

## **CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?**

1. How many battles did the Maccabees win prior to the rededication of the Temple (Bais Hamikdash)?
2. Describe the role of the assimilated Jews in the war with the Syrians.
3. How many years had the Temple fallen into disuse before the rededication?
4. Describe the new Menorah that was used at the rededication.
5. Who was Alcimus?

This and much more will be addressed in the eleventh lecture of this series: "Chanukah".

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 #11

CHANUKAH

I. The Struggle

A. When Appollonius the general of the Samaritan forces heard this he took his army, and made haste to go against Judas; who met him, and joined battle with him, and beat him, and slew many of his men, and among them Appollonius himself, their general, whose sword being that which he happened to wear, he seized upon, and kept for himself; but he wounded more than he slew, and took a great deal of prey from the enemies' camp, and went his way. But when Seron, who was general of the army of Celesyria, heard that many had joined themselves to Judas, and that he had about him an army sufficient for fighting, and for making war, he determined to make an expedition against him, as thinking it became him to endeavor to punish those that transgressed the king's injunctions. He then got together an army as large as he was able, and joined it to the renegade and wicked Jews, and came against Judas. He came as far as Bethoron, a village of Judea, and there pitched his camp: upon which Judas met him; and when he intended to give him battle, he saw that his soldiers were backward to fight, because their number was small, and because they wanted food, for they were fasting, he encouraged them, and said to them, that "victory and conquest of enemies is not derived from the multitude in armies, but in the exercise of piety towards G-d; and that they had the plainest instances in their forefathers, who by their righteousness, and exerting themselves on behalf of their own laws, and their own children, had frequently conquered many ten thousands, for innocence is the strongest army." By this speech he induced his men to contemn the multitude of the enemy, and to fall upon Seron. And upon joining battle with him, he beat the Syrians; and when their general fell among the rest, they all ran away with speed, as thinking that to be their best way of escaping. So he pursued them unto the plain, and slew about eight hundred of the enemy, but the rest escaped to the region which lay near to the sea.

When king Antiochus heard of these things, he was very angry at what had happened; so he got together all his own army, with many mercenaries, whom he had hired from the islands, and took them with him, and prepared to break into Judea, about the beginning of the spring. But when, upon his mustering his soldiers, he perceived that his treasures were deficient, and there was a want of money in them, for all the taxes were not paid, by reason of the sedition there had been among the nations, he having been so magnanimous and so liberal, that what he had was not sufficient for him, he therefore resolved first to go into Persia, and collect the taxes of that country. Hereupon he left one whose name was Lysias, who was in great repute with him, governor of the kingdom, as far as the bounds of Egypt, and of the lower Asia, and reaching from the river Euphrates, and committed to him a certain part of his forces, and of his elephants, and charged him to bring up his son Antiochus with all possible care, until he came back; and that he should conquer Judea, and take its inhabitants for slaves, and utterly destroy Jerusalem, and abolish the whole nation. And when king Antiochus had given these things in charge to Lysias, he went into Persia: and in the hundred and forty seventh year he passed over Euphrates, and went to the superior provinces.

Upon this, Lysias chose Ptolemy, the son of Dorymenes, and Nicanor, and Gorgias, very potent men among the king's friends, and delivered to them forty thousand foot soldiers, and seven thousand horsemen, and sent them against Judea, who came as far as the city Emmaus, and pitched their camp in the plain country. There came also to them auxiliaries out of Syria, and the country round about; as also many of the renegade Jews. And besides these came some merchants to buy those that should be carried captives, (having bonds with them to bind those that should be made prisoners), with that silver and gold which they were to pay for their price. **Antiquities Book XII Chap. 7:1-3**

B. When Philip saw that the man was gaining ground little by little, and that his successful advances were becoming more frequent, he wrote to Ptolemy, the governor of Coelesyria and Phoenicia, to support the king's side. And he promptly selected Nicanor, the son of Patroclus, one of the king's chief friends and sent him, putting him in command of not less than twenty thousand heathen of various nationalities, to wipe out the whole race of Judea. And he associated with him Gorgias, a general and a man of experience in military service. But Nicanor resolved by taking the Jews captive to make up for the king the tribute which he owed to the Romans, which amounted to two thousand talents. And he immediately sent to the coast towns, inviting them to buy Jewish slaves, and promising to deliver them at ninety for a talent, little expecting the judgment from the Al-mighty that was to overtake him. **Mac II 8:8-11**

