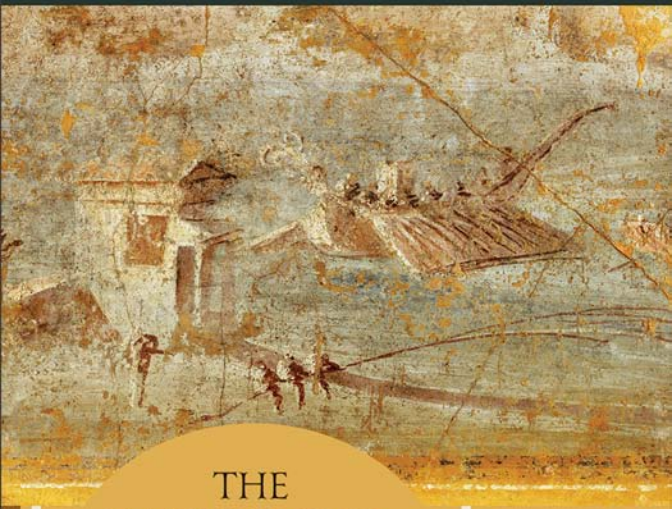

THE WORLD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts

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4

The Hasmoneans and the Hasmonean Era

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From 167 BC until 36 BC, the remarkable family known as the Hasmoneans led an armed struggle for religious and political independence and then exercised national leadership. In the process, they transformed Jewish life and culture, etching an indelible impression that persists to this day. As major players in the larger arena of Middle Eastern politics, they had influence that extended far beyond the traditional boundaries of ancient Israel.

Sources

Two problems hinder the study of this era. First, the primary sources are skewed because the anonymous authors of 1–2 Maccabees and Flavius Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* and *Jewish War*) narrate the story from the perspective of the leading figures. Lacking are accounts describing daily life among the common people, who appear only as background props. This article mentions some of the available archaeological evidence that illuminates more mundane aspects of Jewish life during the Hasmonean era.

Second, the authors were not unbiased. The author of 1 Maccabees was an ardent supporter of the Hasmoneans, whereas the author of 2 Maccabees admired

only Judas Maccabeus, not his successors. Furthermore, both books mention Jews who were unenthusiastic or even hostile to the nationalistic agenda of the Hasmoneans, and many Jews joined their cause only when religious rights were at stake. The Hasmoneans were as much at war against Hellenizing Jews, who advocated assimilation and supported the Seleucid agenda to turn Judea into a Greek temple state, as against the Seleucids.

Although Josephus does not conceal the flaws of the later Hasmonean priest-kings, his account generally reflects pride in their achievements. A close reading of his works, however, also reveals dissenting voices that scarcely get a hearing. Consequently, one must read all four primary sources with discernment. Despite these caveats, they remain indispensable and tell us much about the era (Hayes and Mandell, *Jewish People*, 60–62; Tomasino, *Judaism before Jesus*, 137–40).

History of the Hasmoneans

Josephus traces Mattathias's genealogy back three generations to a priestly family belonging to the course of Joarib and descending from a man named Asamon or Hashmon, a resident of Jerusalem (*Ant*. 12.265; cf. 1 Chron. 24:7)—although it is possible that the name is toponymic (a place name), not patronymic (a family name). Mattathias had five sons: John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar, and Jonathan. The third son, Judas, was given the nickname "Maccabeus," meaning something like "the hammer" or "mallet head," a fitting epithet for a man who delivered violent blows against Hellenizing Jews and the Seleucid dynasty. This essay focuses on the Hasmonean family, often called the Maccabees, and their descendents to the sixth generation.

Revolt and Rise to Power

According to 1 Maccabees, when the family burst on the national scene, the aged priest Mattathias was living in Modein (also spelled Modiin/Modin; modern Ras Medieh), a Jewish settlement located about seventeen miles northwest of Jerusalem (1 Macc. 2:1). The occasion was a religious persecution unleashed by the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (ruled from 175 BC to 164 BC). After being forced to withdraw from Egypt under threat of war with Rome (Polybius, *Hist*. 29.27; cf. Dan. 11:18, 19) and receiving reports of armed revolt in Jerusalem (2 Macc. 5:11), Antiochus wreaked havoc on the city and launched an unprecedented anti-Judaism campaign. Besides his pique at the constant upheaval in Jerusalem over the high-priestly succession and joy over rumors that he was dead (2 Macc. 5:5–6), Antiochus was worried about Roman expansionism. Since many Jews were still fiercely devoted to their ancestral faith, which forbade the worship of other gods and observed strict ritual purity laws, restricting interaction with gentiles, this presented a problem. At the critical land bridge of his empire lay a Jewish enclave not fully espousing the Seleucid

dynasty's ideological and religious ethos. Antiochus decreed that the Jews of Judea cease practicing their religion and become fully cooperating, Hellenistic citizens of the Seleucid Empire.

