

Judah's Wife by Angela Hunt

AUTHOR INTERVIEW

1. Why write about the Intertestamental Period? God was silent during that time, right?

God did not speak through his prophets during that time, but He certainly wasn't napping, so surely He continued to speak to individuals in His still, small voice. For instance, we know He spoke to Simeon, the old man waiting to see the Messiah in the Temple. But God made no proclamations through His prophets. In the preceding years He had already told His people everything they needed to know about the coming Messiah.

2. This is a novel about the Maccabees—who were they, and why are they celebrated?

The Maccabees were followers of Judah/Judas Maccabees, the son of a priestly family who refused to capitulate to the ruling Seleucids who wanted to Hellenize the Jews. When Antiochus Epiphanes made it a capital crime to observe the Sabbath, circumcise baby boys, or refrain from eating pork and other unclean foods, the Maccabees fought back. Literally.

3. In the book, you mention that the celebration of Hanukkah has its roots in events that took place during the time of the Maccabees. What is the connection with Hanukkah, and why does a menorah symbolize that celebration?

After the Maccabees put the Seleucids to flight, they reclaimed the Temple, which had been desecrated in the most horrible ways imaginable. When they had finished cleansing it, they declared a festival—the word Hanukkah means dedication.

Many Jews celebrate Hanukkah with a menorah because a legend arose 600 years after the festival's origination. The legend states that the priests found a vial of holy oil that had somehow escaped contamination by the pagan Seleucids. They poured the oil into a lamp, which miraculously burned for all seven days of the festival.

4. What lessons can a contemporary reader—Jewish or Christian—take from this book about the Maccabees? Is their story relevant to us today?

I believe the story is extremely relevant because our culture is becoming increasingly secular, and Christians are being pressed to conform to the world as never before. Of course, we should never be surprised or offended when people who do not believe in a holy God behave like people who do not believe in a holy God. The problem arises when we who DO believe are asked to accept and/or condone practices the Bible declares unacceptable for God's people. Judeo-Christian principles once served as a basis for Western civilization, but now we are being asked to accept a fluid form of morality or be labeled "haters." This is what the Jews faced under the Seleucid empire, only they faced death, not criticism on social media.

5. The book's characters frequently talk about "Hellenes," or Jews who had set aside their Jewish faith in order to follow Greek customs and culture. Why were the religious Jews so opposed to the Hellenes? Aren't we supposed to be culturally relevant?

If you can relate to the culture without compromising biblical standards of righteous living, great! If you must violate principles the Bible clearly declares, then we should be as steadfast as the righteous Jews who risked their lives to obey the Torah, God's Word. If the Seleucid king had allowed the Jews to continue worshiping according to their beliefs, he would not have faced them in war. But when he began to put righteous Jews to death (in truly horrifying ways), the Maccabees took action, and God blessed them.

6. What book comes next in The Silent Years series?

The third book in The Silent Years series is Jerusalem's Queen, a novel based on the life of Salome Alexandra. Who was she? Israel's greatest queen, and a truly remarkable woman.