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THE JEWISH COMMUNITY AND THE HELLENISTIC CULTURE IN THE LIGHT OF THE BOOKS OF THE MACCABEES**

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The Books of the Maccabees – i.e. the First and the Second Book – belong to the historical books of the Old Testament. However, they are not one *oeuvre* divided into two parts, called books, as each of them is a separate whole created by a different author.¹ The story told in them presents the events in the history of Israel from 175 to 135(134) BC.² It

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¹ Cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie. Wstęp – przekład z oryginału – komentarz* (PŚST VI/4), Poznań 1961, p. 17.

² Cf. J. Homerski, *Pierwsza i Druga Księga Machabejska. Wstęp, przekład i komentarz*, Lublin 2001, p. 5. 1 Maccabees covers a period of 40 years: from the ascension to the throne of Antiochus IV Epiphanes to the death of Simon. 2 Maccabees is not a continuation of 1 Maccabees and for the second time presents the events of the fifteen initial years, from 175, i.e. from Heliodorus’ campaign to Nicanor’s death. See also:

was the time when Palestine was a part of the great empire ruled by kings of the Seleucid dynasty – the heirs of Alexander of Macedon, as it was indicated by the Biblical author in the Introduction to 1 Maccabees (cf. 1Macc 1:1–9). Seeking to maintain control over the conquered nations, the Seleucids engaged in both peaceful and military activities. The author of 1 Maccabees mentions Antiochus IV Epiphanes spreading the Hellenistic ideas to unite the conquered nations into a cultural-religious monolith, subordinated to the king (cf. 1Macc 1:41–42). These efforts concerned – as the mentioned Biblical author remarked – also the Jewish nation (cf. 1Macc 1:44).

The Books of the Maccabees, relating the cultural-religious policy of the Seleucids towards the population of Jerusalem and Judea, present various attitudes towards the Hellenistic culture assumed by the members of the Jewish nation: on the one hand, the attitude of resistance adopted by those who remained faithful to their own religious-cultural traditions and wanted to preserve their identity; on the other – the attitude of those who succumbed to the influence of Hellenism.

In this paper, after presenting Palestine of the time of the Seleucids as the political-cultural background (1), different attitudes of the members of the Jewish nation towards Hellenism will be discussed: the attitude of yielding to the cultural-religious influence of Hellenism (2), the attitude of struggle with the power of the Syrian state in defence of the Law, the Temple, the country and the ancestral customs (3), and the heroic attitude of those who did not accept the imposed practices as inconsistent with the Law of Moses (4).

1. POLITICAL-CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE SELEUCID RULE IN PALESTINE

After the death of Alexander of Macedon (336–323 BC) in 323 BC, his empire – as he had not left a lawful successor³ – was divided, as a result of the reciprocal warfare, among the army generals called the

E. Zawiszewski, *Księgi Machabejskie*, in: *Wstęp do Starego Testamentu*, L. Stachowiak (ed.), Poznań 1990, pp. 228–231.

³ Cf. R.M. Errington, *A History of Hellenistic World: 323–30 BC* (Blackwell History of the Ancient World), Malden–Oxford–Victoria 2008, p. 14–15.

Diadochi.⁴ Initially, Palestine was ruled by the Lagids, kings of Egypt – the dynasty founded by the son of Lagus, Ptolemy I Soter (323–285 BC).⁵ Later, according to the provisions made after the decisive battle of Ipsos in 301, Palestine, together with Koile Syria was given to Seleucus I Nicator. This decision was contested by Ptolemy I Soter who refused to release Koile Syria, which later resulted in six Syrian wars.⁶

Initially Seleucus I Nicator (312–281 BC) did not insist on the return of the lands that were due to him. An attempt to take over the rule over the territory in question was made by Seleucus' successors. The intended goal was achieved by Antiochus III the Great (223–187 BC) who, during the fifth Syrian war with Egypt (202–199 BC), after the decisive victory in the battle of Panion in 200 BC, conquered the whole Koile Syria, Phoenicia and the maritime province.⁷ However, the aspirations of the Ptolemaic dynasty to those territories did not cease. This was expressed in a rumour spread by the Ptolemaic revanchists that Koile Syria, after the betrothal of Cleopatra, the daughter of Antiochus III the Great, with Ptolemy V Epiphanes (205–180 BC), was part of the dowry she brought to her husband.⁸ The response to these claims were two campaigns against Egypt led by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 BC) who ultimately confirmed the rule of the Seleucids over that part of the Levant, winning against the army of Ptolemy VI Philometor (180–145 BC) in 168 BC. The situation remained unchanged by the second campaign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes that ended in a fiasco in Egypt.⁹

⁴ The Greek term δῖάδοχος means „successor” (cf. E.G. Liddell, R. Scott, H. S. Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon. With a revised supplement*, Oxford 1996, p. 393). The taking over of power by the Diadochi was mentioned by the author of 1 Maccabees: “Alexander had reigned twelve years when he died. Each of his officers established himself in his own region. All assumed crowns after his death, they and their heirs after them for many years, bringing increasing evils on the world.” (1Macc 1:7–9) Cf. J. Wolski, *Historia powszechna: starożytność*, Warszawa 1971, pp. 268–271; R.M. Errington, *A History of Hellenistic World*, pp. 11–76.

⁵ Cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie*, p. 19; J. Homerski, *Pierwsza i Druga Księga Machabejska*, p. 5.

⁶ Cf. J. Ciecieląg, *Żydzi w okresie drugiej świątyni: 538 przed Chr.-70 po Chr.*, Kraków: Universitas, 2011, p. 177.

⁷ Cf. tamże, p. 187; see also: J. Homerski, *Pierwsza i Druga Księga Machabejska*, p. 6.

⁸ Cf. R. M. Errington, *A History of Hellenistic World*, p. 258; see also: F. Gryglewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie*, p. 19.

⁹ Cf. R.M. Errington, *A History of Hellenistic World*, pp. 258–259. The campaigns

As historians show, all the Seleucids were interested in spreading the Hellenistic culture in their kingdom.¹⁰ Antiochus III the Great, however, treated the Jews with caution and attempted to show them his benevolence. This was partly due to political reasons, since among the Jewish nation there were numerous supporters of the Egyptian rulers, the Lagids, with whom Antiochus III had had to struggle for power in that part of the Levant.¹¹ Another reason for Antiochus III's caution in his approach to the Jews was their great devotion to their religious tradition. Thus, during his rule, the Jews lived in relative peace; this was also the case during most of the rule of his successor, Seleucus IV Philopator (187–175 BC).¹² The situation changed, however, after Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a zealous follower of the Hellenistic culture, ascended the throne of the Seleucid Empire.¹³ He started this kind of campaign – the campaign to introduce the Hellenistic culture, and with it, the Hellenistic religious customs – also among the Jews. Scholars studying this issue give various motives for the action of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. J. Homerski claims that through systematic colonisation the king aimed at strengthening his kingdom that was culturally and religiously very diverse, and territorially reduced since the time of Antiochus III the Great.¹⁴ This thesis is confirmed by 1 Maccabees, where the Biblical author, citing the decree of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, recorded: “The king then issued a proclama-

of Antiochus IV Epiphanes against Egypt are mentioned by both authors of the Books of the Maccabees: 1Macc 1:16–20 mentions the first campaign of 169 BC, while 2 Maccabees 5:1 refers to the second campaign of 168 BC. J. Homerski (*Pierwsza i Druga Księga Machabejska*, pp. 28–29.192), interpreting the cited Biblical texts, observes that the events described by the author of 1 Maccabees after the account of the first campaign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes against Egypt actually refer to the events that occurred after the king's second campaign.

