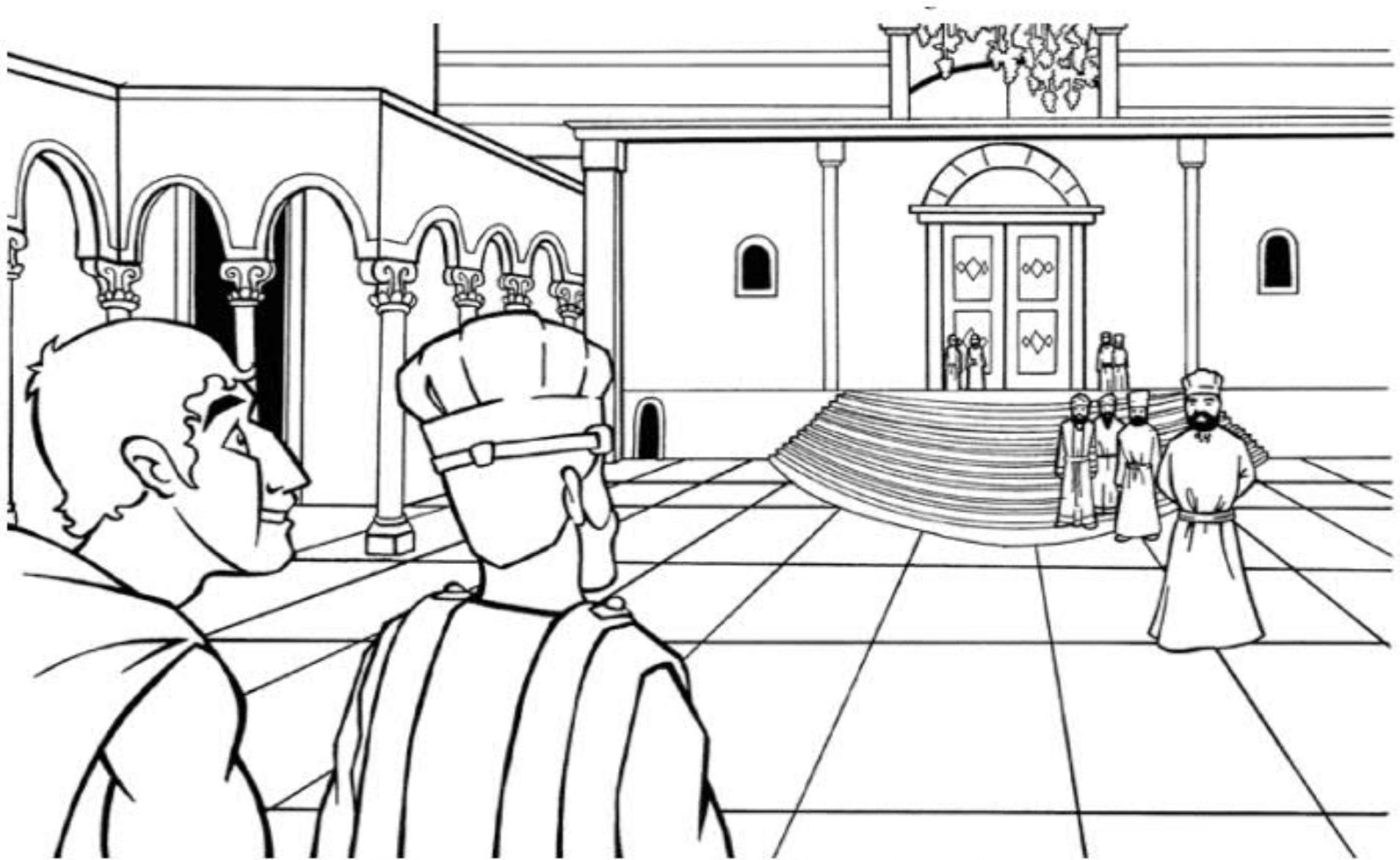




Many years ago, in the year 3442 of the Jewish calendar, 319 before the Common Era, in the city of Jerusalem, something very significant happened to the Jewish people.



It all started with Alexander the Great of Macedonia. After having conquered a big part of that region, he arrived in Jerusalem where he was welcomed by Shimon the Righteous, the high-priest.



