

Mattathias Antigonus coins - the last kings of the Hasmonean

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Abstract

Mattathias Antigonus was the last king of the Hasmonean-Maccabean Dynasty (37-40 BC' all dates BC). Struggles and uprisings preceded his reign of the Hasmonean state, by his father Aristobulus II and his brother Alexander II for control of the Hasmonean kingdom. The three years of his reign were a turbulent time of constant war with his rival king Herod. This period applies to monetary upheaval. Mattathias' activities in the field of Numismatics has been significant and impressive. His minting Authority minted unique coins, while Herod also minted unique coins.

Numismatic background before Mattathias Antigonus of the Hasmonean minting;

The 3 Hasmonean kings prior to Mattathias Antigonus minted an abundance of unique coins. The first was John Hyrcanus I 135-104, who minted several series of coins, including a coin, possibly, together with Antiochus VII Sidetes minted in Jerusalem. On one side of the coin appears an inscription for Alexander Sidetes with the icon of the royal anchor. On the other side of the coin a model of the lily, the symbol of the Hasmonean priesthood. Another coin bearing the Greek letter alpha above a Paleo Hebrew legend "Yehohanan (John) the High priest and the Council of the Jews." The Alpha letter probably represents the first letter in the name of Antiochus VII Sidetes, and validates the Hebrew inscription underneath it. There are, however, researchers who believe otherwise. The other side of the coin bears the symbol of the cornucopia commonly shown on Hasmonean coins, including the pomegranate icon, which may symbolize the priesthood adopted by the Hasmonean dynasty. Another coin minted by John Hyrcanus carries the Hebrew incscription "Yehohanan the High Priest and the Council of the Jews", without the letter alpha. This was possibly minted after the death of Antiochus Sidetes and constitutes the first independent coin of the Hasmonean.



Common coin of Hyrcanus

a coin with the Greek letter Alpha

a coin without the Alpha

And Alexander VII Sidetes

above the Hebrew legend

letter that may point to
Independent minting

The next Hasmonean ruler who minted coins was Judah Aristobulus I. He ruled during 104. Judah Aristobulus minted a small number of coins with a similar model of a Paleo-Hebrew inscription "Yehudah (Judah) the High Priest and the Council of the Jews." On the other side of the coin appears the common symbol of the cornucopia with the pomegranate. Judah was

king. The title "King" does not appear on his coins. He ruled a short period therefore he most likely did not have enough time to mint coins bearing his title.



A coin minted by Judah Aristobulus

Alexander I - Jannaeus, 76-104 minted a lot of coins. Alexander was High priest and King. Among his coins appears the model of the hoop or star with eight rays within a diadem and between the rays the Paleo-Hebrew inscription "*Yehonatan the King*". On the other side of the coin appears the Greek inscription "*of King Alexander*", around an inverted anchor. Another model of a coin Alexander minted bears the lily model surrounded by the Paleo-Hebrew inscription, "*Yehonatan the King*". On the other side of the coin appears the Greek inscription "*of King Alexander*", inverted anchor within circle. The Hasmonean king that served as king, since he did not belong to House of David there was no significance to his title as High Priest.



The Hasmonean kings had extensive authority. Their authority was commemorated on their coins. For example, John Hyrcanus I, minted on some of his coins his titles as High Priest and Head of the Council of the Jews. Judah Aristobulus I did not mint the title of King on his coins. The Hasmonean kings: Judah Aristobulus, Alexander Jannaeus and Mattathias Antigonus were both High Priests and kings.

According to current research, to Alexander Jannaeus I coins appear three different names in Hebrew. One is the name Yehonatan (Jonathan) which is the common name. Another name is Yntn (Yonatan or Yinatan) a name which appears on a small number of Alexander's coins including coins that bear double minting or double overstrike. The third name is Yonatan (Jonathan). Coins with the name Yonatan, bearing on one side the double cornucopia and on the other the Paleo-Hebrew inscription "*Yonatan the High Priest and Council of the Jews*".



