Antiochus IV, Jewish Quarrels, and the Maccabean Revolt

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The conflict between Jerusalem and the Seleucid Empire, and the subsequent rededication of the Temple altar in 167 BCE, are events that still have significant impacts on both Christians and Jews today.¹ These effects can be observed in the Christian theology of martyrdom and in the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah.² Although both religions recognise the conflict, known as the Maccabean Revolt, as a significant hallmark in their history, modern literature and research tend to lean in favour of the Jews, who fought for self-governance. As a result, there is no difficulty in finding literature discussing Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the atrocities that he had committed against the Jewish people who opposed him, or the heroic feats of the Jews who fought for independence from the Seleucids.³ While the cruelty inflicted upon the region of Judea cannot be excused, neither should the involvement of the Jewish population. For this reason, this paper will focus on primary sources of the time and how they implicate certain priests and pro-Seleucid Jews as the instigators of their own demise. The paper will also discuss the historical relationships that existed between Judea, the Seleucids in Asia, and the Ptolemies in Egypt prior to the Revolt. It should be noted that I do not wish to exonerate Antiochus' actions against the inhabitants of Judea, but rather seek to demonstrate that his misdeeds were not motivated by an innate hatred towards the Jewish population, and indeed followed patterns that were not dissimilar to the actions of other Seleucid kings.

¹ Elias Bickerman, *The God of the Maccabees: Studies on the Origins of the Maccabean Revolt* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), 3.

²Bickerman, 1.

³ Examples of both types of literature: Walter K. Price's book *The Coming Antichrist* (Illinois: Moody Press, 1974) where the author compares Antiochus IV's life and events against the biblical description of the antichrist; and Bezalel Bar-Kockva's book *Judas Maccabaeus: The Jewish Struggle against The Seleucids* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) where the author himself describes the heroic feats of the traditional Jews who fought against the Seleucid Empire. The author in his prologue states, "The biography of Judas Maccabaeus is in fact the story of the military and political struggle that he led against the Seleucid authorities from his father Mattathias' death (166 B.C.) up to his own heroic death (160 B.C.)," xiii.

There are three primary sources which will be particularly useful to my argument: the Biblical apocrypha books 1+2 Maccabees, and the writings of Flavius Josephus. The books of the Maccabees contain relevant sequences featuring Judas Maccabeus, his family, and their followers as they mounted a resistance against those who oppressed the Jews and the region of Judea. Although the author of 1 Maccabees is unknown, from its content one can deduce that he was an educated Jew who understood the Temple culture.⁴ 1 Maccabees is a valuable resource for information on the Jewish-Hellenistic world, as it quotes archival sources which prove the text's credibility. The author of 2 Maccabees is also unknown; however, they allude in the introduction that the work is an abridged version of a previously written piece, recorded by Jason of Cyrene.⁵ The two books are thought to have been written around the same time, shortly after the events took place, which can explain some of the parallels between them. Where 2 Maccabees differs from the first book is that while the first neglects to mention the relationship between the Jews and their God, the second makes up for it. This theological commentary is at times viewed as a shortcoming, as the text explains why the God of the Jews is punishing His people and how He then in turn displays compassion once the Revolt is successful. I will argue that the author's understanding of his God's actions toward the Jews does not corrupt the historical relevance of the text; rather, he expresses the guilt of the Jewish people and enumerates certain events that could have particularly angered their God. While there may be the concern of exaggeration, it does not falsify the sequence of events or who was involved.

The third source in question are the writings of Flavius Josephus, a Roman Jew. The importance of Josephus' historical writing cannot be overstated, especially with regard to

⁴ 1 Macc (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible New Revised Standard Version*).

⁵ "All this, which has been set forth by Jason of Cyrene in five volumes, we shall attempt to condense into a single book," 2 Macc 2:23.

