

CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?

1. How did Hyrcanus, the son of Yosef ben Tovia, anger his father and brothers?
2. What was Onias' position regarding the conflict between Hyrcanus and his brothers?
3. Who was responsible for the assimilation of Jewry at the time of Antiochus?
4. When was the Temple (Bais Hamikdash) converted to a pagan sanctuary?
5. Describe the beginning of the Maccabee revolt.

This and much more will be addressed in the tenth lecture of this series: "Antiochus and the Maccabee Revolt".

To derive maximum benefit from this lecture, keep these questions in mind as you listen to the tape and read through the outline. Go back to these questions once again at the end of the lecture and see how well you answer them.

PLEASE NOTE: This outline and source book was designed as a powerful tool to help you appreciate and understand the basis of Jewish History. Although the lectures can be listened to without the use of the outline, we advise you to read the outline to enhance your comprehension. Use it as well as a handy reference guide and for quick review.

THE EPIC OF THE ETERNAL PEOPLE
Presented by Rabbi Shmuel Irons

Series I Lecture #10

ANTIOCHUS AND THE MACCABEE REVOLT

I. Hyrcanus and the Struggle of the "Bnai Tovia"

A. But when one told him that Ptolemy had a son just born, and that all the principal men of Syria, and the other countries subject to him, were to keep a festival, on account of the child's birthday, and went away in haste with great retinues to Alexandria, he was himself indeed hindered from going by old age, but he made trial of his sons, whether any of them would be willing to go to the king. And when the elder sons excused themselves from going, and said, they were not courtiers good enough for such conversation, and advised him to send their brother Hyrcanus, he gladly hearkened to that advice and called Hyrcanus, and asked him, whether he would go to the king and whether it was agreeable to him to go or not? And upon his promise that he would go, and his saying that he should not want much money for his journey, because he would live moderately, and that ten thousand drachmae would be sufficient, he was pleased with his son's prudence.

Antiquities Book XII 4:7

B. So he stood by the king, and said "Dost thou not see, my lord, the bones that lie by Hyrcanus? By this similitude thou mayest conjecture that his father made all Syria as bare as he hath made these bones." **Antiquities Book XII 4:9**

C. But when his brethren heard that Hyrcanus had received such favours from the king, and was returning home with great honour, they went out to meet him, and to destroy him, and that with the privity of their father; for he was angry at him for the [large] sum of money that he bestowed for presents, and so had no concern for his preservation. However, Joseph concealed the anger he had at his son, out of fear of the king. And when Hyrcanus' brethren came to fight him, he slew many others of those that were with them as also two of his brethren themselves, but the rest of them escaped to Jerusalem to their father. But when Hyrcanus came to the city, where nobody would receive him, he was afraid for himself, and retired beyond the river Jordan, and there abode. **Antiquities Book XII 4:9**

D. But upon the death of Joseph, the people grew seditious, on account of his sons; For whereas the elders made war against Hyrcanus, who was the youngest of Joseph's sons, the multitude was divided, but the greater part joined with the elders in this war; as did Simon the high priest, by reason he was of kin to them. However, Hyrcanus determined not to return to Jerusalem any more, but seated himself beyond Jordan and was at perpetual war with the Arabians, and slew many of them, and took many of them captives. He also erected a strong castle, and built it entirely of white stone to the very roof; and had animals of a prodigious magnitude engraven upon it. **Antiquities Book XII 4:11**

II. Chonio (Onias) the Just

A. A great sedition fell among the men of power in Judea, and they had a contention about obtaining the government; while each of those that were of dignity could not endure to be subject to their equals. However, Onias, one of the High Priests, got the better and cast the sons of Tobias out of the city; who fled to Antiochus and besought him to make use of them for his leaders. **Josephus, The War of the Jews, Book I, Chapter 1:1**

