

## **CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?**

1. Describe the death of Alcimus.
2. Describe the circumstances that enabled Jonathan to return to Jerusalem.
3. Who finally granted independence to Judea?
4. How did Yochanon Hyrcanus become a Sadducee?
5. Describe the belief system of the Sadducees.

This and much more will be addressed in the twelfth lecture of this series: "Sadducees and Pharisees".

To derive maximum benefit from this lecture, keep these questions in mind as you listen to the tape and read through the outline. Go back to these questions once again at the end of the lecture and see how well you answer them.

**PLEASE NOTE:** This outline and source book was designed as a powerful tool to help you appreciate and understand the basis of Jewish History. Although the lectures can be listened to without the use of the outline, we advise you to read the outline to enhance your comprehension. Use it as well as a handy reference guide and for quick review.

# THE EPIC OF THE ETERNAL PEOPLE

Presented by Rabbi Shmuel Irons

Series I Lecture #12

## SADDUCEES AND PHARISEES

### I. The Struggle for Survival

A. It happened after the death of Judas that those who had no regard for the Law raised their heads all over Israel, and all the wrongdoers reappeared. In those days there was a very great famine, and the country went over to their side. And Bacchides chose the ungodly men and appointed them masters of the country. And they searched and sought out the friends of Judas and brought them to Bacchides, and he punished them and mocked them. And there was great distress in Israel, such as there had not been since the time when the prophets ceased to appear to them. And all the friends of Judas gathered together and said to Jonathan, "Since the death of your brother Judas, there has been no one like him to go in and out against our enemies and Bacchides and among those of our nation who are hostile. So now we have chosen you today to be our ruler and leader in his place, to carry on our war."

And Jonathan accepted the command at that time, and took the place of his brother Judas. And Bacchides learned of this, and tried to kill him. And Jonathan and his brother Simon and all his men learned of it, and they fled into the wild country about Tekoa, and they pitched their camp by the waters of the pool Asphar. And Bacchides learned of it on the Sabbath, and he and all his army came across the Jordan. **Mac. I 9:23-34**

B. In the one hundred and fifty third year, in the second month, Alcimus gave orders to tear down the wall of the inner court of the sanctuary; he thus destroyed the work of the prophets, but he began to tear it down. At that very time, Alcimus was stricken, and his work hindered and his mouth stopped, and he was paralyzed and could no longer utter a word, or give orders about his household. So Alcimus died at that time, in great agony. And when Bacchides saw that Alcimus was dead, he went back to the king, and the land of Judah was quiet for two years. **Mac. I 9:54-57**

C. Then all those who disregarded the Law plotted, saying, "Here Jonathan and his men are living undisturbed and secure, so now we will bring Bacchides back, and he will arrest them all in a single night." And they went and consulted him. And he set out and came with a strong force and he sent letters secretly to all his allies in Judea to arrest Jonathan and his men, but they could not because their plan became known to them. And they seized fully fifty of the men of the country who were ring leaders in this wickedness, and killed them. And Jonathan and Simon and their men withdrew to Bethbasi in the wild country and he rebuilt the parts that had been torn down, and they strengthened it. And Bacchides learned of it, and he gathered all his host and sent word to the men of Judea, and he came and pitched his camp against Bethbasi, and fought against it for a long time and set up siege engines.

Then Jonathan left his brother Simon in the town and went out into the country, and he went with a small force. And he struck down Odomera and his brothers, and the sons of Phasiron in their tent, and they began to strike and attacked with their forces. And Simon and his men went out of the town and set fire to the siege engines, and they fought with Bacchides, and he was beaten by them, and they pressed him very hard, for his plan and his attack were in vain. And he was very angry with the men who disregarded the Law who had advised him to come into the country, and he killed many of them, and resolved to go back to his country. And Jonathan learned of it, and he sent envoys to him to make peace with him, and obtain the release of his prisoners. And he agreed and did as he promised and made oath to him that he would not seek to injure him so long as he lived. And he released to him the prisoners that he had taken before from the land of Judea, and he went away and returned to his own country, and did not come into their borders again. So the sword ceased in Israel. And Jonathan lived in Michmash. And Jonathan began to judge the people, and he destroyed the ungodly out of Israel. **Mac. I 9:58-73**

