

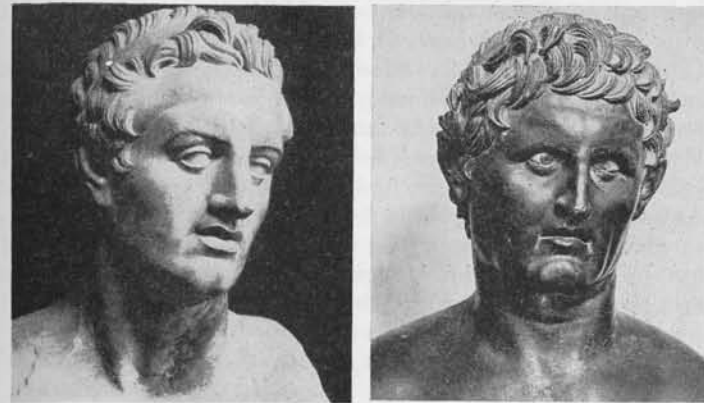
## II

## PTOLEMIES AND SELEUCIDS

1. *The political scene*

FOLLOWING Alexander's death his empire became the spoil of his generals, four of whom staked their claims and assumed the title of king. These were Cassander, ruler of Macedonia; Lysimachus, in control of Thrace since the partition; Antigonus, who held the whole of Asia Minor and northern Syria; and Ptolemy Lagi, who ruled Egypt and southern Syria. Within a short space of time these were joined by Seleucus, one of Alexander's successful generals, who had subsequently served with Perdikkas and with Ptolemy. By 311 B.C. he had so asserted his authority that he became the acknowledged master of Babylonia, this year marking the beginning of the Seleucid dynasty.

During this time and for many years to come the land of Palestine was to remain a bone of contention. First Ptolemy took possession of it and annexed it to his satrapy in Egypt, only to have it wrested from his grasp by Antigonus (315 B.C.); winning it back at the battle of Gaza (312 B.C.), he had again to withdraw, leaving Antigonus in control. In 301 B.C., however, a decisive battle was fought at Ipsus in Phrygia in which Antigonus was defeated and killed. An agreement had already been reached that, on the defeat of Antigonus, Coele-Syria should be given to Ptolemy; but since he had not taken part in this battle it was now decided to annex it to Seleucus. Ptolemy, however, forestalled him and took immediate possession of the land, an action Seleucus and his successors were never to forget. Seleucus gained much from the victory at Ipsus, however, despite his loss of Palestine, and over the next twenty years he laid claim to a substantial part of Alexander's great empire. But the issue was by no means settled and the



Ptolemy I Lagi, surnamed Soter Seleucus I, surnamed Nicator (Conqueror), 376–283 B.C.

Bronze busts from Herculaneum, now in the National Museum, Naples. One cannot be certain that these busts are contemporary; they are probably based on earlier portraits and certainly date from the first century A.D.

great powers continued in intermittent warfare for many years. Palestine remained in the control of the Ptolemies throughout most of the third century B.C.; but in the end they had to relinquish it to the Seleucids in the person of Antiochus III (the Great) (223–187 B.C.). After several unsuccessful attempts Antiochus at last captured all its fortified cities in 199/198 B.C., and at the Battle of Panion, near the source of the Jordan, finally won control of the whole land. The Seleucids had now gained possession of what, from the beginning, they had considered theirs by right. The bewildered inhabitants of Palestine, the Jews among them, awaited the outcome of these changes with no little apprehension. The years to come would fully justify their fears.

Meanwhile Antiochus, though victorious over the Ptolemies, had trouble in another quarter. In 192 B.C. he found himself at war with Rome, and at the Battle of Magnesia (190 B.C.) suffered a crippling defeat. He was forced to pay an enormous

indemnity and to hand over twenty hostages, among them his own son, who was later to become king as Antiochus IV (Epiphanes). Three years later he died a broken man, and was succeeded by his son Seleucus IV (187-175 B.C.), who, after an uneventful reign, was murdered by his chief minister, Heliodorus, who declared Seleucus' son king. The news of Seleucus' death, however, had reached the ears of his brother Antiochus on his way home from Rome. He immediately arranged for the disposal of his young nephew and proclaimed himself king (175 B.C.). A reign had begun which was to have dire results for the entire Jewish nation.

### 2. *Relations with the Jews*

The political events outlined above, from Alexander to Antiochus IV, are described all too briefly and in tantalizingly cryptic form in Dan. 11.<sup>1</sup> Other historical records fill in details, but the information is very limited indeed. The Greek writer Hecataeus, for example, reports that many Jews, including the High Priest Hezekiah, followed Ptolemy I into Egypt after the Battle of Gaza; the historian Agatharchides states that the same king captured Jerusalem by guile and carried off many as slaves to Egypt; the Letter of Aristeas claims that he transported 100,000 in this way, 30,000 of whom he settled as garrisons in the country. The historicity of these accounts cannot be proved, but it is clear from many papyri and inscriptions found there that from the time of Ptolemy I onwards the number of Jews in Egypt grew considerably. Aristeas reports that Ptolemy II set free those Jews who had been enslaved by his father. Friendly relationships apparently continued through the reigns of at least the first three Ptolemies, the Jewish community being permitted to live 'according to the laws of their fathers' with their own Council of Elders.

Synagogues were built in many towns and villages in various parts of the land and especially in Alexandria, where the Jews, though not forming a completely separate community, settled

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 241 ff.

together in one section of the city close to the seashore. They thus enjoyed a certain autonomy in the ordering of their social and religious affairs and were in the main content to live their lives as members of a distinctly Jewish community. There were not a few among them, however, who were deeply influenced by their Greek environment, and so it is not surprising that in course of time there grew up in Egypt a type of Judaism marked by a fusion of Jewish and Greek ideas, which was to have an immeasurable influence on the life and literature not only of the Dispersion but also of Palestine itself.

During the time of the Ptolemies the city of Alexandria became famous throughout the ancient world as a centre of learning and literature, its great Library attracting scholars and philosophers from near and far. Among the many literary works composed there none can compare with the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures known as 'the Septuagint' (or LXX). A legendary account of its origin is given in the Letter of Aristeas (cf. *Antiquities* XII. ii. 4-15), where it is stated that the translation was made in the time of Ptolemy II (285-246 B.C.) at the request of his librarian Demetrius, who wished to add a copy of the Jewish Laws to his collection of 200,000 books for the benefit of Greek readers. At Demetrius' request Ptolemy sent a letter to Jerusalem to the High Priest Eleazar, who in turn sent seventy-two scholars (later legend says 'seventy', hence the name 'Septuagint') to Alexandria to carry out the task. For seventy-two days they lived together in a house on the island of Pharos and at the end of that time had completed their translation. Whilst legendary features in the story can be disregarded, it may nevertheless be taken as certain that the Torah or Pentateuch was actually translated into Greek in Alexandria, possibly under the patronage of Ptolemy II. The rest of the Hebrew Scriptures would be similarly translated later, most of them before about the year 150 B.C. It is hardly likely, however, that the translation was instigated by Demetrius, who died in exile in 283 B.C., or that it was made for the sake of the learned Greeks in Alexandria; it was rather for the benefit of the Alexandrian Jews who were no longer able to

read Hebrew and for whom the translations in the synagogue services were quite inadequate. The actual work of translation was no doubt carried out by Jewish scholars of Alexandria, perhaps with scrolls from Jerusalem, and not by Jerusalem scholars as the story claims. As a bond uniting the Jews of the widely scattered Dispersion and as an instrument for the propagation of Judaism throughout the Greek-speaking world the value of this translation can hardly be overestimated.

But what about the Jews in Palestine during this long period of Ptolemaic supremacy? Relatively little information is available, and what there is is often of a legendary character. It would appear that until near the close of the third century the Jews were left in comparative peace provided that they caused no trouble and paid their taxes regularly to the Ptolemaic government. Despite the removal of many into Egypt in the time of Ptolemy I and the voluntary emigration of many others in subsequent years, Jerusalem remained a fairly populous city in which the priestly class was especially influential. In the time of Ptolemy I the High Priest was Onias I (c. 320–290 B.C.), who was succeeded by his son Simon I; he was followed by his uncle Eleazar, and he in turn by his uncle Manasseh. Simon I had a son who was apparently too young at the time of his father's death to accept office; but around 245 B.C. he succeeded Manasseh as Onias II. In due course he was followed by his son Simon II (c. 220 B.C.), who is given the title 'the Just' by the Jewish writer Ben Sira (cf. *Ecclus.* 50): Josephus applies this title to Simon I (cf. *Antiquities* xi. viii. 7; xii. iv. 1), but it is much more likely that it was used of the second High Priest of that name.

