

# Hasmoneans: From Rebellion to State

# Hasmonean Chronology

- Hasmonean Uprising:
  - Mattathias (167 BCE)
- Judah Maccabee (167-160 BCE)
  - Jonathan (160-142 BCE)
  - Simon (142-135 BCE) – Foundation of Independent State
- John Hyrcanus I (134-104 BCE)
- Aristobulus I (104-103 BCE)
- Alexander Yannai (103 -76 BCE)
- Alexandra Salome (Shlomzion) (76-67 BCE)
- Civil War: Hyrcanus II – Aristobulus II (67-63 BCE)
- Rome (Pompey) Captures Judaea (63 BCE)

# Heroic Model of Mattathias

I Macc. 2:23-27- ...When he (Mattathias) had finished\_ .  
speaking these words, a Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer sacrifice on the altar in Modi'in, according to the King's command. When Mattathias saw this, he burned with **zeal** and his heart was stirred. He gave vent to righteous anger; he ran and killed him on the altar. At the same time he killed the king's officer who was forcing them to sacrifice, and he tore down the altar. Thus he burned with **zeal** for the law just as Phineas did against Zimri son of Salu. Then Mattathias cried out in the town with a loud voice, saying: "Let every one who is **zealous** for the ... " law and supports the covenant come out with me

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# Mattathias Deathbed Testament

- .ibid., 2:53 - ...Phineas our ancestor, because he was deeply zealous, received the covenant of everlasting priesthood...Elijah because of great zeal for the law was taken up into heaven (cf. I Kings 18:40 - ...and Elijah took them (the prophets of Baal) down to Wadi Kishon and slaughtered them there; cf. I Kings 19: 10 He (Elijah) replied "I am moved by zeal for the Lord" - (קנא קנאתי לה' אלוהי) - צבאות

# The “Right” Family

- **I Macc. 5:55-62**
- In those days when Judas and Jonathan were in the land of Gilead, and Simon his brother was in Galilee opposite Ptolemais,
- Joseph, son of Zechariah, and Azariah, the leaders of the army, heard about the brave deeds and the fighting that they were doing.
- They said, “Let us also make a name for ourselves by going out and fighting against the Gentiles around us.”
- They gave orders to those of their army who were with them, and marched against Jamnia.\*
- But Gorgias and his men came out of the city to meet them in battle.
- Joseph and Azariah were routed and were pursued to the frontiers of Judea, and about two thousand Israelites fell that day.
- It was a great setback for the people, because they had not obeyed Judas and his brothers, thinking that they would do brave deeds.
- **But they were not of the family through whom Israel’s deliverance was given.**

# Hasmonean State Constitution

- I Macc. 14: 25-46 - On the 18<sup>th</sup> of Elul, in the 172<sup>nd</sup> year, which is the third year of the great high priest Simon, in Asaramel, in the great assembly of the priests and the people, and the rulers of the nation and the elders of the country, the following was proclaimed to us: The people saw Simon's faithfulness<sup>[i]</sup> and the glory that he had resolved to win for his nation, and they made him their leader and high priest, because he had done all these things and because of the justice and loyalty that he had maintained toward his nation. He sought in every way to exalt his people. <sup>36</sup> In his days things prospered in his hands, so that the Gentiles were put out of the<sup>[k]</sup> country, as were also those in the city of David in Jerusalem, who had built themselves a citadel from which they used to sally forth and defile the environs of the sanctuary, doing great damage to its purity. <sup>37</sup> He settled Jews in it and fortified it for the safety of the country and of the city, and built the walls of Jerusalem higher.
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# The Legal Status of the Hasmonean State

- I Macc. 14:41-43 – The Jews and their priests have resolved that Simon should be their leader and high priest forever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise, and that he should be governor over them and that he should take charge of the sanctuary and appoint officials over its tasks and over the country and the weapons and the strongholds, and that he should take charge of the sanctuary, and that he should be obeyed by all, and that all contracts in the country should be written in his name, and that he should be clothed in purple and wear gold.

