

WARS OF THE MACCABEES

In the narrative of 1 Maccabees. After Antiochus issued decrees forbidding Jewish religious practice, a rural priest from Modiin, Mattathias the Hasmonean, sparked the revolt against the Seleucid Empire by refusing to worship the Greek gods.

Date: 167 – 160 BCE

The Jewish revolt against the Greeks set a precedent as the world's first religious war. 1 Maccabees was originally written in Hebrew as an official court history for the Hasmonean dynasty.

REBELLION

Although many of the Jewish community were at this point Hellenized the persecution of the Jewish people and the destruction of practicing Judaism united the Jewish people in Judea. They needed someone to lead them. Antiochus sent his officers to Modiin where they met Mattathias. He was ordered to fulfill his duty to the state and be the first to sacrifice an animal on the altar of an idol. He refused and when another Jewish man stepped forward to do it he murdered the officer, tore down the idol and cried, "Let everyone who is zealous for the law and stands by the covenant, follow me." (1 Maccabees 2:27) He and his 5 sons, John, Simon, Judah, Eleazer and Johnathon rallied the Jewish population.

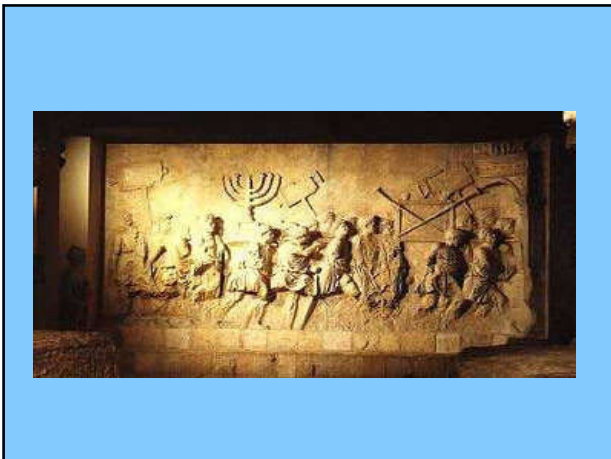
SEDER MASOCHISM



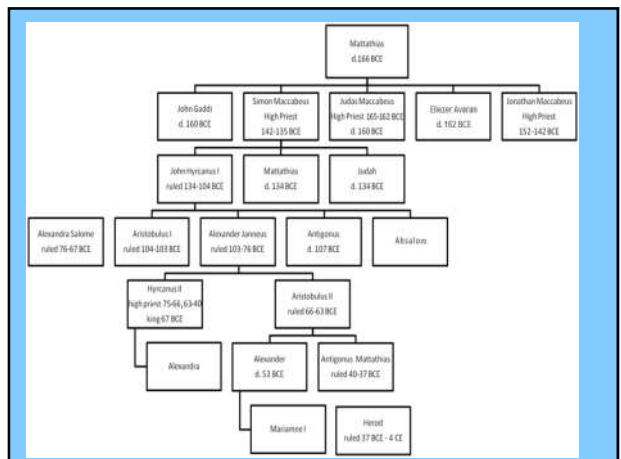
In 167 BC the family of Mattathias became known as the Macabees or "the Hammer". They tore down the altars of idols and killed those who worshipped them, even many Hellenistic Jews. Mattathias died in 166BC. He left Judah in charge of his army.

Antiochus underestimated the severity of the rebellion and sent his less effective generals to battle the Jewish army and Judah easily defeated them. Antiochus set out to exterminate the Jewish population in Judea with Lysias and around 60,000 Seleucid soldiers.

The Jewish rebels were outmanned by five to one. According to the story Judah prayed to God for victory. The Jewish people secured an almost impossible victory over the Selucid Empire and over Antiochus



After the defeat Antiochus' armies were devastated. They met again when Judah's army was at the gates of Jerusalem, but it was a much shorter battle. Judah drove the enemy out of the Holy City. When Judah & his brothers went to the Temple, he saw the destruction and defilement that Antiochus caused up to it and was overwhelmed by grief (1 Maccabees 4:36-40). On Dec. 25, 165 BC, after months of work clearing and cleaning, the Temple was finally rededicated to God. Their celebrations continued for eight days as is known to this day as the celebration of Hanukkah.



THE AFTERMATH

The Maccabees had accomplished religious liberty and were going after political independence. Although the Jewish people had supported their fight, they were unsure of the political and cultural influence of the Maccabees. The Hellenistic way of life was already entrenched onto the Jewish people. However, after the Maccabees conquered the whole of Judea and enforced the collapse of the Seleucid Kingdom in Palestine the Jewish people imposed themselves as an autonomous group. Judea was now free from the Seleucid rule and the death of Antiochus V in 129 BC confirmed this. The Jewish people were now content with the new political purpose of the Maccabees. Although no brother of Judah survived, with Simon being the last leader of the Maccabees who died in 134 BC, their intention still flourished.