## II. THE MACCABEE KINGDOM

A. In the one hundred and sixtieth year, Alexander Epiphanes, the son of Antiochus, went up and took possession of Ptolemais, and they welcomed him, and he became king there. When King Demetrius heard of it, he mustered very strong forces and went out to meet him in battle. And Demetrius sent letters to Jonathan in peaceful terms to flatter him, for he said to himself, "Let us be the first to make peace with them, before he makes peace with Alexander against us, for he will remember all the wrongs we have done him and his brothers and his nation." And he gave him authority to muster troops, and to procure arms and to be his ally, and he gave orders that they should turn over to him the hostages that were in the citadel. So Jonathan went up to Jerusalem, and read the letters in the hearing of all the people, and of the men who were in possession of the citadel; and they were dreadfully frightened when they heard that the king had given him authority to muster troops. And the men in the citadel turned over the hostages to Jonathan, and he gave them back to their parents. And Jonathan lived in Jerusalem, and he began to build and renovate the city. And he ordered those who did the work to build the walls and encircle Mount Zion with four foot stones for its fortification, and they did so. And the foreigners who were in the strongholds that Bacchides had built fled; each one left his post and went back to his own country, except that in Bethsura there were left some of those who had forsaken the Law and the commandments, for it served as a refuge for them. **Mac. I 10:1-14**

B. And King Alexander heard of all the promises that Demetrius had sent to Jonathan, and they related to him the battles and exploits that he and his brothers had performed, and the troubles they had endured, and he said to himself, "Can we find another man like him? Now we must make him our friend and ally." So he wrote letters and sent them to him, in the following terms:

"King Alexander sends greetings to his brother Jonathan. We have heard that you are a valiant warrior, and fit to be our friend. Now we have today appointed you to be high priest of your nation and to be called a Friend of the king," (and he sent him a purple robe and a gold crown) "and to side with us and maintain friendly relations with us."

So Jonathan put on the holy vestments in the seventh month of the one hundred and sixtieth year, at the Camping Out festival (Sukkos) and he mustered troops and provided arms in abundance. **Mac. I 10: 15-21**

C. King Demetrius to Jonathan, “. . . for I will free you from the greatest part of the tributes and taxes which you formerly paid to the kings my predecessors, and to myself; and I do now set you free from those tributes which you have ever paid; and besides, I forgive you tax upon salt, and the value of the crowns which you used to offer to me; and instead of the third part of the fruits [of the field], and the half of the fruits of the trees, I relinquish my part of them from this day: and as to the poll-money which ought to be given me for every head of the inhabitants of Judea . . . I relinquish to you for this time, and for all time to come. I will also that the city of Jerusalem be holy and inviolable; and free from the tithe, and from the taxes, unto its utmost bounds.” **Antiquities Book XIII Chap. 2**

D. Then King Alexander gathered large forces and pitched his camp against Demetrius. And the two kings joined battle, and the army of Demetrius fled, and Alexander pursued him and defeated them, and he pressed the fighting hard until sunset, and Demetrius fell that day.

Then King Alexander wrote to Jonathan to come to meet him. And he went in splendor to Ptolemais and met the two kings, and gave them and their Friends silver and gold and many gifts, and was well received by them. Some malcontents from Israel, who disregarded the Law, gathered against him, to lay charges against him, but the king paid no attention to them. And the king gave orders, and they took Jonathan's clothes off and clothed him in purple; they did as he ordered. And the king made him sit beside him, and said to his officers,

"Go out with him into the middle of the city, and make a proclamation that no one is to appeal against him on any ground and no one must interfere with him on any account."