# Josephus on the Hasmonean Aristobulus I: Conflicting Sources

- Antiquities 13: 302 Now of his brothers he loved only Antigonus, who was next in age, and considered him worthy of a position like his own, while he kept his other brothers in chains. He also imprisoned his mother, who had disputed the royal power with him...and carried his cruelty so far, that he caused her to die of starvation in prison. And to the death of his mother he added that of his brother Antigonus...

# Summing up Aristobulus I

- Ant. 13: 319 – He had a kindly nature, and was wholly given to modesty, as Strabo also testifies on the authority of Timagenes, writing as follows: “This man was a kindly person, and very serviceable to the Jews...

# Alexander Yannai Captures Gaza

- Ant. 13: 356ff. - And when he (=Yannai) saw that Ptolemy had withdrawn from Gaza to Cypress, and his mother Cleopatra to Egypt, in his anger with the Gazaeans...he besieged their city and plundered their territory...(Here follows a reference to the Gazaeian commander Apollodotus and later to his brother Lysimachus)...The Gazaeans however held their ground and did not yield either through lack of supplies or because of the number of their slain, for they were ready to suffer any fate rather than fall into the hands of the enemy...

# ? Who were the heroes at Gaza

- Jos., Ant. 13: 361-364 – On first entering Alexander acted peacefully, but subsequently he loosed his forces on the Gazaeans...and so they went off killing the Gazaeans. These however were by no means meanspirited, but on the contrary defended themselves against the Jews with whatever weapons came to hand...And some of them, being left alone, set fire to their houses in order that nothing may remain in them for the enemy...Others with their own hands made away with their children and wives, this being the means by which they were compelled to deliver them from slavery to their foes...

# More references to Hasmonean Victories

- Pesikta Rabbati chap. 6 – You find that this Hannukah – this feast of dedication that we celebrate – is in memory of the dedication [of the altar] by the family of the Hasmoneans. Because they did battle and defeated the Greeks we kindle lamps to this day.
- BT Ta'anit 18b – What is Nicanor's day? ...But when the Kingdom of the House of the Hasmoneans prevailed and defeated them, they cut off his thumbs...
- Compare Y.H. Yerushalmi, Zakhor, p. 25: “...they (=the rabbis) also ignored the battles of the Maccabees in favor of the cruse of oil that burned for eight days...”

# Opposition to Hasmonean Priesthood

- BT Kiddushin 66a - Now, there was a man there, frivolous, evilhearted and worthless, named Eleazar son of Po'irah, who said to King Jannai. 'O King Jannai, the hearts of the Pharisees are against thee.'.. Now, an elder, named Judah son of Gedidiah, was present there. Said he to King Jannai. 'O King Jannai! let the royal crown suffice thee, and leave the priestly crown to the seed of Aaron.' (For it was rumoured that his mother had been taken captive in Modi'im.) Accordingly, the charge was investigated, but not sustained, and the Sages of Israel departed in anger.

# Agenda-driven Opposition to Hasmoneans

- E. Bevan, Jerusalem under the High Priests (1904)  
p. 98 – “It appears to me a question whether it was not at great spiritual cost that the Jewish people allowed itself to be launched by the sons of Hasmon upon a career of carnal strife. For the Jewish people could not be amenable to the same laws as ordinary nations; it was more like a church, and the laws of a church’s life were in that degree the true laws of its being.

# Conclusions based on Ideological Opposition

- Bevan, p. 128 – Under the blast of Jewish conquests civilization in Palestine withered away. Where there had been prosperous cities were heaps of ruins. Fields went back to brushwood, and roaming bands of marauders had free course in the land. Such a state of things marked the zenith of Hasmonean power.

קאנטאן זעטן סיי קער מידי  
זיינדיגן צורם זעטן אל סטארים...  
קער י 20



..... גבול פריש  
 □ מבצר  
 ○ עיר יחזית ברשות ינאי

# Coin of Mattathias Antigonus (40-37 BCE)



# Inscriptions on Menorah Coin

:Greek Inscription •  
King Antigonus •

; Hebrew Inscription on Reverse •  
מתתיהו כהן גדול •