B. When the holy city was inhabited in perfect peace, and the laws were strictly observed, because of the piety of Onias, the high priest, and his hatred of wickedness, it came to pass that even the kings themselves did honor to the place and glorified the temple with most noble gifts, so that even Seleucus, king of Asia, from his own revenues provided all the expense of the sacrificial service. But a man named Simon, of the tribe of Benjamin, who had been appointed governor to the temple, had a difference with the high priest about the conduct of the city market. When he failed to carry his point against Onias, he went to Apollonius of Tarsus, who was at that time governor of Coelesyria and Phoenicia, and reported to him that the treasury in Jerusalem was full of such untold quantities of money that the amount of the funds was beyond computation and that they did not belong to the account of the sacrifices and they might fall under the control of the king. When Apollonius met the king, he informed him of the money that had been pointed out to him. And he appointed Heliodorus, who was his chancellor, and sent him with instructions to effect the removal of this money. Heliodorus immediately set out on his journey, under the guise of visiting the towns of Coelesyria and Phoenicia, but in reality to carry out the king's design. When he reached Jerusalem, and had been cordially welcomed by the high priest and the city, he laid before them the disclosure that had been made to him, and explained why he had come, and inquired whether this was really true. The high priest pointed out that some deposits belonged to widows and orphans, and one belonged to Hyrcanus, son Tobias, a man of very high position; so falsely had the impious Simon spoken; that it all amounted to four hundred talents of silver and two

hundred of gold, and that it was absolutely impossible that those who were relying on the sacredness of the place and on the sanctity and inviolability of the temple, which was respected all over the world, should be wronged. But Heliodorus, because of the royal orders he had received, said that anyway this must be confiscated for the royal treasury. So he set a day, and went in to conduct an inspection of these funds; and there was no little distress all over the city .

But this Simon who had informed about the money and against his country, made accusations against Onias, saying that he had incited Heliodorus and had been the actual author of these troubles. He dared to charge with conspiracy against the government, the benefactor of the city, the protector of his countrymen, and the champion of the laws! But when his enmity reached such a point that murders were committed by one of Simon's trusted men, Onias, becoming aware of the danger of their contention, and that Apollonius the son of Menestheus, the governor of Coelesyria and Phoenicia, was increasing Simon's malice, resorted to the king, not to be an accuser of his fellow-citizens, but as looking after the welfare, public, and private, of all the people; for he saw that without the king's interest it was impossible for the government to secure peace again, and that Simon would not abandon his folly. **Maccabees II 3:1-14, 4:1-6**

III. The Ascension of the Hellenists

A. But when Seleucus departed this life and Antiochus, who was called Epiphanes, succeeded to the kingdom, Onias' brother Jason obtained the high priesthood by corruption, promising the king in his petition three hundred and sixty talents of silver, and eighty talents from other revenues. Besides this he promised to pay a hundred and fifty more, if he was given authority to set up a gymnasium and a training place for youth there and to enroll the people of Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch. When the king had consented, and he had taken office, he immediately brought his countrymen over to the Greek way of living. He set aside the royal ordinances especially favoring the Jews, secured through John, the father of Eupolemius, who went on the mission to the Romans to establish friendly relations and an alliance with them, and abrogating the lawful ways of living he introduced new customs contrary to the Law. For he willingly established a gymnasium right under the citadel, and he made the finest of the young men wear the Greek hat. And to such a pitch did the cultivation of Greek fashions and the coming in of foreign customs rise, because of the excessive wickedness of this godless Jason, who was no high priest at all, that the priests were no longer earnest about the services of the altar, but disdain the sanctuary and neglecting the sacrifices, they hurried to take part in the unlawful exercises in the wrestling school, after the summons to the discus-throwing, regarding as worthless the things their forefathers valued, and thinking Greek standards

the finest. Now when the quinquennial games were being held at Tyre, and the king was present, the vile Jason sent envoys who were citizens of Antioch to represent Jerusalem, to carry three hundred silver drachmas for the sacrifice to Hercules. But even those who carried it, thought it should not be used for a sacrifice, as that was not fitting, but should be spent in some other way. So this money intended by its sender for the sacrifice to Hercules, was applied because of those who carried it to the fitting out of triremes. **Mac. II 4:7-15, 18-21**