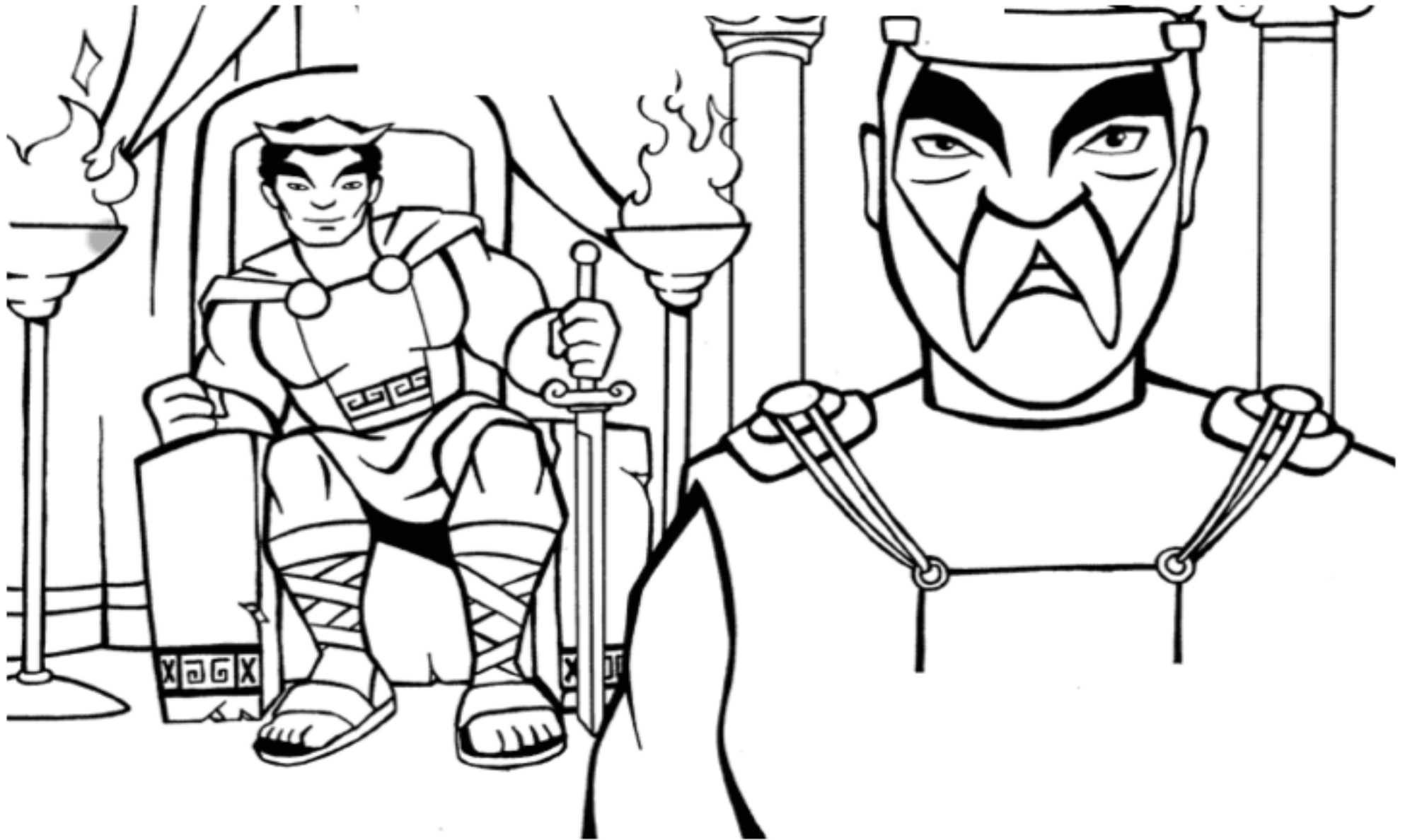
The king was very impressed with the Jewish peoples' way of life, especially in the Holy Temple and he allowed them to practice their laws and customs as always.



*After the death of Alexander, his empire was divided into many parts.
The land of Israel became part of the kingdom of Ptolemy of Egypt.
Later it went over to the reign of the King Antioch IV of Syria.*



King Antioch spread the Hellenist culture in all the countries under his domain. Many Jews started liking his new ideas and the Greek customs started influencing the Jews. Many thought that it wouldn't hurt to be more like the Greeks.



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Jason built a big gymnasium next to the Holy Temple where the athletes brought sacrifices for the Greek idols before they played. Later Menelaus sold the treasures of the Holy Temple and persecuted his nation and religion.



Some time later Antioch tried to conquer Egypt. But the enemy was stronger and he had to give up. The Jews thought that the King died so they rebelled against Menelaus the high-priest.



When Antiochus heard about what was happening in Jerusalem he went into the city and cruelly killed thousands of Jews.