Considerable light is cast on administrative and social affairs in Palestine during the reign of Ptolemy II (285–246 B.C.) by a large number of papyri containing the correspondence of one Zeno, an agent of the King's chief minister of finance, Apollonius, discovered in 1915 in the Fayum district of Egypt. These Zeno papyri are supplemented by the so-called Vienna papyri, first published in 1936, which consist of two injunctions from Ptolemy II concerning the regulation of flocks and herds

and the unlawful enslavement of certain people in Syria, and which are to be dated in the year 261 B.C. These documents show that there was close contact between Palestine and Egypt and that the country was divided up into small administrative units in the charge of numerous officials appointed by senior officials in Alexandria. Of special importance were the agents of Apollonius who were responsible for commercial and trade relations between the two countries. In 259 B.C. Apollonius sent out a trade mission, perhaps with Zeno at its head, to tour Palestine and the surrounding districts with a view to increasing trade with the local inhabitants. In some of the Zeno papyri reference is made to a Jew named Tobias (Hebrew, Tobiah), a man of considerable substance, who was apparently in charge of a military colony of Ptolemaic soldiers situated in 'the land of the Ammonites' in Transjordan. This name appears again in Aramaic characters in a rock-hewn tomb at 'Araq 'el-Emir in Transjordan, dating from the third century B.C., and no doubt refers to the same man. The district is described in the papyri as 'Tobias' land' and his agents as 'Tobias' people'. He was in close contact with the Egyptian authorities and sent personal letters and gifts to Apollonius and even to Ptolemy himself. There can be little doubt that this Tobias was a descendant of 'Tobiah the Ammonite', the formidable enemy of Nehemiah. It has been argued that the biblical Tobiah was himself a Jew, the designation 'Ammonite' referring to his place of habitation rather than to his nationality, and that he may even have belonged to a priestly family. Whether this is so or not it is reasonable to suppose that the Tobiads, having held responsible office under the Persian kings, continued to serve in like capacity under the Ptolemies.

But the chief interest of this period lies in Tobias' son, Joseph, whose mother was none other than the sister of the High Priest Onias II. When this Onias, who was pro-Seleucid in his sympathies, refused to pay the annual tribute of twenty talents to Ptolemy and was in danger of having his land seized, Joseph offered to negotiate with the King, with the result that Onias was forced to relinquish to his nephew his civil

leadership of the Jews. This was a most significant event and marks the beginning of a rivalry between the House of Onias and the House of Tobias which was to have important results in years to come.

Joseph, as the new civil head, called an assembly of the Jewish elders and persuaded them to renew their pledge of loyalty to the Ptolemies. Then, having borrowed money from friends of his in Samaria, he made his way to Egypt, where he was able to appease the King and, by means of bribes, to win friends at court in Alexandria. During this journey (according to Josephus) or, more probably, some years later Joseph was able to persuade Ptolemy to appoint him as official tax-collector for the whole of 'Coele-Syria, Phoenicia, Judaea, and Samaria', a post which he held for the next twenty-two years. During that time he became an extremely wealthy man and, as a high Ptolemaic official, exercised considerable authority over the people of Syria. When, for example, the cities of Ascalon and Scythopolis refused to meet his demands for taxes he called in the help of Ptolemy's soldiers and punished them severely. On his death Joseph's great wealth passed over to his sons, who were known henceforth as 'the sons of Tobias'. Favourite among them was Hyrcanus, the son of his second wife, whose success in business roused the jealousy and hatred of his seven half-brothers by Joseph's first wife. In course of time, by the familiar means of bribery, he won for himself the position of tax-collector which Joseph himself had held for so long. Hyrcanus and his half-brothers will appear again in future relationships between the Jews and their new overlords, the Seleucids.

From the time of the accession of Ptolemy IV in 221 B.C. until the conquest of Palestine by Antiochus III the Jewish people were caught up in the cross-currents of war much more than in earlier years, and, during the crucial years 202-198 B.C. in particular, when the fate of Palestine was in the balance, their loyalties were divided, the majority siding with Antiochus III. On the one side stood Hyrcanus, Joseph's son, who, together with his followers, supported Egypt; on the other side

stood his half-brothers who, together with the High Priest Simon II, supported Syria. To settle the issue a *Gerousia* or Council of the Elders was called, presided over by Simon. A decision was taken to support Antiochus, and when, in 201 B.C., he stood before Jerusalem with his army he was welcomed by Simon and a deputation of elders. That same year the Egyptian general Scopas ousted Antiochus, captured a number of cities in Palestine, and put a garrison in Jerusalem. Two years later, however, Antiochus established his claim on Palestine once and for all and entered Jerusalem in triumph. According to Josephus (cf. *Antiquities* XII. iii. 3 f.) he did not forget the loyalty shown him by the Jews. He gave orders for the restoration of Jerusalem, which had been damaged in the war, put up a considerable sum of money to supply the Temple with sacrificial animals, wine, oil, etc., and imported timber free of duty from the Lebanon and elsewhere to repair the Temple. Moreover, he gave the people the right to live according to their ancestral laws. He exempted all Temple officials from taxation, gave general exemption from taxes for a period of three years, and granted relief of one-third of the required tribute money thereafter. Furthermore, he ordered the return of Jewish refugees, the liberation of those who had been enslaved, and the release of prisoners of war, restoring to them their property. Josephus adds that Antiochus also forbade non-Jews to enter the Temple on pain of death and banned the introduction into Jerusalem of the flesh of unclean beasts. The beginnings of Seleucid rule thus augured well for future relationships; but appearances belied realities, as time was soon to tell.

### 3. *The spread of Hellenism*

The chief means of propagating that form of Greek culture and civilization, known as 'Hellenism', pursued by Alexander and his successors was no doubt the founding of Greek cities, a process begun by Alexander himself and maintained by those who followed him. Of greatest importance was

Alexandria, whose reputation was greatly enhanced by Ptolemy II through the erection there of his famous Library and Museum (or 'Academy'). He and the Ptolemies who succeeded him founded many such cities throughout Asia Minor, Palestine, and the adjacent islands. The Seleucids followed the same policy, sometimes taking over old-established cities and converting them to Greek standards, at other times building new townships altogether and settling in them a 'hard core' of Macedonians and Greeks. Within Palestine itself they were to be found particularly along the Mediterranean coast and in Transjordan. In the time of Pompey mention is made of a league called the 'Decapolis', consisting, as the name implies, of ten cities; these were in existence at a much earlier date than this, even though the league itself did not come into being till much later.

Such cities are called 'Greek', not in the sense that they



Ruins of a colonnaded street in Gerasa (Jerash) whose foundation dates from about the time of Alexander the Great. Situated in Transjordan, about 26 miles north of the present-day Amman, it was one of those cities captured by Alexander Jannaeus in 82 B.C. In the time of Pompey (63 B.C.) it is named as a member of the confederation of cities known as the 'Decapolis' to which reference is made in the New Testament (cf. Matt. 4<sup>25</sup>; Mark 5<sup>20</sup>, 7<sup>31</sup>).

were necessarily populated by native Greeks, but rather in the sense that they were organized according to a Greek pattern; for the most part they were inhabited by local people whose political and social life had undergone a complete reorientation. As such these cities were much more than merely 'symbols' of



This bowl from the Cyprus Museum shows a typical *ephebos* or Greek youth, riding bare-back and armed with a lance. Note the wide-brimmed hat, the short skirt, and the flowing cloak. This 'Greek style' was copied by Jewish youths many of whom were fascinated by the whole Greek way of life (see pp. 25 f.).

the Greek way of life; they were living embodiments of it, demonstrating a civilization and culture unlike anything known there before. The method of government by democratic senate, for example, closely resembling the Athenian *Boulē* or *Gerousia*, would no doubt give to the people an entirely new mental outlook. The Gymnasium and the *Ephebeion* (or 'Youth Centre') were typical Greek institutions, to be found in all cities of this kind, which breathed the very spirit of Hellenism. They were educational institutions in which the young men

of the day could gain an appreciation not only of literature and poetry and music but also of physical culture, which was of the very essence of Greek civilization. 'They expressed', writes Edwyn Bevan, 'fundamental tendencies of the Greek mind—its craving for harmonious beauty of form, its delight in the body, its unabashed frankness with regard to everything natural.'<sup>1</sup> This delight in beauty, shape, and movement found expression in such things as athletic contests and horse-racing, to which the Greeks applied themselves with the utmost seriousness; these were not merely forms of entertainment, but a precious heritage that both perpetuated and strengthened the age-long Greek tradition. Interest in literature and the arts showed itself in the growth of philosophic schools and in the development of drama as a form of cultural expression. Hence, alongside the senate house there appeared the stadium and the hippodrome as emblems of this all-pervasive culture, and alongside these the theatre, which provided everything from classical tragedies to 'music-hall' comedies. Such buildings would convey not only the air but also the appearance of a truly Greek city, as indeed would the style of dress worn, especially by the young men. Members of the *Ephebeion*, for example, wore distinctive dress to show that they belonged to the city's 'young men's guild'; characteristic of this dress was a wide-brimmed hat, a cloak fastened with brooches at the shoulders and high-laced boots. In a number of cities the local dialect or language would still be spoken by some, but just as it was fashionable to 'dress with the times' and keep up with the cultural trends, so it was essential for all educated men, and indeed for any who had even a modicum of interest in culture, to speak the Greek tongue. This Hellenistic culture, then, opened up for many people entirely new vistas, developed new aesthetic appreciation, and encouraged the study of science, philosophy, and the liberal arts in a quite remarkable way throughout the whole civilized world. Intelligent men belonging to traditions other than that of the Greeks saw how superior the Greek way of life was to their own. There was a charm and a vitality about it

<sup>1</sup> *Jerusalem under the High Priests*, 1920, p. 35.

that carried its own appeal to men of diverse religious, political, and cultural backgrounds.

There was another side to Hellenism, however, that was much less attractive. A great deal of what passed as 'culture' was little more than a degenerate form of religious or social life. The religious rites and ceremonies, for example, with which the athletic contests were invariably associated were regularly accompanied by forms of immorality and vice to which many succumbed. Increased wealth led a section of the people to a life of idleness and ease which affected the moral condition of the people as a whole. Here is how the ancient historian Posidonius describes the situation:

Life is a continuous series of social festivities. Their gymnasiums they use as baths where they anoint themselves with costly oils and myrrhs. In the *grammateia* (such is the name they give to the public eating-halls) they practically live, filling themselves there for the better part of the day with rich foods and wine; much that they cannot eat they carry away home. They feast to the prevailing music of strings.<sup>1</sup>

Such 'culture' was a far cry from 'the glories that were Greece'.

