

# **Insurgency in Ancient Times: The Jewish Revolts Against the Seleucid and Roman Empires, 166 BC-73 AD**

**A Monograph  
by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Title: Insurgency in Ancient Times: The Jewish Revolts Against the Seleucid and Roman Empires, 166 BC-73 AD, by LTC William T. Sorrells, USA, 57 pages.

This monograph examines two insurgencies conducted by the Jews in ancient times: The Maccabbee Revolt against the Seleucid Empire from 166-164 BC and the Revolt against the Roman Empire from 66-70 AD. The monograph proposes that all insurgencies have a nature and the nature of insurgency is as critical to understanding an insurgency today as it was two thousand years ago. Ancient Jewish history provides an excellent case study of a successful and failed insurgency. The Jewish revolt against the Seleucid Empire (Maccabbee Revolt 166-164 BC) was a successful insurgency, which gained the free practice of religion for the Jewish people and ultimately an independent Jewish State. This independence lasted for one hundred years until 63 BC when Palestine was annexed by the Roman Empire. Subsequently, the Jewish people again revolted in 66 AD against Roman rule, but the result of the insurgency was a failure catastrophic to the Jewish people and the prospects for an independent Jewish state.

The monograph contains four sections: Introduction, Prelude and Nature of Insurgency: The Maccabbee Revolt, Prelude and Nature of Insurgency: The Revolt against Rome, and Conclusion. The model for analysis is the nature of insurgency as defined by US Army Doctrine. The respective natures of each insurgency are each examined separately to provide data for analysis. The data for each insurgency is then compared against the other to determine why one insurgency failed and the other succeeded.

The monograph concludes that the differences in the nature of the two insurgencies defined why one succeeded and the other failed. Both insurgencies upon initial examination appear to have a similar characteristics (religious persecution, desire for an independent state, fear of lost cultural identity), but subtle differences in the nature distinguish them. The examination of the Jewish insurgencies in ancient times is relevant to the US military today as it faces insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan fueled by strong religious ideologies. The concept of “nature” is still a valuable tool for military planners in the counter-insurgency environment.

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## INTRODUCTION

**“Whoever is zealous for the laws of his country, and for the worship of God, let him follow me!”**

**Josephus**

As he knocked over the defiled altar, Mattathais, an elderly priest and father of Judas Maccabaeus, shouted these words to his family and fellow Jews in the village of Modiim, about sixteen miles northwest of Jerusalem. The year was 166 BC and the land of Judea was in the heart of the Seleucid Empire. Mattathais and his sons had only moments before slain by the sword, Apelles, a general in the Seleucid Army and his accompanying entourage. Apelles had attempted to enforce the Seleucid anti-Jewish decrees by having a pig sacrificed to Zeus on a Jewish altar. This sudden and violent act undertaken by traditionally peaceful priests sparked the Maccabean Revolt, a successful insurgency against a powerful Hellenistic empire.<sup>1</sup>

Insurgencies have plagued occupying armies throughout the history of warfare, and the 21<sup>st</sup> century is no exception. In OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM, the US and its coalition allies waged a swift and violent maneuver campaign that soundly defeated or induced the surrender of all Iraqi conventional forces. Conversely, the post-conflict operation, besides being extremely complex by its very nature, has been hampered by an insurgency, steadily increasing in violence. This insurgency has thwarted US and coalition efforts to create a safe and secure environment for ordinary Iraqi citizens and for the legitimizing of a post-Saddam government. Throughout military history there are countless examples of insurgencies against strong occupying armies: some succeeded, some failed. The nature and causes of a particular insurgency will determine success or failure of the insurgents to achieve their objectives. Ancient Jewish history provides an excellent case study of a successful and a failed insurgency. The Jewish revolt against the Seleucid Empire (Maccabean Revolt, 166-164 BC) was a successful insurgency, which gained the

free practice of religion for the Jewish people and ultimately an independent Jewish State. This independence lasted for one hundred years until 63 BC when Judea was annexed by the Roman Empire. Subsequently, the Jewish people again revolted in 66 AD against Roman rule, but the result of the insurgency was a catastrophic failure to the Jewish people and the prospects for an independent Jewish state. Why did the second revolt fail when upon initial examination the conditions (religious persecution, desire for an independent state, fear of lost cultural identity) appear to be similar to the first revolt?

The answer to this question lies in the differences in the nature of the two insurgencies. The nature of an insurgency as defined by US Army Doctrine can be broken down into separate components: the characteristics of the insurgents, the tactics utilized by insurgents, the goals and objectives of the insurgency, the evolution of the conflict determined by phases, and the environment of the conflict to include political, economic and sociological factors as well as terrain and weather. Deeper analysis into the nature of each conflict will provide the answer to why the Maccabean Revolt succeeded and the Jewish Revolt Against Rome failed.

## **A MODEL FOR ANALYSIS**

**“There is another type of warfare – new in its intensity, ancient in its origin – war by guerillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins; war by ambush, instead of by combat, by infiltration instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him...it preys on unrest.”**

**John F. Kennedy**

The insurgency model is the framework utilized for the analysis into the respective natures of the Jewish insurgencies against the Seleucid Empire in 166 BC and the Roman Empire in 66 AD. The foundation for the model is current US Counterinsurgency Doctrine and a brief

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<sup>1</sup> Flavius Josephus, *The Second Jewish Commonwealth: From the Maccabean Rebellion to the Outbreak of the Judaeo-Roman War*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 17-18.

review of its evolution is helpful for understanding some of the enduring qualities of an insurgency.

In FM 3-07, *Stability Operations and Support Operations*, published in 2003, the Army doctrine writers focused on insurgency/counterinsurgency in the context of a Foreign Internal Defense (FID) operation, which is designed to support a government's efforts to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. Insurgency is defined as an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict. The doctrine writers also reintroduced the concept of the nature of an insurgency and plainly state that the nature of an insurgency dictates the methods by which the military must oppose it. It also describes seven characteristics common to insurgencies and states that understanding how these interact is the key to understanding an insurgency. These characteristics are leadership, ideology, objectives, environment and geography, external support, phasing and timing, and organizational and operational patterns.

Leadership is a critical component of an insurgency. As previously stated, an insurgency is not simply random political violence, but instead, directed and focused political violence. Leadership is required to provide this direction and focus toward a goal or objective. Leaders must be effective communicators to mobilize popular support for their cause as they sever the ties of the populace to the government. The leadership of an insurgency may be centralized or decentralized, which will affect the nature of the insurgency in different ways.<sup>2</sup>

Ideology is the method by which the insurgency creates its alternative to the existing state. An ideology provides a vision of societal improvements after the removal of the current government. The ideology of an insurgency influences the insurgent's perception of his dissatisfaction with the governmental status quo and dictates specific objectives and types of

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *FM 3-07 Stability Operations and Support Operations* (Washington: Government Printing Office, February, 2003), D-1.

tactics. Examples of ideologies that may spawn an insurgency are communism, socialism, capitalism, religious government, ethnic nationalism, or democracy.<sup>3</sup>

The strategic end state or objective of an insurgency is how the insurgent will use power once he has attained it. However, the insurgent will focus initially on attaining power by overthrowing the current government, and, in many cases, this may be the only clearly defined objective of the insurgency. In attaining the strategic objective, the insurgents will have multiple tactical and operational objectives. Activities such as terrorist attacks, ambushes of government security forces, are tactical objectives that lead to an operational objective, such as destroying the perception of government legitimacy.<sup>4</sup>

Environment and geography are critical characteristics of the nature of insurgency. The physical aspects of terrain and weather affect the ability of the insurgent to conduct guerrilla operations by providing escape routes and safe havens. Climate can provide an advantage to the indigenous insurgent due to his familiarity. This advantage is minimized when government forces are also familiar with the terrain and climate. If the counterinsurgency force is an occupying or foreign force, the insurgent's advantage can be significant until the counterinsurgency forces become more acclimatized to the physical environment.<sup>5</sup>

Environment and geography also has a dimension beyond the physical aspects of terrain and climate. The history of a particular region plays a strong role in the insurgent's environment and it can significantly influence the nature of an insurgency. A population that historically has been invaded and occupied by foreign powers or oppressed by its own government will be more susceptible to unrest. History tells the story of the behavior of current and past political institutions. Is there a tradition of efficiency or inefficiency? Sociological factors can cause fragmentation of a society along ethnic, religious, and racial lines and can be a cause of

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, D-2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, D-3

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, D-3.

dissatisfaction among the populace. Economic factors such as unemployment and low standards of living may also influence dissatisfaction toward the government. History, sociological, and economic factors are interrelated and together can contribute to the underlying causes of insurgency.<sup>6</sup>

External support can affect an insurgency by accelerating events and influencing the outcome. External support comes in the form of moral support, political support, resource support, or sanctuary support. The accepting of external support by an insurgent group can affect the legitimacy of the insurgency. It implies that the insurgency cannot sustain itself, but it also implies that the insurgent cause is recognized outside of the state.<sup>7</sup>

Historically, insurgencies have followed a common set of phases as they develop. Although every insurgency does not follow each phase, they provide a useful framework for determining the maturity of the insurgent movement. There are five phases: preinsurgency, organization, guerilla warfare, conventional warfare, and post-insurgency. Phase I: Preinsurgency exists when all the indicators of the insurgency are present, leadership emerges and a catalyst triggers the insurgency to begin to organize. Phase II: Organization, the insurgency establishes and expands its organization and ideology, and small-scale guerilla and terrorist actions take place. Phase III is Guerilla Warfare and it is characterized by the increased scale of guerilla attacks and increased use of sabotage and terrorism. Phase IV: Conventional Warfare occurs when the insurgency has developed militarily and is able to challenge the counterinsurgency forces conventionally. There is also a marked increase in the political activity and the area controlled by the insurgents. Phase V: Post-insurgency occurs as the final result of a successful insurgency. The government is overthrown or it has satisfied the insurgents demands. A new governmental system is established in which the leadership of the insurgency may or may

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<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *FM 7-98, Operations in a Low Intensity Conflict* (Washington: Government Printing Office, October, 1992),

not head. An insurgency may follow all of the phases or none at all. It also may revert back to a previous phase or skip a phase.<sup>8</sup>

Although all insurgencies are unique, certain organizational and operational patterns develop. An insurgency may develop into one of several types of organization: triangular, dual, cellular, political, military, or ethnic. A triangular organization is composed of three elements, the political party, the popular control mechanism, and the military organization. The leadership in each is distinct with the political element the overall authority. A dual organization is composed of only the political and military elements with the political element with overall control. A cellular organization is made up of small, decentralized groups operating independently of each other. Political organization exists when a complex political structure is developed before a military arm is established. Military organization exists when armed insurgents serve as the catalyst for mobilizing the opposition against the regime. Finally, an ethnic organization is organized along ethnic, tribal, or religious lines.<sup>9</sup>

There are also several types of strategies or operational patterns that an insurgent group may follow. There is the mass movement, characterized by a large-scale popular movement, elements of which operate outside the existing political system. There is the focal point strategy whereby a small group uses violence to overturn an existing regime. The subversive strategy uses the political process to place insurgents in positions of authority by election or appointment. The overt element influences public opinion and obstructs government, while the subversive element employs terrorism, coercion and intimidation. The final two strategies are the urban and rural. In the urban strategy the insurgents gain control of the cities and move outward. It focuses on disrupting utilities and services and planning mass demonstrations to discredit the government. A

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *FM 3-07 Stability Operations and Support Operations* (Washington: Government Printing Office, February, 2003), D-5.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, D-5-6.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, D-6-7.

rural strategy mobilizes the population in the countryside. The rural armies eventually surround the cities and isolate the government forces and bring about the downfall of the government.<sup>10</sup>

This framework for the nature of an insurgency will be used to analyze the two distinct Jewish insurgencies: the successful revolt against the Seleucid Empire and the failed revolt against the Roman Empire.

## **PRELUDE AND NATURE OF INSURGENCY: THE MACCABEAN REVOLT**

The historical and sociological landscape of the Jewish people from the time of the end of the Babylonian Exile and the Restoration of the Temple circa 538 BC to the Dispersion beginning in 73 AD influenced the nature of both Jewish revolts. The story of the Jewish people during this period is one of extreme hardship with their identity, culture, and religion bordering on the brink of extinction, to a period of renewal and independence as a nation, to once again, a people on the verge of losing their identity and religion as a distinct people.