¹⁰ Cf. tamże, p. 7.

¹¹ As the historical sources indicate, a rather strong pro-Seleucid fraction was present also in Judea, which may be suggested by considerable help of the people of Jerusalem given to the army of Antiochus III the Great during the siege of the Jerusalem Citadel, where the Ptolemaic divisions were stationed. Antiochus III, as a sign of grace for the Jews' readiness to serve the Syrian king, issued an edict that guaranteed them the right to considerable self-government, as well as subventions for the reconstruction of Jerusalem, and allocated certain sums for the cult in the Jerusalem Temple. Cf. R. M. Errington, *A History of Hellenistic World*, pp. 268–269; J. Ciecieląg, *Żydzi w okresie drugiej świątyni*, pp. 188–189.

¹² Cf. J. Homerski, *Pierwsza i Druga Księga Machabejska*, p. 7.

¹³ Cf. tamże, p. 9.

¹⁴ Cf. tamże.

tion to his whole kingdom that all were to become a single people, each nation renouncing its particular customs. All the gentiles conformed to the king's decree" (1Macc 41–42)¹⁵ Other scholars have a different view on the matter; e.g. J. Ciecieląg, analysing other scholars' results, states that Antiochus IV Epiphanes "certainly was not a mad colonizer, as he opposed native cults in no other place apart from Judea. Moreover, the attack on Judaism was directed exclusively against the Judean Jews; the Babylonian Jews, or those living in other parts of the Seleucid country, were never prohibited to practice their fathers' customs. It is doubtful that the king wished to unify the country religiously by imposing the cult of Olympian Zeus on all the citizens (...)"¹⁶ It should be noted that before Antiochus IV Epiphanes issued the decree that imposed the Hellenistic religious-cultural practices on the Jews, some representatives of the Jewish establishment had undertaken definite initiatives to adopt certain elements of the Hellenized life style (cf. 1Macc 1:11–15).¹⁷ The examples may be Jason and Menelaus, who approached Antiochus IV Epiphanes asking for the high priesthood, and – in return for the office – offered the

¹⁵ J. Nawrot (*Kryzys religijny w Judei za Antiocha IV Epifanesa. Teologia historii w 1 Mch 1,1–2,26* (Studia i materiały 151), Poznań 2012, p. 227–228), notes that "the issue of this decree is actually discussed and many exegetes and historians tends to the conclusion that the act did not exist. It seems, however, that religious zeal of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and his supposed hatred of the Jews justifies the thesis of the issue of such proclamation, as however definitely it should be noted that he did not have the form and scope of which are described in the Book of 1Mcc (...) Despite the many controversies and doubts about the existence of the royal document there are good reasons to accept the hypothesis of its historicity. The thesis of the cultural education of Antiochus, his liberalism and willingness to accept different beliefs under a unitary monarchy can not be an argument undermining his issue such a decree. It can, at best, limit its action to the land of Israel, because in fact the Jews were the only nation radically different from all other communities polytheistic. Without the ability to present a detailed historical justification, it can also be assumed that the decree is the result of propaganda Hellenists who want to get the legitimacy of royal authority for their actions". See also. R. Bartlett, *The First and Second Books of the Maccabees*, p. 29–30; F. Gryglewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie*, pp. 218–219.

¹⁶ Cf. J. Ciecieląg, *Żydzi w okresie drugiej świątyni*, p. 194.

¹⁷ R. M. Errington (*A History of the Hellenistic World*, p. 269) observes that "a serious split had already opened between two broad social groups, those who wished to maintain a separate Jewish identity at all costs, and those who were attracted by the idea of adopting certain aspect of the Hellenized way of life of the surrounding social environment, which had been ruled by Greek speakers since the time of Alexander the Great." See also: V. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, New York 1985, p. 118.

Syrian king a considerable sum of money and expressed their readiness to spread the Hellenistic culture (cf. 2Macc 4:7–15; 23–25). Antiochus IV Epiphanes took a radical decision about imposing the Hellenistic customs by force when in Jerusalem Jason began to fight against Menelaus for the office of high priest. This happened during the second campaign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes against Egypt, when Jason heard a false gossip about the king's death (cf. 2Macc 5:1–7). The reaction to the revolt stirred by Jason was the king's arrival to Jerusalem, the conquest of the city and robbery of the Temple treasury (2Macc 5:11–21).

Leaving Jerusalem, Antiochus IV Epiphanes also appointed inspectors in Palestine: Philip the Phrygian in Jerusalem and Andronicus on Mount Gerizim (cf. 2Macc 5:22–23). Soon after, as the author of 2 Maccabees reports, the king sent his representatives to Jerusalem and to the towns of Judah with the mission to forcibly impose the Hellenistic cultural-religious customs. It seems, therefore, that the main cause of such a radical decision of Antiochus IV Epiphanes – first to launch a military intervention, and next to persecute the Jews by imposing the Hellenistic customs – might have been the confusion provoked by the Hellenized Jews.¹⁸

The essence of the king's intention was eloquently presented by the author of 1 Maccabees who, in a way, summarized the royal decree¹⁹ issued in 167 BC:²⁰ "The king issued a proclamation to his whole kingdom that all were to become a single people, each nation renouncing its particular customs. All the gentiles conformed to the king's decree [...] The king also sent edicts by messenger to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, directing them to adopt customs foreign to the country, banning burnt offerings, sacrifices and libations from the sanctuary, profaning Sabbaths and feasts, defiling the sanctuary and everything holy, building altars, shrines and temples for idols, sacrificing pigs and unclean beasts, leaving their sons uncircumcised, and prostituting themselves to all kinds of impurity and abomination, so that they should forget the Law and revoke all observance of it. Anyone not obeying the king's command was

¹⁸ Cf. J. Ciecieląg, *Żydzi w okresie drugiej świątyni*, pp. 199, 201–202; see also: V. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, p. 191; D Gera, *Judea and Mediterranean Politics: 219 to 161 B.C.E.*, Leiden–New York–Köln 1998, p. 228.

¹⁹ Cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie*, p. 58.

²⁰ Cf. J.A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 41), Garden City–New York 1976, p. 137.

to be put to death. Writing in such terms to every part of his kingdom, the king appointed inspectors for the whole people and directed all the towns of Judah to offer sacrifice city by city" (1Macc 1:41–51).

Antiochus IV Epiphanes entrusted the enforcement of the decree, mentioned by the author of 1 Maccabees – τὸ πρόσταγμα τοῦ βασιλέως (1Macc 1:60; 2:18.23)²¹ to inspectors – ἐπίσκοποι (1Macc 1:51) who were sent – ἄγγελλοι (1Macc 1:44) to Jerusalem; the inspectors were representatives of the Antiochian senate appointed to directly control the Hellenization campaign aimed at the ultimate elimination of the religious practices of Judaism, which allegedly threatened the order of the Syrian state²². Officials of this king are mentioned in 1Macc 1:44: "The king also sent edicts by messengers to Jerusalem and to the towns of Judah [...]," and in 2Macc 6:1: "Shortly afterwards, the king sent Gerontes the Athenian to force the Jews to violate their ancestral customs and live no longer by the laws of God [...]"²³.

