

**A SHILLING BOOK OF
NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY
FOR NATIONAL AND
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

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A Shilling Book of New Testament History for National and Elementary Schools by George Frederick Maclear

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BOOK I.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS.

PART I.

The Jews under the Persians and the Kings of Egypt.

CHAPTER I.

1. **Judæa after the death of Nehemiah.** For upwards of 130 years after the death of Nehemiah, a thick curtain conceals from us much of the history of the Jews. It appears certain, however, that Nehemiah was the last of the governors sent from the court of Persia. Judæa itself was annexed to the province of Coele-syria, and the high-priest, subject to the control of the Syrian governor, administered affairs. Thus the civil and spiritual functions were united in one person, and the high-priesthood became an object of competition, and the cause of many violent and disgraceful contests.

2. **Loyalty of the Jews to the Persians.** As subjects of the Persian kings, the Jews were eminent for their loyalty and good faith. While Egypt, Cyprus, Phœnicia, and other dependencies of the Persian crown, were frequently in rebellion, the Jews remained steadfast in their allegiance to the "Great King," and increased rapidly alike in wealth and numbers.

3. **Conquests of Alexander the Great.** A hundred years, however, did not elapse after the death of Nehemiah before the Persian Empire had begun to crumble to pieces before the armies of Alexander the Great. After his victory at the Granicus, B.C. 334, and at Issus, B.C. 333, this conqueror captured Damascus, and having taken Sidon, laid siege to Tyre, B.C. 332. Thence he sent a message to the high-priest at Jerusalem, demanding that he should transfer his allegiance to him, and send supplies for his army. This Jaddua, the high-priest, declared was impossible. He had taken an oath of fidelity to the Persian king, and faithful he would remain. Though angry at this reply, Alexander delayed to execute vengeance till after the reduction of Tyre, and then set out for the Holy City.

4. **Alexander at Jerusalem.** Informed of his approach, Jaddua and the people were in the utmost alarm. Sacrifices were offered, prayers put up to God, and the Divine aid sought to appease the wrath of the invader. At length, warned it is said, in a dream, the high-priest hung the city with garlands, threw open the gates, and, as soon as he was informed that

Alexander drew near, went forth to meet him, clad in his priestly robes, and followed by a vast concourse. As soon as the Grecian conqueror beheld the venerable form of the high-priest, he fell prostrate, and adored the holy Name inscribed in golden letters on the frontal of his tiara. The Phœnicians and Chaldeans in his retinue, ancient enemies of the Jewish people, who were only awaiting the signal to pillage the city and put the high-priest to the torture, could not conceal their astonishment, and concluded that the great conqueror had lost his senses, while Parmenio addressing him enquired why he, whom all the world worshipped, should kneel before the high-priest.

5. **Alexander's Vision.** "It is not the high-priest," replied the other, "whom I worship, but his God, who has honoured him with the priesthood. In a vision at Dics in Macedonia, I saw him arrayed as he now stands, and when I was debating how I might obtain the dominion of Asia, he exhorted me to make no delay, but boldly cross the sea, for he would conduct my army, and give me victory over the Persians." Then taking Jaddus by the right hand, he entered the city, visited the Temple, and offered to bestow upon the Jews whatever privilege they might select. Thereupon they requested that the free enjoyment of their lives and liberties might be secured to them, as also to their brethren in Media and Babylonia, and that they might be exempted from tribute during the Sabbatical years. These privileges the conqueror willingly conceded.

CHAPTER II.

1. **Division of the Empire of Alexander.** On the death of Alexander, B.C. 323, the vast Empire, which he had won by his arms, was divided amongst his generals, and Palestine, as a province of Syria, passed into the possession of Laomedon, while Egypt was assigned to Ptolemy Soter. Between these two war soon broke out, and Ptolemy having conquered Cyrene, cast longing eyes on the kingdom of Syria, the harbours of Phœnicia, and the iron and timber, which abounded in Palestine and amongst the lofty ridges of Libanus and Anti-Libanus. Accordingly he invaded the realms of Laomedon, defeated him in a great battle, and gained possession of all Syria and Phœnicia.