### **RETURN FROM BABYLON**

In 538 BC Cyrus, King of Persia entered the city of Babylon, capital of the Babylonian Empire, to a joyous celebration and was recognized immediately as the new monarch. One of his first acts as the conquering monarch was to issue the Edict of Cyrus to the exiles of Judah in Babylon, permitting them to return to their former lands and rebuild their temple in Jerusalem.<sup>11</sup>

Jews from all over the captivity gathered in Babylon for the journey back to their homeland. The first group as recorded in the Book of Ezra numbered 42,360, and led by Sheshbazzar, they returned to the Jerusalem carrying with them the sacred vessels of the Temple, which had been plundered by Nebuchadnezzar in 588 BC. When they arrived they found that

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid, D-6-7.

their ancient enemies, the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Philistines were still there and none too happy to see the return of a nation, which they thought had been destroyed. The Samaritans posed a new challenge to the reestablishment of Judea. The Samaritans were the descendents of the northern Kingdom of Israel, which had been deposed by the Assyrians in 722 BC. The remnants of this Jewish population, which had not been taken into captivity by the Assyrians had become mixed racially and religiously by Assyrian colonization efforts as they brought in people from Assyria, Arabia, Babylon and Media to fill the void. The Samaritans believed that they were the true heirs of the Hebrew tradition. Initially they welcomed the returning Jews and wanted to assist in the rebuilding of the Temple. However, these advances were rejected by the returning exiles and there developed a bitter rivalry and hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans. This rivalry resulted in a delay of the construction of the Second Temple until 515 BC. Darius, the King of Persia at the time of the Restoration, proved to be as magnanimous as his predecessor Cyrus and decreed that all Jewish taxes should be applied to the rebuilding of the Sanctuary. The Jews enjoyed religious toleration under the Persians, but any hopes of independence were quelled.<sup>12</sup>

Ezra was a Jewish scribe and priest extremely knowledgeable in the scriptures and reputedly a descendant of Aaron. Ezra was dispatched from Babylon with mission from the monarch to examine the condition of the Jewish religion in Judea. Upon his arrival he set about a series of reforms to purify the faith. His reforms included the banning of intermarriage with non-Jews and expelling non-practitioners from Jerusalem. Another reform instituted by Ezra had long-term implications to the civil and religious governance tradition of the Jews. The Jews could not have political independence, but they could have religious independence, instead. He renewed and reconstituted the priesthood of the Temple, which would consist of the sons of

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<sup>11</sup> Ben-Sasson, H.H. *A History of the Jewish People*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 166.

Aaron, who were actually descendents of the priests of King David. A priest from this order would eventually come to be known as the high priest.<sup>13</sup>

The high priest became the leader of the community. In time he would be the functionary holding the imperial powers controlling Judea. Ezra, in his quest for Jewish purity had created the Jewish Temple State. He also shifted the focus of Judaism from the cult of the priests to a singular focus on the Torah. The Torah would be the pillar upon which the reconstituted Jewish community would be based.<sup>14</sup>

## **GREEK INFLUENCES ON JUDEA**

The latter part of the fourth century BC would mark the decline of the Persian Empire. In 332 BC, Alexander the Great conquered Judea rapidly and with little resistance from the Persian garrisons in the region. With the death of Alexander only nine years later, the dissolution of his empire began rapidly. The provinces of the former Persian Empire were savagely fought over by his generals Ptolemy and Seleucus. Ptolemy's empire centered on Egypt, and Seleucus claimed sovereignty over the rest of the former Persian Empire. Judea had no preference as to who would inherit her territory, but was caught in the conflict. In 318 BC, Ptolemy attacked Jerusalem and took many Jews captive into Egypt. His assault was on the Sabbath and met with no resistance because the use of weapons on the holy day was forbidden to the Jews. Judea, although it changed hands several times, generally remained under the control of the Ptolemy's until the Battle of Panion in 198 BC. The Seleucid Army led by Antiochus III defeated the Ptolemaic forces near the head waters of the Jordan River and established Seleucid control over Judea.<sup>15</sup>

From the time of Alexander to the era of Seleucid control Judea came under the strong

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<sup>12</sup> Lears, Rufus. *Israel, A History of the Jewish People*. (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1949), 109-110.

<sup>13</sup> Grant, Michael. *The History of Ancient Israel*. (New York: Charles Scribners and Sons, 1984), 189-190.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 190.

cultural influences of the Greeks called Hellenism. Hellenism became the dominating culture of the eastern world, itself being the product of a thousand years of civilization and the tradition of the city-state and Athens. Hellenistic culture was marked by superiority in art, music, science, and philosophy, but also a sense of world society. Hellenism sought to bring about a society of recognized differences but where a common culture nonetheless acted as a common bond. The non-Greek residing in one of the Hellenistic Empires considered it essential to have some aspects of Greek culture. The protracted exposure to the Ptolemaic and Seleucid administrative system and the advanced state of hellenistic civilization in agriculture, town planning, and finance all created changes in Judea. The Jewish population in Judea and other parts of the Hellenistic world was surrounded by a large gentile population of differing ethnicities and religions that was mostly hostile toward Jews. The Jews had maintained their distinct cultural identity and had resisted effects of Hellenism at a much stronger rate than the other numerous gentile populations. However, by 200 BC, Hellenism had successfully created a distinct Greek-Syrian culture that now threatened Jewish distinctness. The leadership and upper classes of Jewish society, mainly consisting of priests, slowly began to change their ways of thinking to the corresponding classes of the non-Jewish sections of the empire. The Oniad family had for many generations held the office of High Priest and they were precisely the class of Jewish society most influenced by Hellenism. Many Jews lived in towns where the majority of the population was hellenized and many Jewish families adopted Greek names. Jewish culture, although threatened, was still only moderately hellenized.<sup>16</sup>

The vast majority of the Jews clung to the teachings of the Torah and the common man: craftsman, laborers, peasants in the countryside, and the lower priests, still looked upon Hellenism with great suspicion. Abstract Greek philosophy was in stark contrast to Jewish ways

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<sup>15</sup> Ben-Sasson, H.H. *A History of the Jewish People*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 185-186.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 196-197.

of thinking while the Jews based everything on one fundamental principle: the relationship between God and his people.<sup>17</sup> Many of these Jews formed a party in opposition to the Hellenist Jews called the Hasidim. The Hasidim despised the Hellenists and their brand of synthesized Judaism. To the Hasidim, the Hellenist represented a threat to Jewish culture and violated the laws of Moses.<sup>18</sup>

## **IMMEDIATE CAUSES OF THE REVOLT**

Antiochus III, the Seleucid conqueror of Judea, allowed Judea to maintain its traditions and governmental system that it had become accustomed to under the Ptolemaic rule. This pattern continued through until 188 BC after Antiochus III's defeat by Rome. The Peace of Apamea required that the Seleucids to pay a large indemnity to the Roman Republic that placed it in severe financial straits. This financial strain caused the Seleucid government to increase the tax burden on its subjects and a source of untapped wealth resided in the various temples of the kingdom. Antiochus III was killed in an attempt to plunder an Elamite Temple and his son Seleucus IV tried unsuccessfully to appropriate money from the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. This created controversy between the Jews and the Seleucid administrators. Increased clashes occurred between the local population and representatives of the Seleucid government as a natural response of a heavily taxed and frustrated Jewish population. Conflict also arose from the Jewish populations outside the administrative boundaries of Judea, particularly in the areas of the more hellenized Samaria and Idumaea where there was a tendency for these Jews to become a part of Judea. It is important to note that at this time the objective of the Jewish opposition was not to gain independence and reestablish the ancient Jewish kingdom, but to maintain and establish Jewish autonomy whereby they could maintain their cultural distinctness against the

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<sup>17</sup> Tcherikover, V. *Hellenistic Civilization*, The World History of the Jewish People, vol. 6 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1972), 43.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 131.

forces of Hellenization. However, aside from the current policies, there was a hope that the greatness of Israel would one day be restored, in time.<sup>19</sup>

In 175 BC, Antiochus IV became ruler of a weakened Seleucid Empire. The Romans had defeated his father soundly in 190 BC at the Battle of Magnesia in Anatolia. The Seleucid Empire continued to face pressure from Rome in the west and Ptolemaic Egypt from the south. Antiochus began to accelerate the Hellenization of the empire. In the early part of his reign, Antiochus focused on Judea, because it provided the buffer between Seleucid Syria and the Ptolemaic Empire and in Judea the tension increased between the Hellenizers and their opponents. His brother Jason involved the office of the High Priest of Judea in a Hellenizing controversy when Antiochus deposed the High Priest Onias III when he bribed the monarch and promised him a larger annual tribute. As High Priest Jason began an aggressive Hellenization program with the objective of transforming Jerusalem into a polis, but establishment of a polis required greater introduction of Greek political and cultural institutions.<sup>20</sup>

One of the major changes to Jerusalem was the construction of a gymnasium, which is one of the centers of Greek life. Soon it began to replace the Temple as the center of life in Jerusalem. Unfortunately for Jason, Antiochus was on the verge of another war against Ptolemaic Egypt and had lost trust in his High Priest and replaced him in favor of Menelaus in 171 BC. Menelaus was a Jew but he was not of a priestly family and his submissiveness to the monarch was like that of any other governmental figure. On his way back from Egypt, Antiochus, assisted by Menelaus, plundered the Temple treasures and in doing so, sparked the angers of the Jewish people who regarded this act as demeaning to the Jewish religion and an insult to Jewish autonomy. The High Priest figure, which in the past had been a representative of the Jewish

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<sup>19</sup> Ben-Sasson, H.H. *A History of the Jewish People*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 201-202.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 203.

people, was now only a representative of the Seleucid government. In 168 BC, Antiochus had again attacked Egypt and was on the verge of capturing Alexandria until Roman intervention forced him to abandon this pursuit and return home. While he was away, rumors began circulating in Judea that Antiochus was dead and set off revolts in several cities including Jerusalem. Upon his return he recaptured Jerusalem and as a punitive measure established a foreign colony on the Acra in Jerusalem. The foreigners combined with the extreme Jewish Hellenists of Menelaus now controlled the city of Jerusalem and began a process of depriving it of its religious character. The foreigners brought with them their pagan gods and openly practiced idolatry while Menelaus the High Priest did nothing to stop them. The upper classes of Jewish society hoped through hellenization to move Judea into the modern world. Inevitably there would be clash because the more Judea was hellenized the less Jewish it would become. The schism developed in Jewish society as the Hasidim representing the devout lower-class Jews fled the growing secularism in Jerusalem and took up residence in the rural areas of the north and northwest.<sup>21</sup>

Antiochus took a decisive measure in 167 BC that pushed the Judea situation to the point of revolt – He forbade the practice of the Jewish Religion in Judea. This edict imposed a death sentence on any Jew who circumcised his children or observed the Sabbath. The crowning act of desecration occurred on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Kislev in 168 BC when Antiochus ordered a statue of Zeus to be placed in the Temple and ordered a pig, an animal held in abhorrence by the Jews, to be sacrificed on the alter.<sup>22</sup> Antiochus realized that the Jews monotheism was the cause of their long term resistance to his attempts at Hellenization. This was troubling to Antiochus because the unrest in Judea endangered his southern border with Ptolemaic Egypt.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 204.

<sup>22</sup> Lears, Rufus. Israel, *A History of the Jewish People*. (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1949), 131.

<sup>23</sup> Ben-Sasson, H.H. *A History of the Jewish People*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 205.

Antiochus enforced his policies through his appointed High Priest, Menelaus, who fully cooperated and supported the religious persecution along with his fellow Hellenists. This led to a gross miscalculation on the part of Antiochus who believed wrongly that Menelaus and his Hellenized upper-class supporters garnered their support from the lower classes. The truth was the Hellenized upper classes were fully detached from mainstream Jewish society and the majority of the Jews remained loyal to their religion.<sup>24</sup> Throughout their history the dedication of the Jews to their religion was profoundly embedded in their identity. The Jews had willingly laid down their lives as martyrs and defenders of the faith and Jewish tradition, as recorded in II and IV Maccabees, tells the stories of Jewish martyrs for the faith during the time of Antiochus. The most famous of these is Eleazar, who was tortured to death for refusing to eat pork, and of Hannah and her seven sons who were killed for refusing to bow down to heathen idols.<sup>25</sup> The Seleucid Empire would soon find that the Jews were willing to take their resistance to the next level.