To this end, Antiochus unleashed draconian measures to ensure this "conversion." The author of 1 Maccabees provides a capsule summary of this "first known religious persecution in history" (Aharoni et al., *Atlas*, 142):

> Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, and that all should give up their particular customs. All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the sabbath. . . . [They were] to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, so that they would forget the law and change all the ordinances. He added, "And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die." (1 Macc. 1:41–43, 48–50)

In this hour of crisis, Mattathias, like Phinehas of old (Num. 25:6–13), stood up to defend the Torah of Moses. The specific occasion was an official delegation from the king that arrived at the village of Modein to enforce the new edict (167 BC). Citizens were called on to demonstrate their new loyalty by offering a pagan sacrifice. Mattathias and his sons, being foremost citizens, were invited to lead the way, but Mattathias steadfastly refused, and when another Jew came forward to do so, Mattathias killed both him and the king's delegate and tore down the altar (1 Macc. 2:15–26). He then issued a summons: "Let every one who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me!" (1 Macc. 2:27). This act of rebellion was the opening round of a prolonged struggle, first for religious freedom, then national liberation; twenty-five years later (142 BC), this struggle eventuated in an independent state, headed by Mattathias's second son, Simon.

Judas Maccabeus (167–161 BC)

The Hasmonean brothers fled to caves in a wilderness area called the Gophna Hills, which became a haven for similar-minded Jews. These refugees, especially a group called the Hasideans ("the pious ones"), swelled the ranks and gradually evolved from a guerrilla force into a formidable militia (1 Macc. 2:42–43). Initially, they punished apostate Jews, striking fear into the hearts of would-be defectors. Sons were forcibly circumcised, pagan altars torn down, and Torah scrolls rescued (1 Macc. 2:44–48; 2 Macc. 8:5–7).

The resistance movement inevitably led to armed conflict with the Seleucid regime. After Mattathias's death, Judas assumed command of the insurgents. Against superior numbers and weaponry, Judas, relying on stealth, courage, and intimate knowledge of the terrain, scored four stunning victories over the Seleucid forces (1 Macc. 3–4; Aharoni et al., *Atlas*, 142–43; Rainey and Notley, *Sacred*

Bridge, 308–11). This momentarily allowed Judas to reoccupy Jerusalem and take control of the temple mount—with the exception of the Akra, a Seleucid fortress overlooking the temple area. In the midst of great rejoicing, Judas cleansed and rededicated the temple and reinstituted proper worship. On the twenty-fifth day of Chislev (November–December) in 164 BC, a great celebration—henceforth called Hanukkah, meaning "dedication" (cf. John 10:22)—was instituted: "At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, it was dedicated with songs and harps and lutes and cymbals" (1 Macc. 4:54; cf. Dan. 7:25). Josephus even says that Judas functioned as the high priest during this time, although he omits Judas's name from a list of high priests (cf. *Ant*. 12.414, 434; 20.224–51).[1]

Judas soon realized that religious liberty under the Seleucids would be insufficient to ensure the continued viability of the Jewish people in their ancestral homeland, given the intense hostility of their gentile neighbors. Forced to rescue Jewish communities threatened with annihilation in Hebron, Gilead, Galilee, and the coastal plain, Judas transitioned to a struggle for political independence (1 Macc. 5:3–13, 24–56). A key diplomatic move illustrating this new agenda was the forging of an alliance and mutual defense pact with Rome (1 Macc. 8). This doubtless sent shock waves through the Seleucid regime and foreshadowed the decisive role that Rome would eventually play in this part of the world. Ironically, what began as a courtship dance ended as a dance of death in the two revolts against Rome (AD 66–73, 132–135).