C. And the Al-mighty was their ally, and they slaughtered more than nine thousand of the enemy, and wounded and disabled most of Nicanor's army, and forced them all to flee. And they captured the money of those who had come to buy them. And after pursuing them for a considerable distance, they were obliged to turn back because of the time of day; for it was the day before the sabbath, and for that reason they could not prolong their pursuit of them. But after collecting the enemy's arms and stripping them of their spoils, they busied themselves about the sabbath, fervently blessing and thanking Hashem who had preserved them to see that day, because he had begun to show them mercy. After the sabbath, they gave some of the spoils to the wounded and to the widows and orphans and divided the rest with their children. When they had accomplished this, they made a common supplication, and besought the merciful L-rd to be wholly reconciled to his slaves.

But the thrice-accursed Nicanor, who had brought the thousand slave-dealers to buy the Jews, after being humbled through the L-rd's help by those whom he had thought of no account, took off his fine clothes and going alone like a runaway across country reached Antioch, having been supremely successful-in destroying his army! So the man who had undertaken to secure tribute for the Romans by the Capture of the people of Jerusalem proclaimed that the Jews had a champion, and that the Jews were invulnerable because of their way of life, because they followed the laws laid down by Him. **Maccabees II 8:24-29, 34-36**

D. Hereupon Lysias was confounded at the defeat of the army which he had sent, and the next year he got together sixty thousand chosen men. He also took five thousand horsemen, and fell upon Judea; and he went up to the hill country of Bethsur, a village of Judea, and pitched his camp there, where Judas met him with ten thousand men; and when he saw the great number of his enemies, he prayed to G-d that he would assist him, and joined battle with the first of the enemy that appeared and beat them, and slew about five thousand of them, and thereby became terrible to the rest of them. Nay, indeed, Lysias observing the great spirit of the Jews, how they were prepared to die rather than lose their liberty, and being afraid of their desperate way of fighting, as if it were real strength, he took the rest of the army back with him, and returned to Antioch, where he listed foreigners into the service, and prepared to fall upon Judea with a greater army. **Antiquities Book XII Chap. 7:5**

E. When therefore the generals of Antiochus' armies had been beaten so often, Judas assembled the people together, and told them, that after these many victories, which G-d had given them, they ought to go up to Jerusalem, and purify the temple, and offer the appointed sacrifices. But as soon as he, with the whole multitude, was come to Jerusalem, and found the temple deserted, and its gates burnt down, and plants growing in the temple of their own accord, on account of its desertion, he and those that were with him began to lament, and were quite confounded at the sight of the temple; so he chose out some of his soldiers and gave them order to fight against those guards that were in the citadel, until he should have purified the temple. When therefore he had carefully purged it, and had brought in new vessels, the candlestick, the table, and the altar, which were made of gold, he hung up the vails at the gates, and added doors to them. **Antiquities Book XII Chap. 7:6**

## II. Chanukah

A. So, on the five and twentieth day of the month Casleu, which the Macedonians call Apelleus, they lighted the lamps that were on the candlestick and offered incense upon the altar of incense and laid the loaves upon the table, and offered burnt offerings upon the new altar. Now it so fell out, that these things were done on the very same day on which their divine worship had fallen off, and was reduced to a profane and common use, after three years' time; for so it was, that the temple was made desolate by Antiochus, and so continued for three years. This desolation happened to the temple in the hundred forty and fifth year, on the twenty fifth day of the month Apelleus and on the hundred fifty and third Olympiad; but it was dedicated anew, on the same day, the twenty fifth of the month Apelleus, on the hundred and forty eighth year, and on the hundred and fifty fourth Olympiad. And this declaration came to pass according to the prophecy of Daniel which was given four hundred and eight years before for he declared that the Macedonians would dissolve that worship for some time.

