

## Week 45, Lecture 144.<sup>1</sup> Further Seleucid Threats, 1 Maccabees 15.

“Compressed” outline of 1 Maccabees. For reference, no need to give lecture time to this.

Start with “Preliminary Remarks

I. Introduction & Persecution	1:1-2:70	
II. The Career of Judas	3:1-9:22	
III. The Career of Jonathan	9:23-12:53	
IV. The Career of Simon	13:1-16:24	Lecture 142 (last week)
A. Simon Replaces Jonathan	13:1-30	
B. Judea Gains Independence	13:31-14:3	
C. The Praise of Simon	14:1-49	Lecture 143
D. Further Seleucid Threats	15:1-16:10	Lecture 144 (this lecture week)
1. The Rise of Antiochus VII, Sidetes	15:1-14	
2. Continued Roman Support	15:15-24	
3. Antiochus’s Change of Heart	15:25-36	
4. The Expedition of Cendebeus, Part 1	15:37-41	
5. The Expedition of Cendebeus, Part 2	16:1-10	Lecture 145 (next lecture)
E. The Death of Simon	16:11-22	
F. Conclusion	16:23-24	

### Preliminary Remarks.

Chapters 13-14 presented the reign of Simon as a “Messianic Age.”

The author could have quit with Simon “at the top of his game.” **He did not.**

He chose to include the final two chapters, which “temper” his glorified view of the Maccabee family.

### Overview of Chapter 15: Further Seleucid Threats

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|---|---|
| 1. The Rise of Antiochus VII, Sidetes, 1-14 | 2. Continued Roman Support, 15-24               |
| 3. Antiochus’s Change of Heart, 15:25-36    | 4. The Expedition of Cendebeus, Part 1 15:37-41 |

### Scripture Version<sup>2</sup>

**The Rise of Antiochus VII, Sidetes, 15:1-9.** Antiochus son of Demetrius the king sent letters from the isles of the sea to Simon the priest and ethnarch of the Jews, and to all the people; <sup>2</sup> **The contents were as follows: To shorten the video, I deleted verses 1-4.**<sup>3</sup>

**Greeting.** King Antiochus to Simon the high priest and ethnarch of his nation, and to the people of the Jews, Greeting!

**The King’s Plans.** <sup>3</sup> Since certain pestilent men have usurped the kingdom of our fathers, and my purpose is to reclaim it, that I may restore it to the old estate, and to that end have gathered a multitude of foreign soldiers together, and prepared ships of war, <sup>4</sup> my intent also being to go through the country, that I may be avenged against those who have destroyed it, and made many cities in the kingdom desolate. **The video picks up here.**

**Concessions to Simon.** <sup>5</sup> Now therefore I confirm to you all the tax exemptions which the kings before me granted to you, and whatever gifts they granted in addition. <sup>6</sup> I give you permission also to coin money for your country with your own stamp. <sup>7</sup> And as concerning Jerusalem and the sanctuary, they will be free. And as for all the armor that you have made, and fortresses that you have built and keep in your hands, they shall remain yours. <sup>8</sup> And if anything is owed, or will be

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<sup>1</sup> Lectures numbered consecutively. This is this week’s 1st lecture, but its number reflects its place in the **total** sequence.

<sup>2</sup> The English is based on Brenton’s 19<sup>th</sup> century version, accessed via *BibleWorks*. At times I modify it to make it more literal. I have also Americanized (honour > honor) and updated (followeth > follows) the spelling.

<sup>3</sup> The lecture was originally over 23 ½ minutes long. My edits reduced it to below 19 minutes.

owed to the king, it will be cancelled for you from this time forth for evermore. <sup>9</sup> Furthermore, when we have obtained our kingdom, we will honor you, and your nation, and your temple, with great honor, so that your honor shall be known throughout the world.

### Antiochus VII, **Sidetes**.

He had been raised in Side (SIGH-dee), Pamphylia, an area in the south of modern Turkey. He is the Son of Demetrius I, the brother of Demetrius II, who was captured by Trypho (14:3).<sup>4</sup>

Note on **Pronunciation of Greek names**. The final “e” is never silent!

*Nike*. Nobody wears “NIGHK” shoes. The name of the goddess of victory is pronounced NIGH-key.

People in Texas can call their city whatever they please.

When the lector is reading from Acts, the correct pronunciation is A-buh-LEE -knee.

### Threefold Structure of the Letter.

1) Greeting; 2) The Kings Plans 3) Concessions to Simon & the Jews.

