

Maccabees II: The Author and His Perspective

The following pages are excerpts from Maccabees II. There were four books, numbered one through four, which describe the Hasmonean Revolt against Antiochus and those who supported his attempts to Hellenize Judea. These books, however, do not represent a series by one author or a committee of authors. Only Maccabees I and II are part of the Apocrypha¹. They were written at different times with people of different perspectives. Maccabees II is a secondary source; it was written 100 years after the Hasmonean Revolt in c. 60 BCE. The author of Maccabees II describes his intent in writing the book in paragraph 11. In paragraph 12, he strays from his narrative and speaks to the reader, addressing concerns about how the subject being described may affect the reader and his beliefs.

I1

All this, as related by Jason of Cyrene² in five books, we will try to condense in one volume. ... we have aimed at attracting those who like to read, and at making it easy for those who are disposed to memorize, and of being of use to all our readers. For us who have taken upon ourselves the painful task of abridgement, the thing is not easy, and takes sweat and midnight oil...

I2

So I beseech those who read this book not to be cast down by such misfortunes but to consider that these punishments were meant not for the destruction of our people but for their correction. For it is a mark of great benevolence not to let the impious alone for a long time but to punish them promptly. For in the case of other nations, the Master is long-suffering and waits before He punishes them until they have reached the full measure of their sins; but in our case He has decided differently, so that He may not take vengeance on us afterward when our sins have reached their height. So He never withdraws His mercy from us, and although He disciplines us with misfortune, He does not abandon His own people. This much let us say by the way of reminder; after these few words we must resume our story.

Questions:

1. Why did the author write this book, if there is already a longer version of this history?
2. According to the author, why does persecution of the Jewish people occur?

¹ A body of works canonized in the Greek Bible.

² Jason of Cyrene was a religious Jew who lived in Cyrene, which was a Greek polis. He was at home with the Greek way of life, but maintained a loyalty and faithfulness to Judaism. He wrote his five volumes in Greek. Maccabees II was also written in Greek.

Maccabees II: Sabotage From Within

The conflict with Antiochus IV was not simply a conflict with a foreign power attempting to dominate and change Jerusalem. There were those among the Jewish people who sought power through the Seleucid Empire and used the Temple and coveted the office of the High Priesthood. The following account is the first attempt of Hellenized Jews to cause religious Jews to lose favor in the eyes of the Seleucid Empire.

II

When the holy city was inhabited in perfect peace, and the laws were strictly observed, because of the piety of Onias, the high priest, and his hatred of wickedness, it came to pass that even the kings themselves did honor to the place, and glorified the Temple with most noble gifts, so that even Seleucus, king of Asia, from his own revenues provided all the expense of the sacrificial service. But a man named Simon, of the tribe of Benjamin, who had been appointed governor of the Temple, had a difference with the high priest about the conduct of the city market. When he failed to carry his point against Onias, he went to Apollonius³ of Tarsus (in Syria) ... and reported to him that the treasury in Jerusalem was full of such untold quantities of money that the amount of funds was beyond computation; and that they did not belong to the account of the sacrifices and they might fall under the control of the king. When Apollonius met the king, he informed him of the money that had been pointed out to him. And he appointed Heliodorus, who was his chancellor, and sent him with instructions to effect the removal of his money. Heliodorus immediately set out on his journey...

When he reached Jerusalem, and had been cordially welcomed by the high priest and the city, he laid before them the disclosure that had been made to him, and explained why he had come, and inquired whether this was really true. The high priest pointed out that some deposits belonged to widows and orphans, and one belonged to Hyrcanus, son of Tobias, a man of very high position - so falsely had impious Simon spoken; that it all amounted to four hundred talents of silver and two hundred of gold, and that it was absolutely impossible that those who were relying on the sacredness of the place and on the sanctity and inviolability of the Temple, which was respected all over the world should be wronged.

But Heliodorus, because of the royal orders he received, said that anyway these must be confiscated for the royal treasury. So he set a day, and went in to conduct an inspection of these funds; and there was much distress all over the city. ... the people ... came flocking out to make a general supplication because the Temple was on the verge of being treated with contempt. ... While they therefore called upon the Almighty Lord to keep the things that had been entrusted to Him in perfect security... Heliodorus was carrying out what had been decided upon. But no sooner

³ Governor of Mediterranean provinces for Seleucus.

had he and his guards arrived before the treasury than the Sovereign of spirits and of all authority caused a great manifestation so that all who had been daring enough to come with him were appalled at the power of God and fainted with terror. For there appeared to them a horse with dreadful rider, adorned with magnificent trappings, and rushing swiftly at Heliodorus it struck him with his forefeet. His rider seemed clad in golden armor. Two young men also appeared to him, remarkably strong and gloriously beautiful and splendidly dressed, who stood on each side of him and flogged him continually, inflicting many stripes on him. He fell suddenly to the ground and was enveloped in deep darkness, and men picked him up and put him on a stretcher and carried him off - the man that had just entered that treasury with his whole guard but was now rendered helpless - and they clearly recognized the sovereign power of God. So through divine intervention he lay wounded, bereft of all hope of deliverance, while the Jews blessed the Lord who had marvelously honored His Temple, which a little while before had been full of fear and commotion, and now that the Almighty Lord had intervened was now filled with joy and gladness.

Some of the intimate friends of Heliodorus soon asked Onias to call upon the Most High and grant him his life, as he lay at his very last breath. The high priest suspected that the king might form some opinion that some villainy had been practiced on Heliodorus by the Jews, and offered sacrifice for the man's recovery. But as the high priest was offering the sacrifice of propitiation, the same young men appeared to Heliodorus, clad in the same clothes, and they stood beside him and said, "Be grateful to Onias the high priest, for the Lord has spared your life for his sake; and since you have been flogged from heaven, proclaim to all men the sovereign power of God."

When they had said this they vanished. So Heliodorus offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made very great vows... When the king asked Heliodorus what kind of man was suitable to be sent once more to Jerusalem, he said, "If you have an enemy or a conspirator against the government, send him there, and you will get him back soundly flogged, if he escapes with his life, for there is certainly some divine power about the place. For He whose dwelling is in heaven watches over that place and helps it, and strikes down and injures those who come to injure it."

But this Simon who had informed about the money and against his country, made accusations against Onias, saying that he had incited Heliodorus and had been the author of these troubles. ... Onias, becoming aware of the danger of the contention, and that Apollonius was increasing Simon's malice, resorted to the king, not to be an accuser of his fellow-citizens, but as looking after the welfare, public and private, of all the people; for he saw ... that Simon would not abandon his folly.

Questions:

1. What did Simon report to the Seleucid Empire? Why?
2. Did Simon accomplish his goals?
3. Quote two statements that show the religious conviction of the author.
4. If the author was not a religious man, how might his report of Heliodorus' entry to the Temple and the results have been reported?
5. How did this event effect the relationship between Onias and the officials of the Seleucid Empire?

Maccabees II: The Changing of the Guard in the Temple

III

When Seleucus departed this life and Antiochus, who was called Epiphanes, succeeded to the kingdom, Onias's brother Jason obtained the high priesthood by corruption, promising the king in his petition three hundred and sixty talents of silver, and eighty talents from other revenues. Besides this he promised to pay a hundred fifty more, if he was given authority to set up a gymnasium and a training place for youth there and to enroll the people of Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch.⁴ When the king had consented, and Jason had taken office, he immediately brought his countrymen over to the Greek way of living.