One of the first initiatives was building, on the fifteenth day of Audynaios (Hebrew: Chislew – i.e. December) 167 BC, βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως, i.e. the "abomination of desolation," on the altar of burnt offering in the Jerusalem Temple (cf. 1Macc 1:54)²⁴ and dedicating the Temple to

²¹ The author of 1 Maccabees describes the king's edict as οἱ λόγοι τοῦ βασιλέως – "words of the king" (1Macc 2:22; see also: 2:33.34), or: ἡ ἐντολή. του/ basile,wj – "king's order" (1Macc 2:31).

²² Cf. J.A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, p. 137.

²³ The reference to an "old man of Athens" – γέρον Ἀθηναῖον – certainly refers to one of the officials mentioned in 1 Maccabees, probably their superior, who was an Athenian. It should be noted, however, that the term γέρον may refer not to the age of the official, but to his cult title (cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie*, p. 299–300), official title (γέρον as a member of γερουσία, i.e. the council of elders) or just the official's name (J.A. Goldstein, *II Maccabees. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 41A), Garden City-New York 1983, p. 271). The agnomen Ἀθηναῖον shows that the official used by Antiochus IV Epiphanes as an expert in introducing cult reforms, was of Athenian origin. It is possible that the king – entrusting the implementation of his plans to such a person – undoubtedly saw Athens as the source of true Hellenism (cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie*, p. 299).

²⁴ The expression refers to the parallel expression used in the Book of Daniel (11:31). It translates the Hebrew מְשֻׁמֵם מְשֻׁמֵם, which conveys the idea of a detestable idols, a horrendous sight to pious beholder. The word מְשֻׁמֵם – "abomination" is a substitute the word בַּעַל, which is also a term for a Semitic divinity. Combined with the word מְשֻׁמֵם – "desolating" (or with שָׂמֵם – "devastating, ravaging" – present in Dan 12:11) is a word play, refer to the expression בַּעַל שָׂמֵם (שָׂמֵם) – "lord of heaven", which was at the time the title of a Syrian god that Antiochus IV Epiphanes identified with Olympian

Olympian Zeus (cf. 2Macc 6:2). As scholars show, this “abomination of desolation” does not refer to a statue of Zeus placed on the altar devoted to the cult of Yahweh, but to an altar erected in its place to Olympian Zeus²⁵. Simultaneously, the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerizim was dedicated to Zeus Xenios, i.e. the Hospitable (cf. 2Macc 6:2)²⁶.

In the Temple of Jerusalem offerings stopped, including the incessant sacrifices offered mornings and evenings to Yahweh, and the priests of Yahweh left the Temple. For the first time, pagan offerings on the altar erected in front of the Temple and dedicated to Zeus were made on 25 December, the festival of the rebirth of the Sun, after the winter solstice, in 167 BC (cf. 1Macc 1:59). This was followed by the complete desecration of the Temple (cf. 1Macc 1:46), which the author of 2 Maccabees described as follows: “The Temple was filled with revelling and debauchery by the gentiles, who took their pleasure with prostitutes and had intercourse with women in the sacred precincts, introducing other indecencies besides. The altar of sacrifices was loaded with victims proscribed by the law as profane.” (2Macc 6:4–5) In Jerusalem and in the neighbouring towns of Judah, on the streets and squares, and also in front of the main buildings gates, statues of gods and altars with incense trivets were erected. In addition, holy groves were planted²⁷ and altars for the sacrifice of impure animals were built. On the twenty-fifth day of each month, on the birthday of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, every citizen was duty-bound to participate in the offerings in honour of the king (cf. 2Macc 6:7). On this holiday, the Jews were forced to eat the meat coming

Zeus, hoping to make him into the main god of his kingdom. Cf. N.J. McEleney, 1–2 *Maccabees*, in: *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. R.E. Brown, J.A. Fitzmyer, R.E. Murphy, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1997, p. 427; see also: F.M. Abel, *Les livres des Maccabées* (Études Biblique), Paris: Librairie Lecoffre J. Gabalda et C^{ie}, 1949 pp. 28–29.

²⁵ Cf. J. Homerski, *Pierwsza i Druga Księga Machabejska*, pp. 34–35; see also: F. Gryglewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie*, p. 60. On the other hand, J.A. Goldstein (*I Maccabees*, p. 224) suggests that the βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως probably consisted of three meteorite cult-stones, which represented the God of Jews, his female divine consort, the Queen of Heaven and his divine son – Dionysus.

²⁶ As the mountain of the Greek gods par excellence, the Thessalian Olympus advanced to the epithet of Zeus – Ζεύς Ὀλύμπιος. Moreover, Zeus owned still other denominations: among them was the epithet Ξένιος (Zeus of hospitality) that determined Zeus as a guarantor of interpersonal relations. Cf. A. Henrichs, *Zeus*, in: *Brill's Encyclopedia of the Ancient World. New Pauly*, H. Cancik, H. Scheider (ed.), Ch.F. Salazar (Eng. ed.), Leiden–Boston 2002–2010 (vol. 1–15), vol. 15, col. 919–920.

²⁷ Cf. F. Graf, *Grove*, in: *tamże*, vol. 5, col. 1036–1037.

from the impure sacrifices. Their participation, however, could consist in just throwing incense onto the glowing coals on the trivet.

The Dionysia were another festival that Jews, living both in Jerusalem and in the neighbouring Greek cities, had to participate in (cf. 2Macc 6:7–8). As the author of 2 Maccabees remarked, during those celebrations, the Jews “were forced to wear ivy wreaths and walk in the Dionysiac procession” (2Macc 6:7).²⁸

The commands of the king’s decree included also the prohibition to circumcise children, to celebrate the Sabbath and Jewish holidays, and to own Torah, i.e. the Book of the Law. Those regulations imposed the sanction of death on anyone who showed resistance to the commands. The authors of the Books of Maccabees mention this several times: “Anyone not obeying the king’s command was to be put to death.” (1Macc 1:50); “Whenever anyone was discovered possessing a copy of the covenant or practicing the Law, the king’s decree sentenced him to death” (1Macc 1:57); [...] ordering the execution of those who would not voluntarily conform to Greek customs” (2Macc 6:9). The king’s commission supervising the process of the king’s directives reception by the local people visited different towns every month²⁹.

Analysing the contents of the Books of Maccabees, it may be observed that Antiochus IV Epiphanes – taking such proceedings towards the Jews – encountered various attitudes among the community members: namely, he came across both resistance and favourable response that provided a good basis for the development of the Hellenistic ideas.

2. OPENNESS TO THE INFLUENCE OF THE HELLENISTIC CULTURE

Analysing the contents of the Books of Maccabees, one may note that a part of the Jewish community willingly adopted the customs of the Hellenistic culture, many a time incompatible with the religious requirements of Judaism. The Biblical authors of the discussed books, describing

²⁸ Cf. J.A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, p. 152–156; see. also. J.J. Collins, *Jewish Cult and Hellenistic Culture. Essays on the Jewish Encounter with Hellenistic and Roman Rule* (Supplement to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 100), Leiden–Boston 2005, p. 39. On the topic of the festival of “Dionysia” see e.g. F. Graf, *Dionysia*, in: *Brill’s Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, col. 470.

²⁹ Cf. J. Homerski, *Pierwsza i Druga Księga Machabejska*, p. 12.

that phenomenon, present both a group of anonymous Jews who were open to the “Greek way of life” (2.1), and particular historical figures who followed the initiative to Hellenise Jerusalem and Judea; they were – as the Biblical narrative records – members of the nation’s elite (2.2).

