



***JAMES  
M. LUDLOW***

***DEBORAH:  
A TALE  
OF THE TIMES  
OF JUDAS  
MACCABAEUS***

**James M. Ludlow**

# **Deborah: A tale of the times of Judas Maccabaeus**

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# DEBORAH

## I THE CITY OF PRIDE Table of Contents



King Antiochus, self-styled Epiphanes, the Glorious, was in a humor that ill-suited that title. He cursed his scribe who had just read to him a letter, kicked away the cushions where his royal and gouty feet had been resting, and strode about the chamber declaring that, by all the gods! he would make such a show in Antioch that the whole world would be agog with amazement.

The letter which exploded the temper of his majesty was from Philippi, in Macedonia, and told how the Romans, those insolent republicans of the West, had made a magnificent fête to commemorate their conquest of the country of Perseus, the last of the kings of Greece.

Epiphanes was a compound of pusillanimity and conceit. He could forget the insult offered by a Roman officer who drew about "The Glorious" a circle in the sand, and threatened to thrash the kingship out of him if he did not at once desist from a certain attempt upon Egypt; but he could not endure that another should outshine him in the pomp for which Antioch was famous. This Eagle of Syria, as he

liked to be called, would rather have his talons cut than lose any of his plumage.

Hence that great oath of the king. So loud and ominous was it that the pet jackanapes sprang to the shoulder of the statue of the Syrian Venus, and clung with his hairy arms about her marble neck. The giant guardsmen in the adjacent court, who, half asleep, stood leaning upon their pikes, were startled into spasmodic motion, and shouldered their weapons, before their contemptuous glances showed that they understood the words that rang out to them.

"By all the gods! if Rome has the power, and Alexandria the commerce, Antioch shall be queen in splendor, though it takes all the gold of all the provinces to dress her."

The scribe smiled blandly and bowed his appreciation of this new-coming glory of his master. The jackanapes took heart, and, after annihilating some of his own personal enemies with vigorous scratching of his haunches, leaped from the statue to the arm of the King's chair. So the grand pageant was ordered.

All the world was invited to the Syrian capital. For an entire month such splendors and sports were seen at Daphne, the famous pleasure-grounds near to Antioch, that ever after the capital was called Epidaphne, the City by the Grove. The heights of Silpius, on whose lower slope Antioch lay like a jewel in the lap of a queen, blazed by day with a thousand banners, and at night with fires whose reflection turned the Orontes that flowed below the city into a stream of molten gold.

One day was devoted to military display. There were fifty thousand soldiers of many nations, from the perfectly

formed Greek of the Peloponnesus to the Persian, who made up for his lack of muscle by the superior glitter of his spear, and the lithe and swarthy Arabs from all the deserts between the Ægean and the Euphrates. Plumes of gold nodded above shields of bronze and silver. Hundreds of chariots glowed like rainbows in their parti-colored enamel, and were drawn by horses buckled and bossed with precious gems. Drove of elephants armored in dazzling steel carried upon their backs howdahs like thrones.

A stalwart young Greek stood looking at this martial display. He wore the chiton, or under-garment, cut short above the knees, and belted at the loins, where hung a stout sword indicating that he too was a soldier.

"What think you, Dion?" asked a comrade.

"Why, that the body-guard of our King Perseus, though numbering but three thousand, could have annihilated this whole mongrel horde as readily as Alexander did the million when he won this land for his degenerate successors. But I must not criticise the service I am enrolled to enter."

Following the soldiery in the procession came a thousand young men, each wearing a crown of seeming gold, clad in glistening white silk, and holding aloft a huge tusk of ivory. These symbolized the trade wealth of Syria.

But the army having passed by, the Greek was soon wearied with the rest of the display; and, bidding his companion farewell, with a few sage suggestions about the temptations of the Grove at night, such as one young fellow might give another, went into the city.