Alexander Jannaeus coin bearing the legend Yntn

Alexander Jannaeus coins with an overstrike minting

Alexander Jannaeus coin bearing the legend Yehonatan

Is it possible that Alexander II son of Aristobulus, grandson of Alexander Jannaeus I minted coins with the name Yonatan-Ywntn? About that later.



A Coin bearing the name of Yonatan-Ywntn

An Overview of the political situation after the death of Jannaeus (76) Salome Alexandra (67)

Alexander Jannaeus I died in 76. His wife Queen Salome Alexandra, who reigned after his death, died in 67. Salome's death brought the war between Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II for the monarchy. Josephus writes that Aristobulus won the monarchy. The brothers turned to Pompey, who conquered Jerusalem in 63 and Jerusalem ceased to be the capital of the independent Hasmonean state and the territory of the Judea region was cut.

Hyrcanus became Etnarch (President) and High Priest, Antipater the Edomite as guardian, Herod was appointed governor of Galilee and Phasael as governor of Jerusalem. The Romans thus separated religious authority (High Priest) and political power (King), who passed to the procurators and other client kings Herod among them.

Aristobulus II and his sons: Alexander II (the eldest) and Mattathias Antigonus, his young son and 2 daughters were sent to exile in Rome. According to Josephus, Alexander II managed to escape from captivity in Pompey, remained in the country and rebelled.

Josephus attests to the situation in his book "Antiquities of the Jews" and he says "*This disaster was brought on Jerusalem by Hyrcanus and Aristobulus by fighting each other, for we lost our freedom and we became Roman subjects and were made to return the land we acquired by arms to the Syrians, after taking it from them ... and the monarchy that was previously in the hands of the High Priests family became an honorary position for the common people*".

A Review of the possibility of minting Alexander II coins in the name of Yonatan-Ywntn

The arguments for minting of coins bearing the Paleo-Hebrew inscription Yonatan-Ywntn by Alexander II are:

1. Examination of the political situation in 63-40 according to the source of Josephus.
2. Individual analysis of the subject of the Hasmonean names: double fixed names in Hebrew and Greek and transferring the name from grandfather to grandchild and not using the same name in Hebrew or Greek in the dynasty during the same generation.
3. Examining the feasibility of having a situation that during the passage of 36 years, no new coins will be minted.

According to Josephus in "The history of the Jewish War with the Romans" and "Antiquities of the Jews", Alexander II son of Aristobulus led two rebellions. Regarding the first uprising Josephus writes:

*"Alexander son of Aristobulus who had escaped from captivity of Pompey gathered a large force and bother Hyrcanus for he passed through Judea and almost ended his (Hyrcanus) rule. Alexander son of Aristobulus ... it seemed that soon put an end to his rule (of Hyrcanus) for he boldly came to Jerusalem and began to build the wall Pompey destroyed – had not Gabinius overtook him... Gabinius then returned Hyrcanus to Jerusalem and placed in his hand the oversight of the Temple '*Reference 169 - Hyrcanus confirmed as High Priest"*

From Josephus' source the first argument shows that a Hasmonean ruler called Alexander rebelled and almost brought an end to the reign of his uncle Hyrcanus II. According to this source he raised a large army that conquered Jerusalem and brought to the removal of Hyrcanus from the city and began rebuilding its walls, taking de facto his High Priesthood to himself in the Temple in Jerusalem, a conclusion emerging from Josephus writings - Gabinius then returned to Hyrcanus in Jerusalem and placed in his hands the oversight of the Temple, namely as a High Priest. This means that Hyrcanus did not stay in Jerusalem and in practice during this interim did not act as High Priest in the Temple in Jerusalem.

It is then likely to assume that Alexander II who ruled Jerusalem temporarily took the opportunity he had to access Hasmonean minting and minted coins with, as did his brother Mattathias Antigonus during his reign. After being defeated by Gabinius, Alexander II was exiled to Rome.