## **THE MACCABEAN REVOLT**

The revolt began in a small village just northwest of Jerusalem called Modiin in 166 BC. A group of soldiers led by a Seleucid general named Apelles were enforcing the imperial edict against the practice of the Jewish religion. It had become standard practice for the soldiers to enter a village, erect an altar, and sacrifice a pig in honor of Zeus. On this day things turned out differently. There were not going to be any passive Jewish martyrs. After the altar was setup, a soldier ordered an old man to come forward and perform the sacrifice. The old man was Mattathias from the priestly family of Hasmonaeus. Mattathias and five sons had fled Jerusalem after the defamation of the Temple by Antiochus. Now, ordered to perform a sacrilegious act

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 205.

<sup>25</sup> Lears, Rufus. *Israel, A History of the Jewish People*. (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1949), 131.

against his religion, he refused. When the soldier ordered another Jew to perform the sacrifice, he slew the man and his sons slew the remainder of the soldiers to include Apelles.

This bloody village massacre was the beginning of the Jewish revolt against the Seleucid Empire.<sup>26</sup> The insurgency was fueled by a strong ideological theme: a morphing of nationalism and religion. The Jewish masses demonstrated a tremendous loyalty to their native religion. Judaism had become cultural as well as religious and Jewish autonomy had become tied to living in accordance with their ancestral traditions.<sup>27</sup> While the Hasmoneans garnered the majority of their support from the lower classes, there remained a minority of upper class, hellenized Jews, identified by Menelaus and the Tobiads, that remained loyal to the Seleucid authority. Antiochus' oppressive anti-Judaism decrees further galvanized dissent among the lower class prior to the massacre at Modiin. Interestingly, the preservation of the Jewish religion and culture proved to be stronger than class when many moderately hellenized, upper class, Jews gave their talents and support to the Hasmoneans.<sup>28</sup> In the end, only a small minority of upper class Jews remained loyal to the Seleucids.

Mattathais and his sons then fled to the mountains. The news of the massacre spread throughout the countryside and soon members of the Hasidim and others joined them. They spent the first year of the revolt conducting guerilla operations against Seleucid patrols and conducting raids in villages with the purpose of destroying pagan idols. The success of these actions gave hope to the religious Jews and successfully terrorized apostate Jews.<sup>29</sup> During this period Mattathias became the de facto leader of the Hasidim and the other insurgent forces. He made three significant contributions that set the conditions for the success of the revolt. First he

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<sup>26</sup> Flavius Josephus, *The Second Jewish Commonwealth: From the Maccabean Rebellion to the Outbreak of the Judaeo-Roman War*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 17-18.

<sup>27</sup> Tcherikover, V. *Hellenistic Civilization*, *The World History of the Jewish People*, vol. 6 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1972), 32.

<sup>28</sup> Ben-Sasson, H.H. *A History of the Jewish People*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 205.

convinced the Jews that it was acceptable to fight on the Sabbath, secondly through his leadership and charisma he was able to consolidate all the insurgent bands, and third he encouraged the insurgents to undermine all Seleucid authority in the villages and rural areas surrounding Jerusalem. Before he died he also established the successive leadership of the insurgency: his son Judas (called the Maccabee meaning “Hammerer” in Hebrew) would be the leader.<sup>30</sup>

Leadership is essential to the survivability of any insurgency. The Hasmonean family, led initially by the patriarch, Mattathias, was unique in that it possessed a group of brothers of exceptional leadership ability. Judas, Jonathan, and Simon, the sons of Mattathias, not only possessed military talent but also incredible organizational, and statesmanship ability. The Hasmoneans achieved the difficult task of uniting the Hasidim and other disparate insurgent groups under a common cause: regaining freedom of religion. But Mattathias’ best decision was in selecting his son, Judas the Maccabee, as the military leader of the revolt who turned out to be, arguably, the best guerilla fighter of ancient times.

Judas’ military prowess and activities in the countryside of Judea did not go unnoticed. Apollonius governor of Judea and commander of the Seleucid forces in the region decided to go on the offensive and put an end to the rebellion by destroying Judas and his small army. The Seleucid Army relied on the Greek tactics of tradition of Alexander. The main formation was the phalanx, which consisted of heavy infantry in close formation. The phalanx marched in a tight mass formation, shoulder to shoulder. The main maneuver element of the phalanx was the syntagma, consisting of approximately 250 men. Each syntagma was divided into sixteen ranks with sixteen men each which covered about fifteen square yards. Four syntagma made up a chiliarchia, approximately 1000 men. Two chiliarchia, consisted of approximately 2000 men, and

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<sup>29</sup> Herzog, Chaim and Gichon, Mordechai. *Battles of the Bible*. (New York: Random House, 1978), 194.

<sup>30</sup> Ben-Sasson, H.H. *A History of the Jewish People*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 208.

covered an area 120 yards wide and 15 yards deep. This was the smallest phalanx used at the time of the Maccabean Revolt.<sup>31</sup>

A general fought a phalanx by advancing on an adversary with the first five ranks holding their spear horizontally, and the remaining eleven ranks held theirs vertically. The phalanx's strength lay in its sheer mass and momentum.<sup>32</sup> Its weakness lay in its inflexibility. The phalanx needed sufficient ground to employ its large formation. There were no other tactics to employ on unfavorable terrain or for smaller formations. Judas was quick to recognize how to exploit the weaknesses of the phalanx.

In 166 BC Apollonius moved his army of approximately 2000 men south from Samaria toward Jerusalem. Judas with a small army numbering only 600 saw an opportunity to exploit the situation. He surprised the vastly superior force by ambushing them on the march in a narrow defile near Gophna. The Seleucid force was unable to deploy in the powerful but inflexible phalanx in which they were trained to fight. Judas divided his small army into four smaller units and effectively encircled the two chiliarchia and defeated them in detail. The insurgents killed the Seleucid leader Apollonius and all weapons and equipment were captured. The news of Judas' victory traveled quickly and inspired the Jewish population. More fighters were joining the ranks of the insurgents and Judas was viewed as the national leader of Judea.<sup>33</sup>

Antiochus, wanting to avenge the defeat of Apollonius, directed General Seron in 165 BC to destroy the insurgents. Seron possessed an army twice the size of Apollonius consisting of four chiliarchia, approximately 4000 men against Judas's small army of around 1000. Seron, attempting to avoid the ambush that befell Apollonius in the previous campaign, decided to move down the coastal road toward Jerusalem to ensure the protection from ambush by Judas's unconventional tactics. But he was eventually forced to turn westward and inland toward

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<sup>31</sup> Herzog, Chaim and Gichon, Mordechai. *Battles of the Bible*. (New York: Random House, 1978), 195-196.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 196.

Jerusalem. In Jerusalem he planned to linkup with the Seleucid garrison in the city and they moved out from Jerusalem to destroy the insurgents. Judas again chose to ambush the Seleucids on the ground of his choosing, neutralizing the advantage of the phalanx. Judas also learned from his first major engagement against Apollonius, that it was important to kill the enemy leadership early to add to the confusion and maximize the effect of his unconventional tactics against his adversary.<sup>34</sup>

Seron, riding at the head of the first chiliarchia, set out at dawn for the last days march into Jerusalem. The final leg of the march would take them up a winding road into the hills toward Beth-horon. Judas again divided his force to allow for multiple axis of attack into the Seleucid column and leading the sealing force attacked head on in to the lead syntagma of the advancing army. The ambush caught Seron and his army by surprise. Judas and his men decimated the lead chiliarchia, killing Seron early in the engagement. Leaderless and paralyzed by the surprise and the ferocity of the attack, panic set in and the Seleucids broke ranks and fled, pursued by the insurgents.<sup>35</sup>

Once again Judas demonstrated a keen understanding of the military arts and was able to successfully depart from the tactics of the day and engage in a style of warfare unknown at the time. Judas neutralized the strength of the Seleucid Army's inflexible phalanx tactics, forcing his adversary to fight at the time and on the terrain of his choosing.

The Maccabees had now decisively defeated two Seleucid armies. Judas' army now numbered close to 6,000 and he was gaining prestige among the population. Antiochus, now convinced that he was facing a major rebellion, prepared to embark on a campaign to put down a rebellion in the east when he learned of Seron defeat. He appointed Lycias, a member of the royal family, as viceroy and assigned a force of 20,000 men. Lycias' orders were to "uproot and

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 197.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 198-199.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 202.

destroy the strength of Israel and the remnant of Judea, to blot out all the memory of them from the place, to settle strangers in the territory and allot the land to the settlers.” Lycias subordinated his command between three generals, Ptolemy, Nicanor, and Gorgias. In the spring of 165 BC they began their march into Judea. Lycias, careful not to repeat the mistakes of Apollonius and Seron and be lured into the Judean foothills, established a base camp in the vicinity of Emmaus which provided good terrain for Seleucid tactics. Judas, by now a veteran field commander accustomed to success, again divided his force into four subunits of 1,500 men, commanded by himself and his brothers Simon, Johanan, and Jonathan. After receiving reports as to the location and disposition of the Seleucid force, Judas moved his army to the hills southeast of Emmaus and made camp in sight of his adversary.<sup>36</sup>

The Battle of Emmaus proved to be a disaster for Lycias, while Judas added to his reputation as a great captain through exceptional use of deception, maneuver, and command and control; once again exploiting the weaknesses of the Seleucids. Judas turned the tables on Gorgias who initiated battle by attempting to surprise the Hasmoneans by conducting a night attack on their camp. Judas, through his superior use of intelligence, found out about the plan and had one of his forces ambush Gorgias when he attacked an empty camp. Near simultaneously, Judas attacked a phalanx from the flank, shattering it at its weakest point, while two of his brothers with their forces of approximately 3,000 attacked the unprepared Seleucid base camp. The result again was predictable. Judas denied Lycias the ability to mass and fragmented his force, not allowing the phalanx to exploit its strength. The Seleucids had approximately 3,000 killed while the remainder fled to the coast as a disorganized rabble with the Hasmoneans in pursuit.<sup>37</sup>

With each Hasmonean victory, the Judean Revolt was dealt with at a higher level within the Seleucid government. Lycias, the viceroy of Antiochus, decided to take matters in his own

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 203-204.

