

The Siege of Bethzura and Jerusalem

Part II of the Sabbath
Year of 162/161 B.C.E.

The Seleucid year 150 will simply not fit the proposed Sabbath cycles offered by Systems "B" and "C." As a result, the first effort of the advocates of these systems has been to claim that the records dealing with the events surrounding the siege of Bethzura and Jerusalem by Antiochus (V) Eupator and associated with the 150th Seleucid year are in conflict with one another, are misinformed, or are just plain wrong. Wacholder, for example, argues:

First and Second Maccabees differ, however, as to the date of Antiochus V's march into Judaea. II Macc. 13:1 dates the march in the 149th year of the Seleucid era, I Macc. 6:20, repeated by Josephus, in the 150th year.¹

Wacholder then declares 1 Maccabees and Josephus to be in error and that the 149th Seleucid year was the real Sabbath year. Zuckermann goes as far as to retranslate 1 Maccabees, 6:53, so that it implies, "There had been a Sabbath year in the preceding 149th Seleucid year" rather than in the stated 150th year.² North reads 1 Maccabees, 6:53, to mean "because the effects of the Sabbath year were then being felt,"³ and concludes that the dates found in Josephus "are either palpably incommensurate or else insolubly obscure."⁴

Based upon the inability of these chronologists to make all the evidence fit their desired Sabbath-cycle systems, they extrapolate that the 149th Seleucid year is the correct figure and that the 150th year somehow must have been introduced as a mistake, is misunderstood, or simply reflects a poor form of Greek grammar used in the source texts (theorizing that the true intent of these authors was to express that the 149th Seleucid year was a Sabbath year).

Contrary to these opinions, close examination of these records proves that the relevant accounts found in 1 Maccabees, the *Antiquities of the Jews* by Josephus, and 2 Maccabees are all very much in harmony and that the Greek texts of these works are quite precise in their meaning. The belief that the sources are in conflict is a forced interpretation, based upon a spurious claim that the Jewish year in this early period began with the month of Tishri (Sept./Oct.). It is built

¹ HUCA, 44, p. 161.

² TSCJ, pp. 47f.

³ Biblica, 34.4, p. 507.

⁴ Ibid., p. 511.

upon a longing to have some justification to make the 149th Seleucid year encompass the Sabbath year intended by the story rather than the 150th year.

Sources in Harmony

To demonstrate the accuracy of our three primary sources—1 and 2 Maccabees and Josephus, *Antiquities*—we have provided Parallel Corpora B at the end of this chapter, which places the relevant passages in parallel columns. As a preface to reading these accounts, it must be pointed out that in the verses immediately preceding them we read that during the 9th month—specifically defined as Khasleu (Nov./Dec.) of the 148th Seleucid—the Temple and altar were renovated. These versions then go on to mention a long series of battles carried out by the Jews after this Temple renovation.⁵ It is clear by these records that we are brought well within the 149th Seleucid year (Nisan reckoning).

The following is a summary of the parallel passages as laid out in Parallel Corpora B. They follow in order the series of battles mentioned above and go on to discuss the events surrounding the siege of Bethzura and Jerusalem:

- After the Festival of Pentecost (which occurrence was in early June, and therefore brings us clearly within the 149th Seleucid year), a war between the Jews, led by Judas Maccabaeus, and Gorgias, the Syrian-Greek governor of Idumaea, was fought. The Jews invaded Hebron, Marisa, Azotus (Ashdod) in Palestia, and other places before they returned to Judaea.⁶
- “About that time” King Antiochus (IV) Epiphanes heard of the wealth of the Persian city named Elam and set about to invade Persia. He was defeated in this war and returned to Babylon, where he became despondent.⁷
- While at Babylon, Antiochus IV heard of the victories of the Jews in Judaea. In his continuing despondency, the king now became ill. As his illness lingered on for “many days,” and his suffering increased, Epiphanes perceived that he was about to die.⁸
- Antiochus Epiphanes made his friend Philip regent and designated his own son Antiochus (V) Eupator—who was at this time living in Syria under the guardianship of Lysias—as the next king. Epiphanes then died in the 149th Seleucid year.⁹ The *Seleucid King-list* reports that Antiochus IV died in the Babylonian month of Kislimu (Nov./Dec.).¹⁰

⁵ 1 Macc., 4:42–5:64; 2 Macc., 11:34–12:31; Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:7:7–12:8:6, cf. 12:5:4.