So it happened that when those who were complaining of him saw the distinction with which he was treated, as the herald proclaimed, and saw him clothed in purple, they all fled. And the king treated him with distinction, and enrolled him among his Best Friends, and made him general and governor. So Jonathan returned to Jerusalem in peace and gladness. **Mac.I 10:48-50, 59-66**

E. And in the one hundred and sixty seventh year, Demetrius became king. In those days Jonathan mustered the men of Judea to attack the citadel, and he set up many siege engines against it. And some breakers of the Law, who hated their own nation, went to the king and reported to him that Jonathan was besieging the citadel. When he heard of it, he was angry, but upon hearing it he immediately set out and came to Ptolemais, and wrote Jonathan not to continue the siege but to meet him as soon as possible at Ptolemais, for a conference. When Jonathan heard this, he gave orders to continue the siege, and he selected some of the elders of Israel and of the priests and put himself in danger, for he took silver and gold and clothing and a great many other presents, and went to the king at Ptolemais and he pleased the king. And when some of the men of his nation who disregarded the Law complained of him, the king treated him just as his predecessors had done, and showed him great honor in the presence of all his Friends. He confirmed him in the high priesthood, and all the other honors he had received before, and made him chief of his Best Friends. Jonathan asked the king to free Judea and the three provinces and Samaria from tribute, and promised him three hundred talents. The king agreed, and wrote a letter to Jonathan on all these matters. **Mac. I 11:19-28**

F. Then Jonathan sent to King Demetrius asking him to expel the garrison of the citadel from Jerusalem, and the garrisons from the strongholds, for they kept fighting against Israel. And Demetrius sent to Jonathan and said, "I will not only do this for and your nation, but I will greatly honor you and your nation if I find an opportunity. So now please send me men who will fight for me, for all my troops are in revolt." But he lied in all that he had said, and became estranged from Jonathan and did not return the favors he had done him, but treated him very harshly. **Mac. I 11:41-43, 53**

G. Now after this Trypho returned, bringing with him the little child Antiochus. And he became king and assumed the diadem. And all the troops that Demetrius had cast off rallied about him, and they fought against Demetrius and he was routed, and fled. And Trypho took the animals and took possession of Antioch. **Mac. I. 11:54-57**

H. And Trypho undertook to become king of Asia and assume the diadem, and to raise his hand against King Antiochus. But he was afraid that Jonathan would not permit him to, but would fight against him, so he undertook to seize him, in order to destroy him. And he set out and came to Bethshean...But when Jonathan entered Ptolemais, the people of Ptolemais closed the gates and seized him, and all who had come in with him they put to the sword. **Mac. I 12:39-40, 48**

I. And Simon heard that Trypho had gathered a strong force to invade the land of Judah and destroy it utterly. And he saw that the people were trembling and alarmed, and he went up to Jerusalem and gathered the people together and encouraged them and said to them, "You know yourselves all that I and my brothers and my father's house have done for the laws and the sanctuary, and the wars and hardships we have been through. As a result, my brothers have all perished for Israel's sake, and I alone am left. Now I never want to spare my own life in any emergency, for I am no better than my brothers. But I will avenge my nation and the sanctuary and your wives and children, because all the heathen have gathered out of hatred, to destroy us utterly." **Mac. I 13:1-6**

J. And Simon chose men and sent them to King Demetrius so that he should give the country relief, because all that Trypho did was to plunder. And King Demetrius sent him a message in these terms, and answered him and wrote a letter, as follows: "King Demetrius sends greeting to Simon, the high priest and the Friend of kings, and to the Jewish elders and nation. The gold crown and the palm branch which you sent we have received, and we are ready to make a lasting peace with you, and to write to our officials to grant you the immunities you ask. The things we have guaranteed to you stand assured, and the strongholds which you have built shall be yours. Any oversights and deficiencies up to this time we forgive, as well as the crown tax that you owe, and if any other tax was collected in Jerusalem, it shall no longer be collected. And if any of you are suitable persons to be enrolled at our court, they shall be so enrolled, and there shall be peace between us." It was in the one hundred and seventieth year that the yoke of the heathen was lifted from Israel. And the people began to write in their contracts and agreements, "In the first year of Simon, the great high priest and governor and commander of the Jews." **Mac. I 13:34-42**

K. But the men in the citadel in Jerusalem were being kept from going in and out of the country to buy and sell, and they were famished and a good many of them died of starvation. And they cried out to Simon to make terms with them and he did so. And he expelled them from it and purified the citadel from its defilements. and they took possession of it on the twenty third day of the second month in the one hundred and seventy first year, with praise and palm branches and with lyres and cymbals and harps, and with hymns and songs, because a great enemy had been destroyed out of Israel.