The influence of Hellenism, however, was not confined to political, social, literary, and aesthetic pursuits. By its very nature it deeply affected the religious life and beliefs of the various cultures it invaded. Although Greek in origin and outlook it was essentially a syncretistic system, incorporating beliefs and legends of different religious traditions from both East and West. When Alexander pressed eastwards through Persia towards India, planting Greek cities and cultivating the Hellenistic outlook through trade, marriage, and the like, he made a breach in the cultural barrier between East and West that deeply affected the countries of the Orient. But the effect was reciprocal, for there came flooding back into the lands of the West ideas and influences completely foreign to the Greek way of thinking and living. The Persian empire which Alexander took over had itself taken over the old Babylonian

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41 f.

empire, with its interest in cosmology, astronomy, occultism, demonology, and angelology. Besides these the Zoroastrian religion of the old Iranian or Persian empire was a powerful factor, with its stress on such matters as the determinism of history, the doctrine of the 'two ages', the destruction of the world, the Final Judgement, and so on. This Perso-Babylonian confusion of culture to be found in Alexander's newly-conquered empire, intermingling with the Greek culture from the West, gradually built up a syncretistic system of belief that deeply influenced the Jews scattered throughout the Dispersion.

But what about the Jews in Judaea? It is hardly surprising that they too felt the full impact of this alien culture, exposed as they were on all sides to the influence of Hellenistic life and thought. To the south-west lay Egypt, the most powerful advocate of the Greek way of life; to the south lay Idumaea, whose painted tombs in Marissa, dating from the second half of the third century B.C., show ample evidence of Hellenistic culture; to the east and south-east lay Nabataea, in close contact with Egypt through commerce and trade; to the north lay Samaria with its garrison of Macedonian troops; and to the west and north-west lay Philistia and Phoenicia, with their Greek cities dotting the coastal plain.

New aesthetic horizons had been opened up before the Jews in Jerusalem; old Jewish customs and rites now appeared all too crude when judged by the standards of the 'new enlightenment'. In particular the rite of circumcision became a cause of acute embarrassment to the young Jewish athlete who, as was the custom, ran naked on the track; he accordingly took measures to have himself 'uncircumcised' so as to avoid the derision of the crowds. Athletic games, horse-racing, and the theatre became increasingly popular with the Jewish youths, who dressed themselves like the Greeks and were not even averse to sacrificing to foreign deities as part of the ritual expected of every participant. But the true Hellenizers among the Jews were to be found in the ranks of the ruling aristocracy in Jerusalem, which consisted for the most part of wealthy priestly families. The story of Joseph the Tobiad and his son

Hyrchanus shows clearly that to amass wealth and to hold an influential position in the land it was necessary to keep in step with the Greeks. The new culture, on its external side at any rate, implied a certain social standing, which was apparently more important to such people than religious scruples.

There were others in Jerusalem, however, who refused to respond in this way to the wiles of Hellenistic culture. Valuable insights are given here by Joshua ben Sira ('Jesus son of Sirach' in its Greek form), who wrote his great book, called 'Ecclesiasticus' in the Apocrypha, around the year 180 B.C.<sup>1</sup> Ben Sira was undoubtedly influenced by the spirit of the age in which he lived, but refused to yield to the attractions of Hellenism. In his book, which shows the outlook of the traditional Judaism of the scribal schools, he sets himself the task of educating Jewish youths in the tenets of that Hebrew wisdom which is to be found in the fear of the Lord, and finds expression in manners and morality. The time had not yet come for traditional Judaism and Greek culture to clash, but already Ben Sira was aware of the danger, and so set himself to fortify men's faith through his teaching.

During this same period there emerged a company of men called the Hasidim (RSV, Hasidaeans), or Pious Ones, who took a firm stand against Hellenism and, in the years to come, were to play a vitally important part in the religious and national life of the Jewish people. They were to come to the forefront some years later at the time of the Maccabean Revolt, but even before the opposition to Hellenism came to a head in open rebellion their passionate zeal for the Law, and their eagerness to defend the ways of their fathers, must have been a significant factor in the reaction of the Jewish people to the Hellenistic culture. It was almost inevitable that a clash should come, sooner or later, between these champions of the Law and the wealthy aristocrats whose whole outlook on life and religion was so different from their own. It came at last with the accession of Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) to the throne. The policy of religious toleration adopted by the

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 260 ff.

Ptolemies and earlier Seleucids, which had laid the people wide open to the subtle influence of Hellenism, was now abandoned. The tactics of Antiochus made it clear to many of the faithful in Israel that the antagonism between Hellenism and Judaism was not merely a matter of social standing or culture: where their religion and their Law were concerned it was from now on a matter of life and death.

### III

#### ANTIOCHUS IV AND THE JEWS

##### 1. *The policy and character of Antiochus IV*

BEFORE coming to the throne Antiochus IV, as we have seen, had for twelve years been a hostage in Rome where he made many friends and came to admire Rome's political institutions and military organization. This first-hand knowledge gave him a healthy respect for Roman power in years to come and taught him to exercise that restraint without which, with his impulsive nature, he would more often have found himself in serious difficulties. In 177 B.C. his nephew Demetrius, second son of Seleucus IV, took his place as a hostage in Rome. Antiochus went at once to Athens, where after a short time he again made many friends and was appointed chief magistrate, an honour he was never to forget and which he sought to repay in later years by lavish gifts. On hearing of the murder of his brother Seleucus IV at the hands of his chief minister, Heliodorus, he set off for home and, with the help of Eumenes II, King of Pergamon, ousted Heliodorus from the regency and established himself as King.

The task which now faced him was not an enviable one. He found himself seriously handicapped in three directions—like his brother Seleucus before him he was in desperate need of money; the empire he had inherited lacked cohesion and was in danger of breaking up; his neighbours the Egyptians, the Romans, and the Parthians were pressing in upon him from every side, ready to take the utmost advantage of Syria's weakness. Antiochus determined to deal with each of these difficulties in his own way.

His financial troubles were met, partly at any rate, by robbing various temples and shrines, including the Temple in Jerusalem, whose treasures, as we shall see, he plundered.



The instability and potential disunity of his kingdom he met with a vigorous policy of Hellenization. Such a policy had, of course, already been pursued by his predecessors, but Antiochus devoted himself to the task with the utmost vigour. In particular he encouraged the cities throughout his dominion to adopt a more radical policy of Hellenization in local government and in the ordering of their community life. Religion, as part of culture, came within the scope of this policy of Hellenization; but it was not his intention to ride rough-shod over local sentiments or to suppress the worship of local deities; indeed he was prepared to recognize these gods and honoured them with offerings and sacrifices. The evidence of coins minted during his reign indicates, however, that he himself was particularly disposed to the worship of the ancient god, Olympian Zeus, whom he set up in place of the god Apollo, the traditional protector of the Seleucid dynasty. But Antiochus was no monotheist, nor did he seek to replace the worship of local deities by the worship of this one 'high god'. Zeus could readily be identified with any of these local deities; nevertheless they were able to retain their separate identity and stand side by side in the pantheon. There are indications that Antiochus may have encouraged the people to worship his own person in the form of the god Zeus, for in certain of his coins the image of Zeus appears with features that closely resemble those of the King himself. For the first five or six years of his reign he was designated simply 'King Antiochus', but around 169 B.C. he assumed the additional title 'Theos Epiphanes', meaning 'God Manifest', and in 166 B.C. he added to this the equally divine epithet 'Nicephorus', meaning 'Victorious'. There was, of course, nothing new in a king's claiming divine prerogatives of this kind; Alexander had done so before him and the claim had been made for several of his predecessors on the Seleucid throne. But this was nothing short of blasphemous in the eyes of the Jews who acknowledged the one true and only God.

At this time the dominant claims of Rome were making themselves increasingly felt, and suspicious eyes were cast in the direction of Antiochus, who was now setting himself the

task of drawing Egypt and Syria together under Seleucid rule. Roman policy, as we shall see, was constantly being bedevilled by two disturbing factors—political rivalries at home, affecting national stability, and the danger of enemy attack on the eastern frontier. Antiochus, whose growing power was an obvious menace to the security of these territories, was accordingly bound by treaty with Rome not to attack any of her friends or allies, and, if forced to engage in a defensive war, not to lay permanent claim to any conquered territory. Egypt, however, very conveniently played into his hands by declaring war on him in 169 B.C. But Antiochus took the initiative, marched into Egypt with a strong force (cf. Dan. 11<sup>25-28</sup>; 1 Macc. 1<sup>16-19</sup>), and routed the Egyptian army. A year later he decided to risk the wrath of Rome and invaded Egypt a second time (cf. Dan. 11<sup>29-30a</sup>; 2 Macc. 5<sup>1</sup>), laying siege to Alexandria. Then, proceeding to Memphis, he had himself crowned King of Egypt, an act which did nothing to alleviate the suspicions of Rome. Just as he was preparing to annex the whole of Egypt, Rome acted, promptly and firmly. An embassy arrived in Alexandria, headed by Popilius Laenas, who handed to Antiochus a decree of the Roman Senate demanding his immediate withdrawal from Egypt. When Antiochus asked for time to deliberate with his counsellors, Popilius dramatically drew a circle round him and bade him decide there and then, and not to leave the circle until his decision was made. Antiochus was forced to comply with Rome's demand; in the words of Polybius, he withdrew to Syria 'in high dudgeon indeed and groaning in spirit, but yielding to the necessities of the time'. Repulsed on his western frontiers, he now set off to the east, where the rapidly increasing power of the Parthians had become a serious menace. In 166 B.C. he made a great show of power at the celebrated Festival of Daphne near Antioch, and the following year crossed the Euphrates, leaving the affairs of his kingdom in the hands of a regent, Lysias, who was appointed guardian of his eight-years-old son, soon to succeed him as Antiochus V (Eupator) (cf. 1 Macc. 3<sup>27-37</sup>). Little is known about this Parthian campaign, in which,

apparently, Antiochus won a number of victories before dying, it is said, of consumption in 163 B.C. (cf. 1 Macc. 6<sup>1-16</sup>).