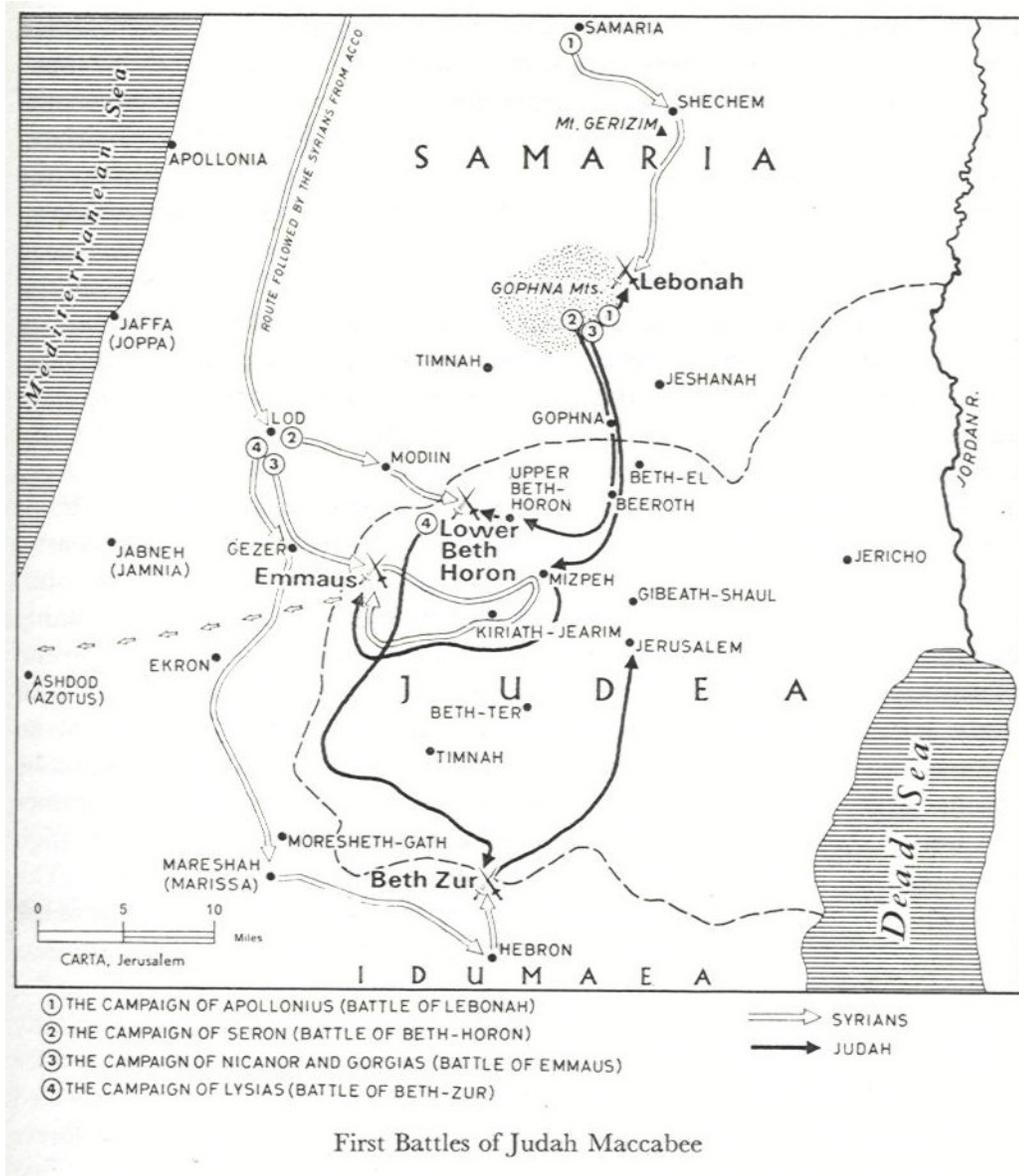
hand and raised an even larger army that he would command himself and march on Judea. His army has been estimated at 20,000 infantry and 4,000 cavalry. Riding the wave of his past successes, Judas had grown his army to approximately 10,000. Lycias' plan was to approach Jerusalem from the south where the terrain was less suitable for one of Judas' deadly ambushes. He massed his army at Hebron and followed the road north toward the Judean border.

He quickly arrived at the border fortress of Beth-zur where the city fell with no resistance. Lycias was now only a day's march from Jerusalem and had encountered no Hasmonean resistance. The historical record is sketchy, but according to the Jewish Historian Josephus, Judas maneuvered his army to a position to attack the Seleucid vanguard, killing approximately 5,000. From this account it appears unlikely that the Hasmoneans engaged the main body of Lycias' army.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, this tactical action had strategic consequences. Lycias realized that he would never gain victory on the battlefield and decided to negotiate a settlement to end hostilities.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 208.

<sup>38</sup> Avi-Yonah, M. *The Hasmonean Revolt and Judah Maccabee's War Against the Syrians*. The World History of the Jewish People, vol. 6 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1972), 163.



**Figure 1- First Battles of Judah Maccabee**

Antiochus agreed to a compromise and issued a letter to Menelaus on 15 October 164 BC that granted amnesty to all the rebels and the permitted the Jews to live in accordance with their own laws.<sup>39</sup> The Battle of Beth-zur was the most serious defeat Seleucids had suffered against the Hasmoneans. The Empire had lost considerable prestige internally and it was now vulnerable abroad. With Judea, secure from attack for the time being, Judas entered Jerusalem and cleansed

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 163.

the Temple of all pagan symbols. In December, a seven day ceremony of the dedication, or Hanukkah, of the purified sanctuary with praise, sacrifice, music, and the relighting of the Menorah.<sup>40</sup> The initial objective of the Maccabee Revolt had been achieved: freedom of religious worship and the cessation of religious persecution. However, Judas and the Hasmoneans now sensed that political independence for Judea was in the realm of the possible.

The emergence of Jewish nationalism in Judea and the strong military presence of the Hasmoneans created tension among Judea's more hellenized neighbors and this frustration was taken out on the Jews living in these areas outside of Judea. Over the next two years the Hasmoneans entered a period of expeditionary guerilla warfare as it sought to liberate the various communities of Jews outside of Judea that were still being persecuted. This entailed offensive operations against some of Judea's old enemies, namely the Idumaeans, Ammonites, Philistines, and Phoenicians. The Hasmoneans also had some other scores to settle. Encouraged by Lycias, these nations had raided Jewish territory, and aided Seleucid solidiers and Hellenist traitors during the rebellion.<sup>41</sup>

In 164 BC news arrived in Judea that Antiochus had died in Persia and Judas, sensing that the time was right, decided launch and attack on the Acra. The Acra was the Seleucid fortress within Jerusalem that held the Hellenizers. Judas began a siege of the fortress but due to a lack of knowledge of siege tactics and the appropriate equipment, progress was slow. When Lycias learned of Judas' attack on the Acra, he assembled the largest army the Hasmoneans had faced. I and II Maccabees both give an exaggerated count of over 100,000 men, infantry and cavalry and somewhere between 22 and 32 elephants. Josephus in the *Jewish War* estimates the Seleucid numbers to be around 50,000 infantry, 5,000 cavalry and 8 elephants. This is generally accepted as a reasonable estimate of the Seleucid strength with the Hasmonean strength at

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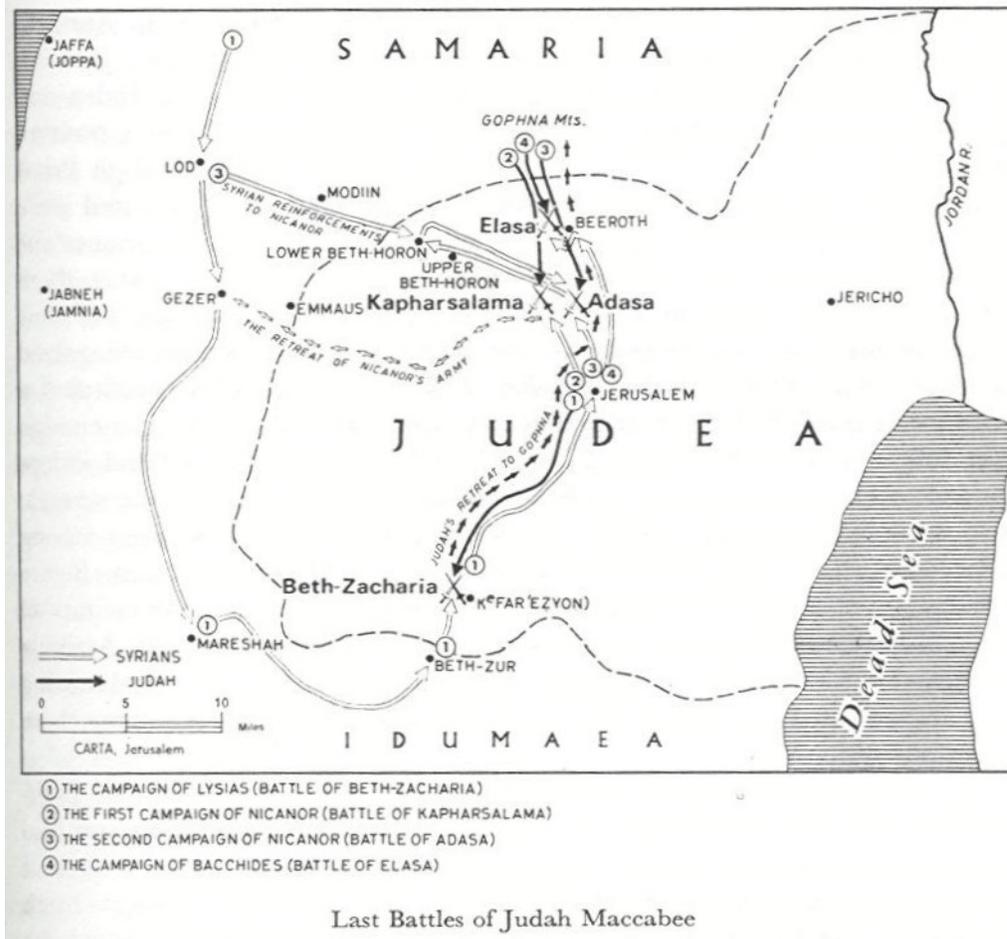
<sup>40</sup> Lears, Rufus. *Israel, A History of the Jewish People*. (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1949), 140.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 134.

approximately 20,000. The elephant's purpose was to break the opposing phalanx making way for lighter infantry and cavalry. With the Seleucid Army marching on Jerusalem, Judas gave up the siege of Acra and marched his army south to meet it near the town of Beth-zacharias. Judas was finally forced to fight the Seleucids on their terms and where the phalanx augmented with battle elephants proved to be too much for the Hasmoneans and they were defeated and forced to evacuate Jerusalem and seek refuge in the Gophna mountains where they were based at the beginning of the revolt. Judas also lost his brother Eleazar on the field of battle where he died attacking a battle elephant he believed to have been carrying Lycias.<sup>42</sup> The Hasmoneans had progressed through all the five phases of insurgency as defined by U.S. Army doctrine and had achieved their initial end state of religious freedom. However, after their crushing defeat at Beth-zachariah, they are essentially able to wage only guerilla warfare as defined by phase III.

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<sup>42</sup> Herzog, Chaim and Gichon, Mordechai. *Battles of the Bible*. (New York: Random House, 1978), 216-290.



**Figure 2 - Last Battles of Judah Maccabee**

The Jewish cause seemed to have been lost. The Seleucids established a garrison in Jerusalem, relieved the besieged Acra, and ran the Jewish defenders from the city. However, disputes over the succession to the Seleucid throne forced Lycias to make peace with the Jewish rebels. Lycias went as far as unreservedly abandoning Antiochus' religious policy and made Menelaus the scapegoat of its failure and had him executed. Lycias then appointed Alcimus as high priest. This was unfortunate for the Hasmoneans in that Alcimus was a hellenizer and by his appointment, Judas was not recognized as the leader of the Jewish nation. Essentially, Lycias had

only established a temporary armistice and the supporters of the Hasmoneans marginalized Alcimus and deprived him of influence over Temple affairs.<sup>43</sup>

When Demetrius I became king in 162 BC the situation in Judea became tense once again. Demetrius set out to reestablish control over his kingdom and his initial focus was Judea. He dispatched an army under the command of Bacchides to come to the aid of Alcimus and to break up the Hasmonean insurgents. Judas again fell back to his Gophna mountain sanctuary where he recruited support and refitted his army once again for battle. He won two victories against the Seleucid General Nicanor, but he had no illusions of final victory. Judas instead sought foreign diplomatic assistance and obtained a treaty of alliance with Rome. Rome was the strongest empire at the time and it now recognized the Judea as an independent Jewish state.<sup>44</sup>

The importance of the external support of the Roman Empire can be overestimated. A weakened and fragmented Seleucid Empire worked to the advantage of Roman ambitions in the region. The Seleucids were already divided against themselves after the death of Antiochus IV, so Roman support to the insurgency in Judea added to the vulnerability of the Seleucid Empire. However, while the treaty with Rome served to improve Judea's international standing, it never panned out in terms of anything other than moral support.<sup>45</sup>

Unfortunately, Judas would not live to see the fruits of his courage and leadership. Before his ambassadors returned from Rome, Judas was killed in battle at Elasa in 160 BC. The Hasmonians were defeated and the survivors fled to the hills and Judas' remaining brothers recovered his body and buried him in Modiin by his father Mattathias.<sup>46</sup> This was another strength of the Hasmonean leadership was the ease of succession after the death of Judas at the

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<sup>43</sup> Ben-Sasson, H.H. *A History of the Jewish People*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 211.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 212.

<sup>45</sup> Gruen, Erich S. *The Hellenistic World And the Coming of Rome*. vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 749.

<sup>46</sup> Avi-Yonah, M. *The Hasmonean Revolt and Judah Maccabee's War Against the Syrians*. The World History of the Jewish People, vol. 6 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1972), 178.

battle of Elasa. Jonathan, his brother, was selected as the leader of the revolt with no opposition and with full legitimacy. This is interesting due to the fact that Mattathias, the patriarch, had selected Simon, the eldest brother to succeed Judas. What could have been a deathblow to the revolt became a non-issue when Simon gave his full support to his brother and unity of command was maintained.