Josephus writes about the second revolt of Alexander in 56 after escaping Rome:

"Alexander son of Aristobulus then came back to power by force and outlawed many Jews and moved with a great army and killed all the Romans that came across him... When Gabinius found matters in Syria...but Alexandros cannot stop because he had thirty thousand Jews and he was greatly defeated by Gabinius When ten thousand dies beside him at Mount Tabor"

Josephus repeats and states the strength of Alexander II's domination of the region who returned to reign, killing many Romans, and it must be taken into account that he wrote in an understatement given the fact that Josephus became a pro Roman who didn't rarely praised rulers who struck severe blow against the Romans. Alexander enlisted an army of about thirty thousand soldiers. Eventually, Alexander was defeated near Mount Tabor and executed at Antioch.

The second argument answers the question of why the Hebrew name Yonatan-Ywntn (Jonathan) should be attributed and associated with the title High priest on Alexander II coins. The Hasmoneans used to repeat one name from grandfather to grandchild as is the case today and thus Alexander II, received the name Yonatan (Jonathan) from his grandfather Alexander Jannaeus I. For the Hasmoneans, Hebrew names verse their Greek equivalents are: Mattatayah (Mattathias)- Antigonus. Yehonatan (Jonathan) / Yntn / Yonatan or Yinatan - Alexander. Yehudah (Judah) - Aristobulus. Yehohanan (John) – Hyrcanus. Meaning constant names with each name in Greek for every Hebrew name

According to the method of double Hasmonean names, as passed from one generation to next the Hasmoneans did not use during the same generation the same name in Hebrew or Greek. The names in Alexander II generation in Hebrew were: the double name for his brother Antigonus was Mattatayah (Mattathias). His father's Aristobulus double name was Yehudah (Judah). His Uncle's Hyrcanus II double name was yehohanan (John). The only name left for Alexander II, was Yonatan as his grandfather Alexander Jannaeus – Yehonatan (Jonathan), Yntn-Yonatan or Yinatan.

The third argument is the likeliness that during a transition period of 36 years there will not be any minting of coins, from the time of Alexander I death (76) and until the minting of

Mattathias coins (40). It is not economically feasible that no coins be minted, especially at a time, of population growth. We know that the Hasmonean state was riddled with wars and uprisings which regularly required more coins, to finance military expenditure and other expenses and needs of the market, even when inflation was likely to occur due to the wars and extensive minting was required due to increased monetary need. The Hasmonean ruler who actively ruled during this period should have had a suitable answer for these needs and mint additional coins to finance expenditures.



HA185

HA191

HA175

Coins bearing the name Yonatan-Ywntn attributed to Alexander II in this article

The end to the revolts of Aristobulus II and Alexander II

During 56 Aristobulus escaped Rome and began the revolt. Aristobulus and Mattathias Antigonus were captured by the Romans and the rebellion was suppressed. In 56 Alexander II escaped again and led the second revolt. He recruited an army of thirty thousand soldiers and renewed the revolt against the Romans. He was defeat at Mount Tabor and executed in Antioch. Pompey poisoned Aristobulus in 49 .The death of Alexander II (eldest) and Aristobulus left Antigonus the Hasmonean dynasty sole heir.

The Political background during Mattathias in Judea was such that struggles existed between supporters of Mattathias Antigonus, who wanted to prevent subjugation by the Romans on the one hand, and the supporters of Hyrcanus II and Antipater who supported the Romans.

The situation in the Roman Empire

After the assassination of Julius Caesar, civil war broke out in the Roman Empire, which ended in the victory of Marcus Anthony and Octavious, who supported the rule of Hyrcanus II and Antipater in Judea, because they were loyal to the Romans. After the death of his father Aristobulus, Antigonus, who was with his brother in law, King Chalkis in Lebanon. He recruited a large army to conquer the Galilee and then Judea and Jerusalem.