The second day's festivities were of a less valiant, though not less fascinating sort. It was the Day of Beauty. Hundreds



of fair women, in balconies that overhung the narrow streets of the city, or grouped upon platforms here and there throughout the Grove, flung into the air the dust of sandalwood and other spiceries, or sprinkled the crowds with drops of aromatic ointments. At the crossing of the paths were great vessels of nard and cinnamon and oils, scented with marjoram and lily, that even the paupers might delight themselves with the perfume of princes. Tanks of wine and tables spread with viands were as free as they were costly.

But the King himself was the most extravagant provision of the show. In him the dignity of a king was less than the vanity of the man: his coxcomb more than his crown. It cut him to the quick that a courtier should outdress him, a charioteer better manage his steeds, or a fakir set the mouths of the crowd more widely gaping. In the military procession yesterday he had sat between the tusks of an enormous elephant, and pricked the brute's trunk with a golden prod. He had also ridden a famous stallion,—tightly curbed, it is true, and flanked by six athletic grooms.

His majesty's originality was especially shown on the Day of Beauty by his riding beside Clarissa, the famous dancer, in the chariot where she reclined as Queen of the Grove, an apparition of Astarte herself. The extemporized divinity of love wore a moon-shaped tiara of silver, the symbol of the Queen of Heaven; Epiphanes put on an aureole of gold to represent the glory of the Sun. A score of women whose forms were familiar to all the frequenters of the dancing gardens of Daphne lay at their feet.

Dion was an onlooker. He had caught so much of the spirit of the day as to curl his locks and drape a purple himation or outer cloak from his left shoulder.

"That's the Macedonian," said one of Clarissa's satellites, as from her float she spied the graceful form in the crowd.

"A perfect Apollo!" was the critical response, which drew a jealous glance from even The Glorious, who made the unkingly comment:

"No. His nose isn't true. Has the snout of a Jew."

His Majesty deserved to hear, though he did not, the comment the Greek was at the same moment making to his comrade:

"Humph! Epiphanes, the Glorious! Well do the people call him Epimanes, the Fool."

Captain Dion, notwithstanding the contemptuous sentiments thus far awakened by the great show, was an observer the day following; for the spectacular greatness of the affair would have drawn a Diogenes into the crowd.

This was All-Gods Day. The various deities of the nations which Epiphanes' fathers had conquered for him, and those of lands which the ambitious monarch claimed, though he had not yet subdued them,—these were represented by their statues, or by living personages who were appalled in celestial hues; that is, so far as the King's costumers were acquainted with the fashions of the world beyond the clouds.

One float bore a tableau in which Mount Olympus appeared, peopled with divinities, among whom Jupiter sat with uplifted hand holding a sheaf of golden spears for lightning bolts, which the shaking of the float made to

menace the spectators with celestial ire. A bull-headed Moloch of brass was contributed by the adjacent Phœnician city of Sidon; this was followed by a stone Winged Bull from Babylon.

Lesser divinities held their court before the gaping crowds, as if heaven were trailing its banners beneath the greater glory of the earthly monarch. Indeed, the vanity of Epiphanes did not hesitate to make this monstrous pretension. He was magnificently enthroned, his head canopied by a device in which a golden sun and silvery planets were made to float through fleecy azure. At his feet on a lower platform were priests representing every religion in his wide domain—those of the Phœnician Baal in white robes with fluted skirts slashed diagonally with violet scarfs, their heads covered with close-fitting caps of knitted hair-work, as if of a piece with their black beards; Greek priests with gloomy brows inspecting the entrails of the sacrifice; and naked Bacchantes, crowned with the leaves of the vine.

Among these sacred officials was Menelaos, the High Priest of the Jews, clad in the beauty of the ancient pontificate; his white tunic partly covered with the blue robe; his head surmounted with the flower-shaped turban. Menelaos was not the rightful High Priest of his people. His brother, the sainted Onias, had held that office, until, after long captivity in the prison of Daphne, he was murdered by Menelaos' order, not far from the spot the fratricide was now passing.