The priests were no longer earnest about the services of the altar, but disdain the Sanctuary and neglecting the sacrifices, they hurried to take part in the unlawful exercises in the wrestling school, after the summons for discus throwing, regarding as worthless the things their forefathers valued, and thinking Greek standards finest.

Now when the quinquennial games⁵ were being held at Tyre, and the king was present, the vile Jason sent envoys who were citizens of Antioch to represent Jerusalem, to carry three hundred drachmas for the sacrifice to Hercules. But even those who carried it thought it should not be used for a sacrifice, as that was not fitting, but should be spent in some other way. So this money intended by its sender for the sacrifice to Hercules, was applied by those who carried it to the fitting out of triremes.

Questions:

1. What was Jason's relationship to Onias?
2. How did Jason become high priest?
3. Which action of Jason at the games had not been done before? Were Jason's instructions to the messengers carried out? Why?

⁴ The requests made by Jason in the above sentence would turn Jerusalem into a polis. The polis' official name would be Antioch at Jerusalem as many other cities' names developed during this time. The benefit to the people of Jerusalem is that they would be full citizens of the Greek Empire and not subjects. The disadvantage is that they would then be required to participate in the pagan elements of Greek rule.

⁵ What would today be called the Olympic games

Maccabees II: The Ground Work for Civil War

IV

After the lapse of three years, Jason sent Menelaus, the brother of this Simon, to take money to the king and to present papers relating to necessary business. But he, on being presented to the king, extolled him with such apparent authority that he obtained the high priesthood for himself, outbidding Jason by three hundred talents of silver. ... So Jason, who supplanted his own brother was supplanted by another, and driven as a fugitive into the country of the Ammonites. So Menelaus held the office but he did not pay any of the money he had promised to the king, and when the governor of the citadel demanded it, for it was his duty to collect the revenues, the two men were summoned by the king to appear before him on account of it. Menelaus left his brother Lysimachus to act in his place in the high priesthood...

Menelaus presented the king's advisor with some gold dishes from the Temple, which he had stolen; he had already sold others at Tyre and the neighboring towns. When Onias was certain of this, he sternly rebuked him ... So Menelaus urged the king to arrest Onias ... So the king's advisor went to Onias, offered him sworn pledges and gave him his right hand, and persuaded him to leave his sanctuary, and immediately without regard to justice killed him.

When many thefts had been committed by Lysimachus with the connivance of Menelaus, the people gathered against Lysimachus. Lysimachus gathered three thousand men against the people. ... when they were aware of Lysimachus' attack, some picked up stones and others sticks of wood and others caught up handfuls of the ashes that were lying about, and flung them pell-mell at Lysimachus and his men. As a result they wounded many, killed many, and put them all to flight, and the Temple-robber himself they killed by the treasury.

Charges were made against Menelaus about this affair, and when the king visited Tyre, the three men sent by the senate presented the case before him. ... the King acquitted Menelaus, who was to blame for all the trouble, of charges against him, and condemned to death the wretched men who would have been dismissed as innocent. ... So the advocates of the city and the people and the sacred plate promptly suffered this unjust punishment. ... But Menelaus, because of the covetousness of the authorities, remained in power, increasing in wickedness and persistently plotting against his fellow citizens.

Questions:

1. How did Menelaus achieve power?
2. Why did Onias react so strongly? What was the result of his protest?
3. What type of name is Menelaus, Lysimachus? What can be learned about these men from their names?

Maccabees II: The Beginning of the Revolt

V

About that time Antiochus made his second attack upon Egypt. ... There arose a false rumor that Antiochus had departed this life, and Jason took fully a thousand men and made a sudden attack on Jerusalem. ... Menelaus took refuge in the citadel. Then Jason unsparingly slaughtered his fellow-citizens.

When news of what happened reached the king, he thought Judea was in revolt; so he set up from Egypt like a wild beast and took Jerusalem by storm. And he ordered his soldiers to cut down without distinction anyone they met and to slay those who took refuge in their houses. ... Not content with this, he dared go into the most holy Temple in the world, guided by Menelaus who had betrayed both the laws and his country; and he plundered the Temple.

The king sent Apollonius ... with orders to slay all the grown men, and to sell the women and younger men as slaves. When this man arrived in Jerusalem, he pretended to be peacefully disposed, and waited till the holy Sabbath day; then finding the Jews refraining from work, he ordered his men to parade under arms and put to the sword all those who came out to see them, and rushing into the city with his armed men he destroyed them in great multitudes. But Judas Maccabeus with some nine others got away to the wild country and kept himself alive with his comrades in the mountains as wild animals do, and they lived on what grew wild rather than suffer pollution with the rest.

Questions:

1. According to this account, against whom was the Jewish revolt directed?
2. Why did it happen at this particular time?
3. Why was Antiochus so angry with the Jewish people?
4. What role did Menelaus play in all of this?

Maccabees II: The Temple Reconquered

VI

Now Maccabeus and his followers under the Lord's leadership regained the Temple and the city, and tore down the altars that had been built by the aliens in the public square, and also the sacred enclosures. And when they had purified the Sanctuary, they built another altar of sacrifice, and striking flints and getting fire from them, they offered sacrifices, after an interval of two years, and they burned incense and lighted lamps and set out Presentation Loaves. And when they had done this, they fell on their faces and besought the Lord that they might never again encounter such misfortune, but that, if they should ever sin, He would discipline them with forbearance, and not hand them over to blasphemous and barbarous heathen. And it came about that on that very same day on which the Sanctuary had been profaned by aliens, the purification of the Sanctuary took place, that is, on the twenty-fifth day of the same month, which was Kislev. And they celebrated it for eight days with gladness, like the Camping Out festival, and recalled how a little while before, during the Camping Out festival they had been wandering in the mountains and caverns like wild animals. ... And they passed a public ordinance and decree that the whole Jewish nation should observe these days every year. Such was the end of Antiochus, who was called Epiphanes.

Questions:

1. How soon after the Jews reconquered the Temple did the Jews purify it enough to be able to use it?
2. What did the Jews celebrate in Kislev, in place of which other holiday?

Enrichment question: There is an argument between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel about the lighting of Hanukkah candles. Which of the opinions takes into account the holiday that Hanukkah was originally celebrated instead of? Prove it.

Maccabees II: Religious Martyrdom

The time period of Hanukkah saw many firsts. One of these firsts was the response of religious Jews to persecution and attempts at forced assimilation. The story of Hannah and her seven sons appears in several different Jewish sources, including Maccabees II. Although there are only three *misvot* that Judaism requires one die rather than transgress, in a *Tekufat Hashmad* - a time of destruction - when some entity attempts to destroy the Jewish people, the law is that all *misvot*, require that one die rather than transgress the law.

VII

It happened that seven brothers were also arrested with their mother, and were tortured with whips and thongs by the king, to force them to taste of the unlawful swine's meat. One of them made himself their advocate and said, "What do you expect to ask and learn from us? For we are ready to die, rather than transgress the laws of our forefathers."

The king was infuriated and gave orders that pans and caldrons should be heated. And when they were immediately heated, he commanded that the tongue of the one who had been their advocate should be cut out, and that they should scalp him and cut off his extremities, while his brothers and mother looked on. And when he was utterly crippled, he ordered them to bring him to the fire and fry him. And as the vapor from the pan spread thickly, they with their mother encouraged one another to die nobly. ...