⁶ 1 Macc., 5:65–68; 2 Macc., 12:32–45; Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:8:6.

⁷ 1 Macc., 6:1–5; Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:9:1.

⁸ 1 Macc., 6:5–13; Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:9:1.

⁹ 1 Macc., 6:14–17; Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:9:2, *Wars*, 1:1:4 §40.

¹⁰ ANET, p. 567, “[149], month Kislimu: It was heard that K[ing] Antiochus [died].” Pritchard incorrectly writes “148” in the lacuna instead of “149.” His error results from the failure to consider that King Antiochus IV at first reigned jointly with his brother’s son, also called Antiochus, whom he adopted as his own. Antiochus IV had this son murdered in the 142 Sel. (Diodorus, 30:7:2–3; cf. CAH, 8, pp. 497, 503f, 713f). The king’s own son, Antiochus V Eupator,

- Lysias, after receiving word of the king's death (most probably in or about early January), placed Antiochus V on the throne. "At this time" the Greek garrison at Jerusalem and some renegade Jews began doing much harm to the people who were coming to the Temple.¹¹ Also, according to 2 Maccabees, 13:1–2, "In the 149th year Judas and his colleagues received the news that Antiochus Eupator παραγενέσθαι (*paragenesthai*; was about to come) with a great multitude ἐπί (epi; against)¹² Judaea, and with him Lysias his protector."¹³ This comment serves as the basis for the arguments offered by Systems "B" and "C."

The Greek term παραγενέσθαι (*paragenesthai*) is the aorist infinitive form of παραγίγνομαι (*paragignomai*), meaning "to be beside, by or near . . . to be at hand, accrue to one . . . arrive, come up" and "to come to, arrive at."¹⁴ Eupator, therefore, was in some form of the act of being "near," or "coming to," or "at hand" against Judaea. As a general rule, the aorist infinitive παραγενέσθαι, in indirect discourse, refers to an event or action prior to the main verb.¹⁵ Jonathan Goldstein's translation of 2 Maccabees, accordingly, renders the term in question to read that Eupator "had come" against Judaea.¹⁶ Using this understanding, the above statement from 2 Maccabees, 13:1–2, is interpreted by those following Systems "B" and "C" to mean that Eupator marched against Judaea in the 149th year. The mentioning by 1 Maccabees and Josephus of the Sabbath year and the accompanying shortages, which took place at the time of this invasion (but dated by 2 Maccabees and Josephus to the 150th year), are in turn placed by the advocates of Systems "B" and "C" within the context of the 149th year.

Nevertheless, this particular translation of the word παραγενέσθαι, with regards to 2 Maccabees, 13:1–2, is out of context with the flow of the discussion. The passage in 2 Maccabees, 13:1–2, is followed in verse 9 with the

succeeded as sole monarch in the 149 Sel. upon his father's death. The relevant part of the text reads as follows:

Year 137, month Elulu, 10th day: Seleucus (IV Philopator), the king, died. . . . In the same month, his son Antiochus (IV Epiphanes) ascended the throne. He ruled for 11 years. In the same year, month of Arahsamnu, Antiochus (IV Epiphanes) and his son Antiochus were kings.
 [Year 1]42, month Abu: Antiochus, the king, was put to death upon the command of his father, King Antiochus (IV Epiphanes).
 [Year 14]3, Antiochus (V Eupator) became king.
 [Year 149], month Kislimu: It was heard that the K[ing] Antiochus (IV Epiphanes) [died].

¹¹ 1 Macc., 6:18; Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:9:3.

¹² GEL, 1968, pp. 621ff. The translation of ἐπί (epi) in 2 Macc., 13:1, as "upon or against" is better than "into," as some translations have rendered it. This point was confirmed by Professor Placid Csizmazia of the University of Dallas in a letter to the author dated 08–08–1991. See below n. 24.

