



# Judas Maccabaeus

HWV 63

Dramma Sacro in tre atti

Musica di

George Frederick Handel

Libretto attribuito a Thomas Morell

Prima esecuzione: Londra, Covent Garden, 1 Aprile 1747

A cura di

**Arsace**

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Aprile 2003

**Personaggi:**

**Judas Maccabaeus (tenore)**

**Simon, suo Fratello (basso)**

**Donna Israelita (soprano)**

**Uomo Israelita (mezzo-soprano)**

**Eupolemus, Ambasciatore Ebreo a Roma (alto)**

**Primo Messaggero (alto)**

**Secondo Messaggero (basso)**

**Coro del popolo di Israele**

**Coro di Giovani**

**Coro di Vergini**



**ATTO PRIMO**

**1. Ouverture**

**Coro del popolo di Israele, uomini e donne,  
lamentando la morte di Mattia,  
il Padre di Judas Maccabaeus.**

**2. Coro del popolo di Israele**

Mourn, ye afflicted children, the remains  
Of captive Judah, mourn in solemn strains;  
Your sanguine hopes of liberty give o'er,  
Your hero, friend and father is no more.

**3. Recitativo**

**Un Israelita**

Well, may your sorrows, brethren, flow  
In all th'expressive signs of woe:  
Your softer garments tear,  
And squalid sackcloth wear,  
Your drooping heads with ashes strew,  
And with the flowig tear your cheeks bedew.

**Donna Israelita**

Daughters, let your distressful cries  
And loud lament ascend the skies;  
Your tender bosoms beat, and tear,

With hands remorseless, your dishevell'd hair;  
For pale and breathless Mattathias lies,  
Sad emblem of his country's miseries!

#### **4. Duetto**

##### **Donna Israelita e Uomo Isrealita**

From this dread scene, these adverse pow'rs,  
Ah, whither shall we fly?  
O Solyma! Thy boasted tow'rs  
In smoky ruins lie.

#### **5. Coro del popolo di Israele**

For Sion lamentation make,  
With words that weep, and tears that speak.

#### **6. Recitativo**

##### **Uomo Israelita**

*Not vain is all this storm of grief;  
To vent our sorrows, gives relief.  
Wretched indeed! But let not Judah's race  
Their ruin with desponding arms embrace.  
Distractful doubt and desperation  
Ill become the chosen nation,  
Chosen by the great I am,  
The Lord of hosts, who, still the same,  
We trust, will give attentive ear  
To the sincerity of pray'r.*

#### **7. Aria**

##### **Un Israelita**

*Pious orgies, pious airs,  
Decent sorrow, decent pray'rs,  
Will to the Lord ascend, and move  
His pity, and regain His love.*

#### **8. Coro del popolo di Israele**

O Father, whose Almighty pow'r  
The Heav'ns, and earth, and seas adore;  
The hearts of Judah, thy delight,  
In one defensive band unite.  
And grant a leader bold, and brave,  
If not to conquer, born to save.

#### **9. Accompagnato**

##### **Simon**

I feel, I feel the deity within,  
Who, the bright cherubim between,  
His radiant glory erst display'd;  
To Israel's distressful pray'r  
He hath vouchsafe'd a gracious ear,  
And points out Maccabaeus to their aid:

Judas shall set the captive free,  
And lead us all to victory.

**10. Aria**

**Simon**

Arm, arm, ye brave! A noble cause,  
The cause of Heav'n your zeal demands.  
In defence of your nation, religion, and laws,  
The Almighty Jehovah will strengthen your hands.  
Arm, arm. . . Etc.

**11. Coro del popolo di Israele**

We come, we come, in bright array,  
Judah, thy sceptre to obey.

**12. Recitativo**

**Judas Maccabaeus**

'Tis well, my friends; with transport I behold  
The spirit of our fathers, fam'd of old  
For their exploits in war. Oh, may they fire  
With active courage you, their sons inspire:  
As when the mighty Joshua fought,  
And those amazing wonders wrought,  
Stood still, obedient to his voice, the sun,  
Till kings he had destroy'd, and kingdoms won.

