

Maccabees on Trial: Kol Ami, 2014  
Closing Arguments: Scott Musoff

WE ALL NEED HEROES. WE ALL WANT HEROES. INDEED, I TOO ENJOY WATCHING OUR CHILDREN IN THESE VERY HALLS, SING:

I WANT TO BE A MACCABEE, SO BIG AND STRONG AND BOLD. I WANT TO BE A MACCABEE, BUT I'M ONLY FOUR YEARS OLD.

BUT WHEN WE'RE OLDER, WE REALIZE EVEN OUR HEROES HAVE FLAWS. EVEN OUR HEROES CAN DO WRONG. AND EVEN OUR HEROES MUST BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS.

AND THAT GOES FOR MATTATHIAS AND HIS TWO SONS. THIS TRIBUNAL IS NOT ABOUT THE REVOLT AGAINST THE GREEKS, THIS TRIBUNAL IS NOT ABOUT AVENGING THE GREAT ATROCITIES AGAINST HANNAH AND HER SONS, AND THIS TRIBUNAL IS NOT ABOUT SAVING THE JEWISH PEOPLE. THIS TRIBUNAL IS ABOUT A CIVIL WAR. A WAR OF JEW AGAINST JEW. ABOUT THE ATROCITIES THAT MATTATHIAS AND HIS SONS COMMITTED AGAINST JEWS WHO DID NOT PRACTICE IN THE WAY THE MACCABEES BELIEVED A JEW SHOULD PRACTICE. SPECIFICALLY, THE MACCABEES MURDERED SCHMUEL AND FORCED THE CIRCUMCISION OF REBEKAH'S SON DANIEL AGAINST HIS AND HIS MOTHER'S WILL.

AND WHY? YOU HEARD MATTATHIAS' TESTIMONY THAT THE MACCABEES BELIEVED THAT A JEW "SHOULD NOT VARY ONE INCH FROM GOD'S LAW" -- NOT ONE INCH. IT DIDN'T MATTER TO MATTATHIAS OR HIS SONS, WHAT SCHMUEL OR DANIEL OR ANY OTHER JEWS ACTUALLY BELIEVED; IT DIDN'T MATTER WHAT WAS IN THEIR MINDS; INSTEAD, THE MACCABEES TRAVELED THROUGH THE COUNTRYSIDE KILLING JEWS LIKE SCHMUEL WHO ADOPTED SOME OF THE WAYS OF THE GREEKS AND CIRCUMCISING BY FORCE ALL UNCIRCUMCISED MALES THEY FOUND, INCLUDING DANIEL.

THINK ABOUT IT. WHAT DO WE CALL PEOPLE WHO REFUSE TO VARY ONE INCH FROM THE WRITTEN SCRIPTURE -- WHETHER THE TORAH, THE KORAN OR THE NEW TESTAMENT -- WE CALL THEM RELIGIOUS FANATICS. AND WHAT ARE THE DANGERS WHEN RELIGIOUS FANATICS TURN VIOLENT IN THE NAME OF GOD? THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YELLING "MI CHA MOCHA BAE LIM ADONAI" -- WHO IS HOLIER THAN YOU -- BEFORE MURDERING SCHMUEL FOR HIS BELIEFS; AND SOMEONE YELLING ALLAHU ACHBAR -- GOD IS GREAT -- BEFORE CRASHING TWO PLANES INTO BUILDINGS. OR THE KIDNAPPING OF HUNDREDS OF NIGERIAN GIRLS BECAUSE SOMEONE IN THE NAME OF GOD DOESN'T BELIEVE THEY SHOULD BE EXPOSED TO WESTERN EDUCATION (WHICH IS BASED ON GREEK CULTURE). OR THE LAUNCHING OF HUNDREDS OF YEARS OF CRUSADES. OR THE MURDER OF YITZAK RABIN BY A JEW BECAUSE RABIN SOUGHT PEACE. THESE ATROCITIES WERE ALL IN THE NAME OF GOD. BUT THEY ARE ALL

WRONG. AND PEOPLE WHO MURDER AND MAIM – EVEN IN THE NAME OF GOD, ESPECIALLY IN THE NAME OF GOD -- MUST BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS. WE SIMPLY DO NOT AND SHOULD NOT ALLOW ANY ONE -- EVEN THE MACCABEES -- TO MURDER AND MAIM PEOPLE BASED ON HAVING DIFFERENT BELIEFS. IN THE WORDS OF ISIAH'S TESTIMONY, "THIS MUST STOP. JEWS KILLING JEWS, ALL IN THE NAME OF TORAH."

LET'S GO OVER THE FACTS. THERE IS NO DISPUTE THAT MATTHIAS MURDERED SCHMUEL. HIS RAGE OVER A PIG SACRIFICE OVERCAME HIM AND HE LASHED OUT AND MURDERED SCHMUEL IN COLD BLOOD. HE DID NOT JUST ATTACK THE GREEK OFFICER, BUT HE MURDERED THE INNOCENT SCHMUEL. AND WE KNOW THIS WASN'T NECESSARY TO SAVE THE JEWISH PEOPLE BECAUSE EVEN HIS SON SIMON TRIED TO STOP HIM. SIMON TESTIFIED, "I TRIED TO STOP HIM WHEN HE ROSE, BUT FOR AN OLD MAN HE WAS STILL QUICK AND STRONG." SIMON TRIED TO STOP HIS FATHER FROM COMMITTING MURDER BUT COULDN'T. SIMON COULDN'T GET THERE IN TIME AND MATTATHIAS SLAUGHTERED POOR SCHMUEL, JUST BECAUSE SCHMUEL SLAUGHTERED A PIG. NOW MATTATHIAS MUST BE HELD RESPONSIBLE.

