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Hyrceanus' Downfall

Tape #R-22

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Hyrchanus' Downfall

Transcribed from Tape #R-22

We'll take some questions now and then we'll come to our subject:

Questioner: How can we understand Yochanan who was a Kohen Gadol for eighty years and then ceased to be observant?

Rav Miller: I'd like to talk about him tonight; maybe it's a good subject. Why should I talk about something else? And, it's connected with Chanuka. So, we'll hear some more questions and then we'll talk about Yochanan Kohen Gadol and his family, because it's something that will come in handy for our own lives.

Questioner: The plight of Soviet Jewry is now in the newspapers. I'd like to know the Daas Torah about protesting against it.

Rav Miller: The *daas Torah*? You have to ask Gedolei Torah. I cannot tell you *daas Torah*.

Questioner: But I'd like your view on it.

Rav Miller: My view is we have to ask *Gedolei Hatorah*. And that's an important view! Not to ask *yinglach*, children. Boys are showoffs, don't ask them. So if the initiative to protest comes from showoffs and kids, we just show them the door and we tell them to shut their mouths. The leaders who initiate any action at all are *Gedolei Torah*. But if action is

initiated by these children, by boys from T.A. with bobby pin *yarmulkes*, and by boys and girls from Flatbush Yeshiva, a so-called yeshiva - it's not a yeshiva at all - so if they initiate and then we have to go and ask because of them what *daas Torah* is, that's not the way. The way it works is that first, the *daas Torah* has to initiate things; not that children initiate things and that will bring us to ask what to do about it.

So we ignore them as if they don't exist. After all, they're only imitating the American youth. It's assimilation; because the American youth want to make a ruckus and show off, and put their noses up in the air as if they have some ideals, and as if there's something mystical and holy about them that the older people can't guess. The youth has "something noble in them" that nobody else can understand except youth. And therefore we're told that we have to let these "prophets" who are able to sense real idealism lead, and we, the older generation, have to sit back and just try to guess what our great leaders are trying to tell us. It's garbage!

Instead of that, we know they're out for mischief, they're out for immorality, they're out to show off, and so we show them the door and we kick them out of the door together with all the American college students. They're just bums and trouble makers. In Torah there's no such thing. In Torah, it's the *old* who are our leaders and there's no changing it. Anybody who wants to change that and make the youth the leaders has to know that's a step out of the doors of Torah.

Torah means the *zikney hador*. And this modern stuff; not even modern, it's very recent, that the youth knows all - you have to forget about that altogether. Youth has to sit at the feet of the sages. Sages mean our great men. We have plenty of great men, may the Almighty give them long lives and may they increase. And we have to listen to them. They're the ones who take the initiative. If they don't take the initiative, it means it shouldn't be taken. This is "*apikorsus*" you're hearing from me tonight. And you should all be *apikorsim* tonight.

Questioner: Is *chochma* measured by age or by knowledge?

Rav Miller: Well look. In order to learn anything you have to have a lot of time. The earlier you start and the more years you put in, the more you'll become. So what can you expect? Even if a man studied diligently from the age of six up to the age of eighteen, what does he know? From six, even to twenty five, he knows very little. And so these leaders, so-called leaders, they're youths, and most of them didn't even learn from six on. They're not even learning today; they're wasting time. They're sitting in a yeshiva, they're draft dodging. They're sitting around and they don't want to learn Torah. They're looking for something to do, looking for mischief, and they see that boys in the college are making mischief, so they also want to make mischief. Only, they want mischief with a yarmulke on.

So how do you make mischief with a yarmulke? You go in front of the Soviet mission. That's the same thing as burning college buildings. Here they'll try to burn the

Soviet mission down. But to us it's all ridiculous.

We are the Torah nation and we walk on the same path that Moshe Rabbeinu started. Moshe Rabbeinu called together the *Ziknei Yisroel*, the seventy elders of Yisroel. They were old men. He didn't call together a youth club of seventy boys or seventy girls and say, "Let's see, make a demonstration, a protest." The youth sat quietly and listened. They drank in every word that Moshe Rabbeinu said.

And that's the way the Jewish nation is and that's how we will be until *Moshiach* will come. We're not going to change. Despite America we won't change.

Questioner: It could be that in the past *dor* the *gedolim* spoke more to the people and provided guidance, but today I don't see that. We have to find them out, search for them, ask them, and then maybe get some statement which might be clear, might not be clear, and we're not always aware of what they think of certain ideas.

Rav Miller: Nobody is asking them. You hear that? Nobody is soliciting their opinion. It's

like a fountain. If you don't draw water from it you won't get any water. After a while, it runs dry. If the people would want leadership, there's no question, they'll get it.

I remember there used to be a paper. I won't honor the paper by telling the name of it. It's now Baruch Hashem defunct, but in those days the paper used to come out with a column by youth, "Youth Speaks Up" or "Youth Wants To Know," something like that. I forgot the title of it. This paper is defunct already many years. And he had a standard argument. Why don't the rabbis give us guidance? But I saw what he wanted. Every article, it was a claim why the rabbis don't tell us that it's permitted to dance with girls. That's the guidance he wants! He wants *his* kind of guidance. Rabbis are giving guidance all the time! I told him, "Come, I'll give you plenty guidance." Nobody came!

The answer is, it's bluff; they don't want any guidance. It's just mischief they're looking for. The ones who want guidance are getting it. Thousands come to the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He gives

them plenty of guidance in everything in life. The Satmar Rabbi is giving guidance in everything in life. And the reason that the Roshei Yeshivos are not giving guidance is because people are not coming to ask them. That's all. Plain and simple. They're not asking them. Even their own *talmidim* are not asking for anything. Talmidim are asking what's the *p'shat* in this piece of *gemara*. That's all they ask them. They don't ask them any more than that. I know. I've been in this business for many years. They don't come to ask. And those who do come to ask like the *chassidim*, they get it. The only thing that people want with guidance is to give guidance to the rabbis. That's what the people want.

So if a rabbi becomes a rabbi in a congregation of a hundred members, there are a hundred rabbis and one member. A hundred teachers teaching him what's right and what's wrong. And his job is to try to resist and try to remain a little bit of what he was before he took the job, not to get spoiled. That's all he can do. To change them is a different job.

Questioner: Unfortunately there are many people who are considered *gedolim*. They have *s'micha* and so forth.

Rav Miller: *S'micha* is very far from being a *gadol*.

Questioner: Well, the question is do all *gedolim*, are they uniform in their decisions? Don't they differ among themselves? I think we are presented with a little difficult problem over here, rabbi.

Rav Miller: Well, as far as I can see, there's no problem. Because, they don't differ among themselves. They don't. They never had any problem like that. All the *gedolim* say with one voice that you should study the Torah. It's unanimous. So therefore you sit down every night and study Torah, and you're following the unanimous opinion of all the *gedolim*. All the *gedolim* say there shouldn't be dances, any mixed clubs of men and women. All the *gedolim* say that you have to dress with *tznius*.