Jonathan proved to be a worthy successor and for the next several years he conducted a guerilla campaign against the Hellenists and their Seleucid protectors. Jonathan and the Hasmonians effectively controlled the countryside. Bacchides with his stronghold in Jerusalem attempted to subdue the northern part of Judea with its dense Jewish settlements by garrisoning a number of forts but he was unable to squash the resistance. With the death of Alcimus in 159 or 158 BC the Jewish opponents of the Hasmoneans were left leaderless and Judea was without a high priest for the next seven years. In 152 BC the Seleucid Empire underwent another series of power struggles over succession to the throne. Alexander Balas claimed to be the son of Antiochus IV and established himself as a challenger to Demetrius I. This power struggle played to the Hasmonean's favor in that each needed the support of Jonathan and part of the courtship the Hasmoneans were allowed to return to Jerusalem. Jonathan eventually supported Alexander and was allowed to become High Priest. This is significant for several reasons, first the Seleucid recognized ruler of Judea is the leader of the insurgency, second the leader of Judea, for the first time under Seleucid rule, has the popular support of the Jewish people, and third Jonathan is the first Hasmonean to hold the office of High Priest.<sup>47</sup>

During this period Jonathan used his influence to improve Judea's strategic position. Throughout the continued power struggle in the Seleucid Empire, he expanded the territory of Judea and strengthened the army. He also renewed diplomatic dialogue with Rome and renewed

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<sup>47</sup> Ben-Sasson, H.H. *A History of the Jewish People*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 212-214.

the treaty of friendship. Most importantly he made Judea the dominant state in the southern part of the Seleucid Empire, capable of influencing the fate of the entire empire.<sup>48</sup>

Unfortunately, Jonathan fell victim to trickery surrounding another play for the throne of the Seleucid Empire. Tryphon, a Seleucid general, lured Jonathan to the city of Ptolemais and took him prisoner and had him slain as part of his plot to claim the throne from Demetrius II. Simon, last and oldest brother of the Maccabee family assumed the leadership of Judea. He inherited a strong army, the support of the Jewish people, and a country with expanded borders and a well-fortified capital. He allied Judea with Demetrius II and in return Judea was relieved of Seleucid taxes and tributes. Demetrius II also fearing that Simon might change his mind and ally with Tryphon, granted Judea full independence in writing. In 142 BC a solemn gathering of priests bestowed upon Simon the title of high priest, commander of the army. The final objective of the insurgency was accomplished: Judea was now independent, free of Seleucid rule and recognized by Rome. The year 142 BC became Year One of the new era.

## **PRELUDE AND NATURE OF INSURGENCY: THE JEWISH REVOLT AGAINST ROME**

### **THE HASMONEAN ERA**

Twenty-five years after the start of the Maccabean Revolt, the Seleucid Empire recognized the independence of Judea. In 140 BCE, Simon, the last of the brothers, becomes the high priest and king of the independent Hasmonean state. Simon was assassinated by his son-in-law in 134 BCE, and his son John Hyrcanus took his place. During his reign as king and high priest, diplomatic foreign relations were maintained with Rome, Sparta, and Athens. John Hyrcanus was also successful in annexing additional territory thereby expanding his the kingdom to lands on the eastern side of the Jordan River. In the process he destroyed the Samaritan temple

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 214.

in Shechem and forced the conversion of Idumaeans in the south. John Hyrcanus died in 104 BCE, and was succeeded briefly by his son, Judah Aristobulus, who conquered the remainder of the Galilee and forced the conversion of the Ituraeans. In 103 BCE, his brother Alexander Jannaeus assumed the throne and continued the expansion of the state.<sup>49</sup>

Salome Alexandra, the wife of Alexander Jannaeus, succeeded her husband in 76 BCE, and ruled nine years at a time when Roman influence was increasing in the region. Her son Hyrcanus II served as high priest during this period. When Salome died in 67 BCE, a conflict over who would follow as ruler and high priest arose between her two sons Hyrcanus II and Aristobolus II. The people supported Aristobolus II, but Antipater, an Idumean, supported Hyrcanus II and with the military support of the Nabatean king Aretas, who had lost territory to the Judea, marched to Jerusalem and demanded that Hyrcanus II be reinstated as high priest and be appointed king.<sup>50</sup> He would be the last Hasmonean to rule over an independent Judea.

The Hasmonean Kingdom brought significant and lasting changes to the Jewish social and religious structure. The Hasmonean family's rise to the ruling dynasty of Judea created a new upperclass. Families and clans that had supported the Hasmoneans during the revolt rose to the upperclasses of society, while the old elite of the Tobiads and the supporters of Menelaus disappeared. However, there were some upperclass families who in the latter stages of the revolt supported the Hasmoneans and they retained their status in the new social order.<sup>51</sup> Also, the Hasmonean monarchy gradually became more Hellenized. In order to maintain power, the Hasmoneans had to rely on a broader support base, which not only included the Hasidim, but other Hellenized occupants and recent converts in the newly acquired territories. Naturally, this led to increased tension from the traditionalist Jews.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 218-220.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 222-223.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 233.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 237.

The most significant social change coming from the Hasmonean era was the development of divergent religious movements within Judaism. While all Jews professed devotion to the Torah, the relative security of a Jewish state allowed for more intellectual debate than ever before.<sup>53</sup> The Pharisees emerged out of the split of the Hasidim and the Hasmonean regime over its secularization. The specific objection was to Jonathan's assumption of the high priesthood. The Hasidim held that since he was not a hereditary descendent of Aaron, he was ineligible. Adding to the conflict was their being forced out from the Sanhedrin during the reign of John Hyrcanus and Alexander Jannaeus, who favored another group, the Sadducees.

The Pharisees were characterized by their strictness to ritual purity.<sup>54</sup> The name Pharisee is derived from a word meaning separators or separated because they desired to withdraw from everything that was sinful or unclean. They were composed primarily of the middle class Jews and advocated total submission to the will of God even if that meant unjust persecution. However, during the Hasmonean period they were not politically active or agitators.<sup>55</sup>

The Essenes were another group that developed under the Hasmoneans and are generally considered an offshoot of the Pharisees. They differed in that they wanted to move completely out of politics and faithfully adhere to the laws of Judaism. They were generally pacifists (although some would fight in the revolt against the Romans) and lived a communal life. They held an important place in the Jewish community due to the atmosphere of holiness that surrounded them.<sup>56</sup>

The final major religious group that developed during the Hasmonean period was the Sadducees. They were comprised mainly of upper class wealthy, landowners, but they also

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<sup>53</sup> Grant, Michael. *The History of Ancient Israel*. (New York: Charles Scribners and Sons, 1984), 216.

<sup>54</sup> Ben-Sasson, H.H. *A History of the Jewish People*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 235-236.

<sup>55</sup> Grant, Michael. *The History of Ancient Israel*. (New York: Charles Scribners and Sons, 1984), 216.

included the hereditary priests that controlled the Temple. They focused primarily on ritual as opposed to interpretation of the Torah beyond its literal written form, seeing no need for additional interpretations or commentary. They were literalists in the sense that they believe in the Torah as the written law, and regarded with contempt the interpretations and oral law of the Essenes and Pharisees. The battle for the soul and character of the Jewish nation was essentially reflected in the competing philosophies of the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The historian Josephus emphasizes the social dimension to this religious controversy when he writes in the *Jewish Antiquities*: “The Sadducees have their support only among rich, and the people do not follow them, while the Pharisees have the people for their ally”.<sup>57</sup>

## **UNDER ROMAN RULE**

In 66 BCE the Roman general Pompey was ordered by the Roman Senate to Asia Minor to put down a rebellion in Pontus. Pompey successfully quelled the rebellion, but while in Asia Minor, Pompey heard of the succession crisis in Judea from one of his generals, Scaurus, who had been sent to Syria. Scaurus was ordered to Judea to attempt to capitalize on the situation in Judea for Rome. Upon hearing that a Roman general was on his way to Judea, Aristobolus II and Hyrcanus II sent emissaries to Scaurus in efforts to gain his support for their causes. Scaurus decided to support Aristobolus II and ordered Aretas to withdraw, which he did. In the meantime, Pompey conquered Syria, and Syria was made a Roman province with a proconsul. This marked the end of the Seleucid Empire.<sup>58</sup>

In 63 BCE, Pompey marched on Jerusalem and Aristobolus II met him in Jericho and capitulated. The people of Jerusalem shut the gates of the city to defend against Pompey. But as Pompey marched on the city, the gates were opened to him by the followers of Hyrcanus. The

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 218-219.

<sup>57</sup> Ben-Sasson, H.H. *A History of the Jewish People*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 236.

supporters of Aristobolus II, were forced to take refuge in the Temple and Pompey promptly laid siege. Three months later Pompey's soldiers broke through the walls and massacre of Jews ensued. The borders of the former Jewish state were greatly reduced to the areas of Judea, Idumea, Perea and Galilee. Pompey installed Hyrcanus II as high priest, but did not give him the title of king. A few years later Hyrcanus II was stripped of all political power, and Gabinius, the proconsul of Syria, divided the remaining territory of the Hasmonean state into five regions, under his control.<sup>59</sup> It had been eighty-years since Simon the last of the Maccabee brothers had been proclaimed ethnarch, but now the Hasmonean Kingdom was gone.

Through Roman Civil Wars in 49 BCE and 44 BCE, Hyrcanus II was able to hold on to power in Judea with the help of his friend Antipater. For his support during the first Civil War, Caesar appointed Hyrcanus II as ethnarch of the Jews, but it was Antipater, not Hyrcanus II who actually ruled in Jerusalem. (Antipater was not a Jew but an Idumean). Antipater had two sons, Phasael and Herod, both of whom would play a role in determining the Roman ruler of Judea.<sup>60</sup>

Another power struggle in Judea arose in 40 BCE when Antigonus, a Hasmonean and the son of Aristobulus II, allied with the Parthians and gained control of Jerusalem. Antigonus took Hyrcanus II and Phasael prisoners but Herod escaped to Masada and eventually made it to Rome. He was able to gain the confidence of Marc Antony and Octavius and the Roman senate granted Herod the title of king of the Judea. In 37 BCE with the assistance of the Roman Army, Herod took control in Judea.<sup>61</sup>

Herod reigned in Jerusalem from 37 BCE until 4, and with the approval of the Romans expanded his kingdom. His rule in Judea was upheld by a system harsh oppression imposed by the Roman Army and harsh restrictions against unlawful assemblies in efforts to control

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<sup>58</sup> Grant, Michael. *The Jews in the Roman World*. (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1995), 49.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 53-54, 57.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 63-65.

disruptive Jewish factions. Herod died in 4 BCE, and his will directed that his kingdom be divided among three of his sons, Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philip. The sons traveled to Rome to petition Augustus to ratify Herod's last will. The majority of Jews in Jerusalem also sent a delegation to Augustus asking him to abolish the Herodian dynasty and to place the region under direct Roman control. Augustus decided in favor Herod's will and divided Herod's kingdom into three among the brothers.<sup>62</sup>

For a brief time the Province of Judea was under the rule of a single king: Agrippa I, a grandson of Herod. Upon the death of Herod Agrippa I in 44, the territory that he ruled was annexed to the province of Syria and was ruled by Roman procurators under the authority of the proconsul of Syria. The procurators were poor politicians, usually seeking primarily to enrich themselves during their brief terms in office.<sup>63</sup>

Roman rule had significant impact on the social and religious condition of Judea. During the years of Roman rule a revolutionary ideology began to take shape. Essentially, the Jews believed that any non-Jewish government was unacceptable and they would not be subservient to a human king. God alone was their master. This ideology was reflected in the Jewish insurrections around the time that direct Roman rule was established but waned until the time of Pontius Pilate. Pilate's severe treatment of the Jewish population and disregard of Jewish sensitivities revitalized ant-Roman sentiment.<sup>64</sup>

During this period a Jewish extremist group known as the Zealots emerged. According to the historian Josephus, the Zealots emerged approximately the same time that Judea became a Roman province around 6 CE. In religious belief they resembled the Pharisees but the Zealots had a boundless love of liberty. They served God alone and they were willing to suffer the death