2. **Siege of Jerusalem by Ptolemy Soter.** The Jews on this occasion manifested such unwillingness to violate their engagements to the Syrian king, that Ptolemy advanced against Jerusalem, and besieged it with a large army. Entering the city B.C. 320, under pretence of offering sacrifice on the Sabbath-day, when the scruples of the inhabitants forbade their

offering any defence, he easily succeeded in capturing it. Instead, however, of following up his victory by an indiscriminate massacre, he contented himself with transporting a great number of the inhabitants to Egypt, where he distributed them as garrisons in different places, but especially in Alexandria, and conceded to them equal privileges with the Macedonians themselves. Eight years afterwards he transported another large body of them to Libya and Cyrene, and thus Egypt became an important centre of Jewish influence.

3. **Battle of Ipsus.** The king of Egypt, however, was not allowed to remain long in undisturbed possession of his prize, and found it disputed with him by Antigonus, one of the most turbulent of the successors of Alexander. Twice the coveted province fell into the hands of his rival, twice Ptolemy managed to recover it, and it was finally adjudged to his share after the decisive battle of Ipsus in Phrygia, B.C. 301.

4. **Foundation of Antioch.** The battle of Ipsus, besides securing to Ptolemy Soter the dominion of Palestine, Phœnicia, and Cœle-syria, elevated Seleucus to the command of an Empire greater than any other held by the successors of Alexander. He assumed the title of "king of Syria," and his dominion, in the words of the prophet Daniel (Dan. xi. 5), was a *great dominion*, extending from the Euxine to the confines of Arabia, and from the Hindukush to the Mediterranean. His Eastern capital he founded on the banks of the Tigris, and called *Seleucia*, after his own name. For his western metropolis he selected a spot on the left bank of the river Orontes, just where the chain of Lebanon running northwards, and the chain of Taurus running eastwards, are brought to an abrupt meeting. Here he founded a city with much display in the year B.C. 300, and called it *Antioch*, after the name of his father Antiochus. Convinced, like the Egyptian monarchs, of the loyalty of the Jews, he began to invite many of them to his new capital and other cities in Asia Minor, assuring them of the same privileges which they enjoyed under Ptolemy in Alexandria. This invitation was readily embraced by many of the Jews, who settled down in Antioch, and were admitted to the same advantages as the Greeks.

5. **Ptolemy Philadelphus.** Ptolemy Philadelphus succeeded his father Ptolemy Soter, B.C. 283, and distinguished himself by uniform kindness to the Jewish nation, ransoming many who had been sold as slaves, and inviting many to settle in Egypt. A liberal patron of literature and science, he established a famous library at Alexandria, and spared no pains in procuring books to be deposited therein. He is also repre-

sented to have caused the Hebrew Scriptures to be translated into Greek, and thus to have originated the celebrated Version called the *Septuagint*, from the tradition that 72 persons were engaged in the translation, which obtained a wide circulation, and was extensively read.

CHAPTER III.

1. **Ptolemy Euergetes.** On the death of Philadelphus, B.C. 247, Ptolemy Euergetes succeeded to the Egyptian throne. The new king considerably extended the privileges of the Jews, and bestowed many presents upon their Temple. But his reign came to a sudden and tragical close. In the year B.C. 222 he was assassinated by his own son Ptolemy IV., who in irony was called *Philopator, the lover of his father.*

2. **Ptolemy Philopator.** As soon as he ascended the throne, Philopator murdered his mother Berenice, and his brother Magas, and gave himself up to luxury and dissipation. Taking advantage of his well-known effeminacy, Antiochus the Great became master of Phœnicia, Damascus, and the greater part of Cœle-syria. Roused at length from his lethargy, the Egyptian monarch confronted his rival at Raphia, between Rhinocorura and Gaza, and defeated him with enormous loss, B.C. 217.