So, there's plenty of unanimity, what's the problem?

Questioner: The problem is this. One *gadol* came on television the other day -

Rav Miller: If he came on television he's not a *gadol*, forget about it! No *gadol* comes on television!

And now I just told you one way to recognize a non-*gadol*. I'll tell you another way. Anybody who has an American first name, he calls himself Norman or Alfred, anything like that he's not a *gadol*. He's not even a *katan*. So that takes out 99% of the so-called great men.

Questioner: Rabbi, why are you against the TV?

Rav Miller: That's not the question now, but no *gadol* appears on TV, whether I'm against it or not, it's a fact - they don't appear on TV.

Questioner: In other words, you condemn being on TV?

Rav Miller: That's a different question. That we'll discuss, it'll take a little time to explain it. But if you asked me the question, if a *gadol* appeared, let's say on the roof of this building. So I say, "No *gadol* has so far appeared on the roof of the building." And no *katan* either, I don't think. I don't think anybody

appeared on the roof of this building so far. A gadol doesn't appear on the roof of this building. Right?

Questioner: Sure. What's the comparison? It's no comparison.

Rav Miller: It's a comparison. If somebody tells me he saw *gedolim* walking around back and forth on the roof of this building, so I'd say, it's highly implausible. So you tell me *gedolim* appeared on TV; it's not the place where they appear. Whether it's right to appear or it's not right, but they don't come. They don't come there. This I know, it's a fact.

And why they shouldn't appear on television? Since you asked me, certainly, I'll do you a favor and tell you. Because, when you turn on televisions for a *gadol*, so you just turn to the next channel and see a *shiksa*, והמבין יבין. So, a gadol doesn't want her as company. A gadol wants to be in good company.

Questioner: The question of our reaction to the Soviets was brought up, I think it's a very appropriate question especially right now and I don't know if it's really answered by just saying that

those Jews are, you know, not following a proper guidance because they don't have leadership. Because, I think they have some leadership and I think that -

Rav Miller: Who are their leaders?

Questioner: I think they have there some people, some prominent people who have spoken out.

Rav Miller: Let's hear, who are they?

Questioner: I don't know. I just think there have been. It's a very important issue.

Rav Miller: Do you know their names?

Questioner: I don't know their names but they're very important people.

Rav Miller: Who knows the names of the great men?

Questioner: On Sunday there were some very distinguished people there.

Rav Miller: So let's hear the names of your distinguished people. Do you want to tell me the names?

Questioner: The issue anyway is what should be the reaction to Soviet -

Rav Miller: This issue, I didn't talk about the issue at all. When a question is asked, we have to deal with the question. The question wasn't asked whether or not we should do something about it. That wasn't the question.

Questioner: That *should* be the question.

Rav Miller: Alright, so the question has to be discussed - but not here, you understand. My point is that a question of such importance has to be discussed among our great men. That's their job and you can be sure it has been discussed and it's being discussed. And therefore they are our parliament.

Let's say for example, the Bobover Rav. He is a man with a very good head and he is very much interested in people. If the Bobover Rav doesn't come out and say "Go out and protest", *it's a p'sak that you shouldn't*. The Lubavitcher Rebbe is a very great man and he knows all about what's doing in Soviet Russia. There's nobody who is as conversant with conditions in Russia as the Lubavitcher Rebbe is. Nobody, even the American intelligence, foreign intelligence, does not know what's doing in Russia as much

as the Lubavitcher Rebbe. I can tell you this. Because, he has his agents; the whole of Russia is covered with his agents. And he is in contact with them constantly. And if he didn't come out and say: "Protest", then it's a *p'sak din* from one who is most competent both from the point of view of knowing the facts and the point of view of loving the Jewish people; because he loves the people, and also the point of view of being a *gadol*, he's a *gadol*. So, he's most competent.

Now, that's only the beginning because there's a whole list of great men in whom we have full confidence. They know the facts. Now, if they don't say "go out", it means it's a *p'sak din*, because they're responsible people. If they felt that it was necessary or useful, they wouldn't keep quiet. We know that they're the kind of people that wouldn't keep quiet. And therefore, if they do keep quiet, it's a *p'sak din*. That's why I asked if you have names of authorities who sanctioned this, come out with them, let's hear!

Questioner: Well, okay. I would say that the rabbis in our community, the Sephardic

community, have endorsed this.

Rav Miller: Rabbi Katzin came out for it?

Questioner: I would say that he *authorized*.

Rav Miller: It's either yes or no. Did he or didn't he?

Questioner: He sympathized, but +

Rav Miller: Sympathized is something else. Did he say you should demonstrate?

Questioner: He didn't say you *shouldn't*.

Rav Miller: He didn't say you shouldn't! So how can he keep quiet in this important issue?

Questioner: But you're criticizing those who have demonstrated.

Rav Miller: Get me straight, get me straight. Don't put any twist in my words. I'm saying, "Did Rabbi Katzin say you should go out and do it? If it's important, how can he keep quiet?"

Question: Others have in the community.

Rav Miller: So he didn't, so he's off the question. Now, who else?

Questioner: You cannot say that the Lubavitcher Rebbe

from here knows what's going on in Russia because Russia has big secrets that nobody knows.

Rav Miller: The Lubavitcher Rebbe knows all the secrets. I tell you, he knows all the secrets. I know he knows because he has his followers in Russia. The headquarters of Lubavitch up till recently was in Russia and he has a lot of very good people still there. And when they come out - they're coming out little by little - and they tell what's happening, they know. They're organized and they have contacts and they are not saying anything about making trouble for Russia.

Questioner: The people who have left *have* said, as a matter of fact. The people who know a lot have said to start trouble.

Rav Miller: The question is if we'll take these people on one side, and the Lubavitcher on the other side and let's weigh them, who is more responsible? Who has more worries for the Jewish nation? Whose utterances bear more weight?

Questioner: The people who've been there have more reliable information.

Rav Miller: So what? The Lubavitcher have just come from there! The Lubavitcher come all the time from there.

Questioner: So, I'm saying the people who've come from there have said to speak out.

Rav Miller: But the Lubavitcher don't say that. Lubavitcher, they are coming and don't say that.

Questioner: The people coming from there are saying that! The people!

Rav Miller: The Lubavitcher are people too! Lubavitcher are people!

Questioner: They're *out protesting*. It's not something quiet. They're trying to show to the world that they care. They want this struggle to be brought in front of the world.

Rav Miller: The fact that they're trying to do it doesn't mean that they're sanctioned by great men or that it's the right thing to do. The question we're coming down to is the original thing that I had pointed out before. Who makes policy for the Jewish nation? That's the question. That's all. Who makes policy for the Jewish nation? Rank and file? Or the *ziknei hador*? If we are Torah people, it's

the Torah leaders. That's all we look to. We don't look to anybody else.

It's a question of being a Jew. A Jew knows where to look for leadership. A Jew doesn't look for leadership to anybody else. You just can't help it. You can't get away from the principle of the Torah, שאל לך אב"ד ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו - ask your elders, the sages, they'll tell you. You can't ask anybody else. That's why I asked, did Rabbi Katzin say that? So you say somebody did, let's hear their names.