B. In those days there arose out of Israel lawless men who persuaded many, saying, "Let us go and make a pact with the heathen around us, for ever since the time we became separated from them many misfortunes have overtaken us." The plan seemed good in their eyes, and some of the people went eagerly to the king, and he authorized them to introduce the practices of the heathen. And they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, in the heathen fashion, and submitted to uncircumcision and disowned the holy covenant (bris kodesh); they allied themselves with the heathen and became the slaves of wrongdoing. **Mac. I 1:11-15**

C. And [they] retired to Antiochus, and informed him, that they were desirous to leave the laws of their country, and the Jewish way of living according to them, and to follow the king's laws, and the Grecian way of living; Wherefore they desired his permission to build them a Gymnasium at Jerusalem. And when he had given them leave, they also hid the circumcision of their genitals, that even when they were naked, they might appear to be Greeks. Accordingly they left off all the customs that belonged to their own country, and imitated the practices of the other nations. **Antiquities, Book XII 5:1**

D. After the lapse of three years, Jason sent Menelaus, the brother of this Simon, to take the money to the king and to present papers relating to necessary business. But he, on being presented to the king, extolled him with such apparent authority that he obtained the high priesthood for himself, outbidding Jason by three hundred talents of silver. Upon receiving the royal commission, he came back, possessing nothing that qualified him for the high priesthood, but with the passions of a savage tyrant and the rage of a wild beast. So Jason, who had supplanted his own brother, was supplanted by another, and driven as a fugitive into the country of the Ammonites. So Menelaus held the office, but he did not pay any of the money he had promised to the king, and when Sostratus, the governor of the citadel, demanded it, for it was his duty to collect the revenues, the two men were summoned by the king to appear before him on account of it. Menelaus left his brother Lysimachus to act in his place in the high priesthood, and Sostratus left Crates, the viceroy of Cyprus, to act in his stead. **Mac. II 4:23-29**

E. Then Menelaus, thinking he had found a favorable opening, presented Andronicus with some gold dishes from the temple, which he had appropriated; he had already sold others at Tyre and the neighboring towns. When Onias was certain of this, he sternly rebuked him, after retiring to a place of sanctuary at Daphne, near Antioch. So Menelaus took Andronicus aside and urged him to arrest Onias. And he went to Onias, and having been persuaded to use treachery, offered him sworn pledges and gave him his right hand, and persuaded him, notwithstanding his suspicions, to leave his sanctuary, and immediately without regard to justice put him in prison. **Mac. II 4:32-34**

F. When many thefts from the temple had been committed in the city by Lysimachus with the connivance of Menelaus, and the report of them spread abroad, the people gathered against Lysimachus, as a great deal of gold plate had already been scattered. But when the people made an uprising and were inflamed with anger, Lysimachus armed about three thousand men, and commenced hostilities with a man named Avaranus, who was as foolish as he was aged, in command. And when they were aware of Lysimachus' attack, some picked up stones and others sticks of wood and others caught up handfuls of the ashes that were lying about and flung them pell-mell at Lysimachus and his men. As a result, they wounded many of them, and felled many, and put them all to flight, and the temple-robber himself they killed beside the treasury. Charges were made against Menelaus about this affair, and when the king visited Tyre, the three men sent by the senate presented the case before him. Menelaus was now facing defeat, but he promised a large sum of money to Ptolemy, son of Dorymenes, to prevail upon the king. So Ptolemy took the king aside into a colonnade, as if to take the air, and persuaded him to change his mind, and he acquitted Menelaus, who was to blame for all the trouble, of the charges against him, and condemned to death the wretched men who would have been dismissed as innocent if they had pleaded even before Scythians. So the advocates of the city and the people and the sacred plate promptly suffered this unjust punishment.