When the first one had departed in this manner, they brought the second one to be mocked, and they tore off the skin of his head with the hair, and asked him, "Will you eat, or have your body punished limb by limb?"

But he replied in the language of his forefathers and answered, "No."

So he also underwent the same series of tortures as the first suffered. But when he was at his last gasp, he said, "You wretch, you release us from this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up, because we have died for His laws, to an everlasting renewal of life."

After him, the third was mocked, and when he was told to put out his tongue, he did so quickly, and courageously stretched out his hands, and said nobly, "I got these from God, and for the sake of His laws I disregard them, and from it I hope to receive them back again," so that the king himself and those who were with him were amazed at the young man's spirit, because he made light of his sufferings.

And when he had departed, they tortured and maltreated the fourth in the same way. And when he was near his end, he spoke thus, "It is better to die by men's hands and

look for the hopes God gives of being raised again by Him; for you will have no resurrection to life."

Next they brought the fifth and maltreated him. But he looked at him and said, "Since you have authority among men, though you are mortal, you do what you please; but do not suppose that our race has been abandoned by God. But follow your course and see how His mighty power will torment you and your posterity."

After him they brought the sixth. And when he was put to death, he was at the point of death, he said, "Do not be falsely deceived; for we suffer these things because of ourselves, for we sin against our own God, so these amazing things have happened. But you must not suppose that you will go unpunished for having attempted to fight against God."

But their mother was surpassingly wonderful, and deserves a blessed memory, for though she saw her seven sons perish within a single day, she bore it with good courage, because of her hope in the Lord. And she encouraged each of them in the language of their forefathers, for she was filled with a noble spirit and stirred her woman's heart with manly courage, and said to them,

"I do not know how you appeared in my womb, for it was not I that gave you life and breath, and it was not I that brought into harmony the elements of each. Therefore the Creator of the world, Who formed the human race and arranged the generation of all things, will give you back again life and breath in His mercy, as you now are regardless of yourselves for the sake of His laws."

Now Antiochus, thinking he was being treated with contempt, and suspecting her reproachful cry, as the youngest still survived, not only appealed to him in words but also promised him with oaths that he would make him rich and envied, if he would give up the ways of his forefathers, and would make him his friend and entrust him with office. But when the young man paid no attention to him, the king called the mother to him and urged her to advise the boy to save himself. After he had labored with her a long time, she undertook to persuade her son. She bent over him, and mocking the cruel tyrant, she spoke thus, in the language of her forefathers:

"My son, have pity on me, who carried you nine months in the womb, and nursed you for three years, and brought you up and brought you to your present age, and supported you. I beseech you, my child, to look up at the heaven and the earth, and see all that is in them, and perceive that God did not make them out of things that existed, and in that way the human race came into existence. Do not be afraid of this butcher, but show yourself to be worthy of your brothers, and accept death, so that by God's mercy I may get you back with your brothers."

Before she could finish, the young man said, "What are you waiting for? I will not obey the command of the king, but I obey the command of the Law that was given to our forefathers through Moses. But you, who have designed every kind of evil

against the Hebrews, will not escape the hands of God. For we are suffering because of our own sins. And though our Living God is angry for a little while, to rebuke and discipline us, He will be reconciled with His own slaves again. But you, impious man, the vilest of all men, do not foolishly buoy yourself up in your insolence with uncertain hopes, when you raise your hand against the children of God; for you have not escaped the judgment of the Almighty all-seeing God. For our brothers after enduring a brief suffering have drunk everlasting life, under the agreement of God. But you, by the judgment of God, will receive the rightful penalty of your arrogance. I, like my brothers, give up body and soul for the laws of my forefathers, calling upon God speedily to show mercy to our nation, and to lead you to confess, in trials and plagues, that He alone is God; and to stay through me and my brothers the wrath of the Almighty, which has justly fallen on our whole nation."

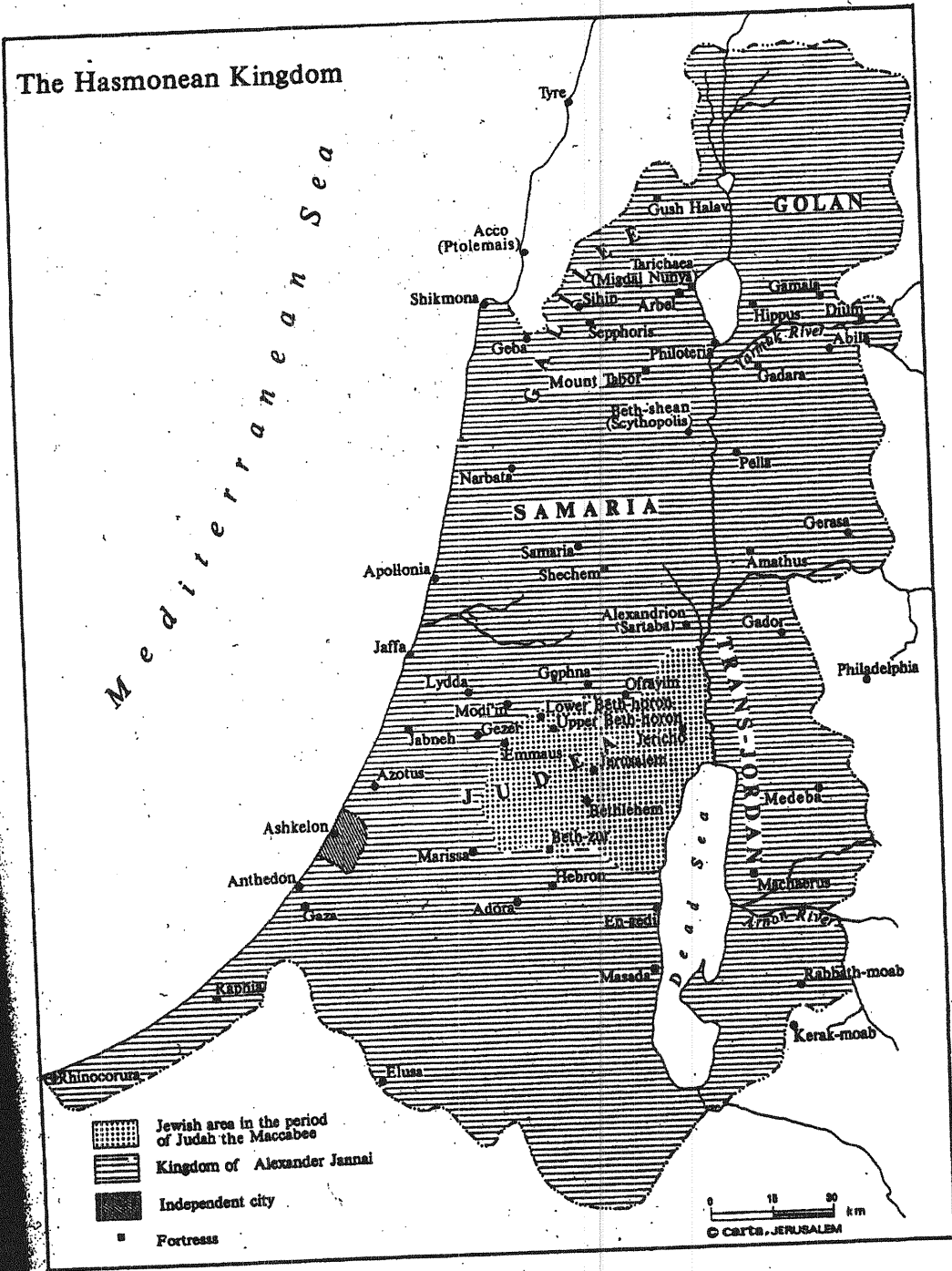
But the king was infuriated and treated him worse than the others, being embittered at his mockery. So he passed away unpolluted, trusting firmly in the Lord. Last of all, the mother met her end, after her sons.

