

# Second Temple Judaism

Unit Twelve, Part 2

The Intertestamental Period

# Antiochus IV (Epiphanes)

~170 – 163 BC

- Attempted to take Egypt (167 BC), but Rome, a growing strength to the west, intervened
- On return from Egypt, he began intense persecution of Jews for their faith, pushing a militant form of Hellenization

# Militant Hellenization: Persecution of the Jews

- 1) Forced syncretized worship
- 2) Prohibited circumcision (1 Maccabees 1.57-64)
- 3) Prohibited Sabbath observance
- 4) Nullified Jewish dietary laws
- 5) Erected pagan altars
- 6) Death sentence for Jews who refused . . .
  - to sacrifice on these pagan altars
  - eat the flesh of pigs

# Persecution of Jews

- 7) Erected statue of Zeus in the Temple  
(15 Kislev, 167 BC)
- 8) Offered sacrifice of swine flesh on  
altar of burnt offering (25 Kislev, 167  
BC)

# The Maccabees

Jewish passive resistance → militant  
resistance



# Mattathias

- Priest and village leader
- Was ordered by Seleucid officer to offer sacrifice on pagan altar at Modein
- When he refused, a Jewish apostate stepped forward to take his place
- Mattathias killed the apostate and the Seleucid officer
- Dismantled the pagan altar in Modein with his 5 sons



1 Maccabees 2.1-9,  
14-28

# Mattathias

John

Simon

Judas

Eleazar

Jonathan

# Mattathias

- Joined by Hasidim
  - the pious ones
  - concerned with the defense of the Law (no political or nationalistic concern)
- gave rise to Pharisees and Essenes

(from חֶסֶד [hesed]:  
steadfast love,  
lovingkindness,  
covenant faithfulness)



# Mattathias

- Guerrilla warfare
  - against the Seleucids
  - against apostate Jews
  - destroyed pagan altars
  - forced circumcision on uncircumcised males
- Mattathias succumbed to age

# Judas “Maccabeus” (166 – 160 BC)

- Successful against Seleucids and wrested control of Jerusalem in 164 BC
  - Antiochus busy with Parthians

“Maccabeus” =  
hammer



# Judas Maccabeus

- Purified temple on 15 Kislev 164 BC, three years to the day after Antiochus had raised the statue of Zeus
- Dismantled desecrated altar of burnt offerings and built new one of unhewn stones

# Judas Maccabeus

- Renewed sacrifices on 25 Kislev (~16 December) 164 BC, three years to the day after Antiochus had sacrificed swine flesh on the altar
- Miracle of the oil → “Festival of Lights”
- This 8-day period became henceforth celebrated as Hanukkah, the *Feast of Dedication*

# Judas Maccabeus

- Antiochus IV died in battle with Parthians



- Antiochus V (restored religious freedom to Jews)



- Demetrius, son of Seleucus IV, whom his younger brother Antiochus IV had deposed, executed Antiochus



# Judas Maccabeus

- Judas made alliance with Rome
  - recall the condemnation of the kings of Israel and especially Judah for relying on worldly kingdoms instead of Yahweh
- Demetrius sends large force, Judas routed and killed



# Jonathan

160 – 143 BC

- Fifth son of Mattathias
- Seleucid inner-conflict
  - Alexander Balas, claiming to be son of Antiochus IV, challenged Demetrius for the throne
    - Rome, Ptolemy VI and others sided with Alexander

# Seleucid inner-conflict

- Demetrius and Alexander vie for Jonathan's support
- Jonathan moved to Jerusalem and fortified it
- Alexander appointed him to high priesthood

# Seleucid inner-conflict

- Jonathan's appointment to high priesthood merged political and religious leadership in one person
  - some think that this is what led to the exodus of the group that formed the Qumran community
- Alexander defeated and killed Demetrius

# Jonathan

- Alexander appointed Jonathan as governor of Judea
- Demetrius II defeated Alexander
- Antiochus VI revolted against Demetrius II
- Jonathan's high priesthood reaffirmed and his older brother Simon made governor from Tyre to Egypt
- Jonathan killed by Antiochus's general (Typhon) who was making move to replace Antiochus VI

# Simon

143 – 134 BC

- The “Hasmonean”
- A great and righteous person
- Set himself for the task of rebuilding the Jewish State, reinvigorating the Jewish people, throwing the Greeks and Greek ideas out of the country and destroying all of the idols