Antiochus entered the Holy Temple and took away the holy objects and put instead of them a Greek statue with an altar where he sacrificed a pig.



He decreed that it is prohibited to rest on Shabbat, make circumcisions, follow the Jewish dietary laws and use the Jewish calendar. The Torah scrolls were burnt and his soldiers started going from city to city building altars and Greek statues.



In Jerusalem there was a family named Chashmonai. They were a very important family of priests. Running away from the persecution, Matisyohu and his five sons moved from Jerusalem to a little village called Modi'in.



One day, the soldiers of Antiochus came to Modi'in, built an altar in the town square in order to bring sacrifices for the Greek idols. When Matisyohu saw what was happening he destroyed the altar, fought with the soldiers and ran away to the Judean hills.



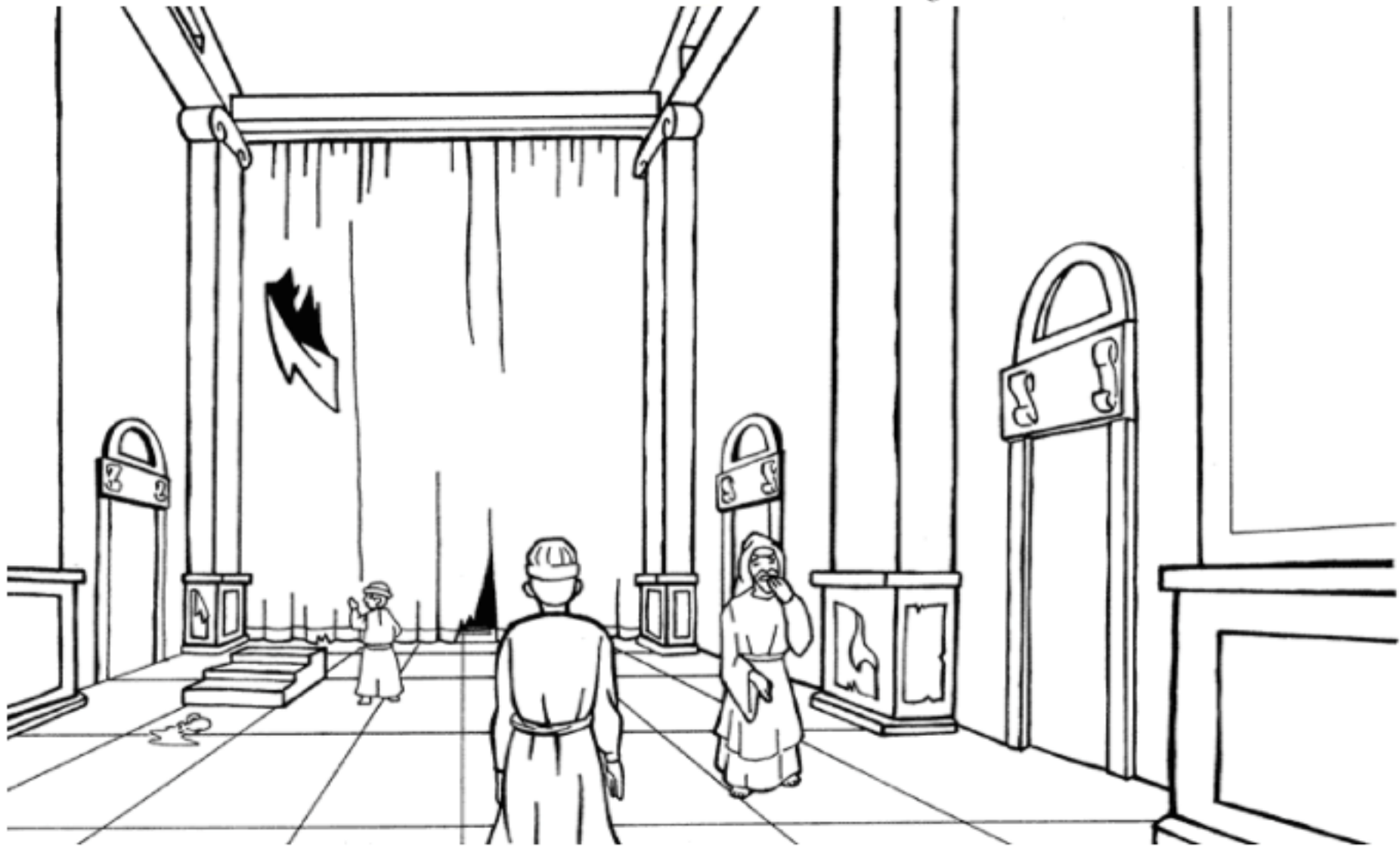
Matisyohu declared: "Whoever follows the Torah and its commandments, follow me!" The Jews went to the Judean hills since they could hide there and practice their religion without being persecuted.