The picture of this powerful Seleucid king that emerges is one of vivid contrasts, and defies description. It is clear from the account given of his military exploits that he was a soldier and statesman of no mean ability, whose policies were marked by shrewdness and courage. He showed military skill and prowess in the field of battle and at times rivalled the Romans themselves in the difficult and dangerous game of diplomacy. But there was a tyrannical streak about him and an impulsiveness which made even his friends not a little afraid of him. He made friends easily and could be generous in the extreme to those he liked. But he was completely unreliable and unpredictable. One day he would distribute gifts of silver and gold; the next, for no apparent reason, he would dole out the cheapest of trinkets. One moment he would be talkative and friendly; the next silent and moody. He often acted on the spur of the moment and found himself doing the most strange and even outrageous things. Polybius tells us that he would fraternize with the lowliest workman or take part in carousals with undesirable characters. He liked to frequent the public baths, where on one occasion, it is reported, he poured a jar of perfumed ointment over the heads of the bathers so that they slithered about on the floor, the King among them! He would sometimes join the actors in a theatrical performance on the stage, or would turn up at a drinking party as a member of the orchestra or take part in the dancing. Such practical jokes and undignified behaviour caused many of his people to despise him. But with his frivolity there was a fickleness that warned them not to take too many liberties. His mood of joviality could suddenly change to fearful vindictiveness. It is not without significance that he was nicknamed by some 'Epimanes', meaning 'mad', instead of 'Epiphanes', meaning '(God) manifest', for there are indications that towards the end of his life he showed signs of mental derangement, a condition which his drunken habits only helped to accentuate. It was during the reign of this brilliant

and besotted man that the Jewish people suffered indignities few nations have ever been called upon to face.

## 2. *Hellenizers in Jerusalem*

When Antiochus Epiphanes came to the throne in 175 B.C. the High Priest in Jerusalem was Onias III, a religious man and leader of the orthodox, who had succeeded his father Simon the Just. Unlike his father, who sided with the Seleucids, Onias gave his support to the Ptolemies. He was no doubt influenced in this decision by the proximity of the large and influential company of Jews in Egypt who would have easier access to the Jerusalem Temple than the more distant colony in Babylonia for whom pilgrimage through a disrupted Syria would be a hazardous undertaking. His policy of friendship with Egypt was opposed by the elder sons of Joseph the Tobiad, one of whom, Simon, was at this time 'captain of the Temple'. This rivalry came into the open during the reign of Seleucus IV when Onias successfully opposed Simon's attempt to gain control of the market in Jerusalem, which carried with it considerable commercial and financial advantages. Simon sought reprisal by denouncing Onias to the King, alleging that he was in league with the Ptolemaic sympathizer, Hyrcanus (Simon's own half-brother), who had a large sum of money hidden away in the Temple (cf. 2 Macc. 3<sup>11</sup>). On hearing this, Seleucus sent his chief minister Heliodorus to appropriate the Temple treasure. Onias, however, refused to give it up, asserting that it had been subscribed by widows and orphans, though some of it belonged to Hyrcanus. Heliodorus thereupon forced his way into the Temple, but (so the story goes) was terrified by an apparition in which he was flogged by two young men (cf. 2 Macc. 3<sup>10 ff.</sup>). As a consequence he gave up his attempt to take the treasure.

Simon, however, not to be outdone, again accused Onias of plotting against the King. Onias decided to put his case person before Seleucus in Antioch; but just at this time the King was murdered by Heliodorus and succeeded by his

brother Antiochus IV. Events in Jerusalem, as we shall see, made it impossible for Onias to return there and so he stayed on in Antioch.<sup>1</sup>

With the High Priest safely out of the way the stage was set for the Tobiads in Jerusalem to assert their authority and to establish themselves even more securely in a position of power. They and their fellow Hellenizers in the aristocratic priestly party were openly pro-Seleucid in their sympathies, and saw in the accession of Antiochus IV an opportunity to further their own ends. Fortunately for them they had a champion in Onias' brother, Jason, who preferred this Greek form of his name to the Hebrew form 'Joshua'. During Onias' absence from Jerusalem, and with the full support of the Tobiads, Jason sought appointment to the High-Priestly office in return for a large sum of money to be paid to Antiochus and the pledge of his wholehearted support in the Hellenization of the Jews (cf. 1 Macc. 1<sup>13-15</sup>; 2 Macc. 4<sup>7-15</sup>). Antiochus at once agreed. To him such an appointment was an astute political move, for, quite apart from the financial advantage gained, Jason was the avowed leader in Jerusalem of the pro-Syrian party. Jason accordingly assumed office (174 B.C.) and set in motion his agreed policy of Hellenization. The King gave him permission to build a gymnasium in Jerusalem and to enrol Jewish youths in it. Games were organized in which the athletes, according to Greek custom, ran naked on the track; even young priests left the altar to take part in the sports. They removed their mark of circumcision; they wore the distinctive cap of Hermes, the patron of Greek sports; they changed their Hebrew names to the Greek style, and conformed in almost every way to Greek custom and fashion. The writer of 2 Maccabees records that Jason sought permission 'to register the Jerusalemites as Antiocheans' (4<sup>9</sup>). Scholars differ

<sup>1</sup> According to Josephus he fled to Egypt, where in due course he built a Temple in Leontopolis (cf. *War* vii. x. 2); but elsewhere he more accurately refers this to his son Onias IV (cf. *Antiquities* xii. ix. 7; xiii. iii. 1-3). Another tradition states that Onias III was killed at Daphne near Antioch (cf. 2 Macc. 4<sup>33 B</sup>).

in their interpretation of these words. Some take them to mean that he sought for the citizens of Jerusalem the rights of citizens of Antioch, the Seleucid capital; others argue that Jerusalem was, in effect, replaced by a new city and renamed 'Antioch', with a new constitution, so that its citizens could truly be called 'Antiocheans'; others again take the words to refer to membership of the gymnasium, which formed a 'corporation' of Hellenized Jews with privileged citizenship rights, the members being called 'Antiocheans' in commemoration of their patron Antiochus IV. The granting of this request (whatever its exact interpretation) meant that the concessions previously granted by Antiochus III, permitting the Jews to live according to their ancestral laws, were now abrogated (cf. 2 Macc. 4<sup>11</sup>). The city was given over to the Greek way of life.

It is not in the least surprising that the orthodox Jews in Jerusalem were greatly incensed at these things. Quite apart from Jason's obnoxious policy of Hellenization, it was to them intolerable that a High Priest should be appointed to this divine office by a Gentile King. Their feelings were tempered only by the fact that he at least belonged to the High-Priestly family, and it is probably for this reason that they took no active measures against him. But Jason's position was far from secure. The Tobiads, although they had supported his appointment to the High Priesthood, now found that his policy of Hellenization was not radical enough, and determined to obtain the office for Menelaus (Hebrew, *Menahem*), one of their own number. The sources disagree about this man's identity; but if, as the writer of 2 Maccabees records (cf. 3<sup>4</sup>, 4<sup>23</sup>), he was a Benjamite, then he was not even a member of a priestly family. The opportunity came when Jason sent Menelaus to Antiochus with certain moneys which he owed the King. Menelaus grasped his opportunity, pledging to the King a more thorough policy of Hellenization than Jason's and offering three hundred talents more than his rival had been able to give. Antiochus accepted, and Menelaus returned to Jerusalem as the new High Priest. Fighting broke out in the city, in which Menelaus ultimately gained the upper hand, chiefly

through the help of Syrian troops sent to assist him. But all was not well with Menelaus. The greater part of the people in Jerusalem were opposed to him, and, to make matters worse, he was finding difficulty in raising the money promised to Antiochus, who now summoned him to Antioch to give an account of himself. Before leaving Jerusalem, with the help of his brother Lysimachus, who was to act as High Priest in his absence, he took possession of a number of golden vessels from the Temple treasury, some of which he sold and others he gave to Andronicus, the King's deputy in Antioch, as a bribe. According to 2 Maccabees, Onias III, the legitimate High Priest, who was still in Antioch at this time, protested against these measures; Menelaus thereupon persuaded Andronicus to have him put to death (cf. 2 Macc. 4<sup>33-38</sup>; Dan. 9<sup>26</sup>; 11<sup>22</sup>). Some scholars believe that this Onias III was the Teacher of Righteousness of the Dead Sea Scrolls and that Menelaus was his opponent, the Wicked Priest.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile trouble was again brewing in Jerusalem, where the issue of 'Judaism versus Hellenism' had become much more clearly defined in the eyes of an increasing number of people. Menelaus' plundering of the Temple was the last straw; severe fighting broke out, in which the mass of the people took up arms against the Hellenizers. Lysimachus mustered an army of three thousand men to quell the riot, but his followers were beaten and he himself was killed (cf. 2 Macc. 4<sup>39-42</sup>). At this point the Jewish people sent three of their elders to Antiochus to lodge complaints against Menelaus, but without avail. Menelaus retained his office by offering further bribes (cf. 2 Macc. 4<sup>43-50</sup>). Meanwhile Jason, who had taken refuge in Transjordan, was biding his time to strike back. His opportunity came when a false rumour reached Jerusalem that Antiochus had died in Egypt. Attacking Jerusalem with a thousand men he compelled Menelaus to take refuge in the citadel (cf. 2 Macc. 5<sup>5</sup>). Not all the orthodox Jews who opposed Menelaus, however, were for that reason on the side of Jason, and many were alienated still further by his

<sup>1</sup> See p. 167.

senseless massacre of many innocent people (cf. 2 Macc. 1<sup>8</sup>, 5<sup>6</sup>). At last he was driven out of the city and took refuge again in Transjordan; after many wanderings he died a fugitive and an outcast from his people (cf. 2 Macc. 5<sup>7-10</sup>).

