



**CHANUKAH**  
**FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS**

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# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Chanukah, the Festival of Dedication and the Feast of Lights recalls historical events that nearly destroyed Judaism in the second century BCE. Eretz Yisrael was ruled at the time by the Syrian-Greek heirs of the great empire of Alexander the Great. The Seleucid dynasty that controlled Palestine and Syria was headed by Antiochus Epiphanes, an ardent Hellenizer who was anxious to spread Greek culture throughout the Middle East and Asia. But he was not the only person convinced of the superiority of Greek customs and culture;. A group of Jewish assimilationists called "Hellenists" petitioned the king to transform Jerusalem into a Greek polis or city-state. This group was so anxious to become Hellenists that it offered to honor Greek gods such as Zeus, pollute the Temple of Jerusalem with Greek pagan practices, and establish gymnasiums in which youths competed in athletic contests in the nude. Some even went so far as to undergo plastic surgery to undo their circumcision. Sadly, the Jewish community was split in two.

When the Hellenizers, backed by a contingent of soldiers, sought to introduce the Hellenistic culture and religion in the small town of Modin near Jerusalem, they sparked a revolt that would save Judaism from assimilation and probable death. An aged priest named Mattathias struck down a traitor who was prepared to bow down to an idol of Zeus, thereby arousing the local citizens to at-

tack the troops. Mattathias and his five sons then proclaimed a full-fledged revolt against the Seleucid rulers and called for the citizens to rise up and expel the polluters of the Temple and Jerusalem. Under the capable and inspired leadership of his son, Judah Maccabee ("the hammer"), the Hebrews rallied their citizen's army in 167 B.C.E. Gradually, they overcame the professional and well-armed

forces of Antiochus and on the twenty-fifth of Kislev (December) 165 B.C.E., they finally expelled them from Jerusalem and crushed the Hellenist party

The scene they found on the Temple mount was appallingly depressing: the sacred altar had been polluted with swine's blood and pagan practices had been introduced into Judaism's holiest site. Accordingly, the liberators set about cleansing the Temple and preparing it for renewed use as a Jewish temple. Finally, after completing the process, an eight-day festival of

rededication was proclaimed. Hence, the name "Chanukah" which means "dedication" or "consecration." Legend has it that the victors found a small cruse of undefiled oil sufficient for one-day's use in the lamp of the Temple. A miracle occurred and the lamp burned for eight days, giving the priests sufficient time to prepare fresh, consecrated oil. Consequently, we light the menorah for eight days of Chanukah and sometimes refer to the holiday as Hag Ha-Urim, the Festival of Lights.



# THE MEANING OF CHANUKAH TODAY

It should be pointed out that the Talmud's account of the Chanukah story pays scant attention to the military victory of the Maccabees and focuses instead on the miracle of the oil. Scholars speculate that the differences in these texts reflect the history of the festival. At first Chanukah was celebrated as a reminder of the victory of the Maccabees. It also marked the rededication (Chanukah means dedication) of the temple. Only later did the miracle of the oil come to dominate the military victory. This shift in focus can perhaps be attributed to the subsequent history of the Hasmoneans. The Hasmonean dynasty, with the passage of time, became hellenized and, more important, some of them opposed and even persecuted the rabbis. This dark later history superseded the brief bright period of their beginning. This may explain the Mishnah's silence about Chanukah. Others speculate that in Mishnaic times, the rabbis, living under Roman rule, may have felt obliged to censor a story of a successful revolt by a small number of Jews against a powerful enemy. The Mishnah was composed after the disastrous revolts of 70 C.E. (when the second temple was destroyed) and of 135 C.E. (the Bar Kochba rebellion). Both to appease the Romans and to discourage Jews from being inspired by the Maccabees, the Mishnah may have minimized the military significance of Chanukah.

