
THE HASMONEAN DYNASTY (135-70 BC)

- A. The division of Jewish history into Maccabean and Hasmonean periods is arbitrary. Some scholars make the distinction by limiting "Maccabean" to Judas and his two brothers. The term "Hasmonean" describes the five descendants of the Maccabees.
1. John Hyrcanus (135—104 BC). John Hyrcanus reached an accord with Syria. The Hellenists became loyal citizens of the Jewish community.
 - a. The ideals of the Hellenist party were perpetuated in the party of the Sadducees.
 - b. The Hasidim were perpetuated in the party of the Pharisees. The parties are mentioned for the first time during the reign of John Hyrcanus (Pfeiffer 98).
 - c. Independence was gained in 129 BC and was confirmed by the Roman Senate.
 - d. "Hyrcanus forthwith began to extend his territory. In the south, for example, he seized Idumaea, compelling the inhabitants to be circumcised; in the north he seized Samaritan territory, destroying the rival Temple (of the Samaritans) on Mount Gerizim" (Russell 32). "There is something ironical in the thought of a grandson of Mattathias forcing religious conformity on a people conquered by Jewish arms! Many historical parallels may be drawn. The oppressed frequently become the oppressors" (Pfeiffer 98).
 - e. The Hasmoneans took over the High Priesthood and it became increasingly worldly and irreligious.
 2. Aristobulus (104—102 BC). The eldest son of John Hyrcanus preferred his Greek name to his Hebrew name, Judah. He cast his three brother in jail.
 - a. He continued the territorial expansion begun by his father.
 - b. He took to himself the title of "king. "
 3. Alexander Jannaeus (102—76 BC). Son of John Hyrcanus.
 - a. Jannaeus continued the policy of territorial expansion. "The size of the Jewish state was comparable to that of the glorious days of David and Solomon" (Pfeiffer 99).
 - b. The Hasmoneans sought to become a maritime power. Ships were sculpted on the family tomb near Modin and were depicted on coins.
 - c. There was a rift between the Pharisees and the Hasmoneans. Open civil war erupted after Jannaeus was officiating in the temple as King-Priest and poured out a water libation at his feet rather than upon the altar. The Pharisees asked the King of Syria to join them in a fight against Jannaeus. "The descendants of Hasidim asked the descendants of Antiochus Epiphanies to aid them against the descendants of the Maccabees" (Pfeiffer 100). Strange allies! Later the Pharisees deserted the Syrians and went to the aid of Jannaeus. He wasn't too impressed. When the war was over he gave a banquet for the Sadducean leaders and had 800 Pharisees crucified in the presence of the guests.
 4. Alexandra (76—67 BC). The wife of Alexander Jannaeus who had been appointed queen by her husband.
 - a. She had her son, Hyrcanus II, appointed as High Priest.
 - b. Hyrcanus favored the Pharisees.
 - c. The younger son, Aristobulus, wanted to be king. The Sadducees found in him a champion.
 5. Aristobulus II (66—63 BC). After the death of his mother he defeated Hyrcanus and forced him to give up office. Aristobulus was both kin^a and priest.
- B. The end of the Hasmoneans and the entrance of Rome.

"The story of the Hasmoneans draws to an end with the account of one Antipater, governor of Idumaea, who encouraged Hyrcanus in exile to remove his brother from office. With the help of an Arabian ruler, Aretas III, he besieged Aristobulus in Jerusalem. It was at this point that Rome decided to interfere in Palestinian affairs. Pompey sent his general, Scaurus, to quell the rising and he, through bribery, supported Aristobulus. In the year 63 BC. Pompey in person, fearing the designs of Aristobulus, attacked Jerusalem and conquered it, entering in person into the Temple and the Holy of Holies. Aristobulus was carried captive to Rome. Hyrcanus was confirmed in the High Priesthood and was appointed Ethnarch of Judea which was now added to the province of Syria" (Russell 34-35).