**13. Aria**

**Judas Maccabaeus**

Call forth thy pow'rs, my soul, and dare  
The conflict of unequal war.  
Great is the glory of the conqu'ring sword,  
That triumphs in sweet liberty restor'd.  
Call forth. . . Etc.

**14. Recitativo**

**Donna Israelita**

To Heav'n's Almighty king we kneel,  
For blessings on this exemplary zeal.  
Bless him, Jehovah, bless him, and once more  
To thy own Israel liberty restore.

**15. Aria**

**Donna Israelita**

O liberty, thou choicest treasure,  
Seat of virtue, source of pleasure!  
Life, without thee, knows no blessing,  
No endearment worth caressing.

**16. Aria**

**Donna Israelita**

Come, ever-smiling liberty,  
And with thee bring thy jocund train.

For thee we pant, and sigh for thee,  
With whom eternal pleasures reign.  
Come. . . Etc.

**17. Recitativo**

**Un Israelita**

O Judas, may these noble views inspire  
All Israel with thy true heroic fire!

**18. Aria**

**Un Israelita**

'Tis liberty, dear liberty alone,  
That gives fresh beauty to the sun;  
That bids all nature look more gay,  
And lovely life with pleasure steal away.

**19. Duetto**

**Donna Israelita e Uomo Israelita**

Come, ever-smiling liberty,  
And with thee bring thy jocund train.  
For thee we pant, and sigh for thee,  
With whom eternal pleasures reign.

**20. Coro del popolo di Israele**

Lead on, lead on! Judah disdains  
The galling load of hostile chains.

**21. Recitativo**

**Judas Maccabaeus**

So will'd my father now at rest  
In the eternal mansions of the blest:  
"Can ye behold," said he "the miseries,  
In which the long-insulted Judah lies?  
Can ye behold their dire distress,  
And not, at least, attempt redress?"  
Then, faintly, with expiring breath,  
"Resolve, my sons, on liberty, or death!"  
We come! Oh see, thy sons prepare  
The rough habiliments of war;  
With hearts intrepid, and revengeful hands,  
To execute, O sire, thy dread commands.

**22. Semi-Coro di Uomini Israeliti**

Disdainful of danger, we'll rush on the foe,  
That Thy pow'r, O Jehovah, all nations may know.

**23. Recitativo**

**Judas Maccabaeus**

Ambition! If e'er honour was thine aim,  
Challenge it here:  
The glorious cause gives sanction to thy claim.

**24. Aria****Judas Maccabaeus**

No unhallow'd desire  
Our breasts shall inspire,  
Nor lust of unbounded pow'r!  
But peace to obtain:  
Free peace let us gain,  
And conquest shall ask no more.

**25. Recitativo****Uomo Israelita**

Haste we, my brethren, haste we to the field,  
Dependant on the Lord, our strength and shield.

**26. Coro del popolo di Israele**

Hear us, O Lord, on Thee we call,  
Resolv'd on conquest, or a glorious fall.

**ATTO SECONDO****27. Coro del popolo di Israele**

Fall'n is the foe; so fall Ty foes, O Lord,  
Where warlike Judas wields his righteous sword!

**28. Recitativo****Uomo Israelita**

Victorious hero! Fame shall tell,  
With her last breath, how Apollonius fell,  
And all Samaria fled, by thee pursued  
Through hills of carnage and a sea of blood;  
While thy resistless prowess dealt around,  
With their own leader's sword, the deathful wound.  
Thus, too, the haughty Seron, Syria's boast,  
Before thee fell with his unnumber'd host.

**29. Aria****Un Israelita**

So rapid thy course is,  
Not numberless forces  
Withstand thy all-conquering sword.  
Though nations surround thee,  
No pow'r shall confound thee,  
Till freedom again be restor'd.  
So rapid. . . Etc.