### 3. *The vengeance of Antiochus*

During this time Antiochus had been taking part in his first Egyptian campaign, in which he defeated Ptolemy VI's army (169 B.C.). On his way back to Syria he learned of the insurrection in Jerusalem and decided to turn aside and subdue the city (cf. 1 Macc. 1<sup>20-29</sup>; 2 Macc. 5<sup>11-17</sup>). In his eyes the people's refusal to recognize his nominee Menelaus as High Priest was an act of rebellion against his own authority which must be punished. Besides this he could not afford to have a pro-Ptolemaic element asserting itself so close to the Egyptian border. Arriving in Jerusalem he reinstated Menelaus and let loose his soldiers to massacre the people. Then, in company with Menelaus (cf. 2 Macc. 5<sup>15</sup>), he desecrated the Temple, plundering the silver and gold vessels that still remained there together with the sacred furnishings and hidden treasures. He then withdrew, leaving the city in the charge of Philip, one of his commanders (cf. 2 Macc. 5<sup>22</sup>).

The next contact Antiochus had with Jerusalem was after his second campaign against Egypt in 168 B.C. when he was severely snubbed by the Roman legate, Popilius Laenas. On his way home he learned of renewed strife in Jerusalem despite the presence there of his commander, Philip. Antiochus was in no mood to be trifled with; he would not tolerate a repetition of the previous trouble and so sent his general Apollonius, leader of the Mysian mercenaries, to deal with the situation (cf. 1 Macc. 1<sup>29-35</sup>; 2 Macc. 5<sup>23-26</sup>). Arriving in Jerusalem, Apollonius waited until the Sabbath, when he knew that the orthodox Jews would not fight, and, under pretence of friendship and peaceful intent, rushed into the city with his troops and slaughtered many of the people. Women and children were taken as slaves; the city was despoiled and burned with fire;

the houses and the surrounding walls were razed to the ground. Not content with this he fortified the citadel on the western hill opposite the Temple with a strong wall and high towers, making it into a fortress, which was now occupied by foreign troops and by a host of Jewish Hellenizers. From now on the Akra, as the fortress was called, became in effect a Greek 'polis' or 'city' in its own right, with jurisdiction over the defenceless city of Jerusalem, which, with its breached walls, lay as open country round about it. The Hellenizers, consisting for the most part of wealthy priests and nobles together with their families, were able to pursue with vigour their policy of Hellenization; even more than before, the control of Jerusalem found its way into their hands. The imposition of taxes and the confiscation of land widened the already great gulf between them and the mass of the people who lived in Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside. Irresponsible men in the Akra took matters into their own hands and much innocent blood was shed. Life for many of these Jews became too much to bear and a considerable number fled from the city (cf. 1 Macc. 13<sup>38</sup>, 34<sup>8</sup>). There was nothing now to keep even the most pious of them there, for the holy Temple itself had come under the control of the Akra. The city had become 'an abode of aliens' inhabited by 'people of pollution' (1 Macc. 13<sup>5-36</sup>) who worshipped foreign gods (cf. Dan. 11<sup>39</sup>). The Syrian soldiers, who worshipped the god Baal Shamen (meaning 'Lord of Heaven') and other deities popular within their syncretistic Hellenistic faith, were not slow to appropriate the Temple for their own use. Within its sacred precincts the worship of the God of Israel was combined with the worship of the gods of the heathen. The Hellenizing Jews were not only conversant with these things, they actually threw in their lot with them. Their leader Menelaus, far from protesting, apparently continued to officiate as High Priest, content that Judaism should continue as a syncretistic cult and that the God of Israel should be worshipped in association with foreign gods.

Up to this point the measures taken by Antiochus to subdue Jerusalem had been political in character and not directed

specifically against the Jews' religion, even although in the process their religious institutions had suffered. Now he determined to change his tactics and to exterminate the Jewish religion altogether. His plan was put into operation 'a short time afterwards' (2 Macc. 6<sup>1</sup>), in 167 B.C.,<sup>1</sup> with the proclamation of a decree forbidding the people any longer to live according to their ancestral laws (cf. 1 Macc. 14<sup>1-64</sup>; 2 Macc. 6<sup>1-11</sup>), and a special emissary was sent to see that this order was carried out. The aim was the complete abolition of the Jewish religion throughout Jerusalem and all Judaea. Attention was concentrated on those very features of Judaism which ever since the return from the Exile had been recognized as the distinctive marks of the Jewish faith—the observance of the sacrifices and festivals, the rite of circumcision, and the reading of the Law. The traditional sacrifices were prohibited and the observance of the Sabbath and the customary festivals forbidden; children must no longer be circumcised; copies of the Law were to be destroyed. Sentence of death was decreed for anyone found breaking any of these commands. Idolatrous altars were set up throughout the land (cf. 1 Macc. 14<sup>7</sup>); on pain of death Jews were forced to offer unclean sacrifices and to eat swine's flesh (cf. 2 Macc. 6<sup>18</sup>). As a crowning deed of infamy, in December 167 B.C. Antiochus introduced into the Temple in Jerusalem the worship of the Olympian Zeus. An altar with a bearded image of Zeus, probably bearing the features of Antiochus himself, was erected on the altar of burnt offerings and swine's flesh offered on it (cf. 2 Macc. 6<sup>2</sup>). It is this altar which Daniel calls 'the abomination that makes desolate' (Dan. 11<sup>31</sup>, 12<sup>11</sup>). The Syrian soldiers and the 'heathen' generally offered forbidden sacrifices and took part in acts of sensuality and drunken orgies. It was impossible to live as Jews in circumstances like these. They were even compelled to take part in the monthly sacrifice offered in commemoration of the King's birthday and to walk in the

<sup>1</sup> Or 168 B.C. The uncertainty is due to the fact that dates for this period are calculated from the 'Seleucid year', which is taken as either 311 or 312 B.C.

procession of the god Bacchus, garlanded with ivy wreaths (cf. 2 Macc. 6<sup>3-7</sup>). These measures were enforced on the Jews not only in Jerusalem and Judaea but also in many other places throughout the empire. Even the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerizim was also dedicated to the god Zeus (cf. 2 Macc. 6<sup>2</sup>). All who refused to conform to the Greek way of life were to be put to death (cf. 2 Macc. 6<sup>8-9</sup>).

The High Priest Menelaus and his Hellenizing priests no doubt acquiesced in these measures; others submitted with a less easy conscience because of the dire penalties which might otherwise follow (cf. 1 Macc. 1<sup>43-52</sup>). There were others, however, who 'chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant' (1 Macc. 1<sup>63</sup>). The accounts given of the persecution of these people are in part legendary (especially in 2 Macc. 6-7), but they give some idea at least of the severity of the punishment meted out to them. An aged scribe, Eleazar, was forced to open his mouth to eat swine's flesh and on refusing was flogged to death (cf. 2 Macc. 6<sup>18-31</sup>). A mother and her seven sons were slaughtered one after the other for refusing to pay homage to an idol (cf. 2 Macc. 7). Copies of the Law were torn in pieces and burned (cf. 1 Macc. 1<sup>56</sup>). Mothers who had circumcised their newly born children were put to death together with members of their families (cf. 1 Macc. 1<sup>60-61</sup>; 2 Macc. 6<sup>10</sup>). Many people who had left the cities and crowded out into the villages and the surrounding country were continually molested by Syrian agents determined to stamp out the Jewish faith.

## IV

## THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

(166-142 B.C.)

1. *The beginnings of revolt*

THE Jews were stunned by the suddenness and ferocity of these events. Many in Jerusalem and neighbouring cities, as we have seen, fled into the open country, where they took refuge in the villages, the mountains, and the desert. Others no doubt fled much farther afield and swelled the numbers in the Dispersion in different parts of the empire.