**Greeting:** The letter is addressed to Simon and to the Jewish people.

An honorific greeting to Simon, who is recognized as “high **priest and ethnarch.**”

The normal Greek word of “high priest” is *archiereus*, literally “arch-priest.”

Antiochus refers to Simon as a “great” (*megas, megalos*) priest.

Significantly, Antiochus reserves the title “**king**” for himself.

**The King’s Plans:** Briefly, he has acquired an army, and plans to take back the kingdom from Trypho.

**Concessions to Simon.** These are “too good to be true. Later the king will revoke them.

It is remarkable that the king concedes to Simon the right to coin money.

No such coins have been found, so it is not known whether or not Simon exercised this right.<sup>5</sup>

Antiochus has probably sent similar letters to other vassals. I think the vassal kings were “big boys.”

I don’t think any of them were shocked when the king, secure in power, later changed his mind.

**15:10-14, Antiochus besieges Trypho.** In the **year 174** Antiochus went into the land of his fathers: at which time all the troops came together to him, so that few were left with Trypho. [Video skips to verse 14] <sup>11</sup> Therefore, being pursued by king Antiochus, he fled to Dor, which lies by the sea side, <sup>12</sup> for he saw that troubles came upon him all at once, and that his forces had forsaken him. <sup>13</sup> Then Antiochus encamped against Dor, having with him 120,000 men of war, and 8,000 cavalry. [Video picks up here] <sup>14</sup> And when he had encircled the city, and stationed ships close to the town on the sea side, he besieged the city by land and by sea, and **he did not allow anyone to leave or enter.**

**V. 10, Year 174** [of the rule of the Greeks] = **138 B.C.** (*NRSV note*)

**V. 14. Did not allow anyone to leave or enter.** This phrase will be repeated again in verse 25.

It serves to “frame” the letter from Rome.

It also provides “narrative space” for the change of heart of the king – concerning the concessions – to take place.

**Continued Roman Support, 15:15-24.** [Video picks up in v. 16, next page] In the meantime Numenius and his company came from Rome, having letters to the kings and countries, **in which the following was written:**

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Doran, “The First Book of Maccabees,” in *New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 4 (Abingdon, 1996), 167.

<sup>5</sup> Doran, “First Maccabees, *NIB* 4. 168.

[Video picks up here] <sup>16</sup> Lucius, consul of the Romans to king Ptolemy, Greetings! <sup>17</sup> The Jews' ambassadors, our friends and allies, came to us to renew the old friendship and alliance, being sent from Simon the **high priest (archhierus)**, and from the **people** of the Jews: <sup>18</sup> And they brought a shield of gold of a thousand minas. <sup>19</sup> We thought it good therefore to write to the kings and countries, that they should do them no harm, nor fight against them, their cities, or countries, nor yet aid their enemies against them. <sup>20</sup> It seemed also good to us to receive the shield of them. <sup>21</sup> If therefore there be any pestilent fellows, that have fled from their country to you, deliver them to Simon the high priest, that he may punish them according to their own law.

Copies are sent throughout the world. No need to read the "list of countries" in lecture. <sup>22</sup> The same things he also wrote to King Demetrius, Attalus, Ariarathes, and Arsaces, <sup>23</sup> and to all the countries and to Sampsons, the Spartans, Delos, Myndos, Sicyon, Caria, Samos, Pamphylia, Lycia, Halicarnassus, Rhodes, Aradus, Cos, Side, Aradus, Gortyna, Cnidus, Cyprus, Cyrene. <sup>24</sup> And they wrote a copy of these letters for Simon the **high priest (archhierus)**.

### Comments on the Letter.

The text of the Roman letter (v. 17) and the narrator (v. 24) use the "normal" word for high priest. The Romans use the word *demus* for the Jewish "people." (Our word "democracy" comes from the same word.) King Antiochus had used the word *laos* (from which we get our word "laity.") The Roman usage sounds more "official." They acknowledge the receipt of the gift of the 862-pound golden shield. The fact that they do not reciprocate with a gift shows that the relationship is not one of "equals." The Romans are flexing their muscles in the East.

**Antiochus's Change of Heart, 15:25-27.** So Antiochus the king encamped against Dor for the second time, assaulting it continually, and making engines, by which means he shut up Trypho, **so that [no one] could leave or enter.** <sup>26</sup> At that time Simon sent him two thousand chosen men to aid him; silver also, and gold, and much armor. <sup>27</sup> However he would not receive them, but broke all the agreements which he had made with him previously, and became estranged from him.