**30. Recitativo**

***Un Israelita***

*Well may we hope our freedom to receive,  
Such sweet transporting views thy actions give.*

**31. Duetto**

***Donna Israelita e Uomo Israelita***

*Sion now her head shall raise,  
Tune your harps to songs of praise.*

**32. Coro**

**Israeliti**

Sion now her head shall raise,  
Tune your harps to songs of praise.

**33. Recitativo**

**Donna Israelita**

Oh, let eternal honours crown his name:  
Judas, first worthy in the rolls of fame.  
Say, "He put on the breast-plate as a giant,  
And girt his warlike harness about him;  
In his acts he was like a lion,  
And like a lion's whelp roaring for his prey."

**34. Aria**

**Donna Israelita**

From mighty kings he took the spoil,  
And with his acts made Judah smile.  
Judah rejoiceth in his name,  
And triumphs in her hero's fame.  
From mighty kings. . . Etc.

**35. Duetto**

**Donna Israelita e Uomo Israelita**

Hail, hail, Judea, happy land!  
Salvation prospers in his hand.

**36. Coro**

**Israeliti**

Hail, hail, Judea, happy land!  
Salvation prospers in his hand.

**37. Recitativo**

**Judas Maccabaeus**

Thanks to my brethren; but look up to Heav'n;  
To Heav'n let glory and all praise be giv'n;  
To Heav'n give your applause,  
Nor add the second cause,  
As once your fathers did in Midian,  
Saying, "The sword of God and Gideon."  
It was the Lord that for his Israel fought,  
And this our wonderful salvation wrought.

### **38. Aria**

#### **Judas Maccabaeus**

How vain is man, who boasts in fight  
The valour of gigantic might!  
And dreams not that a hand unseen  
Directs and guides this weak machine.  
How vain. . . Etc.

#### *Donna Israelita*

#### *Recitativo*

*Sweet are thy words, as noble is thy mind,  
To serve the Lord, with heart and voice inclin'd.*

#### *Aria*

#### *Donna Israelita*

*Great in wisdom, great in glory,  
Thee all nations shall proclaim.  
Future times record Thy story  
And with wonder sing Thy Name.*

### **39. Recitativo**

#### **Primo Messaggero**

O Judas, O my brethren!  
New scenes of bloody war  
In all their horrors rise.  
Prepare, prepare,  
Or soon we fall a sacrifice  
To great Antiochus; from th'Egyptian coast,  
(Where Ptolemy hath Memphis and Pelusium lost)  
He sends the valiant Gorgias, and commands  
His proud, victorious bands  
To root out Israel's strength, and to erase  
Ev'ry memorial of the sacred place.

### **40. Aria**

#### **Donna Israelita**

Ah! wretched, wretched Israel! fall'n, how low,  
From joyous transport to desponding woe.

### **41. Coro**

#### **Israelites**

Ah! wretched, wretched Israel! fall'n, how low,  
From joyous transport to desponding woe.

### **42. Recitativo**

#### **Simon**

Be comforted, nor think these plagues are sent  
For your destruction, but for chastisement.  
Heav'n oft in mercy punisheth, that sin

May feel its own demerits from within,  
And urge not utter ruin. Turn to God,  
And draw a blessing from His iron rod.

#### **43. Aria**

**Simon**

The Lord worketh wonders  
His glory to raise;  
And still, as he thunders,  
Is fearful in praise.

#### **44. Recitativo**

**Judas Maccabaeus**

My arms! Against this Gorgias will I go.  
The Idumean governor shall know  
How vain, how ineffective his design,  
While rage his leader, and Jehovah mine.

#### **45. Aria**

**Judas Maccabaeus**

Sound an alarm! Your silver trumpets sound,  
And call the brave, and only brave, around.  
Who listeth, follow: to the field again!  
Justice with courage is a thousand men.  
Sound an alarm. . . Etc.

#### **46. Coro**

We hear, we hear the pleasing dreadful call,  
And follow thee to conquest; if to fall,  
For laws, religion, liberty, we fall.