¹³ 2 Macc., 13:1.

¹⁴ GEL, 1968, p. 1306; CGD, p. 520.

¹⁵ See for example SMT, p. 42.

¹⁶ Goldstein, *II Macc.*, p. 452.

statement that the king “ῆρχετο (*ērkheto*; was coming)”¹⁷ on his campaign.¹⁸ When Judas was informed of this movement, he and his followers spent the next 3 days in prayer, after which Judas devised a plan to attack King Antiochus Eupator “πρὶν (*prin*; before)¹⁹ the king’s host should enter into Judaea and take the city (Jerusalem).”²⁰

These statements show that Antiochus V had not yet departed on his Judaean campaign when Judas had received the first mentioned report—where the term *παραγενέσθαι* is used—of the impending invasion. Furthermore, Eupator had not yet entered Judaea as late as 3 days after Judas heard the second report, notifying the Jews that, “Now the king “ῆρχετο (was coming)” to attack Judaea. Therefore, we must look for a better understanding of the Greek term *παραγενέσθαι* when used in the context of 2 Maccabees, 13:1.

In this regard, there is yet another important way in which the term *παραγενέσθαι* should be understood. “The aorist infinitive, by itself, does not have a past time meaning, only the single event meaning.”²¹ Indeed, there are several instances known where the aorist infinitive refers to a “single future, intended event.”²² Goodwin’s *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses of the Greek Verb* points out that examples of this anomaly are found “even in the best authors.”²³ The well-respected authority in Classical Greek, Professor Placid Csizmazia of the University of Dallas,²⁴ likewise, observed that, although such usage is exceptional, it is “not without precedents.”²⁵ If we apply this legitimate future usage of *παραγενέσθαι* to 2 Maccabees, 13:1—coordinating its meaning with the context and flow of the entire discussion of that text, as well as use 1 Maccabees and Josephus as further support—it would mean that Eupator “was near to coming” or “was about to come” against Judaea.

It is important to add that in none of our ancient sources does it actually say that Antiochus Eupator arrived in Judaea during the 149th Seleucid year. Even in 2 Maccabees, 13:1, where the term *παραγενέσθαι* is used, it is later stated that Judas decided to make a raid upon the forces of Antiochus V

¹⁷ The Greek term *ῆρχετο* (*ercheto*) is a form of the word *ἔρχομαι* (*erchomai*), meaning to “come or go.” GEL, 1968, pp. 694f. The context of its use in 2 Macc, 13:9, is determined by v. 12f, where it mentions that Judas heard the report that the king “ἔρχομαι” and then 3 days after this news he planned to strike this enemy force “before” it entered Judaea. This evidence proves that the Syrian king was in the process of coming and had not yet arrived in the country of the Jews. Confirmation that “was coming” is the proper translation of *ῆρχετο* in 2 Macc., 13:9, is provided by Professor Juan Gamez of East Texas State University in a taped interview with the author dated 09-01-91. For Professor Gamez, see Chap. XIX, n. 9.

¹⁸ 2 Macc., 13:9; cf. Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:9:4.

¹⁹ GEL, 1968, pp. 1463f; SMT, pp. 240f.

²⁰ 2 Macc., 13:10-12.

²¹ Letter to the author from Professor Csizmazia dated 08-08-91. Also see below n. 24.

²² Letters to the author from Professor Csizmazia dated 08-08-91 and 08-31-91. See below n. 24.

²³ SMT, pp. 42f.

²⁴ Professor Placid Csizmazia received his degrees from the University of Budapest, Hungary. The Hungarian equivalency of an M.A. in Classics and German was received in 1940 and his Ph.D. in Classics in 1942. Before his passing in 1999, he taught at the University of Dallas in Irving, Texas. Professor Csizmazia has been of great assistance to the author on numerous occasions for which we extend to him much gratitude.

²⁵ Letter to the author from Professor Csizmazia dated 08-31-91.