**Mac. I 13:49**

L. And the land of Judah was at peace as long as Simon lived; he sought the good of his nation; his rule and his renown pleased them all his life...There was no one left in the land to fight them, and the kings were destroyed in those days. He re-established all those of his people who had been humbled; he sought out the Law, and removed everyone who was lawless and wicked. He made the sanctuary glorious and increased the equipment of the sanctuary. **Mac. I 14:4, 13-15**

M. Now he was the ruler of the Jews in all eight years; but at a feast came to his end. It was caused by the treachery of his son-in-law Ptolemy; who caught also his wife, and two of his sons, and kept them in bonds. He also sent some to kill John the third son, whose name was Hyrcanus; but the young man perceiving them coming, he avoided the danger he was in from them, and made haste into the city (Jerusalem,) as relying of the good-will of the multitude, because of the benefits they had received from his father, and because of the hatred the same multitude bore to Ptolemy; so that when Ptolemy was endeavoring to enter the city by another gate, they drove him away, as having already admitted of Hyrcanus. **Antiquities Book XIII Chap. 7:4**



### III. The Ascent of the Sadducees

A. However, this prosperous state of affairs moved the Jews to envy Hyrcanus, but they that were the worst disposed to him were the Pharisees, who were one of the sects of the Jews, as we have informed you already. These have so great a power over the multitude, that when they say anything against the king, or against the high priest, they are presently believed. Now Hyrcanus was a disciple of theirs, and greatly beloved by them. And when he once invited them to a feast, and entertained them very kindly, when he saw them in a good humor, he began to say to them, that "they knew he was desirous to be a righteous man, and to do all things whereby he might please G-d, which was the profession of the Pharisees also. However, he desired, if they observed him offending in any point, and going out of the right way, they would call him back and correct him." On which occasion they attested to his being entirely virtuous, with which commendation he was well pleased. But still there was one of his guests there, whose name was Eleazar, a man of an ill temper, and delighting in seditious practices. This man said, "Since thou desirest to know the truth, if thou wilt be righteous in earnest, lay down the high priesthood, and content thyself with the civil government of the people." And when he desired to know for what cause he ought to lay down the high priesthood, the other replied, "We have heard it from old men, that thy mother had been a captive under the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes." This story was false, and Hyrcanus was provoked against him; and all the Pharisees had a very great indignation against him.

Now there was one Jonathan, a very great friend of Hyrcanus', but of the sect of the Sadducees, whose notions are quite contrary to those of the Pharisees. He told Hyrcanus, that "Eleazar had cast such a reproach upon him, according to the common sentiments of all the Pharisees, and that this would be made manifest, if he would but ask them the question, what punishment they thought this man deserved, for that he might depend upon it, that the reproach was not laid on him with their approbation, if they were for punishing him as his crime deserved." So the Pharisees made answer, that "he deserved stripes and bonds, but that it did not seem right to punish reproaches with death." And indeed the Pharisees, even upon other occasions, are not apt to be severe in punishments. At this gentle sentence, Hyrcanus was very angry, and thought that this man reproached him by their approbation. It was this Jonathan who chiefly irritated him, and influenced

him so far, that he made him leave the party of the Pharisees, and abolish the decrees they had imposed on the people, and to punish those that observed them. From this source arose that hatred which he and his sons met with from the multitude; but of these matters we shall speak hereafter. What I would now explain is this, that the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the laws of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them, and say, that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word, but are not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers. And concerning these things it is that great disputes and differences have arisen among them, while the Sadducees are able to persuade none but the rich, and have not the populace obsequious to them, but the Pharisees have the multitude on their side. But about these two sects, and that of the Essenes, I have treated accurately in the second book of Jewish affairs.

But when Hyrcanus had put an end to this sedition, he after that lived happily, and administered the government in the best manner for thirty-one years, and then died, leaving behind him five sons. He was esteemed by G-d worthy of the three greatest privileges, the government of his nation, the dignity of the high priesthood, and prophecy, for G-d was with him, and enabled him to know futurities; and to foretell this in particular, that as to his two eldest sons, he foretold that they would not long continue in the government of public affairs; whose unhappy catastrophe will be worth our description, that we may thence learn how very much they were inferior to their father's happiness. **Ant. Book XIII Chap. 10:5-7**

B.

