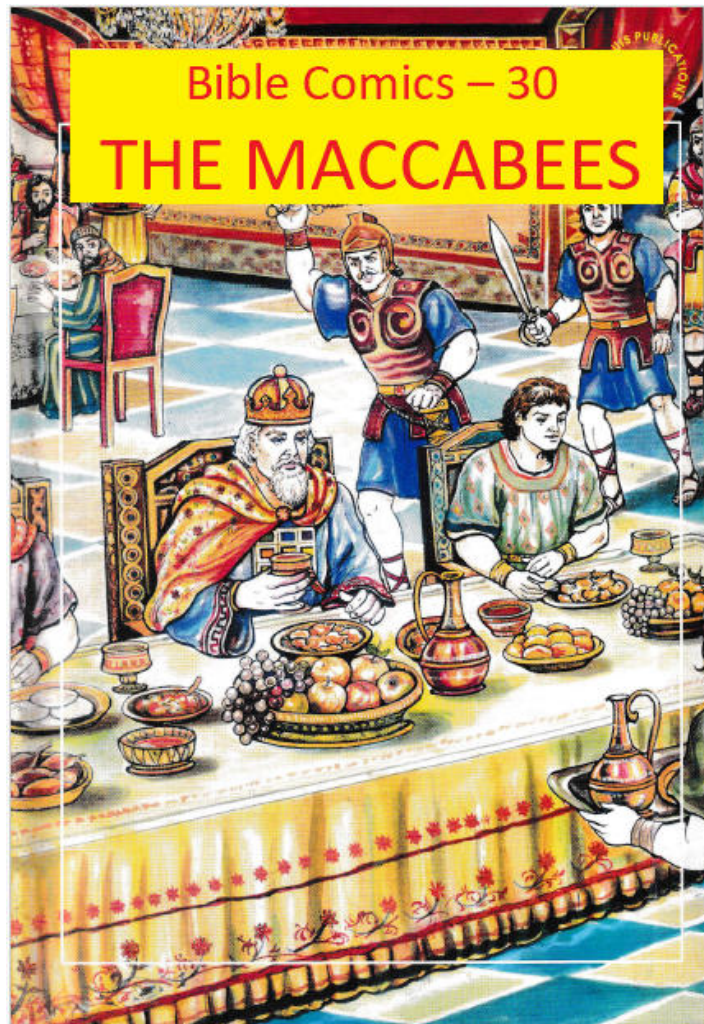


Bible Comics – 30

THE MACCABEES



THE MACCABEES

We are presenting the last book in the OT series of the Bible comics. In this book of heroic deeds and tragic deaths of the five Maccabee brothers are depicted. This is the continuation of the previous story, Maccabeus, that presented the heroic resistance of the Jewish people against the advance of Hellenism and Greek imperialism.

Judas Maccabeus defeated several generals of Antiochus IV in various battles. Within three

years he was able to rededicate the temple that was defiled by the pagans. He liberated the Jews who were kept prisoners and persecuted by the neighbouring countries. With this the primary goal of the Maccabean revolt was achieved. The next step was to obtain political independence and stability. For this he entered into a treaty with Rome.

When Maccabeus fell in battle, Jonathan took over the leadership. He was a shrewd politician and an accomplished diplomat. Taking advantage

of the internal rivalries that plagued the Syrian empire, Jonathan was able to secure his power as the ruler of Judea and also to expand his territory. Any means that served this purpose was acceptable to him. He did not have the least hesitation to accept the dignity of High Priesthood and the position of a vassal from a pagan emperor.

Simon who succeeded Jonathan gained complete independence for the Jewish nation. The people considering him as the liberator of

the nation, acclaimed him High Priest and king. Thus Simon became the founder of a dynasty, called the Hasmoneans. However, the Hasmoneans could not guarantee true and lasting freedom to the people. At the end of the dynasty we see Herod, an Idumean, sitting on the throne of Israel, as a vessel king of the Roman Empire.

A revolutionary movement that started as a heroic struggle for preserving religious freedom gradually gave way to imperialistic ambitions,

undermining the very foundations of Yahwistic religion. During the period of monarchy in Israel, that is to say, from Saul to Zedekiah, there were prophets and priests who, in the name of Yaweh, denounced the kings and called them to conversion. But when the High Priest himself became king, no one dared to challenge him. Supreme authority when concentrated in the hands of sinful people, gets corrupted. Where criticism is not tolerated, self-righteousness prevails and conversion becomes impossible.

The OT history ends here. It depicts with extreme clarity how man's repeated attempts to build a paradise on earth without God miserably fails. The sin of Adam and Eve who tried to become like God, and of Cain who killed his brother, steadily grew with every generation, becoming an enslaving force from which humanity cannot liberate itself. At the end of the OT period, we see a people groaning under foreign domination and crying for liberation. The OT depicts also, with even greater vividness,

God's steadfast love for His chosen people and for the entire humanity. That love was manifested in its fullness when God sent His Only Son as the liberator of humanity. That is the story of the NT.

Bible Comics – 30

THE MACCABEES

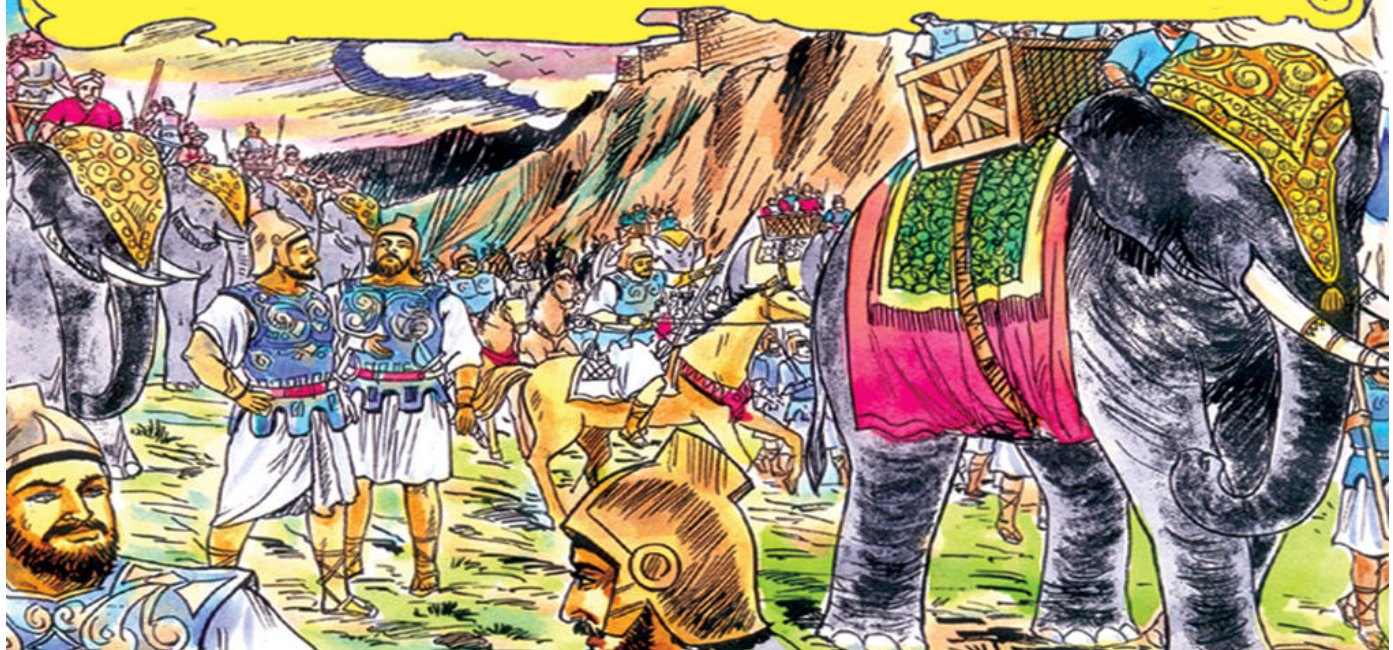
Script

Rev. Dr. Michael Karimattam

Illustration

Benny & Devassy

Antiochus IV who persecuted the Jews died in B.C. 163 in a foreign land like a vagabond. His twelve year old son Antiochus V became king. Lysias, the Supreme Commander of the Syrian Army, set out with the king and an immense army to wipe out the Jews from the face of the earth. They encamped at Bethzur, south of Jerusalem.



In the Syrian camp.

Your majesty,
Maccabeus and his
men have escaped
from the fortress. They
are now camping east
of us.

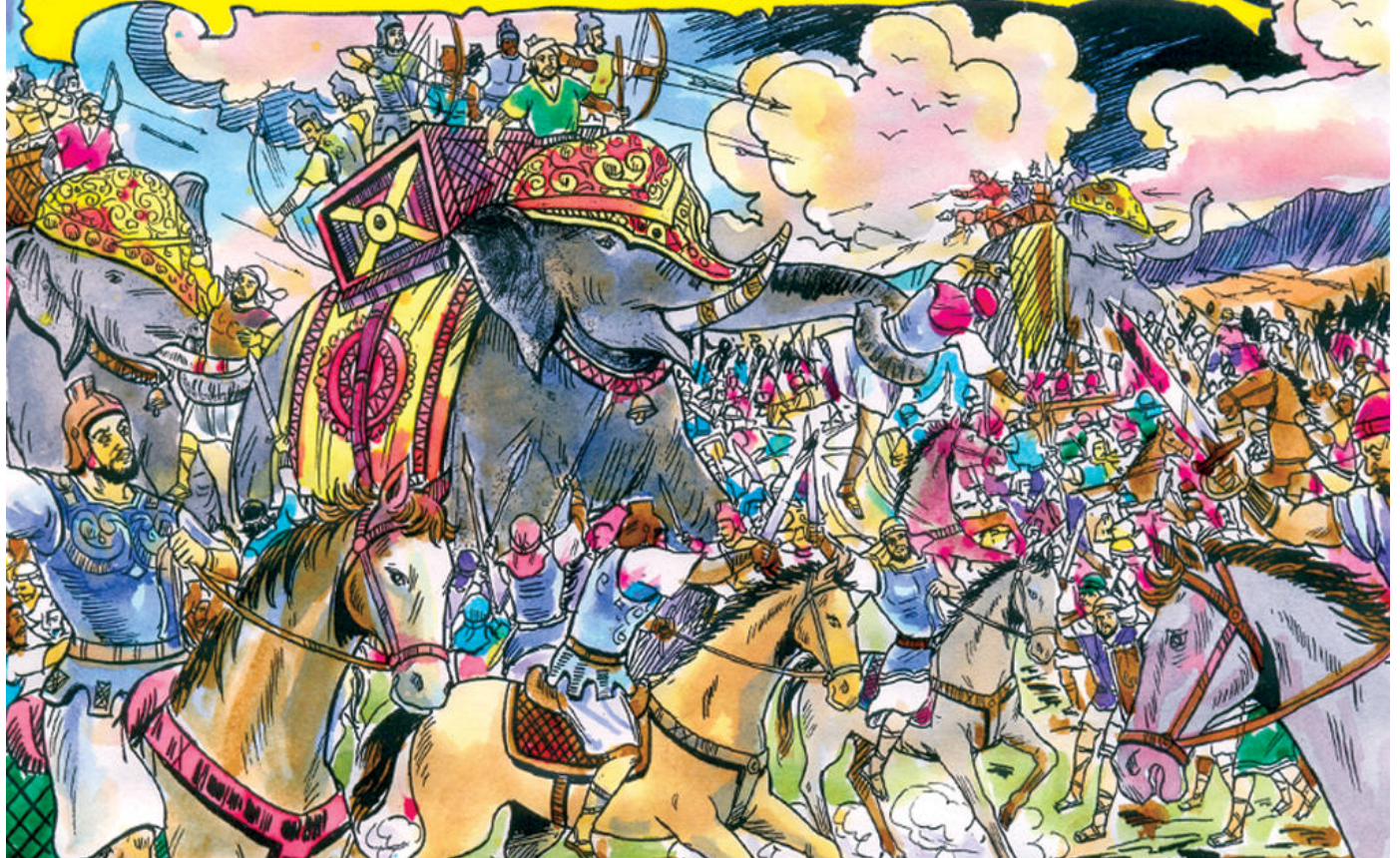
What were you doing?

Let the whole army
march on them. If Judas
has started fleeing from
us, his end is near. Am I
right, Lysias?

!



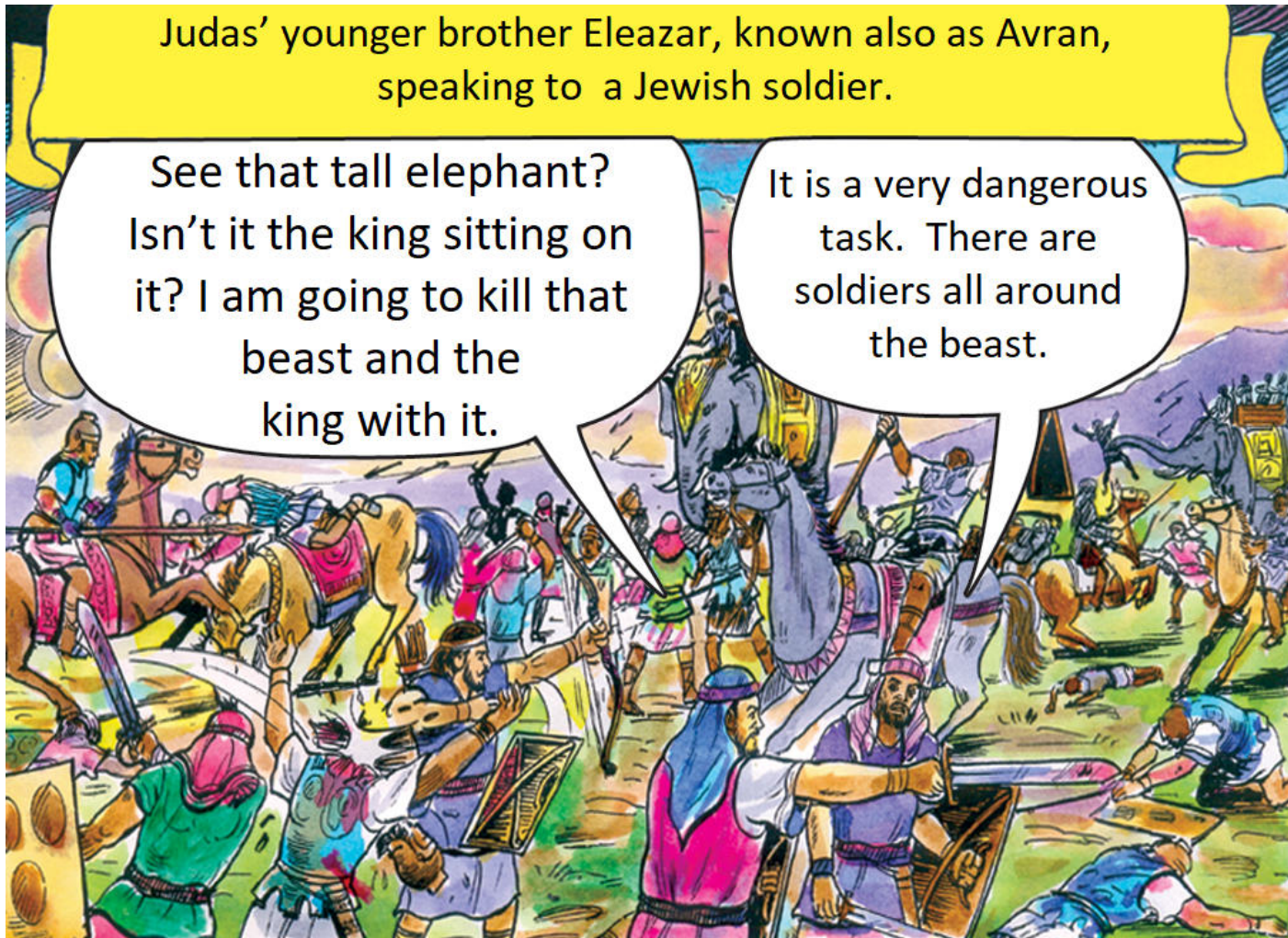
The next day both armies met in battle at
Beth Zechariah.



Judas' younger brother Eleazar, known also as Avran,
speaking to a Jewish soldier.