### Comments

King Antiochus now has his enemy boxed up. The support of Simon is not so critical to him any longer. I suspect that Simon was not the only vassal who began to receive the "cold shoulder."

**15:28-31. The Message of King Antiochus to Simon.** Furthermore he sent to him Athenobius, one of his Friends, to communicate with him, and say,

"You have seized Joppa and Gazara, and the citadel that is in Jerusalem, **cities of my kingdom.** <sup>29</sup> You have laid to waste their borders, **and done great damage in the land,** and taken possession of many places within my kingdom. <sup>30</sup> Now therefore deliver the cities which you have taken, and the tributes of the places, of which you have taken control outside the borders of Judea, <sup>31</sup> or else give me for them five hundred talents of silver. And for the damage that you have done, and the tributes of the cities, another five hundred talents. Otherwise, we will come and fight against you."

### Comments on the Message.

The message is abrupt. There is no honorific greeting. The message begins with an accusation, and ends with threats. King Antiochus regards the citadel in Jerusalem as one of the "**cities**" of his kingdom. The king demands 1,000 talents of silver. A talent is about 75.5 pounds. This is over **30 tons** of silver!

**Simon's Response to the Ambassador, 15:32-36.** So Athenobius the king's Friend came to Jerusalem, and when **he saw the glory of Simon**, and the cupboard of gold and silver plate, and his great attendance, he was astonished, and told him the king's message. <sup>33</sup> Then answered Simon, and said to him,

We have neither taken other men's land, nor that which belongs to others, but **the inheritance of our ancestors**, which our enemies had wrongfully in possession for a certain time. <sup>34</sup> Therefore we, having opportunity, hold the inheritance of our ancestors. <sup>35</sup> And whereas you demand Joppa and Gazara, although they **did great harm to the people** in our country, yet will we give you **a hundred talents** for them.

Athenobius answered him not a word, <sup>36</sup> but returned in a rage to the king, and reported these words to him these, as well as the glory of Simon, and of all that he had seen. Then the king was exceedingly angry.

**The “Glory of Simon”** is described in terms reminiscent of the “glory of Solomon.”

He could afford the 1,000 talents of silver!

### **Simon’s Response.**

Simon is responding to Antiochus, not as a vassal, but as one king to another.

He asserts that most of the land he has taken is part of the “ancestral inheritance” of the Jews.

He states that he conquered Joppa and Gazara simply because they “**did great harm to the people.**”

If Simon had naval ambitions, he is not being completely honest about seizing control of this seaport. His offer of **100 talents** is only 10% of what the king had demanded.

### **Anger in International Relations.**

The narrator notes that Athenobius and King Antiochus are angry at the way Simon is treating them.

I suspect that Simon was also angry at how he was being treated, and so was intentionally disrespectful.

By refusing his offer of troops and his gifts, Antiochus had insulted Simon.

By contrast, the Romans had shown respect by their reception of his gift of the golden shield.

Perhaps Simon is hoping that this “respect” will translate into more concrete support from Rome.

**Expedition of General Cendebeus, Part 1, 15:37-41.** In the meantime **Trypho fled by ship to Orthosia.** <sup>38</sup> Then the king made Cendebeus **commander-in-chief** of the sea coast, and gave him forces of infantry and cavalry. [Verses 39-41 are deleted to shorten the video] <sup>39</sup> He commanded him to move his forces toward Judea; he also commanded him to build up Kedron, and to fortify the gates, and to wage war against the people. But as for the king himself, he **pursued Trypho.** <sup>40</sup> So Cendebeus came to Jamnia and began to harass the people and to invade Judea, and to take the people prisoners, and slay them. <sup>41</sup> And when he had built up Kedron, he stationed cavalry there, and a force of infantry, so that going out they might patrol the roads of Judea, as the king had commanded him.

### **[Video picks up here.] Doran’s Outline**

Doran groups this with the first 10 verses of chapter 16 in his outline.

I decided to stay with the chapter divisions for lecture purposes.

### **The Fate of General Trypho.**

The author of 1 Maccabees reports that he escaped the siege of Dor, and that King Antiochus pursued him.

Doran reports that eventually, again besieged by Antiochus, Trypho committed suicide.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Actions of General Cendebeus**

He is made *epistrategos*, rendered “**commander-in-chief**” by many translations (RSV, NRSV, NAB, NABRE).

