

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND to the story of CHANUKAH

- 198 BCE: Judea and Samaria become part of Seleucid (Greek) Empire.
- 175 BCE: Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) ascends the Seleucid throne.
 - Needed money to conquer Egypt. Hellenizers gave money to replace high priest Onias III with his younger Hellenized brother Jason (Joseph). Money as well to build gymnasium and a Hellenist school. Antiochus IV was devoted to spread Hellenism.
 - A more extreme group of Hellenizers offered greater sum and Menelaus, an Israelite, was appointed high priest. Menelaus robbed temple to pay debt.
 - Antiochus left on Egyptian campaign. Hearing rumors of his death, Jason attempted to overthrow Menelaus. Antiochus returned, interpreted fighting as a rebellion, punished Jerusalem.
- 168 BCE: Under the reign of Antiochus IV, the Temple is looted, Jews are massacred, and Judaism is outlawed. Resistance by Pietists (Chasidim). Acts of martyrdom.
- 167 BCE: Antiochus orders an altar to Zeus erected in the Temple. Mattathias, and his five sons: John (Yochanan), Simon, Eleazar, Jonathan, and Judah lead a rebellion
- 166 BCE: Mattathias dies, and Judah takes his place as leader.
- 165 BCE: The Jewish revolt against the Seleucid monarchy is successful. The Temple is liberated and rededicated (Hanukkah).
- 160-Judah died in battle. And was succeeded by his brother Jonathan.
- 142 BCE: Establishment of the Second Jewish Commonwealth. The Seleucids recognize Jewish autonomy. The Seleucid kings had a formal overlordship, which the Hasmoneans acknowledged. This inaugurates a period of great geographical expansion, population growth, and religious, cultural and social development.

- 140 BCE: Rule of Simeon. The Hasmoneans became hereditary rulers (ethnarch of independent Judea) and High Priests.

Hasmonean Dynasty:

- John Hyrcanus, Simon's son. 134-104 BCE

Aristobulus I, 104-103 BCE

Alexander Jannaeus, 103-76 BCE

Queen Salome Alexandra, 76-67 BCE

Hyrcanus II, 67-66 BCE

Aristobulus II, 66-63 BCE

Hyrcanus II, 63-40 BCE (restored but demoted to Ethnarch)

Antigonus, 40-37 BCE

Aristobulus III, 36 BCE (only as High Priest)

- 63 BCE: The Hasmonean Jewish Kingdom comes to an end due to rivalry between the brothers Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II, both of whom appeal to the Roman Republic to intervene and settle the power struggle on their behalf.

The Roman general Pompey the Great is dispatched to the area. Rome annexes Judea.