
FAQ

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Chanukah, Actions of Antiochus

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In what way did Antiochus Epiphanes commit the “Abomination of Desolation”? I thought this was a future event.

The event describing the desecration of the Temple by Antiochus, even though it actually was carried out by an Athenian senator (2 Maccabees 6:1), was in fulfillment of the Prophet Daniel’s words in Daniel 11:31: “Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation” (NASU). It may seem confusing for us because the eschatological term that often describes “the Abomination of Desolation” in most pre-millennial prophecy circles is used to refer to another event, that of Daniel 9:27:

“And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate” (NASU).

Without a doubt, what happened in the period of the Maccabees was an abomination before the God of Israel. But it was not the final abomination spoken of by Daniel that occurs at the end of the seventy-weeks prophecy. A future leader, much like Antiochus, eager to unite the world as one people worshipping him, will make all of the previous abominations that have occurred on the Temple Mount seem like nothing. The text uses the plural *kenaf shiquzim* (כְּנָף שִׁקּוּצִים), indicating that there have been *multiple abominations* committed,¹ but this one will be the *extreme abomination*, topping all the others. This is perhaps reflected in the NLT rendering, “And as a climax to all his terrible deeds, he will set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration.” The Apostle Paul describes this in greater detail in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4:

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God” (NASU).

From Paul’s vantage point, the Abomination of Desolation has yet to occur; and from our view today, it likewise has yet to occur. Yeshua the Messiah makes this clear in His Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24:

“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath” (Matthew 24:15-20, NASU).

¹ While many interpreters connect *kanaf* (כְּנָף) or “wing” (NASU) to a part of the Temple, it can also relate to the extremity of a garment or the wing of a bird (BDB, 489). Because of the ambiguity of prophecy, while *kenaf shiquzim* has most often been interpreted as “a wing of the temple” (NIV), we should be inclined to remember how *kanaf* is used to speak of a cloak spread out or the extreme ends of the Earth (H.F.W. Gesenius: *Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, trans. Samuel Prideaux Tregelles [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979], 406), connecting it to how this final Abomination of Desolation will stretch far over the other abominations previously committed on the Temple Mount.

Some have claimed that the Abomination of Desolation occurred in ancient times when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed in 70 C.E. But that is contingent on several things. While Yeshua has Daniel's description of the Abomination in mind, His statement is preceded by the ever-critical, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14, NASU). Even today, almost 2,000 years later, this word has yet to be fulfilled. Furthermore, we see the statement "let the reader understand" inserted into the text, presumably by Matthew when he composed his Gospel. When Matthew wrote his Gospel also tells us quite a bit as to whether or not this has occurred. If Matthew's Gospel post-dates the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., as most conservative and liberal scholars believe, then it is indeed an indication that this Abomination of Desolation is to occur in the future.

There has been no leader like Antiochus, or even an emissary of his, who has entered into the Temple in Jerusalem to be worshipped as God. In fact, there is no Temple in Jerusalem today where this prophecy could even be fulfilled. The seventy-weeks prophecy of Daniel has yet to be completely fulfilled, as when it is all over we are to see the restoration of God's Kingdom on Earth, stated clearly in Daniel 9:24:

"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy *place*" (NASU).

We are still awaiting to see everlasting righteousness established in the Earth. That has not happened, and any claim by theologians or teachers that it has is totally misguided.

The example of Antiochus Epiphanes is very, very important to understand. It lays the historical precedent as being one of the many abominations that has occurred on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This abomination in 167 B.C.E. was followed by the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., and the subsequent erection of a temple to Jupiter. Likewise, when Islam expanded throughout the Middle East the Dome of the Rock was built on the Temple Mount. Today, we await the reconstruction of the Temple by many of the Temple Mount faithful groups in Israel, and then we can see the climax of all of these abominations. Unlike those who committed abominations in the past, though, the man of lawlessness will be able to broadcast himself to the world, so everyone, not just those in Jerusalem, will be able to see him declare himself as God. Do you think Antiochus Epiphanes would have liked to do this? Well, the same spirit of antimessiah that was in him will be in someone else in the future.