Questions:

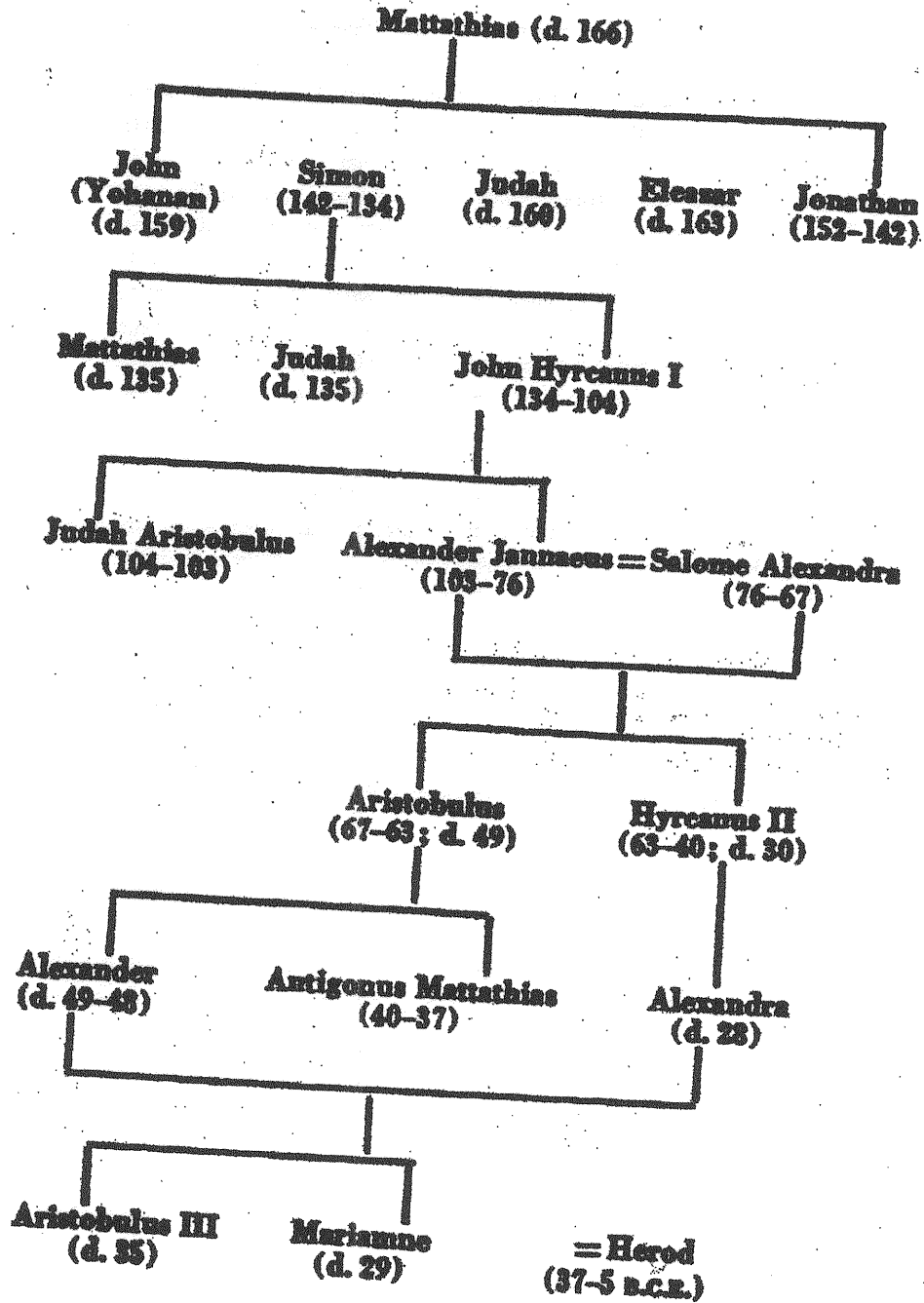
1. Define martyr.
2. What beliefs do Hannah's sons hold that gives them the strength to defy the king and die at his hands?
3. How is language important in this story?

Enrichment question: What are the three laws that require one to die rather than transgress? What is the biblical source? The Rambam (Maimonides) discusses the requirements for having to die rather than transgress these laws in the Mishnah Torah - what are they?

The Hasmonean Kingdom



THE HOUSE OF THE MACCABEES (HASMONEANS)
 (167-29 B.C.E.)



Sects in the Second Temple: Josephus

Josephus Flavius discusses the Pharisees and the Sadducees in Antiquities. He discusses the Essenes in The Jewish War.

There are two possible derivations of the name of the Pharisees. One derivation is that it comes from the Hebrew word l'pharesh - to explain, because of the position of the Pharisees regarding the necessity of the Oral Law in the understanding of the Written Law. The other derivation is that it comes from the Hebrew word l'pharesh - to separate, because the Pharisees were careful to separate themselves from things that are impure so that they would be able to participate in the Temple rituals. It is unclear when the Pharisees began to be known by that name and when the clear distinction between the Pharisees and the Sadducees was first recognized. Some historians believe it to have happened with the return from Babylonia (c. 517 BCE); others believe the split to have taken place during the early Hasmonean period (c. 165 BCE); yet others believe it to have taken place during the later Hasmoneans (the period beginning with John Hyrcanus - c. 135 BCE).

The name of the Sadducees also has two possible derivations. Sadok was a High Priest during the time of David, and sided with him during the rebellion of his son, Abshalom. Some believe that the split began at that time. The other derivation is from the word righteous, because the Sadducees believe their path to be more righteous than that of the Pharisees who relied on interpretations of the Written Law.

The following are excerpts from his description of the three major sects of Judaism during the Second Temple Period.

The Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances handed down by their fathers, which are not written in the Law of Moses. For that reason the Sadducees reject them and say that we are to consider obligatory only those observances which are written in the Law of Moses, but are not to observe those that are derived from the tradition of our forefathers. Concerning these things, great disputes and differences have arisen among them. The Sadducees are able to persuade none but the rich and have no following among the populace, but the Pharisees have the masses on their side.

The Jews had for a great while three schools of philosophy: the Essenes, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees ...

Now, for the Pharisees, they live simply, and despise delicacies in diet. And they follow the conduct of reason; and what that prescribes to them as good for them, they do. They think they ought earnestly to strive to observe those commandments,

which elders and reason have seen fit to dictate to them. They also pay respect to those who are advanced in years, nor are they so bold as to contradict them in anything, which they have introduced. Though they determine that all things are done by fate, they do not exclude the freedom from men of acting as they see fit, since their notion is that it pleases God that His will be done, but that men have the freedom to do His will or evil. They also believe that souls are immortal, and that after death there will be rewards or punishments, depending on whether they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life. The latter are to be detained in an everlasting prison, but the former shall have the power to revive and live again. On account of these doctrines, they are very influential among the body of the people, and whatever they do about divine worship, prayers, and sacrifices, they perform according to their direction. In this way, the inhabitants of the cities gave great tribute to the Pharisees by conducting themselves virtuously.