As on the previous days, Dion, the Macedonian, had his station as a spectator on the raised platform by the splendid gate of Daphne. By his side was a young man. He was of

decided Jewish countenance, of slight form, head uncovered except for the silver band which held his artificially curled hair close down upon his forehead—the fashion of Antiochian fops of the time; from his shoulders a yellow himation buckled with an enormous jewel and cornered with purple devices.

"I take it, Glaucon," said Dion, "that you are in feather with the High Priest of your people. If I mistook it not, you gave him a knowing nod, which he would have returned had not his pose at the feet of the King prevented."

"Yes," replied the Jew, "Menelaos and I are good friends. And well we may be, for, next to his own, my family is the noblest in Jerusalem. Menelaos has great influence with the King, and has brought me into much favor in Antioch."

"Such favor you will doubtless need, if reports be true," replied Dion. "They say that General Apollonius has made your city of Jerusalem a butcher's pen. That surely might have been avoided, since Menelaos, and your house—the house of——"

"The house of Elkiah, the Nasi," quickly interjected Glaucon.

The Greek continued: "Since such great families as yours have been induced to accept the lordship of Antioch, why not all others? I fear that Apollonius is given to the wearing of the bones on the outside of his hand."

"Well he may be," replied Glaucon, "for my people are obdurate,—stupidly so. Many of them are crazed with their religious bigotry. For the precept of some dead Rabbi they would live in the tombs. They would cut off their flesh rather than part with a traditional hem of the garment. They are so

proud that one of them would not marry Astarte herself. But a few of us are wiser. We are going to introduce the Greek customs which are so beautiful and joyous; learn your philosophy; adorn our Temple with your art. Young Jewry hears the call of the Greek civilization, as does all the rest of the world. Old Jewry is soured with its traditions, as milk is from too long standing."

"I am glad that I am not a Jew," replied Dion. "I fear that my love of fight would make me a rebel."

"Not you, Captain Dion," said the Jew, looking with admiration into the Greek's handsome face and his blue eyes, that were as full of frolic as of fire. "You, Dion, could fight for a woman, if she were beautiful; but not for a gray-walled temple, and a lot of psalm-snoring priests."

"Well," replied Dion, "I shall soon have a chance to study your strange people; for I am ordered by the King to join Apollonius. I sail to-morrow on the *Eros*, from the harbor of Seleucia to Joppa."

"Then I am in high luck," replied the Jew enthusiastically, "since I will have you for a fellow-passenger. One night more in Daphne! I assure you that I shall play the true Greek, and fill myself with the best that is left in Antioch, since to-morrow I pay tribute to Neptune. You will join me at sunset, Captain? Celanus' wines are excellent."

"Impossible," replied Dion. "I must keep my legs steady under me, and my brain-pan level, for to-morrow I shall have to take charge of a hundred of the most villainous wretches that the King ever got together. And he calls them 'Greek soldiers,' though there isn't a man of them that can tell his race two generations back. A lot of pirates, robbers,

mine-slaves, and old wine-skins on legs! Greek soldiers! When Mars turns chambermaid to a stable we Greeks will be such soldiers. But they may be good enough for the work that Apollonius has for them in Jerusalem. Farewell! Tomorrow at noon on deck!"

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Even a king must sometimes work. So Antiochus, the Glorious, laid aside the trappings of divinity and attended to business. A vast empire, such as he had inherited through several generations from Alexander the Great, needed care. So far as possible the King farmed out the government of the provinces to those who would return the largest revenue, and trouble him least about the method of their gathering it. Yet something was left for even the King to do.

First in the royal interest, after he had returned to his palace, was the report of the chief of the city spies—old Briareus, he fondly called him, since he was as one that had a hundred arms, and a thousand fingers on them, which were in all the private affairs of the inhabitants of the capital. Having satisfied himself with his chief's account, and feeling confident that the royal throat was in no immediate danger of being cut by any of the multitude he was daily outraging, the King turned to less interesting matters, such as the whereabouts of his many armies, their victories and defeats.