Questioner: The Torah gives us the method of distinguishing between the false prophets and the true prophets. Now, the *gedolim* should be able to be distinguished as true prophets by the same process as the Torah lays down, by the same lines as the Torah lays down. Now, up until now I personally, outside of perhaps you Rabbi, I haven't met very many *gedolim*.

Rav Miller: I'm not a *gadol*, very far from it.

Questioner: Well, I'm very much impressed with your -

Rav Miller: I'm not a *gadol*

Questioner: Well, I'm very impressed with your delivery -

Rav Miller: A *gadol* doesn't have any good delivery. A *gadol* stammers when he talks. A man who has good delivery is not a *gadol*. He's a public speaker.

Questioner: Well, I think you understand the subject matter, I think you have some element of *gedulah*.

Rav Miller: I'm a speaker. A *gadol* can't speak. A *gadol* can think!

Questioner: I'm still looking for *gedolim*.

Rav Miler: You're looking! I'll show you where they are! What are you looking so long for? I'll tell you an address, sure, sure! I mentioned a couple of them but I'll mention some more. Baruch Hashem, we have *gedolim*.

Questioner: We are not against the *gedolim* but the *gedolim*, they are busy sitting and learning Torah. The political *manhigim* also know something that's going on in the world. We cannot just trust the *gedolim*, we listen to the *gedolim* all the time, but we have a little political leaders also and we have to listen to them together.

Rav Miller: Well, to explain this to you I have to explain -

Questioner: The *goyim* are not going according to the *daas* of the *gedolim* or the *daas Torah*. We need the other side also.

Rav Miller: Which other side?

Questioner: Not *daas Torah*, because the *goyim* are not learning what is *daas Torah*. The political leader, he can know the other side.

Rav Miller: So you're bringing a proof from *goyim*?

Questioner: You cannot just trust *Ruach Hakodesh* from *gedolim*.

Rav Miller: Yes, we do. That's a statement that cannot pass unchallenged. It's a difference between being a Jew and a non-Jew. A Jew listens to *gedolim*. That's all it is. If you don't listen to *gedolim*, you're not a Jew. There's no two ways about it. There's no question on it. You can't point out instances to prove that you shouldn't listen to *gedolim*. Because I can explain that the *gedolim* were right. Because, that's a principle of *Torah*; you must listen to *gedolim*. If you don't listen to *gedolim*, you don't belong here. You belong in a

Temple in “*Beth Hakisey Rodef Shalom!*”

It's only one question. Do we obey the *shulchan aruch*, do we obey the *gemara*, do we obey the *Torah*? And all the sources tell us that our leaders are only the *gedolim*. Not Ben Gurion, and not Golda Meir, not *apikorsim*, not *kofrim*, not *ochlei treifos*. We only believe in *gedolim*. And not in little rabbis, in public speakers, in radio speakers, in television speakers, not in synagogue rabbis. We don't believe in anybody except the great *chachmei HaTorah* and that is a principle on which our whole *Torah* stands. If you don't want to accept it, you don't have to, but you don't belong here, that's all.

Questioner: We don't say that we don't accept it. But ככל אשר יירוד is referring to politics also?

Rav Miller: Politics, certainly! Everything! Everything is *Torah*.

Questioner: That's right but when you are surrounded in work that is not *Torah*, over there you cannot just quote the *Torah*, we cannot go that way.

Rav Miller: So if you say that, you're against *Torah*.

Questioner: I'm not against *Torah*.

Rav Miller: You're against *Torah*! *Torah* means you must obey the *gedolei Yisroel*, even in where you should live. If they tell you where to move you have to obey them. That's *Torah*. It's a *p'sak*. And, if you say I'll listen to them in this and not in this, so it means that you're choosing. Your discretion is what guides you, and this cannot be.

Questioner: Is the *Satmar chassidic rabbi a gadol b'Torah*?

Rav Miller: *Satmar Rav* you mean? *Satmar Rabbi*? Certainly he's a *gadol b'Torah*.

Questioner: So why did he print that book two years ago? What kind of book is that? It's against the Judaism, against what the Jews won in 1967!

Rav Miller: What's wrong with the book? Let's hear.

Questioner: I grew up in the yeshiva. And it's against the fighting of Israel in 1967. Even if he's against it, but don't print it out.

Rav Miller: Maybe he's right?

Questioner: He's right, 100% right. I'm not against him, but don't print it out.

Rav Miller: Why not?

Questioner: Why not? It's anti-Semitism. It's an anti-Semitic book, anti-Jewish, anti-Semite book. I can't even follow the book five pages. Five pages, I try to read and I throw it from my hand.

Rav Miller: So you're bringing a proof from yourself! Are you a *gadol b'Torah*?

Questioner: Even if I agree with him, but I would not write it down. I don't agree with that at all!

Rav Miller: Look, you're merely saying your opinion.

Questioner: That's my opinion.

Rav Miller: The question is, are we going to ask you? You over there, this man who is unknown, will we ask *you* for your opinion for the Jewish nation? Or shall we ask a great man to lead our nation in *Torah*. Who should we ask, you or the great man?

Questioner: No, the great man.

Rav Miller: So keep quiet then. Keep quiet. That's all.

Questioner: That's no answer, just "keep quiet". We need proof for that, you need to explain yourself.

Rav Miller: I'm telling you where to go ask. Your *daas* is *daas Torah*?

Questioner: I'm not *daas Torah*, but when you write a book like that, you have to prove that you're correct in doing so!

Rav Miller: *Daas Torah*, go to the *gedolei Yisroel* and ask their opinion. If you get *gedolim* to tell you that you're right about it, so you're right. But you can't say it yourself. You'll throw the book?!

Questioner: A book like that!?

Rav Miller: Maybe the *gedolim* say you *should* print such a book. Did you ask them?

Questioner: Why doesn't he have *haskamos*?

Rav Miller: He's a great man, he doesn't need *haskamos*. He gives *haskamos*.

This can't be helped; this I have to answer you back. Ordinarily it's a discussion. But when it comes to *daas Torah* we have to listen to *gedolim*, that's all. This, I would never yield to you. Sometimes, you can argue with me, but when it comes to whom do we ask for leadership, we ask only our great men and there are no

two ways about it. Anybody who doesn't want to ask a great man, doesn't belong here, that's all.

Questioner: When you're dealing with Russia, you cannot do anything by force. If she wants something -

Rav Miller: This I'm not saying. Again, you want my opinion. I don't give opinions on it.

Questioner: I mean, they're against the Jews. We cannot force them to -

Rav Miller: I'm not saying anything about that. I'm just saying if it's a question of policy for the Jewish people, we don't ask this *chevra* and this man and this organization. We ask only our great men.