"BEFORE the king's host should enter into Judaea." Josephus, on the other hand, specifically states that Eupator "ἐξώρμησεν (exormesen; set out)"²⁶ from Antioch, his capital city, "in the 150th year of the Seleucid reign."²⁷

The verse in question from 2 Maccabees, therefore, should be translated to read, "In the 149th year Judas and his colleagues received the news that Antiochus Eupator was about to come with a great multitude against Judaea," i.e., Eupator had not yet left on this expedition but was in the process of making final preparations for such a campaign. Professor Csizmazia confirms this translation as being "grammatically acceptable and fitting into the context."²⁸ This explains why, later, when Judas heard the second report that "the king was coming," he devised a plan to attack the Syrian king "before" Eupator entered the territory of Judaea.²⁹ As it turned out, Judas was unable to make his strike until just after the king crossed the border. His raid was executed upon Eupator's camp at Modin, located about 8 miles inside the boundary of Judaea and about 17 miles northwest of Jerusalem.³⁰

This understanding of 2 Maccabees is supported by other details as well. In the 148th Seleucid (164/163 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning), Lysias, the general of Antiochus IV, led a large army into Judaea but was sorely defeated.³¹ Finding his foe resolute and strong, Lysias took the remainder of his force and "returned to Antioch, where he remained to enlist mercenaries and make preparations to invade Judaea with a greater army."³² This ongoing preparation, therefore, was underway during the 149th year.

Meanwhile, after learning of his father's death (which news he would have received by early January, 162 B.C.E.), the new king, Antiochus V, joined with Lysias in the planning, preparation, and execution of this new Judaean campaign. The fact that the young king had picked up the cause of his deceased father appears to have been the news that reached Judas in the latter part of the 149th year. Furthermore, the words from 2 Maccabees show no sense of immediacy. The flow of the story merely expresses the idea that the new Greek king of Syria was finishing his preparations for an invasion force against Judaea during the 149th year (163/162 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning), an activity started earlier by his general Lysias after his defeat in the 148th year.

Actually, the new king delayed in his endeavor to attack Judaea. This point is amply demonstrated by the story of the men who escaped from the Akra ("the citadel" in Jerusalem where the Greeks were garrisoned) in the 150th Seleucid year. When they arrived in Antioch, these men made an impassioned plea to Antiochus Eupator to end his delay and to make quick intervention.³³ Furthermore, the most appropriate time after the death of Antiochus IV for an

²⁶ A form of ὄρμα (ormaho), GEL, 1968, pp. 1252f.

²⁷ Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:9:3f; cf. 1 Macc., 6:19–31.

²⁸ Letter to the author from Professor Csizmazia dated 08–31–91.

²⁹ 2 Macc., 13:9–13.

³⁰ 2 Macc., 13:13–17. Modin, modern *el-Medieh*, is located about 7 miles southeast of Lydda and about 17 miles northwest of Jerusalem (Marcus, *Jos.*, vii, p. 137, n. e).

³¹ Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:7:5.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ 1 Macc., 6:21–27; Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:9:3.

invasion would have been in the approaching spring,³⁴ at the very beginning of the 150th year, Abib/Nisan reckoning. Eupator, no doubt, waited until this more advantageous season.

- In reaction to the attacks by the Greek garrison at Jerusalem upon the Jews going to the Temple—which assaults had been occurring since the death of Antiochus IV—Judas called the people together “in the 150th year” of the Seleucid era and began the siege of the Akra (the citadel), where the garrison was located.³⁵ The Jews also fortified Bethzura.³⁶ We have now arrived at the spring of the new year.
- Some of those besieged in the Akra (i.e., during the 150th Seleucid year) escaped and came to Antiochus to report the events occurring in Judaea.³⁷ That Antiochus was in Antioch, Syria when they arrived is confirmed by Josephus when he states that, after these renegades from the Akra met with Antiochus V, the king “set out from Antioch” to invade Judaea;³⁸ then later, after making peace with the Jews, the king “returned to Antioch,”³⁹ i.e., returned from whence he came.
- Antiochus Eupator, angered by the report from the Akra, “set out from Antioch” to go against Judaea.⁴⁰ We are told, “Now the king was coming with a barbarous and haughty mind to do far worse to the Jews than had been done in his father’s time.”⁴¹ Judas, receiving the report of this approaching threat, commanded the multitude to call upon Yahweh.⁴² After 3 days of prayer, Judas left off his attack on the Akra and made a foray against the Syrian army near Modin, located a few miles northwest of Jerusalem.⁴³
- Antiochus Eupator then passed through Judaea and made an attack on the Jewish fortified city of Bethzura, located just northwest of Hebron.⁴⁴
- Antiochus and Judas battled near the Jewish camp at Bethzacharias.⁴⁵