AND WHAT ABOUT DANIEL. THERE IS NO DISPUTE ABOUT THE FACTS. REBEKAH AND HER HUSBAND MADE A DECISION NOT TO CIRCUMCISE THEIR SON. THAT WAS THEIR DECISION. YET, MATTATHIAS, JUDAH AND SIMON TOOK DANIEL INTO THE WOODS AND CIRCUMCISED DANIEL BY FORCE. AND DANIEL WAS NO BABY, MIND YOU. THEY TOOK A SWORD TO DANIEL AGAINST HIS WISHES AND THOSE OF THIS MOTHER. WE CRINGE WHEN HEAR OF FORCED FEMALE CIRCUMCISION IN THE NAME OF RELIGION; WE CRINGE WHEN OTHERS MAIM INNOCENT PEOPLE IN THE NAME OF RELIGION; AND WE SHOULD CRINGE WHEN JEW DOES IT TO JEW AS THE MACCABEES DID UNTO DANIEL. AND THEY SHOULD PAY THE PRICE.

I RESPECTFULLY SUBMIT THAT THE DEFENSE OF NECESSITY – NECESSARY TO SAVE THE JEWISH PEOPLE – MUST BE REJECTED. WHERE DO THE MACCABEES DRAW THE LINE? WHO IS A JEW? WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A JEW? WEARING A KIPAH ON YOUR HEAD TO SERVICES? SHOULD WE MURDER ALL THOSE WHO CHOOSE NOT TO DO SO. YOU, YOU AND YOU? SHOULD WE MURDER AND MAIM THOSE THAT ALLOW WOMEN TO PRAY EQUALLY WITH MEN, HOW ABOUT THOSE THAT ALLOW WOMEN TO BECOME RABBIS? THERE ARE ALWAYS, EVEN TODAY, THOSE THAT WILL SAY: THOSE JEWS WHO STRAY "ONE INCH" FROM GOD'S LAWS ARE NOT JEWS. BUT WE DON'T, AND SHOULDN'T, ALLOW THEM TO MURDER AND MAIM THOSE WHO DO STRAY.

AND WHO KNOWS WHAT WOULD BECOME OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE IF IT WERE MORE PLURALISTIC, MORE OPEN. PERHAPS ONE DAY WE WOULD HAVE AN OLYMPICS FOR JEWISH ATHLETES MODELED ON THE GREEK OLYMPICS. AND WE COULD CALL THEM THE MACCABEAH GAMES -- HOW IRONIC. THE MACCABEAH GAMES NAMED FOR A PEOPLE WHO WANTED NOTHING TO DO WITH GREEK

CULTURE? ALSO, IMAGINE A JEWISH PEOPLE WITHOUT JUST ONE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM, WITHOUT ANIMAL SACRIFICES AND WITHOUT HIGH PRIESTS. IT IS POSSIBLE. USING VIOLENCE TO MAINTAIN THE STATUS QUO IS NOT THE ANSWER. HEARTS AND MINDS ARE WON WITH IDEAS NOT VIOLENCE.

DON'T GET ME WRONG, I AM A REALIST. I UNDERSTAND FORCE IS SOMETIMES NECESSARY TO DEFEND ONESELF AND EVEN TO DEFEND A PEOPLE. BUT THE MACCABEES ARE NOT ON TRIAL FOR THE WAR ON THE GREEKS OR THE KILLING OF THE GREEK OFFICER. THEY ARE ON TRIAL FOR THE MURDER OF SCHMUEL AND THE FORCED CIRCUMCISION OF DANIEL. JEWS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN PERSECUTED. INDEED, THERE IS THE OLD JOKE, WHAT NINE WORDS DESCRIBES EVERY JEWISH HOLIDAY. "THEY TRIED TO KILL US. WE WON. LET'S EAT." BUT WE PERSEVERE AS A PEOPLE. AS A GREAT RABBI ONCE SAID, IT IS BETTER TO BE AMONG THE PERSECUTED, THAN THE PERSECUTORS. AND FROM TIME TO TIME, JEWS HAVE DONE WHAT THEY NEEDED TO DO TO SURVIVE. FOR EXAMPLE, THE MARRANOS OR CONVERSOS -- THOSE SPANISH JEWS WHO HAD TO SWEAR TO CHRISTIANITY DURING THE INQUISITION WHILE PRACTICING JUDAISM IN HIDING -- ARE VIEWED AS HEROES. WE DON'T THINK THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN MURDERED AND MAIMED BY OTHER JEWS SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY DID WHAT THEY NEEDED TO DO TO SURVIVE.

I WANT TO THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR ATTENTION. AND NOW I ASK YOU TO FOCUS ON THE EVIDENCE, NOT THE RHETORIC ABOUT HEROIC ACTIONS. THE FACTS ARE THE FACTS. AND WE MUST HOLD MATTATHIAS AND HIS SONS RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS BECAUSE WE KNOW THE DANGERS THAT FLOW FROM UNCHECKED VIOLENT FANATICS WHO JUSTIFY VIOLENCE IN GOD'S NAME. HEROES HAVE FAULTS. BUT RECOGNIZING THOSE FAULTS, MAKES US AND OUR HEROES STRONGER NOT WEAKER. THEREFORE, I ASK YOU TO HOLD THE MACCABEES RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS -- THE MURDER OF SCHMUEL, POOR SCHMUEL, AND THE FORCED CIRCUMCISION OF DANIEL -- AND I ASK YOU TO RETURN A VERDICT OF GUILTY ON ALL COUNTS.