

The Intertestamental Period

The Hasmonean Dynasty

Introduction:

1. We concluded several weeks ago with the story of the first generation of Hasmoneans, the sons of Mattathias. This week will pick up the second generation and trace the dynasty to its end.
2. Under the Hasmoneans, the Jews experienced around 100 years of “independence.” Despite the issues, this is a time that would become nostalgic for the Jewish people. It is their first and last breath of independence until 1948.

I. John Hyrcanus I (134-104 BC)

A. Rise to Power

1. He survived his brother-in-law, Ptolemy’s assassination attempt which claimed the lives of his father, and two older brothers.

B. In Service of Antiochus Pius

1. Antiochus sieged Jerusalem in 134.
2. John agreed to serve in Antiochus’ military to end the siege.
3. When Antiochus died against the Parthians, Hyrcanus deserted and returned to Judea in 128 BC.

C. Expansion of Israel

1. Consolidation of Power
 - a) He ended the Oniad temple in Egypt.
 - b) He destroyed the Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerezim
2. Expansion of Judea
 - a) He annexed Samaria to the North
 - b) He annexed Edom to the South
 - (1) He forced them to be circumcised and proselytize.

D. Pharisees and Hyrcanus

1. The Pharisees opposed the forced conversion of Edom.
2. The Pharisees supported a separation of power
 - a) (Numbers 27:18-20)
 - b) Hyrcanus willed the priesthood to be inherited by his son, Aristobulus, and the crown to his wife.

II. Aristobulus I (104-103 BC)

A. First actions:

1. Order his mother to be starved to death and impressed his brothers.
2. Crowned himself “King”
3. Conquered Galilee

B. His return Home

1. He was very sick (likely appendicitis)
2. His wife, Alexandra, plotted.

- a) Aristobulus sent word to Antigonus to come to the palace and be crowned. Alexandra bribed the messenger to add the request for Antigonus to come in full armor.
- b) As Antigonus paraded around the temple, Aristobulus had him killed.
- C. Shortly after, Aristobulus died from his appendicitis

III. Alexander Jannaeus (193-76 BC)

A. Jannaeus and Alexandra Salome

- 1. The 24-year-old Alexander married his much older sister-in-law. At the age 38 she gave birth to two sons.
- 2. Jannaeus sided with the Pharisees, as Salome was one.

B. Alexander Jannaeus' conquest

- 1. Jannaeus' conquest and expansion which led to war.
- 2. Alexander returned from war defeated
 - a) He was met with angry 10,000 worshippers in the temple who threw fruit at him.
 - b) In retaliation, he executed 6,000 of the worshippers.
 - c) Alexander switched sides from the Pharisees to the Sadducees.
 - d) This led the Pharisees to appeal to the Seleucids and attempt to have Alexander overthrown. However, due to a Seleucid civil war, the troops returned home.
 - e) Alexander gathered some 800 Pharisees and crucified them while their families were murdered at their feet.

C. Failing Power

- 1. Realizing the political power of the Pharisees, he essentially lost his power.
- 2. He willed his kingdom to his wife, Alexandra, and the priesthood to his son Hyrcanus II.

IV. Alexandra Salome (76-67 BC)

- A. Alexandra was a pharisee. Under her rule, the Pharisees became increasingly powerful.
- B. The Sadducees who had helped Alexander Jannaeus, were being persecuted by the Pharisees. They began to support Aristobulus II.
- C. Her decade-long rule was perhaps the best of the Hasmonians.

V. Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II (67-40 BC)

- A. After the Death of Alexandra Salome, the Pharisee-backed Hyrcanus II became king.

B. Civil War!

- 1. Only 3 months after Hyrcanus II became king, he was deposed by his twin, Aristobulus II who was backed by the Sadducees and the shrewd Antipater.
- 2. After Aristobulus II ascended to the throne, Antipater recommended that Hyrcanus II be killed. Aristobulus II, however, did not kill his brother.
- 3. Antipater then switches sides and supports Hyrcanus II to retake the throne.

4. Hyrcanus II, with the help of Antipater, lay siege against Aristobulus II on the temple mount during Passover.

VI. Pompey The Great.

A. Appeal to Rome

1. The Mithridatic Wars were concluding, and Rome had conquered the Seleucid Kingdom and controlled Syria.
2. Both Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II send envoys to Rome for Assistance.
3. Rome initially sides with Aristobulus for their wealth, but ultimately, Pompey the Great would side with the weaker Hyrcanus II.

B. Romans in Jerusalem

1. Pompey arrived in Jerusalem in 63 BC and was welcomed by the Pharisees, but not the Sadducees.
2. The Sadducees holed up on the temple mount and the Romans laid siege against the temple mount.
3. Rome eventually gained access to the temple mount and slaughtered 12,000 of the temple's defenders.

C. Pompey Enters the Temple.

1. He enters the Holy of Holies
2. It seems this was not done in malice.
 - a) He learns of his offense and immediately leaves and orders the temple to be cleansed.
 - b) He orders that nothing be taken from the temple.

VII. Antigonus II Mattathias (40-37 BC)

- A. Pompey reinstalls Hyrcanus II as ethnarch until the line of succession is solved, with the understanding that the true power is Antipater who served as the Roman chief official.
 1. If Hyrcanus II dies without an heir, Judea is annexed by Rome.
 2. If there is a dispute as heir, Rome will conquer and annex Judea.
 3. Hyrcanus' solution is to marry his daughter, Alexandra, to Aristobulus' Son, Antigonus Mattathias.
- B. Antigonus took power from Hyrcanus II and was proclaimed "King"
 1. He also wanted the High Priesthood. In 40 BC he bit off the ear of his uncle, Hyrcanus II. — (Leviticus 21:18-20)
- C. Antigonus and Alexandra would have a daughter, Mariamne,
 1. Marianne would marry the son of Antipater, Herod.

Conclusion:

1. The Hasmonean Dynasty is a time of nostalgia for the Jews. It's a taste of the freedom and power that they once held.
2. Despite the flaws of the Hasmoneans, the hearts of the people are being prepared for a "King of Kings" who can save his people.
3. Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 14.4.5