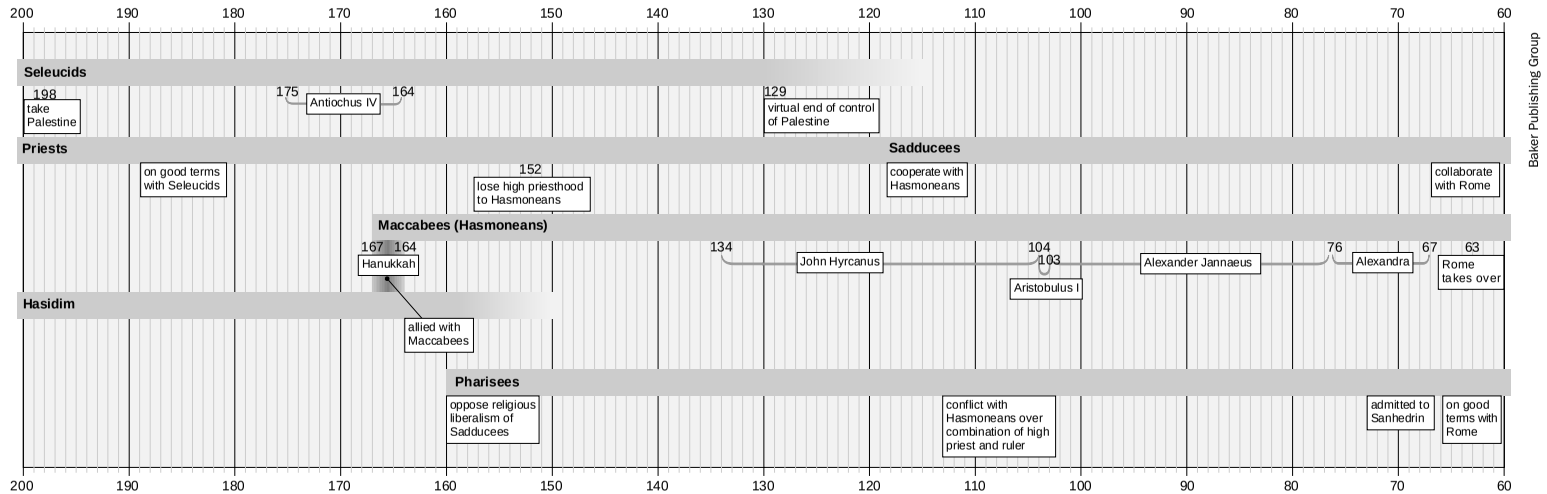
Wearied with lack of success in taking the temple mount and threatened by a rival claimant to the throne, Antiochus V, successor of Antiochus IV, opted for negotiations: "Let us agree to let them live by their laws as they did before; for it was on account of their laws that we abolished that they became angry and did all these things" (1 Macc. 6:59). Thus ended the first phase of the war of liberation.

Hostilities continued, however, and abandoned by many former supporters—many of the Hasideans appear to have been content with achieving religious freedom—Judas fell in battle at Elasa (1 Macc. 9:5–18). He was buried in the ancestral tomb at Modein (1 Macc. 9:19) and lionized in a stirring tribute by the author of 1 Maccabees (1 Macc. 9:20–22; cf. 13:25–30).

Jonathan (High Priest from 152 to 143 BC)

Jonathan succeeded Judas as leader of the insurgents and carried on the protracted struggle. Though clearly a formidable military leader, Jonathan achieved more to secure political independence through skillful diplomacy. After inflicting a decisive defeat on the Seleucid regent Bacchides and forcing him to return home (1 Macc. 9:62–69), Jonathan quickly sued for peace, and Bacchides accepted (1 Macc. 9:70–73). This left Jonathan in virtual control of Judea.

1. See Hayes and Mandell, *Jewish People*, 76–78; James C. VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas: High Priests after the Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 241–44.



4.1. Time line of Seleucid and Hasmonean rule in Palestine.

In 153/52 BC Alexander Balas, who claimed to be the son of Antiochus IV, occupied Ptolemais and prepared to overthrow the incumbent, Demetrius I. A bidding war for Jonathan's services as an ally and friend resulted, ironically, in Jonathan's appointment as general and governor of Judea, and high priest of the Jerusalem temple. He was also able to extract a number of significant concessions, tax exemptions, and territorial acquisitions. An army was recruited and equipped, and captives were released from the Akra. The freedom fighters of the early days morphed into the strongest military force in Israel (Aharoni et al., *Atlas*, 150).

