



CHANUKAH

Putting things in **PERSPECTIVE**

A closer look at the major events leading up to the most famous Jewish military victory of all time: the retaking of the Beis HaMikdash from the hands of the mighty Syrian-Greek army – and the open miracle that followed, all of which eventually led to the creation of the annual 8-day celebration of Chanukah | BY ROBERT SUSSMAN

3412

The Second Beis HaMikdash (Temple) was completed.

c3448

Alexander the Great, who had previously conquered Persia, conquered the Middle East, sparing the Beis HaMikdash (Temple) from destruction after meeting with Shimon HaTzadik, the Kohen Gadol at the time, and recognising the regal garments adorning the Kohen Gadol as being the same worn by a man who would appear in his dreams prior to each of his military victories.

3454

Alexander died and his kingdom was divided between four of his generals. Eretz Yisrael (the land of Israel) was caught between two of these kingdoms, the Egyptians and the Syrians, and was usually under the dominion of one or the other.

3515

The Egyptian-Greek ruler gathered and separately sequestered 72 Torah scholars, forcing them to translate the Torah into the Greek language – with the result that the scholars produced 72 identical translations, including identical changes to the text in 13 places.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND ILLUSTRATIONS:
BIGSTOCKPHOTO.COM; WIKIMEDIA.COM

— 3412

— c3448

— 3454

— 3515

Hebrew year to secular year conversion (a difference of 3760 years): 3412 = 348 BCE, 3700 = 60 BCE

3610

- The Syrian-Greeks began their persecution by forbidding certain offerings in the Beis HaMikdash (Temple), but eventually stopped the service there entirely.
- The Syrian-Greeks instituted harsh decrees with the goal of eliminating Jewish religious observance, specifically directing their decrees at: Shabbos observance, Rosh Chodesh (the declaration and observance of the new lunar month; the failure to observe this would result in the nullification of the observance of the yomim tovim), and Bris Milah (circumcision).
- On the 17th of Tammuz, Apustomus burned a Torah scroll.
- Chana's seven sons were killed for refusing to bow down to a Greek idol.

3621*

The revolt by Matisyahu, from the family of Kohanim known as Chashmonai, and his five sons, Yochanan, Shimon, Yehuda, Elazar, and Yonatan, began in Modi'in and quickly spread.

3622

- After a year of leading the growing Jewish rebellion and winning many battles, Matisyahu died and his son Yehuda, known as the Maccabi (hammer), became the leader after him.
- On the 24th or 25th of Kislev, the rebellion gained control of the Beis HaMikdash (the Temple) and entered it, although the fighting with the Syrian-Greeks would continue for many more years. The Chashmonaim got to work cleaning, repairing, and rebuilding the Temple, finding a single, small container of olive oil suitable for lighting the menorah for a single day. The oil miraculously burned for 8 days in the makeshift menorah that the Chashmonaim created.
- Yehudis, the daughter of Yochanan ben Matisyahu, infiltrated a Syrian-Greek military camp and killed the general, Holofernes, causing the Syrian-Greek army to flee in terror and confusion.

3623

- Yochanan ben Matisyahu, the Kohen Gadol, composed the *Al HaNissim* prayer which we insert in *Bentching* (grace after meals) and *Shemoneh Esrei*.
- Chanukah was declared to be a festival.

3628

In the many ensuing battles that took place, Elazar was crushed by an elephant and Yehuda was also killed. Yonatan ben Matisyahu became ruler of Yehuda (Judea).

3634

Yonatan was killed in battle and his brother, Shimon ben Matisyahu, became the ruler of Yehuda (Judea).

3700

The Romans gained control over Yehuda (Judea) III

3600

Eretz Yisrael (the land of Israel) fell under the dominion of the Syrian-Greeks.

3570

Jewish Hellenists and other breakaway groups promoted the acceptance of Greek culture.

— 3570

— 3600

— 3610

— 3621

— 3622

— 3623

— 3628

— 3634

— 3700

* There are some who say these events took place earlier, in 3590 (170 BCE), but this date is inconsistent with the Talmud.
Based primarily upon *The Jewish Timeline Encyclopedia* by Rabbi Mattis Kantor