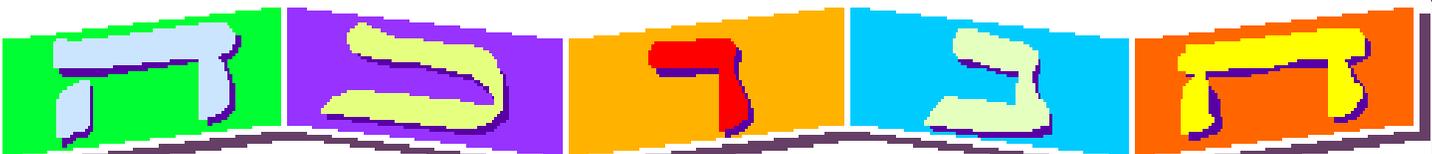
Finally, one can speculate that because the independence of the Hasmonean state lasted less than a hundred years, the importance of the Maccabees' victory diminished as time went on, until it seemed like a relatively brief moment in the history of Israel. Other dates in the Jewish calendar from that period also subsequently passed into obscurity—for example, the day of Judah's victory over the general Nicanor was celebrated on Adar 13 (which later became the Fast of Esther). To ensure Chanukah's lasting importance, then, the tradition decided to emphasize its spiritual meaning and its symbol—the menorah.

Chanukah is a minor holiday in the Jewish calendar. Yet, it has assumed a major role in the lives of many Jews. One reason is that it stresses how a few, highly motivated patriots were able to overcome the superior forces of a tyrant. As the prayer, Al Ha-Nissim puts it: "You delivered the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few..."

Second, Chanukah teaches us that spirit can triumph over force; that deeply felt principles can overcome mighty armies. In the words of the Prophet Zechariah which we read during Chanukah, "Not by armies and not by might but by My spirit." Jews have always maintained this belief; had they done otherwise, we would have disappeared long ago.

Third, Chanukah reinforces the notion of pluralism: that each faith and creed has the sacred right to be different, to uphold its own ideals and principles, to serve God in its own unique way. Hellenism sought to homogenize all faiths and cultures; the Maccabees succeeded in battling for the right to uphold Judaism in a world of paganism and to swim against the popular tide.

Finally, Chanukah emphasizes the lesson that out of darkness can come light. We have never surrendered to the dark night of hopelessness and despair whether in our national history or in our personal lives. To the contrary: we have always been strengthened by men and women who were ready and able to kindle the lamps of faith and hope.



# RITUALS OF CHANUKAH

There are very few sources that discuss Chanukah in rabbinic literature. Consequently, there are only a few ritual observances that are connected with the holiday. We are expected to light the menorah or hanukiyah each night for eight successive nights as dusk falls. Preferably, we place the menorah near the window in order to publicize the miracle of "the few who defeated the many." We use a ninth candle or oil wick called the shamash to kindle the others. We place the candles from the right to left as we face the menorah, lighting from left to right so that the newest candle is kindled first each evening. We start with one candle on the first night, adding nightly so that on the last night every light is ablaze.

Additionally, we add several prayers daily such as Al Ha-Nissim ("Thank God for the Miracles") and Hallel (Psalms 113 to 118). Popular songs such as Maoz Tzur ("Rock of Ages") are sung after candle lighting. People also distribute gifts or money (Chanukah gelt) to friends and family. Children play with a top called a dreidel or sevivon on which are inscribed four Hebrew letters ש ה ג ה, which stand for the phrase: "A great miracle occurred there." Ashkenazic Jews enjoy eating potato latkes fried in oil while Sephardic and Israeli Jews prefer sufganiyot or doughnuts. These foods are designed to recall the miracle of the olive oil.



# RITUALS OF CHANUKAH

## The lighting procedure is as follows:

The correct number of candles are placed in the menorah beginning at your right. Each subsequent night you add one candle, starting at the right and moving left. After the candles are set, you light the shamash, the helper candle, which usually has a distinct place on the menorah apart from the other candles. Before lighting the candles, the following blessings are recited:

## BLESSINGS FOR KINDLING THE LIGHTS

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של חנוכה.

*Barukh ata Adonay, Elohaynu melekh ha-olam, asher kidshanu be-mitzvotav vetzivanu le-hadlik ner shel Chanukah.*

Praised are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe who has sanctified us with Your commandments and commanded us to kindle the Chanukah light.

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם שעשה ניסים לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

*Barukh ata Adonay, Elohaynu melekh ha-olam, she asah nisim la-avotavnu bayamim ha-hem bazman ha-zeh.*

Praised are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe who has performed miracles for our ancestors in ancient times and in our days as well.