מעשה בינאי המלך שהלך לכוּחלית שבמדבר וכיבש שם ששים כרכים ובחזרתו היה שמח שמחה גדולה וקרא לכל חכמי ישראל אמר להם אבותינו היו אוכלים מלוחים בזמן שהיו עסוקים בבנין בית המקדש אף אנו נאכל מלוחים זכר לאבותינו והעלו מלוחים על שולחנות של זהב ואכלו והיה שם אחד איש לץ לב רע ובליעל ואלעזר בן פועירה שמו ויאמר אלעזר בן פועירה לינאי המלך ינאי המלך לבם של פרושים עליך ומה אעשה הקם להם בציץ שבין עיניך הקים להם בציץ שבין עיניו היה שם זקן אחד ויהודה בן גדידיה שמו ויאמר יהודה בן גדידיה לינאי המלך ינאי המלך רב לך כתר מלכות הנח כתר כהונה לזרעו של אהרן שהיו אומרים אמו נשבת במודיעים ויבוקש הדבר ולא נמצא ויבדלו חכמי ישראל בזעם ויאמר אלעזר בן פועירה לינאי המלך ינאי המלך הדיוט שבישראל כך הוא דינו ואתה מלך וכהן גדול כך הוא דינך ומה אעשה אם אתה שומע לעצתי רומסם. ותורה מה תהא עליה? הרי כרוכה ומונחת בקרן זוית כל הרוצה ללמוד יבוא וילמוד אמר רב נחמן בר יצחק מיד נזרקה בו אפיקורסות דהוה ליה למימר תינח תורה שבכתב תורה שבעל פה מאי מיד ותוצץ הרעה על ידי אלעזר בן פועירה ויהרגו כל חכמי ישראל והיה העולם משתומם עד שבא שמעון בן שטח והחזיר את התורה ליושנה. קדושין סו.

There was an incident with Yanai (Yochanon) the King who upon returning from a successful campaign at Cochlith in the desert, having conquered sixty cities, made a great celebration and invited all the sages of Israel. He said to them: "Our forefathers ate simple vegetables at the time they built the Bais HaMikdash. As a commemoration to them we should also. They brought the vegetables on golden tables.

There was present a cynical evil man by the name of Eliezer ben Pueira. He said to Yanai: "King Yanai, in their hearts the Pharisees are opposed to you." "What can I do to confirm this accusation", asked Yanai. "Put on the "Tzitz" (the golden frontlet worn by the High Priest) and see their reaction", answered Eliezer.

One of the elders present when Yanai put on the "Tzitz" , Yehudah ben Gedidiah, remarked to him: "King Yanai , it is enough that you have the position of king. Leave the priesthood to the true descendants of Aaron." This comment was based on testimony that Yanai's mother was taken captive by Antiochus' forces in Modi'in. A woman taken captive is considered unfit to marry a Cohen and the child of such a union is not considered to be a true Cohen. This testimony, however, was subsequently discredited and therefore untrue and an affront to the king.

The sages as a result punished Yehuda ben Gedidia and excommunicated him. Eliezer provoked the king further and said: "Excommunication is a fit punishment when a commoner is falsely accused, but for a king and High Priest this punishment is not sufficient. "What shall I do?", asked the king. "If you would listen to my advice", Eliezer continued, "you should crush them (the sages)." "But what will become of the Torah?", asked Yanai. "The Torah is neatly rolled and sitting in the corner. Anyone who wants to avail themselves of it can do so", replied Eliezer.

The evil sprouted through Eliezer ben Puierah and they (the Sadducees and Yanai) killed out the vast majority of the sages. The world was desolate until Shimon ben Shetach came and returned the Torah to its former greatness. **Kiddushin 66a**

## IV. The Sadducee Philosophy

A.