But the doctrine of the Sadducees is that the souls die with the bodies. Nor do they regard as obligatory the observance of anything other than what is in the Written Law. For they think it an instance of virtue to dispute with the teachers of philosophy. Their doctrine is accepted by only a few, yet by those of the aristocracy. But they are unable to do anything by themselves, for when they become magistrates, they submit themselves to the notions of the Pharisees because the multitude would not otherwise tolerate them.

The doctrine of the Essenes is that all things are best ascribed to God. They teach the immortality of the soul and believe that the rewards of righteousness are to be earnestly striven for. When they send what they have dedicated to God to the Temple, they do not offer sacrifices because they have more purification rituals of their own, but they offer their sacrifices themselves. They entirely devote themselves to agricultural labor. ... All things are held in common; so that a rich man enjoys no more of his own wealth than he who has nothing at all. There are about four thousand men who live in this way. They do not marry wives nor do they keep servants, thinking that the latter tempts men to be unjust and the former opens the way to domestic quarrels; but as they live by themselves, they minister one to another.

Questions:

1. Identify the major areas where the sects differ.
2. Who were the members of each sect?
3. Which sect did Josephus find most admirable and worthy of respect? Why?
4. Which sect had the greatest following among the Jewish people? To what does Josephus attribute this great following?

Thought Question:

1. Why would sects develop among the Jewish people in Judea?
2. Which of the sects are the predecessors of Orthodox Jews today?

Enrichment Question: There are sects in Judaism today. What are they? Are there similarities between the sects of the Second Temple and the sects of today?

John Hyrcanus: Josephus

John Hyrcanus ruled Judea from 134-104 BCE. He served as both ruler and High Priest of Judea. He negotiated a settlement with the Seleucid Empire and cultivated ties with the Roman Empire, seeking to create new economic possibilities with Rome. It was during his time period that control of the civil government switched from the Pharisees to the Sadducees.

Hyrcanus was a follower of the Pharisees and greatly beloved by them. When he once invited them to a feast and entertained them, and when he saw them in good humor, he began to say to them that they knew him to be a righteous man and to do all things which might please God, which was the profession of the Pharisees also. However, he requested, that if they observed him offending in any point and straying from the right way, they should call him back and correct him. On that occasion they attested to him being entirely virtuous, and with this commendation he was very pleased. But there was one of his guests whose name was Eleazar, a man of evil nature, who delighted in seditious practices. This man said, "Since you desire to know the truth, if you are righteous in earnest, give up the high priesthood and content yourself with the civil government of the people." And when he desired to know why he should give up the high priesthood, he replied, "We have heard it from the elders that your mother had been a captive during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes." This story was false, and Hyrcanus was furious with him, and all the Pharisees were indignant against him.

Now there was one Jonathan, a very great friend of Hyrcanus, but of the sect of the Sadducees whose notions are quite contrary to those of the Pharisees. He told Hyrcanus that Eleazar had cast such an allegation upon him with the general approval of all the Pharisees, and that this would be made obvious if he would only ask them the question of what punishment they thought this man deserved. So the Pharisees gave an answer that he deserved lashes and chains, but that it did not seem right to punish reproaches with death; and indeed the Pharisees, even upon other occasions, are not apt to be severe in punishments. At this gentle sentence Hyrcanus was very angry, and he thought this man accused him with their approval. It was this Jonathan who chiefly aggravated him and influenced him so that he joined the Sadducean party, made him leave the party of the Pharisees, and abolish the decrees they had imposed on the people, and punish those who observed them. From this source arose that hatred which he and his sons met with from the multitude.

Questions:

1. Why did Eleazar suggest that Hyrcanus give up the High Priesthood?
2. Did Hyrcanus contribute to the situation where Eleazar had told him to give up the High Priesthood? How?
3. Does Josephus feel that the Pharisees were protecting and supporting Hyrcanus? Explain from the text.
4. Why did Jonathan instigate in this situation?
5. What was the result of the lack of trust created by this instance?

Enrichment Question: What is the punishment for someone who rebels against the king in Judaism? According to Jewish law, is it permissible to reprimand the king if he is in violation of Jewish law? Who has the role of reprimanding the king?

Judah Aristobulus: Josephus

Aristobulus ruled Judea from 104-103 BCE. It was a short time period but one filled with jealousy, paranoia, and intrigue. He imprisoned all of his brothers, except Antigonus, whom he trusted and placed in charge of the army. Toward the end of the year of his reign, Aristobulus heard rumors that his brother was disloyal. The following is an account of Aristobulus' attempt to determine his brother's loyalty and the part their mother played in the deception of their last meeting. Aristobulus kills his mother before the end of his reign.

Aristobulus began to believe the charges against his brother, Antigonus, but took care that his brother should not suspect him and that he himself might not risk his own safety. So he stationed his guards in a dark, underground passage (he himself was then lying sick in the tower which was called Antonia), and he commanded them that in case Antigonus came in to him unarmed, they should not touch anybody, but if armed, they should kill him. Moreover, he sent a request to Antigonus and requested that he come unarmed. But the queen, and those that joined with her in the plot against Antigonus, persuaded the messenger to tell him the direct opposite, how his brother heard that he had made himself a fine suit of armor for war and invited him to come to him in that armor so that he might see how fine it was. So Antigonus, suspecting no treachery but depending on the good will of his brother, came to Aristobulus armed, as he used to be, with his entire armor, in order to show it to him. But when he came to a place called Strato's Tower, where the passage happened to be exceptionally dark, the guards killed him.

When Aristobulus died, his wife Salome, who was called Alexandra by the Greeks, let his brothers out of prison and made Alexander Janneus king for he was superior in age and in moderation ... He killed one of his brothers who had designs on the kingdom, and the other, who chose to live a private and quiet life, he held in honor.

Alexander Janneus: Josephus

Alexander Janneus ruled Judea from 103-76 BCE. He extended the boundaries of the country, but had a tense and difficult relationship with the majority of the population (Pharisees). The stigma placed on John Hyrcanus remained on Alexander Janneus since many people believed that he was unfit for priestly duties because he was a descendant of a woman who was once held captive.

His own people revolted against him. For at a festival, which was then celebrated, when he stood upon the altar and was about to sacrifice¹, the nation rose up against him and pelted him with etrogim. ... At this he flew into a rage and killed about six thousand of them. He also built a partition wall of wood around the altar and the Temple. Beyond that partition it was lawful only for the priests to enter, and by this means he obstructed the people from coming to him. He also maintained foreign troops, for he was at war with the Syrians. He also overcame the Arabs of Moab and Gilead, and made them pay tribute. Then he joined battle with Obedas, king of the Arabians, and falling into an ambush in a rugged region where it was quite difficult to travel, he was thrown down into a deep valley by a multitude of camels, and hardly escaped with his life. From there he fled to Jerusalem where, because of his misfortunes the people insulted him. He fought against them for six years and killed no fewer than fifty thousand of them. When he requested that they desist from their ill will toward him, they only hated him much more on account of what already happened. And when he asked them what he ought to do, they all cried out he ought to kill himself. They also sent to Demetrius Eukairos (Ruler of the Seleucid Empire) and asked him to make a league of mutual defense with them.