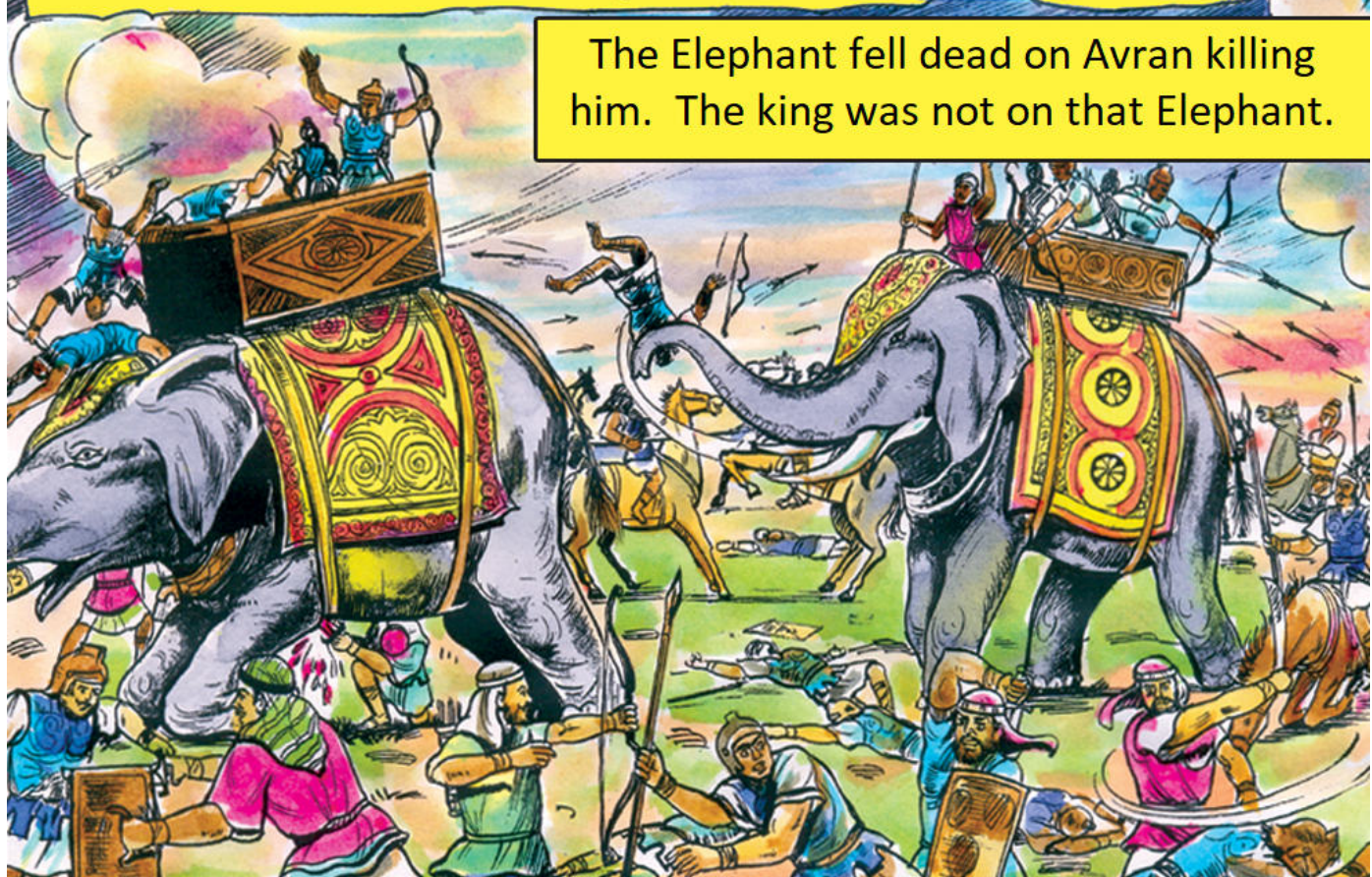
See that tall elephant?
Isn't it the king sitting on
it? I am going to kill that
beast and the
king with it.

It is a very dangerous
task. There are
soldiers all around
the beast.



Killing the Syrian soldiers on both sides, Avran reached the Elephant.

The Elephant fell dead on Avran killing him. The king was not on that Elephant.

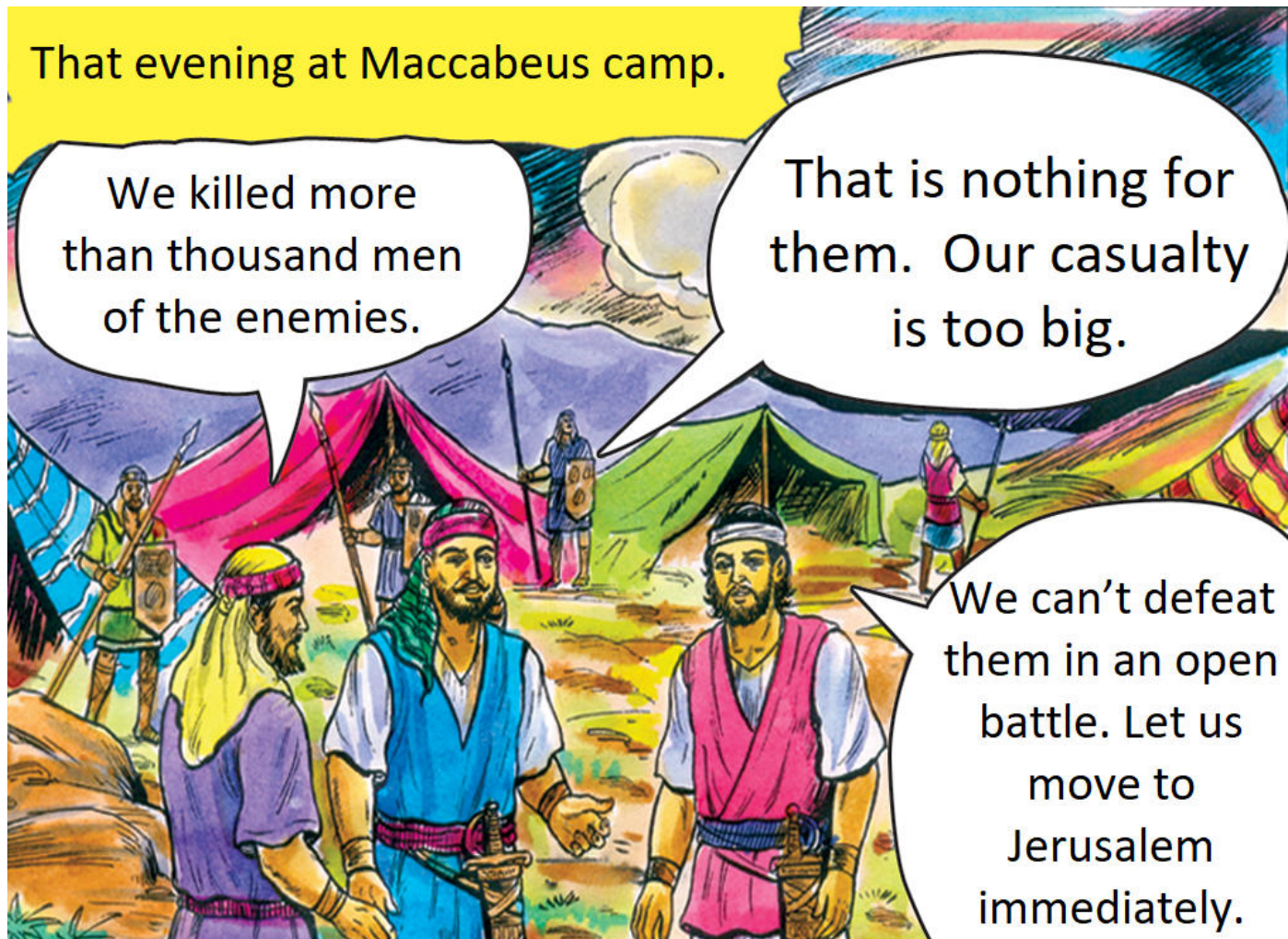


That evening at Maccabeus camp.

We killed more than thousand men of the enemies.

That is nothing for them. Our casualty is too big.

We can't defeat them in an open battle. Let us move to Jerusalem immediately.



Lysias laid Siege to Jerusalem.



Days later in the city.


We are running short of food. Since it is the Sabbath year, we couldn't store up much.

Besides, we have thousands of refugees from the troubled areas that have to be fed.




Let us pray to the Lord, He will not abandon us.

At the same time in the Syrian camp.



Your Majesty, Philip has returned from Persia and declared himself king of Antioch.

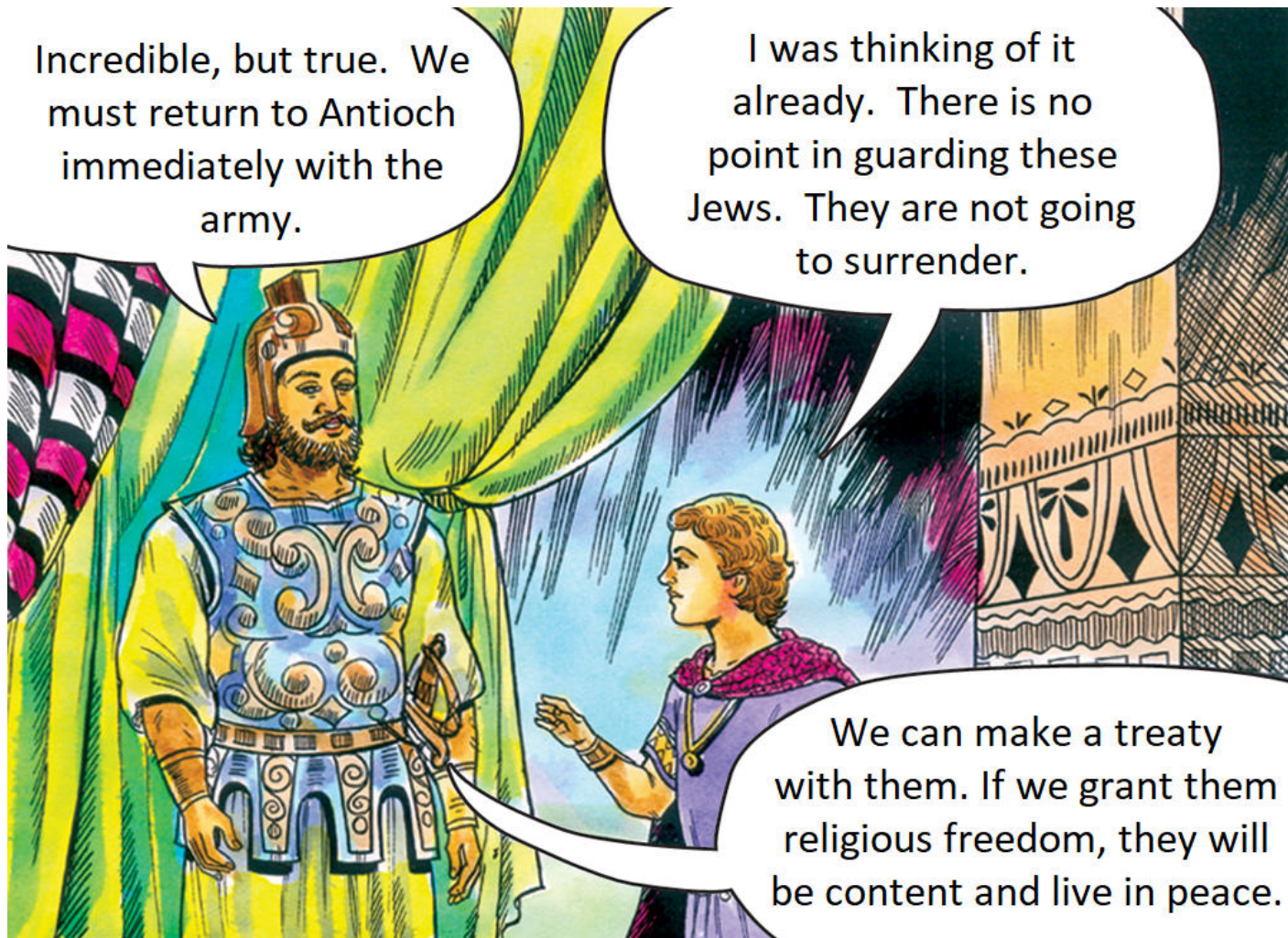


You mean our Commander Philip whom my father appointed as my guardian? Lysias, it is incredible.

Incredible, but true. We must return to Antioch immediately with the army.

I was thinking of it already. There is no point in guarding these Jews. They are not going to surrender.

We can make a treaty with them. If we grant them religious freedom, they will be content and live in peace.



After signing a treaty that guaranteed religious freedom to the Jews, the king and Lysias returned to Antioch with the army.

We praise you and thank you Lord for protecting your people and your Holy Temple. How wonderful are your ways!

Halleluiah....
Halleluiah...



Before long, Antiochus V and Lysias were killed. Demetris I became king of Syria in 160 B.C. Judas Maccabeus defeated the army sent by Demetrius to attack Jerusalem.

We are not yet safe. Demetrius will come back with greater force.

It's our own people that betray us. They support and propagate Hellenistic culture only as a smoke screen to gain power.

I wouldn't be surprised if somebody else goes to Antioch to buy the High priesthood.



We are a tiny nation.
We can't stand up to
Syria much longer.

We must seek
alliance with a
stronger force.





Rome is the only
mighty nation
today. They protect
their friends and
destroy their
enemies.

The divisions of their
army are called
“Legions”, a name
that strikes Terror in
the enemy.



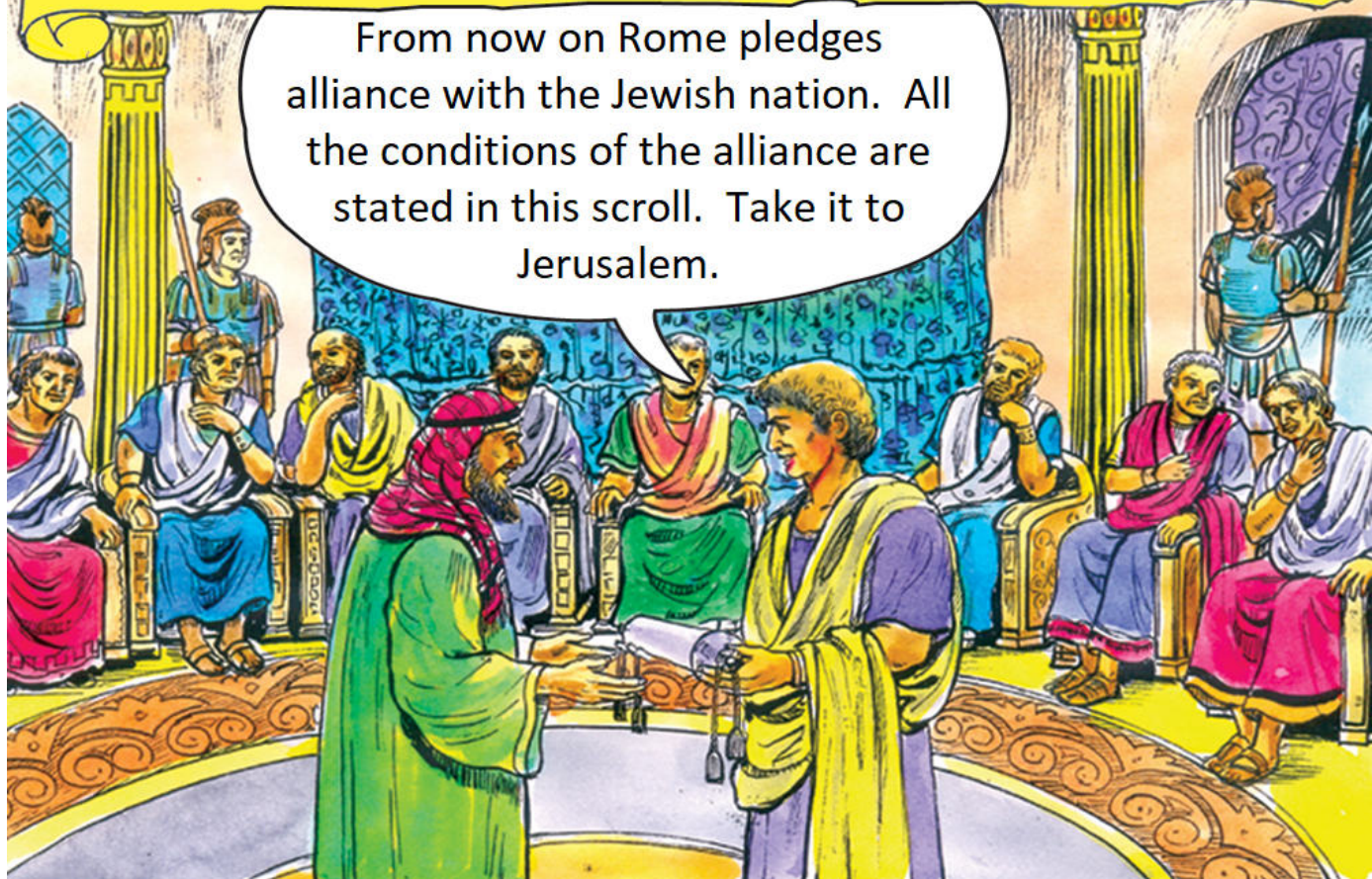
The whole of the west is
already under their
control. Before long they
will control the whole
world.

Let us send two
messengers and
request for an
alliance with the
Romans.