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid,

<sup>62</sup> Ben-Sasson, H.H. *A History of the Jewish People*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 245-246.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 256,258.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 251-252.

of themselves and their families than to acknowledge a mortal as their master. The movement elevated freedom to the level of a religious tenet and regarded submission to Roman rule as a serious sin, similar to sacrilege. They also believed that the Kingdom of God could be brought closer by rebellious action against foreign rule and God would assist those who did. This essentially was a philosophy that served as a license to revolt. It also led to a sense of martyrdom to lay down one's life for the sacred goal of independence and an attempt to persuade others to join the cause who would not have been inclined to revolt.<sup>65</sup>

Judaism itself was become influenced by the messianic idea and the vision of the end of days. Apocalyptic and messianic thought was engrained in Judaism from ancient times. At the end of the Second Temple era theories of a messiah and when and how the apocalypse was to occur took on meanings that combined national hopes and aspirations as well as universal vision. The end of days would be when Israel was purified and her enemies punished, but also

It would be a time when individual sufferings were eliminated. The Messiah was envisioned both as an anointed king that would rule Israel but also as something supernatural and transcendental. These messianic and apocalyptic expectations became a critical factor in political life during the period of direct Roman rule. The Roman governors experienced numerous minor revolts and insurrections created by the apocalyptic and messianic tension.<sup>66</sup>

## **THE JEWISH REVOLT AGAINST ROME**

The final procurator of Judea was Gessius Florus who arrived in 64 AD. Josephus in the Jewish War claims that Florus actually wanted a Jewish Rebellion, but nonetheless, his actions contributed significantly to the outbreak of hostilities. Early on, Florus became embroiled in a difficult Jewish problem in Caesarea Maritima over a judicial decision where Emperor Nero ruled against a Jewish demand to share citizenship with the Greeks. After the decision the Greeks

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 274.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 286-287.

began clashing with the Jews who began to relocate to Nabata. The news of Jewish persecution soon reached Jerusalem where it was extremely unpopular and caused increased unrest. Florus' continued disregard in Jewish sensitivities was again demonstrated when he took money from the Temple treasury. Jewish rioting followed and fighting broke out between the Jewish crowds and the Roman soldiers and Florus responded by allowing the soldiers to loot the upper market. The incident resulted in many Jews being killed. Florus deployed two additional Roman cohorts from Caesarea to Jerusalem and the violence was repeated. The Jewish rioting eventually reached a point where the cohorts were greatly outnumbered and were forced to take refuge in the garrison. The high priest Matthias in a conciliatory effort convinced Florus to leave only one cohort in the city. Florus agreed and departed for Caesarea with the remaining cohorts. From his position as King of Judea, Agrippa II had a clear acceptance of his subordination to Rome. Now it was his turn to urge restraint among his people. His long oration to the people of Judea, recorded by Josephus attempted to convince the Jews of the futility of a revolt against Rome. The crux of his argument was that complaints against individual Roman procurators do not justify a full-scale revolt against the Roman Empire. Agrippa ended his oration with a foreshadowing that even if the Jews would not take pity on their families by not engaging in a catastrophic revolt, at least spare the Temple. Agrippa realized that in the event of a revolt against Rome it would mean a total destruction of the religious center of Judean society.<sup>67</sup>

The growing unrest among the Jews was fueled by the conflict between the Jewish vision of Israel as a glorious and powerful nation versus the reality of a brutal Roman occupation. The extreme imbalance of power between the Jews and the Romans intensified the messianic hopes of the salvation that would bring Israel to prominence and become the successor to Rome. The Roman historian Tacitus writes that "Most [Jews] were convinced that it was written in the ancient priestly writings that in those times the East would gain in might and those who come

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<sup>67</sup> Grant, Michael. *The Jews in the Roman World*. (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1995),

forth from Judea should possess the world". This messianic vision was the principal ideology that drove the Jewish insurgents. The connection of this abstract ideology with the reality of Roman occupation allowed the Jewish insurgents to view the Roman Empire as a tyrannical, evil, pagan entity at the same level as Satan. The evil must be resisted and fought at all costs. This ideological view is significantly different than that of the Maccabee Revolt. The Hasmoneans professed a strong religious ideology that required them to live according to their religious traditions, but it did not generate the fanatical response that the messianic ideology inspired.<sup>68</sup>

Eleazar, son of Ananais the former high priest, was responsible for the action that ignited the revolt in 66 D. Eleazar was a Sadducee and held the title of captain of the Temple, which meant he was second in authority behind the High Priest. He made an announcement that henceforth no sacrifices would be accepted from any foreigner. What this implied was that the twice-daily sacrifices honoring the emperor in Rome would be stopped since representatives of Rome paid for the sacrifices. This action constituted an act of rebellion.<sup>69</sup>

There was disunity within the Jewish community from the beginning. The High Priest Matthias protested the decision by Eleazar and vacated the Temple and lower city of Jerusalem. Matthias established himself in the upper city and sent a delegation to Florus and three Herodian princes to see King Agrippa II. Florus did nothing but Agrippa attempted to quell the uprising by deploying 2,000 cavalry to Jerusalem with orders to defend the high priest and his followers in the upper city and to dislodge Eleazar from the Temple and the lower city. Eleazar did not sit back and wait to be attacked. He seized the upper city and forced out the government troops. Matthias and his followers were forced into hiding in the city's underground passages and sewers.

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185-188.

<sup>68</sup> Ben-Sasson, H.H. *A History of the Jewish People*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 296.

<sup>69</sup> Grant, Michael. *The Jews in the Roman World*. (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1995), 185-188.

He also burned down the old Hasmonean palace, which was the residence of Agrippa and destroyed the record office, which held deeds and mortgages. Many of Eleazar's followers were among the financially destitute who were to benefit from this unofficial erasure of debt.<sup>70</sup>

Eleazar's next move was to besiege the small Roman garrison located in the Antonia castle overlooking the Temple. The castle fell in two days whereby Eleazar and his men massacred the defenders. Eleazar then focused his attention on Herod's palace, which now held the High Priest Matthias and many of Agrippa's friends and soldiers. This effort was superceded by arrival of a rival rebel leader by the name of Menahem who had won prestige from a surprise attack on the fortress Masada where he had slaughtered the Roman garrison there and occupied the fortress with his own men. Menehem's pedigree was also impressive; he was the son of Judas the Galilean who led an uprising 60 years earlier. He entered Jerusalem in grand splendor, almost messiah-like and he had the good fortune to accept the surrender of Agrippa's Jewish troops at Herod's palace. Menehem clearly aspired to become the overall leader, so much so that he had Ananias, the former high priest, and his brother executed who he felt might later become rivals for leadership. Eleazar felt threatened by this new popular leader that was interfering with his own aspirations for overall leadership. Eleazar had Menehem kidnapped and he tortured him to death. This began the internal power struggles that plague the revolt to its end.<sup>71</sup>

The events in Jerusalem reverberated throughout Judea and beyond to other communities with Jewish populations. Riots broke out in the other cities of Judea and soon it became clear to the Roman authorities that the small constabulary force in Judea could not hope to regain control. The Roman governor in Syria, Cestius Gallus, put together a force consisting of one legion and approximately 6,000 auxiliary forces and marched against Jerusalem in 66 BC. Gallus' army reached the outskirts of the city and attacked the Antonia Fortress. However, stiff resistance from the Jewish defenders forced Gallus to call off the siege and withdraw towards the coast. On his

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 189.

route he faced guerillas style harassing attacks and ambushes in the vicinity of Beth-Horon and soon the withdrawal turned into a rout. When Gallus finally reached Caesarea he had lost approximately 6,000 men.<sup>72</sup>

The Jewish victory became known as the Battle of Beth-horon and it had an enormous impact on the revolt. Many Jews that had hesitated to join the insurgents were now drawn to the cause by a new wave of Jewish nationalism including many from the priesthood and upper classes. For the Romans it also determined that they could no longer treat the Jewish Revolt as a localized problem. The insurgency had put into question Roman rule in Judea, which was strategically important because it was located between Syria and Egypt.<sup>73</sup>

In Jerusalem an independent Jewish government emerged. The leader was Ananas, the former high priest with a record of openly defying the Romans. It was Ananas who had taken the law into his own hand and executed James the Just, brother of Jesus. He adopted an anti-Roman policy, moderate at first, in hope that Rome would offer to negotiate a settlement to the revolt. However, as a precaution, Judea was divided into military districts each with a rebel commander. Eleazar, who had led the revolt in its early stages, was not part of the central authority at this time. He was, however, named as a regional commander. Other regional commanders included Josephus, the future historian. He later writes in his account of the conflict in the Jewish War that their mission was to make preparations to resist the probable Roman invasion.<sup>74</sup>

The Emperor Nero received a thorough report from the Herodian princes on the urgent situation in Judea. Nero realized that weakened control over Judea could eventually lead to problems on the Parthian frontier. He recalled the procurator, Florus, to Rome and significantly upgraded the position of governor by appointing Titus Flavius Vespasian, a senator and ex-consul in February 67 AD. Vespasian, who was with Nero in Greece, departed immediately for Judea to

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 196.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 192.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 192.

assume the governorship and command of his armies. Upon arriving in Antioch he picked up two legions and marched to Ptolemais Ace where he linked up with his son Titus who was arriving from Alexandria with one legion. Including auxiliaries and augmentation from other vassal states, Vespasian was in command of an army numbering approximately 60,000. He then marched his army to Galilee and where he confronted the Jewish force guarding the frontier. The Jewish armies were no match for the well trained Roman legions and their only success was in holding on to their fortresses. Complicating the Jewish situation was the consistent internecine quarreling between the Jewish factions of varying levels of rebelliousness and social classes. Among the competitors was Josephus, the overall commander of Galilee and his force, John of Gischala, leader of a much more radical group, and the followers of Justus of Tiberius.<sup>75</sup>

The only formidable resistance encountered by Vespasian was the fortress at Jotapata entrusted to Josephus. Vespasian laid siege to the fortress, which lay nine miles south of Sepphoris. The siege lasted forty-seven days during which time the some of Josephus' key associates entered into a suicide pact to avoid capture. Somehow Josephus avoided this arrangement and surrendered to Vespasian in June 67 AD. Vespasian quickly realized the value of his captor as a collaborator and Josephus soon became a trusted advisor.<sup>76</sup>

John of Gischala succeeded in escaping Vespasian in Galilee and made his way to Jerusalem. There he convinced Ananas, the leader of the Jewish government, that he was a loyal to his authority. John secretly had other plans. He was a supporter of another Jewish extremist group that opposed the authority of Ananas. This faction was known as the Zealots, which represented adamant hostility towards Roman authority and the priesthood. The Zealots were led by Eleazar the son of Simon (not Eleazar son of Ananias). Eleazar and his zealots murdered a Herodian prince, Antipas and the city's treasurer, and forcibly removed Matthias from the office

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 195.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 194-195.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 195.

of High Priest and replaced him with an uneducated rural priest named Phineas from an obscure priestly clan. Next the Zealots seized the Temple and surrounding Temple district. In response, Ananas mobilized 6,000 men and forced the Zealots to withdraw to the Temple sanctuary.<sup>77</sup>

As if the situation in Jerusalem were not complicated enough, awaiting an inevitable Roman attack, and the various insurgent groups fighting violently among themselves, now there arrived a group of armed Idumaeans. Idumaea had undergone major violence at the hands of several Idumaeen proselyte insurgent groups lead by a proselyte named Simon son of Giorias. Simon had terrorized the villages in the region of Masada. Now Idumaea was experiencing the counter-insurgency tactics of Vespasian and approximately 20,000 Idumaeans flooded north into Jerusalem. The Idumaeans were the descendents of proselytes who had been forced to convert to Judaism by John Hyrcanus in the early period of Hasmonean State. Most devout Jews would not even consider them fellow Jews, however they now joined the insurgency and became the fiercest Jewish nationalists of all the insurgent groups. Eleazar, son of Simon, welcomed the Idumaeans into Jerusalem where they allied with the Zealots and systematically massacred the upper and middle classes of Jerusalem.<sup>78</sup>