"Your tablets, Timon."

The scribe read:

"Apollonius reports all quiet at Jerusalem. Executed two hundred yesterday."

"Good!" said the King. "Bid him leave not so much as a ghost of a Jew above Hades; and then let him hasten the work in the country to the north. The Jewish peasants are unsubdued. It is not safe for a single company of our troops to go over land to Judea. I have had to send the detachment tomorrow by water down the coast."

"There is the matter of Glaucon, son of the Nasi. You recall your Majesty's promise to spare his property. It was a part of the bargain with Menelaos, the Priest."

"To Hades with the Priest!" cried the King.

"Would it be wise to break with Menelaos?" timidly suggested the scribe.

"You are right, Timon. The High Priest will be convenient in Jerusalem,—like the handle to a blade. Has Menelaos paid up all he promised?"

"Yes; the nine hundred talents are safe."

"Nine hundred talents! That rascal must have robbed the Temple."

"Well, if he did, it will save your Majesty the trouble of finding the hidden coffers. They say that the old King Solomon put his gold into wells as deep as the earth, and that only the High Priest knows where they are."

"A good thought!" said the Glorious, thumping the bald head of the scribe with the royal seal. "Your skull, Timon, is as full of wisdom as a beggar's is of fleas. When Menelaos has gobbled down all the gold there is in Jerusalem, we will open his crop and let out the shekels, as they do corn grains from a turkey's gullet. A good thought! But enough of these things. They tire me. Business is for slaves, not for kings."

Did you note to-day how the people looked as I appeared in the procession?"

"Your Majesty's glory can but grow upon the multitude. It is like that of a mountain,—of a sunset—of—of the Great Sea when the glowing orb of day with rays like the dishevelled hair——"

"Stop, good Timon; no flattery. You know I never could abide flattery."

"No words could flatter your Majesty." The scribe bowed upon the marble floor, and kissed the feet of his master.

"Now begone," said the King. "Let everything be ready for to-night. Clarissa, the Queen of the Grove, comes with a troop of her dancers."

With a wave of the royal hand the scribe vanished, and instead came the King's costumers and physician; for the body of the Glorious must be re-apparelled, and his stomach put in order for feasting.





# II THE CITY OF DESOLATION

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The streets of Jerusalem in every age have been thronged with the same motley multitude: cool-looking, white-shirted market venders from the stalls; no shirted sweat-hot artisans from the cellar workshops; dyers, designated by their badges of bright-colored threads; tailors, in heraldry of ornamented needles; carpenters, wearing their symbol of square and compass—of which they were as proud as the scribe was of the pen stuck behind his ear; fishermen from Galilee and the coast jostling the fruiterers with great baskets on their heads; bare-legged, dirt-tanned laborers from the fields; half-naked children of either sex, playing with equal carelessness whether they knocked over the piles of fruit and black bread that stood upon the stone pavement, or were themselves knocked over by the sharp hoofs of asses or the spongy feet of camels. These exponents of common, toiling humanity made way for the gay tunic-clad aristocrats of the Upper City of Sion, white-robed priests from the Temple Mount, gray-sheeted women from the Cheesemakers Street, and ladies in black silken garments and caps of coins, who were borne in palanquins from the more fashionable Street of David.

But in the year 167 before our Era all these had disappeared,—as suddenly and completely as the sea-mullets and blackfish are driven out of the shallows in the bay of Joppa by an invasion of sharks.

The costumes and speech of the new crowd on the streets were foreign, chiefly those of Greek and Syrian soldiers, with broad-brimmed hats, loose-knit, iron-linked corsage, tight leather leggings, and short, stout cleaver-like swords hanging from their girdles. Here and there one stood stock still, sentinelling his corner of the street, with the point of his sarissa or long spear gleaming ten cubits above his head, while his broad circular shield held abreast made an eddy in the living current as it swept around him. These were the soldiers of Antiochus Epiphanes.