There were some, however, who decided that the time had come for drastic action. In the village of Modein, seventeen miles north-west of Jerusalem, there lived an aged priest named Mattathias with his five sons—John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar, and Jonathan—who had apparently moved there from Jerusalem some time before (cf. 1 Macc. 2<sup>1 ff.</sup>). Mattathias' grandfather was a man called Asamonaeus (cf. *War* 1. i. 3; *Antiquities* XII. vi. 1), and this is the probable origin of the name 'Hasmonaean' which is commonly given to his descendants.<sup>1</sup> One day Antiochus' agents arrived at the village and began to compel the people to renounce their God and to offer unclean sacrifices (cf. 1 Macc. 2<sup>15 ff.</sup>). Mattathias, as an acknowledged leader of the community, was bidden to show a good example by being first to make his offering; if he did so he and his sons would be rewarded and be counted among 'the Friends of the King'. Instead, he defied the order and publicly pledged his loyalty to the ways of his fathers. When a renegade Jew stepped forward to offer the required sacrifice, Mattathias put words into deeds and slew him on the altar. Then, turning on a Syrian

<sup>1</sup> Another explanation is that it comes from the word *Hasmonaim* meaning 'Princes'. See p. 185.

officer who was standing by, he slew him also, and finally destroyed the altar itself. It was impossible for Mattathias and his sons to remain in Modein any longer, and so, calling upon all who were 'zealous for the Law' to follow him, he fled with his followers to the mountains in the wilderness of Judaea. Whilst they were hidden there news reached them of a thousand men, women, and children who had been slain nearby because they refused to fight on the Sabbath day. Realizing that such a policy could only spell disaster for their cause, Mattathias and his companions came to an important decision—Sabbath or no Sabbath they would fight to the death in defence of the holy Covenant which God had made with their fathers (cf. 1 Macc. 2<sup>41</sup>).

At this point an important event took place that gave the movement not only increased numerical strength but also a new religious standing. Mattathias and his sons were joined by the Hasidim (Hasidaeans), who, as we have seen, probably came into existence some time earlier, during the High Priesthood of Onias III, but are mentioned now by name for the first time (cf. 1 Macc. 2<sup>42</sup>; cf. 7<sup>13</sup>; 2 Macc. 14<sup>6</sup>). At a later stage these men were to find themselves at cross purposes with the Maccabees, and ultimately they withdrew from them; but at this juncture their attachment to the resistance movement gave it the inspiration it required. From the beginning they apparently retained their identity as a distinct group, and the fight for freedom in those early days owed much to their devotion and zeal. It has generally been thought, because they were among those who refused to fight on the Sabbath day (cf. 1 Macc. 2<sup>36</sup>), that they formed a pietistic and pacifist group, intent only on religious reform and avoiding political and national entanglements as much as possible. This is now seen to be a misconception. They formed a religious group within Judaism whose passionate devotion to the Law of God was so intense that they were prepared for its sake to sacrifice their very lives. Most scholars see in them the ancestors of the Essenes with whom they would identify the party of the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 165 f.



evidence of the Scrolls supports the picture given of them in 1 and 2 Maccabees as 'mighty warriors of Israel', ready to fight in defence of the Law (cf. 1 Macc. 2<sup>42</sup>), who 'keep up war and stir up sedition' against the Syrians (cf. 2 Macc. 14<sup>6</sup>), and form an important element in the revolutionary army (cf. 1 Macc. 7<sup>13</sup>). These 'militant believers', filled with a deep piety and aflame with zeal for God's holy Law, had no doubt for some time taken their stand in opposition to the Hellenizers in Jerusalem. Now they came out openly on the side of Mattathias and his sons, their swords unsheathed in the struggle for religious liberty.

In those early days of the Maccabean Revolt, as the struggle came to be called, the fighting took the form of guerrilla warfare (cf. 1 Macc. 2<sup>44-48</sup>). They went from village to village tearing down the altars, forcibly circumcising those children who had not undergone the rite, and slaughtering any they found who had taken part in pagan sacrifices. In this way 'they rescued the law out of the hands of the Gentiles and kings, and they never let the sinner gain the upper hand' (1 Macc. 2<sup>48</sup>). In that same year, 166 B.C., Mattathias died, his place being taken by his third son, Judas, with whom a new stage in the fighting began (cf. 1 Macc. 2<sup>49-70</sup>; *Antiquities* XII. vi. 3-4).

Not long after these events a book appeared which despite its obscure symbolism casts a great deal of light on the hopes and fears of the faithful Jews living in those days. The Book of Daniel<sup>1</sup> reflects the outlook of the party of the Hasidim. Its author (or authors) expresses his faith in the speedy triumph of God's purpose, and at the same time encourages his fellow Jews in their sufferings to remain true to the Law and the holy Covenant made with their fathers. Little reference is made here to the events associated with the Maccabean Revolt. Several reasons can perhaps be given for this. The fighting at this time, as we have seen, had not yet developed into full-scale war, but was still at the guerrilla stage; the author is rather doubtful about 'flatterers' who had joined themselves to the movement (11<sup>34</sup>); above all, his faith was

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 220 ff. The book, as we have it, probably belongs to the period 167-164 B.C.

set not so much in a victory of arms as in the supernatural intervention of God (2<sup>23</sup>, 8<sup>25</sup>), who would send his archangel Michael to rescue his people out of all their troubles (10<sup>21</sup>). The true leaders of the nation were, to him, 'the wise' who 'shall make many understand' (11<sup>33</sup>), in whom we are probably to recognize the party of the Hasidim. The resistance movement under Mattathias and Judas was only 'a little help' (11<sup>34</sup>); deliverance could come from God alone.

## 2. *The rise of Judas Maccabaeus: the rededication of the Temple (164 B.C.)*

Judas, the third son of Mattathias, was a natural successor to his father as leader of the revolutionary movement. He is described as 'a mighty warrior from his youth' (1 Macc. 2<sup>66</sup>) and 'like a lion in his deeds, like a lion's cub roaring for prey' (3<sup>4</sup>). He was given the nickname 'Maccabee', meaning 'hammer' or 'hammer-headed', in token, no doubt, of his military exploits. Although this name applies strictly only to Judas himself it is generally used also with reference to his brothers who continued the 'Maccabean' Revolt. Under his leadership the struggle passed from the guerrilla stage to that of well-planned battles and full-scale war. Judas from the start won a series of victories, including one over Apollonius and another over Seron at Beth-horon (cf. 3<sup>10-26</sup>), which enhanced his reputation and gained for him many more volunteers in the fight for freedom. More important was his rout of Gorgias, at Emmaeus near Beth-horon, whom Antiochus' regent Lysias had sent against Judaea (cf. 3<sup>27-425</sup>; *Antiquities* XII. vii. 3-4). The following year (164 B.C.) Lysias himself attacked Jerusalem from the south, but he too suffered defeat at Beth-zur and withdrew to Antioch (cf. 4<sup>26-35</sup>; *Antiquities* XII. vii. 5).

Now that their enemies were crushed one thing above all others remained to be done—to purify the Temple and rededicate the sanctuary (cf. 4<sup>36-59</sup>). Accordingly, in the second half of the same year (164 B.C.) Judas marched on Jerusalem and occupied Mount Zion, shutting up the Syrian troops and



their Jewish sympathizers in the Akra. The Temple itself could now be restored. First he selected priests who had remained faithful during the time of persecution; the altar which had been desecrated by offerings made to the Olympian Zeus was pulled down and a new one made of unhewn stones erected in its place; the sanctuary and the interior of the Temple were rebuilt and refurnished with curtains, lamps, and other holy vessels. And so in the month Kislev (i.e. December) 164 B.C., exactly three years after its desecration by Antiochus, the Temple with its altar was rededicated and restored to its former use. The Feast of Dedication (Hebrew, *Hanukkah*) which followed was ordered to be kept year after year on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev in commemoration of this joyous event. Thus 'there was very great gladness among the people, and the reproach of the Gentiles was removed' (4<sup>58</sup>). So as to ensure its safety in the future Jerusalem was fortified with high walls and strong towers, and a garrison stationed there to defend it; similar measures were taken at Beth-zur on the borders of Idumaea to the south (cf. 4<sup>60-61</sup>).

### 3. *The rule of Judas Maccabaeus: full religious liberty granted (163 B.C.)*

The position of the Jews in Judea was, for the time being at any rate, tolerably secure. The same could not be said, however, of their fellow Jews in the countries around Judea, surrounded as they were by Hellenistic influence and under the jurisdiction of foreign powers. Partly for the protection of his people and partly to strengthen his own position in Judea, Judas now set himself to win complete independence for the Jewish nation, to make the whole Palestinian area and not only Judea itself thoroughly Jewish. Such a policy, in which he was followed by his brothers Jonathan and Simon and their successors in the Hasmonaean House, was in a sense an extension of the policy formerly adopted by Ezra.<sup>1</sup> All

<sup>1</sup> For other illustrations of this policy and the attempt to proselytize by force see pp. 63, 69, 70.

Jews in the surrounding territories must be brought within the scope of their rule. Accordingly Judas carried out a series of successful campaigns against the Idumaeans in the south, the Baeanites in Transjordan, and the Ammonites north-east of the Dead Sea (cf. 1 Macc. 5<sup>1-8</sup>); on receiving reports of persecution from the Jewish communities in Galilee and Gilead, he sent his brother Simon northwards with an army to the help of the one, whilst he himself, supported by his brother Jonathan, crossed the Jordan to the help of the other. Both campaigns were successful, but as they could not keep permanent control over these areas they brought back the Jewish inhabitants to Judaea (cf. 5<sup>9-54</sup>). In subsequent campaigns against Idumaea and Philistia he captured Hebron and Ashdod, returning home with much plunder (cf. 5<sup>63-65</sup>).