Now Judas celebrated the festival of the restoration of the sacrifices of the temple for eight days; and omitted no sort of pleasures thereon; but he feasted them upon very rich and splendid sacrifices; and he honored G-d and delighted them by hymns and psalms. Nay, they were so very glad at the revival of their customs, when, after a long time of intermission, they unexpectedly had regained the freedom of their worship, that they made it a law for their posterity, that they should keep a festival on account of the restoration of their temple worship, for eight days. And from that time to this we celebrate this festival, and call it Lights. I suppose the reason was, because this liberty beyond our hopes appeared to us; and that thence was the name given to the festival. Judas also rebuilt the walls round about the city; and reared towers of great height against the incursions of enemies; and set guards therein. He also fortified the city Bethshura, that it might serve as a citadel against any distresses that might come from our enemies.

**Antiquities Book XII Chap. 7:6-7**

B.

בעשרים וחמשה ביה יום חנוכה תמניא יומין דלא למספד שכשנכנסו יונים להיכל טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל וכשגברה מלכות בית חשמנאי ונצחום בדקו ולא מצאו אלא פך אחד שהיה מונח בחותמו של כהן הגדול שלא נטמא. ולא היה להדליק אלא יום אחד ונעשה בו נס והדליקו שמונה ימים. לשנה אחרת קבעו שמונה ימים טובים. ומה ראו לעשות חנוכה שמונה ימים? והלא חנוכה שעשה משה במדבר לא עשה אלא שבעת ימים! שנאמר ומפתח האהל לא תצאו שבעת ימים וגו' וכך מצינו בחנוכה שעשה שלמה שלא עשה אלא שבעת ימים כי חנוכת המזבח עשו שבעת ימים והחג שבעת ימים. ומה ראו לעשות חנוכה זו שמונה ימים? אלא בימי מלכות יון נכנסו בית חשמנאי להר הבית ובנו את המזבח ושדוהו בשיד ותקנו בו כלי שרת והיו מתעסקין בו שמונת ימים. ומה ראו להדליק את הנרות אלא בימי מלכות יון שנכנסו בני חשמנאי להיכל ושבעה שפודין של ברזל בידם וחפום בבעץ והדליקו בהם את המנורה. ומה ראו לגמור בהם את הלל אלא שכל תשועה ותשועה שהקב"ה עושה להם ישראל היו מקדימין לפניו בהלל בשירה ובשבח ובהודאה. מגילת תענית פרק ט'

On the twenty fifth of Kislev begins the eight days of Chanukah in which one is forbidden to deliver eulogies. When the (Syrian) Greeks entered the sanctuary they defiled all the oils. When the government of the Chashmonaim was victorious, they searched and found one undefiled cruse of oil that was sealed with the seal of the High Priest. Although it contained only enough to light for one day a miracle occurred and they lit from it for eight days. The next year they established these eight days as days of festivities.

Why did they make a holiday of "dedication" (chanukah) to last eight days? The dedication ceremonies of Moshe and Shlomoh lasted only seven days! The answer is, that when the Chashmonaim entered the Temple mount they had to build a new altar, plaster it and build new vessels. This whole process took eight days.

Why did they see fit to institute the lighting of lamps (Hadlakas Neiros)? The answer is, that when the Chashmonaim entered the sanctuary they had to build a whole new Menorah. It was made from iron poles covered with tin.

Why did they institute the saying of Hallel? For every act of salvation that Hashem has done for the Jewish people they respond with Hallel, song, praise and thanks.

### **Megillas Taanis 9**

C.  
בימי מתתיהו בן יוחנן כהן גדול חשמונאי ובניו, כשעמדה מלכות יון הרשעה על עמך ישראל להשכיחם תורתך ולהעבירם מחקי רצונך ואתה ברחמיך הרבים עמדת להם בעת צרתם, רבת את ריבם, דנת את דינם, נקמת את נקמתם מסרת גבורים ביד חלשים, ורבים ביד מעטים, וטמאים ביד טהורים, ורשעים ביד צדיקים וזדים ביד עוסקי תורתך, ולך עשית שם גדול וקדוש בעולמך ולעמך ישראל עשית תשועה גדולה ופרקן כהיום הזה. ואחר כן באו בניך לדביר ביתך ופנו את היכלך, וטהרו את מקדשך, והדליקו נרות בחצרות קדשך, וקבעו שמונת ימי חנוכה אלו להודות ולהלל לשמך הגדול. תפילת "על הנסים"