2.1. VOLUNTARY SUBMISSION TO THE PROCESS OF HELLENIZATION

The contents of the analysed Books of Maccabees show clearly that a section of the Jewish society that in their everyday life communed with the Hellenistic culture, gradually – and voluntarily – submitted to its trends. This kind of phenomenon occurred mainly among the Jews living in a diaspora³⁰. However, also the Jews in Jerusalem and Judea, and in other parts of Palestine, especially in the towns on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea with large pagan populations, yielded to this process voluntarily, to join, in a sense, the great family of the Hellenistic world nations and become its integral part³¹. The author of 1 Maccabees vividly describes this fact: “It was then that there emerged from Israel a set of renegades who led many people astray. «Come,» they said, «let us ally ourselves with the gentiles surrounding us, for since we separated ourselves from them many misfortunes have overtaken us.» This proposal proved acceptable, and a number of the people eagerly approached the king, who authorised them to practise the gentiles’ observances. So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, such as the gentiles have, disguised their circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant, submitting to gentile rule as willing slaves of impiety” (1Macc 1:11–15). As the cited text shows, before Antiochus IV Epiphanes issued the decree so cruel for the Jewish community in Palestine, there were Jews who took the initiative to implement some Hellenistic ideas about life, which the author of 1 Maccabees called “gentiles observances” – τὰ δικαιώματα τῶν ἔθνῶν (1Macc 1:13) or τὰ νόμιμα τῶν ἔθνῶν (1Macc 1:14). They needed the consent of the king, as Antiochus III the Great – referring to the earlier practice of Artaxerxes I and Alexander of Macedon – instituted Torah, in Ezra’s

³⁰ Cf. H. Hegemann, *The Diaspora in the Hellenistic Age, The Cambridge History of Judaism. Vol. II. The Hellenistic Age*, ed. W.D. Davies, L. Finkelstein, Cambridge 1989, pp. 131–151; J.J. Collins, *Jewish Cult and Hellenistic Culture*, p. 1–20.

³¹ Cf. O. Mørholm, *Antiochus IV*, in: *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, p. 281.

interpretation, as the territorial law for all the Jews³². Thus any activity contrary to the decree of Antiochus III the Great required the king's consent³³.

The cited text of 1Macc 1:11–15 shows clearly that the preservation of the separate religious-cultural identity, caused many difficulties to the Jews who, living in Palestine ruled, alternately, by the Ptolemaic kings or the Seleucids, belonged, like other peoples of the Ancient East, to the Greek world. In addition, "conforming to Greek customs" – μεταβαίνειν ἐπὶ τὰ Ἑλληνικά (2Macc 6:9) – learning the Greek language, which made Hebrew and Aramaic used by the Jews seem barbarian³⁴, created numerous opportunities of development and career in different walks of life: in politics, administrative hierarchy, trade, as well as in education and science. Thus, after Antiochus IV Epiphanes issued the decree, the enthusiasts of the king's commands emerged immediately. This is confirmed by the author of 2 Maccabees: "All the gentiles conformed to the king's decree, and many Israelites chose to accept his religion, sacrificing to idols and profaning the Sabbath" (1Macc 1:42–43; cf. 2:18).

Speaking about the Jews conforming to the Hellenistic culture, the author of 1 Maccabees called them "renegades" – in Greek: υἱοὶ παράνομοι³⁵ (1Macc 1:11). He also described them as ἄνομοι – i.e. impious,

³² Ezra 7:11.25–26: "This is the text of the document which King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra, the priest-scribe [...] «And you, Ezra, by virtue of the wisdom of your God, which you possess, are to appoint magistrates and scribes to administer justice for the whole people of Transeuphrates, that is, for all who know the Law of your God; and you are to teach it to those who do not know it. And on anyone who will not comply with the Law of your God and the Law of the king let sentence be swiftly executed, whether it be death, banishment, fine or imprisonment»" (cf. Ezra 6:1–12); Josephus Flavius (*Antiquitates Iudaeorum*, 12,3.3.142, trans. according to Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews etc.*, by W. Whiston, Philadelphia: Jas. B. Smith & Co., 1854, vol. 1, p. 361) quoted the following words of Antiochus III the Great: [...] and let all of that nation live according to the laws of their own country [...]" Cf. J.A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, p. 200; J. Homerski, *Pierwsza i Druga Księga Machabejska*, pp. 184–185; E.J. Bickermann, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History. A New Edition in English including "The God of the Maccabees"* (Ancient Judaism and early Christianity 68/1), introd. M. Hengel, ed. A. Tropper, Leiden: Brill, 2007, vol. 1, p. 355.

³³ Cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie*, p. 48; J.A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, p. 200.

³⁴ Cf. J. Ciecieląg, *Żydzi w okresie drugiej świątyni*, p. 135.

³⁵ In the LXX phrase υἱοὶ παράνομοι is usually the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew expression לְבַלְבָּלֵי אֱלֹהִים, that means people disregarding the moral principles of sexuality, breaking the unity of the country, proving unfaithfully against neighbor, and finally

lawless, offending the Law³⁶ (e.g. 1Macc 2:44; 7:5; 11:25), or ἀσεβείς – ungodly, sacrilegious³⁷ (e.g. 1Macc 3:8; 6:21; 7:5), and also ἁμαρτωλοὶ, – sinners³⁸ (1Macc 2,44). All adopting the Hellenistic customs by the Jews, i.e. „allying with the gentiles,” according to the Biblical author, committed evil (cf. 1Macc 1:15), that is violated of the Law, and, in consequence, appeared unfaithful to God. This was manifested first of all by participating in and celebrating the pagan cults. Also the newly built gymnasium, where physical exercises and sports events were held, became an opportunity to deviate from the Law of Moses. Their participants, young and also older Jewish men appeared, according to the Greek custom, naked. In this context – because of circumcision, which was a bodily sign of the Covenant and of their belonging to the Chosen People – often met with derision on the part of their pagan peers and audiences.³⁹ Therefore, to avoid humiliation, they underwent very painful surgical procedures to remove the traces of circumcision.⁴⁰

What is more, the attraction of the events in the gymnasium was such that even priests, obliged to the daily service in the Lord's Temple, neglected it to participate in the shows. The Biblical author relates this in strong words: “[...] indeed the Hellenising process reached such a pitch that the priests ceased to show any interest in serving the altar; but, scorning the Temple and neglecting the sacrifices, they would hurry, on the stroke of the gong, to take part in the distribution, forbidden by the Law, of the oil on the exercise ground; setting no store by the honours of their fatherland, they esteemed Hellenic glories best of all” (2Macc 4:13–15).

2.2. THE PARTICIPATION OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE JEWISH SOCIETY HIGHER LAYERS IN THE PROCESS OF HELLENIZATION

The Biblical author reports that: “a number of the people eagerly approached the king, who authorised them to practise the gentiles’

fools who do not care about their good and happiness. Cf. J. Nawrot, *Kryzys religijny w Judei za Antiocha IV Epifanesa*, p. 65.

³⁶ Cf. H. Kleinknecht, W. Gutbrod, νόμος etc., in: ThWNT IV, 1079; E.G. Liddell, R. Scott, H. S. Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 147.

³⁷ Cf. tamże, p. 255.

³⁸ Cf. tamże, p. 77.

³⁹ Cf. J. Ciecieląg, *Żydzi w okresie drugiej świątyni*, p. 136.

⁴⁰ Cf. J.A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, p. 200; F. Gryglewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie*, pp. 48–49.

observances" (1Macc 1:13). As the contents of the Books of Maccabees show, the main role was played the representatives of the higher layers of the Jewish society who, at the cost of political support of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, or obtaining the office of the high priest⁴¹, offered their help in thorough Hellenization of Jerusalem and the whole Judea.