# Simon

- With Simon, the high priesthood becomes hereditary again
  - Numbers 25.12-15: high priest a descendant of Phinehas
  - Since David of the line of Zadok only
- The Great Synagogue in Jerusalem recognized Simon and descendants as high priest and governor until the appearance of a true prophet



# Simon

- Ongoing struggle for Seleucid throne allowed Simon freedom
- He was killed, along with two of his sons and some servants, by his son-in-law, Ptolemy, governor of Jericho

# Hasmonean Era

- John Hyrcanus (134 – 104 BC)
  - Son of Simon
  - reaffirmed relationship with Rome

# John Hyrcanus

- Expanded Judea's borders
  - southward, he took **Idumea** and forced conversion and circumcision on them (these are the ancestors of Herod, the Idumean, and thus he could claim to be “Jewish” though the Jews hated him as an outsider)
  - north to **Mt. Carmel**, forcing circumcision and conformity to the Law of Moses on them



Note the Hellenized name

# John Hyrcanus

- Religious allegiance
  - initially Pharisees
  - after they challenged his right to be high priest, he supported the Sadducees
  - Essenes became disenchanted with Hasmonean regime (some hold that it is they who withdrew and established the Qumran community → Dead Sea Scrolls)



# John Hyrcanus

- Destroyed Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerizim



Samaritan Temple Ruins



# John Hyrcanus

- Achieved the complete independence of Judea and undertook extensive conquests throughout the whole of the land of Israel
- Strengthened the pact with Rome
- His *preference for Greek culture* made him controversial in Jerusalem
- Died natural death (some report suicide)



# Aristobulus I

104 – 103 BC

- Eldest son of Hyrcanus
- First to take title of “king”
- Imprisoned his mother and brothers
- Died after developing health issues
  - His wife, Salome Alexandra, released his brothers and chose Alexander Jannaeus to be the next king

# Alexander Jannaeus

103 - 76 BC

- Kept title of king
- Married his sister-in-law, Salome Alexandra, widow of Aristobulus (Levirate marriage?)
- He had Greek motifs and inscriptions on coinage
- Militarily expanded borders to those of Solomon's kingdom

# Alexander Jannaeus

- Noted for immorality and drunkenness, leading to enmity with the Pharisees and common people
- Persecuted and crucified Pharisees

# Alexander Jannaeus

- Pharisees then *called on the Seleucid leader*, Demetrius II
  - So, the successors of the Hasidim, in league with the successors of Antiochus Epiphanes, were fighting against the descendants of the Maccabees!

# Alexander Jannaeus

- Appointed Antipater II, father of Herod the Great, governor of Idumea
- Died from combined effects of alcoholism and malaria
- Succeeded by his wife, Salome Alexandra

# Salome Alexandra

76 – 67 BC

- Widow of Aristobulus (I) and Jannaeus
- Brother was leader of the Pharisees
- Son Aristobulus allied with Sadducees
- Appointed her son Hyrcanus II as high priest (favored by the Pharisees)
- She ruled well
- Succeeded by her son, Aristobulus II, son of Jannaeus, not Aristobulus I



# Aristobulus II

67 – 63 BC

- Favorite of the Sadducees
- Forced High Priest Hyrcanus II (favorite of the Pharisees) to withdraw from Jerusalem
- Defeated by Nabatean king, Aretas, to whom Hyrcanus had fled
- Complete rift between common people (who followed Pharisees) and priestly establishment (Sadducees)



# Aristobulus II

- Gained the support of Rome
- The struggle between Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II led to evaporation of the Hasmonean realm, though Hyrcanus continued as High Priest under Pompey and Herod the Great

# Developments During Jewish (Hasmonean) Self-Rule

1. The familiar parties of the Sadducees and Pharisees seem to have found 'official' delineation during the reign of Jonathan, brother of Judas Maccabaeus
2. Falling out of John Hyrcanus and the Pharisees, lessened their power and influence



# Developments During Jewish Self-Rule

3. Jewish expansion, especially under Hyrcanus, forced neighboring non-Jewish areas into political *and* religious assimilation; most significantly, the Idumeans began to consider themselves Jews, paving the way for Herod the Great
4. Roman control of the area dominates the attention of the Jews from this time until the defeat in AD 70