3. **Philopator visits the Temple.** Meanwhile the Jews had remained steadfast in their allegiance to Ptolemy, and the conqueror visited Jerusalem, offered sacrifices according to the Jewish law, and presented rich gifts to the Temple. Attracted by the beauty of the building, and the solemnity of the service, he desired to penetrate into the Holy of Holies. The priests entreated him to desist from his purpose, but he pressed forward, amidst the dismay and lamentation of the people, towards the sanctuary. Here, however, he was seized with a sudden and supernatural terror, and was carried forth half-dead. Enraged at this repulse, he retired to Alexandria, and wreaked his vengeance on the numerous Jews who had settled there. Some he is said to have put to death, others he degraded from their high positions and consigned to slavery, or reduced to the lowest class of citizens. Thirteen years afterwards, B.C. 204, he died a victim to his sensual habits, and was succeeded by his son Ptolemy Epiphanes, then only five years old.

4. **Battle of Mount Panium.** Since his disastrous defeat at Raphia, Antiochus had been gradually strengthening his position in Upper Asia, where he had won his title of "the Great" by his successes against the Parthians and Bactrians. Thence he returned to Western Asia, and finding the Egyptian throne in the possession of a child, instantly resolved to avenge

the defeat at Raphia. In the campaigns that ensued the Jews suffered severely, and became in turn the prey of each of the contending parties. In B.C. 203 Antiochus succeeded in taking Jerusalem. In B.C. 199 it was retaken by Scopas, the general of the Egyptian forces. Next year Antiochus reappeared in the field, and at the foot of Mount Panium, near the sources of the Jordan, gained a decisive victory over Scopas, capturing that general himself and the remnant of his forces, which had fled for refuge to Sidon.

5. **The Jews welcome Antiochus.** Wearied of the struggle, and remembering the indignities offered to their sanctuary by Philopator, the Jews now threw off their subjection to Egypt, and welcomed the conqueror as their deliverer. Antiochus in his turn treated his new subjects with liberality and kindness. He not only guaranteed to them perfect freedom and protection in the exercise of their religion, but promised to restore their city to its ancient splendour, forbade the intrusion of strangers in their Temple, and contributed largely towards the regular celebration of its services. At the same time, imitating the examples of Alexander and Selencus, he issued orders to Zenxis, the general of his forces, to remove 2000 Jewish families from Babylon into Lydia and Phrygia, where they were to be permitted to use their own laws, to have lands assigned them, and to be exempted from all tribute for ten years.

PART II.

The Jews under the Kings of Syria.

CHAPTER I.

1. **The Jews and the Seleucids.** The battle of Mount Panium marks an era in the history of the Jews. For a century since the battle of Ipsus they had been steadfast in their allegiance to the Egyptian throne. They now transferred it from the descendants of the Ptolemies to those of Seleucus Nicator, and their connection with the Syrian kings begins.

2. **Battle of Magnesia.** Antiochus, who had bestowed upon them so many privileges, did not long enjoy the fruits of his victory. In the year B.C. 192 he crossed over into Greece on the invitation of the Ætolians, and ventured on a campaign with Rome. But in the following year the consul M. Acilius Glabrio attacked him, and speedily put his whole army to flight. Thereupon the Syrian king hastened back to Asia, and having collected a vast host from all parts of his dominions, and confronted the Romans who had crossed the Hellespont in the neighbourhood of Magnesia, at the foot of Mount Sipylus,

B.C. 190. Utterly unable to resist the terrible Roman legions, he was defeated with a loss of 50,000 men, and constrained to sue for peace, the conditions of which were the death-blow of the Syrian empire.

3. *Death of Antiochus.* Beaten, baffled, and disgraced, the Syrian monarch returned to his capital, and to raise the heavy tribute, exacted by the conquerors, resolved to plunder the temples throughout his dominions. The first attack it was agreed should be made on that of Elymais, situated at the meeting-point of the caravan routes which connected Media with Persia and Susiana. But the guards of the temple, aided by the hardy mountaineers of the district, made a vigorous defence of their shrine, and Antiochus was slain, B.C. 187.