Question: Torah gives *reshus* for a doctor to perform medical work מכאן שנתן רשות לרופא - so I had once an argument with a learned man and he said that as far as the *chachamim*, the *gedolei had* or - he told me like this, this was his argument - he said, "I would go along with them, I would accept their opinion in religious matters. But when it comes let's say to sickness, I'd draw the line there. The *Torah* gave the doctors the

reshut to heal." So it's the same with politics, don't you think?

Rav Miller: He's an *apikores*; he's a *kofer* b'Hashem. Because Hashem said you have to listen in *everything* to the *gedolim*. Only, they're the ones to tell you ורפא ירפא - *they* tell you to go to a doctor.

So there's no question about drawing a line. If the *gadol* tells you not to go to a doctor, then you don't go. He won't tell you that because *Torah* says that you should go. But there's no such thing as drawing lines, because what a *gadol* tells you, that's our lives.

Now, a real *gadol* is very careful what he does and what he doesn't tell you. Understand that. And that's why on many things they don't say because they have not yet found it necessary to formulate a policy. But don't think that there are areas where a *gadol* has a right to say and areas where he doesn't have a right to say. A *gadol*, a great man has a right to say *on everything*.

Now this has to be hammered into our heads over and over again, for years and years

until we get it into our heads. If we want to succeed in our lives, not only as Jews, if we want to succeed as human beings, we have to take guidance from people who are competent. And who is competent for the Jewish nation? The *gedolei Yisroel*.

Now, I know my audience. Not everybody here is soaked, steeped in *Torah*, and it will take many years to get this across. Because people come

from the street with the street ideas that rabbis should take care of rabbi business. Outside of rabbi business they have nothing to say. It'll take years and years, like I said, before we hammer this into their heads that there's no such thing. The *Torah* covers *every phase of life* and therefore in everything we do, if we can have guidance, we should seek it.

THE IDENTITY OF THE ENEMY

And now we begin our subject: We will speak about Yochanan Kohen Gadol, or Yochanan Hyrcanus, that was his name. His grandfather was Mattisyahu the Chashmona'i who fought to save the *Torah* from being extinguished in Eretz Yisroel by the enemy. But our first question for tonight is: Who was the enemy? What enemy was Mattisyahu battling?

So we look in the siddur for the answer and it says there: כשעמדה עליהם מלכות יון הרשעה - which means it was *Yevanim*, the Syrian Greeks who wanted to stamp out the *Torah*. Our enemies were the Greeks. But actually it's not the truth, it's very far from the truth. Only, that the sages who inserted these words were covering up the honor of the Jewish people.

Do you know who it was who wanted to destroy the *Torah*? Only Jews. It was the Jews who were the source of trouble, and it was only because of them that our forefathers battled on *Chanukah* - it was a battle *against Jews*. And here's the whole story.

BEN TUVIA WINS THE BID

In the days of the grandson of Shimon Hatzadik there was one Yosef, Yosef ben Tuvia, who went to the king of Egypt. Egypt was then in charge, they were the ones who ruled the Am Yisroel

in Yehudah. So he went to the king of Egypt and made him an offer: "I'll pay you a lump sum, a nice sum of money, and you let me collect taxes on your behalf, in your name, in the land of Judea, that's Yehudah, and in Syria. All you have to do is give me some of your soldiers, a small regiment of troops to back me up, and I'll handle it."

That's how it was in those days. The taxes were farmed out to tax collectors. The king didn't bother to collect taxes. But people came and gave bids and the highest bidder, the one who offered to pay to the king the highest price, he was the one who farmed the taxes. It's called farming taxes. He's called *muchas* in Hebrew, the appointed tax collector.

So Yosef ben Tuvia went to the king and he outbid everyone. So he became the tax collector in the land of Yehudah and in Syria. And the king of Egypt, Ptolemy, gave him soldiers. So Yosef now took these gentile soldiers and he started marching around collecting taxes. But he didn't take normal taxes; he went overboard and he took as much as he wanted. And when people were reluctant to give it to him, he didn't show any mercy at all. He destroyed cities.

A NETWORK OF FEAR IS ESTABLISHED

He came to the cities of Ashkelon and Yaffo, they were gentile cities, and he burned down Yaffo when they refused to give him the taxes. It was exorbitant taxes. He was taking the skin off them. He was getting back his original investment with 10,000%. It was too much; they wouldn't give it. So he would take out the leaders of the city, the *chashuvim*, men of stature, and he had them killed. When the people saw that the leading men were put to death, so they were frightened, and they began to cough up the money and pay the taxes.

He established a big network of tax collectors and he ruled with fear. Everybody trembled because of him; he was like a gangster. Imagine if the mafia would *chas v'sholom* gain control of a country. Only that this was worse than a mafia. And he sucked the blood of the Jewish people as he and his officials became very wealthy. The whole land was honeycombed with his officials.

Every town had an office with officials and they knew about everybody's private business; they knew exactly who's making money. And you couldn't say no to them. Not only did they start taking people's money away from them, but other things too. Their daughters! The Jews suffered from them terribly.

SYRIA JOINS THE COALITION

Then later, the king of Syria became a partner. The king of Egypt took a son-in-law, he married off his daughter to the king of Syria. Now the king of Egypt and the king of Syria both together were partners over the land of Judea. So this man, Yosef ben Tuviah, and his whole company became friendly with the king of Syria too. And they kept on “sucking the blood” of the Jewish people, crushing them with heavy taxes.

And since they were friendly with the gentiles in Syria and in Egypt, they started walking in the gentile ways. They were licentious, they were immoral. They didn't care for Judaism. They didn't keep the *Torah* anymore. They were full of money. They weren't afraid of anybody and they began to corrupt the country.

OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

Now when you have rich people who have tremendous influence so the tendency is that you have others who gather around them to flatter them, to toady to them, to serve them, to try to get jobs from them. And so after a while a whole party developed around Yosef ben Tuvia. And these people were the ones who made the first *shmad*. They were the ones who decided that the Jews were too old fashioned; and that they were stagnating the Jewish nation by not adopting the Greek ways.

Now where do the Greeks come in over here? I'll tell you a little bit of history so we should have the background we need. At one time Greece had conquered the whole habitable world. Under the leadership of Alexander the Great, that whole part of the globe came under the dominion of Greece. Now, when Alexander the Great died, his empire broke up into four parts. One part was Egypt, but it was only Egypt in a geographic sense. Actually it was a Greek Egypt. From then on Egypt was always a Greek Egypt, even down to Islam, down to Mohammed, Egypt was a

Greek Egypt. And Syria too; Syria became a Greek Syria. Alexander had conquered the entire Asia Minor and it all became Greek.

ANTIOCHUS, MENELAUS AND THE KEHUNA GEDOLAH

Now, these Syrian Greeks, their kings were known mostly as Antiochus. Some had other names too. Some were called Demetrius, but Antiochus was a regular name among them. So the rich class, the upper class, came to one of the Antiochus kings, and these people, we'll call them the Hellenizers from now on, they said, "We would like to have our man as the High Priest of the Jews."