Vespasian was beginning preparations for an attack on Jerusalem when news arrived of the death of Nero in June 68 AD. An elderly General Galba was appointed Emperor who happened to be the first emperor not belonging to the house of Julius Caesar. Vespasian sensed that Rome was in a precarious situation and his actions reflect that he was in no hurry to end the revolt and return to Rome. He delayed his attack on Jerusalem for seven months. His intuition proved accurate when Otho quickly succeeded Galba in January 69. But only three months later Otho was deposed by Aulus Vitellius. Vespasian now had more important issues to attend to than the Jewish revolt. He calculated that for the time being, the insurgent groups were inflicting more damage to themselves by their infighting than the Roman Army could inflict. Vespasian along

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 195-196.

with the governor of Syria and the governor of Egypt conspired to promote Vespasian himself as emperor. The governors had their legions swear allegiance to Vespasian as the emperor of Rome and they then marched to Rome to confront Vitellius. In 69, Vespasian led his armies into Italy, put Vitellius to death, and assumed the throne as emperor.<sup>79</sup>



**Figure 3 - Vespasian's Conquest of Galilee**

Unfortunately for the insurgents, they gained no advantage from the delay in the Roman offensive. The insurgents were unable to gain any unity due to continuous infighting among the

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 196.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 197.

various groups compounded by some strange behaviors. Josephus writes that the followers of John of Gischala “began indulging in effeminate practices” to include plaiting their hair, wearing women’s clothing and applying perfume and makeup. Regardless of these practices they were still a murderous bunch, quickly wielding the sword and transforming into warriors if threatened.<sup>80</sup>

This behavior of course had consequences; the Idumaeans who had previously been allies found this behavior particularly offensive and drove John Gishala and his followers into the middle of the city where they took refuge in the outer chambers of the Temple. They were unable to move further into the Temple because the sanctuary was still occupied by Eleazar and the Zealots. Adding to the confusion, rumors spread that Eleazar and the Zealots planned to break out of the Temple and burn the city down. Matthais, the former high priest, and other surviving members to the establishment now allied themselves with the Idumaeans and welcomed another insurgent leader into Jerusalem, Simon son of Gioras. He and his followers had recently abandoned Masada under pressure from Vespasian. Simon wanted to create an egalitarian state which under other conditions would have been unacceptable to Matthais, but under his current duress, warmly welcomed the group into Jerusalem in April 69. Upon arrival Simon launched an offensive with objective of liberating the Temple from the two insurgent factions holed up inside. He made little progress and a stalemate ensued.<sup>81</sup>

Aside from the general chaos in Jerusalem caused by the insurgent groups, there was a misguided sense of confidence. Stemming from the Messianic writings of the time, it was believed that the final decisive battle between the Messianic forces and their enemies would be fought in the vicinity of Mount Zion. The fact that the gates to the city of Jerusalem had

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 197.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 197.

remained open during the three-year span in which Vespasian did not attack the city attested to belief that the city of God was safe.<sup>82</sup>

The responsibility of ending the Jewish revolt now passed to Titus. In 70 he marched on Jerusalem and laid siege. Titus learned that there had been another shakeup in the city's defenders. John of Gischala had finally succeeded in ejecting Eleazar and the Zealots from the Temple and they were forced to take refuge in the subterranean sewers and tunnels of the city. Now, there were only two groups with any amount of military effectiveness in the city: John of Gishala and his followers, and the alliance of the Idumaean proselytes and the remaining followers of Matthais.<sup>83</sup>

The siege inflicted great suffering on the people of Jerusalem and Titus was able to take down the city walls one by one. In July of 70, Titus captured the Antonia fortress and by August the Temple was surrounded and threatened. In order to clear the Temple of insurgents, Titus ordered the doors to be burnt to allow access to the sanctuary. The next day a group of insurgents rushed out of the doors, only to be beaten back by the Romans. In the process, a legionary threw a burning torch through one of the windows catching the entire building on fire. The 600-year-old Temple was completely destroyed by the fire.<sup>84</sup>

The Romans still faced isolated pockets of resistance in the city, but it was only a matter of time before the city would fall. Titus seized the lower city and then the upper city and when some insurgents still refused to surrender, he ordered his troops to massacre, loot, and burn. By the end of September 70, the resistance was broken. The siege of Jerusalem lasted one hundred thirty nine days.<sup>85</sup>

John of Gischala and Simon son of Gioras were both captured. John was imprisoned to participate in Titus' victory triumph in Rome, but Simon was executed. The Romans took extra

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 200.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 200.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 201.

care to hunt down and execute all that claimed to be from the house of David. They considered these to be potential Messiahs or rebels. Thirty-thousand Jewish prisoners were sold at auction and when Titus celebrated his triumphal march in June 71, the sacred objects of the Jews were carried along in the parade to include the menorah from the destroyed Temple.<sup>86</sup>

There was still one pocket of resistance remaining. At Masada, the fortress on the Dead Sea, Eleazar, son of Jair, and a small group of Jews managed to hold out until 73. The Roman army surrounded the fortress and after a long siege, the defenders of Masada all committed suicide. This marked the end of the failed revolt. Judea was in ruins and the damage to the land was severe in part caused by a scorched earth policy the insurgents practiced. Only half the buildings in Jerusalem remained and it had only 40,000 inhabitants. The major tragedy was that the Temple, the most important symbol of Jewish culture, religion and identity, had been destroyed. The Jewish defeat by Rome was so catastrophic that they would not again be reestablished as a nation until 1948.<sup>87</sup>

The nature of the insurgency against Rome was significantly different than the Maccabbee Revolt. The lack of any coherent unity of leadership resulted in wasted efforts and a general loss of military initiative. Some of the most violent fighting of the revolt was between the various Jewish insurgent groups. Only for a brief period under the leadership of Ananas did the insurgent groups attempt to coordinate their forces in a coherent military operation. Ananas' attempt to divide Judea into military districts to defend against attack fell apart at the first Roman threat. This again was tied to the leadership problem in that subordinate commanders were more interested in posturing for control and influence in the revolt than actually fighting the Romans.

The apocalyptic/messianic ideology contributed to the lack of a realistic end state. The insurgents held the belief until the very end that divine intervention would ensure the preservation

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 201.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 203.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 204-205.

of the Temple and Jewish victory. It was not until Titus burned the Temple that the fanaticism finally waned.

The Jewish revolt was essentially over in 70, lasting only four years. If Vespasian had not delayed his assault on Jerusalem for seven months it is likely that the insurgency would have been defeated a year earlier.

## **CONCLUSION**

Why were the outcomes of the two insurgencies so different? The components that define the nature of insurgency were similar in many respects, but where there were differences is striking. These components offer an explanation for the success of the Maccabee Revolt and the failure of the Jewish Revolt Against Rome. Also, there is another factor outside of nature that affected the outcome of the insurgencies that cannot be ignored. This is the relative strength of the insurgents to the strength of the counter-insurgent force.

Leadership is a critically important component in the determining the nature of an insurgency in that it is linked to all the other components. The leadership is responsible for communicating the ideology and developing a strategy for achieving the objectives of the insurgency. Without the Hasmonean family, it is unlikely that the Maccabee Revolt would have been successful. Judas Maccabaeus possessed extraordinary talents as a military tactician and strategist. His victories at Emmaus and Beth-zur against superior Seleucid forces were nothing short of brilliant. He also possessed the strategic vision and leadership qualities necessary to hold together a committed force capable of waging a long-term guerilla war. Throughout the twenty-year insurgency there was unity of command and seamless transitions of authority when the Hasmonean brothers succeeded each other. This is a stark contrast to the leadership problems the insurgents faced in the Jewish Revolt Against Rome. The revolt was lead by the moderate Ananas in the early stages who hoped to reach a negotiated settlement and avoid a large-scale revolt. His hold on power was tenuous in that he represented the minority and he was deposed by

the extremist factions of the revolt. Unfortunately, the insurgent groups warred against each other over a myriad of issues such as leadership of the insurgency, religious beliefs, and class rivalries. The Revolt was unable to produce a strong leader or group of leaders that could unite the various groups so that a coherent strategy could be developed. While effective leadership contributed greatly to the success of the Maccabbee Revolt, its absence in the Jewish Revolt Against Rome made success virtually impossible.

Both insurgencies were fueled by the religious ideologies. The Maccabbee Revolt was a response to the Hellenization of Judea by the Seleucids which threatened existence of Judaism and the religious persecutions acts of Antiochus III. The Hasmoneans fought for the right to practice their religion in accordance with Jewish tradition and Mosaic Law. The Jewish Revolt Against Rome also had a religious ideology but it was distinctly different in its coherence and had a negative impact on the insurgency.

The Hasmoneans were strongly influenced by the prophetic writing of the Restoration Era. The Book of Ezekiel prophesied a future end of the world where after its destruction; a prince from the House of David would humble the gentiles and bring salvation to Israel.<sup>88</sup> The author of a portion of the Book of Isaiah, probably writing in Babylon, predicts the return of the exiled Jews to Jerusalem and the restoration of the Temple.<sup>89</sup> To the Hasmoneans these writings spoke of partially fulfilled prophesies. In 165 BC their ancestors had been a part of the Restoration of the Temple, and now they, in present times, are feeling the oppression of an occupying power. The influences of Ezra and Nehemiah consolidated the religious and legal code of small community of returned Jews. This served to preserve the distinct Jewish identity and faith and reinforce the threat of Hellenization. The Book of Daniel was an extremely influential Jewish writing just prior to the Maccabbee Revolt. Written in 160 BC, it tells the story

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<sup>88</sup> Grant, Michael. *The Jews in the Roman World*. (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1995), 18.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 18-19.

of the persecution of the Jews in Babylon through the story of Daniel and his three friends. The three men are thrown into a fiery furnace for their refusal to deny their adherence to Judaism. In the story, God intervenes and saves them for their loyalty. Written in Aramaic, it is believed to be a metaphor for the persecutions Antiochus IV was inflicting on the Jews at the time. The story of Daniel demonstrated the responsibility of martyrdom for the faith, and that God would intervene at the appropriate time.<sup>90</sup> These prophecies formed the ideological nucleus of the Maccabean Revolt. There were class overtones in the ideology as it expanded to become a mass movement in that most of its supporters came from the lower-classes, but religious zeal was predominant. The major religious faction was the Hasidim, who strongly opposed Hellenization and wanted stricter adherence to Mosaic Law. The Hasidim provided the religious direction and it was not challenged by any other rival sect. This unity or consensus of religious ideology allowed the insurgency to take on a nationalistic identity as well, in the latter years once religious freedom had been attained. Nationalism and religion essentially fused together as an ideology that led to the establishment of the Hasmonean state.

Over a period of years, the Hasmonean state developed serious fissures in the religious ideology that created it. Jewish tradition has always referred to the faithful remnant as prophesied by Ezekiel. The remnant was those designated pious Jews who remained after certain catastrophic events such as the Babylonian Captivity. They were to be the ones who carried God's promises and His covenant forward to the new generations which would come after them.<sup>91</sup> The Hasmoneans were believed to have been that remnant carrying forward the faith from Seleucid oppression, but now, they had become increasingly Hellenized and had lost the trust of many Jews. The primary religious factions that developed during the Hasmonean period were the Sadducees, the Pharisees and the Essenes, but there were many other splinter groups. The Sadducees were close to the Hasmonean rulers and were opposed to any subversive thinking

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 37-38.

such as the end of the world and resurrection. This ran contrary to the thinking of the Pharisees who were the successors of the Hasidim. They represented a more interpretist view of the Torah allowing oral interpretation as well as the written law. However, they were much more willing than the Sadducees to embrace the writings in the Book of Daniel. They accepted the writings on the ultimate resurrection of the body but drew the line on the more apocalyptic parts, initially.<sup>92</sup>

The Essenes, who may have been an offshoot of the Pharisees, are the third group. They were generally a semi-monastic group with the same basic beliefs as the Pharisees except they claimed to be prophets and strongly espoused apocalyptic doctrine. One particular sect of the Essenes was the Qumran which is fairly well known today because they are believed to be the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Qumran is believed to have come into existence in the late Hasmonean period and they are illustrative of one of many differing sects in Judaism at the time. Their writings demonstrate the severity of the factionalism in Judaism when they record that they must resist their rulers (Hasmoneans and later Romans) here and now. They describe an apocalyptic end of the world that would result in the liberation of the Jewish nation. The Qumran also refers to a Teacher of Righteousness, who is a priest and a prophet. Additionally, this individual is referred to in the same manner as the Messiah. The Qumran dogma also indicates that there would be two Messiahs preceded by a prophet. One Messiah would be of the priestly family of Aaron and the other of the family of David, and the priestly Messiah would rule over the other. Needless to say, this theology would be considered extremely subversive to the Hasmoneans and the Romans.<sup>93</sup>

During the period of Roman rule prior to the revolt, other more extreme groups developed. The Zealots were an offshoot of the Pharisees that appeared as early as the year 6. They fully embraced the religious viewpoint of the Pharisees but were extremists in fighting for

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 44-45.

political and religious freedom against Roman rule. Within their religious ideology they elevated freedom as a major religious tenet and submission to Roman rule as sacrilege. The atmosphere in Jerusalem of Messianic expectations compounded by a high number of dissatisfied lower-classes made it possible for a number of “messianic kings” to appear with small guerilla forces ready to fight against Rome.<sup>94</sup> These conditions allowed the Zealots to represent the social revolution aspects of the revolt. The debt-ridden and landless lower classes from the rural and border regions provided the bulk of the Zealot fighters. Their leaders in many cases posed as kings or messiahs and used their positions to fight against the Romans but also members of the upper-class who were considered Hellenizers or traitors.