#### **47. Recitativo**

**Simon**

Enough! To Heav'n we leave the rest.  
Such gen'rous ardour firing ev'ry breast,  
We may divide our cares; the field be thine,  
O Judas, and your sanctuary mine;  
For Sion, holy Sion, seat of God,  
In ruinous heaps, is by the heathen trod;  
Such profanation calls for swift redress,  
If e'er in battle Israel hopes success.

#### **48. Aria**

**Simon**

With pious hearts, and brave as pious,  
O Sion, we thy call attend,  
Nor dread the nations that defy us,  
God our defender, God our friend.

#### **49. Recitativo**

**Un Israelita**

Ye worshippers of God,  
Down, down with the polluted altars, down.  
Hurl Jupiter Olympius from his throne,  
Nor reverence Bacchus with his ivy crown  
And ivy-wreathed rod.  
Our fathers never knew  
Him, or his beastly crew,  
Or, knowing, scorn'd such idol vanities.

**Donna Israelita**

No more in Sion let the virgin throng,  
Wild with delusion, pay their nightly song  
To Ashtoreth, yclep't the Queen of Heav'n.  
Hence to Phoenicia be the goddess driv'n,  
Or be she, with her priests and pageants, hurl'd  
To the remotest corner of the world,  
Ne'er to delude us more with pious lies.

**50. Aria**

**Donna Israelita**

*Wise men, flatt'ring, may deceive us  
With their vain, mysterious art;  
Magic charms can ne'er relieve us,  
Nor can heal the wounded heart.  
But true wisdom can relieve us,  
Godlike wisdom from above;  
This alone can ne'er deceive us,  
This alone all pains remove.  
Wise men. . . Etc.*

**51. Duetto**

**Donna Israelita e Uomo Isrealita**

Oh, never, never bow we down  
To the rude stock or sculptur'd stone.  
We worship God, and God alone.

**52. Coro del popolo di Israele**

We never, never will bow down  
To the rude stock or sculptur'd stone.  
We worship God, and God alone.

**ATTO TERZO**

**53. Aria**

**Uomo Israelita**

Father of Heav'n! From Thy eternal throne,  
Look with an eye of blessing down,

While we prepare with holy rites,  
To solemnize the feasts of lights.  
And thus our grateful hearts employ;  
And in Thy praise  
This altar raise,  
With carols of triumphant joy.  
Father of Heav'n. . . Etc.

#### **54. Accompagnato**

##### **Uomo Israelita**

See, see yon flames, that from the altar broke,  
In spiring streams pursue the trailing smoke.  
The fragrant incense mounts the yielding air;  
Sure presage that the Lord hath heard our pray'r.

#### **55. Recitativo**

##### **Donna Israelita**

Oh, grant it, Heav'n, that our long woes may cease,  
And Judah's daughters taste the calm of peace,  
Sons, brothers, husbands to bewail no more,  
Tortur'd at home, or havock'd in the war.

#### **56. Aria**

##### **Donna Israelita**

So shall the lute and harp awake,  
And sprightly voice sweet descant run,  
Seraphic melody to make,  
In the pure strains of Jesse's son.

#### **57. Recitativo**

##### **Primo Messaggero**

From Capharsalama, on eagle wings I fly,  
With tidings of impetuous joy:  
Came Lysias, with his host, array'd  
In coat of mail; their massy shields  
Of gold and brass, flash'd lightning o'er the fields,  
While the huge tow'r-back'd elephants display'd  
A horrid front. But Judas, undismay'd,  
Met, fought, and vanquish'd all the rageful train.  
Yet more, Nicanor lies with thousands slain;  
The blasphemous Nicanor, who defied  
The living God, and, in his wanton pride,  
A public monument ordain'd  
Of victories yet ungain'd.

##### **Secondo Messaggero**

But lo, the conqueror comes; and on his spear,  
To dissipate all fear,  
He bears the vaunter's head and hand,  
That threaten'd desolation to the land.

#### **58. Coro**

**Giovani**

See, the conqu'ring hero comes!  
Sound the trumpets, beat the drums.  
Sports prepare, the laurel bring,  
Songs of triumph to him sing.