Orodes II coin (57-38). Pacorus I,
his son, took over Syria

In the year 40 the Parthians invaded Syria and took control over it. The Parthians came from today's Persia and were adversaries of the Romans. Mattathias Antigonus, who was anti-Roman, used the opportunity and turned to the Parthians with an offer to crown him over Judea and dethrone his uncle Hyrcanus II. At the same time he offered the Parthians a lot of money and 500 women and slaves and in return received the monarchy. The Parthians came to Jerusalem with Antigonus and besieged the palace of Hyrcanus. During the siege, the Parthians tricked Hyrcanus II and Herod Phasael into leaving the palace, to conduct negotiations with them in the Galilee. Hyrcanus was arrested by them and handed over to Antigonus, while Phasael committed suicide. Hyrcanus' ears were later cut, to prevent him

from continuing to serve as High Priest and he then was exiled to Babylon. At that time Herod managed to escape from Jerusalem.

While the Romans were busy at war with the Parthians, King Mattathias Antigonus conquered the majority of the Edomite district including the city Marissa, which he destroyed. He then took siege of Masada to where most of Herod's family fled. Herod who was Tetrarch at Samaria at the time, fled to Rome, and turned to the Romans to be crowned King, so in actuality he reigned at the same time Mattathias ruled between 40-37.

The Romans usually used to appoint a king from royal lineage but that wasn't the case of Mattathias Antigonus. In 39 Herod came from Rome to Eretz Israel with a letter of appointment, as Sovereign he received from Octavian, who later became Augustus. Herod took over the city of Samaria and made it the headquarters for his army and a struggle began between him and Antigonus, for the monarchy. A struggle that did not cease until 37. In 38 Herod conquered the Galilee from Antigonus, including the Arbel caves which housed his warriors. Antigonus, who sat in Jerusalem, could not come to the aid of the Galilee. On the other hand he attacked the forces of Herod near Jericho and killed Herod's brother Joseph and defeated his army.

Herod conquered Jaffa and Masada, where his family was staying. He then turned his troops to overcoming the main army of Antigonus. Antigonus, instead of concentrating his forces, sent some of his army under the command of Pappos to wage war against the Roman troops in Samaria, in order to cut off Herod's supply lines, but Herod was able to defeat the army of Antigonus at Beit El. Then with the help of the Romans he besieged Jerusalem.

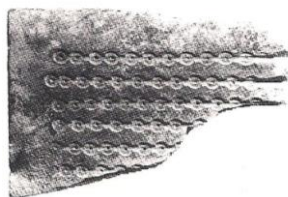
During the war, Antigonus and Herod minted coins. The review will focus on Mattathias Antigonus coins and then review Herod's coins of the same time. It is likely that both Hasmonean kings coins that were minted previously were used in circulation at that time.

Antigonus Mattathias coins

Antigonus served as King and High Priest and ruled from 40 as Hasmonean ruler. An important source attesting to Antigonus' activities is Josephus. The only sources indicating his Hebrew name - Mattathias, are his coins.

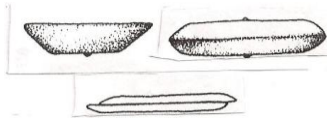
His coins are characterized by the high content of lead - about 27% and the relatively low content of about 70% copper, when the Prutah denomination coins of the Hasmoneans prior to that contain a significantly higher percentage of copper. It must be noted that some coins of Alexander Jannaeus were made of lead. It may very well be that the reason for this is the many wars that took place in those days, which preferred to increase the consumption of copper for military use. Most of the Antigonus' coins were not well preserved, due to the high lead content of many of them. Most Jews did not read or write Paleo-Hebrew and Antigonus probably used Paleo-Hebrew as a symbol of continuity of the kings from the First Temple period who used the Paleo-Hebrew script.

How coins were manufactured during the time of Antigonus?