The Book of Daniel preceded the Hasmoneans, however, the author’s might criticize the Hasmoneans in that they fought only for civil and religious liberties, not for the ultimate apocalyptic kingdom.<sup>95</sup> The Zealots would be the catalyst that would ignite the Jewish Revolt over 200 years later in an attempt to reach the apocalyptic end state. The ideology of the revolt was a product of the evolution the religious divisions in Judaism over the last 200 years. In the end the apocalyptic/messianic version won out over the moderate and more inclusive nationalistic side of Judaism led by the Sadducee Ananas. This ideology proved problematic because it lead to infighting, intangible objectives, and a lack of strategy. How does one decide who is in charge of the various insurgent groups when the groups believe their leader is a prophet or even the Messiah? What tactics and strategy does an insurgency employ if the end state is apocalyptic and the enemy is the most powerful army in the ancient world? These became difficult and in most cases unanswerable questions for the Jewish fighters against Rome.

Early in the Maccabee Revolt, Mattathias and his sons formulated the strategic end state of the insurgency: establishing freedom of religion for the Jews in Judea. This allowed

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<sup>94</sup> Ben-Sasson, H.H. *A History of the Jewish People*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 274.

Judas Maccabaeus to focus military operations against the instruments of Seleucid control. In 161 BCE, the Hasmoneans had forced the Seleucid Empire to repeal all of the religious persecution edicts of Antiochus IV as a gesture of appeasement to the Jews. The initial objective of the revolt had been achieved. However, the Hasmoneans were still in a position of power and recognized that they had good chance at winning total independence from the declining Seleucid Empire. The new strategic objective of an independent Jewish state was established. This could only happen with the strong leadership provided by the Hasmoneans and a clear ideology which was able to convince the insurgents to continue the fight.

In the Jewish Revolt Against Rome strategic end state was not as clear. As time progressed the situation turned into a full scale revolt. But initially, the moderate Jews, consisting of the Sadducees and the Pharisees opposed the revolt and attempted to calm the extremist Zealot factions that were engaging in violence. The moderates realized that they were unprepared to fight a war against Rome and hoped that a negotiated settlement could be reached.<sup>95</sup> The point of no return was reached when the Roman Proconsul Gallus' forces were routed by the Zealots as he withdrew from the walls of Jerusalem in 66. The moderates lead by Ananas, a former High Priest, formed an independent secessionist government and divided Judea into military districts in an effort to defend against Roman attack. At this juncture the strategic end state of the leadership was still to reach a negotiated settlement in order to avoid all out war. Unfortunately, the Jews were not negotiating from a position of strength and Vespasian and his forces had little difficulty in clearing the Judean countryside of the insurgents. A number of the extremist factions and their leaders escaped Vespasian' forces and fled to Jerusalem where in time they overthrew the moderate leadership of Ananas and generally fought each other for control of the revolt. During this latter half of the revolt from 67-70 there was a lack of strategic direction due

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<sup>95</sup> Grant, Michael. *The Jews in the Roman World*. (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1995), 40-41.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 193.

primarily to the internecine fighting among the extremist groups and the plundering and purging of any remaining upper-class Jews. This resulted in a city that was not prepared defensively for the Roman attack and an unrealistic strategy of apocalyptic and messianic hopes.

Historically, insurgencies evolve in a phased sequence from latent and incipient activities to mobile or conventional warfare. The Maccabee Revolt evolved through all the phases of the insurgency model. Phase I: Pre-insurgency activities had been building for years prior to the incident at Modiim. Seleucid religious persecution, excessive taxation, and general discontent in the Jewish populace allowed the insurgency to move quickly into Phase II: Organization, and Phase III: Guerilla Warfare. In Phase III, the Hasmoneans had tremendous success due largely to the military talents of Judas Maccabeus. In the latter years of the insurgency the Hasmoneans transitioned to Phase IV: Mobile Warfare. The Hasmoneans were defeated at the Battle of Beth-zacharia and the Battle of Elassa and were forced to revert back to Phase III to ensure the survival of the revolt. From this point, the Hasmoneans were eventually able to achieve their strategic end state, Phase V: Post-Insurgency, without reverting back to Phase IV.

The Jewish Revolt Against Rome also evolved through the phases of insurgency, but the lack of effective leadership and a clear ideology hindered its evolution. Judea, under the Roman governors, was ripe for a full scale insurgency. The Jews had essentially been in Phase I: Pre-insurgency since the establishment of Roman rule in the year 6. By the year 66, the Jews had been under Roman taxation for sixty years and the majority of the Jewish population was poor and there were many unemployed. Religious persecution and Roman disregard of Jewish religious sensitivities added to the powder keg. At the outbreak of the war in 67, the insurgency quickly progressed to Phase II: Guerilla Warfare: the climatic event being the rout of Gallus' forces as they withdrew from Jerusalem. At this point, leadership decisions forced the insurgency to move rapidly into Phase III: Mobile Warfare. Ananas, leader of the insurgency in 67, divided Judea into military districts and directed the insurgents to occupy defensive positions in the event of Roman attack. This plan failed miserably as Vespasian and his army methodically defeated the

Jews in the Judean countryside. The majority of the surviving insurgents fled to Jerusalem and attempted a conventional defense of the city that never really materialized due infighting among rival insurgent groups. The apocalyptic/messianic ideology also played a role in the lack of development of the insurgency in that it lends itself to a suicidal defense of the Temple. Predictably, the “last stand” in Jerusalem was a flawed strategy. The insurgency was defeated by a Roman attack into the city preceded by a 139 day siege.

Judas Maccabaeus realized that external support would serve to legitimize the Hasmonean cause. He sought diplomatic assistance and obtained a treaty of alliance with Rome. Rome was the strongest empire at the time and it now recognized Judea as an independent Jewish state. Rome never provided any material, military or financial support to the Hasmoneans, but the treaty with Rome served to improve Judea’s international standing. While the importance of the external support of the Roman Empire can be over-estimated, its effect further isolated the declining Seleucid Empire. The Hasmoneans also received critical support from the Nabataean Arabs in the form of guides through their desert territories, safe havens for the families of the fighters, and cache sites for captured booty and supplies.

It is unknown if the Jews in their revolt against Rome sought assistance from outside powers, but the international situation was not favorable. The Parthians were the only eastern power that might have been able to provide any useful assistance, but just prior to the revolt they entered into a peace agreement with Rome. The Parthian emperor even sent congratulations to Vespasian upon the conquest of Jerusalem.<sup>97</sup> The Nabataean Arabs, which had provided refuge for the Hasmoneans 230 years before, provided auxiliary forces to Vespasian.<sup>98</sup> The Jewish insurgents were isolated internationally.

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<sup>97</sup> Ben-Sasson, H.H. *A History of the Jewish People*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 298.

<sup>98</sup> Grant, Michael. *The Jews in the Roman World*. (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1995), 194.

At first glance, the two Jewish insurgencies seem almost identical, only separated by 230 years. But by examination of the nature of the insurgencies, significant differences appear. The Maccabean Revolt possessed extraordinary leadership and was fueled by a coherent ideology that successfully defined the future end state or strategic objective to the population. The Hasmoneans did not have tremendous external support, but enough to assist them in sustaining a twenty year insurgency. Through effective leadership and a coherent ideology, the revolt evolved over time to the point where it was able to engage the enemy in mobile warfare. The leaders of the revolt were able to revert back to a less developed phase to regroup and build strength. In the end, the Hasmoneans achieved their strategic objective: an independent Jewish state with the freedom to practice their religion in accordance with Mosaic Law.

The two insurgencies also varied with respect to the number of insurgents compared to the size of the counter-insurgent force. The Hasmoneans in their early battles against the Seleucids generally faced a disadvantage in force ratio of 3 or 4 : 1. In the battle against the Apollonius in 166 BC, the Hasmoneans numbered only 600 against a Seleucid force of approximately 2,000, a ratio of 3 : 1. In 165 BC at the Battle of Beth-horon, the Seleucid force led by Seron numbered approximately 4,000, against a Jewish force of only 1000; a 4 : 1 disadvantage against the Hasmoneans. However, by 164 BC the Hasmoneans were able to increase the size of their army and were able to cut the force ratio disadvantage to 2 : 1 and by the Battle of Elasa in 160 BC, the Seleucid advantage was less than 2 : 1. The Seleucids were never able to deploy a force larger than 24,000 against the Jews. The ability of the Maccabee leadership to steadily degrade the numerical disadvantage made possible the transition from guerilla operations to mobile warfare. While the Hasmoneans never achieved parity, their growth in numbers made it virtually impossible for the Seleucids to crush the revolt.

The opposite trend in force ratio is true in the Revolt against Rome. With the exception of the initial defeat of Cestius Gallus and the 12<sup>th</sup> Legion with auxiliaries numbering around 12,000, the Roman force was never to dip below 60,000 in Judea during the course of the

campaign. Vespasian arrived in Judea with 2 legions and picked up an additional legion from Egypt led by his son Titus. Altogether, counting auxiliaries from local kings, his army numbered approximately 60,000. At the same time Josephus writes in the *Jewish War* that as the commander responsible for the defense of Galilee, he levied 100,000 men and retained approximately 65,000 as his army. In numbers, the ratio was relatively even, but the Jewish conscripts were no match for the professional legions. Unfortunately for the Jews, it only got worse. By the time of Titus's siege and capture of Jerusalem, he headed a force of 65,000 against three Jewish factions defending the city with a combined strength of approximately 23,000. The Roman professional army was far superior to any army in history at that time and the fact that it consistently gained numerical superiority over the poorly organized insurgents contributed to its success.

The nature of the Jewish Revolt Against Rome failed miserably in all the areas the Hasmonians succeeded. The lack of effective leadership and an extremist ideology affected the ability to develop a coherent strategy to achieve a realistic end state. Poor leadership also caused the insurgency to attempt activities in a phase of development it was not ready for. The insurgent's ability to generate and sustain combat power against the counter-insurgents, degrading the counter-insurgent superiority in force ratio, also proved critical to the success of the Hasmonians.

The nature of an insurgency is an enduring concept. The two case studies occurred approximately 2,000 years ago but the tools used to analyze this ancient history are the same tools used to analyze the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2004. The similarities between the Jewish insurgencies and the Global War on Terrorism are numerous. The religious ideological nature of the insurgencies posed challenges that are not that different from those faced by the counter-insurgent forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. Fanatical insurgents, motivated by religious beliefs and the will to fight until the very end against insurmountable odds that could only be overcome by divine intervention, describe the Jewish insurgents of antiquity as well as the

insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan today. Due to this phenomenon, the counter-insurgents may be tempted to use extremely harsh tactics such as those used by Titus when he destroyed Temple and Jerusalem in 70 AD. The issue of force ratio also looms over the battlefield in Iraq just as it did in ancient times. By the end of the Maccabee Revolt the Seleucids were close to facing an equal foe, but the Romans were able to bring overwhelming combat power to bear against the insurgents in 70 AD. It is doubtful if a US commander in Iraq today would turn down additional ground combat power if it were actually available in the force structure. The nature of insurgency is an effective tool in analyzing insurgency in ancient times and today. How different psychologically is a John of Gishala from an Osama bin Laden?

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