

Antiochus IV and the Maccabean Revolt



Aims

- ▶ There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens - Ecclesiastes 3
- ▶ Why then was there a time for the Maccabean Revolt and the conflict between the Seleucid King Antiochus IV and elements of Jewish society.



Key Dates

- ▶ All dates BC unless otherwise noted.

195 Antiochus III gains territory that includes Judaea and its hinterland

170 Antiochus IV starts war against Ptolemies : Sixth Syrian War

169 Initial sack of Jerusalem by Antiochus IV

168 End of Syrian War

167 Start of Maccabean revolt

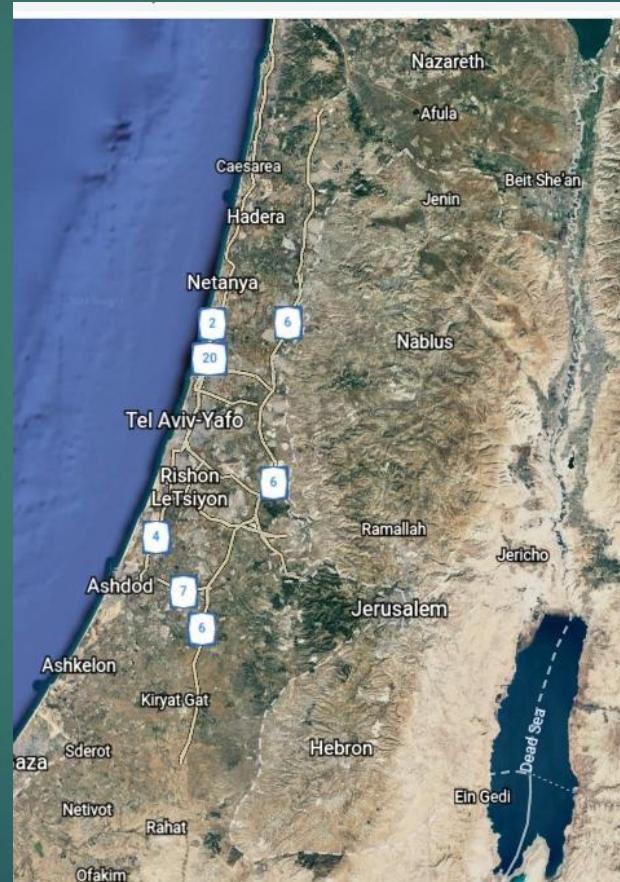
164 End of Guerilla phase

60s AD series of revolts against Roman occupation in Jerusalem and its environs.



Geography of Jerusalem

© Google Earth.
Satellite image
of Israel



Primary Sources

- ▶ The primary sources are
 - ▶ Old testament, books of Maccabees
 - ▶ The Romanised historian Josephus.

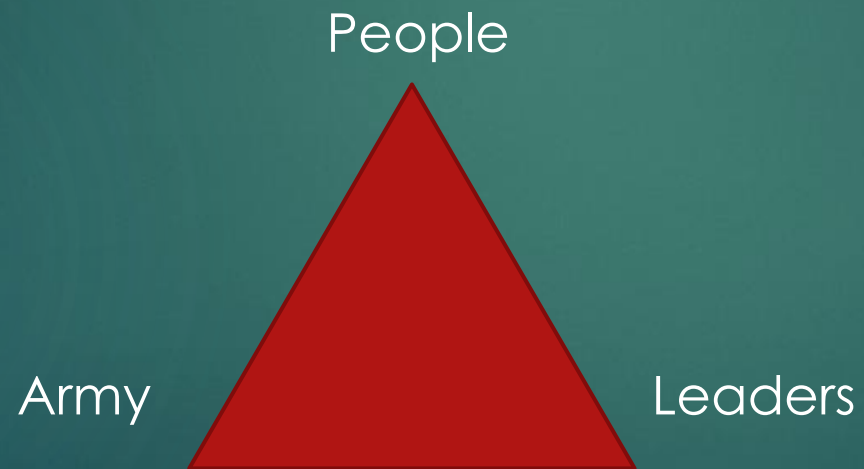


Theoretical Background

- ▶ Theory of War - Clausewitz

- > War is a continuation of politics,

- > War consists of triads



Historical Background

- ▶ In 195 the control of Jerusalem passed into the hands of the Seleucid Empire
- ▶ High priest same family since Persian times in 6th Century
- ▶ Confirmed by Alexander the Great, the Ptolemaic Kings and now the Selucids.
- ▶ No apparent change seem likely



Religious Context

- ▶ The Greek Pantheon was principally worshipped by the Seleucid rulers
- ▶ Other Clergy were tolerated, even at times if it meant a sometimes contested coexistence
 - ▶ eg - Seleucus 1 and the Babylon hierarchy
- ▶ Common place:
 - ▶ Statues of Kings in temples
 - ▶ Names such as Antiochus II as 'Theos'
- ▶ Existence of Cults centred around Selukid kings and their families - eg Antiochus III wife Laodike was honoured in a temple in Sardis



Culture and Finance

- ▶ Temples rich and not well protect - Dissolution of the monasteries a modern example
- ▶ Greek Culture was a dominant - Mithridates VI (Poison King) of Pontus a philhellene
- ▶ Gymnasium – core to Greek identity



- ▶ Kings like Gods had power and were capricious in their usage, as will be shown.



Casus Belli

- ▶ High priest both a religious and secular office - being the agent of the King in Jerusalem and surrounding areas.
- ▶ 174 Traditionalist High priest Onias was driven out.
- ▶ Jason, supported by Philhelenes became the new High Priest .
 - ▶ Brother to former High Priest: Hence acceptable to traditionists
 - ▶ Greek name : implying a sympathy to Greek Ideas.
- ▶ Increased tribute to Antiochus IV was paid.



Coups and Counters

- ▶ 171 Pro-Hellenic, Meneaos, installed as High Priest, after permission granted by Antiochus IV
- ▶ Very pro-Greek and not of a traditional priestly family.
- ▶ Political violence began- assassination of the ex-High priest Onias.
- ▶ Paramilitary force of 3,000 to keep peace and quell opposition to Meneaos
- ▶ It failed and a counter-coup - Jason back (increased tribute again to Antiochus IV)



Wider contexts and outside forces

- ▶ Sixth Syrian war in 170
- ▶ 169 Antiochus IV takes steps - ousting of Meneas a challenge to his authority and effects ongoing war
- ▶ From the books of the Maccabees and Josephus - Antiochus IV took and sacked Jerusalem with much carnage.
- ▶ Meneas again High Priest but “aided” by Philip the Phrygian (afterwards replaced by Apollonius)
- ▶ 168 Roman invitation ended the war
- ▶ 167 More taxes levied from the main temple
- ▶ Resistance. To quell this, Apollonius converted temple to Zeus to seemly undercut the traditional priestly caste



Maccabees

- ▶ Of the Religious caste
- ▶ Fives sons, Mattathias head according to sources
- ▶ Objected new rites of Zeus in a pointed way.
- ▶ War begun when Mattathias killed those performing new rites
- ▶ Guerrilla phase in the countryside had begun

In Clauswitzean terms the triangle had been completed.



Summary

- ▶ Religious faith - varied in type and practice from devout to the disinterested
- ▶ Rites however were important: part of day-to-day societal ritual across the Mediterranean
- ▶ The disruption of these with the excess taxes/looting showed Antiochus IV lacked the sure touch of Seleucus I



References

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