אנטיגנוס איש סוכו היו לו שני תלמידים שהיו שונים בדבריו והיו שונים לתלמידים ותלמידים לתלמידיהם. עמדו ודקדקו אחריהן ואמרו מה ראו אבותינו לומר דבר זה. אפשר שיעשה פועל מלאכה כל היום ולא יטול שכרו ערבית. אילו היו יודעין אבותינו שיש עולם אחר ויש תחית המתים לא היו אומרים כך. עמדו ופירשו מן התורה ונפרצו מהם שתי פרצות צדוקים וביתוסין. צדוקים על שום צדוק וביתוסין על שם ביתוס. והיו משתמשים בכלי כסף וכלי זהב כל ימיהם שהיתה דעתן גסה עליהם. היו הצדוקים אומרים מסורת ביד פירושים שהן מצערין בעזה"ז ובעולם הבא אין להם כלום. אבות דרבי נתן פרק ה' ב

Antigonos the man of Socho had two disciples that studied and repeated his words and repeated them to their disciples who in turn taught it to their disciples. They (the disciples) arose and analyzed their words and commented: "How could our forefathers ever make such a statement (that one should serve Hashem without the motivation of receiving reward)? Is it possible that a laborer should not receive his wages at night? If our forefathers were aware of another world and of the resurrection of the dead they would never have made such a statement." They arose and severed their ties to the Torah. Two breaches came out from them: Sadducees, the self styled disciples of Sadduc (one of Antigonos' disciples) and the Baithusim, the self styled disciples of Baithus (another disciple).

Throughout their lives the Sadducees would use only the finest vessels of silver and gold. They were gross and arrogant people. They would often say that the Pharisees have a tradition to torment themselves in this world with having anything in the next. **Avos D'Rabbi Noson 5:2**

B. At this time there were three sects among the Jews, who had different opinions concerning human actions; the one was called the sect of the Pharisees, another the sect of the Sadducees, and the other the sect of the Essenes. Now for the Pharisees, they say that some actions, but not all, are the word of fate, and some of them are in our own power, and that they are liable to fate, but are not caused by fate. But the sect of the Essenes affirm, that fate governs all things, and that nothing befalls men but what is according to its determination. And for the Sadducees they take away fate and say there is no such thing, and that the events of human affairs are not at its disposal, but they suppose that all our actions are in our own power, so that we are ourselves the causes of what is good, and receive what is evil from our own folly. However, I have given a more exact account of these opinions in the second book of the Jewish war. **Antiquities Book XIII Chap. 5:9**

C. But the Sadducees are those that compose the second order, and take away fate entirely, and suppose that G-d is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil; and they say, that to act what is good, or what is evil, is at men's own choice, and that the one or the other belongs so to every one, that they may act as they please. They also take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades. Moreover, the Pharisees are friendly to one another, and are for the exercise of concord and regard for the public. But the behavior of the Sadducees one towards another is in some degree wild; and their conversation with those that are of their own party is as barbarous as if they were strangers to them. And this is what I had to say concerning the philosophic sects among the Jews. **The Wars of the Jews Book II Chapter 8**

## TIME LINE

|     | EVENT  | SELEUCID DATE | BCE |
|-----|--|---------------|-----|
| 1)  | Chanukah   | 148           | 164 |
| 2)  | Death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes<br>Ascension Antiochus V Eupater                     | 149           | 163 |
| 3)  | Ascension of Demetrius I   | 150           | 162 |
| 4)  | Death of Judah Maccabee  | 151           | 161 |
| 5)  | Death of Alcimus   | 153           | 159 |
| 6)  | Peace treaty with Bacchides<br>Jonathan moves to Michmash                            | 155           | 157 |
| 7)  | Pact of Demetrius I<br>Jonathan moves to Jerusalem                                   | 160           | 152 |
| 8)  | Defeat of Demetrius<br>Ascension of Alexander Epiphanes                              |               |     |
| 9)  | Ascension of Demetrius II  | 167           | 145 |
| 10) | Death of Jonathan<br>Independence of Judea confirmed<br>by Demetrius. Reign of Simon | 170           | 142 |
| 11) | Murder of Simon<br>Reign of Jochanon Hyrcanus  | 178           | 134 |
| 12) | Death of Jochanon Hyrcanus   | 208           | 104 |