One supreme task, however, remained to be done. The Akra—that hated symbol of Syrian domination—was still in the hands of the enemy and served as a constant reminder that Antiochus' decree forbidding the rites and ordinances of the Jewish religion had not yet been rescinded. Judas accordingly laid siege to it, probably in the spring or summer of 163 B.C. During the blockade some Syrian soldiers together with a number of Hellenizing Jews managed to escape and made their way to Antioch, where they put their case before the King (cf. 6<sup>18-27</sup>). The old arch-enemy of the Jews, Antiochus IV, had died the previous year about two months before the rededication of the Temple (cf. 2 Macc. 9<sup>1-29</sup>),<sup>1</sup> and was succeeded by his eight-years-old son Antiochus V (Eupator). Just before he died he appointed Philip regent and guardian of the young King; Lysias, however, who had been given these appointments at an earlier stage, now saw his opportunity and appropriated both responsibilities (cf. 6<sup>5-17</sup>). When the Jews who had escaped from the Akra made their report, Lysias set off for Judaea with a strong army, forced Judas to retreat, and besieged Jerusalem (cf. 6<sup>28-54</sup>). The situation was saved, however, when Lysias received word that Philip was planning to

<sup>1</sup> According to 1 Macc. 6<sup>17</sup>, however, the death of Antiochus appears to have taken place *after* the rededication of the Temple.

take over the reins of government in his absence. Generous terms were offered to Judas, who agreed to surrender the fortifications around the Temple; in return Lysias granted a general amnesty, rescinded the orders issued by Antiochus IV in 167 B.C. when he set up the worship of the Olympian Zeus, deposed the High Priest Menelaus, and had him put to death (cf. 2 Macc. 13<sup>3-8</sup>). Thus, though the Jews were still subject to Syrian rule and a Syrian garrison continued to occupy the Akra, religious freedom was at last secured (cf. 1 Macc. 6<sup>55-62</sup>).

#### 4. *Judas and his nationalist aims (162-160 B.C.)*

The Maccabean Revolt, which had begun as a protest against religious persecution, had now achieved its aim; the Jewish people were once more free to live according to their ancestral laws. What had begun as a religious revolt soon developed, however, into a strong nationalist movement for political independence, led in turn by Judas and his brothers Jonathan and Simon. These years were marked not only by opposition to the Seleucids, who remained militarily in control, but also, as previously, by a struggle for political power within the Jewish nation itself. The Syrian government saw no reason to trust Judas further and so decided to strengthen their association with the Hellenizers among the Jews. To this end Lysias appointed as High Priest a man called Alcimus (Hebrew *Jakim* or *Jehoiakim*), who, though a member of the High-Priestly family (cf. 1 Macc. 7<sup>14</sup>; 2 Macc. 14<sup>7</sup>; *Antiquities* XII. ix. 7, xx. x. 1), was himself a member of the Hellenizing party. This appointment was not at all popular with Judas, who, it would seem, prevented Alcimus from taking up office in Jerusalem (cf. 2 Macc. 14<sup>3</sup>). Meanwhile the balance of power in Syria had once more been upset. In that same year, 162 B.C., Demetrius, the son of the murdered Seleucus IV and nephew of Antiochus Epiphanes, escaped from Rome, where he had been kept a hostage, brought about the death of Lysias and Antiochus V, and assumed the throne of Syria as Demetrius I (Soter). Alcimus and his fellow Hellenizers lost no time in

lodging their complaints against Judas and in pledging their support for the new King. Demetrius confirmed Alcimus in the High Priesthood (161 B.C.) and sent him to Jerusalem with a strong escort under his general Bacchides. At this point it is reported that certain scribes and Hasidim approached Alcimus and Bacchides seeking to establish good relations, no doubt influenced by Alcimus' promises of loyalty to the Jewish religion and by the fact that he himself belonged to the true priestly line of Aaron (cf. 1 Macc. 7<sup>12 ff.</sup>). It has been generally assumed that this incident marks a profound split in the ranks of Judas' followers and that the Hasidim, seeking only religious independence, now withdrew their support from Judas, whose aim was national independence. This assumption, however, is hardly justifiable on the evidence available. The hopes of the Hasidim for peace were rudely shattered, and their confidence in Alcimus completely broken when, despite his promise that no harm would befall them, he treacherously seized sixty of their number and slew them (cf. 1 Macc. 7<sup>15 ff.</sup>; *Antiquities* XII. x. 2). Realizing that Judas had been right in his judgement they threw in their lot with him as formerly. This is implied in the report of a second interview that Alcimus now sought with Demetrius, in which he singled out for special mention 'those of the Jews who are called Hasidæans, whose leader is Judas Maccabæus, (who) are keeping up war and stirring up sedition, and will not let the kingdom attain tranquillity' (2 Macc. 14<sup>6</sup>). In response to his appeal for help Demetrius decided to send an army under his general Nicanor to capture Judas and to confirm Alcimus in the High Priesthood. Judas, however, was too powerful for him: near the village of Adasa a battle took place (161 B.C.) in which Nicanor was defeated and killed, and his army driven out into the coastal plain (cf. 1 Macc. 7<sup>26-50</sup>). Alcimus, the High Priest, fled to Syria.

At this point Judas did something which underlines his political aspirations—he sent a deputation to Rome, headed by two Jewish leaders named Eupolemus and Jason, 'to establish a treaty of friendship and alliance' (1 Macc. 8<sup>17</sup>).

The result was a declaration of friendship between the Roman Senate and the Jewish nation (cf. 1 Macc. 8). Rome thereupon sent a warning to Demetrius concerning his future dealings with the Jews (cf. 1 Macc. 8<sup>31 f.</sup>). Demetrius, however, had already taken steps to avenge the defeat of Nicanor, dispatching an army to Judaea under Bacchides, who was accompanied by Alcimus. Seeing the might of the Syrian army many of Judas' followers deserted him, and in the ensuing battle fought at Elasa (160 B.C.), in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, Judas was slain (cf. 1 Macc. 9<sup>1-22</sup>).

#### 5. *Jonathan as leader and High Priest (160-143 B.C.)*

The death of Judas was a great blow to the nationalist party, and control of affairs once more passed over into the hands of the Hellenizers, with Alcimus at their head. The greater part of the people accepted the situation, gratified no doubt that they could at least continue to worship in freedom according to their ancestral laws.

*Jonathan and Bacchides (160-153 B.C.)*. Bacchides' policy was clear—to suppress all resistance by force. Certain of Judas' friends were captured, tortured, and put to death; many others escaped into the desert of Judaea, where they went into hiding. By popular acclamation Judas' younger brother Jonathan was now elected leader in his stead, with the purpose of carrying on the war against the enemy (cf. 1 Macc. 9<sup>23-31</sup>). Bacchides prepared against future trouble by holding certain leading Jews as hostages in the Akra and by building a ring of fortifications round Jerusalem (cf. 1 Macc. 9<sup>50-53</sup>). In the spring of that same year (159 B.C.) Alcimus tore down the wall separating the Temple Mount from the inner court that had previously been forbidden to Gentiles; and when, a short time later, he died, the orthodox Jews regarded this as a just retribution. No suitable man was found to take Alcimus' place and the office of High Priest remained vacant for the next seven years (cf. 1 Macc. 9<sup>54-57</sup>). Following the death of Alcimus, Bacchides decided he could safely leave his command in Judaea and so



An aerial view of the Wilderness of Judaea to the east of Jerusalem showing the semi-arid terrain of eroded limestone and desolate plains. Both here and in deserts farther to the south many Jews from time to time sought refuge from their oppressors.

returned to Antioch. Two years later, however, at the request of the Hellenizers he returned to Judaea, where his army suffered a defeat at Beth-basi in the Judaeian wilderness. Bacchides at this point showed open displeasure with the Hellenizers who had brought him into this compromising situation, and in a rage slew many of them. Jonathan thereupon made peace proposals, which were at once accepted. The Syrians handed over the prisoners they had taken and agreed to bring hostilities to an end; Bacchides himself returned to Antioch. Jonathan now took up his headquarters at Michmash, about nine miles north of Jerusalem. From there he 'began to judge the people' and punished the Hellenizers among the Jews (cf. 1 Macc. 9<sup>58-73</sup>). For the next five years (157-152 B.C.) Judaea continued at peace, and the power and influence of Jonathan and his followers rapidly increased.

*Jonathan and Alexander Balas (152-145 B.C.)*. In 152 B.C. the authority of Demetrius I was challenged by a pretender, Alexander Balas, who claimed to be the son of Antiochus Epiphanes. In the course of the next few years both men were to court the favour of Jonathan, who was now recognized as the obvious leader of the Jewish people. Demetrius was first to make concessions; the hostages who had been kept prisoner in the Akra were handed over and Jonathan was permitted to muster troops and equip them with arms. Jonathan took immediate steps to exploit the situation thus created. Moving his headquarters from Michmash to Jerusalem he took control of the city and fortified the Temple area, seriously curtailing the power of the garrison in the Akra there (cf. 1 Macc. 10<sup>1-11</sup>). The Syrian troops were now withdrawn from all the places previously fortified by Bacchides, with three exceptions—the Akra itself, Beth-zur (cf. 1 Macc. 10<sup>14</sup>), and Gazara (cf. 1 Macc. 11<sup>41</sup>; 13<sup>43</sup>).

