

Did the Maccabees Intend to Conquer the Promised Land?

A Public Dialogue with Professors Katell Berthelot and Yonder Gillihan
 Congregation Kehillath Israel, Brookline, MA, November 30th, 2015



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Contesting lands: Simon Maccabee vs. Antiochus VII Euergetes, c. 133 BCE (1 Makk 15) The following excerpt reproduces text from *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (NETS), ed. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright (OUP, 2007), with slight modification for clarity.

1Makkabees 15:28 And [the Seleucid King Antiochus VII] sent to [Simon Makkabee] Athenobius, one of his Friends, to converse with him, saying,

“You are in control of Joppe and Gazara and the citadel in Ierousalem, which are cities of my kingdom. **29** You have devastated their regions and have done great harm in the land and have taken control of many places in my kingdom. **30** Now then, turn over the cities that you have taken and the taxes of the places of which you have taken possession outside the boundaries of Judea. **31** Or if not, instead of them give five hundred talents of silver for the destruction that you have caused, and for the taxes of the cities another five hundred talents. Or if not, we will come and make war upon you.”

32 And Athenobius, the Friend of the king, came to Ierousalem and saw the glory of Simon and a cabinet for wine cups with gold and silver plate and considerable ostentation, and he was astounded and announced to him the words of the king. **33** And answering, Simon said to him,

“Neither have we taken a foreign land, nor have we taken the property of foreigners, but the inheritance of our fathers, which was held unjustly by our enemies for a certain time. **34** But we, seizing the occasion, are clinging to the inheritance of our fathers. **35** But concerning Joppe and Gazara, which you claim, they were doing great harm to the people and our country, for these we will give one hundred talents.”

And [Athenobius] did not answer a word to him **36** but returned with wrath to the king and reported to him these words and the glory of Simon and all the things that he saw. And the king became very angry.