Mingled with them were many foreign civilians, as their dress indicated; merchants whose belts were well filled with gold to purchase what the soldiers might steal; colonists to resettle the lands from which the conquered people were expelled; and hordes of hucksters and harlots who followed the armies of the time as dust clouds come after chariots.

Nor were there wanting in the crowd those whose curved noses contradicted the disguise of their newly cropped hair, and proclaimed them to be renegade Jews: men who preferred to retain their ancestral property by denying the faith of their fathers.

One afternoon the crowd in the Street of David became suddenly congested. Through it a man, venerable with age, was vainly trying to make his way. His long white locks, which curled downward in front of his ears and mingled with the snowy beard upon his bosom, betokened his Jewish

race; while the broad fringes of white and hyacinth upon his outer garment designated him as one of the Chasidim or Purists, who preferred to part with their blood rather than with their religion. The old patriot made no retort to the jostling and gibes of the crowd, but his deep-set eyes flashed hatred from beneath their shaggy brows, and told of the tragedy in his soul even more eloquently than if his lips had poured forth fiery speech.

"You can't swim up this stream, old man," said a soldier, giving the frail form a twirl that made it face the other way.

"It is the Nasi himself, Chief of the Rabbis," whispered a young Jew in Greek cloak to a soldier. "Herakles club me, if you haven't caught the biggest rat left in the hole. But Apollonius has given protection to the Nasi's house. Be careful."

"Protection to his house! Why then did he come out of it? Fetch him along. Strip him naked, and warm his toad's blood in the new gymnasium."

With this insult the soldier tore the outer garment from the old man's back. The Jew was dazed for the instant by the Greek's audacity, and mumbled within his sunken lips the words of the Prophet: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheek to them that plucked off the hair."

He then raised his eyes heavenward, apparently unconscious of a staggering blow between his shoulders from the flat of a sword. He stood a moment until he had completed the sacred sentence: "For the Lord God shall help me; therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint."

"'Face like a flint,' does he say? Let's see if it will strike fire like a flint," shouted one, smiting the old patriot on the mouth with the palm of his hand.

This dastardly deed drew blood which stained his white beard. But it brought a quick retaliation from an unexpected direction; for a blow like that of a catapult fell upon the assailant's head.

"By the thunderbolt of Zeus! that made you see fire," cried a comrade, as the coward reeled into his arms. "Captain Dion's fist is as heavy as the hammer of Hephæstus, the blacksmith of the gods, and makes the sparks fly as well. I'll wager, Ajax, that you saw the sky full of stars, or else your head is harder than an anvil."

By the side of the venerable Jew now stood a young Greek officer. If Hephæstus had need of an assistant blacksmith the shoulders of Dion would have attracted his notice; yet it is doubtful if the goddesses of Olympus would have allowed so graceful a man to be consigned to the celestial workshop. His face, too, was peculiarly attractive. Topped with a brush of light hair and lighted by his blue eyes, it was beautiful, but without a trace of femininity; a blending of dignity, intelligence, courage, and kindly feeling, though the latter quality was just then outglowed by rage.

On his well-curled head was a chaplet of myrtle, for he was returning as victor in the day's sports at the new gymnasium which, as an intended insult to the religious prejudices of the people, the Governor, Apollonius, had recently built against the southern wall of the Temple plaza.

"Bravo, Dion! If you had hit the Theban boxer yesterday like that, they wouldn't have called for another round."

Dion faced the crowd, and with utmost detestation in his voice, exclaimed: "If I had been here yesterday, this crew of cowardly knaves had not hanged the babes to their mothers' necks, and thrown them from the walls. Let one of you garlic chewers dare confess any part in that beastly business, and I will heave him over the walls into Gehenna, where other carcasses rot. Who touched those women?"