In the days of Mattisyahu, the son of Yochanan, the High priest, the Hasmonean, and his sons, when the wicked Greek kingdom rose up against Your people Israel to make them forget Your Torah and compel them to stray from the statutes of Your Will--You in Your great mercy stood up for them in the time of their distress. You took up their grievance, judged their claim, and avenged their wrong. You delivered the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the wanton into the hands of the diligent students of Your Torah. For Yourself You made a great and holy Name in Your world, and for Your people Israel You worked a great victory and salvation as this very day. Thereafter, Your children came to the Holy of Holies of your House, cleansed Your Temple, purified the site of Your Holiness and kindled lights in the Courtyards of Your Sanctuary; and they established these eight days of Chanukah to express thanks and praise to Your great Name. **"Al HaNisim" Prayer**

### III. In the Afterglow of Victory

A. When these things were over, the nations round about the Jews were very uneasy at the revival of their power, and rose up together, and destroyed many of them, as gaining advantage over them by laying snares for them, and making secret conspiracies against them. Judas made perpetual expeditions against these men, and endeavored to restrain them from those incursions, and to prevent the mischiefs they did to the Jews. **Antiquities Book XII Chap. 8:1**

B. About this time it was that king Antiochus, as he was going over the upper countries, heard that there was a very rich city in Persia called Elymais; and therein a very rich temple of Diana, and that it was full of all sorts of donations dedicated to it; as also weapons and breast plates, which, upon inquiry, he found had been left there by Alexander, the son of Philip, king of Macedonia. And being incited by these motives, he went in haste to Elymais and assaulted it, and besieged it. But as those that were in it were not terrified at his assault, nor at his siege, but opposed him very courageously, he was beaten off his hopes for they drove him away from the city, and went out and pursued after him; insomuch that he fled away as far as Babylon, and lost a great many



of his army. And when he was grieving for this disappointment, some persons told him of the defeat of his commanders whom he left behind him to fight against Judea, and what strength the Jews had already gotten; When this concern about these affairs was added to the former, he was confounded, and by the anxiety he was in, fell into a distemper, which, as it lasted a great while, and as his pains increased upon him, so he at length perceived he should die in a little time; so he called his friends to him, and told them that his distemper was severe upon him; and confessed withal, that this calamity was sent upon him for the miseries he had brought upon the Jewish nation, while he plundered their temple, and contemned their G-d, and when he had said this, he gave up the ghost. **Antiquities Book XII Chap. 9:1**

C. However, Antiochus, before he died, called for Philip, who was one of his kingdom; and gave him his diadem, and his garment, and his ring, and charged him to carry them, and deliver them to his son Antiochus; and desired him to take care of his education, and to preserve the kingdom for him. This Antiochus died in the hundred forty and ninth year: But it was Lysias that declared his death to the multitude, and appointed his son Antiochus to be king, (of whom at present he had the care,) and called him Eupator. **Antiquities Book XII Chap. 9:2**

#### IV. The Hellenists Return

A. At this time it was that the garrison in the citadel at Jerusalem, with the Jewish renegades, did a great deal of harm to the Jews: for the soldiers that were in that garrison rushed out upon them suddenly, and destroyed such as were going up to the temple in order to offer their sacrifices, for this citadel adjoined to, and overlooked the temple. When these misfortunes had often happened to them, Judas resolved to destroy that garrison; whereupon he got all the people together, and vigorously besieged those that were in the citadel. This was in the hundred and fiftieth year of the dominion of the Seleucidae. So he made engines of war, and erected bulwarks, and very zealously pressed on to take the citadel: But there were not a few of the renegades who were in the place, that went out by night into the country, and got together some other wicked men like themselves, and went to Antiochus the king, and desired of him that "he would not suffer

