
IV. THE JEWS UNDER THE SELEUCIDS.

- A. The Seleucids and the Ptolemies fought frequently during the Ptolemaic rule of Palestine. The Ptolemies were defeated at the battle of Banias in 198 BC, and the Seleucids took control of Palestine.
- B. Seleucid rulers included Antiochus III, "the Great" (223—187 BC), Seleucus IV (187-175 BC) and Antiochus IV (175-164 BC).
- C. Antiochus IV was nicknamed 'Epiphanies' (the brilliant one), but by some was called 'Epimanes' (the madman or the dullard). He was a strong devotee to Hellenism and sought to impose his philosophy on all his subjects.
- D. Rivalry among the Jews. "Among the Jews two factions developed, 'the house of Onias' (pro-Egyptian) and 'the house of Tobias' (pro-Syrian). The Syrian king Antiochus IV or Epiphanies (175—163 BC) replaced the Jewish high priest Onias III with Onias' brother Jason, a Hellenizer, who planned to make Jerusalem a Greek city" (Gundry 5).
1. Pfeiffer describes this period as one of Israel's darkest: 'A systematic attempt was made to Hellenize the country by force. An edict demanded the fusion of all the nationalities of the Seleucid empire into one people. Greek deities were to be worshipped by all.
"An elderly Athenian philosopher was sent to Jerusalem to supervise the enforcement of the order. He identified the God of Israel with Jupiter, and ordered a bearded image of the pagan deity, perhaps in the likeness of Antiochus, set up upon the Temple altar. The Jews popularly spoke of this as 'the Abomination of Desolation.'
"Greek soldiers and their paramours performed licentious heathen rites in the very Temple courts. Swine were sacrificed on the altar. The drunken orgy associated with the worship of Bacchus was made compulsory. Conversely, Jews were forbidden, under penalty of death, to practice circumcision, Sabbath observance, or the observance of the feasts of the Jewish year. Copies of the Hebrew Scriptures were ordered destroyed" (Pfeiffer 81).
 2. Gundry elaborates on some of the Greek customs: "A gymnasium with an adjoining race track was built. There Jewish lads exercised nude in Greek fashion, to the outrage of pious Jews. The track races opened with invocations to pagan deities, and even the Jewish priests attended such events. Hellenization also included attendance at Greek theaters, adoption of Greek dress, surgery to remove the marks of circumcision, and exchange of Hebrew for Greek names" (5).
- E. The Jews who opposed the Hellenization efforts were called Hasidim. The name Hasidim means "the pious." They developed a resistance movement and attempted a defense of orthodox Judaism. The Hasidim were the forerunners of the Pharisees.
- F. Antiochus Epiphanies invaded Egypt in 170 BC. Before doing so he removed Jason as high priest in his stead. Menelaus was a Hellenizing Jew of the tribe of Benjamin (priests were to be from Levi!) who offered higher tribute.
1. Word came to Jerusalem that Antiochus had been killed in Egypt. Jason hurried to Jerusalem and ousted Menelaus. (The report was false.)
 2. After a second invasion into Egypt (ca. 168 BC), Antiochus was pressured by the Romans to relinquish all claims to Egypt. He vented his frustration on the Jews.
 - a. This is when a sow was offered on the Temple altar. Jews who resisted were put to death.
 - b. The Maccabean revolt was begun.
 3. Gromacki describes the spirit of the Jews at that time: "Unknown to the Seleucidae, they had stimulated a spirit of nationalism among the Jews. Tired of oppression and years of Gentile dominion they prayed and conspired to be free. this determination not only produced the Maccabean revolt but permeated Jewish thought into the New Testament era up to the time of Bar-Cochba (AD 135). Among the orthodox developed a longing for a military, political messiah who

would smash the Gentile war machine. This is why so many were disenchanted with Jesus' teaching and actions" (10). Paul and Barnabas went out from Antioch (Acts 11:19-26).

G. For the Biblical prophecies concerning this period see Daniel 8—11. The Prophecy of Daniel, by Edward J. Young, is a good commentary to consult.