The first of them was Joshua, brother of Onias III, using the Greek name of Jason, who taking advantage of the favourable circumstances⁴², put himself up as a candidate for the high priest, promising a considerable sum of money in return: "[...] three hundred and sixty talents of silver, with eighty talents to come from some other source of revenue" (2Macc 4:8). He also committed himself to paying a hundred and fifty talents of silver to the king's treasury in return for the consent to introduce the "Greek way of life" – ὁ Ἑλληνικὸς χαρακτήρ in the Jewish community of Jerusalem and the whole Judea. In this way, the office of the high priest became a commodity⁴³. The author of 2 Maccabees expressed the wickedness of these dealings using the verb ὑπονοθεύω – "procure by corruption/seduction"⁴⁴, at the same time suggesting that Jason achieved the status of the high priest like one obtains the favours of a courtesan for money⁴⁵.

As the author of 2 Maccabees reported, the specific manifestations of the spreading Hellenistic culture was the construction of the gymnasium and the so-called ephebate, designed to start the Hellenization of Israeli boys in their adolescence (cf. 2Macc 4:9)⁴⁶. The hagiographer so describes Jason: "He went so far as to found a gymnasium at the very foot of the Citadel, and to fit out the noblest of his young men in the

⁴¹ It should be observed that the assumption of the office of high priest had to be accepted by the state ruler. Cf. J. Homerski, *Pierwsza i Druga Księga Machabejska*, p. 184.

⁴² This took place after the death of Seleucus IV Philipator. Jason used the opportunity created by the law of the time stating that king's death cancelled all his nominations. Cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie*, p. 285.

⁴³ Cf. J. Ciecieląg, *Żydzi w okresie drugiej świątyni*, p. 194.

⁴⁴ Cf. E.G. Liddell, R. Scott, H. S. Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 1890.

⁴⁵ Cf. F.M. Abel, *Les livres des Maccabées*, p. 331.

⁴⁶ The gymnasium, as well as the ephebate, were used both as a place of physical exercise for young boys and as a school where general education was emphasised: boys could study philosophy, literature, rhetoric, and music. Cf. S. Hornblower, A.J.S. Spawforth, *ephebōi*, in: *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth (ed.), Oxford–New York 1996, pp. 527–528; R.A. Tomlinson, *gymnasium*, in: *ibidem*, pp. 659–660; see also: A. Legendre, *Éphébee*, w: *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, vol. 2, F. Vigouroux (ed.), Paris 1895–1912 (vol. 1–5), col. 1830; E. Beurlier, *Gymnase*, in: *ibidem*, vol. 3, col. 369–371.

petasos" (2Macc 4:13)⁴⁷. The mention of putting on the petasos refers to the practice of wearing the so called πέτασος – the hat of Hermes – by Greek young men during the exercise. As Hermes was believed to have invented physical exercise, he was also perceived as the god protector of the palaestra⁴⁸.

Interestingly, Jason undertook – as the Biblical author recorded – “registering the Antiochists of Jerusalem” – τοὺς ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις Ἀντιοχεῖς ἀναγράψαι (2Macc 4:9). He probably intended to change the status of Jerusalem, transforming it into a new πόλις, with a dynastic name of Antiocheia and Hellenistic in character⁴⁹. The gymnasium built by Jason was obviously intended – like in every Greek city – as a leading institution in the new πόλις⁵⁰. Similarly the ephebate, designed for the best boys coming mainly from the richer social strata, particularly from aristocracy, was meant to establish a new elite that would create a Hellenistic community⁵¹. Some scholars believe that probably three years after Jason obtained the office of the high priest, Antiochus IV Epiphanes arrived at Jerusalem (cf. 2Macc 4:21–22) and then could have officially inaugurated the new πόλις, i.e. the Greek city “Antioch-at-Jerusalem”⁵². However, it is not known if Jason managed to fully implement this idea. It is possible that he merely established the so called πολιτεύμα, i.e. a corporation of

⁴⁷ E.S. Gruen (*Heritage and Hellenism. The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Hellenistic culture and society 30), Berkeley–London: University of California Press, 1998, p. 30), explicitly states that the “text makes clear, Jason, High Priest of the Jews, initiated the gymnasium and the ephebate, not the Greek king. The significance of that ought not to be missed. By creating the institutions as official acts of the High Priest, Jason introduced the Hellenic features with the embrace of Jewish authority”.

⁴⁸ Cf. *The Oxford Dictionary of Classical Myth and Religion*, S. Price, E. Kearns (ed.), Oxford 2003, p. 256; see also: R. Hurschmann, *Petasos*, in: *Brill's Encyclopedia*, vol. 10, col. 864.

⁴⁹ Cf. F.M. Abel, *Les livres des Maccabées*, p. 332; see also N.J. McEleney, *Pierwsza i Druga Księga Machabejska*, p. 391; R.M. Errington, *A History of Hellenistic World*, p. 270; J.R. Bartlett, *The First and Second Books of the Maccabees*, p. 245. On *poleis* created in the Seleucid Empire, see: F.W. Walbank, *Świat hellenistyczny*, Warszawa 2003, pp. 132–139.

⁵⁰ Cf. J. J. Collins, *Jewish Cult and Hellenistic Culture*, p. 27.

⁵¹ Cf. J. Ciecieląg, *Żydzi w okresie drugiej świątyni* p. 195.

⁵² V. Tcherikover (*Hellenistic Civilization*, p. 165) states that “the new city was identical with Jerusalem; it did not stand “near” Jerusalem, nor “within” it [...]; it was Jerusalem itself in a new form”. Cf. J.C. VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas. High Priests after Exile*, Minneapolis–Assen 2004, 202.

the Hellenised Jews⁵³, who enjoyed certain rights and privileges granted by their patron – king Antiochus IV Epiphanes⁵⁴.

Another high priest who – although this is not explicitly stated in the Books of the Maccabees – supported the Hellenization process in Jerusalem and Judea was Menelaus⁵⁵. Like Jason, he also offered Antiochus IV Epiphanes a large sum of money for the office of the high priest, “[...] outbidding Jason by three hundred talents of silver” (2Macc 4:24). Also his action, like that of his predecessor, was meant to pay his debt of gratitude to the Syrian king for the support the latter had given to his appointment as the high priest in the Jerusalem Temple. Describing his activity, the Biblical author stated that he brought “nothing worthy of the high priesthood and supported only by the fury of a cruel tyrant and the rage of a savage beast” (2Macc 4:25), and turned out to be the “traitor to the laws and to his country” (2Macc 5:15) who committed “many sins against the altar” (2Macc 13:8)⁵⁶.

It seems that the implementation of the Hellenistic customs was also supported by Alcimus, confirmed in the high priesthood by Demetrius I Soter, son of Seleucus IV Philopator and nephew of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (cf. 1Macc 7:9). This is suggested by the very terms that the author of 1 Maccabees used to describe Alcimus: he was the leader of “all those Israelites without law or piety” – πάντες ἄνδρες ἄνομοι καὶ ἄσεβεις

⁵³ V. Tcherikover (*Hellenistic Civilization*, p. 165) gives in this question the interesting assumption: “[...] probably the visit of Antiochus and the festivities associated with it marked the actual juridical foundation of the *polis*, for in 175 the license had been given to Jason only “to register the people of Jerusalem as Antiochenes”, that is, only the first steps were taken to establish the civic roll, and probably some time elapsed before Jason was able to inform Antiochus that the new city was organized in due legal form [...]. Antiochus’ visit to Jerusalem formed a suitable pretext for proclaiming officially and with great pomp the foundation of the Greek city «Antioch-at-Jerusalem.»”