³⁴ E.g., “AFTER the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle” (2 Sam., 11:1), i.e., at the very beginning of the new year, with the arrival of the month of Abib/Nisan. Therefore, the armies of ancient kings usually left their winter quarters and would go to war in the spring-time of the year.

³⁵ 1 Macc., 6:19–24; Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:9:3.

³⁶ 1 Macc., 6:26.

³⁷ 1 Macc., 6:19–27; Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:9:3.

³⁸ Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:9:4.

³⁹ Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:9:7.

⁴⁰ Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:9:4.

⁴¹ 2 Macc., 13:9.

⁴² 2 Macc., 13:10–12.

⁴³ Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:9:4; 2 Macc., 13:13–17; 1 Macc., 6:32. Also see above n. 30.

⁴⁴ 1 Macc., 6:31; Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:9:4, *Wars*, 1:1:5; 2 Macc., 13:18–21. Bethzura (Bethsura), modern *Khirbet et-Tubeiqah*, is located a few miles northwest of Hebron (Marcus, *Jos.*, vii, pp. 162f. n. d.).

⁴⁵ 1 Macc., 6:32–47; 2 Macc., 13:13–22; Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:9:4. Bethzacharias, modern *Beit Skaria*, is located about 10 miles southwest of Jerusalem and 6 miles northeast of Bethzura (Marcus, *Jos.*, vii, p. 191, n. c.).

This evidence proves that the sources are in harmony. Word of the impending invasion reached Judas during the latter part of the 149th year but the actual march of Antiochus (V) Eupator against Judaea did not start until after the beginning of the 150th Seleucid year, Nisan reckoning. When Judas heard in the second report that Antiochus was now coming, he prepared his people for the imminent conflict with 3 days of prayer and made plans to attack the enemy before they could enter the territory of Judaea.

The Siege during the Sabbath Year

In the second part of the story of Antiochus V's invasion of Judaea, we are confronted with the evidence regarding which year was a Sabbath. We begin by noting that 2 Maccabees, in which the term “παραγενέσθαι (was about to come)” is coupled with the 149th Seleucid year, Nisan reckoning, there is no discussion at all of the Sabbath year or its shortages. This connection is only made by chronologists who support Systems “B” and “C.” The parallel stories found in Parallel Corpora B continue with the events of the 150th Seleucid year as follows:

- Judas retreated to Jerusalem. Antiochus Eupator besieged Bethzura. After a period of siege, he took the city and placed a garrison there. Antiochus V also laid siege to Jerusalem. This year was a Sabbath year.⁴⁶

The book of 1 Maccabees informs us that Antiochus V was able to take Bethzura by making peace with its inhabitants, “for they came out of the city, because they had no victuals there to endure the siege, ὅτι σάββατον ἦν τῇ γῇ (oti sabbaton hen te ge; BECAUSE IT WAS A SABBATH OF THE LAND).”⁴⁷ There is no suggestion by these Greek words that the Sabbath year had already passed, as Zuckermann and others conjecture by rephrasing the sentence. The Greek clearly states that a Sabbath year was presently in the land—it being the 150th Seleucid year, a year that began on the 1st day of Nisan (March/April) in 162 B.C.E.