The Greek word *strategos* often means “general.” So “commander in chief” is a good rendition of “over-general.”

KJV and Brenton render the word as “captain.” The NJB calls Cendebeus the “viceroy.”

Doran remarks that, in effect, King Antiochus has given Simon’s job to Cendebeus.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Doran, “First Maccabees,” *NIB* 4. 173.

He is not making a frontal assault on Simon by marching against Jerusalem.  
His actions appear to be calculated to draw Simon out to fight in the open country.  
More about this in the next lecture.

### Week 45, Lecture 145.<sup>8</sup> The Conclusion. 1 Maccabees 16.

My lectures on Maccabees number from 92 to 145, so this is my **53<sup>rd</sup> lecture** on 1-2 Maccabees!

#### Overview of Chapter 16

Expedition of Cendebeus, Part 2, 1-10

The Death of Simon, 11-22

Conclusion, 16:23-24

**1 Macc 16:1-3, Simon's Response to the Invasion.** Then John came up from Gazara, and told Simon his father what Cendebeus had done. <sup>2</sup> Then Simon called his two eldest sons, Judas and John, and said to them, I, and my brethren, and my father's house, have ever since my youth to this day fought against the enemies of Israel; and things have prospered so well in our hands, that we have delivered Israel many times. <sup>3</sup> But **now I am old**, and you, by **His** mercy, are mature adults. You go instead of me and my **brother**, and fight for our nation, and may the help from **Heaven** be with you.

**"Now I am old."** Doran remarks that in the Bible this often precedes a person's last blessing & testament. He gives examples of Isaac (Gen 27:1-2), Joshua (Josh 23:2), Samuel (1 Sam 2:2), Tobit (14:3).

**"His mercy."** (so the RSV). Literally **"the mercy."**

The mention of **"Heaven"** in the same verse shows that it is divine mercy that is meant.

Other translations make this more explicit: **Heaven's** mercy / mercy of **Heaven** (NRSV, NAB, NABRE, NJB).

**"My Brother"** is peculiar. One would expect **"brothers."**

Doran suggests that this is a translation mistake. The original Hebrew would have been **אָחִי** **'ḥy**, with no vowels.

If it is pronounced **'aḥi** it means "my brother," but if it is pronounced **'aḥay** it means "my brothers."

The two words are indistinguishable in a text without vowel points.

**16:4-10, John's Victory.** So he chose out of the country twenty thousand men of war with cavalry, who went out against Cendebeus, and spent that night at Modein. <sup>5</sup> And when they rose in the morning, and went onto the plain, behold, a mighty great host both of infantry and cavalry came against them. However there was a stream between them. <sup>6</sup> So he and his people lined up against them, and when he [John] saw that the people were afraid to cross the stream, he went first over himself, and then the men seeing him passed through after him. <sup>7</sup> Then he divided his men, and **set the cavalry in the midst of the infantry**: for the enemies' cavalry were very many. <sup>8</sup> Then they **sounded the holy trumpets: and Cendebeus and his host were put to flight**, so that many of them were slain, and the remnant fled to the stronghold. <sup>9</sup> At that time Judas, **John's** brother, was wounded; but John continued to pursue them, until he came to Kedron, which Cendebeus had rebuilt. <sup>10</sup> They fled even to the towers in the fields of Azotus; therefore he **burned it [Azotus?]** with fire: so that about two thousand of them were slain. Afterward he returned into the land of Judea in peace.

**Battle Tactics.** John has only a small cavalry force. He is avoiding a cavalry battle with Cendebeus.

The author gives **credit for the victory to the "holy trumpets."** Shades of Jericho!

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Doran refers to 11:59, where Antiochus VI had made Simon *strategos* (general, governor) of the region. However it appears to me that the title *epistrategos*, commander-in-chief, is actually higher.

<sup>8</sup> Lectures numbered consecutively. This is this week's 1st lecture, but its number reflects its place in the **total** sequence.

**What did John burn?** What does “it” refer to?

The word for “tower” is masculine, so if the towers were burnt, we would expect “them” (masculine plural). However, the pronoun is feminine singular. Cities are always feminine in Semitic thought. So my guess is Azotus.

**Simon’s son** [I left out the word “son” in the lecture!] is called “**John**” (*Iōannēs*), not Jonathan!

This name is rare in the Greek OT, occurring only in 1 Esdras (1x), 1 Maccabees (12x) and 2 Maccabees (2x).