⁵⁴ Cf. E. Bickermann, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History. A New Edition in English including “The God of the Maccabees”* (Ancient Judaism and early Christianity 68/2), introd. M. Hengel, ed. A. Tropper, Leiden: Brill, 2007, vol. 2, pp. 1073–1074; cf. F.M. Abel, *Les livres des Maccabées*, p. 332; F. Gryglewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie*, pp. 285–286. J.A. Goldstein (*I Maccabees*, pp. 117–119) observes that Antiochus IV Epiphanes, having stayed in Rome as a hostage and watched the operation of the Roman State, later followed the Romans and established the Antiochene citizenship, analogous to the Roman one. Considering this, Jason certainly attempted to obtain that kind of citizenship for the hellenized Jews.

⁵⁵ Cf. J.J. Collins, *Jewish Cult and Hellenistic Culture*, p. 27.

⁵⁶ Cf., *II Maccabees*, p. 251. The introduction of Hellenistic cults by Menelaus was mentioned by Diodorus Siculus (*Bibliotheca historica* 34,1,4).

ἐξ Ἰσραηλ καὶ ἄλκιμος ἠγείτο αὐτῶν (1Macc 7:5), „godless” (1Macc 7:9). Analysing the cited epithets in the light of the Books of the Maccabees, it may be observed that they refer mainly to those Jews who, adopting the Hellenistic customs, violated the Law.

In both Books of the Maccabees, Alcimus was presented as the one who denounced Judas Maccabaeus to the Syrian king. In the first place, he accused Judas of persecuting all king’s friends among the Jewish people (cf. 1Macc 7:6; 2Macc 14:1–10). Those “friends of the king” were certainly the Hellenised Jews⁵⁷ with whom Alcimus was identified.

Another testimony that may suggest Alcimus’ support to Hellenistic trends is his command, recorded in 1 Maccabees, to demolish “the wall of the inner court of the sanctuary” (1Macc 9:54). Some exegetes suggest that – probably – the demolition order concerned the wall that separated the Jews from the pagans, thus symbolising the religious difference between the Jews and the gentiles. In this context, destruction of the wall could initiate the practice of introducing the pagans to places reserved exclusively for the Jews⁵⁸.

As the cited examples show, a rather considerable role in spreading the Hellenistic cultural-religious ideas was played by the Jerusalem high-priests. Scholars believe that the latter did not want to work against Judaism, but to relax rigorous religious commands that made Judaism appear as too exclusive and the Jews as barbarians⁵⁹.

3. THE RESISTANCE OF THE JEWISH SOCIETY AGAINST THE PRESSURE OF THE HELLENISTIC CULTURE

Along with the typical attitudes of yielding to the influence of the Hellenistic culture, whether voluntarily or under constraint, the attitudes generated, as said above, by various sanctions including death penalty,

⁵⁷ Cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie*, p. 124; see also: J.A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, p. 330.

⁵⁸ Cf. J.C. Swaim, *Alcimus*, in: IDB I, p. 76; J.R. Bartlett, *The First and Second Books of the Maccabees*, p. 124; J. Homerski, *Pierwsza i Druga Księga Machabejska*, p. 98; cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie*, p. 147. J.A. Goldstein (*I Maccabees*, p. 392) is of different opinion: “Even if Alcimus had not been pious, there could be no issue of introducing gentiles or Greek practices to the inner court. The issue of the «wall of inner court» must have been an internal Jewish controversy, between Jewish sects”.

⁵⁹ Cf. J. Ciecieląg, *Żydzi w okresie drugiej świątyni*, pp. 196.201.

the Books of the Maccabees present a number of initiatives on the part of the Jewish society that aim to resist the foreign culture that was essentially opposed to the Israelite religious beliefs. It is also noteworthy that even those who succumbed to some of the Hellenistic customs, experienced a kind of “conflict of conscience,” and as a result attempted to mitigate their activities. An example of such an attitude is contained in a description in 2 Maccabees: “On the occasion of the quadrennial games at Tyre in the presence of the king, the vile Jason sent an embassy of Antiochists from Jerusalem, taking with them three hundred silver drachmas for the sacrifice to Hercules. But even those who brought the money did not think it would be right to spend it on the sacrifice and decided to reserve it for some other item of expenditure; and so what the sender had intended for the sacrifice to Hercules was in fact applied, at the suggestion of those who brought it, to the construction of triremes.” (2Macc 4:18–20)⁶⁰. The mentioned Antiochists – as can be seen in the light of the cited text – felt in their hearts the anxiety related to their breaking the Decalogue: they preferred to allocate the money, against the order, for the construction of a battleship with three rows of oars, than for the sacrifice to a pagan divinity⁶¹.

Obviously, the forced and often extremely cruel imposition of Hellenism caused tensions that with time turned into open struggle for freedom of conscience and religion. Mattathias, a priest in the town of Modein, and his action became a kind of tinderbox. The Biblical author describes that event in the following way: “The king’s commissioners who were enforcing the apostasy came to the town of Modein for the sacrifices. Many Israelites gathered round them, but Mattathias and his sons drew apart. As he finished speaking, a Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer sacrifice on the altar in Modein as the royal edict required. When Mattathias saw this, he was fired with zeal; stirred to the depth of his being, he gave vent to his legitimate anger, threw himself on the man and slaughtered him on the altar. At the same time he killed the king’s

⁶⁰ The mentioned celebration was probably to commemorate Alexander the Great keeping the vow he made after he had conquered Tyre. Then, Alexander the Great, in the name of fleet and the whole army, made a sacrifice to Hercules, identified with a local divinity called Melquart (cf. Arrian, *Anabasis*, 2,24,6; see also: 3,6,1). The very celebration and the games that accompanied it were probably repeated every year; every five years, a more spectacular festival was held. Cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie*, p. 287; see also: J.A. Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, p. 232.

⁶¹ Cf. J.R. Bartlett, *The First and Second Books of the Maccabees*, p. 248.

commissioner who was there to enforce the sacrifice, and tore down the altar. Then Mattathias went through the town, shouting at the top of his voice, «Let everyone who has any zeal for the Law and takes his stand on the covenant come out and follow me.» Then he fled with his sons into the hills, leaving all their possessions behind in the town.” (1Macc 2:15–16.23–25.27–28). It is then that the armed struggle for freedom of religion and ancestral customs began. Its main participants and leaders were Mattathias and his sons: Judas, Jonathan, and Simon, later called the Maccabees⁶².

In the first phase, when Mattathias was alive, the Israeli army formed of men who volunteered “on the side of the Law” (1Macc 2:42) turned against “sinners” and “renegades” (1Macc 2:44), i.e. the Jews that succumbed to the influence of Hellenism. Mattathias’ divisions made a tour in Judea, going from town to town and demolishing pagan altars; they also circumcised Israeli boys whose parents conformed – whether voluntarily or against their will – to the royal edicts and failed to observe the Law of Moses in this respect⁶³. Another target of the attack of the Maccabean forces were the “upstarts” mentioned in 1Macc 2:47 – υἱοὶ τῆς ὑπερηφανίας that are usually identified with the king’s commissioners appointed to oversee the progress of Hellenization in Judea⁶⁴. The expression “upstarts” can be understood also in a broader sense as all the representatives of the Syrian king: officials, generals, soldiers, etc. who imposed the Hellenic customs on the Jews⁶⁵. In this context, the “upstarts” are further

⁶² For a detailed description of the struggle of the Jews under the leadership of succeeding Maccabees brothers, reconstructed on the basis of the Books of the Maccabees and other ancient sources, see: E. Dąbrowa, *The Hasmoneans and Their State. A Study in History, Ideology, and the Institutions* (Electrum 16), Kraków 2010, pp. 13–66.

