
Pearl Seeking

PARSHA POINTS

The History of Chanukah

- ***The Rise of Alexander the Great***

- The last events recorded in the Old Testament center upon Nehemiah rebuilding the walls around Yerushalayim. At that time, the Persian Empire was the world power and controlled the area of Judea. Alexander the Great defeated King Darius of Persia and established the Greek Empire - 1 Maccabees 1:1-4

- ***The Death of Alexander the Great***

- After a 12-year reign, Alexander became so ill that he knew he would not recover. Before he died, he divided his kingdom between his 4 generals. After his death, the 4 generals formed 4 separate states within the Greek Empire - 1 Maccabees 1:5-9

- ***Antiochus Epiphanes***

- One of the 4 generals formed the Seleucid kingdom. From within the Seleucids rose an evil ruler named Antiochus. He was so prideful that he added the title Epiphany (god), to his name. He ruled over Judea - 1 Maccabees 1:10



- ***The Push for Assimilation***

- Among the Yehudim (Jews) there arose those trying to convince their families and friends to Hellenize. Hellenization means to assimilate to the Greek way of life by adopting their language, dress, and gods. Thus, they became unfaithful to Elohim - 1 Maccabees 1:11-15

- ***Antiochus Expanded his Rule***

- During this time, Antiochus attacked the Ptolemy kingdom of Mitsrayim (Egypt) with ships, soldiers on horseback, elephants, and chariots. Antiochus defeated the King of Mitsrayim and plundered his land - 1 Maccabees 1:16-19

- ***Antiochus Plundered the Temple***

- After defeating the Mitsrites (Egyptians), Antiochus stopped in Yerushalayim on his way home. While there, he plundered the Temple and killed some of the faithful Yehudim, which caused great mourning throughout the land of Yisra'el - 1 Maccabees 1:20-28

- ***Yerushalayim Attacked Again***

- Two years after Antiochus attacked Yerushalayim, he sent a commander to deceive the people so they could be easily attacked and killed. In addition to the destruction, they also took women and children as slaves, then confiscated animals - 1 Maccabees 1:29-32

The History of Chanukah Cont'd:

• *The Enemy Built a Fortress*

- After defeating the people of Yerushalayim, the soldiers and unfaithful Yehudim joined together to build a citadel, or fortress. They filled this fortress with the provisions and weapons they had taken from the people. Because of this, many faithful Yehudim fled from Yerushalayim, seeking refuge in other cities of Yisra'el - 1 Maccabees 1:33-38

• *The Temple is Desecrated and Defiled*

- Many Yehudim consented to Antiochus' religion by sacrificing to idols and profaning the Sabbath. Yahweh's burnt offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings were forbidden in the Temple. Instead, swine's flesh and all manner of unclean beasts were offered. The children of Yisra'el quit circumcising their children and made themselves unclean with all manner of profanation - 1 Maccabees 1:39-48

• *The Holy Books are Prohibited and Destroyed*

- They tore up the books of the Law and burnt them with fire. If someone was found with any of these books, they were put to death by the king's command - 1 Maccabees 1:56-57

• *The Faithful Few*

- Although it was banned by Antiochus, several women did circumcise their babies. The faithful few resolved not to eat any unclean thing, choosing to die rather than profane the holy covenant - 1 Maccabees 1:60-64

• *Mattathias the priest*

- When the king's commanders told Mattathias to forsake Yahweh's commandments, he told them that he would not deviate from Yahweh's word—either to the right or to the left. Mattathias was so zealous that when he saw one of his own people offering a wrong sacrifice, he slew him upon the altar and pulled the altar down. Then he also killed the king's commissioner - 1 Maccabees 2:1-26



• *A Call to Arms*

- Following this, Mattathias went throughout the city, calling for anyone who was zealous to maintain the covenant to follow him. He and his sons gathered others and fled to the mountains to dwell there. The king's men pursued many who had fled and waged a battle with them on the Sabbath day. Mattathias and his men agreed to fight, even if it was Sabbath, so that they would not all perish. Many other faithful men of Yisra'el joined them and slew many sinful men - 1 Maccabees 2:27-44

• *Mattathias Gives his Farewell Speech*

- When it came time for Mattathias to die, he drew his sons near and gave them a beautiful farewell speech, in which he passed the baton to his eldest son Judah the Maccabee who became known as Judah the Hammer - 1 Maccabees 2:49-70

The History of Chanukah Cont'd:

- **Many Battles, Much Victory**

- As Judah the Hammer led his army, many battles were fought and won with Yahweh as their banner. The fear and dread of him spread throughout the kingdom and other empires as well. Finally, the city of Yerushalayim and the Temple were regained - 1 Maccabees 3-4

- **Rededicating the Temple**

- Because the heathen had defiled the existing altar, Judah thought it best to take down the old altar and build a new one. He chose wise men to cleanse the Temple and brought in the 7-branch menorah and the table of showbread, along with the 12 loaves and the altar of incense. They kept the feast of dedication for 8 days, starting on the 25th day of the month of Kislev - 1 Maccabees 4:43-56

- **A Proclamation**

- Because the reproach of the heathen was put away, there was much joy among the people. Judah and his brethren, along with the whole congregation of Yisra'el, ordained that the Jews should celebrate these 8 days of the dedication of the altar in the same season from year to year. They would start on the 25th of the month of Kislev, observing the 8 days with mirth and gladness, as in the feast of Tabernacles. They also bore boughs and branches and sang Psalms - 1 Maccabees 4:57-59; 2 Maccabees 10:5-8

DIGGING DEEPER

Parents/Teachers may choose to use these prompts for further discussion of the Torah portion.

- Give examples of those in Scriptures who did not assimilate with the majority. Ex: Turn to the book of Daniel.
- In the story of the festival of lights, the Jews cleansed the temple. How can we cleanse our lives during this time?
- Did you know that light taken from a flame to light another candle does not diminish the first flame at all? Find verses in the Scriptures about light and discuss how we can shine our light to others.