Matisyohu had a son named Yehuda the Macabee. A lot of courageous Jews gathered around him and started attacking the Syrian army and destroying the altars.



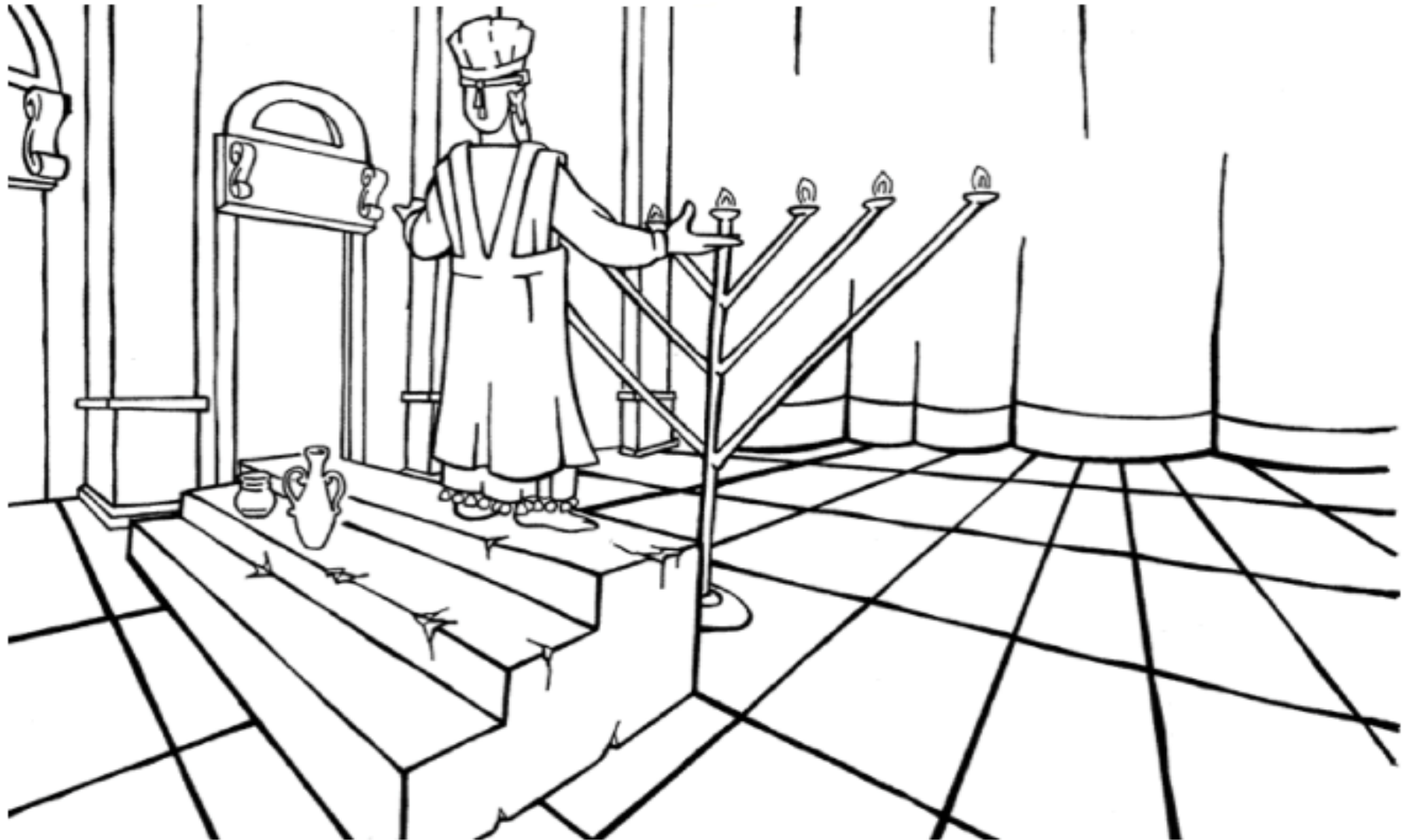
The enemies decided to fight against the Jews with an army of 60,000 soldiers, arms and war elephants. But the Maccabees, with the help of G-d, after a few battles finally won.