Hellenist-Jewish relations. His two works *Jewish Antiquities* and *The Jewish War* are both relevant to the present argument, but the texts do not come without faults. As ancient historian Paul L. Maier explains, Josephus' writings reveal a tendency to over-exaggerate dramatic scenes, one example being Antiochus' atrocities in Jerusalem, where, as Josephus writes, "so much blood was shed in Jerusalem during its conquest that streams of gore extinguished the fires burning there."⁶ It should be recognised that Josephus is writing in the first century AD, well after the events in question, and is dependent upon the accuracy of earlier sources, among them 1+2 Maccabees. However, with his Roman, that is to say gentile, readership in mind, it is possible that Josephus wrote in a manner that can be taken either to blame the rebel leaders or excuse those Jews who were pro-Seleucid. As ancient Hellenistic scholar Elias Bickerman remarks, "He writes for the Greeks and hardly can present to them the persecution as the result of Gentile sinfulness."⁷ Due to Josephus' dependency on prior sources, there are recurring themes found in other works, such as the irresponsible behaviour of the Jewish priesthood described in 2 Maccabees. Interestingly, Josephus himself, in his preface to the *Jewish War*, states:

It is true, these writers have the confidence to call their accounts histories; wherein yet they seem to me to fail of their purpose, as well as to relate nothing that is sound. For they have a mind to demonstrate the greatness of the Romans, while they still diminish and lessen the actions of the Jew, as not discerning how it cannot be that those must appear to be great who have only conquered those that were little.⁸

In casting doubt upon the opinions of the Roman authors, Josephus simultaneously claims that his own works are sound, and as such edifying for the purpose of instruction. Although certainty is difficult to attain, this paper will proceed with confidence in Josephus' perspective.

⁶ *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1999), 14

⁷ Bickerman, 23.

⁸ *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, 667.

To have a proper understanding of the dynamics of the region of Judea, its geographic situation should be noted.⁹ Josephus does a fairly good job of describing the region, but although he claims brevity, he is quite long-winded. For this reason I will paraphrase his explanation of the regional borders and important sites: to the north, Judea borders Samaria with the city of Anuath; to the south, Arabia; to the east, the Jordan river; and to the west, the city of Joppa. In the middle of this region is found the city of Jerusalem, which leads some to call the city “the navel of the country.”¹⁰ The region of Judea also extended to the coast, including port cities such as Ptolemais in Phoenicia. Jerusalem was the region’s supreme entity, controlling all that surrounded it as the head controls the body. The relationship between Jerusalem and its neighbouring countryside is important in understanding the actions taken against the city.¹¹ The region of Judea, placed within the bigger picture of the ancient Mediterranean world, can be described as such: it is located off the southeast coast of the Mediterranean, northeast of Egypt and southwest of the Seleucid Empire, in effect situating it between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids—and, as this paper will demonstrate, often under sovereign rule of one or the other.

To further illustrate the relationships between Jerusalem and its surroundings, a brief historical overview from the time of Alexander the Great onwards to the Seleucid Empire will be useful. Following Alexander’s death in 323 BCE, his inherited Macedonian land was divided up among four of his military commanders, known as the Diadochi. This sparked intense rivalries and produced two figures significant to this paper’s argument: Seleucus Nicator, who managed to obtain Babylon and Syria, and Ptolemy Soter, who situated himself in Egypt. The region of Judea, following this initial sorting of territory, fell to Ptolemy.¹² As discussed, being situated

⁹ Currently, in the year 2020, the ownership of this area is contested between Israel and Palestine.

¹⁰ Josephus, *The Jewish War* 3.3.5

¹¹ A complex description can be found in Josephus’ *The Jewish War* 3.3.5.