The struggle, however, was far from over. Fearing the growing power of Jonathan, Demetrius II twice sought to rein in this upstart, but both campaigns resulted in resounding victories for Jonathan. Another claimant to the Seleucid throne, however, was able to take him down, not by force of arms, but by treachery. Tryphon brought a large force to attack the Jews, and the two armies faced off at Beth-shean. Realizing he could not defeat Jonathan militarily, Tryphon held out a carrot, promising to turn over the important seaport of Ptolemais to Jewish control. He induced Jonathan to leave behind most of his army and accompany him to Ptolemais with only a thousand troops. The people of Ptolemais, in league with Tryphon, closed the city gates behind Jonathan and took him prisoner. Unable to defeat the Jewish forces now under Simon's command, Tryphon returned to Syria, but not before executing Jonathan (1 Macc. 12:39–13:24). Simon recovered the body and reburied it with great honors at the family tomb in Modein, which he adorned by a monument and seven pyramids (1 Macc. 13:25–30).

Simon (High Priest from 143 to 135 BC)

After Jonathan's death, Simon assumed the mantle of leadership. A landmark achievement was the declaration by Demetrius II that the Hasmonean state was released from paying tribute, all previous land grants remained valid, and the crown tax was cancelled (1 Macc. 13:35–42). At long last, "the yoke of the Gentiles was removed from Israel" (1 Macc. 13:41). The Jewish people acclaimed Simon "the great high priest and commander and leader of the Jews" (1 Macc. 13:42). The date was 142 BC, which marked a watershed in Jewish history. Documents were dated in reference to this event, and coins were struck to commemorate it.

All in all, it was a stunning achievement for a guerilla movement that began in the Gophna Hills fifteen years earlier. A final reminder of Hellenistic interference in the internal affairs of Judea was erased in 141 BC when, after a long siege, the hated Akra surrendered and the fortress was razed. Simon also commenced the construction of massive city walls circling the entire perimeter of Mount Zion (the western hill) and strengthened the walls around the ancient city of David. The temple mount itself was extended to the south and protected by a fortress. In 140 BC, in a public assembly and on bronze tablets, Simon's supporters declared his appointment as high priest to be "forever, until a trustworthy prophet should

Hasmonean High Priests and Qumran

The Hasmonean rejection of dyarchy (government shared by two rulers, in this case, political and religious; cf. Hag. 1:1; Zech. 4:3) elicited strong resistance in some circles. It is widely held that the antipathy stemmed from the fact that the Hasmoneans were not Zadokites, a priestly family from the days of David and Solomon claiming exclusive right to the high priesthood (T. H. Lim, *EDSS* 2:973–75 [974–75]). Other scholars, however, think it likely that the Hasmoneans were Zadokites[a] and that the opposition was prompted by resentment of rival priestly families over exclusive national and religious leadership.

Many scholars see in the Hasideans the precusors of the Essenes and Pharisees (e.g., Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1:175–218). The Essenes rejected the temple cult and established their own communities throughout the country. At some point, a charismatic leader, called "the Teacher of Righteousness," himself a high priest, claimed to be the recipient of divine guidance in matters of correctly interpreting the pentateuchal laws. His followers withdrew to the site of Qumran and bound themselves to his particular halakah (interpretation and application of Torah) as the touchstone of what it means to be the true Israel (M. A. Knibb, *EDSS* 2:918–21).

Six passages from the sectarian literature of Qumran contain tantalizing references to a "Wicked Priest" who persecuted and pursued the "Teacher of Righteousness" (1QpHab 8.8–13; 8.16–9.2; 9.9–12; 11.4–8; 11.12–15; 12.2–10; 4QpPs[a] [4Q171] 4.7–12). Many scholars believe the Wicked Priest is either Jonathan or Simon (the so-called standard view).[b] The celebrated 4QMMT (4Q394–399) mentions twenty ritual purity issues in dispute between two parties, probably the Jerusalem priesthood and the Qumran community. This document may be earlier than the Habakkuk commentary since it is less combative in tone. The suggestion is that over time the disagreements intensified and resulted in mutual excommunication (L. H. Schiffman, *EDSS* 1:558–60; but see M. G. Abegg Jr., *DNTB* 709–11).

Other scholars believe that the evidence, especially 4QpNah (4Q169), better supports the view that the Wicked Priest was John Hyrcanus II (who sided with the Pharisees under the influence of his queen mother, Alexandra) and that the Qumran community actually applauded the crucifixion of some eight hundred Pharisees by the Hasmonean priest-king Alexander Jannaeus (Jonathan).[c] Still others hold that the Wicked Priest is an appellation for successive high priests (S. B. Tzoref, *EDEJ* 1050–55 [1053]). The identity of the Wicked Priest and the Teacher of Righteousness remains a contentious issue.