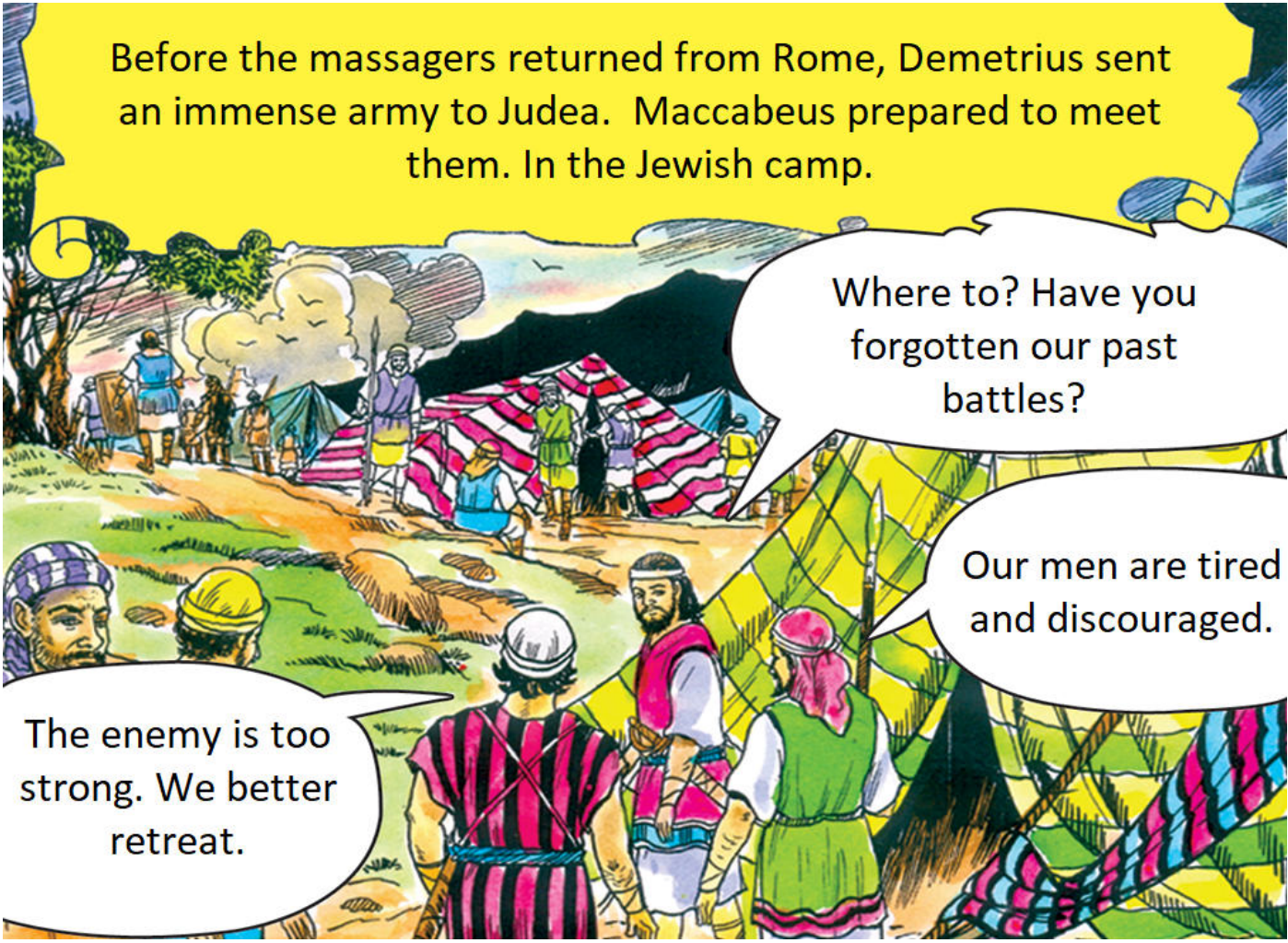


The Roman senate welcomed the envoys of Judas Maccabeus.

From now on Rome pledges alliance with the Jewish nation. All the conditions of the alliance are stated in this scroll. Take it to Jerusalem.



Before the massagers returned from Rome, Demetrius sent an immense army to Judea. Maccabeus prepared to meet them. In the Jewish camp.



Where to? Have you forgotten our past battles?

Our men are tired and discouraged.

The enemy is too strong. We better retreat.

If we pull back the enemy will be encouraged.

We are not ready to fight now.

!?



Many deserted Maccabeus. Only 800 men remained with him.

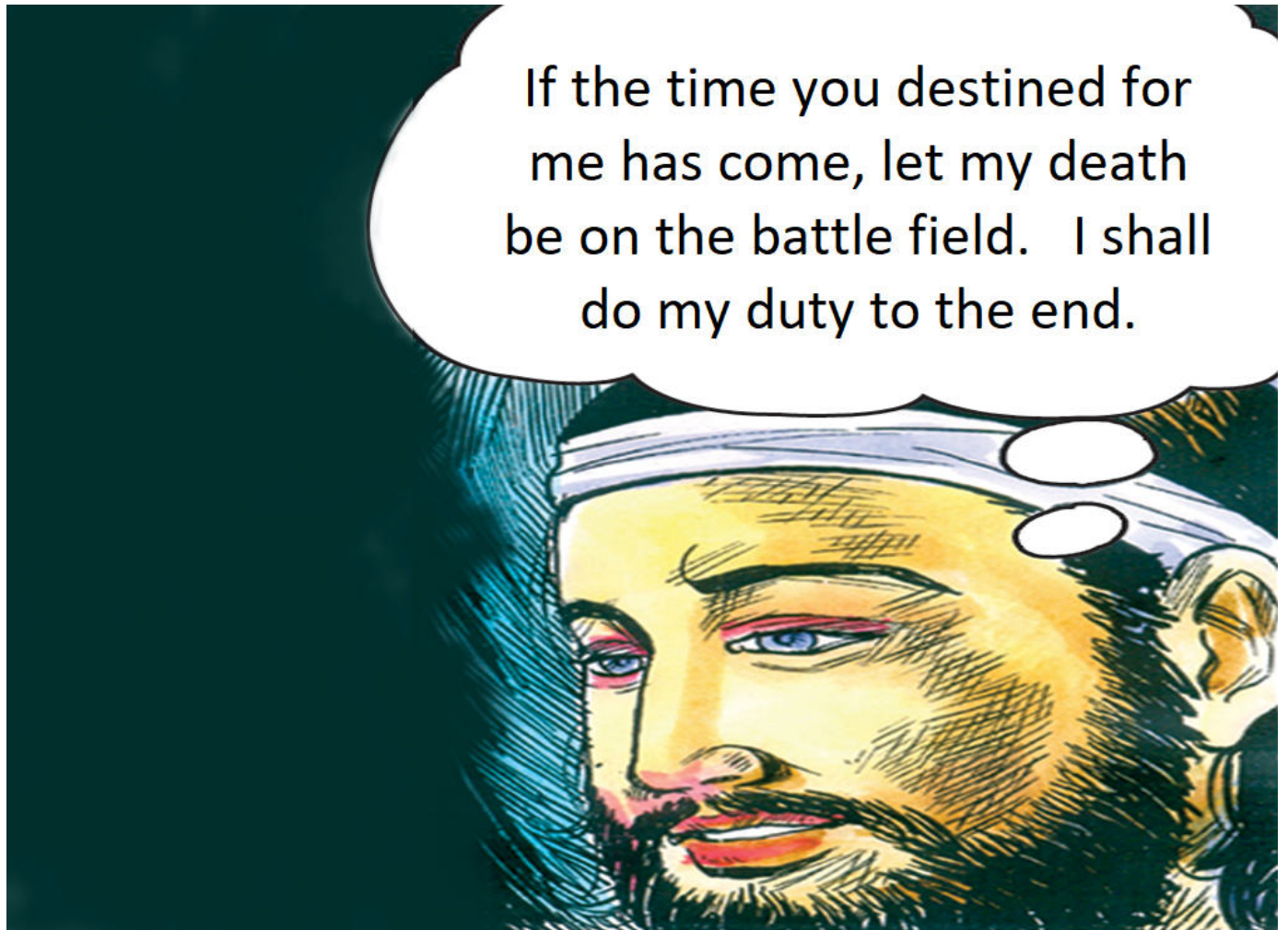
O Lord, is this the end? What happened to my men who fought like young lions against the Syrians?



Lord, my God, I took up arms in order to gain freedom to live according to your laws. It was you who gave me this sword of Apollonius as a token of your protection.



If the time you destined for
me has come, let my death
be on the battle field. I shall
do my duty to the end.



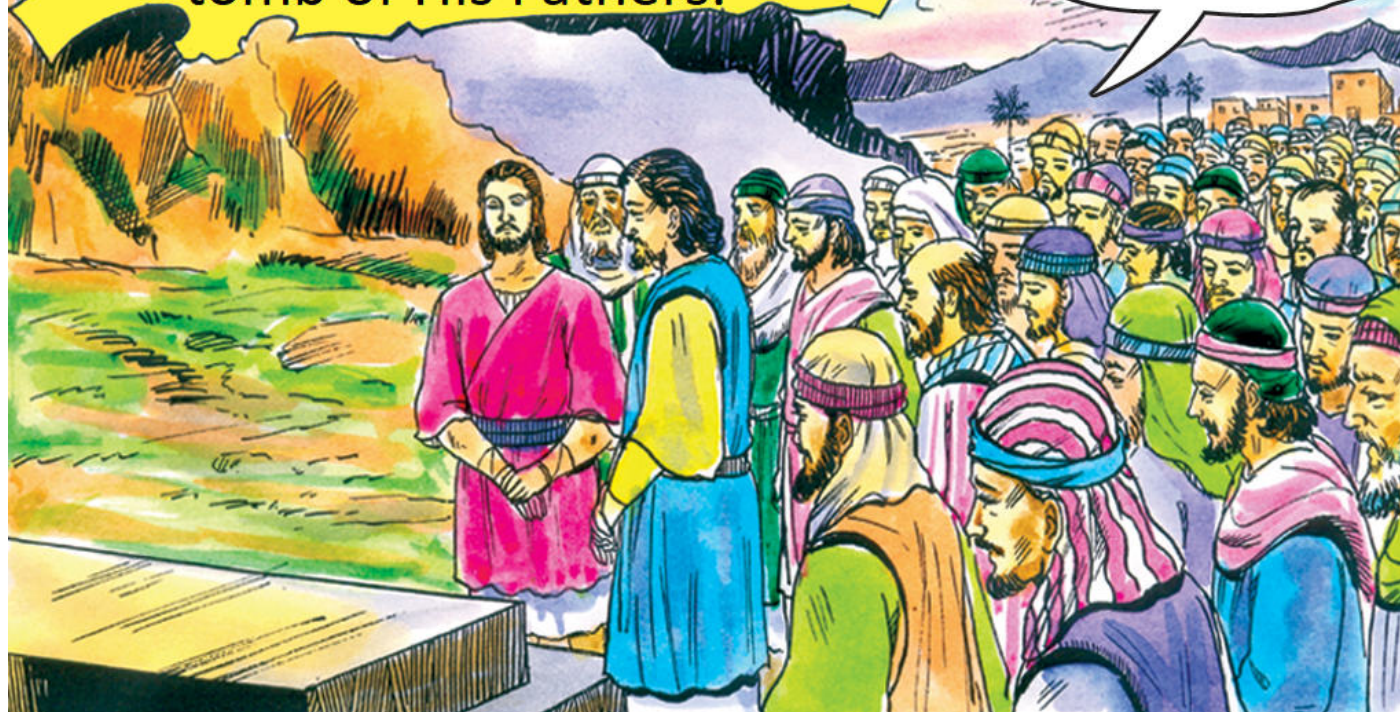
The next day the two armies met in battle. Maccabeus fought like a Lion against the Bacchides, the Syrian commander. But...

Adonai...



Judas Maccabeus fell in battle. They took his body to Modein and buried him in the tomb of His Fathers.

O Judas Maccabeus, mighty leader of Israel...

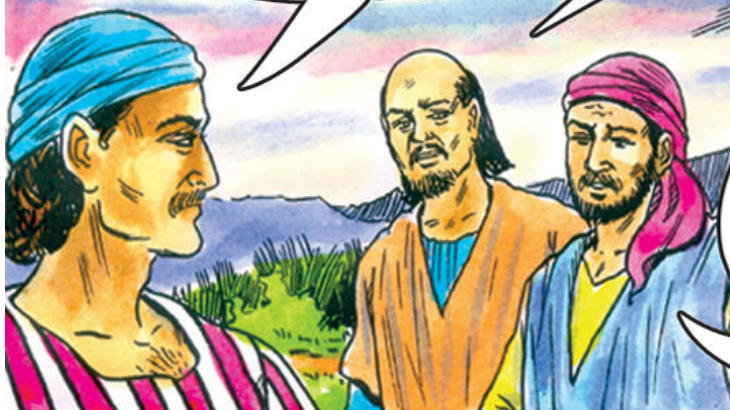


After the death of Maccabeus, many Jews who favored Hellenism joined Bacchides, the Syrian commander. They persecuted the followers of Maccabeus.

The freedom Maccabeus gained for us has ended with him.

What to do? The High priest Alcimus has sold us out to the Syrians.

They are determined to eliminate the family and friends of Mattathias who led the freedom Movement.



Our main problem is that we
don't have a strong leader
now.

Let us make Jonathan
our leader. He is
strong and courageous
like his brother, Judas
Maccabeus.



We must call a
meeting of all
the scattered
soldiers at
Modein.

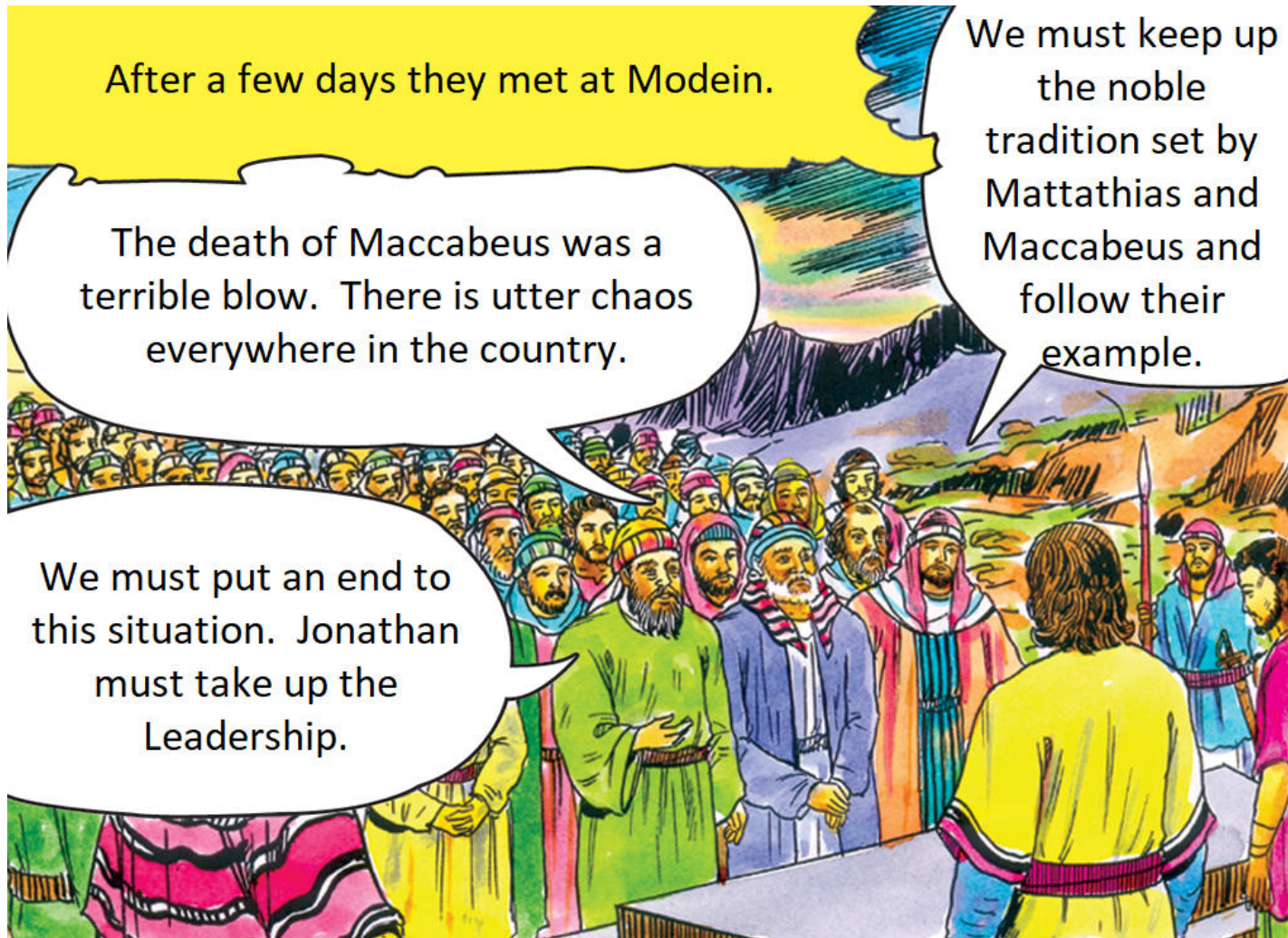


After a few days they met at Modein.

The death of Maccabeus was a terrible blow. There is utter chaos everywhere in the country.

We must put an end to this situation. Jonathan must take up the Leadership.

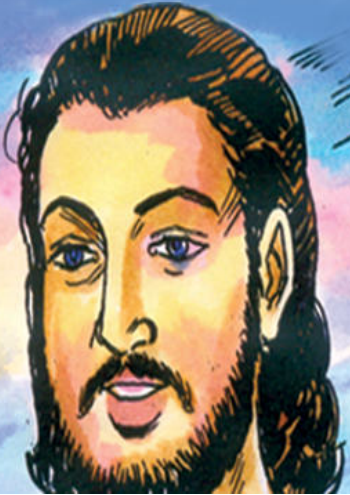
We must keep up the noble tradition set by Mattathias and Maccabeus and follow their example.



Voice of the people is the voice of God. Jonathan, take this sword of Maccabeus. Beat the enemy to the ground. May the Lord be with you.

I am ready to offer my life to defend the law of the Lord and his people.



A man with a beard and long hair, wearing a yellow garment, is shown from the chest up. He is looking slightly to the right. The background is a colorful, abstract sky with shades of blue, pink, and purple. A speech bubble is positioned to his right, containing text.