¹² Bickerman, 32.

between these two powerful empires, Judea found itself in the middle of any conflicts that arose between them. Josephus reveals as much when describing a battle between Antiochus III and Ptolemy Philopater:

Now it happened that in the reign of Antiochus the Great, who ruled over all Asia, that the Jews, *as well as the inhabitants of Coele-Syria*, suffered greatly, and their land was sorely harassed;...so that they were very like to a ship in a storm, which is tossed by the waves on both sides; and just thus were they in their situation in the middle between Antiochus's prosperity and its change to adversity. (*Jewish Antiquities* 12.3)

This passage demonstrates that the Jews were not the only ones affected by war in the region, and thus not necessarily targeted because of their religion. This is later echoed by Antiochus IV, who, after seizing Jerusalem, “wrote to *his whole kingdom* that all should be one people, and that *all* should give up their particular customs”¹³ Josephus describes the Jews’ reaction to the conquest of the region by Antiochus III the Great ca. 200 BCE¹⁴:

But afterward, when Antiochus subdued those cities of Coele-Syria which Scopas had gotten into his possession, and Samaria with them, the Jews, *of their own accord*, went over to him, and received him into the city [Jerusalem], and gave plentiful provision to all his army, and to his elephants, and readily assisted him when he besieged the garrison which was in the citadel of Jerusalem. (*Jewish Antiquities* 12.3.3:133)

This passage tells us that at least some of the Jews went to Antiochus III to befriend him. This should not be thought of as odd: the Seleucids had won the region, and maintaining good relations with its inhabitants was in their best interest. Josephus goes on to explain how greatly the Jews were rewarded for their kindness. Antiochus’ concessions to them included rebuilding or repairing their temple; a pension that provided the necessary elements for sacrifices; tax breaks and collection¹⁵; the return of all the Jews who had previously been carried away to foreign lands; and a sanction permitting the Jews to live according to the laws of their own

¹³ 1 Macc. 1:41.

¹⁴ Otto Mørkholm, *Antiochus IV of Syria*, (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1966), 66.

¹⁵ Normally tax collections were performed by kingdom officials, not by the subjects themselves.

country.¹⁶ A decree was also issued, announcing that no foreigner or unlawful person, nor any animal deemed unclean by the Jews, was permitted within the temple precinct.¹⁷ It is these preferential arrangements that the author of 2 *Maccabees* 4:11 is referring when portraying Jason negatively by stating that “He set aside the existing royal concessions to the Jews...and he destroyed the lawful ways of living and introduced new customs contrary to the law.” This is a key text in 2 Maccabees, because it initiated the Jews’ descent into a Hellenistic culture which demanded they relinquish the freedoms granted to them by Antiochus III.. It should be observed that every decree concerning the Jews issued by Antiochus III had connections to the Temple in some form or another. As such, the temple personnel throughout the region of Judea were given great power and a special role in the Seleucid Empire.

As was common throughout the Mediterranean world, the Jews’ interactions with the various Seleucid kings were often accompanied by the giving of gifts. This cultural practice is well recorded in the sources under discussion. Prior to Antiochus III gaining the territory of Judea, Josephus mentions the Egyptians also performing this duty:

And these were what gifts were sent by Ptolemy to Jerusalem, and dedicated to God there. But when Eleazar the high priest had devoted them to God, and had paid due respect to those that brought them, and had given them presents to be carried to the king, he dismissed them. (*Jewish Antiquities* 12.2.11:85)

In order to present oneself and be perceived as an ally, one must present gifts or something of an equivalent nature, such as assistance in one form or another. Within the Jewish context, this meant providing something that was of great value, whether monetary or religious. To not present a gift in return for any amount of demonstrated kindness could be viewed as an insult, which explains the enormity of the favour that Antiochus III heaped upon the Israelites for assisting him in his conquest. Upon his death, Antiochus III was succeeded by his son Seleucus

¹⁶ *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, 396.

¹⁷ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 12.3:145.

