# The Jewish Armed Resistance

As we explained yesterday, the of assimilation into Hellenic culture began a generation after the death of Alexander the Great (323 BCE). Its empire was divided among his three generals, and they began the advancement of Hellenization, that is to say, the movement so that all the people conquered by the Greeks embrace the Greek culture and religion. The Greeks introduced their beliefs and values throughout the world without any resistance: promiscuous pagan practices, idolatry, the idealization of outer beauty and the entertainment industry. All these new "values" were adopted quickly and enthusiastically by all the peoples of the Greek empire. Except for the Jewish people.

At first, the Greeks tried to assimilate the Jews thru nonviolent means. To do that, they focused their efforts on the most vulnerable people in society: the rich. Those who had more to lose. The Greeks threatened the rich with confiscating their entire fortune if they persisted in keeping Jewish practices. And they also tempted them by offering them tax reductions and aristocratic titles if they began to act completely as Greeks. Slowly many influential Jews assimilated. This situation reached its peak when during a Shabbat, Jason, a Cohen Gadol fully assimilated to the Hellenic culture, attended a sports competition in an Olympic stadium built next to the Bet haMiqdash, instead of directing the religious services in the Great Temple.

However, although many Jews followed the path of the Greeks, other Yehudim remained loyal to their faith.
In 169 BCE something occurred that would change the course of history. Antiokhus Epiphanes, the new emperor, decided that it was time to stop being good and persuasive with those obstinate Jews who still remained faithful to their religion. It was time to impose Greek values by force and eliminate the stubborn Jewish resistance. Antiokhus brought his armies to

Yerushalayim. First, he forbade the Yehudim to offer the daily sacrifices in the Bet haMiqdash. Then he profaned our Bet haMiqdash, transformed it into a sanctuary for his idols and introduced his statues. He killed thousands of Jews who resisted and captured others and sold them as slaves.

In the year 167 BCE Antiochus decreed that practicing Judaism was considered a capital crime in the Greek Empire and would be punished with execution. Shabbat, Rosh Hodesh, Kashrut and in particular circumcision were banned. And the Jews were obliged to kneel in public every time they passed before a Greek idol.
At first, the Yehudim reacted passively. Thousands chose death rather than worshiping idols. Until someone decided to do something about it …

In one of their raids, the Greeks entered the city of Modi'in and ordered Matitiyahu HaCohen, the leader of the city, to offer a sacrifice to a pagan idol. The Greeks speculated that once the leader would offer a sacrifice to the Greek god, all the others would follow his example. And if the leader refused to offer the pagan sacrifice, they would kill him and put a Hellenistic Jewish leader in his place. They had done so in every Jewish city. But with Matitiyahu something different happened. In place of martyrdom (choosing to being killed instead of practicing idolatry) Matitiyahu *fought* and ended up killing those who brought the orders of Antiokhus. This heroic and unprecedented act, inspired the armed revolution of the Yehudim, led by Matitiyahu and his sons, against the tyrant Antiokhus.
With the help of HaShem, and after many heroic and difficult battles, the Yehudim defeated the mighty Greek army, and in the end, in 165 BCE, they purified and rededicated the Bet haMiqdash, and restored Jewish sovereignty over the land of Israel.

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed (Penine Halakha, Zemanim, 218-220) says that Antiokhus's impatience was something "providential" (□□ □□□□□) that pushed many Jews, especially those who

assimilated, to fight for their religion. Rabbi Melamed says that if the Greeks had been more patient, the assimilation could have been much greater, and the consequences, □”□, could have been devastating. As it happened many times, when prohibiting the practice of Judaism, even assimilated Jews reacted and joined the rebellion.

**LIGHTS, a Hanuka Story**



*In my opinion, this video from the 80’s, is the one that better and in more depth explains the history of Hanuka. One of the things I love the most about this video is that its narrative is significant for adults, because it has very intelligent symbolisms, as well as for children. Although the quality is far from being HD, I think it is worth seeing and analyzing it.*