Maccabees II 4:39-48

G. There arose a false rumor that Antiochus had departed this life, and Jason took fully a thousand men and made a sudden attack upon the city. As the troops upon the walls gave way, and the city was already virtually captured, Menelaus took refuge in the citadel. Then Jason unsparingly slaughtered his fellow-citizens, regardless of the fact that success gained over one's kindred is the greatest failure, fancying that he was winning trophies from his enemies, not from his countrymen. He did not get control of the government, however, and in the end got only shame from his conspiracy, and had to take refuge again as a fugitive in the country of the Ammonites. **Mac. II 5:5-7, 11-16, 21-27**

H. King Antiochus returning out of Egypt, for fear of the Romans, made an expedition against the city Jerusalem; and when he was there, in the hundred forty and third year of the kingdom of the Seleucidae, he took the city without fighting, those of his own party opening the gates to him. And when he had gotten possession of Jerusalem he slew many of the opposite party; and when he had plundered it of a great deal of money, he returned to Antioch.

Now it came to pass, after two years, in the hundred forty and fifth year, on the twenty-fifth day of that month, which is by us called Chasleu and by the Macedonians Apelleus, in the hundred and fifty-third Olympiad, that the king came up to Jerusalem, and pretending peace, he got possession of the city by treachery; at which time he spared not so much as those that admitted him into it, on account of the riches that lay in the temple; but led by his covetous inclination, (for he saw there was in it a great deal of gold, and many ornaments that had been dedicated to it of very great value,) and in order to plunder its wealth, he ventured to break the league he had made. So he left the temple bare; and took away the golden candlesticks, and the golden altar of incense, and table of shew-bread, ... and did not abstain from even the veils, which were made of fine linen and scarlet. He also emptied it of its secret treasures and left nothing at all remaining; and by these means cast the Jews into great lamentation, for he forbade them to offer those daily sacrifices which they used to offer to G-d, according to the law. And when he had pillaged the whole city, some of the inhabitants he slew, and some he carried captive, together with their wives and children, so that the multitude of those captives that were taken alive amounted to about ten thousand. He also burnt down the finest buildings; and when he had overthrown the city walls, he built a citadel in the lower part of the city, for the place was high and overlooked the temple, on which account he fortified it with high walls and towers; and put into it a garrison of Macedonians. However, in that citadel dwelt the impious and wicked part of the Jewish multitude, from whom it proved that the citizens suffered many and sore calamities. And when the king had built an idol altar upon G-d's altar, he slew swine upon it, and so offered a sacrifice neither according to the law, nor the Jewish religious worship in that country. He also compelled them to forsake the worship which they paid their own G-d and to adore those whom he took to be gods, and made them build temples, and raise idol altars in every city and village, and offer swine upon them every day. He also commanded them not to circumcise their sons, and threatened to punish any that should be found to have transgressed his injunctions. He also appointed overseers, who should compel them to do what he commanded. And indeed many Jews there were who complied with the king's commands, either voluntarily or out of fear of the penalty that was denounced but the best men, and those of the noblest souls, did not regard him, but did pay a greater respect to the customs of their country, that concern as to the punishment which he threatened to the disobedient on which account they every day underwent great miseries, and bitter torments, for they

were whipped with rods, and their bodies were torn to pieces, and were crucified, while they were still alive, and breathed; They also strangled those women and their sons whom they had circumcised, as the king had appointed, hanging their sons about their necks as they were upon the crosses. And if there were any sacred book of the law found, it was destroyed, and those with whom they were found miserably perished also. **Antiquities XII 5:3, 4**