IV. Policy regarding Judea did not change significantly between the reigns of Antiochus and Seleucus. *2 Maccabees* 3:1-3 states that

While the holy city was inhabited in unbroken peace and the laws were strictly observed because of the piety of the high priest Onias and his hatred of wickedness, it came about that the kings themselves honored the place and glorified the temple with the finest presents, even to the extent that King Seleucus of Asia defrayed from his own revenues all the expenses connected with the service of the sacrifices. (*2 Maccabees* 3:1-3)

The same text also mentions that Seleucus “glorified the temple with the finest presents.”¹⁸ It should be understood that Seleucus did not do this out of the generosity of his heart; rather that this was another gesture of reciprocity, granted in expectation of the Jews’ allegiance. That allegiance would also mean financial support if need be. Practices of reciprocity evidently contributed to a relationship of good will between the Jews and their ruler. However, as will be discussed later, the priests in Jerusalem used the cultural practice of reciprocity for their own benefit, not necessarily that of the whole Jewish population.

Prior to Seleucus’ succession, Antiochus III had been defeated in altercations with the Romans and their ally King Eumenes while attempting to gain control over Asia Minor. These battles led to the Treaty of Apamea, the terms of which were not favourable for the Seleucid Empire. Polybius, a Greek historian, states in his *Histories* that:

Antiochus shall pay to the Romans twelve thousand talents a year, the talent not to weigh less than eighty Roman pounds, and five hundred and forty thousand modii of corn: he shall pay to King Eumenes three hundred and fifty talents in the next five years, paying seventy talents a year at the same time that is fixed for his payments to the Romans and in lieu of the corn, as Antiochus estimated it—one hundred and twenty-seven talents and twelve hundred and eight drachmas, the sum Eumenes agreed to accept as a satisfactory payment to his treasury. (Polybius *Hist.* 21.42.19-21)

It is in this context—that of a Seleucid Empire in need of funds—that *2 Maccabees* 3:4-14 should be read. Within these texts, the author reveals that Simon, a captain of the temple and a

¹⁸ *2 Maccabees* 3:2.

member of the tribe of Benjamin,¹⁹ had a disagreement with Onias the High Priest²⁰ about administration practices.²¹ Since Simon could not prevail, he went to Apollonius of Tarsus, the governor of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia, and provided him with the information that the treasury in Jerusalem was full of untold sums of money. This information Apollonius then relayed to king Seleucus, who then ordered Heliodorus, the man in charge of the king's affairs, to look into the matter. The investigation resulted in Seleucus ordering the confiscation of the treasury money.²² Afraid that he may be implicated for dispersing the treasury fund information, Simon committed slander, claiming it was Onias who had revealed the monetary value of the treasury. This generated an intense rivalry among Simon and Onias., and this rivalry created instability in public affairs. Onias appealed to Seleucus IV in order to seek a peaceful settlement with his oppressors.²³ The case of Simon and Onias demonstrates the level of interaction the Seleucid kings had with the priesthood in Jerusalem.

The Jewish source of 2 Maccabees reveals that the priesthood would in fact actively seek out the authority of the king in order to establish the peace that they could not. This is a recurring theme, as is evident in the following example from 2 Maccabees:

When Seleucus died and Antiochus, who was called Epiphanes, succeeded to the kingdom, Jason the brother of Onias obtained the high priesthood by corruption, promising the king at

¹⁹ 2 Macc 3: 4 states this as Simon's position at the temple. The note for this verse in the *NRSV Study Bible* references Acts 4:1 which states, "While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came to them." The note on Acts 4:1 reads, "*Captain of the temple*, the officer in charge of the temple police." 1963.

²⁰ 2 Macc. 3:1 portrays Onias as a "pious" High Priest who hated "wickedness."

²¹ The author of 2 Maccabees states this as Simon's tribe. Whether this is historically accurate or not is not of primary concern for the author. The note on 2 Maccabees 3:4 (pp. 1630) would suggest this as well, as some scholars question the reliability of this claim. I would suggest that the author makes this claim because of his intentions to portray Simon as an enemy of the priesthood and villainous in nature. Contemporary readers of the text would have understood these intentions because of their education in the Scriptures. They would have known that the tribe of Benjamin in the Hebrew Bible was described as, "a ravenous wolf, in the morning devouring the prey, and at evening dividing the spoil." See Genesis 49:27.