them to be neglected, under the great hardships that lay upon them from those of their own nation, and this because their sufferings were occasioned on his father's account, while they left the religious worship of their fathers, and preferred that which he had commanded them to follow: that there was danger lest the citadel, and those appointed to garrison it by the king, should be taken by Judas, and those that were with him, unless he would send them succors." When Antiochus, who was but a child, heard this, he was angry, and sent for his captains, and his friends, and gave order, that they should get an army of mercenaries together, with such men also of his own kingdom as were of any age fit for war. Accordingly, an army was collected of about a hundred thousand footmen, and twenty thousand horsemen, and thirty-two elephants. **Antiquities Book XII Chap. 9:3**

B. So the king took his army, and marched hastily out of Antioch, with Lysias, who had the command of the whole, and came to Idumea, and thence went up to the city Bethsura, a city that was strong, and not to be taken without great difficulty; he set about this city, and besieged it. And while the inhabitants of Bethsura courageously opposed him; and sallied out upon him, and burnt his engines of war, a great deal of time was spent in the siege. But when Judas heard of the king's coming, he raised the siege of the citadel, and met the king, and pitched his camp in certain straits, at a place called Beth-Zachariah, at the distance of seventy furlongs from the enemy; but the king soon drew his forces from Bethsura, and brought them to those straits. And as soon as it was day, he put his men in battle array, and made his elephants follow one another through the narrow passes, because they could not be set sideways by one another. Now round about every elephant there were a thousand footmen, and five hundred horsemen. The elephants also had high towers upon their backs, and archers in them. And he also made the rest of his army to go up the mountains, and put his friends before the rest; and gave orders for the army to shout aloud and so he attacked the enemy. He also exposed to sight their golden and brazen shields, so that a glorious splendor was sent from them; and when they shouted the mountains echoed again. When Judas saw this, he was not terrified, but received the enemy with great courage, and slew about six hundred of the first ranks. But when his brother Eleazar, whom they called Auran, saw the tallest of the elephants armed with royal breastplates, and supposed that the king was upon him, he attacked him with great quickness and bravery. He also slew many of those that were about the elephant, and scattered the rest, and then went under the belly of the elephant, and smote him, and slew him; so the elephant fell upon Eleazar, and by his weight crushed him to death. And thus did this man come to his end, when he had first courageously destroyed many of his enemies. **Antiquities Book XII Chap. 9:4**

C. Accordingly the king sent to Judas, and to those that were besieged with them, and promised to give them peace, and to permit them to make use of, and live according to the laws of their fathers. And they gladly received his proposals; and when they had gained security upon oath, for their performance, they went out of the temple. But when Antiochus came into it, and saw how strong the place was, he broke his oaths, and ordered his army that was there to pluck down the walls to the ground, and when he had so done, he returned to Antioch; he also carried with him Onias the high priest, who was also called Menelaus; for Lysias advised the king to slay Menelaus, if he would have the Jews be quiet, and cause him no farther disturbance for that this man was the origin of all the mischief the Jews had done them, by persuading his father to compel the Jews to leave the religion of their fathers; so the king sent Menelaus to Berea, a city of Syria, and there had him put to death, when he had been high priest ten years. He had been wicked and an impious man; and in order to get the government to himself, had compelled his nation to transgress their own laws. **Antiquities Book XII Chap. 9:7**

D. After the death of Menelaus, Alcimus, who was also called Jacimus, was made high priest. About the same time Demetrius, the son of Seleucus, fled away from Rome, and took Tripoli, a city of Syria, and set the diadem on his own head. He also gathered certain mercenary soldiers together, and entered into his kingdom, and was joyfully received by all, who delivered themselves up to him. And when they had taken Antiochus the king, and Lysias, they brought them to him alive; both which were immediately put to death by the command of Demetrius, when Antiochus had reigned two years, as we have already elsewhere related. But there were now many of the wicked Jewish renegades that came together to him, and with Alcimus the high priest, who accused the whole nation, and particularly Judas and his brethren; and said that they had slain all his friends, and that those in his kingdom that were of his party, and waited for his return, were by them put to death; that these men had ejected them out of their own country; and caused them to be sojourners in a foreign land; and they desired that he would send someone of his own friends, and know from him what mischief Judas' party had done. **Antiquities Book XII Chap. 10:1**