Happy Hanukkah

# RITUALS OF CHANUKAH

## ON THE FIRST NIGHT ADD THIS BLESSING

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם שהחיינו וקימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

*Barukh ata Adonay, Elohaynu melekh ha-olam, she-heheyanu, ve-kiyemanu, vehigiyanu la-zman ha-zeh.*

Praised are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season.

Then use the shammash to light the candle. After the first night, begin the lighting with the candle that has been added. Thus you always begin on the left and end on the right—the opposite of the way you place the candles in the menorah. (NOTE: The mitzvah is fulfilled whether you light the menorah left to right or right to left, but the above is the customary method.)

If the menorah is on a windowsill, many people reverse the menorah after lighting it so that people in the street will see the candles in the right position. After the lighting is completed, some people recite the ha-neirot hallalu paragraph:

**We kindle these lights to commemorate the miracles, wonders, triumphs and victories which You performed through Your holy priests for our ancestors in those days, in this season. These lights are sacred for all eight days of Chanukah. It is forbidden to make any use of them except to look at them in order to praise Your great name for Your miracles, wonders and triumphs.**

## Ma'oz Tzur

While customs vary, most people after the candlelighting sing "Ma'oz Tzur," a hymn composed in the thirteenth century. The most common melody for it is believed to have been borrowed from fifteenth-to-sixteenth-century German Protestant church music.

*Ma-oz tzur y'shu-ati, l'kha na-eh l'sha-bey-akh,  
Tikon beyt t'filati, v'sham toda n'za-bey-akh,  
L'eyt takhin mat-bey-akh, mi-tzar ha-m'na-bey-akh,  
Az egmor b'shir mizmor, hanukat ha-miz-bey-akh.*

Rock of Ages, let our song praise Your saving power.  
You amid the raging foes were our sheltering tower.  
Furious they assailed us; but Your help availed us.  
And Your word broke their sword  
when our own strength failed us.

מעוז צור ישועתי. לך נאה לשבח.  
תכון בית תפילתי ושם תודה נזבח.  
לעת תכין מטבח מצר המנבח.  
אז אנמור בשיר מזמור חנכת המזבח.

# CHANUKAH IN SONG

## Mi Yemalel

*Mi yemalel gevurot yisra'el,  
otan mi yimneh.  
Hen behol dor yakum hagibor  
go'el ha'am. (2x)*

*Shema! Bayamim hahem bazeman hazeh  
Makabi moshi'a ufodeh.  
Uvyameynu kol am yisra'el  
yitahed yakum lehiga'el.*

Who can retell the things that befell us?  
Who can count them?  
In every age a hero or sage  
Came to our aid. (2x)

Ah! At this time of year in days of yore  
Maccabees the Temple did restore,  
And today our people, as we dreamed,  
Will arise, unite and be redeemed!

## Chanukah, Oh Chanukah

(English)  
Chanukah, O Chanukah  
Come light the menorah.  
Lets have a party,  
we'll all dance the hora.

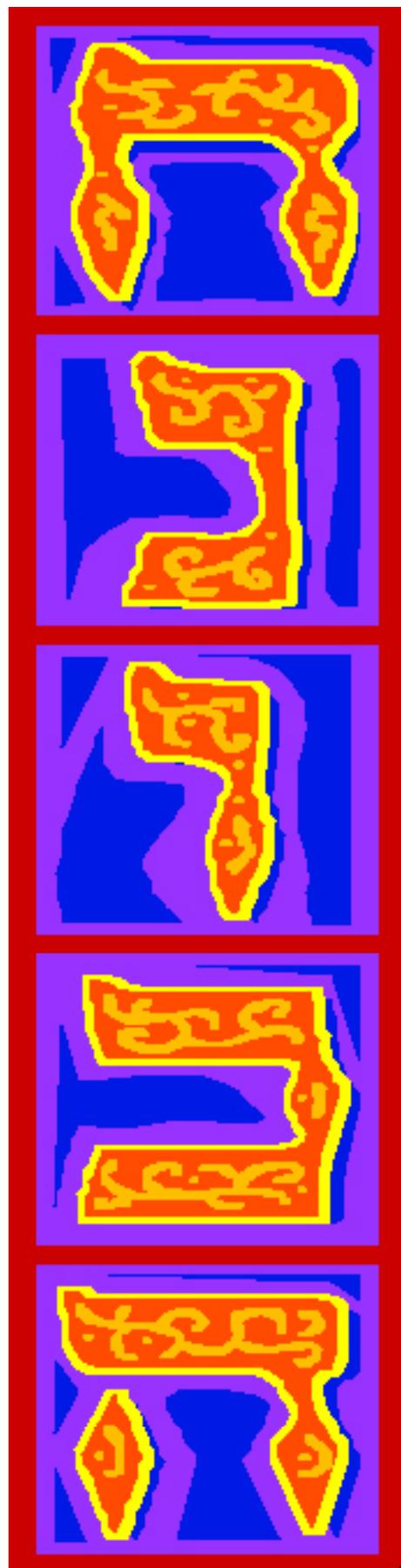
Gather round the table,  
we'll give you a treat.  
Dreidels to play with  
and latkes to eat.