²² 2 Macc 3:13-14.

²³ 2 Macc 4: 5-6. Although the texts do not explicitly reveal whether Onias was successful or not in his appeal, the fact that Jason, Onias' brother, was only able to succeed in obtaining the priesthood after Seleucus' death (2 Macc 4:7), suggests that Onias' appeal was indeed successful.

an interview three hundred sixty talents of silver, and from another source of revenue eighty talents. In addition to this he promised to pay one hundred fifty more if permission were given to establish by his authority a gymnasium and a body of youth for it, and to enroll the people of Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch. When the king assented and Jason came to office, he at once shifted his compatriots over to the Greek way of life. (*2 Maccabees* 4:7-10)

The text makes it clear that the kings of the Seleucid Empire, in this case Antiochus IV, were willing to provide assistance to the priests of Jerusalem through the practices of gift-giving and reciprocal aid. Although it is not explicitly expressed, Antiochus' permission to build the gymnasium would have only assisted his cause—to maintain influence and governance over Judea by allowing implementation of Greek culture. Better yet, it was not an action that he had to enforce; there were willing participants in Jerusalem. This is expressed in *2 Maccabees* 4:22 when Antiochus IV is set to go on his first campaign against Egypt: “He was welcomed magnificently by Jason and the city, and ushered in with a blaze of torches and with shouts.”²⁴

Ironically, just as Jason had come to office in a corrupt fashion, he was supplanted in a similar manner. Having sent Menelaus, brother of the aforementioned Simon, to pay Antiochus IV the necessary amount to complete their essential business, Menelaus was able to secure the priesthood for himself by offering three hundred talents of silver more than what Jason had been presenting.²⁵ Menelaus, it should be mentioned, was a corrupt individual who was involved in bribery and murderous schemes, including the murder of the former High Priest Onias after Onias had found Menelaus to be stealing gold vessels from the Temple to sell.²⁶ Menelaus'

²⁴ *2 Macc* 4:22.

²⁵ *2 Macc* 4:24.

²⁶ The etymology of the names of Jason and Menelaus may be of interest. In the Greek language, the name Jason means “healer” and Menelaus can be translated into “the rage (or wrath) of the people”. What should be noted that both have Greek names, which indicates the rise of Hellenism in Jerusalem. Of further interest, Menelaus reflects his name in character, being noted as a cruel tyrant (*2 Macc.* 4:25) and one who did not shy from murderous intentions (*2 Macc.* 4:34).

crime is all the more heinous because of Onias' reputation as a well-respected man, as demonstrated in 2 Maccabees 4:36-37:

When the king returned from the region of Cilicia, the Jews in the city appealed to him with regard to the unreasonable murder of Onias, and the Greeks shared their hatred of the crime. Therefore Antiochus was grieved at heart and filled with pity, and wept because of the moderation and good conduct of the deceased.²⁷

The author of this text reveals Antiochus to be a sympathetic person, genuinely fond of Onias.

This is certainly not the characteristic of a man with an innate hatred of the Jews, as he has often been portrayed.

The second example worth mentioning is when the shrewd Menelaus, being charged with his involvement with Lysimachus,²⁸ bribed his way into being acquitted:

But Menelaus, already as good as beaten, promised a substantial bribe to Ptolemy son of Dorymenes to win over the king. Therefore Ptolemy, taking the king aside into a colonnade as if for refreshment, induced the king to change his mind. Menelaus, the cause of all the trouble, he acquitted of the charges against him. (2 Maccabees 4:45-47)

What should be noted is the context of the charges. The texts preceding the bribe state that Menelaus was allowing Lysimachus to also steal gold vessels, presumably from the Temple. The Jewish crowds were growing angry that this was happening; because of this, Lysimachus preemptively gathered three thousand men and proceeded to attack the people. Instead of cowering to Lysimachus and his troops, the Jews fought back and succeeded in killing him.²⁹ It is obvious that there was discontent among the Jewish population. A number of the previous texts relate a corrupt priesthood that was gaining power through the offering of financial gifts to the Seleucid kings, who in turn would secure their authority over Jerusalem, and thus over the

²⁷ 2 Macc. 4:36-37.

