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Exclusive Broadcast Partner  
of the Maccabiah Games 2009



## Introducing The Maccabiah Games History of the Games

The brainstorm of 15-year-old Yosef Yekutieli—who was inspired by the 1912 Stockholm Olympic Games—the first Maccabiah Games was 14 years in development. 1932 was selected as the first year to host the first game in recognition of the 1800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bar Kochba revolt.

Simon bar Kochba was the Jewish leader who led what is known as Bar Kochba's revolt against the Roman Empire in 132 CE. This revolt established an independent Jewish State of Israel, which he ruled for three years as *Nasi* ("prince" or "president"). The new state knew only one year of peace. Simon bar Kochba became the last "king of Israel" in history. His state was conquered by the Romans in 135 following a two-year war. The Romans eventually captured the fortress of Betar and killed all the defenders. According to the Roman historian, Cassius Dio, 580,000 Jews were killed, and 50 fortified towns and 985 villages razed.

In the aftermath of the war, Roman Emperor Hadrian consolidated the older political units of Judaea, Galilee and Samaria into the new province of Syria Palaestina (Palestine). The new provincial designation was derived as an insult from the name of the enemies of the Jews, the Philistines who had occupied the coastal plain in ancient times. In time, the Philistines were defeated by the Hebrew King David.

Ironically, Judas Maccabeus, the man for whom the games are named, strongly disapproved of athletic games and competitions, which he felt were a clear influence of Greek culture. They were introduced into Jerusalem by his staunch enemies the "Hellenising Jews," and abolished upon his getting control of the city. The Maccabiah Games are modeled on the modern Olympics—in turn modeled on the Classical Greek ones, of which Maccabeus also evidently disapproved as part of an alien and hostile culture.

The Maccabiah Games were opened on March 28, 1932, and about 400 sportsmen took part. The Games were held in athletics, football, and swimming. Since 1932, the Games have been held roughly every four years. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Maccabiah Games were moved up a year to 1935 because of the rising tide of Nazism in Europe.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Maccabiah Games, scheduled for 1938, was delayed until 1950 due to the rise of Nazism in Europe and the outbreak of World War II. The Games were reborn in 1950 in the new State of Israel, and Maccabiah number four was held in 1953. In 1957 the Maccabiah established its current quadrennial formula, held the year following the Summer Olympic Games.

The Maccabiah is staged under the auspices of the Maccabi World Union (MWU), a worldwide youth and sports organization devoted to furthering Jewish identity and traditions through cultural, social, and educational activities. The MWU is headquartered in Israel.