As Dion looked from face to face his blue eyes flashed like the sword-point of a fencer feeling for an exposed spot in the breast of his antagonist. The challenge was not taken, one venturing to say:

"It was done at the Governor's orders."

"I pronounce that a lie. Who repeats it?" cried Captain Dion.

A fellow-officer suggested that it might have been ordered by Apollonius, since the women had plainly broken the new law and had circumcised their brats.

"Shame on you, comrade!" said Dion. "They were women and mothers, and I would say as much to the King's face."

The old Jew, hearing the reference to the scene which he himself had been compelled the day before to witness, turned boldly to the crowd of Greeks, and, with uplifted hands, repeated this imprecation from one of the Psalms of his people:

"Let your children be fatherless and your wives be widows! Let your children be vagabonds and——"

But Dion's hand was firmly laid upon the speaker's mouth.

"Nay, hold your breath, old man. If you give us much of it that way, this crowd will take the rest of it with the

hangman's rope."

Dion gently took the Jew's arm. "You must go back to your house. Come, I will see you safely within doors, if you will stay there."

"No, I will go to the house of the Lord, and worship, for it is the ninth hour," replied the determined man.

"That you cannot do," said Dion, kindly. "Don't you see that the Temple gate is burned, and that soldiers are guarding the opening? Your worship is no longer permitted there. Your sort of priests are all gone."

"Then," said the patriot, "I will be my own priest. Surely the Lord will accept an old man's last worship on earth before he goes hence."

"Nay, my good man, but the priests of the new religion are at the Temple. To-morrow they celebrate the feast of Bacchus. If you go there, they will crown you with ivy, and make you drunk in honor of the god. You must go home, and stay within doors."

"Then let me go—to my own house! My God! Why was it not my sepulchre ere I saw what the Prophet foretold?"

Captain Dion led him safely along the Street of David, the crowd giving way as it gazed upon the two and remarked the contrast between the half-mummied saint and the strong-limbed, festive-crowned youth.

"Old Elkiah is about the last of this damnable race left in Jerusalem. It is a wonder that Apollonius has given him tether so long."

"Perhaps Dion knows the Jew," responded some one. "The captain is as good a Greek as ever drew sword or loved

a woman, but his nose isn't straight on a line with his forehead. See, it has a Jewish twist."

"A fine observation," laughed another, "for one always follows his nose, and that may account for Dion's kindness to some of these rebels."

"Don't insult Captain Dion!" said one. "He's close in with Apollonius. Besides, he's a good fellow. He always gives a weaker man his handicap in the arena without having it ordered."

"True, or you would not have won yesterday. But I wish he wouldn't interfere with the sport of the men. I know that it is cruel, but the sooner the bigots are exterminated the sooner it will cease. Were it not for Dion's friendship for that Glaucon—as Elkiah's fool of a son now calls himself—we would soon find out what the old Jew's house has for us. They say his cellar is as good as a gold-mine."

"Better kill off Glaucon, and let the old man die himself. You saw that his life is about burned out, and his old body only like a heap of ashes with a spark in it," was the humane response.

Dion paused by the oaken door in the wall of the Jew's house. He took from a little pouch at his belt a pinch of aromatic sawdust of sandalwood, and dropped it upon a small square altar whose brazier emitted a thin curl of white smoke, clouding the entrance. This was an altar to Zeus which the Governor had commanded to be placed at all the houses which were still occupied by the Jews. Just above the altar the lintel had been torn by the destruction of the Mezuzah or wooden box which, according to the Hebrew custom, contained the sacred sentences from the Law, and

through the small apertures in which a visitor to any Jewish home could see the word "Shaddai," the Almighty One, and thus make the common salutation, "Peace be to this house," into a prayer. Dion's worship at the little altar by the gate was marred by a muttered curse upon Apollonius for the needless insult perpetrated by this act of sacrilege.

The Greek had scarcely time to knock at the outer entrance when the door flew open, and with the cry "Father!" a young girl's arms were about the old man.