So Demetrius came with an army, took those who invited him and pitched his camp near Shechem. Alexander, with his six thousand two hundred mercenaries and about twenty thousand Jews who were of his party, went out to meet Demetrius, who had three thousand horsemen and forty thousand footmen. Now there was great activity on both sides - Demetrius trying to convince the mercenaries who were with Alexander to desert because they were Greeks, and Alexander trying to convince the Jews who were with Demetrius to desert. However, when neither of them could persuade them to do so, they engaged in battle, and Demetrius was the conqueror. All Alexander's mercenaries were killed after they had given proof of their fidelity and courage. A great number of Demetrius' soldiers were also killed.

Then as Alexander fled to the mountains, six thousand Jews then came to his side out of pity at the change of his fortune. Then Demetrius was afraid and withdrew from the country. Afterwards the Jews fought against Alexander and were defeated, and many died in battles. When the battles were over, Alexander massacred eight hundred of those who opposed him.

¹ The sacrifice refers to the water libation ceremony, which takes place on Sukkot. Alexander Janneus poured the water on his feet instead of on the altar, causing the people to respond with anger at his disrespect to the Law.

Questions:

1. Define mercenary.
2. Pride and hatred cause destruction. Identify the motives of both parties involved in this civil war. Rewrite one event that would prevent further destruction.
3. What role did loyalty play in the events described above? On what was this loyalty based?

Thought Question: What should be the basis of loyalty to a country or government? When is it advisable to be disloyal to your own people? Give an example to illustrate your point.

Salome Alexandra: Josephus

Salome Alexandra (Shlomzion) ruled Judea from 76-67 BCE. Salome Alexandra was masterful at sharing her reign with the Sanhedrin, allowing them to have a say in many of the decisions in the country. The following is Josephus' description of how Salome Alexandra determined to rule the way she did. In the passages Josephus' feelings toward the Pharisees become clearer.

I

But when his queen saw that he was ready to die, and no longer had any hope of surviving, she came to him weeping, and bewailed the desolate condition in which she and her sons would be left. And she said to him, "To whom do you thus leave me and my children who are without any other support, and this when you know how ill will your nation bears you?"

He gave her the following advice: that she should conceal his death from the soldiers until she captured the fortress. After this, she should go triumphantly to Jerusalem. He said, "When you come to Jerusalem, send for the leading men among the Pharisees and show them my body, and with great appearance of sincerity give them permission to treat it as they please, whether they will dishonor the dead body by refusing it for burial for having severely suffered by my hands, or whether in their anger they will offer any other injury to that body. Promise them also that you will do nothing without them in the affairs of the kingdom. If you do but say this to them, I shall have the honor of a more glorious funeral from them than you could have made for me; and when it is in their power to abuse my dead body, they will do it no injury at all, and you will rule in safety."

II

Alexander left two sons, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, but committed the kingdom to Alexandra. Of these two sons, Hyrcanus was indeed unable to manage public affairs and delighted rather in quiet life, but the younger one, Aristobulus, was an active and a bold man. As for the woman herself, Alexandra, she was loved by the multitude because she seemed displeased at the offenses of which her husband had been guilty.

So she made Hyrcanus High Priest because he was the elder, but much more because he did not care to meddle with politics and permitted the Pharisees to do everything. She also ordered the multitude to be obedient to the Pharisees. She then restored those practices, which the Pharisees had introduced according to the traditions of the forefathers, which her father-in-law, Hyrcanus¹, had annulled. So she had indeed the name sovereign, but the Pharisees had the authority for it was they who allowed many who had been banished to return, and set prisoners free, and, in a word, they differed in nothing from absolute rulers. However, the queen also took care of affairs of the kingdom, got together a great body of mercenary soldiers, and increased her

¹ John Hyrcanus

own army to the degree that she struck terror in the neighboring tyrants and took hostages from them.

Questions:

1. Why did Salome Alexandra need the Pharisees in order to rule, when Alexander Jannaeus did not need them?
2. How did Salome Alexandra choose which son would have a public role? Was it a wise choice? Explain.
3. List three actions taken by the Sanhedrin.
4. What is Josephus' attitude toward the Pharisees? Quote words from the passages that would prove this.
5. Describe the type of leadership the Pharisees provided in one sentence in your own words.

Civil War: Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus: Josephus

When Salome Alexandra died, she wanted Hyrcanus II to rule, because he would allow the Pharisees to rule. Aristobulus II felt his brother was too weak to rule. The civil war between the two brothers weakened Judea. The following took place in 67 BCE, immediately after the death of Salome Alexandra.

Hyrcanus began his rule, and immediately, Aristobulus began to make war against him, and in battle many of Hyrcanus' soldiers deserted to his brother, Aristobulus. Then Hyrcanus fled to the citadel where Aristobulus' wife and children had been imprisoned by his mother.¹ He sent a message to his brother about coming to an agreement regarding the matters between them, he laid aside his enmities to him on these conditions: that Aristobulus should be king, and that he (Hyrcanus) should leave without meddling in public affairs and quietly enjoy the estate he had acquired. When they had agreed upon these terms in the Temple and had confirmed the agreement with oaths ... and embracing one another in the sight of the whole multitude, they departed, Aristobulus to the palace, and Hyrcanus to the former house of Aristobulus.

Despite the agreement, there was distrust between the brothers. Antipater, an advisor to Hyrcanus who had converted to Judaism and was originally from Idumea², convinced Hyrcanus that Aristobulus was going to attempt to kill him. Pompey, a general in the Roman Empire, was in Syria at the time. He was expanding the reach of the Roman Empire, conquering areas and establishing alliances. Both Hyrcanus and Aristobulus approached him to arbitrate their conflict.

Ambassadors came to him from Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, and both desired that he assist them. When both promised to give him money, Aristobulus four hundred talents and Hyrcanus no less, he accepted Aristobulus' promise, for he was rich, and had a great soul, and desired to obtain nothing but what was moderate; whereas the other was poor and tenacious, and made incredible promises in hope of greater advantages.

Aristobulus was chosen but he did not pay Pompey. There was strife and internal disorder in Judea. As a result, Pompey entered Jerusalem and put Judea under direct Roman control as a client state, in 63 BCE. Hyrcanus was given the ceremonial title and Antipater was given authority over Judea and enjoyed the support of Rome.

¹ Aristobulus tried to establish a power base during his mother's reign. In order, to insure that he would not harm Salome Alexandra, she imprisoned his family as security.

² Residents of Idumea were forcibly converted to Judaism under the reign of John Hyrcanus, who fought against the enemies of the Jews who helped the Seleucid Empire when the Jews strove for their independence.

Questions:

1. Why did the brothers approach a representative of Rome instead of a representative of the Seleucid Empire?
2. Why did Pompey choose Aristobulus over Hyrcanus?
3. Describe the process of the decline of the Hasmonean rule over Judea.

The End of Hasmonean Rule: Josphehus

Aristobulus and his son, Antigonus, resisted the rule of the Romans. However, they were unsuccessful and were forced to leave Judea. They moved to Parthia where they plotted how they would return to Judea. Parthia and Rome were rival powers in the Middle East. Between 40 and 37 BCE, Parthia gained control of Judea. In addition to the fighting between those loyal to Rome and those loyal to Parthia there was civil war between those loyal to Hyrcanus and those loyal to Aristobulus. Antipater, who supported Hyrcanus, was more loyal to Rome than Hyrcanus, and many Jews resented him for it. His son, Herod, was one of the generals that led Roman attempts to prevent the Parthian take-over.