They told Antiochus the following:" The High Priests that the Jews have now, he's one of those fellows with the old Jewish ways, and we would like to be more like you. We'd like to modernize and become one people with you. So since you're the rulers of the land of Judea, issue an edict, give orders that a High Priest that *we can* will choose should be put into the job."

So they put in a man named Menelaus. Just the name Menelaus itself, tells you something here. That's some name for a *Kohen Gadol*, a gentile name. He was a Greek. He was Jewish, he was a *kohen* after all, but he was a Greek, he had the head of a Greek. He was already no longer a pious man.

JASON REPLACES MENELAUS

But after a while even Menelaus wasn't good enough for them because he refused to put an idol into the *Beis Hamikdash*. And these people wanted a Greek idol like all the Greeks had. In all the Greek temples there were Greek idols so they wanted a Greek idol in theirs too. נהיה ככל הגויים, they said.

And so they got permission again from their king and they put in a new Kohen Gadol: *Ayazon*, was his name. In English they say "Jason". So if you have Jews called Jason instead of Isaac, a lot of Jews today are called Jason, so now you know from where his *yichus* comes. *Ayazon*, *Yazon*; that was their first so-called High Priest, and he introduced an idol into the *Beis Hamikdash*.

THE GYMNASIUM CALLS FOR SURGERY

So this Jason set up an idol in the *Beis Hamikdash* and he made a ceremony out of it. And now the Jewish boys were all urged to come. They built a big gymnasium outside Jerusalem and Jewish men came to the gymnasium. Gymnasium means, the word gym means naked, g-y-m in Greek means naked. In the olden days the Greeks came together naked for sport. They believed nakedness was right, that it was proper. To the Jews anybody who walked naked was *meshuketz*, was abominated.

And now suddenly in Jerusalem a place of naked men was set up! And when the Jews came they had real Greeks too, uncircumcised Greeks. So these Jews who came were a little ashamed because each one was bearing the sign of the covenant, the *bris* on him. They couldn't hide it, and that meant that they couldn't mingle with the Greeks the way that they would have wanted. So they went through a little operation to draw their skin over, it should look like they're uncircumcised. That was under the influence of Yazon and his cohorts, the Hellenizers. It was these Jews who brought on the *shmad*.

And now these Jews went back to the king and said, "We're being hindered. There's resistance against us. We're trying to enlighten the Jewish people; we're doing our best to make Greeks out of them but there are people who are preaching against us. They're organizing the youth to keep their *Torah* and to disobey us. So give a decree that anyone who will keep the *Torah* should be put to death with torture," they asked the king. They begged it from the king.

ANTIOCHUS DIDN'T CARE ABOUT RELIGION

The authority for this you know is in two places. One is the Book of Chashmona'im, the Book of Maccabees, in the beginning. He says, in those days בני בליעל - wicked men, came forth from the Jews and they asked the king to take action against their fellow Jews who were being obstinate, clinging to their old ways. Now the king wasn't even thinking about this. Antiochus would never think about such things. It wasn't his business. All he wanted was Jews should pay taxes. He wasn't interested in the religion of the Jews. But these Jews came out, these wicked men,

the Hellenizers, and they urged the king to make a decree to force the Jews to become Greeks. This is confirmed by Josephus as well. And so now came the time of the *shmad*.

The Hellenizers went out and they started looking for Jews who kept the Torah. When they found anybody who circumcised his child, he was put to death. When women secretly circumcised their little babies, the babies were killed and were hanged on a rope around their mother's neck and the mother was led out to be tortured to death. They burned and they slaughtered and they hanged - and the Jewish people were suffering in silence. What could they do? They couldn't do anything, because here these people had Greek soldiers. The Hellenizers came with force, with violence.

THE SIDDUR IS LYING TO PROTECT THE JEWS

Now before we go on, let's make clear that the whole calamity was caused *only by Jews*. Only that these Jews *used the Greeks* as a way of forcing their fellow Jews to forsake the *Torah*. And therefore in the *siddur* you'll read that "the kingdom of the Greeks" arose against the Jewish people. It's not true. But the sages, who put this prayer in, always tried to protect the Jewish people's honor. But the truth is a different story; the sages didn't want the truth to be known. It's only people like me, who like to rake up mud and tell the dirt, that you'll hear this from. And I wouldn't tell it either, but since it's already told, Josephus tells the whole story and the Book of Maccabees tells the whole story anyhow, so now it's no secret anymore. But it was Jews who caused the whole thing, only Jews.

And at the end of the whole thing, finally Antiochus, after many wars, he became so disgusted - I'm skipping the whole story now, I'm going to the end - that he said: "What do they want of me? Why are the Jews they dragging me into their own personal problems? The Jews want to keep their religion, what business is it of mine?" And at the end he gave up, just before he died. He gave up the whole business, because he wasn't interested in the whole thing. Only that he was being prodded and pushed constantly by these Hellenizer Jews.

MATISYAHU LOSES HIS TEMPER

Now while the Jews were being patiently massacred, they couldn't do a thing. The Jews always were a quiet nation. We're not a war-like nation, and besides, what could they do? Antiochus the king of Syria, was their king. And he was forcing them with his soldiers. There was a power of an army arrayed against the frum Jews. They couldn't do anything.

So everybody knows there was one man that got angry. He lost his temper. Matisyahu - in his town, in the town of Modi'in, somebody came to force the Jews to offer a pig to an idol. Everybody knows the story. Only, I'll tell you a few highlights on it. So this officer called all the Jews together, they all had to be present to see how Jews are capitulating, how they're slaughtering a pig to an idol. Matisyahu was an old man already, but he had the fire of his ancestors in him. He was a descendant of Levi. You know Levi was a very angry man? You'll remember that Levi's anger was cursed by his father! אָרוּר אַפָּם - Cursed is their anger. The *kohanim* were angry people always. Throughout all the generations, they were full of anger. And when Matisyahu heard what was taking place, so he took along his sword with him under his coat and he went also to see the proceedings.

THE VOLUNTEER IS MURDERED

And when this officer started urging the people to come forward, so the first one he urged was Matisyahu, because he was the most dignified, respected man of the town. If Matisyahu would offer an offering to the idol so the whole town would be won over. But he wouldn't move, Matisyahu wouldn't budge. So then somebody else volunteered, a Jew, a weakling. One of these people, one of these *Misyavanim*, the Hellenizers, who was in that town, he volunteered and stepped forward. And as he stepped forward to make the sacrifice, Matisyahu reached into his cloak and pulled out his sword. And in his anger and he ran at him through the crowd. And he put his sword through him. And when he killed him, while he was at it, he killed the Greek official too.

Now when that happened there was no turning back. That was already burning his bridges behind him. Once he killed the

king's officer, he couldn't stay in the town anymore. So, Matisyahu said, מי לה' אלהי - "Who is for Hashem, he should come with me." Now it wasn't as easy as it sounds. It meant leaving your home, leaving all your property behind and running away to hide, hiding in the deserts, in the mountains and the caves. And many people joined Matisyahu and went to hide with him.