4. *Accession of Seleucus.* On the news of his death, his son Seleucus IV, ascended the throne, and assumed the title of *Philopator*. During the early period of his reign, the new king carefully abstained from giving any offence to the Jewish nation, guaranteed to them the free exercise of their religion, and even contributed to the expenses of the Temple services. Before long, however, his attention was directed to the riches deposited in the sanctuary at Jerusalem, and he directed his treasurer Heliodorus not only to penetrate into the Temple, but plunder it of its funds.

5. *Heliodorus at Jerusalem.* Heliodorus, thereupon, set out for Jerusalem, and demanded the surrender of the money. In vain the high-priest expostulated and declared that one half the treasures belonged to God, and the other to widows and orphans, who had placed it there for security. Heliodorus declared that his orders must be carried out, demolished the outer gates, and was on the point of entering the sanctuary, when, like Ptolemy Philopator, he too was struck with a panic terror, which prostrated him speechless on the ground, so that he had to be carried away insensible by his retinue. Restored, however, by the prayers of Onias, he gradually recovered, and returning to Antioch related all that had occurred, and declared to his Syrian lord that nothing would induce him to venture again on such an errand. On the death of Antiochus the Great, it had been agreed between the senate of Rome and Seleucus that he should send his son Demetrius to take the place, as a hostage, of his brother Antiochus, who was to be allowed to come back to Syria. While, however, Demetrius had departed for this purpose, Heliodorus poisoned his master and usurped the crown. News of this reaching Antiochus he instantly invoked the aid of Eumenes king of Pergamus, and having quickly crushed the usurper, ascended the Syrian

throne, and assumed the title of Epiphanes, or *the Illustrious*, B.C. 175.

CHAPTER II.

1. **Apostasy in Palestine.** The long-continued subjection of the Jews to Grecian monarchs had by this time exerted a very considerable influence on their habits and mode of life. Familiar not only with the language but the literature and philosophy of Greece, many had acquired a strong taste for Grecian studies, preferred the Grecian religion to their own, adopted Grecian manners, and practised Grecian arts.

2. **Joshua or Jason.** Amongst this Hellenizing party none was more active than Joshua the brother of the high-priest, who even assumed the Grecian name of *Jason*. On the accession of Epiphanes he made his appearance among the princes who flocked to Antioch to assure the new monarch of their allegiance, and offered the king the tempting bribe of 440 talents of silver to secure the deposition of his elder brother, and his own appointment to the high-priesthood. Successful in this he caused Onias to be summoned to Antioch, and kept there as a prisoner at large, and then returning to Jerusalem devoted himself to the work of introducing Grecian customs among the people. By a second bribe of 150 talents he obtained permission from his patron to establish at Jerusalem a gymnasium for athletic exercises, and with such success that even the priests *despised the Temple and neglected the sacrifices* to take part in the games. He next procured a licence to establish an academy in which the Jewish youth might be brought up in the Grecian fashion, and was empowered to confer the citizenship of Antioch on many of his fellow-countrymen, who eagerly coveted the empty honour.

3. **Menelaus.** For three years the high-priest continued his work of corrupting the manners of his people, and then found the means he had used to acquire his ill-gotten dignity turned against himself. Having occasion to send his brother Onias IV., who had assumed the name of *Menelaus*, to the Syrian court, his envoy embraced the opportunity of offering Antiochus 300 talents a year more than his brother had paid for the office of high-priest, and succeeded in supplanting him in the royal favour. Escorted by a body of Syrian troops, Menelaus then expelled Jason, and assuming the title of high-priest proved even more wicked than his predecessor.

4. **Antiochus invades Egypt.** At this time the thoughts of Antiochus were fixed on the reduction of Egypt. In B.C. 171 he led his forces through Palestine and defeated the Egyptians before Pelusium. In the following year he again attacked