And while we are playing  
the candles are burning low.  
One for each night,  
they shed their sweet light,  
to remind us of days long ago.

(Hebrew)  
*Y'mei Ha Chanukah  
Chanukat mikdasheinu.  
B'gil uv'simcha  
m'malim et libeinu.*

*Laila vayom  
s'vivoneinu yisov.  
Sufganiot  
nochal bam larov.*

*Hairu hadliku  
neirot Chanukah rabim.  
Al hanissim  
v'al hanifla'ot  
asher cholalu ha Makabim.*



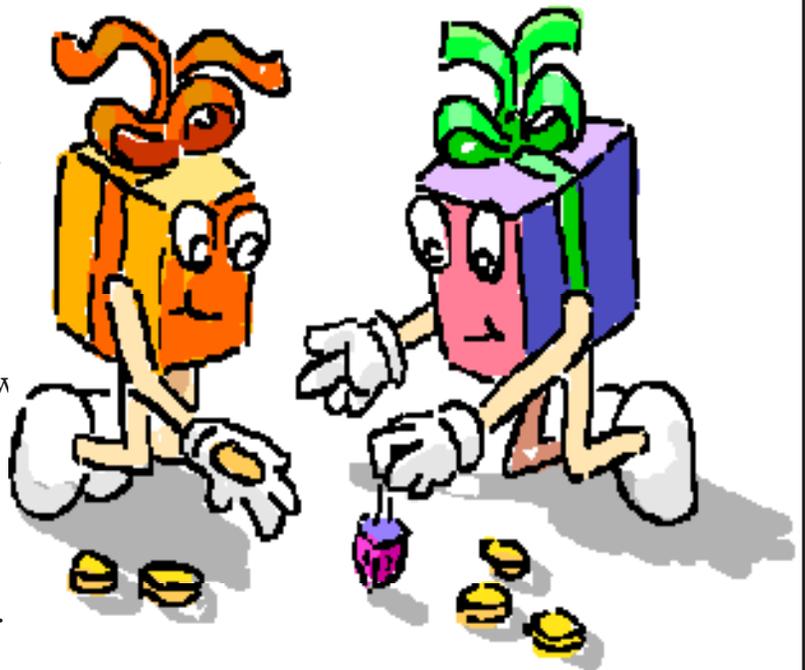
# CHANUKAH IN SONG

## Light One Candle

Peter Yarrow

Light one candle for the Maccabee children  
With thanks that their light didn't die  
Light one candle for the pain they endured  
When their right to exist was denied.  
Light one candle for the terrible sacrifice  
Justice and freedom demand  
But light one candle for the wisdom to know  
When the peacemaker's time is at hand.

Don't let the light go out!  
It's lasted for so many years  
Don't let the light go out  
Let it shine through our love and our tears.



Light one candle for the strength that we need  
To never become our own foe.  
Light one candle for those who are suffering  
The pain we learned so long ago.  
Light one candle for all we believe in  
That anger won't tear us apart.  
And light one candle to bring us together  
With peace as the song in our heart.