Limestone mold to mint Mattathias Antigonus coins

Antigonus' process of casting coins was: casting flans, engraving the minting dies and minting the coins on the flans. Antigonus coins were minted in Jerusalem in 40-37, in double sided limestone molds, when minting included a double template of two stone slabs drilled with rows of holes facing one another. In this process thick flans were cast. An example of such a limestone mold was discovered from the fortress Tower of David in Jerusalem, which served as the local minting location to medium-sized coins. This discovery attests to the way minting was done and the place of minting. Often the molds were not exactly aligned, which led to creating the "moving coins" model.



"Moving Coins"



Medium coin - Chalcos

The characteristics of Mattathias Antigonus coins are: a. excess weight; b. thick letters; c. the coins are in three denominations: large, medium and Prutah. It must be noted that these denominations are contradictory to Hyrcanus' I, Judas Aristobulus and Jonathan Alexander Jannaeus minting characteristics, which minted until the days of Antigonus only Prutah denomination coins. Most coins were discovered in Jerusalem and its surroundings and many other places. All of the coins are not dated. Mattathias did not mint silver coins.



Two sides of Antigonus' coins: top row medium-sized coins (Chalcos) Bottom line large denomination coins (Dichalcos).



Obverse: the cornucopia model and the Paleo-Hebrew legend "*Mattatayah the High Priest and the Council of the Jews*"

Reverse: Ivy leaves and the Greek legend "*of King Antigonus.*"

Characteristics of a high denomination coins

Obverse: a double cornucopia and Paleo-Hebrew legend: "*Mattatayah the High Priest and the Council of the Jews*" [Mtathias high priest / Council / of / Jew / s] (Dichalcos). Reverse: Ivy wreath and a legend around the wreath: *BACILEWC ANTIGONNOY*.

The average weight of the coin is 16.40 grams. The legends is bilingual in Hebrew and Greek. Estimated value of 8 Prutah. On its obverse is a pair of cornucopia without the pomegranate, adopted by the Hasmoneans. It's easy to recognize the coins even without weighing them

(one cornucopia or two). The coin was compatible with the weighing system of the regional kingdoms. Removing the pomegranate between the cornucopia made room on the coin to add Paleo-Hebrew legend. The letters "An" sometimes between the cornucopia [probably An=Antigonus]. On its reverse the Greek legend was meant to attest on Antigonus' kingship and use of the coin as a means of advertising it in foreign cities in Eretz Israel. Sometimes the letters are edited backwards and there are errors, it may be that due to the urgent situation and the war which brought about the lack of rigor for quality. There are apparently 48 coins of equal value to the silver drachma. It must also be pointed out that a significant part of Mattathias Antigonus' coins are not up to standard. For example: two coins are shown below with a value of 8 Prutah. The weight of the coin on the right is 12.40g compared to the one on the left which is 16.42g.



Some of the coins coined were minted in low quality. For example, the coin with the denomination of 8 Prutah due to poor minting quality because of a high concentration of lead



Low quality minting coin

In designing Mattathias coins the minters used the space in between the cornucopia in the 8 Prutah coins, in order to add some Paleo-Hebrew legend, compared to the Hasmonean coins that used the space to place the pomegranate. Below is an example of a Prutah coin on the right in comparison to the 8 Prutah coins of Mattathias on the left.



Alexander Jannaeus and Mattathias Antigonus minted bilingual coins. Some of Alexander Jannaeus' coins bore on one side a star with the Paleo-Hebrew legend "*Yehonatan the king*" and on the other side the Greek legend "*of king Alexander*" meaning the title of king on both sides of the coin. In comparison, Mattathias Antigonus minted on one side of his coins the Paleo-Hebrew legend "*Mattathias the High Priest and the Council of the Jews*" and on the other side "*of King Antigonus*" in Greek.