[a] James C. VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas: High Priests after the Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 270n90.

[b] See, e.g., James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 130–32; Rajak, "Hasmonean Dynasty," 73–75.

[c] See Michael Wise et al., *Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 26–34.

arise" (1 Macc. 14:25–49; quote from v. 41). Like his brothers, however, Simon met a violent death (134 BC), when his ambitious son-in-law assassinated him in a vain attempt to seize power (1 Macc. 16:11–24).

The Dynasty of Hasmonean Priest-Kings

Simon's son John Hyrcanus, having assumed power as high priest and ruler, finally brought the decades-long struggle for political independence to an end.

John Hyrcanus I (135–104 BC)

The era of the third generation, under John Hyrcanus I, did not begin auspiciously, nor was it a time of peace. Difficulties with the Seleucid Empire continued, and Antiochus VII, still smarting from his failure to seize control of Judea in the days of Simon and deeming it essential to reclaim the important land bridge of Israel, invaded the coastal area, taking Joppa and Gazara (Gezer). He then proceeded to besiege Jerusalem for more than a year. In these dire circumstances, Hyrcanus was nonetheless able to negotiate a settlement with Antiochus VII, though the terms were grievous. Heavy indemnity and tribute was levied, arms were surrendered, the walls of Jerusalem were razed, and hostages—including Hyrcanus's son—were handed over (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.236–48). The successes of Jonathan and Simon were seemingly undone in one blow.

Hyrcanus's fortunes, however, quickly took a dramatic turn for the better. Antiochus VII was killed in battle against the Parthians in 129 BC, and Demetrius II was released and sought to reestablish his control over the Syrian Empire. The ensuing power struggle left Hyrcanus with a free hand in Judea, and he quickly reasserted Jewish sovereignty. Of special importance was the renewal of an alliance and mutual defense pact with the Romans. Syria was warned not to interfere in the internal affairs of Judea; consequently, Hyrcanus stopped all tribute payments. The final victory over the Seleucids was at last achieved (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.259–66).

Hyrcanus then engaged in a series of military campaigns aimed at territorial expansion. He first conquered areas in the Transjordan, wresting these away from the Nabateans and thereby gaining control of the important King's Highway linking Damascus with the Gulf of Elath (or Aqaba). He then turned his attention to Samaria, which had long separated Judea from the northern Jewish settlements in lower Galilee. Shechem and the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim were destroyed in 128 BC (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.254–56), as confirmed by archaeological excavations (I. Magen, *NEAEHL* 2:484–87). In the south, Adora and Marisa were conquered, and the Idumeans were given an ultimatum: either convert to Judaism (involving circumcision) or face expulsion. They chose the former, which in effect provided a buffer zone on the southern frontier (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.257–58).

The sweeping changes brought about by Hyrcanus's conquests were reflected in a first: coins minted in his name. Hyrcanus's thirty-year reign was the longest of the Hasmonean dynasty.

Aristobulus I (104–103 BC)

The fourth generation of Hasmonean rule began ominously. Aristobulus I, not content with being merely high priest, sought to be a Hellenistic monarch. Accordingly, he assumed the title of king and a diadem, the first Hasmonean leader to do so. In the process, however, he starved his mother to death in prison and treacherously executed his brother. His primary accomplishment was annexing and Judaizing the region of Iturea, located between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountains (Josephus, *Ant*. 13.301–19). Few lamented his premature death after a reign of one year, and "in many respects . . . his life resembled a Greek tragedy" (Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 329).

Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 BC)

During the reign of Alexander Jannaeus (also called Jonathan), the policy of territorial expansion reached its zenith, equaling the territory once ruled by David and Solomon. However, internecine conflict between religious and political parties intensified, sowing the seeds of self-destruction. Jannaeus, like Aristobulus, executed one of his brothers, whom he feared as a rival (Josephus, *Ant*. 13.323; *J.W*. 1.85). This was a harbinger of unprecedented bloodshed to follow.

Jannaeus annexed more territory in Galilee and Transjordan and occupied the entire coastline from Carmel to Rhinocorura (Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 331–32). Shrewd diplomacy, especially his dealings with Cleopatra III of Egypt and her estranged son Ptolemy Lathyrus, played a key role in his successes.