ONLY SHIMON SURVIVES

Now, Matisyahu died battling for the Torah. He gave his life, and his son Yehudah also died on the battlefield for Torah. And all the brothers died defending the Torah except Shimon, the last one. Now here's what happened. Listen how Shimon died, the last one of the brothers.

Shimon was a *tzadik*, no question about it. All of Matisyahu's sons were *tzadikim*. They gave their lives for the Torah. You know how long they fought? They fought 30 years. Chanukah they made at the end of five years. It was three years after the rebellion but five years after the *shmad* began. They celebrated Chanukah, but after that first Chanukah they spent twenty five more years battling. And they were killed, one by one they were killed defending the Torah. Now all this is important because we're going to see what happened to this great family.

COMPETITION IN SYRIA - INDEPENDENCE IN JUDEA

Shimon was the last of the brothers. And finally he was victorious. In his day everything finally quieted down, so it seemed and there was peace. Hashem caused certain things to happen that made things settle down in the province of Eretz Yisroel. In Syria there were two kings fighting to get the throne and each one tried to get as many allies as possible. Each one was afraid that the Jews, who as it turned out were good fighters, might join the other side, so both sides now started giving a lot of favors to the Jewish people. And that's how we became independent finally.

There was competition between them. One said to Shimon, "I'll make you independent." The other one said, "No, I'll do better; I'll make you a king." And so the other one said, "I'll give you this, I'll give you that."

And they started giving so many favors that finally the Am Yisroel were entirely liberated from the yoke of Syria and they were free from taxes too. They became independent. It was the *yad Hashem* that caused the two parts of Syria to fight against each other and give the frum Jews a respite from the years of battle.

THE DIPLOMATS GO JOB HUNTING

Now it's all over. So it seems that now they should settle down to live a peaceful existence. But the big question is, what happened to these wicked Jews? What happened to the Hellenizers? After the loyal Jews won, what happened to the disloyal ones? There were so many of them and they were very rich, they were powerful too. So what became of them? Did they all get swallowed up in the earth? What happened to them?

The answer is that nothing happened to them! They were still around. They were all very much around. They were all rich, they were all diplomats. They all had connections with the kings of the surrounding countries, so they were the officials. They had built a whole network of tax gathering. Now they were out of business. Now that the real Jews were in charge, the tax gatherers were out of business. But they had plenty of money they had amassed from many years of collecting, many years of blood squeezing.

Now what did the Chashmona'im do to them? The Chashmona'im were Torah people. They obeyed the sages; they listened to the chachomim. The Chashmona'im at first did whatever the *gedolei HaTorah* said to them, whether it was politics or Torah. Everything that the *gedolim* said, the Chashmona'im listened to their words implicitly. And as long as they did, they were fortunate. But now we'll see what happened when they stopped listening.

THE HELLENIZERS WAIT QUIETLY

The Chashmona'im decided that we have to be friends with these old enemies of ours. "They can't be that bad," they said. "They're Jews after all." So instead of destroying them, we can come to terms with them, some sort of peace - after all, they're

Jews. And now they can't do us any harm, because we're in power now. Now they're quiet.

But the truth is that they were only temporarily quiet. They were just keeping their mouths shut. But these old Hellenizers, we'll call them from now on the *Misyavanim*, so the *Misyavanim* were waiting for a chance. And the Chashmona'im gave them the benefit of the doubt. They said, since they're quiet let's try to bring them close, to buy them off and make them friends of ours. And because they were adept at politics, they had years of experience, and government connections, so the Chashmona'im started giving them government jobs. Because the *Misyavanim* wouldn't remain private citizens, they'd make trouble. But if they were given government jobs, positions of authority, then the Chashmona'im thought that they would be friendly. And so they started doing that.

THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN TABLES IS ABSENT FROM THE LECTURE

At that time when Shimon, the last of the brothers, was still alive there lived a sage, one of the leaders of the Torah, *Nitai Ha'arbeli*. If you look in *Pirkei Avos*, you'll see his name. And what does *Nitai Ha'arbeli* say? הרחק משכן רע - Keep away from bad neighbors.

But *Nitai Ha'arbeli* when he said these words, he looked around in the audience and he didn't see Shimon present when he spoke. Shimon, the last of the brothers, was not present at the shiurim of *Nitai Ha'arbeli*. He didn't come to listen to the *chachamim*. You know why he didn't come to listen? Because Shimon was already wearing a golden girdle like a king. He had made tables of gold. Yes, he made tables of gold. He needed it; he wanted to show prestige. He was a newly chosen leader. He wanted to be independent from the other nations and for that he felt he had to show prestige. And he wanted the Jews to respect him too - he's the leader after all - so he started making furniture of gold, pure gold.

And therefore Shimon decided it wasn't for him anymore to come and listen to the *chachamim*. He was already "too big" to listen to them. And so he didn't hear, or he didn't listen to these

words of the great Torah leader, הרחוק משכן רע - *Keep far away from a bad neighbor.*

What does a bad neighbor mean? A man who is not orthodox, a man who doesn't observe the *Torah*, he's a bad neighbor. It doesn't matter if you think he's a nice fellow, or he smells good. Keep far away from him! But Shimon didn't come to listen to this good advice. He thought he knew better, he had his own way of doing things. And he made a fatal error.

PTOLEMY: THE GOLDEN SON-IN-LAW

This Shimon became so friendly with these Hellenizers, these wicked Jews. They were all rich and his *kavana* was to make them friends, allies of his. So he took one for a son-in-law. Instead of listening to the sages who said keep away from a bad neighbor he brought a bad neighbor into his family. He could have taken a son-in-law who was a *ben Torah*. He could have. But he was already too big for that. A man with golden tables is looking for a son-in-law who has gold of his own. And therefore he took a rich son-in-law. By his name you can see what type of fellow he was. His name was Ptolemy. That was the name of his son-in-law. And he was one of the *Misyavanim*, one of these Hellenizing Jews. So let's see the *nachas* he has from his son-in-law!

His son-in-law threw a party in a certain city. I think it was Geza. And he invited his father-in-law Shimon to come, and Shimon came. And there the son-in-law slaughtered his father-in-law. That's what these Greek Jews did because they learned Greek ways. For a Greek it's nothing to kill somebody. For a *goy* it's nothing, in those days especially. You want to get rid of a father-in-law? Don't send him away; that won't do the trick because he'll come back again. You have to send him away permanently. That's what the Greeks did.

We'll soon see that one of the Chashmona'im later became a real Greek. He wanted to get rid of his mother so he put her in a room and he locked the door and he forgot about her. She didn't have any lunch, so she died of starvation. It was one of these kings of the house of the Chashmona'im. Because they became Greeks, and they learned the ways of the Greeks. Everybody knows that

among the Greeks and among the Romans, the way that they used to elect a new king was by the knife. The sword was the way of choosing a king.