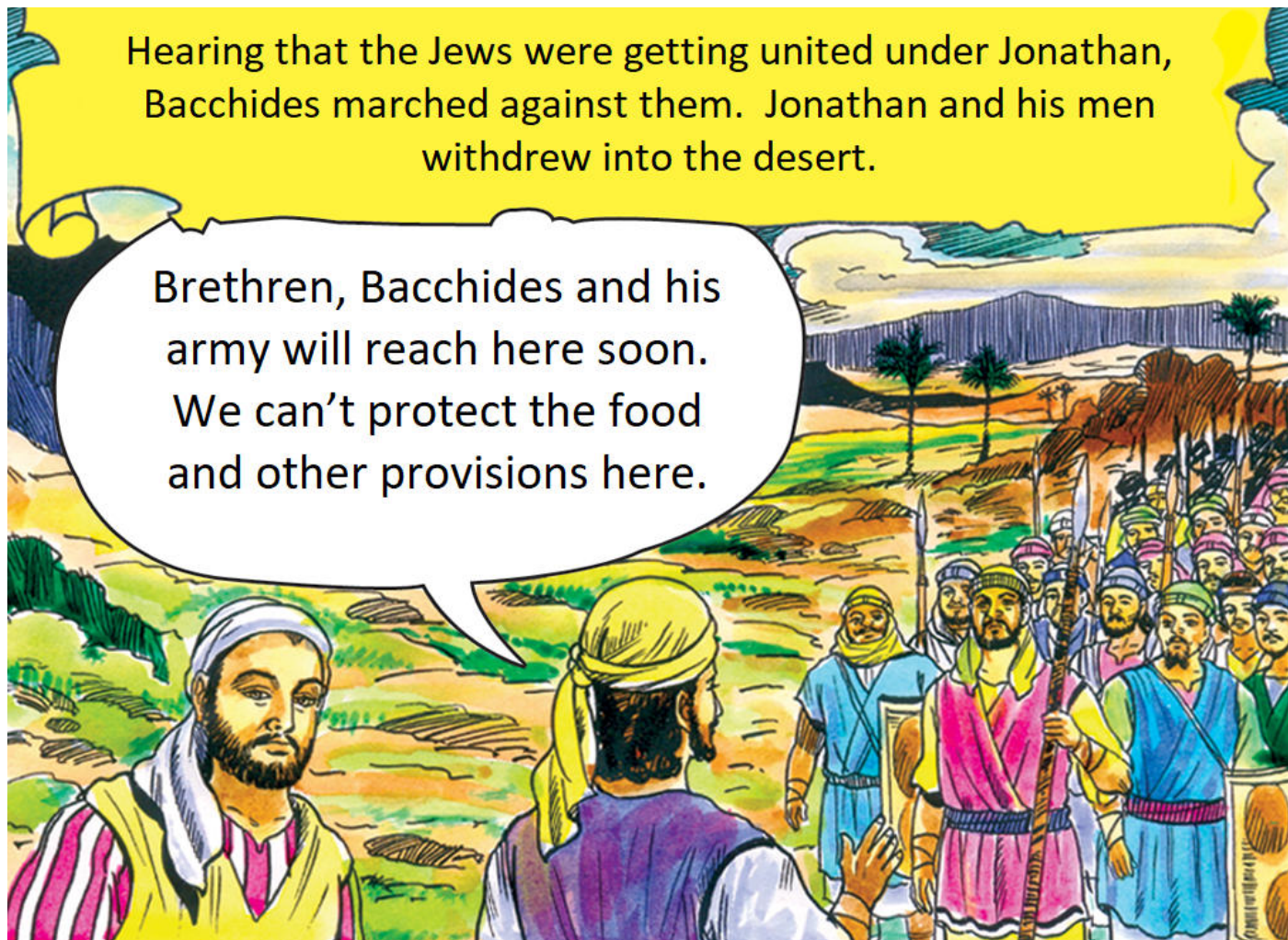
Bacchides will try to
destroy us. We must
be prepared. Villages
are our strongholds.

We must search out and
punish those who defy the law
of the Lord and support the
Syrians. We must defend the
innocent.

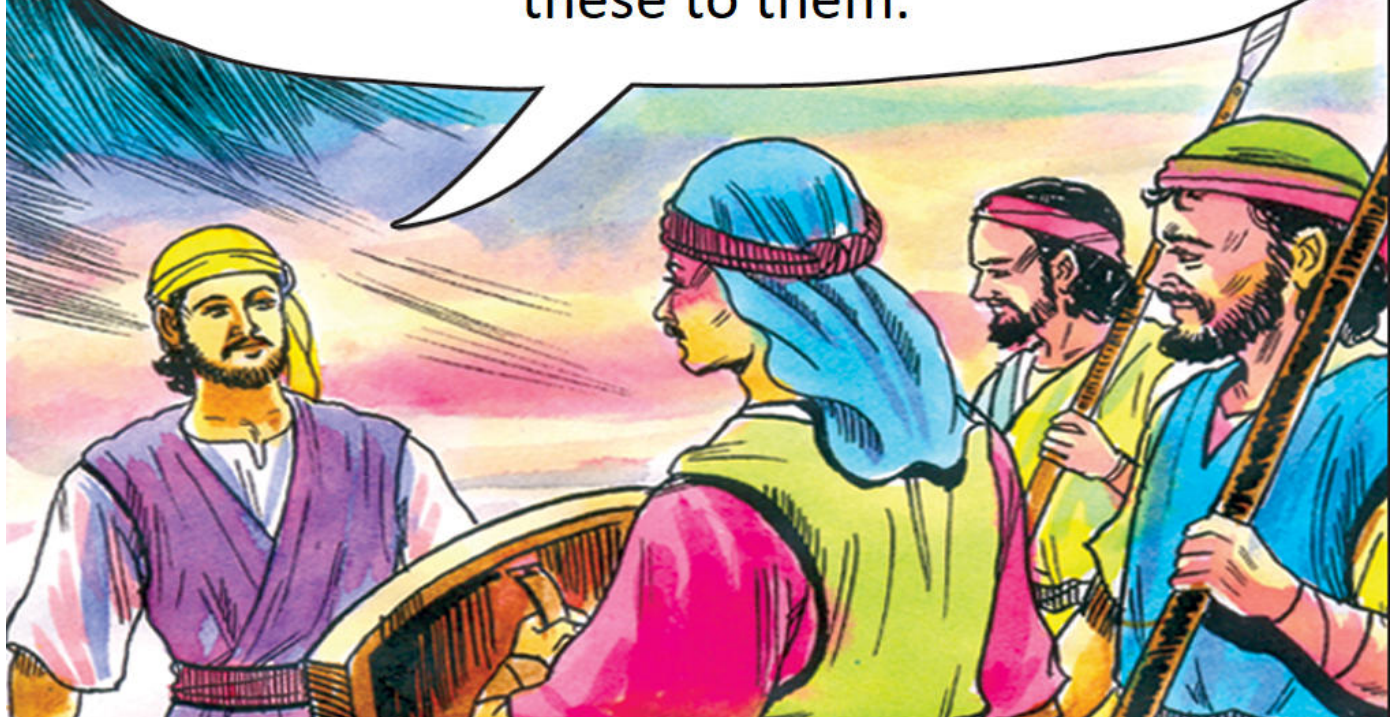


Hearing that the Jews were getting united under Jonathan, Bacchides marched against them. Jonathan and his men withdrew into the desert.

Brethren, Bacchides and his army will reach here soon. We can't protect the food and other provisions here.



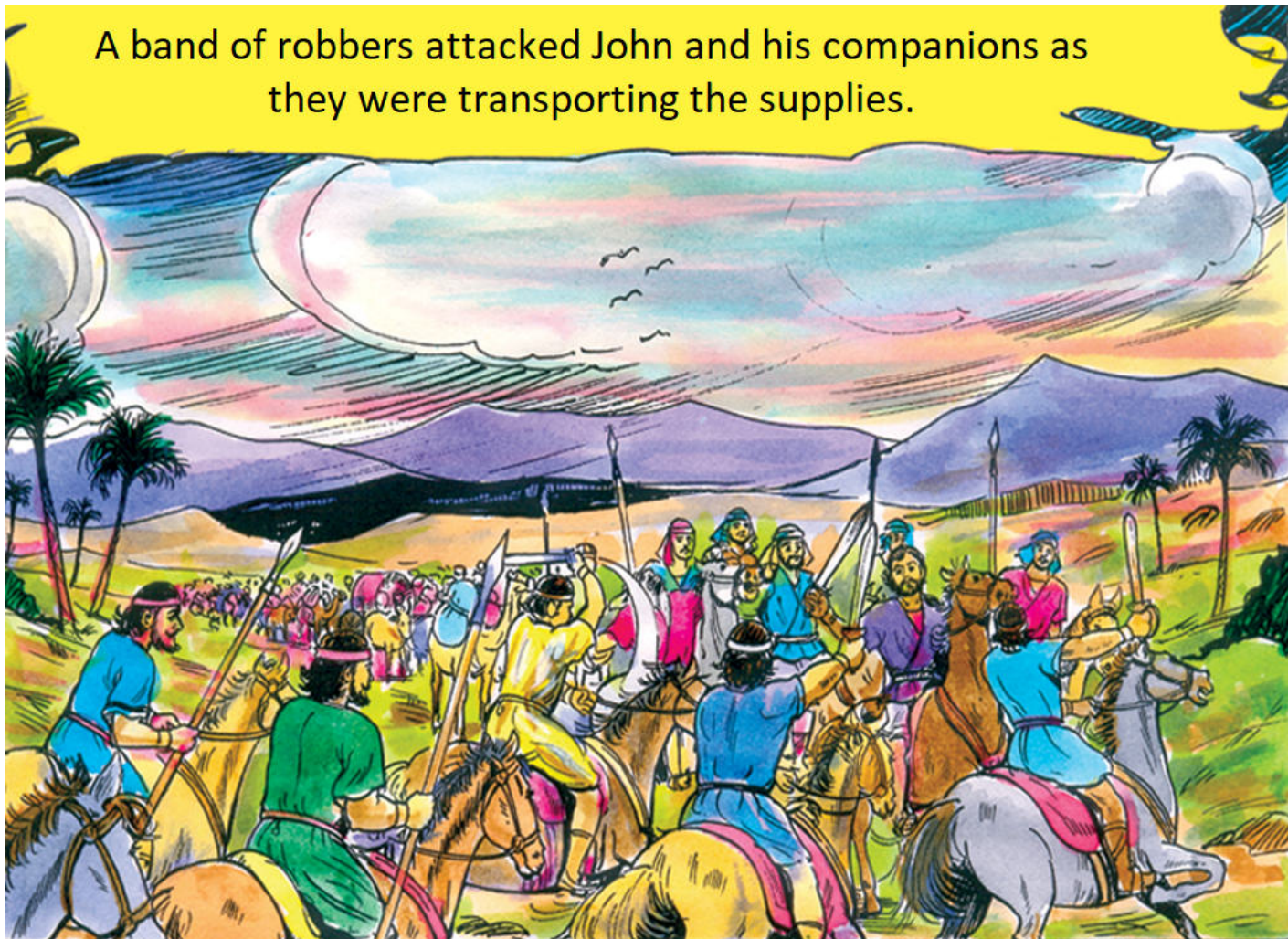
What we do not need immediately, we shall entrust to the Nabatheans. May I ask our elder brother John to take these to them.



The Nabatheans are our friends. After the battle with the Bacchides we shall collect our supplies.



A band of robbers attacked John and his companions as they were transporting the supplies.

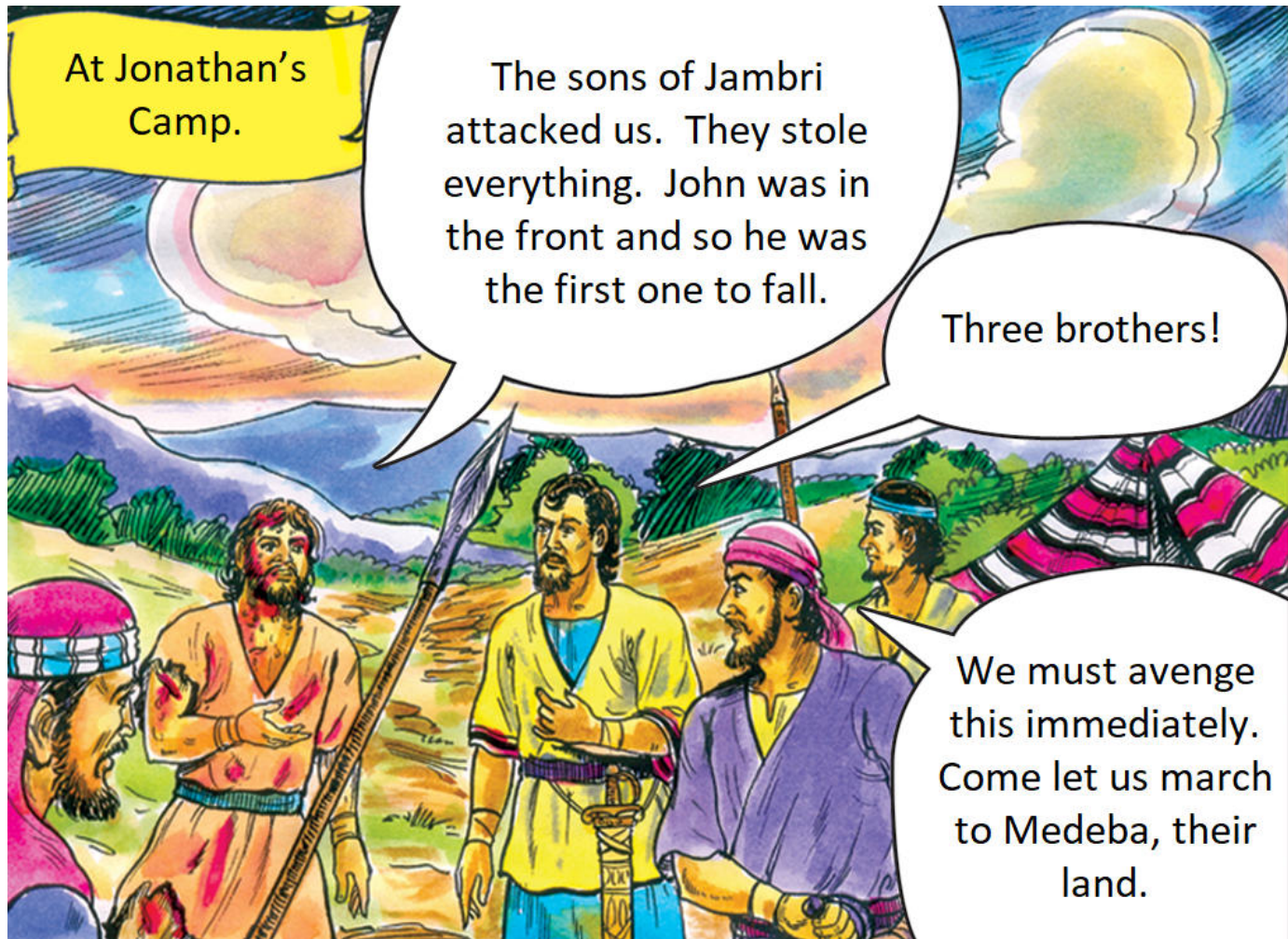


At Jonathan's
Camp.

The sons of Jambri
attacked us. They stole
everything. John was in
the front and so he was
the first one to fall.

Three brothers!

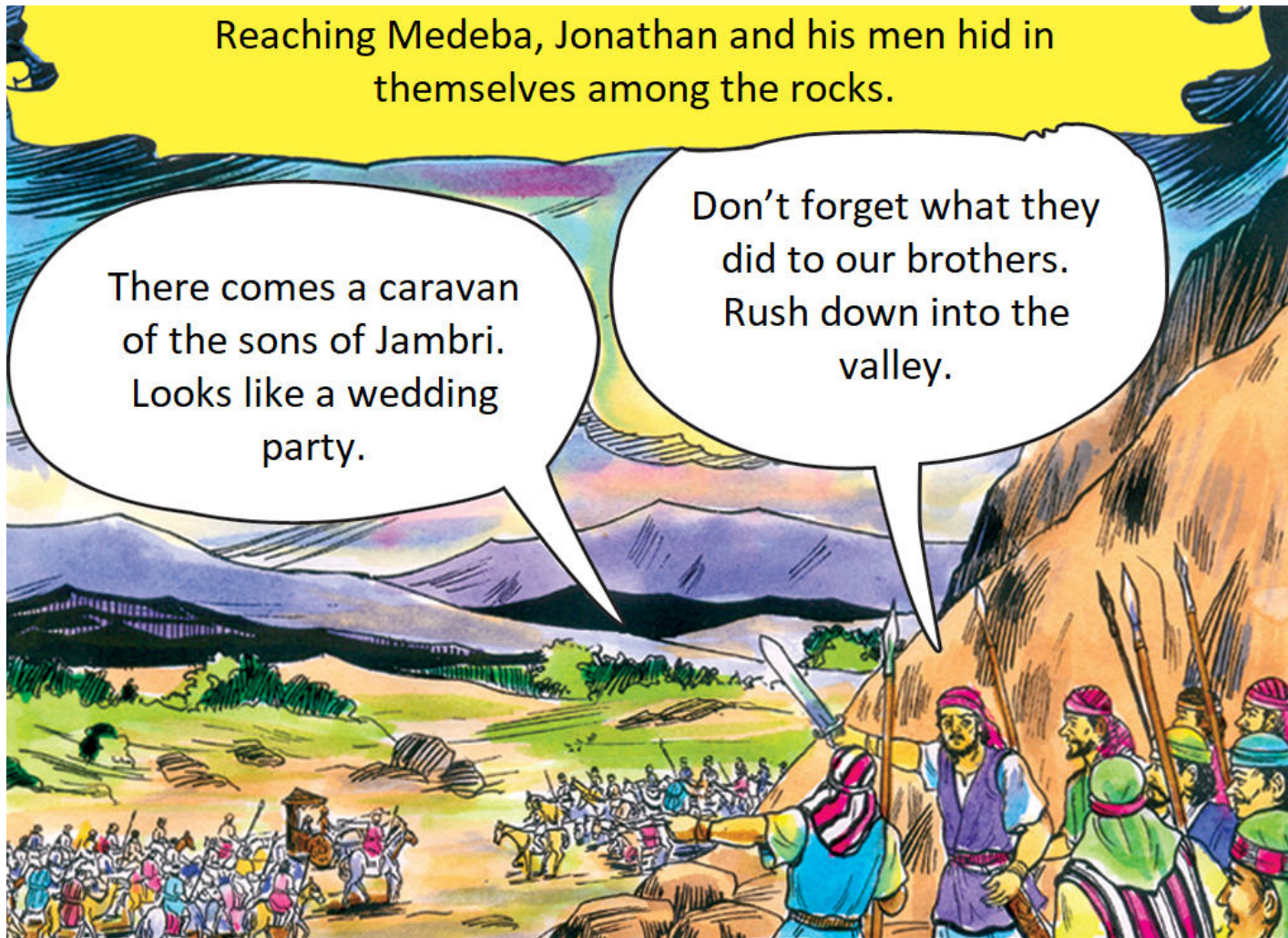
We must avenge
this immediately.
Come let us march
to Medeba, their
land.