Jannaeus's later years were marked by civil war. He aligned himself with the Sadducees against the Pharisees, and in a "day of infamy," he crucified eight hundred of his Pharisaic opponents and executed their wives and children before their eyes (Josephus, *J.W*. 1.97; *Ant*. 13.380). This inhumane treatment is almost certainly referred to in the Qumran document 4Q169 frgs. 3–4 1.2–8. Many Jews detested Jannaeus.

Alexandra the Queen and Hyrcanus II the High Priest (76–67 BC)

Queen Shelamzion Alexandra succeeded her husband, Alexander Jannaeus, and became sole monarch (Ilan, *Silencing the Queen*, 50–58). Probably the influence of Ptolemaic Egypt, in which there were several queens, prompted this deviation. Alexandra's primary contribution was twofold: a period of relative peace with neighboring powers and a strategic switch of allegiance to the party of the Pharisees, in keeping with her husband's deathbed counsel. This apparently was more in tune with the sympathies of the majority. She had two sons: the firstborn, Hyrcanus II, whom she appointed high priest and regent, and Aristobulus II (Josephus, *Ant*. 13.405–32).

War between Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II (67–64 BC)

In the fifth generation, deadly animosity once again arose between two brothers, setting the stage for the demise of the dynasty. The ambitious Aristobulus II wrested control from Hyrcanus II. The coup, however, did not go uncontested. Into the picture emerged another powerful family, of Idumean descent, that dramatically altered the course of Jewish history: the family of Antipater, father of Herod the Great. Antipater urged Hyrcanus to regain control from Aristobulus and enlisted the support of the Nabatean king Aretas.

Aristobulus was besieged in Jerusalem. At this point, Rome intervened and called a halt to the siege. In the stalemate that followed, both claimants made a beeline to Pompey, the Roman proconsul in Syria, to argue their case. A Jewish delegation also appeared before Pompey and emphatically rejected both contenders (Josephus, *Ant*. 14.41). After disobeying Pompey's direct order to stay put and wait for his decision, Aristobulus fled to Jerusalem. When his supporters refused to yield and fortified themselves on the temple mount, Pompey constructed a siege wall around it and, after a three-month siege, crushed all resistance (63 BC). He reinstated Hyrcanus as high priest and ethnarch, and he sent Aristobulus to Rome as a prisoner (Josephus, *Ant*. 14.57–79). In the ensuing power struggle between Julius Caesar and Pompey, Caesar dispatched Aristobulus to fight against Pompey, but Pompey's partisans poisoned Aristobulus before he arrived on the scene. In the meantime, Antipater served as the real power behind the throne, having installed his sons, Phasaelis and Herod, as governors in the land. Hasmonean hegemony existed in name only.

Mattathias Antigonus (40–37 BC)

Unexpectedly, one last Hasmonean prince, from the sixth generation, momentarily seized power. The powerful Parthian Kingdom (Iran) invaded and placed Mattathias Antigonus, son of Aristobulus II, on the throne. Coins were minted on which he appears as both high priest and king. Hyrcanus II's ear was cut off, rendering him unfit to serve as high priest. Antigonus's reign was short lived, however, because Antipater's son Herod managed by heroic measures to escape to Rome and plead his case. The Roman Senate conferred upon Herod the title of king and provided assistance (40 BC). For three years he fought a brutal war to subdue his new realm, at the end of which he took Jerusalem. Antigonus was captured alive and taken to Antioch, where he was beheaded. As for Hyrcanus II, Herod eventually sentenced and executed him in order to eliminate any possible uprising on his behalf (30 BC). The Hasmonean dynasty was over.

Hasmoneans during the Herodian Dynasty

Several Hasmoneans of the sixth through the eighth generations played unhappy roles in the drama of Herod's reign. Mariamme, whom Herod passionately loved,

fell victim to his insane jealousy and was executed (29 BC). Mariamme's mother, Alexandra, was also executed by Herod (28 BC). Herod had already dispatched Aristobulus III, the seventeen-year-old brother of Mariamme, who was greatly admired by the populace in his role as high priest, in a "drowning accident" at Jericho (35 BC). After a drawn-out affair, Herod's two sons by Mariamme—Alexander and Aristobulus—were finally sentenced and strangled at Sebaste (Samaria)—ironically, where Herod had married her. In short, Herod eliminated all possible rivals belonging to the Hasmonean family.