E. At this Demetrius was very angry, and sent Bacchides, a friend of Antiochus Epiphanes, a good man, and one that had been entrusted with all Mesopotamia, and gave him an army, and committed Alcimus the high priest to his care; and gave him charge to slay Judas, and those that were with him. So Bacchides made haste, and went out of Antioch with his army; and when he was come into Judea, he sent to Judas and his brethren, to discourse with him about a league of friendship and peace, for he had a mind to take him by treachery; But Judas did not give credit to him, for he saw that he came with so great an army as men do not bring when they come to make peace but to make war.

However, some of the people acquiesced in that Bacchides caused to be proclaimed; and supposing they should undergo no considerable harm from Alcimus, who was their countryman, they went over to them; and when they had received oaths from both of them, that neither they themselves, nor those of the same sentiments, should come to any harm, they entrusted themselves with them; But Bacchides troubled himself not about the oaths he had taken, and slew three score of them, although by not keeping his faith with these that first went over, he deterred all the rest, who had intentions to go over to him, from doing it. But as he was gone out of Jerusalem, and was at the village called Bethzetha, he sent out and caught many of the deserters, and some of the people also, and slew them all; and enjoined all that lived in the country to submit to Alcimus. So he left him there, with some part of the army that he might have where-with to keep the country in obedience, and returned to Antioch, to king Demetrius. **Antiquities Book XII Chap. 10:2**

F. But Alcimus was desirous to have the dominion more firmly assured to him; and understanding, that if he could bring it about that the multitude should be his friends, he should govern with greater security, he spoke kind words to them all, and discoursed to each of them after an agreeable and pleasant manner, by which means he quickly had a great body of men and an army about him, although the greater part of them were of the wicked, and the deserters. With these, whom he used as his servants, and soldiers, he went all over the country, and slew all that he could find of Judas' party. But when Judas saw that Alcimus was already become great, and had destroyed many of the good and holy men of the country, he also went all over the country, and destroyed those that were of the other's party. But when Alcimus saw that he was not able to oppose Judas, nor was equal to him in strength, he resolved to apply himself to king Demetrius for his assistance; so he came to Antioch, and irritated him against Judas, and accused him, alleging that he had undergone a great many miseries by his means, and that he would do more mischief unless he were prevented, and brought to punishment, which must be done by sending a powerful force against him. **Antiquities Book XII Chap. 10:3**

G. Then the king sent Nicanor, one of his distinguished officers, who hated Israel bitterly, and ordered him to destroy the people. After this, Nicanor went up to Mount Zion, and some of the priests came out of the sanctuary with some of the elders of the people to greet him peaceably, and show him the whole burnt offering that was being offered for the king. And he jeered at them and laughed at them and polluted them and spoke arrogantly and swore angrily, "If Judas and his army are not immediately delivered into my hands, it will happen that if I return safely, I will burn this house up." And the armies met in battle on the thirteenth of the month of Adar, and Nicanor's army was beaten, and he himself was the first to fall in the battle. But when his army saw that Nicanor had fallen, they threw down their arms and fled. **Mac. I 7:26, 33-35, 43, 44**

H. When Demetrius heard that Nicanor and his troops had fallen in battle, he sent Bacchides and Alcimus into the land of Judah again a second time, with the right wing of his army. And they marched by the Gilgal road, and pitched their camp against Mesaloth, in Arbela, and took and destroyed many people. And in the first month of the one hundred and fifty second year, they encamped against Jerusalem. Then they set out and marched to Berea with twenty thousand men and two thousand horse. And Judas was encamped at Elasa, and had three thousand picked men with him. And the fight became desperate, and many on both sides fell wounded. And Judas fell and the rest fled. And Jonathan and Simon took their brother Judas and buried him in the tombs of his forefathers in Modin. And they wept over him, and all Israel lamented him greatly and mourned for a long time, saying, "What a hero is fallen, the Savior of Israel!" **Mac. I 9:1-5, 17-21**