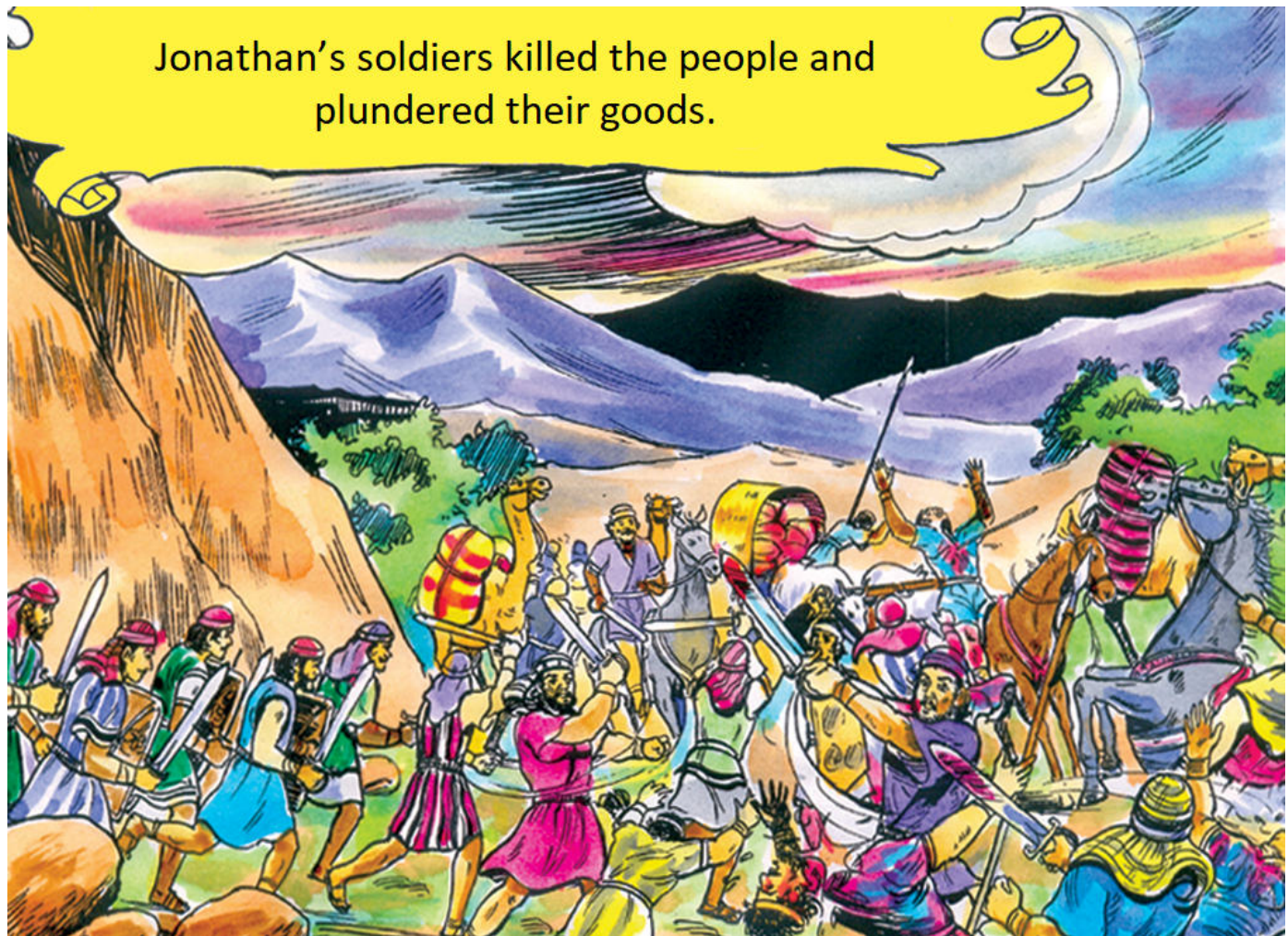
Reaching Medeba, Jonathan and his men hid in themselves among the rocks.

There comes a caravan of the sons of Jambri. Looks like a wedding party.

Don't forget what they did to our brothers. Rush down into the valley.



Jonathan's soldiers killed the people and
plundered their goods.



Jonathan and his men camped on bank of the River Jordan.
Bacchadis attacked them.

Brother, we are fighting
for our lives. Trust in the
Lord and Fight with
courage.

Today is the
Sabbath, can we
take up arms?



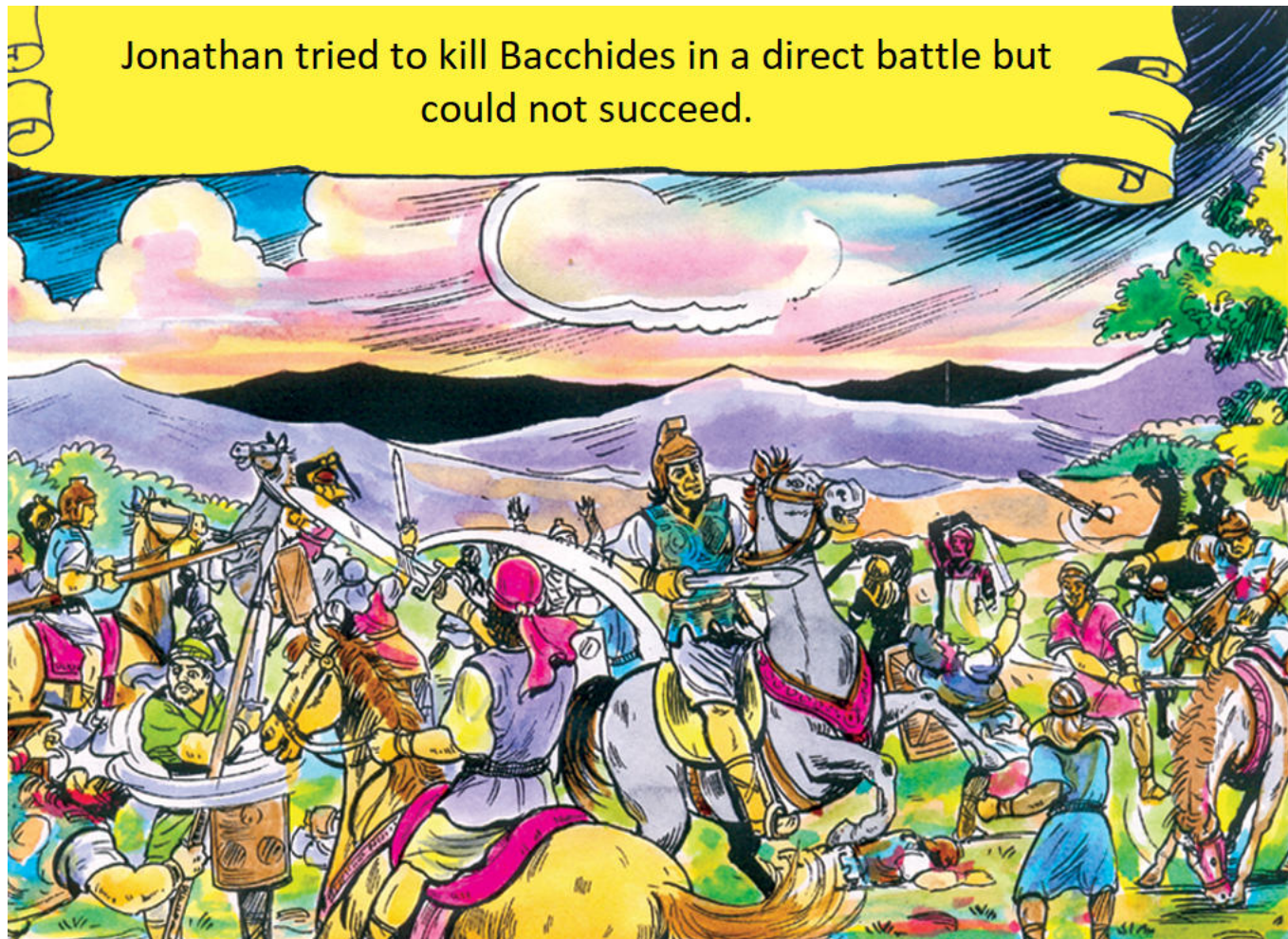
Before us is Jordan
behind us is Marsh. The
enemy is closing in. How
can we avoid fighting.



We have decided long ago that
we'll fight back if we are
attacked even on Sabbath day.



Jonathan tried to kill Bacchides in a direct battle but could not succeed.



Jonathan to his men.

Jump in and swim
across the river.

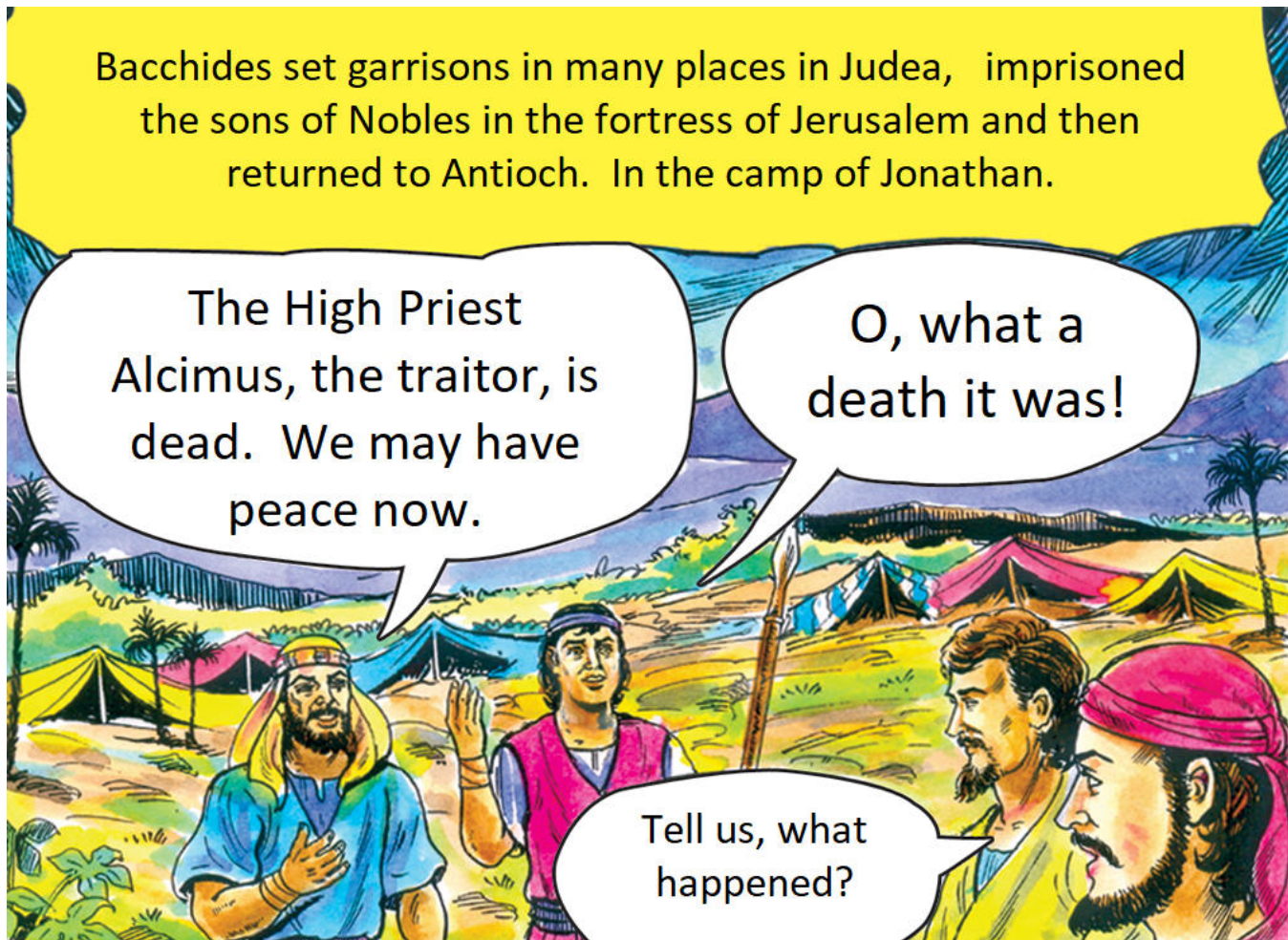


Bacchides set garrisons in many places in Judea, imprisoned the sons of Nobles in the fortress of Jerusalem and then returned to Antioch. In the camp of Jonathan.

The High Priest Alcimus, the traitor, is dead. We may have peace now.

O, what a death it was!

Tell us, what happened?



Alcimus
ordered to
pull down the
Temple walls.

When the workers
took the first stone
off the wall, Alcimus
fell like a log. He
didn't move after
that.



God gave him what
he deserved.

When Alcimus died, Bacchides was forced to return to Antioch.

We must build up our force. We don't know when he will come back.

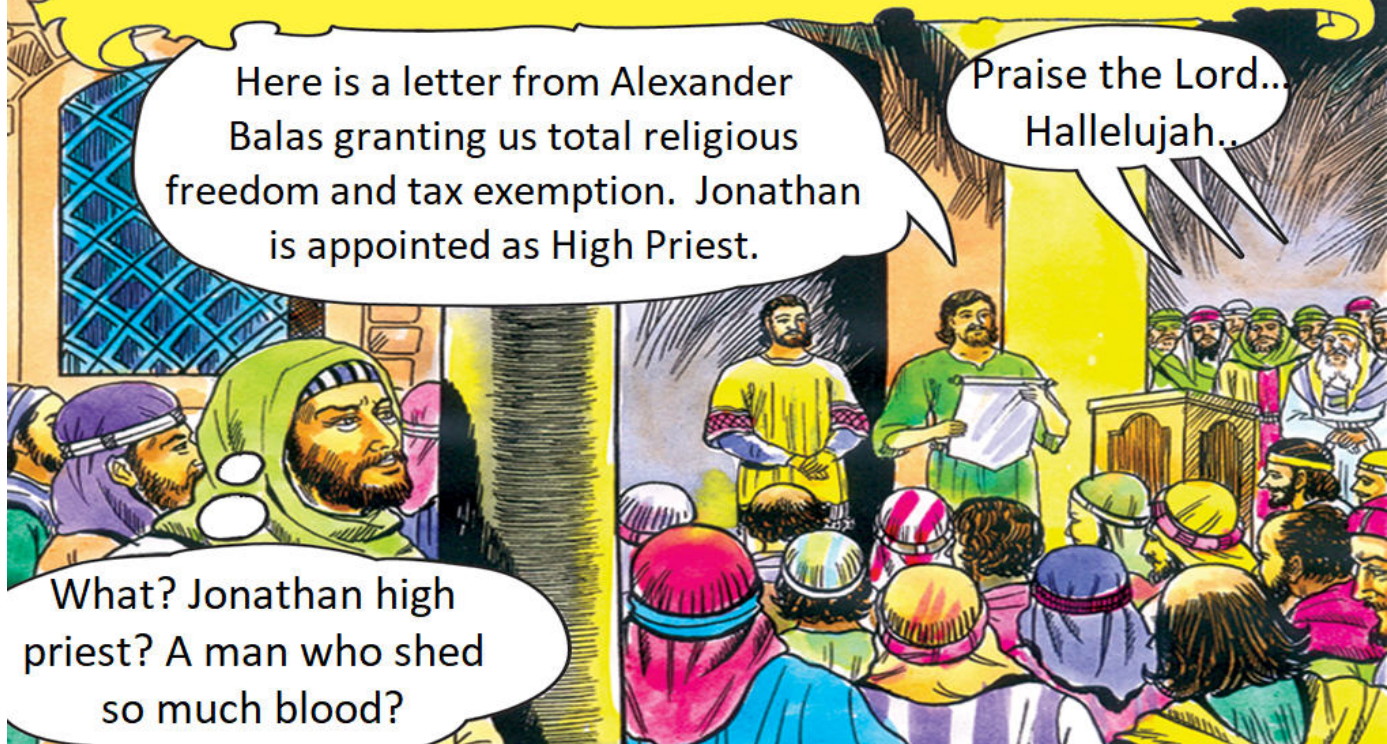



During the following years the Jews had peace. The Syrian empire was disintegrating by internal conflicts. Demetrius and Alexander Balas fought with each other for the throne. They competed to win Jonathan's support. B.C. 152 in Jerusalem.

Here is a letter from Alexander Balas granting us total religious freedom and tax exemption. Jonathan is appointed as High Priest.

Praise the Lord...
Hallelujah...

What? Jonathan high priest? A man who shed so much blood?



A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a green garment, is holding a golden crown. The background is a colorful, abstract sky with blue, yellow, and pink hues. A speech bubble is positioned to the right of the man.

He has sent a golden
crown and purple
garment for the High
Priest. May I put this
on Jonathan with
your permission?

