

Returning to the temple...restorational faith!

Background to the miracle of the oils in the Temple. HANUKKAH

Judea was part of the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt until 200 BCE when King Antiochus III the Great of Syria defeated King Ptolemy V Epiphanes of Egypt at the Battle of Panium. Judea became at that moment part of the Seleucid Empire of Syria. King Antiochus III the Great wanting to conciliate his new Jewish subjects guaranteed their right to "live according to their ancestral customs" and to continue to practice their religion in the Temple of Jerusalem. However in 175 BCE, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the son of Antiochus III invaded Judea, ostensibly at the request of the sons of Tobias. The Tobiads, who led the Hellenizing Jewish faction in Jerusalem, were expelled to Syria around 170 BCE when the high priest Onias and his pro-Egyptian faction wrested control from them. The exiled Tobiads lobbied Antiochus IV Epiphanes to recapture Jerusalem. As the ancient Jewish historian Flavius Josephus tells us:

"The king being thereto disposed beforehand, complied with them, and came upon the Jews with a great army, and took their city by force, and slew a great multitude of those that favoured Ptolemy, and sent out his soldiers to plunder them without mercy. He also spoiled the temple, and put a stop to the constant practice of offering a daily sacrifice of expiation for three years and six months."

When the Second Temple in Jerusalem was looted and services stopped, Judaism was outlawed. In 167 BCE Antiochus ordered an altar to Zeus erected in the Temple. He banned circumcision and ordered pigs to be sacrificed at the altar of the temple (the sacrifice of pigs to the Greek gods was standard ritual practice in the Ancient Greek religion).[17]

Antiochus's actions provoked a large-scale revolt. Mattathias, a Jewish priest, and his five sons Jochanan, Simeon, Eleazar, Jonathan, and Judah led a rebellion against Antiochus. Judah became known as Yehuda HaMakabi ("Judah the Hammer"). By 166 BCE Mattathias had died, and Judah took his place as leader. By 165 BCE the Jewish revolt against the Seleucid monarchy was successful. The Temple was liberated and rededicated. The festival of Hanukkah was instituted to celebrate this event.[18] Judah ordered the Temple to be cleansed, a new altar to be built in place of the polluted one and new holy vessels to be made. According to the Talmud, unadulterated and undefiled pure olive oil with the seal of the high priest was needed for the menorah in the Temple, which was required to burn throughout the night every night. The story goes that one flask was found with only enough oil to burn for one day, yet it burned for eight days, the time needed to prepare a fresh supply of kosher oil for the menorah. An eight-day festival was declared by the Jewish sages to commemorate this miracle.

The version of the story in 1 Maccabees states that an eight-day celebration of songs and sacrifices was proclaimed upon re-dedication of the altar, and makes no mention of the miracle of the oil.

Read the story in 1 Maccabees Ch 4 vs 36-60 p 132 in new pew Bible.



Public Hanukkah menorah in Donetsk, Ukraine

- **What do you think it felt like to return to the temple knowing how it had been desecrated**
- **Does the story help us identify with people who have seen their holy shrines desecrated**
- **Can a place really be sacred...or is this superstitious nonsense?**
- **What is Holy Ground?**
- **What do we make of verse 60? Piety seems to go hand in hand with quite a defensive attitude!**



Northwood and South Oxhey URC Some local thoughts:

Can we relate this story on our present “exile” from the familiar surrounds of the Church?

What have we learned in our worship experience in the hall?

Are there aspects of this experience that we will miss, lessons to be learned, new patterns that we can take back to the temple?

How do we avoid breathing a great sigh of relief, and then turning back the clock?

Do we really yearn to be sitting in pews staring into eachothers’ necks?

A Christian perspective:

In the story of the Prodigal returning we sense something of how Jesus thought about returning. Expectations and relief, all felt to varying degrees, were tempered by a knowledge that the former times would not be restored

There is a strong hint of discomfort.



How do we blend the uncomfortable truths of the Gospel with a desire to be comfortable, to be at home, and therefore largely in control of who comes and goes?

How do we maintain a Radical Welcome in the new temple of our faith?