YOCHANAN KOHEN GADOL

Now listen what happened. What happened as a result of Shimon not listening to *Nitai Ha'arbeli* who said keep away from bad neighbors? So after Shimon was dead, after he got his father-in-law out of the way, so this Ptolemy quickly came to Jerusalem, to Yerushalayim, to seize power. He wanted to take advantage of the leadership vacuum and seize power. That was his plan from the beginning. But Yochanan Hyrcanus, that's the son of this slain Shimon, he heard what happened so he hurried first to Yerushalayim and he told the people "Don't let him in". So they shut the gates and didn't let Ptolemy in.

Now when Yochanan Hyrcanus, that's the son of the slain man, came to Yerushalayim to block the grand entrance of his brother-in-law Ptolemy, so he succeeded to the position of the *Kohen Gadol* and he became the new leader of the Jewish people instead of his father.

WHEN IT COMES TO GETTING KILLED, NOBODY IS STUPID

Now a question arises here. This man Ptolemy killed his father-in-law Shimon, who was beloved by the whole Jewish people. He was a hero because he was the last of the brothers who had fought for the *Torah* - Shimon was the hero of the Jewish nation - so how is it possible that Ptolemy after killing the nation's hero, how could he come to Jerusalem and expect that they would let him in and make him a king or give him control of the city?

Does everybody hear my question? After Ptolemy murdered Shimon who was so beloved by the Jewish nation, how could Ptolemy come to Jerusalem and say, "Let me in; I'm the new leader"? He should have been lynched! People would mob him. They'd chop him up into minced meat. Was he so stupid to try to come to Yerushalayim? No, he wasn't stupid. Nah, he wasn't stupid at all. When it comes to getting killed, nobody is stupid. He knew what business he had to do.

He knew that Jerusalem was swarming with these Greeks. Jerusalem was swarming with *Misyavanim*. They still were there waiting for a chance, biding their time, waiting to take over. So he knew that had a very good chance. There were still plenty of these old *Misyavanim* around. And so it was only because Hyrcanus, Yochanan Hyrcanus came first, and after all they respected him. After all, he was the son of their slain ruler. So they let him in and he persuaded them, "Don't open the gates to Ptolemy and his gang." And they made him, Yochanan, the new ruler. Now listen what happened.

THE CHASHMONA'IM STOP ASKING

At the beginning, this Yochanan Hyrcanus was loyal to the sages of the Torah. What do I mean loyal? He didn't do anything *against* their decisions. He wouldn't ignore their commands. *But he didn't ask them anything either.* The Chashmona'im stopped asking. They stopped asking the sages. What did Yochanan do instead? He made a tragic error that we're suffering from to this day.

He didn't ask the sages but he asked his advisors, his friends. And who were his friends? Remember now, that his father had brought into his government these *Misyavanim*, these Hellenized Jews. And he took their advice, he would ask their *eitzos* for all political decisions. So now he started out on a campaign of making war; wars of conquests all around. The *chachamim* would never sanction that. But his friends told him, these advisers said, "Look, you can't remain a little country. If you don't conquer all your enemies they'll conquer you. Go out and make battles and fight, war and soldiers and so on." And that's what he did. He started a campaign of constant warfare, constant battles.

YAAKOV ANNEXES EDOM

And it was during one of these wars that he conquered the land of Edom, a nearby country. And his advisors told him "Force the people of Edom to circumcise themselves, to become Jews." Now, such a thing Jews don't do. Had he asked the *chachamim* they would say: Nothing doing. You can't force anybody to become a Jew. That's not a Jew.

But he didn't ask the *chachamim*, he asked his friends, these Greek Jews and they said, "Do it. That's what conquest is about. You have to do it because that's conquest. Who cares if they mean it or not?" Because, religion didn't mean anything to these people. These Hellenized Jews wanted power so if they get another country, if they could add some numbers to the nation, people who are willing to call themselves by the name of the Jews, whether they are or not, doesn't make any difference.

It's like today in Eretz Yisroel. They want to take in *geirim*. Anybody who is converted, no matter if he really is interested, no matter if he's really converted, anybody who goes through some formality, a paper that he's converted, they want him. Because, why not? Let him in! Anybody who wants to come we let come. And that's what they wanted then as well.

A CHURBAN IS CAUSED

So what happened as a result? The *churban Beis Hamikdash* took place as a result! Because when they took in these Edomeans they became part of the Jewish nation. Although they were not loyal to the Jewish people, they were not loyal to Hashem and to the Torah, but now these wicked people are also "Jews." And two generations later, these Edomeans slaughtered the entire family of the *Chashmona'im* so that not one single *Chashmona'i* remained alive for history. There isn't a single *Chashmona'i* anymore. The Edomeans who were *me'gayer* against their will and they were told, "You're Jews now, you're part of us, we consider you Jews" killed out the *Chashmona'im*. Because even though they hated the Jews, they hated the Torah, but since they were considered Jews, they mingled with the Jews, and they ruined them. And eventually they slaughtered the whole household, the whole family of the *Chashmona'im*, until not one remained, not a single one.

And then they seized the government, and Herod, Hordus, became the ruler. And Hordus is the one for whom we can directly attribute the *churban Beis Hamikdash*. I won't explain that now. But in history it's well known. (See the Rav's sefer "Torah Nation" Chapter Five - End of the Hasmonean Era). Hordus is the

one who sent us into *galus* finally. Edom ruined us - and the whole *Talmud* is full of this lesson.

YOCHANAN SAYS V'SEIN TAL U'MATAR

Now how did this happen? It happened because Yochanan Hyrcanus did not listen to the sages. He listened to others, to politicians. For the first twenty years of his regime, Yochanan Hyrcanus was what we call an observant Jew. He himself kept everything. But he was independent. He wasn't a *talmid* and he didn't come to learn. He didn't come to listen to the *chachamim*. He didn't solicit their advice in politics. He asked them advice when it came to *kosher*, *treifa*, but that's all. *V'sein tal u'matar*, when do we start saying it, things like that; but that's all.

Like a man comes to ask his rabbi, "What name should I give my new daughter?" "Do I have to light a *yarhrtzeit* candle this and this night?" That's all they ask. But other things, the important things of life, that "I'll do myself. I don't need Torah for that."

And therefore Yochanan didn't ask the *chachamim*. He did things on his own. And little by little he became so spoiled and his children became so spoiled that although outwardly they still retained the appearance of a observant Jews but inwardly they had lost their loyalty entirely and we'll see what happened.

HE HAD GROWN UP ON THE BATTLEFIELD

He came back after a conquest of Chalkus, that's *קילוּחית*, a certain Medina that he conquered. He was very far from learning. He had no connection with learning at all. All his life he had grown up on the battlefield. As a child, he had battled side by side with his grandfather and with all his uncles. He had battled for the *Torah*. But even if you're battling for the *Torah*, if you never have a chance to learn it, then you don't have it. You're far from it. He was empty of *Torah*. He had no learning of the *Torah* and therefore the spirit of the *Torah* he didn't have. And all his friends were these wicked men who didn't care for Judaism at all, who once were the enemies of the Jewish nation. These were their children now. These children of the old Greeks were his friends and his advisors. And his sons were the first ones to become

spoiled. He didn't spoil right away but when he came back from conquering Chalkus he made a very big party on golden tables.