Don't let the light go out!  
It's lasted for so many years  
Don't let the light go out  
Let it shine through our love and our tears.

What is the memory that's valued so highly  
That we keep it alive in that flame?  
What's the commitment to those who have died  
When we cry out that they've not died in vain?  
Have we come this far always believing  
That justice would somehow prevail?  
This is the burden and this is the promise  
And this is why we will not fail.

Don't let the light go out!  
It's lasted for so many years  
Don't let the light go out  
Let it shine through our love and our tears.



# CHANUKAH IN SONG

## The Chanukah Song

**Adam Sandler**

"There's a lot of Christmas songs out there and not too many Chanukah songs.  
So I wrote a song for all those nice little Jewish kids who don't get to hear any Chanukah songs.  
Here we go..."

Put on your yarmulke  
Here comes Chanukah  
So much funukah  
To celebrate Chanukah

Chanukah is the festival of lights  
Instead of one day of presents, we have eight crazy nights  
When you feel like the only kid in town without a Christmas tree  
Here's a list of people who are Jewish just like you and me

David Lee Roth lights the menorah  
So do James Caan, Kirk Douglas, and the late Dinah Shore-ah  
Guess who eats together at the Carnegie Deli  
Bowser from Sha Na Na and Arthur Fonzerelli  
Paul Newman's half Jewish, Goldie Hawn's half too  
Put them together, what a fine lookin' Jew

You don't need "Deck The Halls" or "Jingle Bell Rock"  
'Cause you can spin a dreidel with Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock- both Jewish

Put on your yarmulke  
It's time for Chanukah  
The owner of the Seattle Supersonicahs  
Celebrates Chanukah

O.J. Simpson, not a Jew  
But guess who is? Hall of famer Rod Carew- he converted  
We got Ann Landers and her sister Dear Abby  
Harrison Ford's a quarter Jewish- not too shabby  
Some people think that Ebenezer Scrooge is  
Well he's not, but guess who is  
All three Stooges  
So many Jews are in showbiz  
Tom Cruise isn't,  
but I heard his agent is

## Chanukah in Santa Monica

**Tom Lehrer**

I'm spending Chanukah in Santa Monica,  
Wearing sandals, lighting candles by the sea,  
I spent Shavuot in East Saint Louis,  
A charming spot, but clearly not the spot for me...

Those eastern winters, I can't endure 'em  
So every year I pack my gear and come out here til Purim  
Rosh Hashona I spend in Arizona  
And Yom Kippah way down in Mississippah

But in December there's just one place for me  
Amid the California flora I'll be lighting my menorah  
Like a baby in its cradle I'll be playing with my dreidel  
Here's to Judas Maccabeus, Boy if he could only see us  
Spending Chanukah , in Santa Monica, By the Sea!

# DREIDEL

It is also an old Chanukah custom to play dreidel (sevivon in Hebrew). Though the rabbis of the Middle Ages opposed playing games of chance, they permitted them during the long nights of Chanukah. The dreidel is a top with a different Hebrew letter inscribed on each of its four sides—nun, gimel, heh, shin. They form an acronym for the phrase Neis gadol hayah sham—"A great miracle happened there." (In Israel the letter shin is replaced by a peh for the word poh—"A great miracle happened here.")

Each player is given a stake for playing the game (eg. coins, walnuts, etc.) To begin the game, each player puts one coin in the "pot" (if only a few people are playing, you may want to put in two). Then the players take turns spinning the dreidel and following its instructions: The letter nun means neither win or lose; gimel means you take the whole pot; heh means you take half the pot (rounding to the highest number in case of fractions); shin means you put one coin in the pot.

It is also fun to try spinning the dreidel upside down, or to see how many you can keep spinning at one time. Another dreidel game is to try to knock down other spinning dreidels.