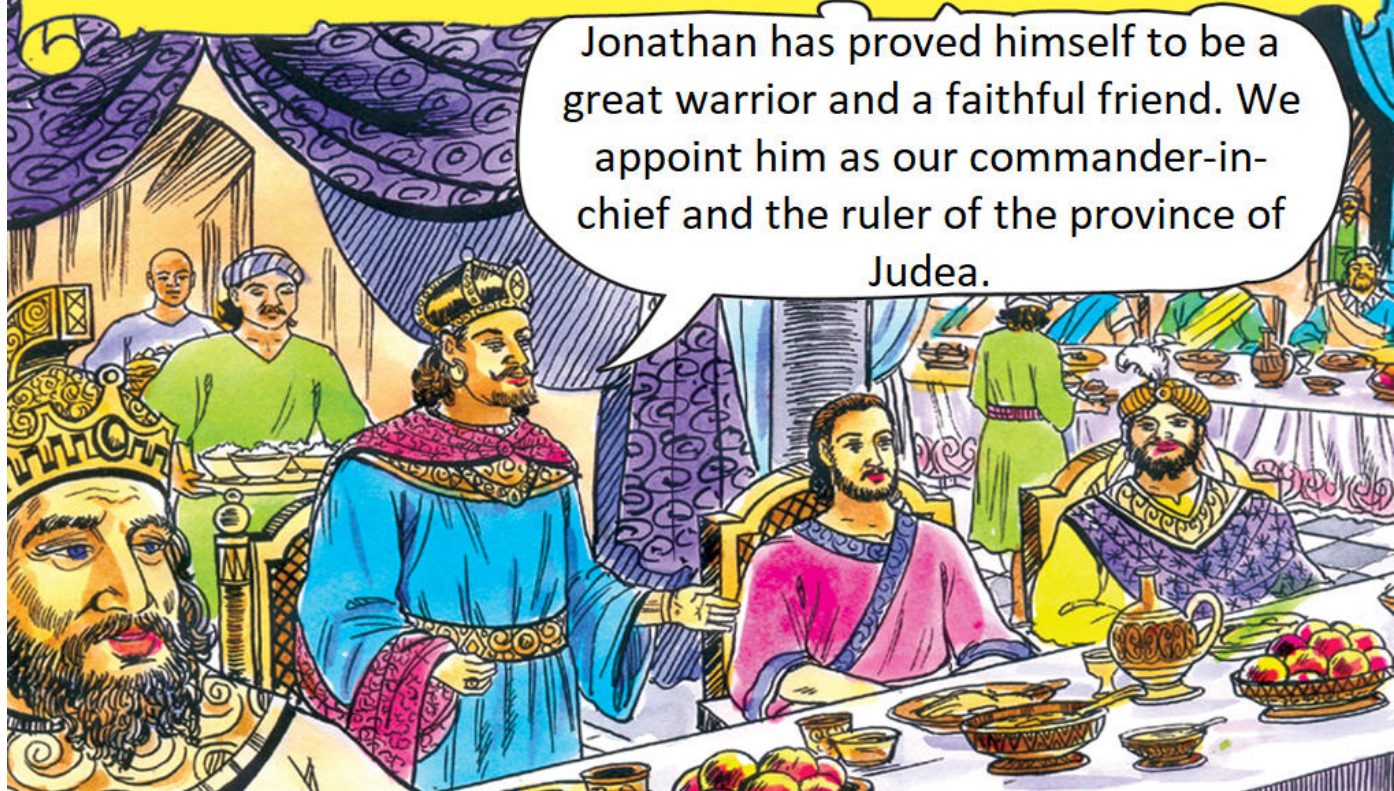
I think it is wise to sign a treaty with Alexander Balas, Because we can't trust Demetrius and his promises.

Besides, Alexander has a stronger army. Let us write to him confirming the treaty.



B.C. 149, Alexander Balas married Cleopatra, daughter of Ptolemy, king of Egypt. Jonathan was invited to the city of Ptolemais for a reception.

Jonathan has proved himself to be a great warrior and a faithful friend. We appoint him as our commander-in-chief and the ruler of the province of Judea.



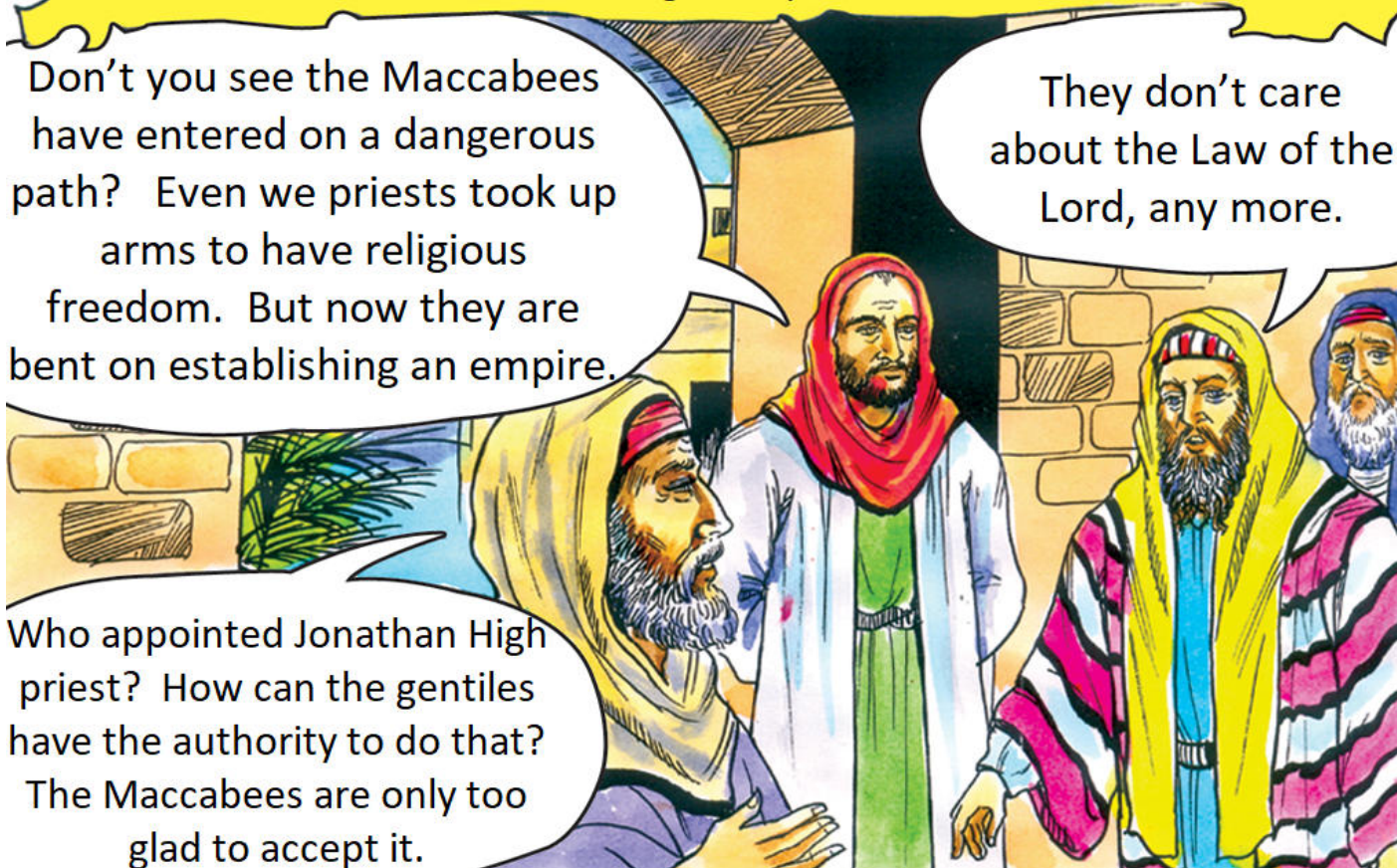
During the following years, taking advantage of the weakness of the Syrian kings, Jonathan strengthened his army and expanded his territory.

A conversation among some priests in Jerusalem.

Don't you see the Maccabees have entered on a dangerous path? Even we priests took up arms to have religious freedom. But now they are bent on establishing an empire.

They don't care about the Law of the Lord, any more.

Who appointed Jonathan High priest? How can the gentiles have the authority to do that? The Maccabees are only too glad to accept it.



A blood thirsty man like Jonathan
should never be the High Priest.
Where is the holiness of the
priesthood?

But, who can
stop them?



Let us go into the wilderness and
holding fast to the Law, wait for
the coming of the Messiah.

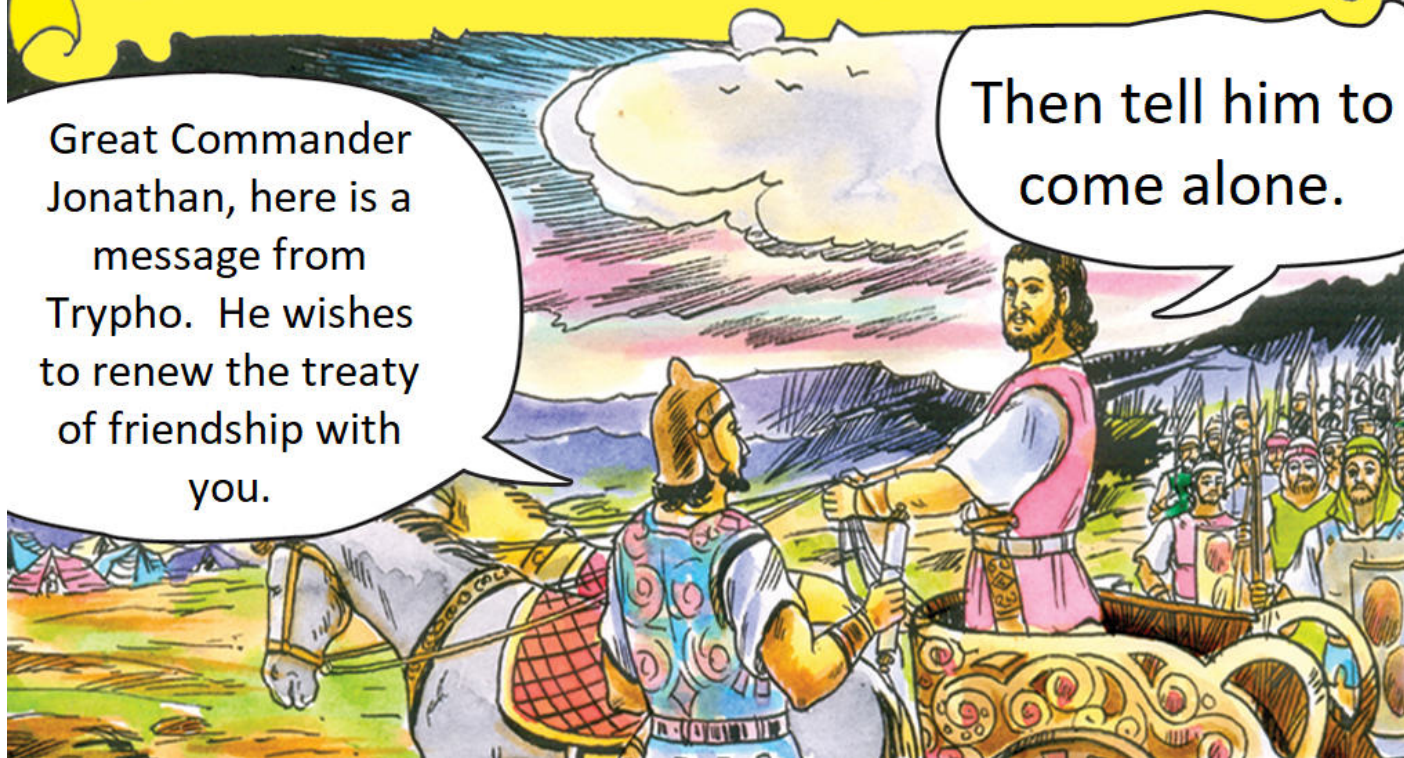


Thus a religious community called “The Essenes” was
founded at Qumran, on the shore of the Dead Sea.

As the Syrians remained divided and weak, Jonathan grew steadily in power. In B.C. 143 the commander-in-chief of Alexander Balas came to attack Jonathan.

Great Commander Jonathan, here is a message from Trypho. He wishes to renew the treaty of friendship with you.

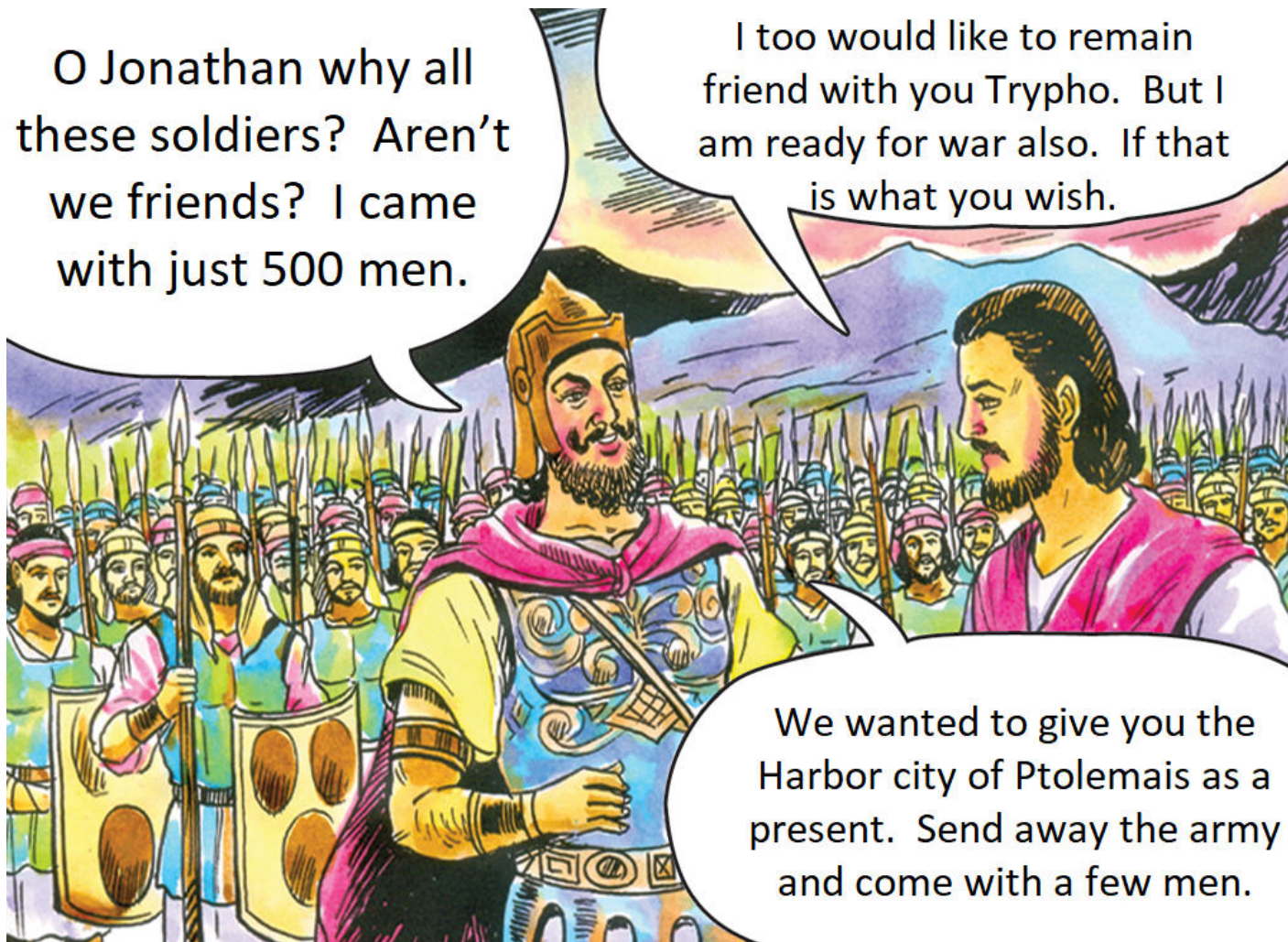
Then tell him to come alone.