The Temple of Yahweh and Jerusalem, meanwhile, underwent a longer siege. Here we are told in 1 Maccabees that Antiochus besieged the Temple “many days” and that the Jews held the enemy in “battle a long season.”⁴⁸ Josephus likewise observed, “But the siege of the Temple in Jerusalem kept him (Antiochus V) there A LONG TIME, for those within stoutly resisted.”⁴⁹ This evidence shows that we have moved well into the 150th Seleucid year. As a result of this long siege, those at Jerusalem also suffered from the lack of food for the same reasons as the people at Bethzura.

Yet at the last, their vessels being without victuals—
 διά τὸ ἔβδομον ἔτος εἶναι (*dia to ebdomon etos einai*; BY
 REASON OF IT BEING THE 7TH YEAR), and they in

⁴⁶ 1 Macc., 6:48–54; Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:9:5, *Wars*, 1:1:5; 2 Macc., 13:22.

⁴⁷ 1 Macc., 6:49.

⁴⁸ 1 Macc., 6:51, 52.

⁴⁹ Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:9:5.

Judaea, that were delivered from the nations, had eaten up the residue of the store. There were but a few left in the sanctuary, because famine did so prevail against them, that they fain to disperse themselves, every man to his own place.⁵⁰

Their supply of food, however, had begun to give out, for the *καρποῦ* (*karpou*; stored produce)⁵¹ had been consumed, and THE GROUND HAD NOT BEEN TILLED THAT YEAR, BUT HAD REMAINED UN-SOWN ἀλλὰ διά τὸ εἶναι τὸ ἔβδομον ἔτος (*alla dia to einai to ebdomon etos*; BECAUSE IT WAS THE 7TH YEAR), DURING WHICH OUR LAW OBLIGES US TO LET IT LIE UNCULTIVATED. Many of the besieged, therefore, ran away because of the lack of necessities, so that only a few were left in the Temple.⁵²

This data is unequivocal. The land had not been cultivated in that very year of the siege, the 150th Seleucid year, because it was a year of rest. Therefore, the 150th Seleucid year was THE 7TH YEAR, a Sabbath year.

- “At that time,” i.e., after the many days of siege, word came that Philip—who had been appointed regent by Antiochus, the father of Antiochus Eupator—was coming from Persia and Media seeking to take sole control of the government. This political turn of events forced Antiochus to make peace, allowing the Jews to live after their own laws, as they had done before.⁵³
- Peace was made with the Jews. At this point the Hasmonaean family was formally recognized as the ruling entity in Judaea. Antiochus, after staying in Jerusalem for only “a few days,”⁵⁴ then pulled down the city’s walls and returned to Antioch, finding that Philip had already seized the government there. During that period Antiochus sent Menelaus to Beroea in Syria and had him executed.⁵⁵ He next made war on Philip and killed him.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ 1 Macc., 6:53f.

⁵¹ The Greek word *καρποῦ* (*karpou*) is sorely mistranslated by Marcus, *Jos.*, vii, p. 195, as “present crop.” The word “present” does not appear in the Greek, and the word means, “profits,” “fruit,” and “produce,” by implication stored crops (GEL, p. 401). Whiston’s translation is much more appropriate, i.e., “what fruits of the ground they had laid up were spent” (Whiston, *Jos.*, p. 263).

⁵² *Jos., Antiq.*, 12:9:5.

⁵³ 1 Macc., 6:56–59; 2 Macc., 13:23; *Jos., Antiq.*, 12:9:6.

⁵⁴ *Jos., Wars*, 1:1:5.

⁵⁵ The story of Menelaus, how he was brought to Antiochus V at Beroea in Syria and slain, which is found at this point in 2 Macc., 13:4–8, is a digression. As Josephus shows, this event actually took place after the siege of Jerusalem was over (*Jos., Antiq.*, 12:9:7). The digression of 2 Macc., 13:4–8, therefore, has been placed in its proper time frame on Parallel Corpora B, see below pp. 252f.

⁵⁶ 1 Macc., 6:60–63; 2 Macc., 13:3–8, 23–26; *Jos., Antiq.*, 12:9:7; 2 Macc., 13:9–12.