Hasmonean Descendents in the New Testament: Ninth and Tenth Generations

Mariamme's son Aristobulus fathered three children, two of whom, along with a grandson and granddaughter, appear in the NT:

1. Herod Agrippa I was appointed king of the Jews from AD 37 to 44. He persecuted the early church, arrested Peter, and died at Caesarea (Acts 12; Josephus, *Ant*. 19.343–52). His son Herod Agrippa II was king of the Jews from AD 50 to 100 and listened to Paul's defense at Caesarea (Acts 25–26).
2. Herodias was the wife of Herod Antipas, tetrarch over Galilee (4 BC–AD 39; Luke 3:1). Her daughter, called Salome by Josephus (*Ant*. 18.136), and whose dancing captivated Antipas, requested the head of John the Baptist on a platter (Matt. 14:1–12; Mark 6:17–29).

Achievements of the Hasmoneans

The Hasmonean dynasty pulled the Jewish state into the orbit of Hellenism. At the same time, it preserved Jewish ideas and values that persist to this day.

Hellenization of the Heartland

The Hasmoneans, who initially resisted the inroads of Hellenism in the heartland of Israel, actually contributed to its acceleration and influence. The founding of Hellenistic cities along the Palestinian coast had already begun before the conquests of Alexander the Great (332 BC). Shortly before the Hasmonean revolt, Jason and Menelaus, rival claimants to the high priesthood, championed the adoption of a Greek way of life and enthusiastically sponsored the building of a gymnasium in the shadow of the Jerusalem temple. Athletic contests in the Greek tradition were eagerly attended and participated in by Jewish young men, some of whom even sought to hide evidence of their circumcision by an operation called *epispasm*.

By the time of Simon, Hellenistic influence was clearly present, not least in architecture and city planning. Cities were laid out in the Greek hippodamic style (a grid pattern), and grand walls and towers of hewn masonry replaced earlier mud-brick construction. Besides fortresses and palaces, even rural farmsteads

began appearing in a style similar to Hellenistic sites in Asia Minor. Although archaeological evidence for imported ware and glass is meager until the Herodian era, Hasmonean sites (such as et-Tell [Bethsaida]) provide some good examples. Clearly, the Hasmoneans ushered in an era of economic growth and a rise in the standard of living. The capture and resettling of the seaport town of Joppa opened a gateway to the sea lanes of the Mediterranean with its far-flung commercial markets. Indeed, Simon's "capture of the city was celebrated as the crown of all his honors" (F. E. Udoh, *EDEJ* 557–61 [559]; cf. 1 Macc. 14:5). Jürgen Zangenberg (*EDEJ* 201–35 [206]) captures the transformation:

> Hasmonean restoration did not mean the end of Hellenization. It was during the Hasmonean period that Judaism developed a distinct variant of eastern Hellenistic material culture. Hellenism became indigenous to Jewish Palestine, embedded in its culture and in the self-definition of its ruling dynasty. Symptomatic of that process is how Simon Maccabee (high priest and ethnarch 142–134 B.C.E.) integrated elements of Greek architecture into his renovated family tomb in Modein (1 Macc. 13:23–30; Josephus, *Ant*. 13.210–12).

Unfortunately, the Hasmonean leaders also began to conduct themselves like the despotic Seleucid monarchs they displaced. Ironically, little tolerance was granted to people groups who came under their military control, leading to forcible conversions, expulsions, and in some cases, massacres.

The above observations should not, however, be taken to mean that Hellenism completely replaced the traditions of the ancestral faith. Especially in the hinterlands, where the majority of Jewish inhabitants lived, Hebrew traditions remained intact. Most Jews adapted to Hellenism but did not assimilate.

Restoration of Jewish Nationalism

The Maccabean era resembles the rise of King David and the transformation of the tribal federation into a united kingdom possessing military prowess and economic clout. The author of 1 Maccabees imparts to his work a Davidic typology fulfilled in the Hasmonean leaders. A classic example is when Judas takes the sword of vanquished Apollonius and uses it in his ensuing battles (1 Macc. 3:12), recalling David's use of Goliath's sword in battle (1 Sam. 17:51; 21:9). Later, Jonathan retreats to the wilderness of Tekoa and operates like David of old as the leader of a guerilla band, successfully evading the pursuit of the Seleucid forces (1 Macc. 9:28–49). In 2 Maccabees (1:20–2:23), Judas is "depicted as the 'successor' to Nehemiah, who, it was argued, had restored the original fire upon the rebuilt Jerusalemite altar and founded a library housing the sacred books" (Hayes and Mandell, *Jewish People*, 74). The Herodian dynasty was a bitter pill for many Jews, and two disastrous revolts against Rome testify to an intense longing for "the good old days" of Hasmonean autonomy. The rebirth of the modern state of Israel bears striking similarities to the rise

of the Hasmonean dynasty and, not surprisingly, in our post-Holocaust world, the Maccabean ethos has reemerged in the ongoing struggle between the Israelis and their Arab neighbors.