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Alexander Jannaeus
coin

Mattathias Antigonus coin

On Mattathias Antigonus' coins we find bilingual legends with the titles of king and high priest. The title king was given to Mattathias Antigonus by the Parthians and the title of High priest was automatically given to him after he disqualified Hyrcanus II from serving as high priest. The coin was minted in contrast to the Roman trend from Pompey's period to separate between the two rulers (religious authority-High Priest and political power-King) carrying these titles. The Greek *ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΑΝΤΙΓΟΝΥ* legend (of King Antigonus) attests to the fact that Antigonus appeared as king for the needs of the Greek population in his kingdom and according to the Paleo-Hebrew legend, *High priest and Council of Jews* for the Jewish population.

The coins minted by Mattathias Antigonus were impressive in size, design and uniqueness compared to the large coins minted by king Herod at the same time, who were also impressive in beauty and design. The two kings used their coins as propaganda. Antigonus minted the symbols the previous Hasmonean rulers used in different denominations and mainly intended them for the Jewish population. In comparison, Herod minted symbols that conformed with the Romans and were used mainly in the Samaria region.



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King Mattathias Antigonus coin

King Herod coin

Characteristics of medium denomination coins – Calcos

On the obverse of the coin: single cornucopia, and Paleo-Hebrew legend around it: "*Mattatayah the High priest and Council of the Jews*". On the reverse of the coin: a Greek inscription within wreath: *BACIL ANTIGO / NOY* (Chalcos)

The coin weighs 7.87g and is worth 4 Prutah. The weight of the coin was apparently designed to be half the weight of the large coins, when the single cornucopia is worth half the weight of the coin with a pair of cornucopia. The inscription on the coin is shorter than the larger coin because of size limitations. The bilingual Paleo Hebrew and Greek inscription is also shorter. The reverse of the coin bears a wreath of bay leaves and inside the wreath an inscription "*of king Antigonus*". The coins preservation is low because of the high content of lead.



Cornucopia / Hebrew inscription "*Mattatayah the High Priest Council* "

A Greek inscription "of king Antigonos". A Greek inscription surrounded by a wreath of bay leaves.

Characteristics of Prutah coins – Lepton

Obverse: a partial inscription inside a wreath: *Mattatayah the Priest*.

Reverse: a double cornucopia and between them a pomegranate. Weight 1.87 grams. 1/8 of the larger coin.

Or

Obverse: Paleo-Hebrew inscription inside a wreath: *Mattatayah the Priest*

Reverse: a double cornucopia and between them an ear of barley.

Or

Obverse: inscription inside the wreath: *Mattatayah*

Reverse: a double cornucopia and in between an ear of barley in dots.

oat



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An ear of barley between the Cornucopia

Prutah coins with a pomegranate or oat in between the cornucopia

The highlight of Mattathias Antigonos coins is the Prutah coin design, which shows the seven branched candelabrum (Menorah) and the showbread table, the holy tools that were used in the Temple in Jerusalem that could be seen only by the priests at the Temple. Exposing the most sacred temple vessels on coins had significant meaning for the Jews.



The Menorah at the Temple was made of pure gold. Exposing the tools on coins by Mattathias Antigonos was of national significance. The coin was first published by De Saulcy in 1865. The two tools appear as a one time opportunity on the coins. It should be noted that in the Talmud appears the sentences "*a man may not make a house after the design of the Temple...a table after the design of the table or candelabrum after the design of the candelabrum*".

The uniqueness of the Menorah on the coin was that the artists' that designed it saw the Menorah in the Temple and so this is an authentic model of the Menorah that was in the Temple in Jerusalem. There are differences in the base of the Menorah on Antigonos' coin in comparison to other models, such as the Arch of Titus showing the Menorah on a stand. On Antigonos' coin the Menorah's decorations do not appear. A die is about 25% larger than the flan. The artist who designed the Menorah was not proficient enough in his occupation. Some

researchers argue that there were a number of Menorah of different styles at the Temple, including the Menorah standing in a tripod base at a later period. The Menorah also appears in later period on Islamic coins, especially after the year 696 CE. The Menorah served as a model Menorah for a contemporary coin



The Table of showbread on Mattathias Antigonus' coins is described vertically compared to the showbread table described in the Bar Kochba coin across. The table of showbread in the Temple was plated with pure gold. The Menorah appears on the side of the coin bearing the Greek legend while the showbread table is described vertically with two stacks of loaves of bread. The table appears on the side bearing the legend in Paleo-Hebrew. Researchers believe the importance of the showbread table, exceeded that of the candelabrum (Menorah). The Arch of Titus bears the showbread table and then the Menorah.



