

Hanukkah Reflection
Susan Huddleston
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To Be Dedicated

Loving not our lives

When we read 1 Maccabees chapter one it does not take very long to be confronted with a level of courage that can only be granted to mere men and women from heaven itself. In the face of unimaginable persecution this chapter closes with these verses:

“But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. They chose to die rather than be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die. And very great wrath came upon Israel.” 1 Maccabees 1:62-64

In reading these verses this morning I was reminded of a passage in Hebrews 11 that I believe includes a reflection of the persecution that occurred during this time of the Maccabees.

“Women received back their dead by resurrection. And others were tortured, not accepting release, to obtain a better resurrection. And others had trials of mocking and flogging and more, of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were tried, they were sawn in two, they were slain with the sword. They went about in sheepskin, in goat skins, being in need, afflicted, mistreated, of whom the world was not worthy - wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes of the earth. And having obtained witness through the belief, all these did not receive the promise, Elohim having provided what is better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.” Hebrews 11:35-40

Because this time of our history in between the First Covenant (Old Testament) and the Renewed Covenant (New Testament) has largely been ignored and forgotten by modern believers, the connection of these verses with this saga in Israel’s history usually goes unrealized.

Following the natural flow of the context of Hebrews 11 however it is evident that the writer of Hebrews, whom I believe was Paul, was writing of a time that followed the period of the Scriptural prophets - as read in verse 32 just prior to verse 35 and ends with... *“and the prophets”*.

Because the events of the Maccabean Revolt occurred after the closing out of the writings of the First Covenant prophets and the time of Paul, it is reasonable to believe that Paul is reflecting here partly on this portion of Israel’s history. This is especially true at the verse I have marveled at many times, verse 35:

“Women received back their dead by resurrection. And others were tortured, not accepting release, to obtain a better resurrection.”

In researching this for a moment this morning I found I was not the first, as usual, to have linked this passage to what had occurred during the time period of the Maccabees. Looking into Matthew Henry’s Commentary I found this reference:

Hebrews 11:32-40, III, 1. *They were tortured, not accepting deliverance*, v. 35
... This is thought to refer to that memorable story, 2 Macc. ch. 7, etc.

I will not take the space here to rewrite 2 Macc. 7 but I would encourage you to include it in your Feast of Dedication/Hanukkah reflections. Some, I am sure, being familiar with this passage recognize immediately the context of this chapter. This chapter contains a glimpse into nothing short of the miraculous aid heaven can and does give to one who is overcoming the world by not relenting of their belief in the Everlasting Covenant.

In chapter seven of 2 Macc. we find the story of a mother and her seven sons who had been taken captive by the wicked tyrant King Antiochus, and were being compelled to taste swine’s flesh, which is against the Torah and would defile their bodies. One by one the sons resisted this defilement and were tortuously murdered in front of their mother and each other. Yes, it is a hard chapter to read let alone to imagine, but the Set-apart Spirit wanted to be sure their memory, and others like them, was included with honor and heavenly validation in our hall

of faith Hebrews chapter 11. When we make this connection of those who suffered during the Maccabean Revolt with Hebrews 11 we realize yet again, that this time period is a portion of our history that has been removed from our understanding when we read our Scriptures...but it is in there. Because of this, these heroes of faith go unhonored in our memory when reading this great chapter of faith and their examples of courage silently fruitless.

Let me record here just one testimony given out of the noble courage that rested on these brothers as they each watched the one before them tortured and murdered right in front of their eyes.

“After him was the third made a mocking stock: and when he was required, he put out his tongue, and that right soon, holding forth his hands manfully. And said courageously, These I had from heaven; and for His laws I despise them; and from Him I hope to receive them again. Insomuch that the king, and they that were with him, marveled at the young man’s courage, for that he nothing regarded the pains.” 2 Macc. 7:10-12

What virtue worthy of remembrance! And above all, the mother of the seven sons who stood with unimaginable valor in the very face of this murderous wickedness. She is among the many referenced here in Hebrews 11, but sadly goes unheard of by most Scripture readers today. Upon her we find the most amazing spirit of favor resting:

“But the mother was marvelous above all, and worthy of honorable memory: for when she saw her seven sons slain within the space of a day, she bare it with good courage, because of the hope she had in [YHVH]. Yea, she exhorted every one of them in her own language, filled with courageous spirits; and stirring up her womanish thoughts with a manly stomach, she said unto them, I cannot tell how ye came into my womb: for I neither gave you breath nor life, neither was it I who formed the members of every one of you; But doubtless the Creator of the world, who formed the generation of man, and found out the beginning of all things, will also of His own mercy give you breath and life again, as ye now regard not your own selves for His laws’ sake. 2 Maccabees 7:20-23

Oh beloved, how far we have fallen from the understanding of dedication and loving commitment to our Elohim (God) and His ways. It is unthinkable that we, YaH’s people, have been convinced to depart from the instructions to GUARD His commandments and have been

turned into a people who believe they are a wrongly placed BURDEN upon our backs and worst yet, we no longer even understand what they are.

There is hope however because we serve the Elohim of hope! Our Scriptures prophesy that there will be a remnant at the end of this age who will yet again overcome this same spirit of anti-messiah that our ancestors in our hall of faith overcame.

And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the Word of their witness, and they loved not their lives to the death. Rev. 12:11

Now this... is DEDICATION!