**Vergini**

See the godlike youth advance!  
Breathe the flutes, and lead the dance;  
Myrtle wreaths, and roses twine,  
To deck the hero's brow divine.

**Israeliti**

See, the conqu'ring hero comes!  
Sound the trumpets, beat the drums.  
Sports prepare, the laurel bring,  
Songs of triumph to him sing.  
See, the conqu'ring hero comes!  
Sound the trumpets, beat the drums.

**59. Marcia****60. Soli (alto, tenore) & Coro del popolo di Israele**

Sing unto God, and high affections raise,  
To crown this conquest with unmeasur'd praise.

**61. Recitativo****Judas Maccabaeus**

Sweet flow the strains, that strike my feasted ear;  
Angels might stoop from Heav'n to hear  
The comely song we sing,  
To Israel's Lord and King.  
But pause awhile: due obsequies prepare  
To those who bravely fell in war.  
To Eleazar special tribute pay;  
Through slaughter'd troops he cut his way  
To the distinguish'd elephant, and, whelm'd beneath  
The stabbed monster, triumph'd in a glorious death.

**62. Aria****Judas Maccabaeus**

With honour let desert be crown'd,  
The trumpet ne'er in vain shall sound;  
But, all attentive to alarms,  
The willing nations fly to arms,  
And, conquering or conquer'd, claim the prize  
Of happy earth, or far more happy skies.

**63. Recitativo****Eupolemus**

Peace to my countrymen; peace and liberty.  
From the great senate of imperial Rome,

With a firm league of amity, I come.  
Rome, whate'er nation dare insult us more,  
Will rouse, in our defence, her vet'ran pow'r,  
And stretch her vengeful arm, by land or sea  
To curb the proud, and set the injur'd free.

**64. Coro del popolo di Israele**

To our great God be all the honour giv'n,  
That grateful hearts can send from earth to Heav'n.

**65. Recitativo**

**Donna Israelita**

Again to earth let gratitude descend,  
Praiseworthy is our hero and our friend.  
Come then, my daughters, choicest art bestow,  
To weave a chaplet for the victor's brow;  
And in your songs for ever be confess'd  
The valour that preserv'd, the pow'r that bless'd,  
Bless'd you with hours, that scatter, as they fly,  
Soft quiet, gentle love, and boundless joy.

**66. Aria (Duetto)**

**Donna Israelita (e Uomo Isrealita)**

O lovely peace, with plenty crown'd,  
Come, spread thy blessings all around.  
Let fleecy flocks the hills adorn,  
And vallies smile with wavy corn.  
Let the shrill trumpet cease, nor other sound  
But nature's songsters wake the cheerful morn.  
O lovely peace. . . Etc.

**67. Aria**

**Simon**

Rejoice, O Judah, and, in songs divine,  
With cherubim and seraphim harmonious join!

**68. Coro**

**Israeliti**

Hallelujah! Amen.

**FINE DELL'ORATORIO**

\*\* Le parti in corsivo sono brani aggiunti da Handel in occasione di ulteriori rappresentazioni

## APPENDICE

Il Duetto e coro "**Sion now her head shall raise**", era una aggiunta all'esecuzione di ESTHER nel 1757.

L'aria "**Wise Men, flatt'ring**" era una aggiunta originaria in una ripresa di BELSHAZZAR nel 1758.

Entrambi i pezzi furono aggiunti al secondo atto di JUDAS MACCABEUS nel 1758, il primo col recitativo "**Well may we hope**", facendo seguito all'aria "**So rapid thy course is**"; il secondo invece venendo dopo il recitativo "Ye worshipper of God.

Da sottolineare che il coro "**Sion Now**" è l'ultimo coro che Handel compose, durante il periodo di cecità, con l'aiuto di John Cristopher Smith, suo assistente copista.

L'Aria "**Great in wisdom**", caratterizzata da un basso ostinato per fagotti all'unisono, è stata aggiunta, con il recitativo "**Sweet are thy words**", dopo "**How vain in man**" nel secondo atto.