## Dreidel Don McLean

I feel like a spinnin' top or a dreidel  
The spinnin' don't stop when you leave the cradle  
You just slow down  
'Round and around this world you go  
Spinnin' through the lives of the people you know  
We all slow down  
How you gonna keep on turnin' from day to day?  
How you gonna keep from turnin' your life away?  
No days you can borrow, no time you can buy,  
No trust in tomorrow, it's a lie

And I feel like I'm a dippin' and a divin'  
My sky shoes are spiked with lead heels  
I'm lost in this star-car I'm a drivin'  
But my air soul keeps pushin' big wheels  
My world is a constant confusion  
My mind is prepared to attack  
My past, a persuasive illusion  
I'm watchin' the future it's black

What do you know? You know just what you perceive  
What can you show? Nothing of what you believe  
And as you grow, each thread of life that you leave  
Will spin around your deeds and dictate your needs  
As you sell your soul and you sow your seeds  
And you wound yourself and your loved one bleeds  
And your habits grow and your conscience feeds  
On all that you thought you should be  
I never thought this could happen to me...



# CHANUKAH THROUGHOUT THE AGES AND COMMUNITIES

## Eastern Europe

Prohibitions against gambling were relaxed for dreidel, chess, checkers, dominoes, and card games like kvitlakh, played with a set of thirty-one numbered and artfully decorated cards representing the kings the Israelites fought on their entrance to Canaan.

## Yemen

Children received coins every day of Chanukah, with which they bought small bags of sugar with a pinch of red coloring, used to make a Chanukah mock wine.

## Iraq

Parents had the custom, on the last night, of roasting nuts and seeds on a large tray for the children, who grabbed handfuls to eat and to take to school the next day.

## Tunisia

Rosh Chodesh Tevet was called 'New Moon of the Daughters,' when parents gave gifts to their girls and grooms gave to their brides. A bride's father then hosted a feast for friends and relatives of both families.

## Turkey

Leaders visited the affluent to collect money for the poor, distributing latkes from the platters they carried to each contributor.

## Venice

Jewish families rode through the canals in their gondolas, serenading at every home that had a menorah in the window or doorway.

## Bukhara

They baked coins into cakes for their needy relatives and teachers.

## Persia

Children of the poor went door to door for contributions. In return for a gift, they burned a piece of grass to ward off the 'evil eve.'

## Israel

Members of the Maccabi sports movement gather at the ancient Maccabee catacombs in Modin, the starting point for a reenactment of their triumphant march into Jerusalem. Torches are lit from a bonfire to begin the Freedom Torch Relay. Runners pass their torches on to successors at predetermined positions, who carry them to towns and cities throughout the country. On reaching Jerusalem, the torch is used to kindle a menorah at the president's residence during a public ceremony and is then carried to Mount Zion, where another is lit in memory of Holocaust victims.

## Syria

Aleppo's Jews wandered for months following their expulsion from Spain in 1492 before being allowed to settle in Syria during the Chanukah season of that year. They lit an extra candle for finding a country willing to accept them and began the custom of having two shammashim.

## Spain

The Sabbath that fell during the Chanukah was called Khalbasha, clothing the poor. Garments for the needy were brought to the synagogue and distributed towards the end of the holiday.



# What Really Happened: A Chronological Table

(From The Anchor Bible, II Maccabees, by Jonathan Goldstein)

**175** Seleucus IV dies or is murdered. Antiochus IV, brother of Seleucus IV, seizes power over Seleucid empire.

**Late 175 or 174** In an effort to strengthen the Seleucid empire by copying institutions and ideas he had learned at Rome, Antiochus proclaims an Antiochene republic, similar to the Roman republic, and invites individuals and communities subject to him to accept Antiochene citizenship.

Jason, brother of Onias III, purchases the favor of Antiochus by offering him increased revenue and by bidding high for the privilege of being the founder of the Antiochene community at Jerusalem. Antiochus appoints Jason high priest in place of Onias and allows Jason to found an Antiochene citizen community at Jerusalem with gymnasium and similar institutions.

**172** Menelaus offers Antiochus IV still more revenue and thus wins appointment as high priest in place of Jason. Jason takes refuge in Ammanitis.

Unable to produce the promised revenue, Menelaus in his trouble uses temple vessels to bribe a royal minister, Andronikos, while Antiochus IV is away from the capital.

**170** Depredations of temple property by Menelaus and his brother Lysimachus rouse the wrath of pious Jews. A riot ensues. Members of the Jewish Council of Elders press charges against Menelaus, but again by bribing a royal official Menelaus escapes punishment.