The following is part of an account of the years when Parthia had control of Rome. It is taken from *Josephus Flavius*; however many historians believe that Josephus relied heavily on the work of Nicholas of Damascus for his rendition of the events. Nicholas of Damascus' account did not survive to modern times.

The Parthians in Jerusalem then began to plunder and fall upon the house of those who had fled and upon the king's palace, and they spared nothing but Hyrcanus' money which amounted to no more than three hundred talents. They plundered other men's money also, but not as much as they hoped for. For Herod, having for a long while had a suspicion of the perfidiousness of the barbarians, had taken care to have the most splendid of his treasures moved to Idumea, and every one of his men had likewise done so. But the Parthians proceeded to so great a degree of injustice as to fill all the country with undeclared war ... Not only did they set up Antigonus as king, but they delivered Phasaelus¹ and Hyrcanus bound for torture. Antigonus himself bit off Hyrcanus' ears with his own teeth, as Hyrcanus fell down upon his knees to Antigonus, so that Hyrcanus might never be able upon any change of affairs to assume the high priesthood again, for the high priests who officiated were to be perfect and without blemish.

Herod went to Rome with all speed. There he first of all went to Antony, on account of the friendship his father had enjoyed with him, and laid before him his misfortunes and those of his family; and that he left his nearest relations besieged in a fortress and had sailed to him in a storm to make supplication to him for assistance.

Thereupon Antony was moved to compassion at the change that had taken place in Herod's affairs, both upon calling to mind how hospitably he had been treated by Antipater, but more especially on account of Herod's own virtue. He had then resolved to have him made king of the Jews, whom he had formerly made tetrach. Also the conflict he had with Antigonus was another inducement ... he looked upon Antigonus as a seditious person and an enemy of the Romans. As for Caesar, Herod found him more ready than Antony, remembering the wars he had gone through

¹ Phasaelus was one of Antipater's key political and military advisors.

together with his father, the hospitable treatment he received from him, and the entirely good will he had shown to him, besides the enterprising character which he saw in Herod himself. So he called the Senate together ... and told them that it was to their advantage in the Parthian war that, Herod should be king they all cast their votes for it.

Herod returned to Judea with a Roman army. They laid siege to Jerusalem for five months. Antigonus surrendered to the Roman Army in the hopes of receiving clemency. However, after five months of waiting to conquer the city, the Roman Army wanted their "just" reward.

But Herod's concern at present, now that he had his enemies under his power, was to restrain the zeal of the foreign auxiliaries², for the multitude of the foreigners were very eager to see the Temple and what was sacred in the Holy House itself. But the king endeavored to restrain them, partly by his exhortations, partly by threats, indeed, partly by force, thinking that the victory would be worse than defeat for him, if anything that ought not be seen by them were seen by them. He also forbade at the same time the despoiling of the city. ... Herod purchased the deliverance of his country and kept his promises to them (the auxiliaries), and made presents in a magnificent manner to each soldier and proportionately to their commanders, so that nobody went away unprovided.

Thereupon King Herod made a distinction among the population in the city. For those who were on his side, he made them still more his friends by the honors he conferred on them. But for those of Antigonus' party, he killed them. As his money now ran low, he turned all the ornaments he had into money and sent it to Antony and his staff.

Questions:

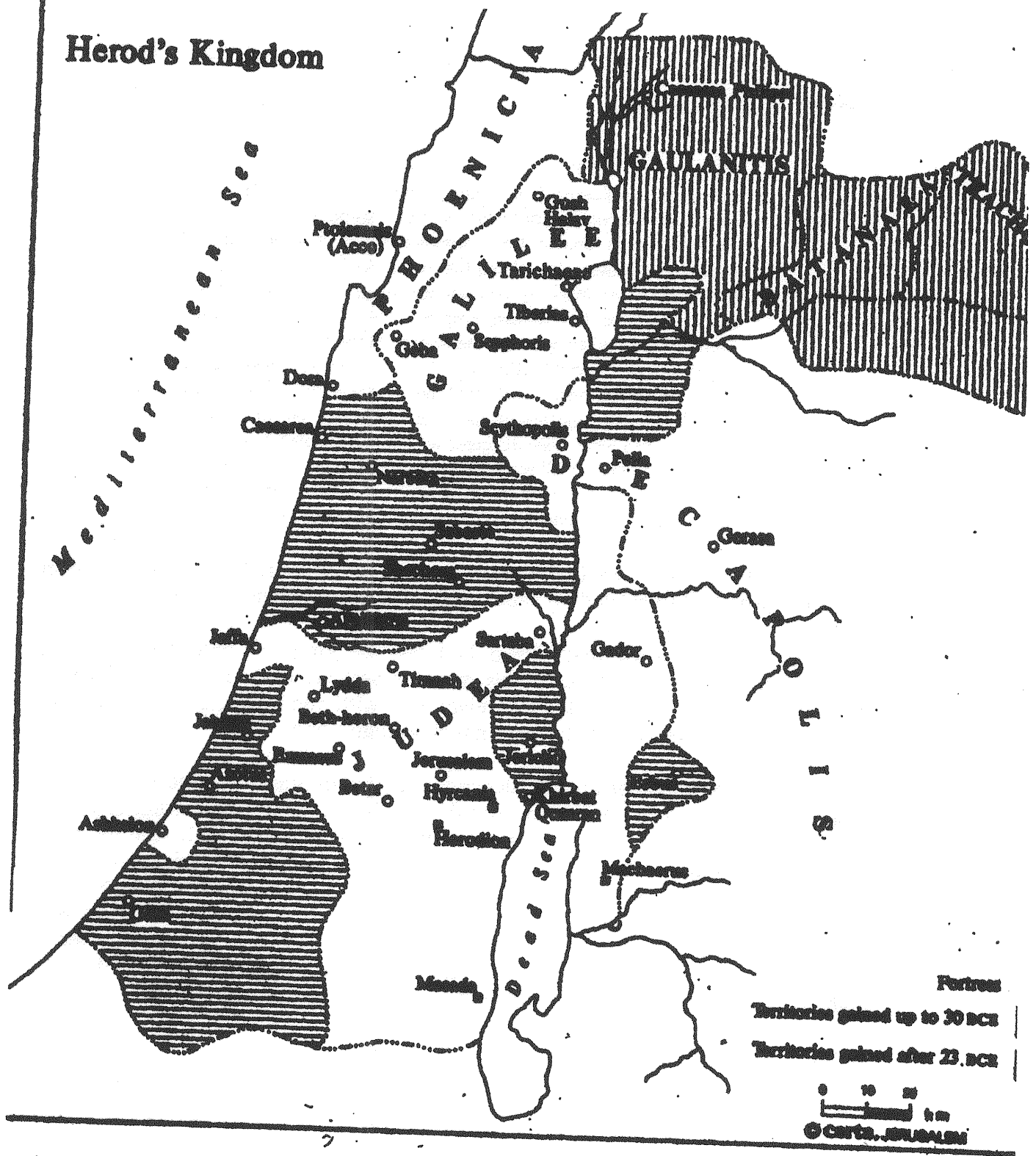
1. Why did Antigonus bite off Hyrcanus' ear?
2. Why did Rome help Herod?
3. Antony and Caesar liked Herod's character. What can you tell about Herod's character from his actions?
4. Why would Herod be concerned about the auxiliaries entering the Temple? What would be the reaction of the Jewish people to the Romans entering the Temple?
5. Was Herod's control over Judea firmly established? Explain.