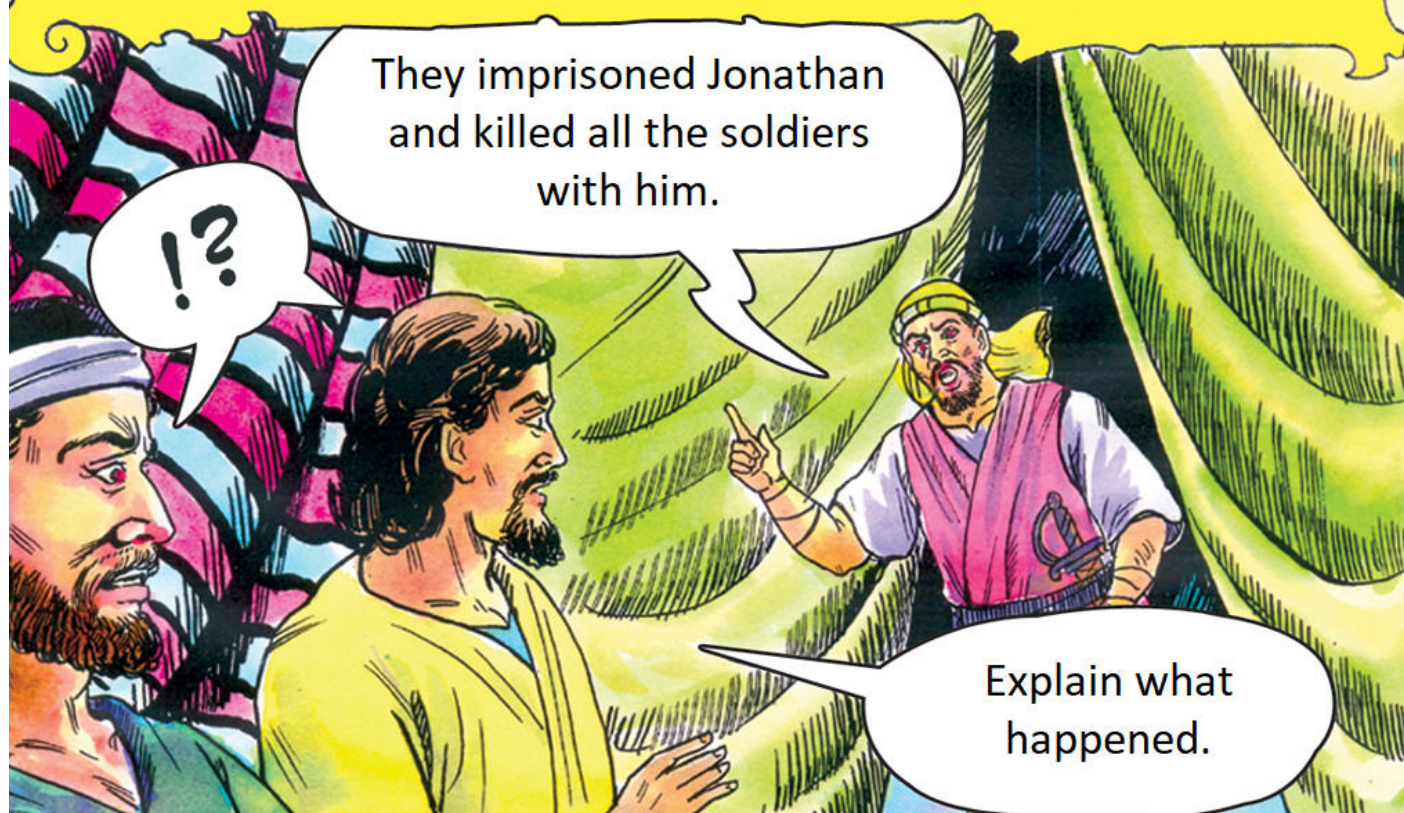
O Jonathan why all these soldiers? Aren't we friends? I came with just 500 men.

I too would like to remain friend with you Trypho. But I am ready for war also. If that is what you wish.

We wanted to give you the Harbor city of Ptolemais as a present. Send away the army and come with a few men.



Believing the words of Trypho, Jonathan sent away the army and went to Ptolemais just with a thousand men.
A few days later at the Jewish camp.



As soon as we entered the city, they closed the gates and arrested Jonathan. A terrible Massacre followed. We were taken by surprise.



Everything was over within less
than an hour. I just escaped.

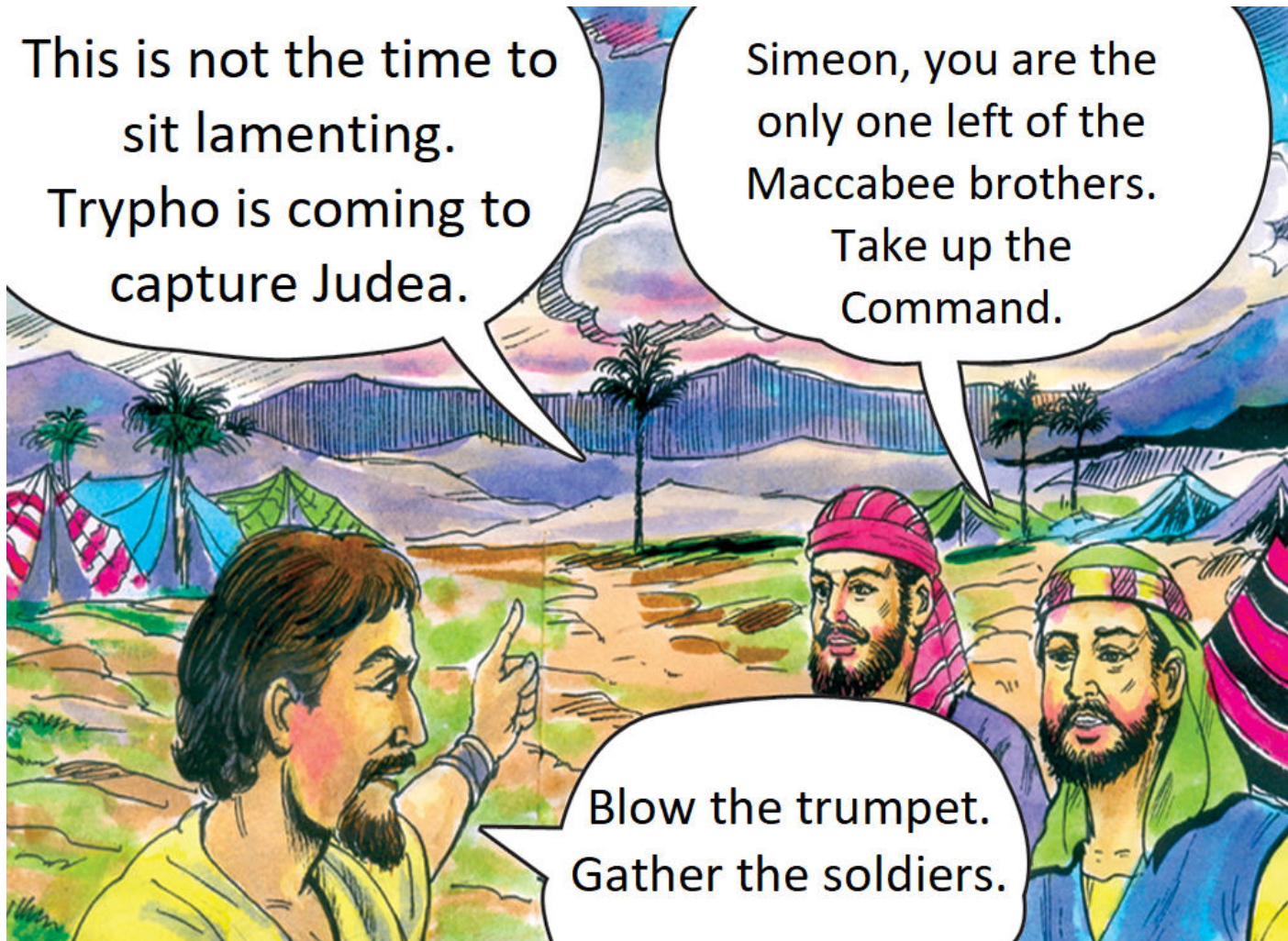
Treachery!
O Jonathan.



This is not the time to
sit lamenting.
Trypho is coming to
capture Judea.

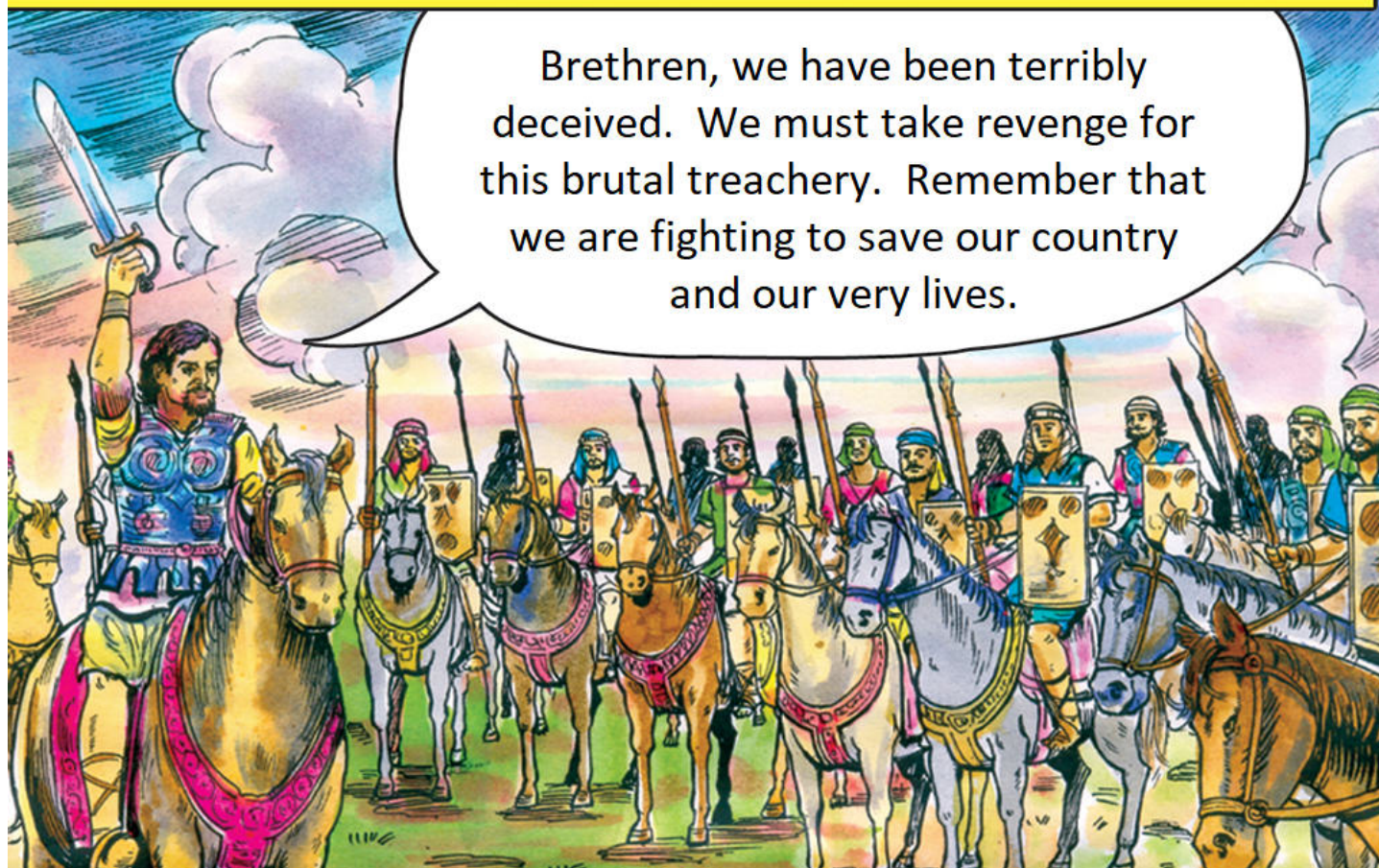
Simeon, you are the
only one left of the
Maccabee brothers.
Take up the
Command.

Blow the trumpet.
Gather the soldiers.



The Jewish soldiers who were relaxing at various camp sites came together and lined up behind Simeon.

Brethren, we have been terribly deceived. We must take revenge for this brutal treachery. Remember that we are fighting to save our country and our very lives.



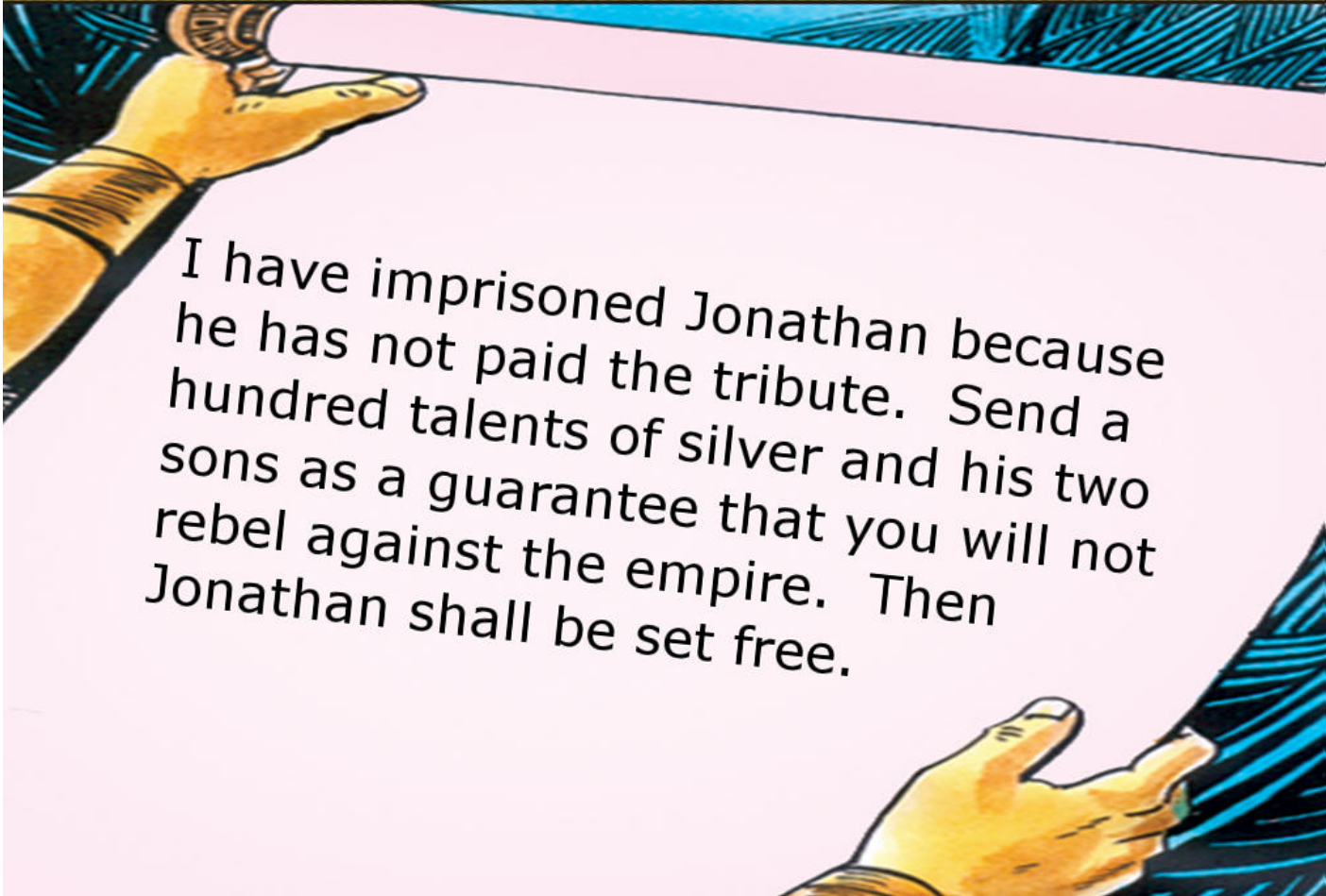
Seeing the mighty army marching behind
Simeon, Trypho used another trick.

Trypho is sending
messenger.

Watch out, it
may be another
trick.



Trpho's message

A cartoon illustration featuring a hand holding a scroll. The hand is yellow with black outlines and is positioned at the top left of the scroll. The scroll is white with a pink border and contains a message. The background is a solid yellow color.

I have imprisoned Jonathan because he has not paid the tribute. Send a hundred talents of silver and his two sons as a guarantee that you will not rebel against the empire. Then Jonathan shall be set free.

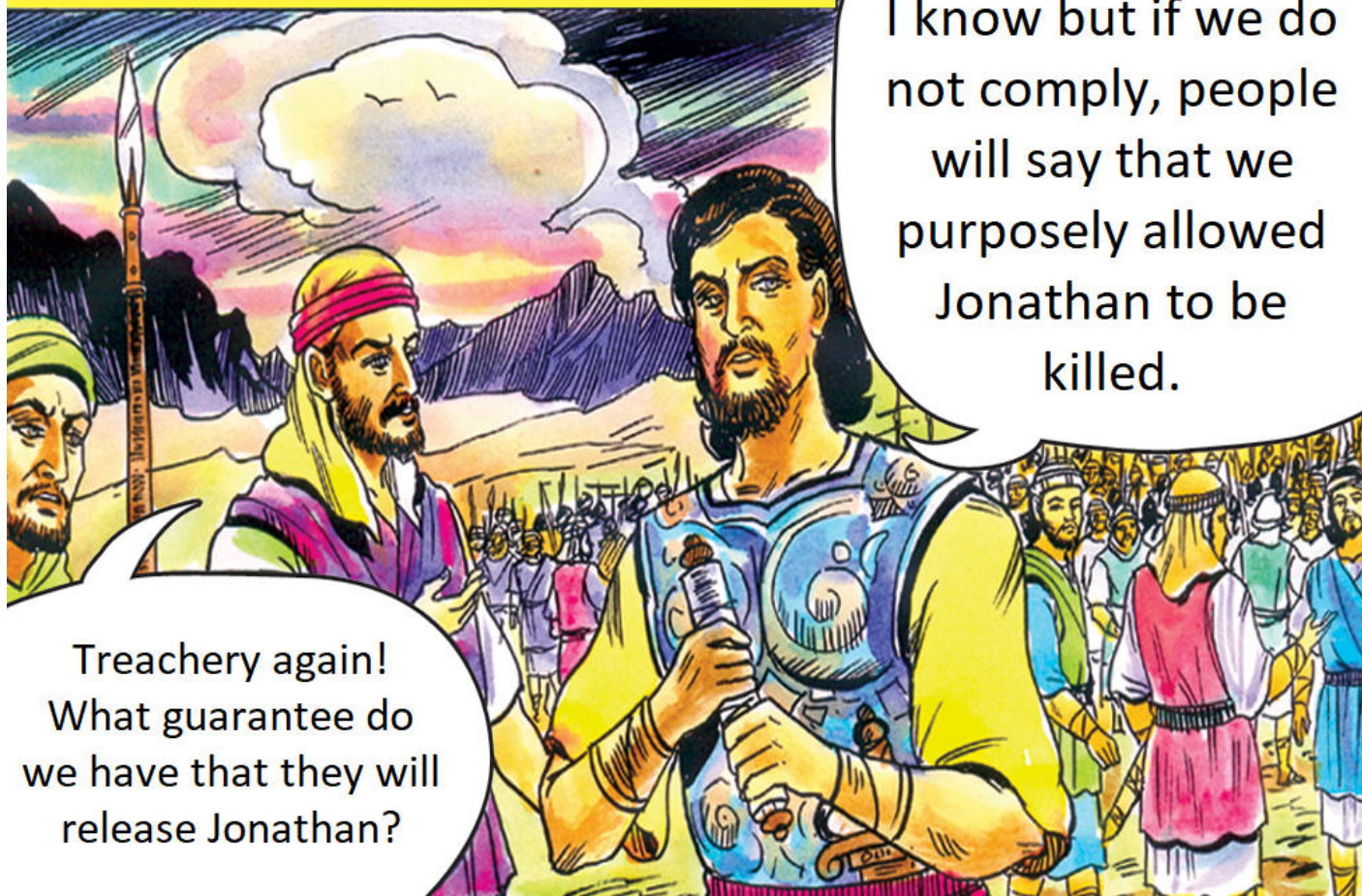
Agreed we will do it
in a week.