Antiochus IV repels Ptolemaic aggression, invades Egypt, and overruns all but Alexandria.

**169** Jason and his followers, upon a false rumor of Antiochus' death, try to capture Jerusalem. Pious Jews rise against both Jason and Menelaus. Antiochus regards all but Menelaus' faction as rebels, punishes the city, plunders the temple, and attempts to reestablish order, confirming Menelaus in power over the Jews.

**Summer 168** Antiochus IV, almost successful in his second attempt to conquer Egypt, withdraws completely from the Ptolemaic empire upon receiving a Roman ultimatum.

**Early 167** Antiochus IV, in response to complaints of Antiochenes of Jerusalem, sends a punitive expedition

under Apollonius the Mysarch. Pious Jews of Jerusalem are massacred. Privileges of Jerusalem and Judea are revoked and punitive taxes imposed. Troops fortify and help man Akra (the citadel) north of the temple to preserve order and protect the Antiochenes.

**Nisan/April 167** Antiochus IV decrees that on penalty of death the turbulent Jews, including all those in Judea, must cease observing the Torah and follow an imposed polytheistic cult, said to be a "purified Judaism," free of the tendencies which had turned the Jews into "rebels."

Enforcement of the decrees is at first probably sporadic. Some Jews obey the king, officials begin to persecute pious Jews.

**15 Kislev** Antiochus IV takes drastic measures to enforce the imposed cult. "Abomination of Desolation," is placed upon the sacrificial altar of the temple.

**25 Kislev 167** An Athenian expert helps direct the practices of the imposed cult. The practices in the temple include monthly sacrifices on the twenty-fifth and violation of the laws of ritual purity. Force is exerted throughout Jerusalem and Judea to compel Jews to violate the Torah.

**Late 167 or 166** Mattathias' and his family, the Hasmoneans attract followers and wage guerrilla warfare against the royal government and against Jews who violated the Torah. Some Pietist Jews believing that God forbade them to flee or defend themselves on the Sabbath are massacred by royal troops. Mattathias decided that God must have intended to permit Jews to defend themselves on the Sabbath. Many Pietists agree and join forces with the Hasmonean party.

**166 to 165** Mattathias dies. Judah takes command. Judah's force defeats expeditions of Apollonius and Seron. Philip, royal commander at Jerusalem appeals to Antioch for help.

**Early 165** Antiochus IV marches off with half the royal army to tax and loot the eastern regions claimed by the Seleucids. He appoints his little son Antiochus coregent king over the western part of the empire, with Lysias as his guardian.

The governor of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia, Ptolemy son of Dorymenes, responds to Philip's appeal

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by sending a force under Nicanor and Gorgias. From their base at Ammaus, Nicanor and Gorgias fail to crush Judah's band and instead are routed by them.

**Early 164** Lysias himself undertakes to stop the Jewish rebels. He approaches Judea from the south and fights a bloody battle with Judah's army at Beth-Zur. Non-Hasmonean pious Jews try to negotiate with Lysias in Judea for an end to the persecution. Menelaus similarly appeals to the royal government at Antioch.

Roman ambassadors offer to support the Jewish case before the coregent king, at Antioch.

**164** Jews build and prepare a new sacrificial altar and temple vessels.

**Late 164** Jewish priests resume sacrifice of meal offerings in the temple, upon the new altar.

**25 Kislev 164** Judah prolongs the doubtful date of Sukkot for a celebration of the dedication of the new sacrificial altar, new menorah, incense altar, and table. The dedication occurs on 25 Kislev, with the celebration continuing for eight days. The Jews decide to make the eight-day celebration an annual observance, the holiday will be called Chanukah.

**Early 163** News of Antiochus IV's death reaches Antioch.

Lysias becomes chief power in the regime of little Antiochus V. Philip, Antiochus IV's choice to replace Lysias, fails to win control and flees to Ptolemaic Egypt.

Jews at Jerusalem, 1,150 days after the desecration of 25 Kislev, 167, receive a copy of a letter from Antiochus V announcing the death of Antiochus IV and restoring the temple to the Jews.