I. Not long after, the king sent an old Athenian to force the Jews to forsake the laws of their forefathers and cease to live according to the laws of G-d, but to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and to call it that of the Olympian Zeus, and to call the one in Gerizim that of Zeus the Hospitable, in keeping with the character of those who lived there. This harshly and most grievously intensified the evil. For the heathen filled the temple with profligacy and revelry, amusing themselves with prostitutes and lying with women within the sacred precincts, and bringing into it things that were forbidden. That altar was covered with abominable offerings which the laws forbade. A man could not keep the sabbath or celebrate the festivals of his forefathers, or admit he was a Jew at all. On the monthly celebration of the king's birthday, they were taken by bitter necessity to taste the sacrifices, and when the festival of Dionysus was celebrated, they were compelled to wear wreaths of ivy and march in procession in his honor. At Ptolemy's suggestion a decree was issued to the neighboring Greek towns, that they should adopt the same policy toward the Jews and make them taste the sacrifices, and that they should slay any who would not agree to adopt Greek customs. So anyone could see how their misery was intensified. For two women were brought in for circumcising their children, and they led them publicly about the city with their babies hanging at their breasts and then threw them down from the top of the wall. Others who had gathered in caves near by, to keep the seventh day in secret, were betrayed to Philip and all burned together because they had scruples about defending themselves, in their respect for the dignity of that most holy day. Eleazar, one of the leading scribes, a man of advanced age and fine appearance, was being forced to open his mouth and eat pork. **Mac. II 6:1-11, 18**

J.

בעשריין ותלתא ביה (באייר) נפקו בני חקרא מירושלים הוא דכתיב וילכוד מצודת ציון היא עיר דוד זה הוא מקום חקראים מפני שהיו מצירים לבני ירושלים ולא היו ישראל יכולין לצאת ולבוא לפניהם ביום אלא בלילה וכשגברה בית חשמנאי הגלו אותם משם ואותו היום שעקרום עשוהו יו טוב. מגילת תענית פרק ב

On the twenty third of Iyar the occupants of the citadel left Jerusalem. Regarding that same citadel it is written "And he conquered the fortress of Zion, that is the City of David" (Samuel II 5:7). That was the place of the dwellers of the citadel. [They rejoiced when they left] because they tormented the people of Jerusalem and the Jews were not able to go about by day, only by night. When the Chashmonaim took control, they exiled them from there. That day was declared a holiday. **Megilas Taanis Chap. 2**

K. After two years the king sent an officer to collect tribute, to the towns of Judah, and he entered Jerusalem with a strong force. And he spoke to them craftily in peaceful terms, and they trusted him. Then he suddenly fell upon the city and struck it a great blow and destroyed many of the people in Israel. He plundered the city, and burned it down, and tore down the houses in it and the walls around it. And they took the women and children captive and possessed themselves of the cattle. Then they fortified the City of David with a great, strong wall, with strong towers, and it became their citadel. And they put sinful heathen there, who did not obey the law, and they entrenched themselves there. And they stored up weapons and provisions, and they collected the spoils of Jerusalem and laid them up there, and they became a great threat, and it proved a place of ambush against the sanctuary and a wicked adversary to Israel constantly.

Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that they should all become one people, and every one should give up his particular practices. And all the heathen assented to the command of the king. And many from Israel agreed to his kind of worship and offered sacrifice to idols and broke the sabbath. And the king sent word by messengers to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah to follow practices foreign to the country and put a stop to whole burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings at the sanctuary, and to break the sabbaths and profane the feasts and pollute sanctuary and sanctified; to build altars and sacred precincts and idol temples and sacrifice hogs and unclean cattle; and to leave their sons uncircumcised and defile themselves with every unclean and profane practice, so that they might forget the Law and change all their religious ordinances; and anyone who did not obey the command of the king should die. He wrote to his whole kingdom, to this effect, and he appointed inspectors over all the people, and he ordered the towns of Judah every one of them to offer sacrifice. And many of the people and everyone who was ready to forsake the Law joined with them and they did wrong in the land, and forced Israel to hide in every hiding place they had.

On the fifteenth day Kislev, in the one hundred and forty-fifth year, he erected a dreadful desecration upon the altar and in the towns of Judah round about they built altars, and at the doors of their houses and in the squares they burned incense, and wherever they found the book of the Law, they tore them up and burned them; and if anyone was found to possess a book of the agreement or respected the Law, the king's decree condemned him to death. The Israelites who appeared from month to month in the towns they treated

with force. On the twenty fifth of the month they offered sacrifice upon the altar which was set up on the altar of burnt offering. The women who had circumcised their children they put to death under the decree hanging the babies around their necks, and destroying their families and the men who had circumcised them. Yet many in Israel stood firm and resolved in their hearts not to eat what was unclean; they preferred death to being polluted with food or profaning the sacred agreement, and so they died. And Israel suffered intensely. **Mac. I 1:29-36, 41-64**

