

The Jewish Wars with Rome: From the Rise of the Hasmonean Kings to the Fall of the Second Temple *A Collection of Six Ancient Bronze Coins*



The Maccabees threw off the yoke of the Seleucids, establishing a new Jewish kingdom, only for Rome to conquer Judea a century later. This collection is a numismatic history of the Holy Land in the tumultuous period from the rise of the Hasmonean kings to the fall of the Second Temple.

The Jewish Kingdom was established by King David after the Siege of Jebus, when his armies liberated the Holy Land from foreign rule. The period from about 1010 BCE until the Babylonian conquest of 587 BCE is known as the First Temple Period. Because the practice of minting money did not emerge until later, there is no coinage from the First Temple Period.

For four hundred years, the Jews were a conquered people, subject to the whims of their rulers. Then, in 164 BCE, Judah the Hammer—*Maqqaba* in Aramaic; hence Maccabee—led a rebellion against the forces of the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes, who had slaughtered thousands of Jerusalem Jews by invading on the Sabbath. Judah was the patriarch of the so-called Hasmonean dynasty, whose first king, **John Hyrcanus I**, restored Israel to Jewish power. The son of Simon Maccabaeus and nephew of Judah Maccabee, John took part in the uprising against the Seleucid emperor **Antiochus VII**, as described in the Biblical books of Maccabees, assuming command when his father died. After being vassals to Antiochus, the Jews under John's leadership

completely repelled the hated Seleucids from Judaea, doubling the size of their kingdom and granting them the opportunity to mint the first Jewish coins.

When John died, his son Aristobulus declared himself king, but died after a reign of just a year. His brother **Alexander Jannaeus**—nicknamed “the Thracian” for his cruelty; he once massacred 50,000 of his own people for daring to rise against him—ruled for more than a quarter-century, consolidating his hold on Judaea before drinking himself to death. But this period of expansion would not last, for Rome loomed.

In 64 BCE, Pompey, the most powerful man in Rome, defeated the Seleucid Empire. The Young Butcher, as he was called, set his sights on Judaea, where the sons of the dead king, Aristobulus and John Hyrcanus II, vied for supremacy. Pompey ordered a suspension of hostilities so he could mediate, the cocky Aristobulus betrayed him, and the great Roman commander unleashed the might of his army upon Jerusalem. For three months, Pompey's army laid siege to the city, before striking during Sabbath, executing the priests at the Temple, and violating the Holy of the Holies. Twelve thousand were killed in the slaughter. Pompey assumed control of Judaea, installing Hyrcanus II as high priest. It was the first major war between the Romans and Jews. It would not be the last.

The Second Temple Period was at its apex during the reign of **Herod the Great**. A brilliant politician who enjoyed excellent relations with Rome, he was also a paranoid madman who ruthlessly executed anyone he deemed a threat to his absolute power, whether legitimate rivals, family members, or innocent babies. Crowned King of the Jews by the Roman Senate, Herod ruled from 40 BCE until his disease-ridden death 36 years later. A prodigious builder, Herod expanded the Second Temple in Jerusalem, a magnificent complex, of which only the famed Western Wall remains. He constructed fortresses at Masada, Antonia, and Herodium; the port city of Caesarea; the huge edifice atop the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron; and massive fortifications around Jerusalem, as well as three towers at the city's entrance. **Herod Archelaus** was next in line, ruling Judaea until 6 CE. Once a bosom friend of the mad Caligula, his removal from the throne by the emperor was indicative of the volatile relationship between Rome and Judaea.

Tensions reached a fever pitch in the year 66, when Jewish rebels, tired of living under imperial rule, revolted. The rebels were tenacious, but the Romans were too strong. The **Jewish revolt** effectively ended when the Romans destroyed the Temple and much of Jerusalem in 70 CE, although the fighting continued for three more years, ending with the mass suicide at Masada in 73.

Coin Specifications:



1. John Hyrcanus	Issued: 134-104 BCE
Material: Bronze	Denomination: Prutah
Weight: 1.7-2.4 g	Diameter: 12-14.5 mm
Obverse	Hebrew inscription
Reverse	Double cornucopia



2. Antiochus VII/w-Hyrcanus I	Issued: 138-129 BCE
Material: Bronze	Denomination: Prutah
Weight: 2.2-2.6 g	Diameter: 13-16.5 mm
Obverse	Lily
Reverse	Seleucid anchor



3. A. Jannaeus	Issued: 103-76 BCE
Material: Bronze	Denomination: Prutah
Weight: 1.1-2.2 g	Diameter: 12-14 mm
Obverse	Hebrew inscription
Reverse	Double cornucopia



4. Herod I	Issued: 37-4 BCE
Material: Bronze	Denomination: Prutah
Weight: 1.2-1.9 g	Diameter: 12-13.5 mm
Obverse	Anchor
Reverse	Double cornucopia



Type 1 or

5. Herod Archelaus	Issued: 4 BCE-6 CE
Material: Bronze	Denomination: Prutah
Weight: 0.8-1.8 g	Diameter: 12-14.5 mm
Obverse	Helmet
Reverse	Grapes



Type 2

5. Herod Archelaus	Issued: 4 BCE-6 CE
Material: Bronze	Denomination: Prutah
Weight: 0.8-1.8 g	Diameter: 12-14.5 mm
Obverse	Prow of galley
Reverse	Wreath



6. First Revolt	Issued: 66--70 CE
Material: Bronze	Denomination: Prutah
Weight: 1.5-3 g	Diameter: 15-18 mm
Obverse	Crude amphora
Reverse	Vine leaf

Images shows coins, not to scale
Coin images shown for illustration purposes, grades may vary in the collection.
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