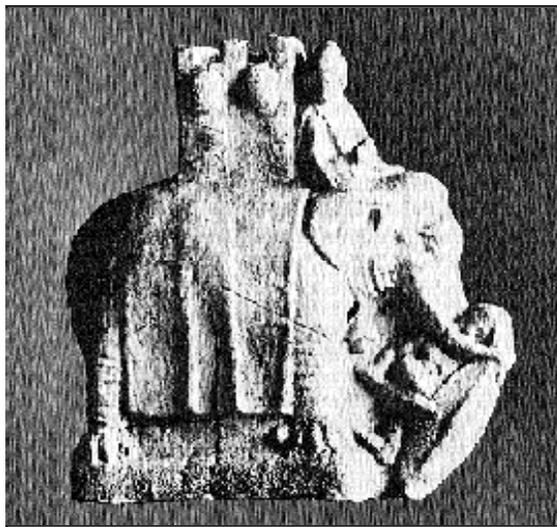
**Spring of 163** Judah assembles a Jewish army and besieges the Akra.

**June 163** Antiochus V and Lysias march on Judea and besiege Beth-Zur. Judah lifts the siege of the Akra

to relieve Beth-Zur, but at the battle of Beth-Zechariah the Jews are defeated and Judah's brother Eleazar is killed. Jewish forces are besieged in the temple. The Hasmoneans probably hid in the mountains.

**Summer 163** The Seleucid besiegers allow the Jews in Beth-Zur to make peace and withdraw. Beth-Zur is garrisoned by Seleucid troops.

**Late 163** Antiochus V deposes Menelaus from the high priesthood and sends him to Syria for execution.



One of Antiochus V's elephants grapples with a soldier. The Seleucids had been forbidden by Rome to use elephants in war, but disregarded the agreement in their efforts to subdue the rebellious Jews. Judah's younger brother, Eleazar, was crushed to death by an elephant in the battle of Beth-zechariah.

**162** Antiochus V appoints the pious Alcimus as the new high priest, thus winning some pious Jews away from the rebellion. The neglected Oniad heir to the high priesthood then or soon after leaves Judea for Ptolemaic Egypt.

Lysias and Antiochus V withdraw with their army from Jerusalem in order to crush the rebel regime of the minister Philip at Antioch. Antiochus V makes full peace with the Jews.

**Late 162** Demetrius, son of Seleucus IV, escapes from Rome where he had been serving as a hostage, lands at Tripolis and claims to be king. The troops at Antioch rally to Demetrius and kill Lysias and Antiochus V.

Demetrius I confirms Alcimus as high priest and sends Bacchides with an army to Judea to stop the fighting among the Jews. The Hasmonean party refuses to deal with Bacchides.

Judah leads opposition in countryside of Judea to Alcimus' regime. Alcimus appeals to Demetrius I for additional help. Demetrius sends an army under Nicanor, with an order to capture Judah. Frustrated by non-cooperation by pious Jews, Nicanor threatens to destroy the temple after defeating Judah.

**Early 161** Judah's army routs Nicanor's force in the battle of Adasa. Villagers of Judea join in destroying the fugitives. Nicanor is slain.

# What Really Happened: A Chronological Table

(From The Anchor Bible, II Maccabees, by Jonathan Goldstein)

**161** The Jews, with the agreement of the Hasmonean party, send an embassy to Rome which succeeds in establishing friendly relations, making a treaty of alliance. Rome warns Demetrius I not to oppress the Jews.

**160** Demetrius I sends a punitive expedition under Bacchides against the Jewish rebels. The troops massacre Jews at Messaloth in Galilee. Bacchides defeats the Hasmonean force at Elasa. Judah dies in battle. The surviving Hasmoneans probably agree to cease resisting in return for the rights to take up and bury the dead and to go home in peace.

**152-142** Jonathan, Judah's brother, is made high priest of the Jews.

**142-134** Simon, another brother of Judah, is high priest of the Jews.

**134-103** John Hyrcanus, Simon's son, reigns as prince and high priest of the Jews.

**103 -76** Alexander Janneus, John's son, reigns as high priest and king of the Jews. I Maccabees is written and published as propaganda to justify the dynastic claims of Alexander Janneus.

## THE HASMONEAN DYNASTY



Priests, kings and queens are in bold with dates of reigns.