² An auxiliary force is a secondary force used to supplement the primary force.

Herod's Political Position: Josephus

Herod ruled Judea as king from 37BCE to 4BCE. During his reign there was political upheaval in Rome as it changed from a democracy to an empire. Herod had allied himself with Antony, who was involved with Cleopatra of Egypt. Antony and Cleopatra plotted taking over the rest of the world and were eventually defeated. Herod's previous alliance with Antony caused him difficulty - as Antony lost the Battle of Actium to Caesar in 31BCE. Still Caesar's victory was not absolute as the Senate was not willing to cede power. Augustus (Octavian) is the one who consolidates the Roman Empire as a stable entity in 31BCE, after Caesar's assassination by members of the Senate. In addition, there is much suspicion about Herod in Judea, because Herod's lineage is not from the Davidic dynasty or from the family of the priesthood. He married a member of the Hasmonean family, Mariamne, however, that does not stop the discussions of Herod's legitimate place in the Judean power structure or Herod's own doubts about his acceptance. It is in this atmosphere that Herod attempts to maintain his position in Judea.

Herod's Kingdom



Herod: Palace Intrigue

Herod's reign (37BCE- 4BCE) in Judea was marked by military campaigns, development of building projects, the Romanization of Judea, and the murders of members of the Hasmonean family. The following is an excerpt from Josephus, which is typical of the relationship between Herod and the members of his own family. It took place when Mark Antony was struggling for control of what was to become the Roman Empire under Octavian Augustus. Eventually, Octavian becomes the Roman Emperor and comments about Herod, "I would rather be a swine in Herod's house than a son." Herod not only orchestrated the murder documented below, but killed his wife, mother-in-law, sons, and others. He intimidated the Sanhedrin when they disagreed with him and ruled Judea, as a dictator, unafraid to kill those who stood in his way. Rome allowed his rule because it was profitable to Rome in the form of gifts and taxes, and Herod provided a strong ally of Rome in the region.

As soon as Herod was established on the throne, he conferred honors on those in Jerusalem who had supported his cause, and punished partisans of Antigonus.

When Hyrcanus learned that Herod had become king, he returned to Judea, assuming that Herod would be in his debt for past favors, although the Jews of Babylon urged him to stay. Herod received him with due honor, but appointed an undistinguished priest from Babylon, Ananel, as high priest.

This made Herod's mother-in-law, Alexandra, mother of Mariamne and Aristobulus, furious. She thought the high priesthood should have been transferred to Aristobulus, so she wrote to Cleopatra, urging her to intercede with Antony, who was now in Egypt. Antony's friend Dellius came to Judea on business and met Mariamne and Aristobulus. He was so overcome by their beauty that he persuaded Alexandra to send portraits of the two to Antony, which she did. Antony was impressed by their beauty¹; he asked that Aristobulus come to Egypt. Herod supplied an excuse for not complying with Antony's request, and then awarded the high priesthood to Aristobulus, making peace with Alexandra.

Herod, however, placed Alexandra under such strict surveillance that she complained to Cleopatra, who suggested that Alexandra flee to Egypt with her son. Alexandra concocted a plan whereby she was placed in one coffin, and Aristobulus in another, which were taken out of the city as if for burial. But Herod was alerted, and caught them in the act. Yet he forgave them in a show of magnanimity.

At the feast of Tabernacles, the seventeen-year-old Aristobulus looked very tall and handsome as he conducted the rites, and his great popularity with the worshippers was only too obvious to Herod. Some time later, they were all being entertained by

¹ Homosexuality was common in Roman culture.

Alexandra in Jericho. Because it was hot, Herod, Aristobulus, and their friends were at the swimming pool, and the high priest was urged to take a swim. As it was getting dark, some friends following orders, began pushing Aristobulus under water as if in sport until he drowned. So Ananel again assumed the high priesthood.

Aristobulus was given a lavish funeral by the "grieving" Herod, while Alexandra lived only for revenge. She wrote about Herod's plot against her son to Cleopatra, who urged Antony to avenge the murder. Antony wrote Herod to meet him to clear himself of the charges. Before leaving, Herod left his uncle Joseph in charge, with instructions to kill Mariamne if anything happened to him. He was so in love with her, Herod said, that he could not stand the thought of her in someone else's arms, especially Antony's.

Questions:

1. Why was Herod suspicious of the Hasmonians? (Include in your answer Herod's lineage.)
2. Why didn't Herod kill Aristobulus outright? Why was there a need for subterfuge?
3. Was there a basis for Herod's paranoia? What was it?
4. Was there a basis for Alexandra's distrust of Herod and desire to topple him? What was it?
5. How did Octavian Augustus view Herod?
6. Evaluate Herod's ability to rule considering his actions toward the members of the Hasmonian family.

Herod: The Builder

During Herod's reign there was a major earthquake in Judea. After that, Rome provided some financial help for the rebuilding of Judea. Herod built fine structures, remnants of which exist to this day. Some of the buildings were also a source of conflict between Herod and the religious population of Judea.

Herod erected a palace in the upper city, furnished with gold and precious stones, which contained two great wings, named after Caesar and Agrippa¹. ...

He constructed a fortress south of Jerusalem. Perched on a hill, which he raised higher and rounded the top to a perfect mound, the fortress contained towers, royal apartments, and watered parks.

At Caesaria, he constructed a major port along a shore where there was none, enclosing a large harbor. Then he erected a whole city of white stone crowned with a temple to Rome and Augustus – all within a twelve-year period. Caesaria now boasted a theater, an amphitheater, and a subterranean sewer system, which automatically flushed itself with the sea tides.

In the eighteenth year of his reign, Herod started to enlarge and reconstruct the Temple at his own expense, which he knew would be his greatest enterprise. After removing the old foundations, he laid new ones, and raised the structure of hard, white stones. Purple hangings covered the entrances, and a golden vine with grape clusters adorned the area below the cornice. Large porticoes with 162 Corinthian columns surrounded the Temple, which was supported by walls of unprecedented size. Beyond the first court was a second, surrounded by a balustrade with an inscription prohibiting a foreigner from entering on penalty of death. Within this court was the sacred court which women were forbidden to enter. And still farther in was the third court where the Temple stood, into which only priests could go. At the northwestern corner of the Temple enclave stood the citadel, which Herod called Antonia to honor his friend. Here the high priest's robe was kept, which was worn only when he offered sacrifice.

The Temple itself was built by the priests in a year and a half, and was dedicated with great celebration. It is said that during construction no rain fell during the day, but only at night, so there would be no interruption of work. This story is not at all incredible if one considers the other manifestations of God's power.

Herod placed a large golden eagle over the gate of the Temple. This was put there in defiance of Jewish law, which forbade the image of any living thing to be introduced into the Temple.²

¹ Agrippa was a ruler in a neighboring state.

Questions:

1. The Talmud states in reference to the Temple that Herod rebuilt: "Whoever did not see the building of Herod never saw a beautiful building." How would Amoraim usually refer to the Temple? How did they refer to it here? What does that tell us about how they viewed Herod's rebuilt Temple? Why?
2. What was significant about Herod's buildings?
 - a. Technology
 - b. Culture/Religion
3. Aside from the Temple, what about Herod's choices in buildings would disturb the population of Judea?

² The entry about the golden eagle at the entrance to the Temple is found in a different place in Josephus, and is placed here for a more complete description of the character of the Temple Herod built.