²⁸ Lysimachus is mentioned as the brother of Menelaus, who was given the position as "deputy in the high priesthood" (2 Macc 4:29) He was unpopular among the Jewish population because of his "many acts of sacrilege...committed in the city" (2 Macc 4:39).

²⁹ 2 Macc 4:39-42.

region of Judea. The last text perhaps offers insight that the ordinary or traditional Jew was not pleased with these actions, and as such, a violent insurrection occurred among the Jews themselves.

Sadly, the uprising against Lysimachus would not be the end of Jewish civil discontent. During Antiochus IV's second campaign against Egypt, a rumour was spread that he had died. When Jason, who had been outbid by Menelaus for the High Priesthood, heard about this, he

took no fewer than a thousand men and suddenly made an assault on the city. When the troops on the wall had been forced back and at last the city was being taken, Menelaus took refuge in the citadel. But Jason kept relentlessly slaughtering his compatriots, not realizing that success at the cost of one's kindred is the greatest misfortune, but imagining that he was setting up trophies of victory over enemies and not over compatriots. He did not, however, gain control of the government; in the end he got only disgrace from his conspiracy, and fled again into the country of the Ammonites...When news of what had happened reached the king, he took it to mean that Judea was in revolt. So, raging inwardly, he left Egypt and took the city by storm. (2 *Maccabees* 5:5-7,11)

What ensues can only be described as a bloodbath, and is generally offered as evidence of Antiochus' innate hatred of the Jews. Many were massacred or else sold into slavery. On top of this, Antiochus entered the Temple, assisted by the treacherous Jew Menelaus, and plundered it of all the riches amassed. The actions that occurred afterwards in and around the Temple and Jerusalem are described as the antithesis to the laws given by the Jewish God, such as sexual debauchery, abominable offerings, not observing the Sabbath, and being publicly humiliated for the practice of circumcision.³⁰ *Maccabees* 1 summarizes these events as follows:

In those days certain renegades came out from Israel and misled many, saying, "Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles around us, for since we separated from them many disasters have come upon us." This proposal pleased them, and some of the people eagerly went to the king, who authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles. So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom, and removed the marks of circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant. They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil. (1 *Maccabees* 1:11-15)

³⁰ 2 Macc 6:3-11.

These texts explicitly mention lawless Israelites seeking out the Seleucid king. The king provided them with security and authority to govern Judea along with an opportunity to further their own careers, and in an act of reciprocity the pro-Seleucid Jews adopted Greek customs in order to secure the alliance that they believed would ensure the safety of Judea.

With these examples in mind, I will argue that there were two parallel reasons for the act of gift-giving. Firstly, exchanges between the priests and the king allowed priests to gain or maintain control over Jerusalem and, as such, the region of Judea. Gift-giving between the same two parties also served to guarantee the security of Judea and its loyalty to the king, spurning foreign nations such as the Ptolemaic Empire. As mentioned previously, Ptolemy had also provided gifts to Jerusalem dedicated to the God of the Jews, developing an intimate relationship with them prior to Antiochus' reign. Other similar interactions are mentioned by Josephus. For example, this account which took place after the seizure of Egypt by Ptolemy of Lagus following Alexander the Great's death:

But when Ptolemy had taken a great many captives, both from the mountainous parts of Judea, and from the places about Jerusalem and Samaria, and the places near Mount Gerizim, he led them all into Egypt, and settled them there. And as he knew that the people of Jerusalem were most faithful in the observation of oaths and covenants....so he distributed many of them into garrisons, and at Alexandria gave them equal privileges of citizens with the Macedonians themselves...But, there were not a few other Jews who, of their own accord, went into Egypt, as invited by the goodness of the soil, and by the liberality of Ptolemy. (*Jewish Antiquities* 12.1.1)