IV. The Revolt Begins

A. Then the king's officers who were forcing the people to give up their religion, came to the town of Modin, to make them offer sacrifice. And many Israelites went to them, and Mattathias and his sons gathered together. Then the king's messengers answered and said to Mattathias, "You are a leading man, great and distinguished in this town, surrounded with sons and brothers; now be the first to come forward and carry out the king's command as all the heathen and the men of Judah and those who are left in Jerusalem have done, and you and your sons will be counted among the Friends of the king, and you and your sons will be distinguished with presents of silver and gold and many royal commissions."

Then Mattathias answered and said in a loud voice, "If all the heathen in the king's dominions listen to him and forsake each of them the religion of his forefathers, and choose to follow his commands instead, yet I and my sons and my brothers will live in accordance with the agreement of our forefathers. G-d forbid that we should abandon the Law and the ordinances. We will not listen to the message of the king, or depart from our religion to the right hand or to the left."

As he ceased to utter these words, a Jew went up before the eyes of all of them to offer sacrifice as the king commanded, on the altar in Modin. And Mattathias saw him; and was filled with zeal, and his heart was stirred, and he was very properly roused to anger, and ran up and slaughtered him upon the altar. At the same time he killed the king's officer who was trying to compel them to sacrifice, and he tore down the altar. Thus he showed his zeal for the Law, just as Phineas did to Zimri, the son of Salom. Then Mattathias cried out in a loud voice in the town and said, "Let everybody who is zealous for the Law and stands by the agreement come out after me." And he and his sons fled to the mountains and left all they possessed in the town. **Mac. I. 2:15-28**

B. Then many seekers for uprightness and justice went down into the wilderness to settle, with their sons and their wives and their cattle, because their hardships had become so severe. And news reached the king's agents and the forces that were in Jerusalem, in the City of David, that men who had disregarded the king's order had gone down to the hiding places in the wilderness. And they pursued them in force and overtook them, and pitched their camp against them; and prepared to attack them on the sabbath day. And they said to them, "Enough. Come out and do as the king commands, and you will live." And they said, "We will not come out nor do as the king commands, and break the sabbath." Then they hastened to attack them; And they made no response to them; they did not throw a stone at them; nor block up their hiding places, for they said, "Let us all die guiltless. We call heaven and earth to witness that you destroy us unlawfully."

So they attacked them on the sabbath, and they died with their wives and their children and their cattle, to the number of a thousand people.

And Mattathias and his friends learned of it, and they grieved bitterly over them. And one said to another, "If we all do as our brothers have done, and refuse to fight against the heathen for our lives and what we believe is right, they will very soon destroy us from the face of the earth."

On that day they reached this decision; "If any one attacks us on the sabbath day, let us fight against him; and not all die, as our brothers died in the hiding places." **Mac. I. 2:29-41**

C. And Mattathias and his friends went about and tore down the altars and forcibly circumcised all the uncircumcised children that they found within the limits of Israel. And they drove the arrogant before them, and the work prospered in their hands. So they rescued the Law from the hands of the heathen and their kings, and would not let the sinner triumph. **Mac. I. 2:45-48**

TIME LINE

BCE	EGYPT	SYRIA
312-311	Ptolemy I (Lagos)	Seleucus I
285	Ptolemy II Philadelphus	
280		Antiochus I
261		Antiochus II
246	Ptolemy III Euregetes	Seleucus II
226		Seleucus III
223		Antiochus III (The Great)
221	Ptolemy IV Philopater	
203	Ptolemy V Epiphanes	
199	Palestine Conquered by Syria	
187		Seleucus IV
181	Ptolemy VI Philomater	
175		Antiochus IV (Epiphanes)
163		Antiochus V
162		Demetrius I
150		Alexander
145	Ptolemy VII Eurgetes	Demetrius II
138		Antiochus VI