Religious Legacy

The Hasmonean era initiated an age of diversity in Judaism. The old consensus forged by the leadership of the Judean temple state under the Persians fractured and led to the formation of rival parties, each offering its own response to the challenge of Hellenism. The NT reflects this diversity by the presence of Herodians, Sadducees, Pharisees, zealots, and inferentially, Essenes. Most scholars suspect there were other, lesser-known groups and movements whose presence is not documented. This diversity was supplanted, though never completely, by the ascendance of rabbinic Judaism in the aftermath of the two revolts against Rome. But in the wake of the Enlightenment, modern Judaism once again fragmented and now reflects the discordant diversity of the Hasmonean age.

In the end, however, the greatest contribution of the Hasmoneans lay in preserving monotheism in the face of Hellenistic pressure to assimilate. The courage of the second generation of Hasmoneans, leading to the death of all five brothers in defense of the ancestral faith, left a lasting legacy to the three great monotheistic faiths. The story of the martyrdom of a Jewish mother and her seven sons, the centerpiece of 2 Maccabees (chaps. 5–8), has inspired Christian martyrs down through the ages. Especially in Eastern and Latin Christianity the exploits of the Maccabees live on.

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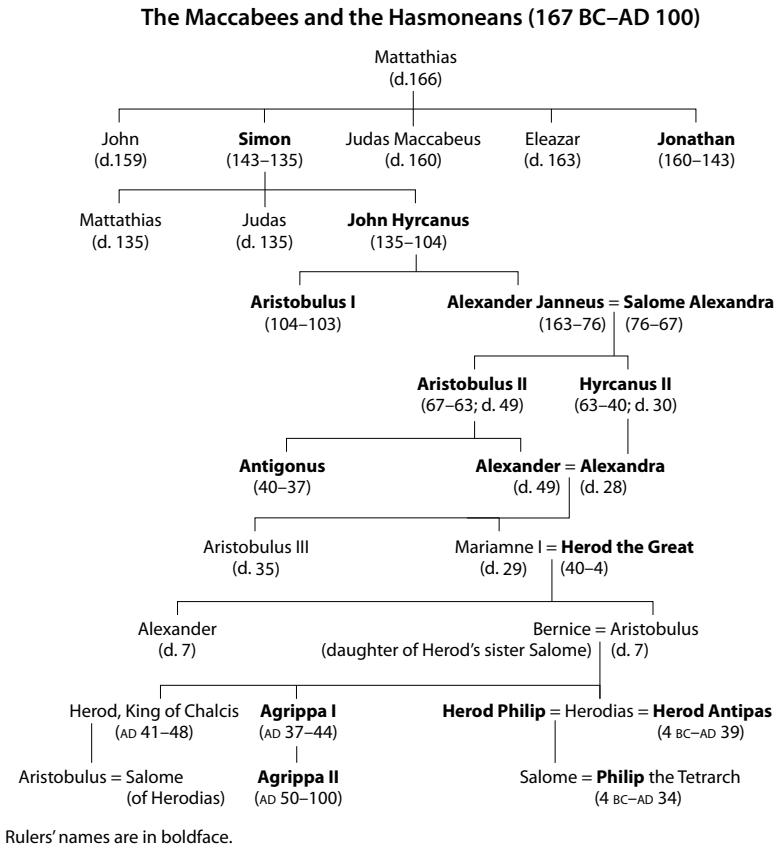
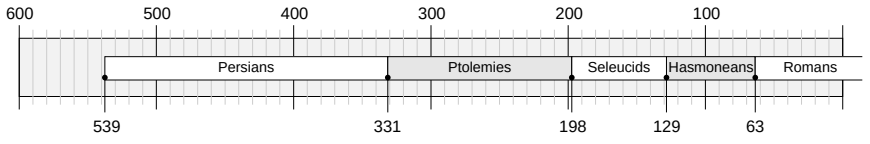


4.2. Family tree of the Maccabees and the Hasmoneans (167 BC–AD 100). From Harold Hoehner, "Hasmoneans," *ISBE* 2:622.



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