The peace treaty between the Jews and Antiochus Eupator was made towards the end of the 150th Seleucid year. This point is verified by the Megillath Taanith, as the noted historians Zeitlin and Herzfeld both agree, when this text records, “On the 28th thereof (Shebat) Antiochus withdrew from Jerusalem.”⁵⁷ This comment reveals that the siege against Jerusalem ended in about February of 161 B.C.E. Therefore, this siege had lasted about 10 months during that Sabbath year. The time of year is supported by Josephus, who gives the cursory statement in his book on the *Jewish Wars* that Antiochus V withdrew his army from Jerusalem “to winter quarters in Syria.”⁵⁸

- Our texts now bring us to the 151st Seleucid year, with the escape of Demetrius I Soter from Rome and his landing at Tripolis, Syria. Josephus importantly observes that this event took place “about the same time” that Antiochus had battled with and killed Philip.⁵⁹

This evidence further verifies that the Jewish-Seleucid year began in the spring. Antiochus V left Judaea with his fully equipped army near the end of the month of Shebat (Jan./Feb.), joined in battle with and killed Philip, and then placed his own troops in winter quarters. “About the same time,” described as the 151st Seleucid year, Demetrius I escaped from Rome and came to Tripolis. Since it is clear that Antiochus Eupator would have attacked Philip almost immediately (i.e., by March), this being the last month of winter, “about the same time” can only refer to the month of Nisan (March/April) as the beginning of the 151st year. Calculating 8 or more months later in order to accommodate a Tishri (Sept./Oct.) beginning of the year would be far too great a time for this expression to be relevant. The beginning of the 151st year with Nisan 1, therefore, ends the previous 150th Jewish-Seleucid year, which was counted in the records as a Sabbath year.

Conclusion

A line by line analysis proves that 1 and 2 Maccabees and the book of *Antiquities* by Josephus are in perfect harmony. When 2 Maccabees, 13:1–2, takes notice of the fact that Judas was told during the 149th year “that Antiochus Eupator παραγενέσθαι (was about to come) with a great multitude against Judaea,” the statement must be understood within the context that, upon the death of Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) in December, 163 B.C.E., his son Antiochus V (Eupator) had taken charge of the army’s preparations for the impending war against Judaea. This undertaking had been in progress ever since the

⁵⁷ Meg. Taan., 11; MTS, pp. 67, 80f; JQR, 10.2/3, pp. 252f; GVJV, 1, p. 280.

⁵⁸ Jos., *Wars*, 1:1:5.

⁵⁹ 1 Macc., 7:1–7; 2 Macc., 14:1–6; Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:10:1. The statement in Josephus that the arrival of Demetrius I from Rome occurred “about the same time” as the defeat of Philip by Antiochus V further supports the date of Shebat 28 for the peace treaty between Antiochus V and the Jews. There remained only about 32 days from that treaty until the 1st of Nisan in the 151st Seleucid year. By the time that Antiochus V had concluded peace with the Jews, tore down the walls at Jerusalem, marched to Syria, and prepared for and did battle with Philip, it was well beyond the beginning of the year.

defeat of Lysias in the 148th year (164/163 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning). It was the news of this renewed effort by the new king, Antiochus V, that reached the ears of Judas and his men during the latter part of the 149th year (163/162 B.C.E.). The next year, the 150th Jewish-Seleucid year, was a Sabbath.

When the Jews laid siege to the Greek garrison in Jerusalem during the early part of the 150th year (spring of 162 B.C.E.), it was as a result of Greek harassment of the Jews, which had continued since the death of Eupator's father in the latter part of the 149th Seleucid year (Dec. of 163 B.C.E.). It is also important to notice that the Jewish siege of this garrison occurred in the 150th Seleucid year, at the same time that the Jews "fortified Bethzura."⁶⁰ The Jews fortified Bethzura in response to the first report received by Judas that Eupator "was about to come" against Judaea. Indeed, after hearing of the fortification of Bethzura, Antiochus V made this city the target of his attack.⁶¹

Further, when these initial events of the 150th Seleucid year took place, Antiochus V was still in Antioch, Syria—as demonstrated by the story of the men who fled from the besieged Greek garrison at Jerusalem in the 150th Seleucid year to come to Antioch to see the king, report their troubles in Judaea, and to urge his intervention. These details prove that Antiochus V did not strike at Judaea until sometime after the beginning of the 150th year.