After the messenger left.

I know but if we do not comply, people will say that we purposely allowed Jonathan to be killed.

Treachery again!
What guarantee do we have that they will release Jonathan?



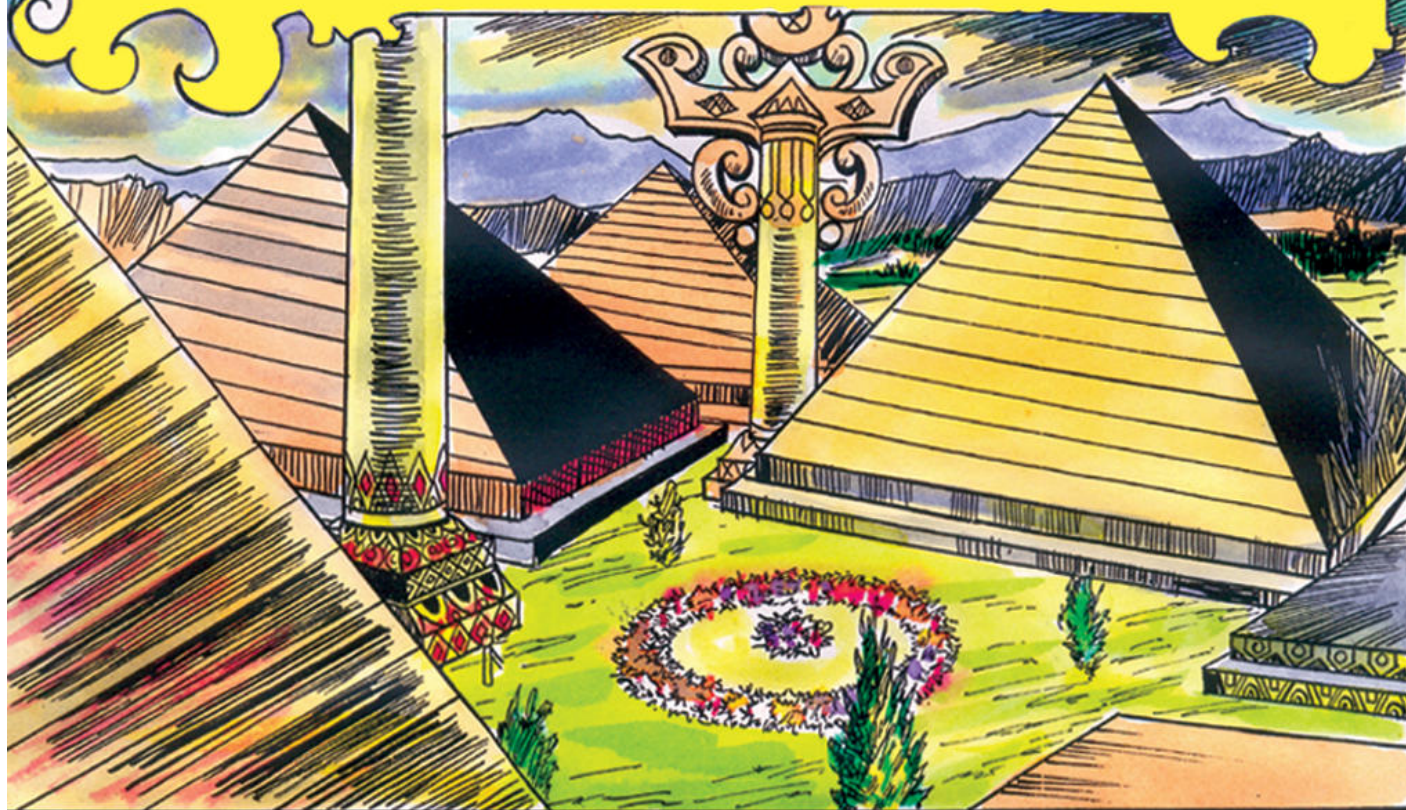
Though Simeon kept his promise, Trypho prepared for war.
Simeon defeated him in several encounters. Finally the
winter set in.
At Trypho's camp.



Right we will
return to
Antioch. Kill
Jonathan and his
sons.

It is not wise to
continue fighting
Simeon in the winter.

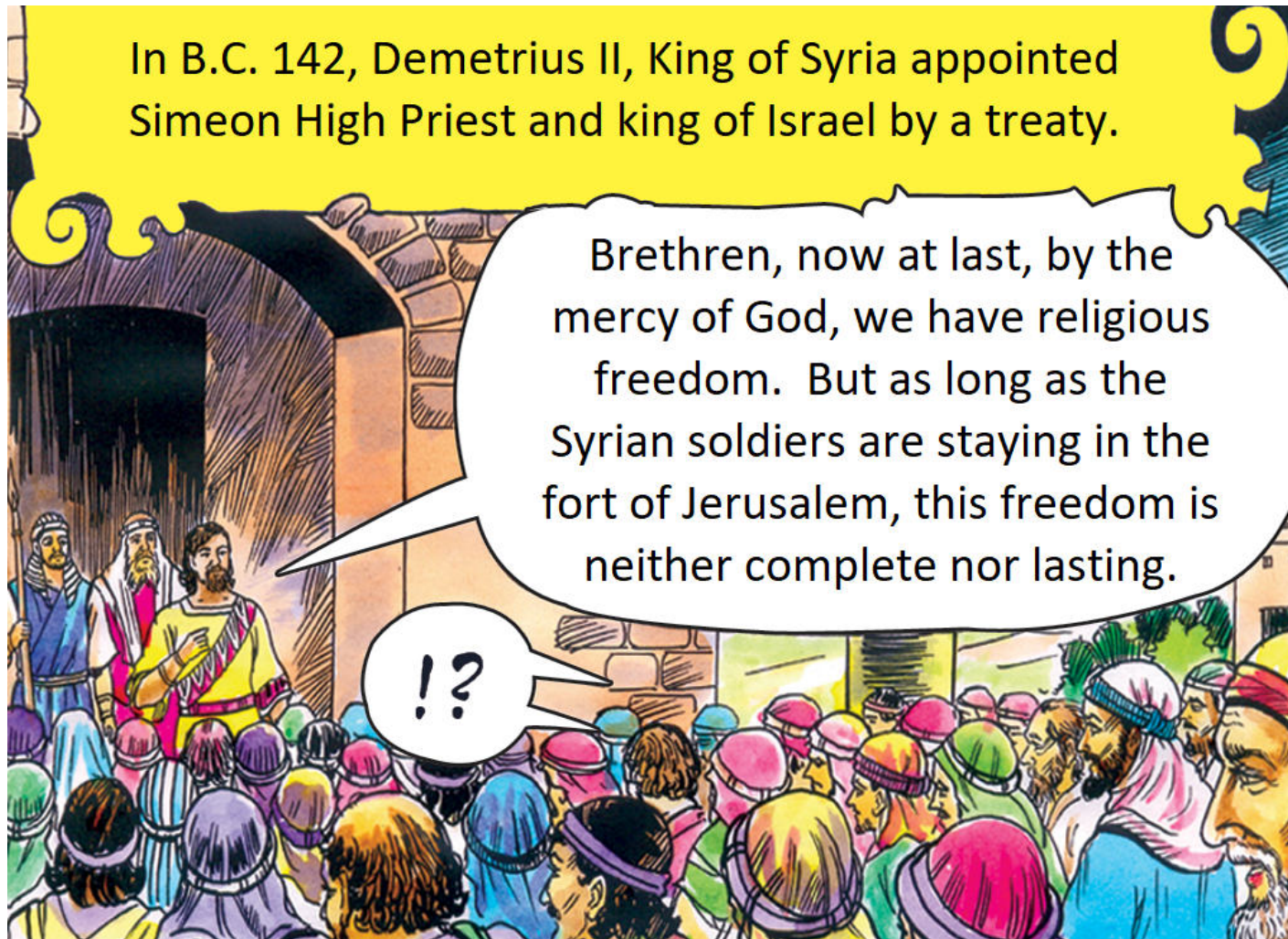
Simeon took the bodies of Jonathan and his sons and buried them at Modein and built a monument there for the whole family.



In B.C. 142, Demetrius II, King of Syria appointed Simeon High Priest and king of Israel by a treaty.

Brethren, now at last, by the mercy of God, we have religious freedom. But as long as the Syrian soldiers are staying in the fort of Jerusalem, this freedom is neither complete nor lasting.

!?



We must capture that fort at any cost. We cannot destroy it because we need it for our defense.



We will besiege them
and starve them to
death.

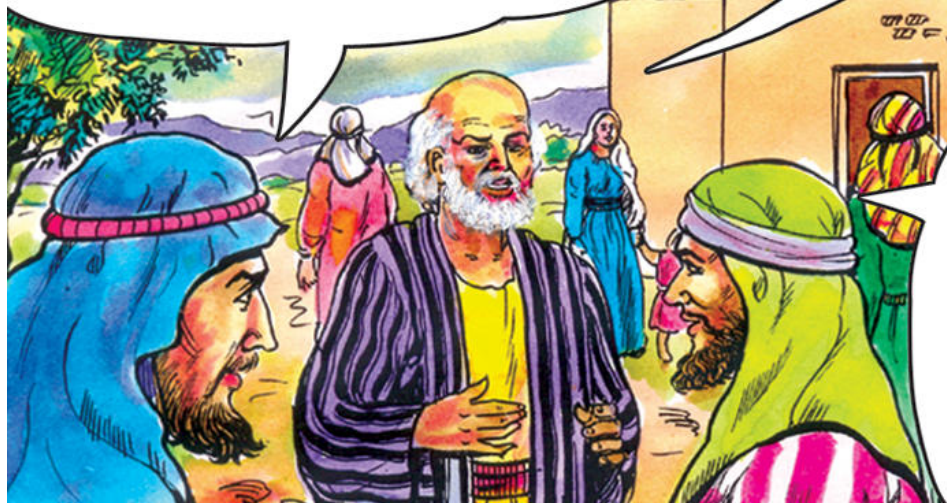


Before long the Syrians surrendered. Simeon captured the Harbor city of Joppa and annexed it to Judea. There was a great prosperity in the country. A conversation among the Jews.

Thanks to the Maccabee brothers, we have our freedom now. We can be proud of ourselves and our country.

The country is as big and as prosperous as in the time of Solomon.

Right, Simeon is like Solomon but without his perversions. Simeon is a holy priest and just ruler.



In B.C. 140 a meeting of all the Jews was called to honor the Maccabee brothers for their heroic service to the nation.

Brethren we are all well aware of the great service rendered by Mattathias and his sons to our nation. Except Simeon, our High priest, all of them died in battle while defending our country.



The Heroic
deeds of the
Maccabee
brothers must
be inscribed
on Bronze
tablets and
preserved in
the national
Archive.



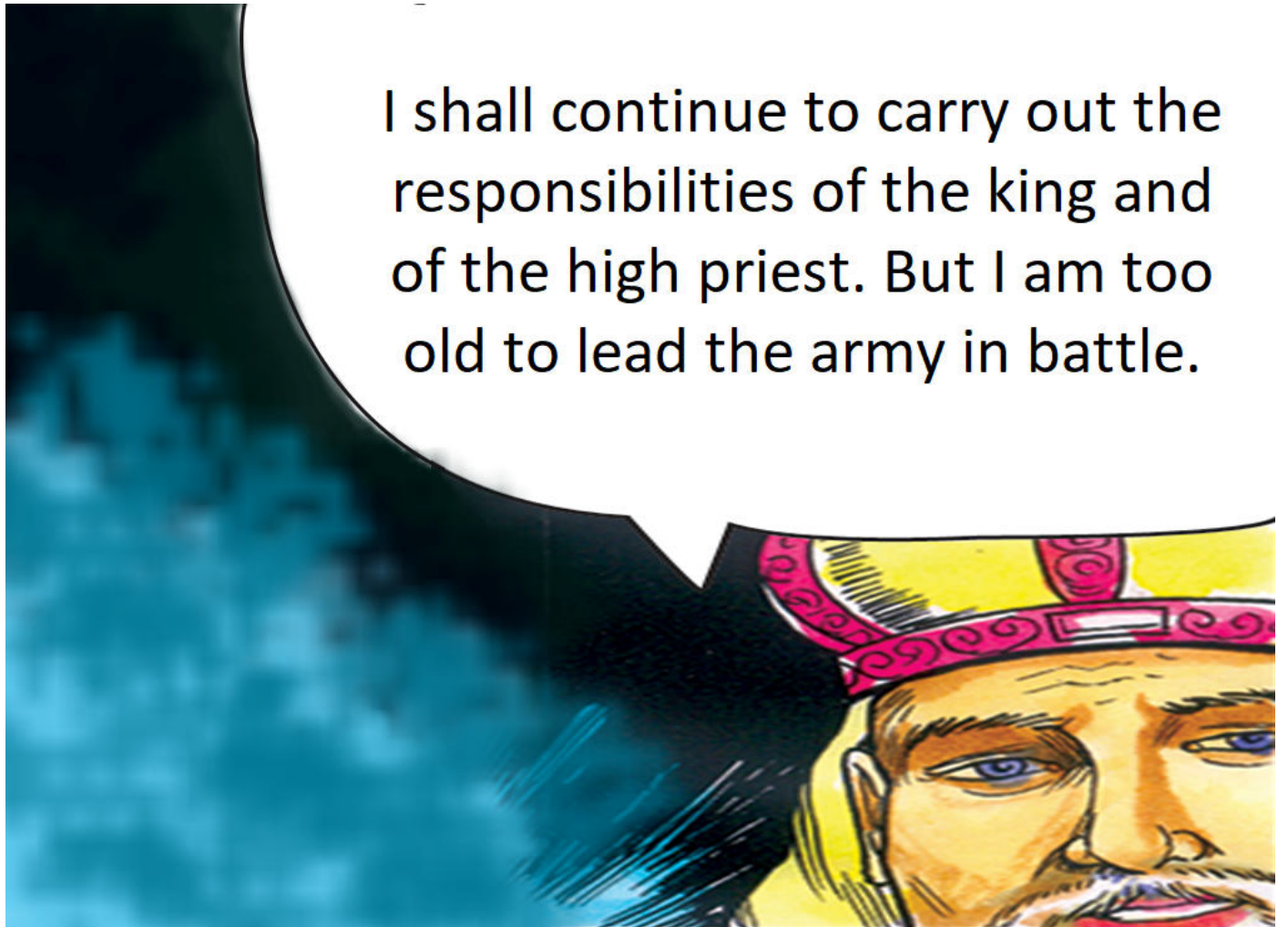
Until the Lord our God sends us and
tells otherwise, let Simeon and his
descendants be the High Priest and
the king in Israel.





Respected elders
and brethren, I
shall be always
grateful to the
honors you have
bestowed on me
and my family.

I shall continue to carry out the responsibilities of the king and of the high priest. But I am too old to lead the army in battle.





Therefore I appoint my son John as the Commander-in-Chief of the army. After my death he shall take over all my responsibilities.



B.C. 134, Simeon and all his sons except John were killed in a trap set by Ptolemy, his son in law at a banquet he gave in Simeon's honor.



Kill them all. Let this be the end of the Maccabean rule. From now on I will be the Master of Judea.

All those who took up the sword perished by the sword. John who escaped the Massacre adopted the name Hyrcanus and ruled Judea until B.C 104. His son succeeded him until B.C. 63. The Old Testament history ends here. It proved that lasting peace and salvation cannot be obtained by the sword.

A New Series Begins:

Next Story

Jesus Christ

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Maccabeus make a treaty with Rome?
2. Why did Antiochus V grant religious freedom to the Jews?
3. Name the general who killed Maccabeus.
4. Name the High Priest who supported Hellenisation and died suddenly.
5. Who appointed Jonathan High Priest?
6. Explain the circumstances under which the Essene community was formed at Qumran.
7. Describe how Jonathan was killed.
8. Who succeeded Simon?
9. How was Simon killed?
10. What do you learn from the history of the Maccabees?

THE ENTIRE BIBLE IN COMICS

1. Cain and Abel
2. Abraham
3. Jacob
4. Joseph
5. Moses
6. Joshua
7. Samson
8. Ruth
9. Samuel
10. Saul
11. David
12. King David
13. Solomon
14. Elijah
15. Amos
16. Hosea
17. Micah

18. Isaiah
19. Jeremiah
20. Ezekiel
21. Zechariah
22. Jonah
23. Job
24. Tobit
25. Daniel
26. Susanna
27. Esther
28. Judith
29. Maccabeus
30. The Maccabees
31. A World Awaiting
32. Light of the world
33. The Herald
34. The Prophet
35. The Liberator

36. The One to come
37. The Lord of the Universe
38. Son of God
39. The Son of Man
40. In the shadow of the cross
41. The Way
42. Son of David
43. Bread of Life
44. The Redeemer
45. With us forever
46. Tongues of fire
47. Baptism in blood
48. The chosen vessel
49. Libation
50. Come, Lord Jesus
51. Woman