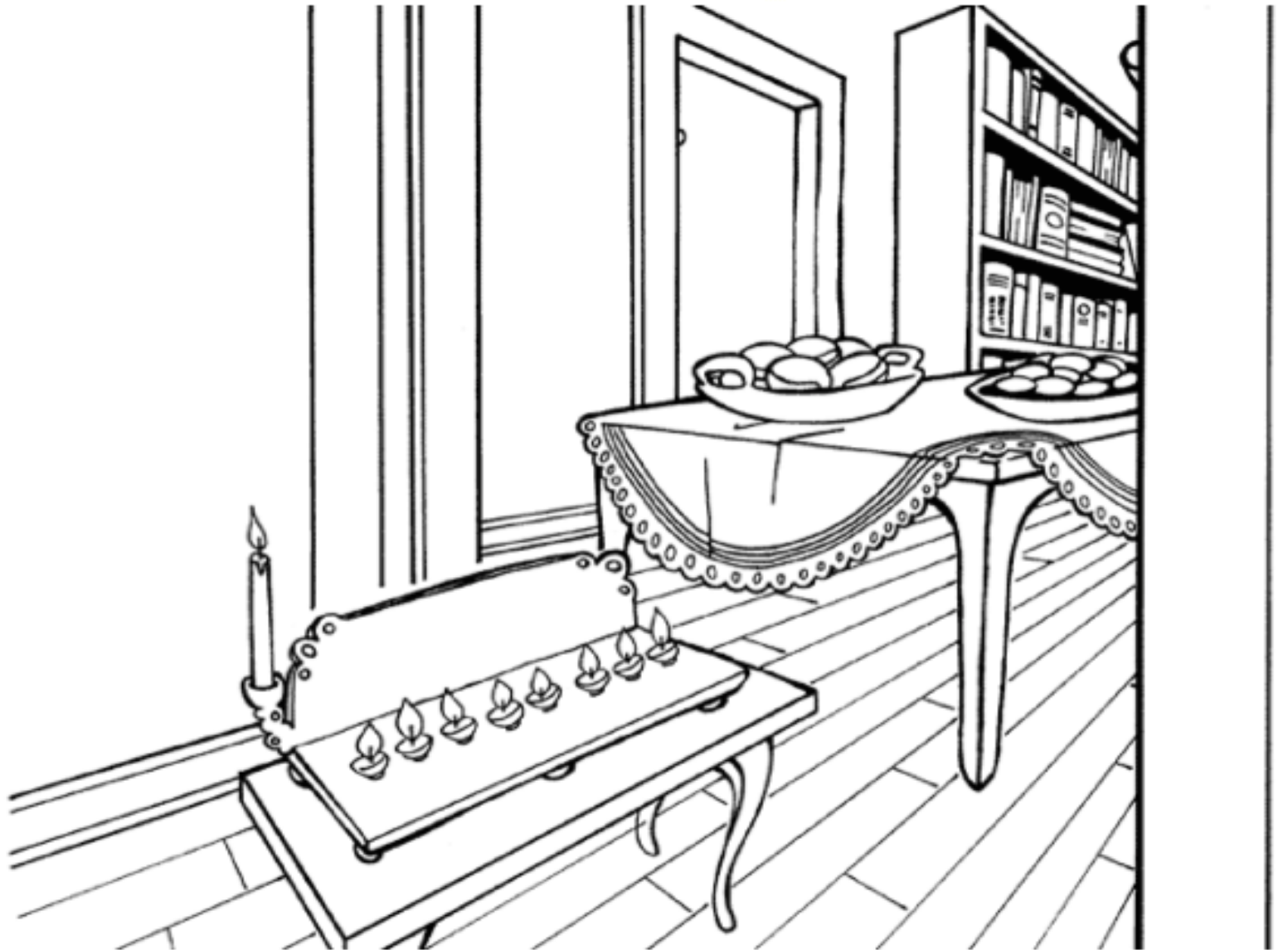
When they came back to Jerusalem they found the holy temple profaned. They took out all the statues and they discovered that the golden Menorah was stolen. They built another one of iron and decided to light it with pure olive oil.



When they looked for the oil jars with the high priests' seal they found only one that still had the seal on it with enough oil for only one day. They knew that eight days are needed for new oil to be made.



On the 25th of Kislev the oil was put into the menorah. By a Divine miracle the oil lasted for eight days. This miracle showed that G-d once again protected his people.



In memory of this miracle, our sages designated these eight days as days of thanking. And from the night of the 25th of Kislev on, we light at dusk a candle, and every day we add another one. The candelabra is called a Menorah and has to be put in a place where it can be seen.