She drew him inside, and stood with her left arm supporting, while she raised her right hand as if it were a shield to protect him.

Captain Dion was familiar with the finest statuary in Athens and Antioch, but thought he had never seen anything to match this,—the white head and beard of age shielded by the raven locks of youth and beauty. He would tell Laertes, his sculptor friend, of this pose.

The girl was apparently about seventeen years of age, tall and lithe, with sufficient muscle to give that exquisite grace which only accompanies strength. Her hair, bound about the temples with a single fillet of silver, fell in wavy profusion of jet black upon a white linen chiton. This was gathered at the shoulders, and left fully exposed a neck which might have illuminated a copy of Solomon's Song. Beneath the breasts the garment was girdled with a rope of golden threads, and thence fell below the knees. Her ankles were wound with long white sandal lacings, which were in harmony with the silver band that bound her brow. Her arms were bare. In her haste she had not put on her outer garment, and thus stood revealed in a more exquisite



modelling of nature than she would have chosen had she known that she was to be beneath so critical an eye. Yet she could not have been more charming had she practised for hours before her mirror of polished brass, and passed her proud old nurse Huldah's inspection before she made her *début* at the gate.

Dion noted that the girl's features were perfect, but strictly on the Semitic model. Her face might be a hard one, for it well fitted the tragic feeling of the moment; or it might be sweet as any he had loved to dream about, for it also fitted the intensity of filial affection and solicitude she now displayed. The Greek seemed transfixed by her eyes. These were enlarged by her surprise, and their pupils gleamed from their deep black irises with the fire of excitement.

"A Jewish Athena!" thought Dion, as in a brief sentence or two he begged the girl to be more prudent in the care of her father. Surely there was no scorn of the Jewish race in the profound bow with which he took his departure, nor in the hasty glance he stole as the door was closing.

He plucked a leaf from his myrtle crown and dropped it upon the altar. As he went away he sighed a prayer for the maiden, and grumbled another curse upon the King's cruelty. Then he whistled a sort of musical accompaniment to his thought, which ran something like this:

"That girl is Glaucon's sister. He never told me that he had one." He shrugged his shoulders. "Well, in that he was wise, since he only knows me for a Greek adventurer, and thinks my honor like his own, a spur on the heel, to be used or not according to one's inclination. But, by the arm of Aphrodite! what a woman! Beautiful as a lioness, and as

brave too. Strange that the Jew could be father of both her and Glaucon—of a lioness and a jackal! Glaucon and I must be good friends, though I despise the fool. Why doesn't he fight for his house? I would—especially with that woman in it."

Dion stopped and stood a long time looking at the narrow strip of sky visible between Elkiah's house and those which lined the opposite side of the street. There were no angels in the blue ether; but something prompted him to take from his bosom a piece of onyx enclosed in a casket of gold, and to look at a sweet face cut into the stone.

"I wonder if she was anything like Elkiah's daughter!"

He put the intaglio back into its pocket and went away.

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# III

## THE LITTLE BLIND SEER.

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The house of Elkiah was one of the most stately in Jerusalem, though inferior to the structure which, in more ancient days, rose from the same foundations. Whenever Elkiah told of his ancestral dignities he was apt to show his listeners what were now the cellars and sub-cellars of the house, the great stones of which, by the flat indentations chiselled about the borders, proved that they were as old as the days when Solomon built the Temple, and perhaps wrought by the same Phœnician workmen. The second story, and the battlements which enclosed the roof, were of newer construction, and had evidently been made of the débris of a former and more palatial edifice, for an occasional huge and broidered stone showed upon the street in ancient architectural pride—just as some moderately circumstanced people wear an occasional jewel left them by their richer forebears.

The residence of Elkiah thus maintained a relation to the other and ordinary houses of the city not unlike that which its occupant held to his fellow-citizens. He traced his blood to the days when another Elkiah stood high in the court of Solomon, and thence back to the settlement of the land by

the emigrants from Egypt. This could be attested by the official records, and was illustrated by numerous priceless antiques now stored away in secret closets cut into the solid walls, but which in safer times had ornamented the house from battlement to court.