At no time do any of our sources conflict. The claim that 1 Maccabees places the march and siege within the 150th year while 2 Maccabees dates it to the 149th is groundless. Judas only heard the news that Eupator "was about to come" against Judaea during the 149th Seleucid year. Not until later did Judas receive the second report that the march was actually underway. At word of this second report, Judas made plans to meet his foe "before" the enemy could enter Judaea.

The second major issue, which has caused a great deal of confusion, is the belief that the 150th Seleucid year conflicts with any possible Sabbath cycle and, as a result, our ancient sources must be reworked to make them agree with a cycle prejudged as correct. This hypothesis is the underlying force compelling chronologists to find alternative interpretations for the words of Josephus and the Maccabean books, and for their redating the Sabbath year of the 150th Seleucid—the year when Antiochus left Syria and came against Jerusalem—to the 149th Seleucid year.

There is no legitimate reason or justification for this assault on the original wording of these Greek texts. To begin with, 2 Maccabees never described the 149th Seleucid year as a Sabbath year. Furthermore, the 150th Seleucid year exactly fits the Sabbath cycle established by the 15th year of Hezekiah and the 8th year of Artaxerxes I (see Chart C). Next, the Greek words used are clear and concise. They positively state that the 150th year was the 7th year of the cycle, a Sabbath for the land, and a time when the fields remained uncultivated. Yet the Greek words only make sense if we allow the Maccabean books and Josephus to use a Nisan beginning for their Seleucid-year system as well

⁶⁰ 1 Macc., 6:19–27; Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:9:3.

⁶¹ 1 Macc., 6:21–27; cf. 1 Macc., 6:28–31; Jos., *Antiq.*, 12:9:3f.

as for the Sabbath years. Once we permit these source materials to use the very year system they themselves proclaim, all inconsistencies disappear.

What then of System “D”? System “D” is possible only if we alter the Seleucid-year system used by our sources so that the year begins with Nisan of the Julian year 312 B.C.E. But this scheme fails on two counts.

First, there is no evidence at all that any ancient nation using the Seleucid calendar, especially Judaea, ever counted their Seleucid year in this fashion. In fact, the Jews themselves pronounced that the 381st Seleucid year occurred with the year that the Second Temple was destroyed (i.e., in Ab [July/Aug.] of 70/71 C.E., Nisan reckoning).⁶² This and other details, as we have already demonstrated in our last chapter, prove that the Jews of this period counted the Seleucid era from 311/310 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning.⁶³

Second, for this method to work the invasion of Judah by King Sennacherib and the Sabbath year which occurred in the 15th year of Hezekiah would have to be pushed back 1 year, i.e., to 702/701 B.C.E. As we have already demonstrated in Chapters III and IV, such a construct is impossible. One would have to conclude that the Israelites formally changed their Sabbath-year cycle sometime between the reign of King Hezekiah and that of the high priest Yahudah Maqabi (Judas Maccabaeus),⁶⁴ in whose time Antiochus Eupator laid siege to Jerusalem—an illogical proposal that can only be considered by cynics.

Finally, the data that shall be offered in the remainder of our work will further prove that the System “A” cycle is accurate and, as a result, the 150th Seleucid year in Judaea, being equivalent to 162/161 B.C.E., Nisan reckoning, was a Sabbath year.

⁶² TSCJ, p. 48; HBC, p. 124.

⁶³ See above Chap. XV, pp. 227f.

⁶⁴ The name Judas Macabbaeus was rendered in ancient Aramaic and Hebrew as יְהוּדָה מָכְבֵּי (Yahudah Maqabi) and יְהוּדָה מָכְבֵּי (Yahudah Makabi), e.g., see Meg. Matt., 28; Meg. Antio., 27; Scroll Antio., 27; Sefaria, Meg. Antio., 27 (www.sefaria.org/Megillat_Antiochus?tab=contents).

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