his residence under guard, and the administration is in complete disarray.

Mattathias takes it in. Pained, but not surprised.

MATTATHIAS

But you did not run all this way just to tell me Jerusalem bleeds.

Naphtali shakes his head.

NAPHTALI

No, Rebbi. They have come here.

Mattathias stills.

MATTATHIAS

Where?

NAPHTALI

The town square. Philip's men.
Soldiers. Some of the town elders.

MATTATHIAS

They've constructed an altar.

Naphtali nods.

NAPHTALI

They say the whole village is to gather
before sunset.

Mattathias looks toward the door Philip just exited through.

MATTATHIAS

My sons.

NAPHTALI

Rebbi?

MATTATHIAS

The inn.

Naphtali hesitates, confused.

NAPHTALI

The inn?

Mattathias reaches for his walking stick.

MATTATHIAS

They closed the house of study, so my
sons sought other venues. Tell them to
meet me in the square.

NAPHTALI

All of them?

Mattathias opens the door and exits without turning back.

MATTATHIAS

All of them.

INT. TOWN INN - DAY

At the center of it all sit JUDAH, SIMON, JOHN, JONATHAN, and ELAZAR — the sons of Mattathias. Simon carries himself like the eldest man in every room. John keeps near the entrance, watching the room and the street beyond a narrow slot in the door.

Jonathan wears an easy demeanor and a watchful smile. Judah sits still among them. Ready.

Elazar, pale and narrow-shouldered, bends over a small SCROLL with the fierce concentration of a scholar guarding treasure. Around them sit students of varying ages, pretending not to look like students. Behind Simon sits HIS WIFE, quiet and watchful.

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

Mattathias had five sons: John, called Gadi; Simon, called Thassi; Judah, called Maccabee; Elazar, called Avaran; and Jonathan, called Apphus.

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

Treasured one. Guide. Hammer. Piercer. Diplomat. Names they would carry into war. Names they would carry into history.

Simon watches the room from beneath lowered eyes. John glances through the slot in the door. Jonathan trades banter with a merchant as if nothing in the room worries him.

They are not soldiers yet. Elazar reads.

ELAZAR

"Not by power," the prophet declares, "nor by might. But by My spirit, says the Lord of Hosts." Who can tell me what this verse comes to teach?

URIEL, eight years old and painfully earnest, raises his hand. Elazar nods to him.

URIEL

That victory is not always given to the strongest army. It is given to whomever God wills.

ELAZAR

Well said, Uriel.

Uriel beams.

ELAZAR

All of you should be proud. You know the punishment for studying the Law, and still you come. If our nation is to endure, it will be by the help of Heaven, and by the courage of young men and women like—

A change outside. Boots on stone. John glances through the narrow slot in the door. A pair of Seleucid troops approach.

JOHN

Soldiers.

Across the table, Judah does not look up. Elazar slips the scroll beneath the table and produces a deck of playing cards. Jonathan scatters coins. Judah slides bread and olives into the center. Students pull out dreidels and spin them with practiced ease. Within seconds, Torah study has become gambling.

A SELEUCID SOLDIER enters. His eyes scan the room. The students laugh a little too loudly. Elazar deals cards with surgical focus. The soldier's gaze lands on Uriel. Uriel freezes. Judah smiles and ruffles the boy's hair.

JUDAH

You'll lose your father's whole purse
if you keep playing like that.

The table laughs. Uriel manages a smile. Outside, another soldier calls. The soldier in the doorway hesitates, then exits.

Breath returns to the table. The cards vanish. The coins are gathered. The dreidels disappear into sleeves and pouches. Elazar retrieves the scroll.

ELAZAR

Now. The Navi spoke these words when we
were coming out of exile in Babylonia.
Keep that in mind, because—

The door bursts open. NAPHTALI rushes in and slams straight into John. John barely moves. Naphtali stumbles back, mortified.

NAPHTALI

My teachers. Forgive me.

John steadies him with one hand. Every brother sees Naphtali's face. The lesson is over.

SIMON

You are not here for the lunch and
learn.

Naphtali crosses to them and speaks in hushed, urgent tones. The brothers rise together. Elazar rolls the scroll and slides it into a satchel.

JUDAH

Class dismissed.

The students begin gathering their things.

JUDAH

Straight home. No lingering.

The students obey. The brothers start for the door. Simon turns to his wife. A look: stay here. She hates it, but nods. He touches her shoulder, then follows his brothers out.

CUT TO:

EXT. MODI'IN PUBLIC SQUARE - DAY

The village square is crowded. Aside from scattered whispers, quiet. Quiet in the way a courtroom gets quiet before a verdict. An unfinished ALTAR stands atop a raised platform. Beside it: a painted statue of ARES with Antiochus' features. A bound PIG strains against the rail.

Seleucid soldiers hold the edges of the crowd – not enough to fight the whole village, enough to remind it what fighting would cost.

At the center of the platform stands a GREEK EMISSARY. Beside him stands PERETZ SON OF ALEXANDER, wealthy, Hellenized, and determined not to see the faces that know him. Mattathias and his sons arrive. Mattathias sees the altar. Sees the pig. Sees the statue.

His face goes still. Simon sees it and steps closer.

SIMON

Abba, not here.

Mattathias keeps his eyes on the platform.

SIMON

There are soldiers among the crowd. If this turns–

MATTATHIAS

I see them.

JUDAH

Then we leave and choose our ground.