And he invited the *resha'im* and he invited the *chachamim*. You understand what kind of a man that is already. If at the same table he's seating the wicked men, the *posh'ei Yisroel*, the people who don't care for the *Torah* - it's true, he was still loyal to the *chachamim*, he invited them too. But you see already that he was inwardly no longer what his family used to be.

MISCHIEF WITH THE TZITZ

As they were sitting there one of his wicked advisors said to him, "Put on your head the crown of the *Kohen Gadol*." The *Kohen Gadol* wears a golden plate around his forehead. "Put that on right here." So Yochanan had the crown brought and he put it on.

At that time one of the sages spoke up, a younger man. Josephus says his name was Elazar, "a man of bad temper who delighted in making mischief." He said, "Yochanan, it's enough for you that you're a king. You shouldn't wear the crown of a *Kohen Gadol*."

This story is authentic because first of all it's in the *gemara*. And all of the details exactly are told by Josephus as well who was an enemy of the *gemara*. So we see that two very distant sources say the same thing exactly. So we know it happened this way.

A COMMISSION IS SET UP TO INVESTIGATE

When Yochanan heard the proposition not to wear the crown of the *Kohen Gadol*, he wanted to know why. "What's wrong?" he said. Because that was his family's honor. The honor of that family was the office of *Kohen Gadol*.

So this sage said, "We heard that your mother, during the time of the *shmad*, during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, she was kidnapped, she was in the possession of gentiles." You know, a woman who is in the possession of a gentile, any children that she has subsequently, cannot be *Kohanim*. Once a gentile might have defiled a Jewish woman, her children cannot be *kohanim* anymore. It's the rule of a captive woman, an ancient rabbinic

decree. "So we heard," he said, "that your mother was kidnapped at the time of the *shmad*, therefore you cannot be a *Kohen Gadol*."

Now when Yochanan heard this, his anger knew no bounds. He said, "Prove it." Now, the *chachomim* told him to ignore the accusation, to forget about it. But Yochanan was incensed. He said, "You'd better be able to prove such an accusation if you bring it forth." So they investigated. They sent out commissions, inquiring for proof one way or the other. But it was an old story already. Witnesses were afraid to come. People don't want to come against the king and testify even if there was anything. So no testimony was forthcoming one way or the other and therefore the accusation was squashed. The report was not found to be sufficiently substantiated.

THE SANHEDRIN LOSES ITS POWER

So then Yochanan said to the sages, "What will you do with this man who brought this question up?" So the *chachamim* said, "What do you want us to do to him? What can we do to him? We live by the *Torah* and the *Torah* doesn't say you have to kill a man who brings up a question. Anyhow, maybe it was right; it happened but we just couldn't prove. But you can't kill him for that. In the *Torah* it's stipulated for what you can kill a man. The best we can do, is give him *makos mardus*, we can whip him." Whipping is done for conduct that's not proper.

So Yochanan said, "That's all you do to him? Just to whip him? That proves that you are on his side. That you also think the same as he thought." And Yochanan broke off at that moment with the sages. Now the sages were actually for Yochanan, and they told him to disregard this man who had opened his mouth, but Yochanan was already being egged on by his advisors. And the next step was that Yochanan came out and he said that he was abolishing the leadership of the sages. We'll keep the *Torah* without them. And the next step was to execute as many sages as he could catch.

THE CHASHMONA'IM GO LOST

And now we have a picture of a man whose grandfather and his uncles died for the *Torah*, fighting for the *Torah*. And now

we find him seeking out the sages in their places of hiding and destroying them. The Sanhedrin of Torah-Sages had been the ruling power over our nation, and they judged according to the Torah alone. And now the weaklings of our nation wanted to put an end to that.

And now began the downward trend of this great house. And after two or three generations, these Edomeans whom had been forcibly converted to Judaism, took over and it was the retribution of *Hashem* that the whole family of *Chashmona'im* were wiped out down to the last man. Not one single of the *Chashmona'im* remained in history.

WATCH YOUR STEP!

Now this story has a big moral lesson for us. Actually there are many lessons. One lesson is that no matter how good you are, you have to beware. Our sages tell us this: Beware until your last day! It was one of the best families. A family that was willing to give their lives for the *Torah*. But because they didn't beware, because they weren't on guard against infiltration of bad influences, the end was they became enemies of the *Torah*. Not only enemies, but they set out on a campaign to murder, to massacre the sages. It's unbelievable that you could go from one extreme to the other. It's a great lesson of how much a person must watch his step, how dangerous outside influence can be. It seeps in little by little, and even good people, good families can be ruined forever. Even the great miracle of Chanukah, the return to the Beis Hamikdash, eventually dissipated because of the gentile influence that seeped into our nation because of our association with wicked Jews.

"MAKE A TEACHER FOR YOURSELF"

But another lesson is that the destiny of the Jewish people is only in the hand of the *Torah* leaders. And when a man doesn't come to listen to them, when he chooses other counselors, he disregards them; the end will be what happened to this great family. And that's why this story is told. It's part of *Torah*. It's in the *gemara*, to teach us this lesson. The downward trend of the era of the *Chashmona'im* came because of their failure to solicit always the opinion of the Sages. And that has always been what

caused the deterioration of our people. How different would have been the fate of Yochanan Hyrkanus and his family, and the subsequent history of the Am Yisroel, had they hearkened loyally to the Torah teachers. Had they listened to the sage advice of the Av Beis-Din Nitai Ha'arbeili, who preached, "Keep far away from an evil neighbor, and do not associate with a wicked man (Avos 1:7), they would have been saved; and instead they went lost forever. Whether you're a king or a private man, your success in life is going to depend on how much you have a connection with your teacher. עשה לך רב means make for yourself a teacher and stick to him all your life. Seek out his advice in everything. Everything! And this is the way for a man to succeed as much as a Jew can succeed in this world.

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Q&A With Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l

Q:

Should someone buy gifts for his children on Chanukah?

A:

There's no harm, but you have to be careful that it shouldn't enter into the realm of the season's holidays spirit. It shouldn't be done because of the general atmosphere of the street, because they're doing something like that. You have to beware of that attitude.

So, to give cash is a much better idea. Chanukah gelt is a well-known minhag, so give cash if you can. I don't say it's wrong to give gifts; nothing wrong with giving gifts. But make sure, in your own mind at least, that you're divorced from any thoughts of the season.

Chanukah is not the season to give gifts, no, no. It's not the gift season, no. You can give gifts anytime. You can give gifts on Shavuos too, and Purim and Pesach. And if you want to give gifts on Chanukah as well, I'm not going to tell you no. But if you're going to make a big fuss about it, and make it into an ideal, that Chanukah is the time to give gifts, then you might as well sing carols and put up a Chanukah tree, because that's what it really is.

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