**The Fate of Cendebeus?** This is not clear from our text.

He was defeated, and fled to Kedron, which he had fortified.

Was he “holed up” there? Or, if Kedron were burned, was he one of the 2,000 who perished?

### **The Death of Simon, 16:11-22**

<sup>11</sup> Now Ptolemy the son of Abubus was appointed governor (*strategos*) over the plain of Jericho, and he had an abundance of silver and gold, <sup>12</sup> for he was the **high priest’s son-in-law**. <sup>13</sup> His heart was lifted up, and he planned to get the country for himself. So he consulted deceitfully against Simon and his sons to destroy them. <sup>14</sup> Simon was visiting the cities that were in the country, and taking care for the good ordering of them; at which time he came down to Jericho with his sons, Mattathias and Judas, in the **year 177**, in the eleventh month, called **Shebat**. <sup>15</sup> The son of Abubus received them deceitfully into a little stronghold, called Dok, which he had built, and made them a great **banquet**. However he had hid men there. <sup>16</sup> So when Simon and his sons had become drunk, Ptolemy and his men rose up, took their weapons, and came upon Simon in the banqueting place. They slew him, and his two sons, and some of his servants. <sup>17</sup> In doing this he committed a great treachery, and repaid evil for good.

**High priest’s son-in-law.** Simon’s own son-in-law plots against him.

Note that he has an Egyptian name, Ptolemy!

**Year 177** [of Greek rule] = 134 B.C. (NRSV note). “Shebat” is a winter month.<sup>9</sup>

**The word for “banquet” is *poton*.** Literally it refers to a meal with “drink.”

It is therefore no surprise that Simon and his sons become drunk.

Simon and his sons come to an ignominious end.

I am somewhat surprised that the author of 1 Maccabees, a great supporter of the family, reports the gory details.

**16: 18-22, John Escapes an Assassination.** Then Ptolemy wrote up these things, and sent [the report] to the king, so that he [King Antiochus] would send him forces, and that he [Ptolemy] would deliver the country and cities to him [Antiochus]. <sup>19</sup> He also sent others to Gazara to kill John: and he sent letters to the army officers to come to him, so that he might give them silver, gold, and rewards. <sup>20</sup> He also sent others to take Jerusalem, and the mountain of the temple. <sup>21</sup> But someone had run ahead to Gazara and told John that his father and brethren had been killed, and he also said, “Ptolemy has sent [some men] to kill you too.” <sup>22</sup> When he heard this, he was totally shocked. Then he seized those who had come to destroy him, and slew them; for he knew that they were seeking to destroy him.

**Simon’s son-in-law takes advantage of politics to get his father-in-law’s job.**

We are back to the beginning of the story, where inter-Jewish strife was a major factor in Hellenization.

The rebellion is ultimately unsuccessful. John is warned in time, and the plot is foiled.

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<sup>9</sup> Doran, “First Maccabees,” *NIB* 4. 176.

**Conclusion, 16:23-24**

And the rest of the acts of John, and his wars, and the brave deeds which he did, and the building of the walls which he made, and his achievements, <sup>24</sup> behold, these are written in the chronicles of his priesthood, from the time he was made high priest after his father.

The conclusion is the same that ends the reigns of all of the kings, good & bad, in the Books of Kings.

Is our author suggesting that the Hasmonean (Maccabean) dynasty has become “just one more”

**Postscript.**

The ending tells us that John ruled successfully, so Ptolemy’s rebellion did not last long. According to Josephus, John reached Jerusalem ahead of Ptolemy’s men and gained control of the city. At that, Ptolemy retreated to Dok, where John besieged him. . . . That same year, Antiochus VII invaded Judea and besieged John in Jerusalem. After a lengthy siege marked by surprisingly indulgent behavior from Antiochus, who allowed a truce so that the Feast of Tabernacles could be celebrated, John and Antiochus VII reached a settlement in Jerusalem. The walls of Jerusalem were demolished and coins of Antiochus were minted. Later John accompanied Antiochus on his expedition against the Parthians (130/29 BCE). Only after Antiochus’s death on this campaign could John exert his own power. The independence of Judea depended on Seleucid weakness. None of this, however, is reported by the author of 1 Maccabees. He leaves Jerusalem free and independent.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Doran, [“The First Book of Maccabees,”](#) in *New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck, vol. 4 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994–2004), 178.