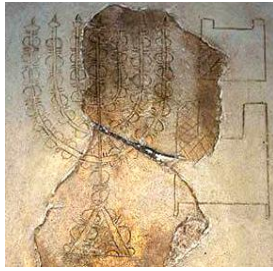
The Showbread table was presented on holidays to pilgrims at the Temple in Jerusalem. Under the influence of the Pharisees on any one of the holidays these two tools in were public shown to holy pilgrim who came to the Temple and they observed them. This was the highlight of the experience for many of the pilgrims.

Thus the Mishnah states:

"After the "Regel"¹, at the end a Holiday,
They would dunk all the tools in the Temple,
Because they were touched by people of the land
during the holiday. Therefore were saying
Be careful not to touch the
Table, while showing it to the pilgrims"
Mishna, Celebration PG MH

Models of menorah:

3 Regalim are the three Pilgrimage Festivals: Sukkot, Pesach and Shavuot. ¹



Menorah model from the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem synagogue in Migdal



Arch of Titus in Rome



Menorah model in the ancient plaster

Later models of Menora:



Lead lid for seven nests Menorah * from Beth Shearim



Menorah at Beth Shearim



mosaic at the **** synagogue in Tzipori



Mattathias Antigonus apparently minted on a coin the two most sacred Temple vessels in order to influence and encourage the people as a national aspect in his struggle for the monarchy against King Herod, whose family converted to Judaism at the time of John Hyrcanus I. Mattathias Antigonus may have minted the Menorah coins during the siege of Jerusalem, while trying to highlight the uniqueness of his family as high priests and head of Temple, who were responsible for the use of the Temple vessels, by displaying the Menora coin and affecting the national feelings of the people and warriors as he uses the parallel title to King. All this during the time Herod served as client king of the Romans.

At the same time Herod minted impressive coins as counter-propaganda to King Mattathias Antigonus. The large coins with symbols that matched the Romans. An example of a series of these coins dated with the Samaria minting from year 3 are displayed below. The coins bear the title of Tetrarch in monogram.



Herod's coin from year 3 and counter propaganda monogram for Mattathias' coins

According to researcher A. Rapaport year 3 of his reign is 38 BCE so Herod did not conquer Jerusalem yet. According to most researchers the coins were minted before the conquest of Jerusalem and thus attest to being used as counter propaganda against Mattathias Antigonus' impressive coins during the long war between them.

Mattathias divided his army and sent Pappos to cut off Herod's supply lines. His army was defeated near Beit El. Herod and the Syrian procurator along with 11 Roman legions besieged Jerusalem for five months and in the summer of 37 the city was conquered. Mattathias turned himself in to the Syrian procurator, sent to Antioch and Marcus Antonius ordered him beheaded. Even though Herod brought an end to the Hasmonean kings dynasty, he was married to Miriam, Alexander II's daughter, brother to Mattathias Antigonus and Aristobulus III son of Alexander II was appointed by him to High Priest of Jerusalem.