Alexander Balas, not to be outdone, now determined to outbid Demetrius and offered Jonathan even greater benefits than his rival had done. In a cordial letter he appointed Jonathan High Priest—an honour which the Jews themselves were not yet ready to confer upon him—and gave him the title 'the King's Friend' (cf. 1 Macc. 10<sup>15-21</sup>). Thus by a strange twist of fate Jonathan found himself in league with the professed son of the notorious Antiochus Epiphanes.<sup>1</sup> The Hellenizers now found themselves in a most unenviable position. Without the support of the Syrians their opposition to Jonathan fell to the ground and the political influence they had exercised for many years came suddenly to an end. Jonathan had won by diplomacy, and by exploiting the division within the Syrian camp, what Judas had been unable to gain by force of arms.

Demetrius, however, had not even yet given up hope, and offered Jonathan greater favours still. His promises included exemption from taxation, surrender of the Akra, restoration of

<sup>1</sup> For the claim that Jonathan was the Wicked Priest of the Dead Sea Scrolls see p. 167.

ceded territories, the enrolment of Jewish troops in the Syrian army, subsidies for the Temple, and money for the rebuilding of the city walls. But Jonathan was shrewd enough not to accept such promises at their face value and continued his support of Alexander Balas. As things turned out he made the right decision, for in 150 B.C. Demetrius met Balas in battle and was slain (cf. 1 Macc. 10<sup>22-50</sup>). Shortly afterwards Balas invited Jonathan as his guest to Ptolemais (Acco), on the occasion of his marriage to Cleopatra, daughter of Ptolemy VI (Philometor) of Egypt. There the King treated him with great respect, 'made him general and governor' of Judaea 'and enrolled him among his chief Friends' (1 Macc. 10<sup>51-66</sup>). Jonathan thus held office as a servant of the Syrian government responsible to Balas for his actions. But he was at least in control of his own land, a situation that could be exploited by a man of his shrewdness and skill. With an eye on the complete independence of Judaea he now seized every opportunity to strengthen his own position and to extend his territory beyond the narrow limits of the Judaeian state.

Further complications developed in Syrian affairs when, in 147 B.C., Balas' position was challenged by the son of Demetrius I, bearing the same name as his father, who now laid claim to the throne. Two years later Balas was defeated in battle and fled to Arabia, where he was assassinated. The way was open for Demetrius II (Nicator) to take over the Syrian throne (cf. 1 Macc. 11<sup>1-19</sup>).

*Jonathan and Demetrius II (145-143 B.C.)*. Demetrius, however, whose hold on the throne was none too secure, was as yet young and inexperienced in the arts of diplomacy and war. Jonathan, aware of these things, determined to strike a further blow for the independence of the state of Judaea by attacking the Akra, where the Hellenized Jews with a Syrian garrison were still in control. Demetrius at once ordered him to raise the siege and report to him at Ptolemais. On hearing this Jonathan decided on bold action. Ordering his men to continue the siege he set off for Ptolemais, together with a group of elders and priests, with lavish gifts for the King. Demetrius

was so impressed by this show of audacity and arrogance that he forthwith made Jonathan a 'King's Friend', confirmed him in the High Priesthood, and, at his request, annexed to Judaea three districts in the southern part of Samaria—Ephraim, Lydda, and Ramathaim—which he now exempted from taxation (cf. 1 Macc. 11<sup>20-37</sup>).

At this juncture Demetrius found himself in serious trouble. His army, openly rebellious at his treatment of them, deserted him. To make things worse one of Balas' generals, Diodotus Tryphon by name, claimed the Syrian throne for Balas' young son Antiochus. Jonathan immediately took advantage of the situation and sent a request to Demetrius to withdraw his garrisons from the Akra, Beth-zur, and Gazara. Demetrius, besieged in his palace in Antioch by his own people, was glad to make any promises in return for Jonathan's help. But when Jonathan attacked Antioch with three thousand men and rescued the King, Demetrius went back on the promise he had made. In such circumstances it is not surprising that, when Tryphon sought his help, Jonathan turned his back on Demetrius and joined his rival, who crowned his young protégé as Antiochus VI. Jonathan was now confirmed in all the honours conferred upon him by Demetrius; Simon his brother was made governor 'from the Ladder of Tyre to the borders of Egypt' (1 Macc. 11<sup>30-59</sup>).

*Jonathan and Tryphon (143 B.C.)*. As one of Tryphon's generals Jonathan now took part in a number of successful campaigns, ranging from Gaza and Ascalon in the south-west to Damascus and the Sea of Galilee in the north. At the same time he took independent action by renewing friendly relations with Rome, which his brother Judas had previously encouraged, and sent letters to Sparta and other foreign powers with the same purpose in view (cf. 1 Macc. 12<sup>1-23</sup>). He went even further and built a number of fortifications throughout Judaea; in Jerusalem itself he increased the height of the walls and erected a great mound between the Akra and the rest of the city, thus cutting off its vital supply-line (cf. 1 Macc. 12<sup>24-38</sup>).

Tryphon, not without reason, viewed these happenings with

the gravest apprehension. The increasing power of the Jews was proving an embarrassment to him in his own plans, which were to kill the young Antiochus VI and claim the throne for himself. He decided, however, not to show his hand openly. Instead he inveigled Jonathan, together with a thousand of his men, to go with him to Ptolemais. As soon as they had entered the city the gates were shut, Jonathan was arrested, and his retinue slaughtered (cf. 1 Macc. 12<sup>39-53</sup>). There was consternation in Jerusalem at the news of Tryphon's treachery and Simon was at once appointed Jonathan's successor. Losing no time he strengthened the fortifications around Jerusalem and sent a powerful force to occupy Joppa, whose inhabitants he did not trust (cf. 1 Macc. 13<sup>11, 14<sup>5</sup></sup>; *Antiquities* XIII. vi. 6). Tryphon now marched south from Ptolemais, bringing Jonathan with him. At Adida, near Modein, he tried to parley with Simon but broke his promise that, in return for hostages and 100 talents of silver, he would release Jonathan. He then made an attempt to march on Jerusalem, where the Syrian garrison in the Akra was by now desperate for food, but was hindered by a heavy fall of snow. In a fit of temper he finally killed Jonathan at a place called Bascam on the east side of Jordan and returned to his own land (143 B.C. Cf. 1 Macc. 13<sup>1-24</sup>).

#### 6. *Simon and the independence of Judaea (142 B.C.)*

Simon now saw his opportunity to achieve the goal which both Judas and Jonathan had set before them—the independence of the Jewish nation from Syrian control. Judas had achieved the goal of religious independence and Jonathan had made himself master in Judaea; Simon now took the final step and demanded complete political independence. Having consolidated his position by building fortresses throughout Judaea, he sent a deputation to Demetrius II, with suitable gifts, to ask for the recognition of Judaea as an independent state by the grant of release from taxation. The price of such independence would be his loyalty to Demetrius, whose rival Tryphon had by this time murdered the young Antiochus VI and

claimed the throne (cf. 1 Macc. 13<sup>31-34</sup>). Demetrius was hardly in a position to refuse, and in a letter addressed to 'Simon the High Priest and Friend of Kings' and to the Elders of the Jews he agreed to an amnesty and granted complete exemption from taxation, i.e. he recognized Judaea as a sovereign and independent country. Thus 'the yoke of the Gentiles was removed from Israel' in the year 142 B.C., and 'the people began to write in their documents and contracts, "In the first year of Simon the great High Priest and commander and leader of the Jews"' (1 Macc. 13<sup>35-42</sup>).

That same year Simon captured the fortress of Gazara, between Jerusalem and Joppa, replacing its heathen inhabitants with loyal Jews and appointing his son John as governor. His most memorable act, however, was the capture of the Akra in Jerusalem, which for more than forty years had been in the hands of the Hellenizers, a constant reminder of the Jews' subjection to the Syrian power. The Akra itself was purified and the adjacent Temple Mount fortified (cf. 1 Macc. 13<sup>43-53</sup>). The Hellenizing party was now completely crushed and the last stronghold of Syrian domination removed from the land.

The state which Simon and his brothers had done so much to establish was yet to pass through many troubled times. For the next seventy years or so (142-63 B.C.) it enjoyed independence so hardly won, until another world-power, greater even than that of the Seleucids, once more brought it into subjection. But from the beginning the foundations on which it had been built were none too strong. The victory of the Jews under the Maccabees was essentially the victory of a particular party within the nation, even though it included the greater part of the people. The Hellenizing party ceased to exist as an organized military and political force after the fall of the Akra, but Hellenism as a cultural factor continued to play a vital part in the life of the Jewish people. The Jewish state, though now politically independent of Syria, was nevertheless part and parcel of the Hellenistic world in which it had to live its life. As its contacts with other Hellenistic powers

increased it gradually assumed the character of a Hellenistic state whose High-Priestly rulers became almost indistinguishable at times from the princes and kings of neighbouring peoples.

This is illustrated in the case of Simon himself. Even when allowance is made for the idealized picture of his reign given in 1 Maccabees, it is clear that he was regarded by his subjects as a great and wise ruler, essentially a man of peace, who took seriously his High-Priestly office and was devout in his observance of the Law. It is equally clear, however, that he and the members of his family lived in considerable splendour and amassed wealth which dazzled even the envoys of the Syrian king (cf. 1 Macc. 15<sup>32</sup>), Simon himself using much of his private fortune for public benefactions and fitting out the army at his own expense, after the style of a typical Hellenistic king (cf. 1 Macc. 14<sup>32</sup>). These characteristics, and others less attractive, were to become much more pronounced in the lives of his successors and were yet to cause grave concern among the people, some of whom were convinced that the descendants of the Maccabees had betrayed their God-given trust.