Following the rededication of the Temple after the Maccabean Revolt took place, the author of 2 Maccabees invites the Jews of Egypt to celebrate with those Jews who were able to claim independence; this celebration would become known as Hanukkah. The relationship between the Jews in Jerusalem and those in Egypt must have been known to the Seleucids and could have caused some distrust, hence the need to secure the Temple leadership.³¹

³¹ In the Israelite tradition the priesthood could be traced back to Aaron the High Priest, or simply priest, as is found in the *Hebrew Bible*, Genesis 28:1 "Then bring near to you your brother Aaron, and his sons with him, from among

The desecration and plundering of the Temple is the hallmark argument for implicating Antiochus IV as a man who hated the Jews and Judaism. However, there are at least two other occurrences in 1 Maccabees that mention sackings of cities not in Judea. The first is mentioned in 1 Maccabees 1:18-19: “He engaged King Ptolemy of Egypt in battle, and Ptolemy turned and fled before him, and many were wounded and fell. They captured the fortified cities in the land of Egypt, and he plundered the land of Egypt.”³² The second can be located in chapter 6:1-4:

King Antiochus was going through the upper provinces when he heard that Elymais in Persia was a city famed for its wealth in silver and gold. Its temple was very rich, containing golden shields, breastplates, and weapons left there by Alexander son of Philip, the Macedonian king who first reigned over the Greeks. So he came and tried to take the city and plunder it, but he could not because his plan had become known to the citizens and they withstood him in battle. So he fled and in great disappointment left there to return to Babylon. (1 *Maccabees* 6:1-4)

Both of these accounts raise important points—the first, and most obvious, that the Seleucids plundered fortified cities other than Jerusalem; and the second, that when Antiochus heard that there was wealth being hoarded by a city or temple, Jewish or otherwise, he was tempted to capture it for himself. As mentioned earlier in this paper, Seleucus IV also tried to procure funds from the Temple in Jerusalem once he heard that wealth was stored there; evidently the practice of collecting valuable items from temples was not unique to Antiochus. By the time Antiochus IV came into power, the Treaty of Apamea had more than likely been paid off, as the stipulated yearly terms had passed. As such, the need for money for this purpose cannot be argued.³³

the Israelites, to serve me as priests”. This was a command from the Israelite Lord to Moses as Genesis 25:1 indicates, “The Lord said to Moses:...” Aaron the High Priest, along with Moses, were considered national leaders of the Israelites, having been chosen by the Lord. As such, religious leaders were considered synonymous with national leaders, unless a king was anointed.

³² 1 Macc 1:18-19.

³³ Erich Gruen, “Hellenism and Persecution: Antiochus IV and the Jews,” *Hellenistic History and Culture*, ed. Peter Green (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 253.

However, it is obvious that Antiochus was an ambitious man who was readily willing to go to war, and men who go to war always need funds.³⁴

In conclusion, the measures taken by Antiochus IV against the city of Jerusalem and the region of Judea were not out of the ordinary. His actions were calculated, and followed the cultural practices of the region such as the acts of gift-giving and reciprocal aid—practices from which some Jewish elites were willing to profit. Antiochus ultimately needed to seize Jerusalem because of the corrupt nature of certain factions, particularly those led by Jason and Menelaus, within the Jewish population. In order to maintain the control and obedience that were necessary to his rule, Antiochus saw fit to enter the city, causing Jason to flee and preserving Menelaus as the High Priest. This paper has not intended to exonerate Antiochus for the massacre he subsequently perpetrated in Jerusalem. Rather, I have aimed to provide clarity as to the dynamic relationships present between the Seleucids, Egyptians, and the Jewish population at the time, and how they culminated in this tragic event.

³⁴ John D. Grainger describes Antiochus III's death when plundering a temple in Susa in Chapter 11 of his book *The Seleukid Empire of Antiochus III, 223–187 BC* (Barnsley: Praetorian Press, 2015), 192.

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