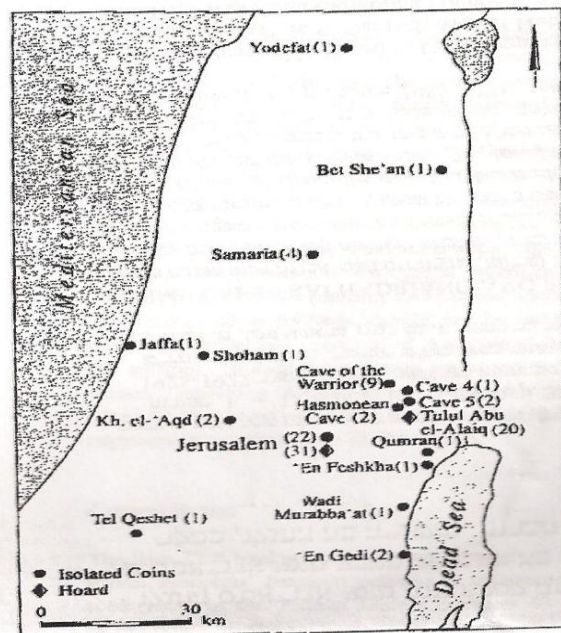


Fig. Ap.1. Distribution of Antigonus' coins.

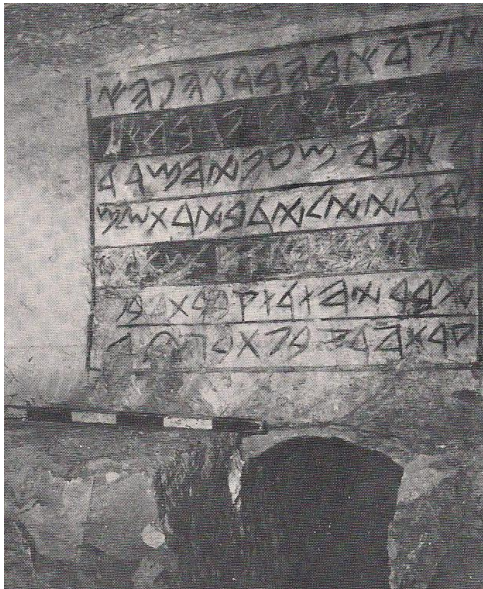
Antigonus coins distribution:

Antigonus coins findings:

Antigonus' coins were discovered in the following locations: Jerusalem, Samaria, Yodfat, Beit-Shean, Jaffa, Kiryat Sefer, Yavne Yam, Beit Shemesh, Shoham, Khirbat al Eked, H. Budd Issa, Tel Shoket, Ein Gedi, Qumran, Ein Fashcha, Caves "Megilla Operation" cave "Amud"

Most of the coins were discovered in Jerusalem and Judea, a small number in the Galilee. It is possible that the coins continued in circulation after Antigonus' death along with the Herod's coins since there were numerous amounts of coins in circulation and the new administration didn't see it necessary to replace them and thus coins of Mattathias Antigonus were found at Masada and Samaria, places that Antigonus did not conquer them.

In 1970 a grave with an impressive inscription over the entrance to the tomb was discovered at Givat Hamivtar in Jerusalem.



The question arose of whether this grave was made for Mattathias Antigonus? Over the entrance to the tomb there was an inscription in Aramaic and ancient Hebrew letters that was common among the Samaritans. Translation into Hebrew inscription:

I am aba son of priest /
 Elazer son of Aaron the Great /
 I am Aba the tortured and persecuted, /
 Born in Jerusalem /
 Exiled to Babylon and raised Mattathias /
 Son of Yehuda and buried him /
 in the cave, which I bought by bill. "

Although the affiliation to Mattathias Antigonus can be interpreted by the inscription's content by examining the bones in the grave, the researchers concluded that it cannot be attributed to Mattathias Antigonus the last of the Hasmonean kings.

Summary:

The Hasmonean Dynasty ruled Eretz Israel from the beginning of the revolt against the Seleucid kingdom and attained independence, political freedom with the backing of the Romans and control by high priests and kings with military prowess. The dynasty existed until the death of King Mattathias Antigonus, the last of the Hasmonean kings, in 37, who reigned three years over Eretz Israel during a struggle for power against King Herod aided by the Romans, the rulers of the country and instead of the Hasmoneans dynasty, the kingdom, came to Herod.

From a lecture dated May 31, 2010 to the Israel Numismatic Society members, Tel-Aviv branch.