⁶³ J. Ciecieląg (*Żydzi w okresie drugiej świątyni*, p. 205) observes that the divisions gathered by Mattathias constituted a kind of “Maccabean militia” which fought against those inhabitants who supported the Hellenists.

⁶⁴ Cf. F.M. Abel, *Les livres des Maccabées*, pp. 44–45; J.A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, p. 237; F. Gryglewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie*, p. 70.

⁶⁵ It should be noted that the authors of the Books of Maccabees use the term ὑπερηφανία in the expression “sons of arrogance” to describe Antiochus IV Epiphanes who in these Books is seen as the main source of Hellenism imposed by the Jews (cf. 1Macc 1:23.24; 2Macc 5:21; 7:36; 9:6.11). The mentioned term can also be found in the ante-mortem speech of Mattathias who described the time of the “invasion” of Hellenism as the time when arrogance [is] in the ascendant” (1 Maccabees 2:49). In this context the expressions “sons of arrogance” may refer to all those who in the name of the Syrian kings imposed the Hellenistic customs on the Jews.

defined in the following verse of the Biblical narrative by the mention of the “gentiles” – τὰ ἔθνη – and “kings” οἱ βασιλεῖς. Undoubtedly, the Biblical author – using the two latter terms – had in mind the fight of the Jewish divisions led by the Maccabees with the Syrian army led by a sequence of generals sent by the kings. As the analysis of the Biblical text shows, the struggle against the power of the Syrian state aimed at the defence of the Law (cf. 1Macc 2:48; 14:29), justice and faith (cf. 1Macc 14:35), their country (cf. 2Macc 8:21; 13:14), the life and customs of the Jewish nation (cf. 1Macc 3:21; 2Macc 13:14; see also: 1Macc 3:43) and the Temple (1Macc 3:43.59; 14:29; 2Macc 13:14; 15:17).

During the rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes the struggle of the Maccabees and their supporters took the form of a religious confrontation between two inimical cultures characterised by diametrically opposite underlying worldviews. On the one hand, Judaism was based on the faith in one and only transcendent God, on the other – the Hellenistic pagan culture was permeated with polytheism and accepted deification of the king who, in turn, attempted to determine religious beliefs of his subjects⁶⁶. In reality, however, already during the rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and still more clearly after his death, the Syrian kings perceived that struggle as a political revolt against legitimate power, which must be suppressed by all possible means. The issue of struggle against the Hellenization of Judea, and in consequence also religious issues, receded into the background. In the light of the Books of the Maccabees, however, to the Maccabees and to their supporters it meant primarily the fight in defence of religion and native customs⁶⁷. Yet the analysis of the historical data leads to the observation that the Maccabees skilfully combined the defence of religious values and native customs with the struggle for the privilege of increasing freedom and for full political independence. Therefore, by the end of the Maccabean history, the rule of the Seleucids over Judea was merely symbolic. In 142 BC, the last of the Maccabean brothers, Simon, became the leader of Judea liberated from the foreign rule. In the following year, in Jerusalem gathered the great assembly of priests, people, princes of the nation and elders of the country that confirmed Simon as high priest, army commander and ethnarch of

⁶⁶ Cf. J. Homerski, *Pierwsza i Druga Księga Machabejska*, p. 14.

⁶⁷ This motif often returns in both Books of the Maccabees (cf. e.g. 1Macc 3:21; 2Macc 2:21, 13:10.14).

Judea (cf. 1Macc 14:25–49)⁶⁸. In the future this decision was to extend over Simon's sons. It was an act of extraordinary courage, because until then the Maccabees were in fact self-appointed leaders, and also nominees – especially to the office of high priest – established by the foreign rulers. The power the Maccabees had won was granted full legitimisation by that decision of the national assembly. It was undoubtedly a direct step towards monarchy established by the descendant of Simon Maccabeus⁶⁹.

4. HEROIC ATTITUDES OF FIDELITY TO THE LAW OF MOSES

As both Books of the Maccabees suggest, the majority of the Jews did not yield to the pressure of the imposed Hellenistic culture. This was emphasised by the author of 1 Maccabees: “Yet there were many in Israel who stood firm and found the courage to refuse unclean food. They chose death rather than contamination by such fare or profanation of the holy covenant, and they were executed” (1Macc 1:62–63). As historical studies show, those Jews came mainly from smaller towns and villages where national and religious traditions were very strong. The group of the most pious Jews were the so-called Hasidim who founded their life on the Law of Moses and firmly resisted Hellenization⁷⁰. For their fidelity to the native values those people paid the highest price – the price of their own life or the life of their nearest and dearest. These attitudes towards the pressure of the Hellenistic culture were doubtlessly heroic, and death they met in this context, often in drastic circumstances, resembled the death of martyrs. An example of such an attitude was undoubtedly presented by a group of Jews who, after the persecution had broken, with their children, wives and cattle, took refuge in the caves at the Judean Desert, to live there quietly in conformity with the precepts of the Law of Moses (cf. 1Macc 2:29–38). When the royal officials learned about the refugees who repudiated the king's edict imposing the practice of the Hellenistic customs, the former attacked them with the military divisions stationed in Acre⁷¹. Strictly observing regulations of the Law, the refugees

⁶⁸ Cf. J. Ciecieląg, *Żydzi w okresie drugiej świątyni*, pp. 216–217; see also: E.S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism*, pp. 18–23.

⁶⁹ Cf. R.M. Errington, *A History of Hellenistic World*, pp. 274–275.

⁷⁰ Cf. J. Homerski, *Pierwsza i Druga Księga Machabejska*, p. 12.

⁷¹ Cf. F. Grylewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie*, p. 67.

did not fight back, because they had been attacked on the Sabbath day⁷². As a result, according to the author of 1 Maccabees, almost a thousand people – who neither threw a stone at the enemy, nor barricaded the entrances to the caves, not to violate the Sabbath repose – were killed⁷³.

Another example of heroic attitude is provided by the women who, following the Law of Moses, had their children circumcised. The author of 1 Maccabees described the event in the following way: “Women who had their children circumcised were put to death according to the edict with their babies hung round their necks, and the members of their household and those who had performed the circumcision” (1Macc 1:60–61). A similar occurrence was reported also by the author of 2 Maccabees: “For example, two women were charged with having circumcised their children. They were paraded publicly round the town, with their babies hung at their breasts, and then hurled over the city wall” (2Macc 6:10). The methods employed by the royal officials were obviously aimed at intimidating the Jewish population and breaking their resistance against the imposed Hellenistic customs⁷⁴.

Also the author of 2 Maccabees described the cases of people who heroically died a martyr’s death to remain faithful to the Law of Moses. The first known by name was old Eleazar (cf. 2Macc 6:18–31), one of the first scribes, who was forced to eat unclean food: obviously pork meat, taken from the sacrifices offered probably to Olympian Zeus⁷⁵. According to the king’s decree, the Jews were duty-bound to participate in sacrificial banquets that contained also a rite of consuming the sacrificial animals meat (cf. 2Macc 6:7.21; 7:42)⁷⁶. The avoidance of those practices was sanctioned with death (cf. 2Macc 6:8–9).