Mattathias looks at Judah. For a moment, father and son understand each other perfectly. Mattathias looks back to the platform.

MATTATHIAS

The ground has chosen us.

The Emissary raises his hands.

EMISSARY

People of Modi'in.

The murmurs thin.

EMISSARY

His Majesty Antiochus Epiphanes, god manifest, extends his hand to every people beneath his dominion.

A few scattered villagers clap. Most do not.

EMISSARY

No longer shall Syrian, Greek, Jew, or
any other tribe divide itself from the
peace of the realm. One king. One law.
One people.

The Emissary turns to Peretz.

EMISSARY

And here, among you, stands a son of
Israel loyal enough to welcome that
peace.

PERETZ

My neighbors. My friends. You know me.
You know my house. You know I have
given bread in lean years and silver
when taxes came due.

He lets that land.

PERETZ

So hear me now. A people survives by
knowing when to bend.

A hard murmur moves through the crowd.

PERETZ

This is not surrender. It is wisdom.

Mattathias watches him, stricken.

EMISSARY

Well spoken.

The Emissary gestures to the pig.

EMISSARY

Proceed.

Peretz turns toward the altar. Simon takes Mattathias by the
arm.

SIMON

Abba.

Mattathias does not move. Peretz reaches for the sacrificial
knife. Mattathias looks to Judah.

MATTATHIAS

Your sword.

JUDAH

Pardon?

MATTATHIAS

Lend me your sword.

JUDAH

Father, you know as well as I that the bearing of arms has been expressly forbidden by royal edict.

Mattathias glares at him. Judah relents, opening his cloak just enough to reveal a small bronze XIPHOS. He passes it to his father beneath the folds of both their garments. Simon sees.

SIMON

Father, no.

Mattathias slips the sheathed blade inside his cloak and steps forward. The crowd parts for him. At the base of the platform stairs, two SOLDIERS cross their spears.

SOLDIER #1

Back.

MATTATHIAS

I am Mattathias, son of Yohanan, a priest of this village.

The soldiers glance at each other. They know the name.

MATTATHIAS

I have had time to reconsider, and I am here to bestow my blessing. Everyone knows it is not kosher unless a rabbi blesses it.

The soldiers eye him suspiciously. The Emissary considers this. Public approval has value.

EMISSARY

Let him pass.

The soldiers lower their spears. Mattathias climbs the steps slowly, the sheathed blade hidden beneath his cloak. Judah drifts closer to the platform steps. Simon sees him go, then follows. Peretz turns as Mattathias approaches. For one impossible moment, he looks relieved.

PERETZ

Rabbi-

Mattathias stops before him. He speaks low enough that only Peretz hears.

MATTATHIAS

Do not do this.

Peretz keeps his face toward the crowd.

PERETZ

You think refusal will stop them?

MATTATHIAS

I think submission will not.

Only now does Peretz look at him.

PERETZ

We have to protect our people.

Mattathias' eyes fill.

MATTATHIAS

Yes.

Peretz almost relaxes.

MATTATHIAS

We do.

Mattathias embraces him. For one strange moment, Peretz lets himself be held. Then— Peretz grunts. Loudly. The crowd goes still, confused. Mattathias grips him tighter, tears standing in his eyes. With all the strength left in his old body, he drives the concealed sword deeper. The bronze tip bursts through Peretz's back. A woman screams. Peretz looks over Mattathias' shoulder, stunned. Mattathias whispers into his ear.

MATTATHIAS

Forgive me.

He pulls the blade free. Peretz collapses against the altar. The square erupts. The pig tears loose and bolts through the crowd. Villagers scatter. Soldiers shove forward. The nearest soldier lunges for Mattathias. Judah drives into him before the spear can reach his father. John takes the steps in two bounds and hurls another soldier off the platform. Jonathan yanks two frozen villagers out of the way. Simon shouts over the chaos.

SIMON

Get him down!

Mattathias stands on the platform, Judah's sword slick with blood. He sets his eyes on the Emissary. The Emissary backs away, suddenly pale.

EMISSARY

Stop him!

No one does. Mattathias turns on the Emissary. Not fast. Not young. Unstoppable. The Emissary stumbles backward, catches his heel in the pig's rope, and falls hard from the platform. A sickening crack. Silence ripples outward from the body. Then the chaos returns louder. Mattathias looks at the statue of Ares. At Antiochus' painted face.

MATTATHIAS

Not here.

John follows his eyes. He seizes the rope still looped around the platform rail. Simon joins him. Judah reaches them a beat later, bloodied and breathing hard. The three sons pull. The

statue rocks but does not fall. More villagers grab the rope. Then more. Mattathias, blood on his hands, takes hold too.

MATTATHIAS

Again.

They pull. The idol tips. For one suspended instant, Antiochus' painted face seems to look down upon them. Then the statue crashes to the stones and shatters. A stunned silence. Mattathias climbs down from the platform with Judah's help. He turns to the crowd. His voice cuts through the square.

MATTATHIAS

Whoever is for the Lord - to me!

Elazar lifts a shofar to his lips. The blast tears through the square. Raw. Ancient. Terrible. A cry rises from the crowd - fear, grief, defiance, all bound together. The brothers mount the nearest soldiers' horses. Mattathias is helped onto his own. He looks once more at the shattered idol. Then he turns toward the mountains. Judah rides at his side. Simon, John, Jonathan, and Elazar follow. One by one, villagers break from the square and follow after them. Not all. Enough. The war has begun.