For many years Elkiah had been the Nasi, or President of the Sanhedrin, that combined ecclesiastical and secular court of seventy-two men who legislated for and judged the people. Of late years the Sanhedrin itself had become utterly debauched by the gold of Egyptian Ptolemies and Syrian Antiochuses, in their rivalry for the possession of Palestine. Most of the members of this sacred council had become Hellenized, and adopted Greek philosophies and customs; and now that the Syrian monarch had invaded the city, these renegades saved themselves from being despoiled by becoming despoilers of their brethren. A former High Priest, Joshua, had changed his name to the Greek Jason, as the Greeks scornfully said, for the sake of the "Golden Fleece." The present incumbent of the sacred office, Menelaos, had been circumcised as Onias, and was now the chief of the traitors in the sacrilegious extinction of the national religion.

The crowning grief of the venerable Elkiah was the apostasy of his own first-born son, Benjamin, who had taken the heathen name of Glaucon, and thus shamed the house of his fathers while he protected it from the general pillage.

The late afternoon of the day following that of Dion's rescue of Elkiah from the mob the old man was reclining upon the thick rug and pillows which Deborah—for so was his fair daughter called—had spread upon the roof. Here he

loved to lie, sheltered from view by the parapets, while his eyes followed the white clouds which flecked the deep blue of the sky—"Jehovah's banners," he called them—or caught the gleam of the Temple roof when he was disposed to pray.

"Where is Caleb?" he asked.

A lad of some ten years was lying in the upper chamber, the room which, like a little house by itself, occupied half of the roof upon which it opened. Hearing his father's call, the child sprang up, and in an instant was by Elkiah's side.

"Here am I, father!"

With his long black hair clustering upon his white chiton, and his large black eyes, the boy resembled his sister. One would have noted, however, a strange look; the pupils too widely expanded, as when one tries to see in the dark. And this the child had been doing ever since, five years ago, his sight was destroyed by a strange malady which not even the physician Samuel could cure, for all that this learned man was skilled in the potencies of herbs, the baleful and blessed beams of the stars, and even the deeper mysteries of the words of the Rabbis.

Little Caleb was marvellously beautiful in spite of the stare of his blind eyes and the marble pallor of his face. It was a child's face, yet there was in it the placid sweetness of a woman's look, and at times it seemed to glow with the intelligence of riper years—for the boy had thought and felt more than most men had done.

Caleb knelt down by his father's side, and kissed his forehead. The old man's harsher features relaxed at the touch of the young lips, and tears sprang to his eyes as he drew the lad to his breast.

"Blessed be God, who has left me this fair image of my Miriam! Come, Caleb, and look for me. Your blind eyes are better than mine, which my sins have smitten. Can you see the chariots of the Lord?"

"Nay, father, but you have taught me to trust in Him who is Himself like 'the mountains round about Jerusalem.' What need have we for chariots? Can He not save by His word as well as by war?"

"True, child! Yet I myself once saw, when the impious Apollodorus raged through our street, slaughtering all he met, and no one could stand against him, I saw—or do I dream it?—I saw a heavenly warrior, clad from head to foot in solid silver, waving a sword of fire, who stood before the wicked man, and smote him to the ground. But when they lifted the heathen there was not the sign of the stroke upon him, though he breathed no more. Would that the Avenger might come again, and speedily! But until He come—until He come—we must trust the word, only the word. Bring the Roll of the Prophet. It surely tells of the times that are now passing."

The boy felt for his sister's hand. Taking it, he pressed it against his blind eyes—a way he had of checking his own too violent feeling. He whispered, as he felt her comforting touch:

"Sister, the troubles have surely broken our father's mind. He does not remember even yesterday."

Then, raising his voice, "You have forgotten, father, that the soldiers came and searched the house and took the Books away."