⁷² The following texts of the Old Testament refer to the celebration of the Sabbath: Ex 20:8–11 and Deuteronomy 5:12–15; Cf. G.F. Hasel, *Sabbath*, in: ABD V, 851–853.

⁷³ See also: 2Macc 6:11: “Other people, who had assembled in some near-by caves to keep the seventh day without attracting attention, were denounced to Philip, and were then all burnt to death together, since their consciences would not allow them to defend themselves, out of respect for the holiness of the day.”

⁷⁴ Cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie*, p. 61.

⁷⁵ Cf. tamże, pp. 302–303. J.A Goldstein (*I Maccabees*, p. 158), on the contrary, suggests that the enforced eating of pork was due to the fact that the pig was a favoured sacrificial animal of Dionysus.

⁷⁶ An occasion to this kind of sacrifice and the accompanying feasts was the king’s birthday, celebrated every month. Cf. J.R. Bartlett, *The First and Second Books of the Maccabees*, p. 262; see also: *Grecko-łacińsko-polska Synopsa*, pp. XLII–XLIII.

As the Biblical author reported, Eleazar “resolving to die with honour rather than to live disgraced, walked of his own accord to the torture of the wheel, having spat the stuff out, as befits those with the courage to reject what is not lawful to taste, rather than to live” (2Macc 6:19–20). He did not succumb to the persuasion of his long-time friends⁷⁷, who advised him, for the sake of saving his life, to pretend that he was eating the dishes imposed by the king. Eleazar, however, rejected this suggestion as disgraceful and unworthy of his age. He also said that such conduct might deprave the young who could suppose that he also had adopted the Greek customs. He voluntarily accepted a martyr’s death that undoubtedly came as a result of torture: Eleazar was probably tied to the so-called *τύμπανον* (cf. 2Macc 6:19), and lashed (cf. 2Macc 6:30)⁷⁸. The author of 2 Maccabees, describing the death of old Eleazar, wrote: “This was how he died, leaving his death as an example of nobility and a record of virtue not only for the young but for the greater part of the nation” (2Macc 6:31).

The attitude of seven brothers and their mother is also very significant (2Macc 7:1–42). They were also forced to eat pork prohibited by the Law. Their refusal to obey the king’s command provoked a violent reaction of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who ordered to torture them cruelly: he had their tongues cut out, their heads scalped, their extremities cut off, he commanded to fry them in a pan (cf. 2Macc 7:3–5). As the author of 2 Maccabees reported, did not yield in the face of torture. They all preferred to die rather than break the precepts of the Law. Even the youngest brother – although the king promised him, in return for his denial of the Law, to make him rich and happy, and the king’s friend holding high offices – chose death as the price for his fidelity to the Law. In this context, the attitude of the seven brothers’ mother is awe-inspiring. The author of 2 Maccabees reported that “filled with noble conviction, she reinforced her womanly argument with manly courage” (2Macc 7:21), admonished each of them in their native language to obey God’s

⁷⁷ Those friends were probably the Jews who had practiced the Hellenistic customs for a long time. Cf. F.M. Abel, *Les livres des Maccabées*, p. 367; see also: F. Gryglewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie*, p. 303.

⁷⁸ F. Gryglewicz (*Księgi Machabejskie*, p. 303), states that the convict was beaten tied up to a tree (cf. J.A Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, p. 286). J. Homerski (*Pierwsza i Druga Księga Machabejska*, p. 201) applies the term τὸ τύμπανον, meaning “kettledrum, drum” (cf. E.G. Liddell, R. Scott, H. S. Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 1834), to a torture device used to break victims’ bones.

laws (2Macc 7:22–23; see also: 7:27–29). Finally, she also died a martyr's death (2Macc 7:41).

In this context, the action of Razis, one of the elders of Jerusalem, who “loved his countrymen and stood high in their esteem, and [...] was known as the father of the Jews because of his kindness” (2Macc 14:37), is also worthy of note. As the author of 2 Maccabees reported, in the days of the insurrection during the rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, “he had been convicted of Judaism, and he had risked both life⁷⁹ and limb for Judaism with the utmost zeal” (2Macc 14:38). To show his enmity to the Jews, one of the Syrian generals, Nicanor, decided to capture Razis and sent five hundred soldiers for him⁸⁰. Razis, to avoid falling into the enemies' hands, took drastic actions to commit suicide: he first attempted to take his life with a sword; next, having missed, threw himself down to the ground and sustained painful wounds; later, despite the great loss of blood, he ran to a “steep rock”, tore out his entrails and with both hands threw them at the soldiers chasing him (cf. 2Macc 14:41.43–46). Thus he preferred committing suicide to being captured and becoming an object of humiliation and contempt.

In the account of the author of 2 Maccabees, the death Razis met was – without any doubt – a heroic act⁸¹. It also reflects the views of the Jews of the time that it was better to commit suicide than, e.g., watch the profanation of the Temple⁸². A similar opinion was expressed by the author of 1 Maccabees who, when describing the divisions of Judas Maccabeus preparing to fight Nicanor's and Gorgias' army, stated that the Jewish soldiers, being aware of the unequal struggle, preferred to die in a battle rather than watch the misery of their nation and the profanation of the Temple (cf. 1Macc 3:59).

Abstract: Summarising the proposed analyses of the contents of the Books of the Maccabees, it can be noted that the Biblical authors described three main attitudes of the Jews to the Hellenistic culture and the pagan religion that was part of that culture: the attitude of openness and ready adoption of the “Greek customs,” military resistance, as well as the heroic attitudes of giving one's life for

⁷⁹ The term ψυχή used in this context undoubtedly means “life.” Cf. G.M. Baran, *Ψυχή i πνεῦμα w antropologii św. Pawła*, Tarnów 1997, pp. 24.29–31.41–42.45–49 (typescript).

⁸⁰ Cf. J.A. Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, p. 492.

⁸¹ Cf. J. Homerski, *Pierwsza i Druga Księga Machabejska*, p. 250.

⁸² Cf. Filon z Aleksandrii, *Legatio ad Caium* 32,234–235; 39,308. See also: F.M. Abel, *Les livres des Maccabées*, p. 469 ; J.A. Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, p. 493.

the sake of fidelity to the precepts of the Law. As the Books of the Maccabees show, the high priests of Jerusalem played a non-unimportant role in the process of the city Hellenization. It also should be observed that the authors, describing historical facts, sometimes put their own interpretation on them to express a definite theological message.

Key words: The Books of Maccabees, Jews, Hellenism

Społeczność żydowska wobec kultury hellenistycznej świetle Ksiąg Machabejskich (Streszczenie): Podsumowując przeprowadzone analizy treści Ksiąg Machabejskich, można zauważyć, że autorzy biblijni opisują trzy zasadnicze postawy Żydów wobec kultury hellenistycznej oraz religii pogańskiej, która stanowiła integralną część owej kultury: postawa otwartości i chętnego przyjmowania „greckich zwyczajów”, zbrojny opór oraz heroiczne postawy oddawania życia w imię wierności przepisom Prawa. Jak wynika z treści Ksiąg Machabejskich, niemałą rolę w procesie hellenizacji Jerozolimy i Judei odegrali sami arcykapłani jerozolimscy. Należy także zauważyć, że autorzy, przedstawiając fakty historyczne, nadali im niekiedy własną interpretację, aby w ten sposób wyrazić określone przesłanie teologiczne.

Słowa kluczowe: Księgi Machabejskie, żydzi, hellenizm