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Report on the Rabbinic Dissertation Submitted

by

Aaron Panken

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Ordination

MAI CHANUKAH

From the days when tannaim reportedly asked Mai Chanukah, "What is Chanukah?", the festival of dedication (or "of lights" as Josephus knew it) has been the subject of popular interest and scholarly enquiry, simultaneously. If the tannaim were not all that certain how the holiday emerged -- the commonly known cruse of oil etiology is but one of several -- we can hardly blame them. For all his historical sophistication, Josephus too has little understanding of how the rites of Chanukah evolved, saying only, "I suppose the reason was because liberty beyond our hopes appeared to us."

Modern scholars have not progressed much beyond the tannaim and Josephus, if by progress we mean general consensus on the origin of Chanukah's characteristic rituals. The reconstruction of the early practices -- those that go back to Hasmonean times -- are largely guesswork; and the later customs that Chanukah attracted through the centuries have gone unstudied to a large extent. Articles about this or that prayer or practice can be found, but no one has systematically gone through the literature from intertestamental beginnings to rishonic glosses on the rabbinic past, and thereby given us the history of Chanukah ritual writ large from start to finish. Now we have a thesis that does just

that. Such an undertaking is massive enough to prove daunting indeed. But Aaron Panken has produced a work that proves how even the most daunting project is conquerable by researchers willing to apply a good mind, linguistic competence, and scholarly discipline to the task.

The beginning, for Panken, is the origin of the holiday itself, on the one hand so obviously given in the Apocrypha, and yet, on the other, so obviously muddled by inconsistent accounts, confusion of dating, linkage to Sukkot, and affinity with mid-winter solstice rites in general. Carefully and methodically, Panken has read through all the literature -- secondary and primary alike -- to sort out the options offered by modern scholarship. He breaks no new ground here, but he does assemble all the old pieces of scholarly turf into one easily negotiable field. Following Rankin (1930), he concludes that Chanukah has some pagan elements within it, that it might well have emerged as a parallel to Sukkot, but that we cannot say even that for certain.

It is not the unearthing of Chanukah's origins so much as the unpacking of its rituals that interests Panken most. He therefore devotes most of his effort to tracing down the earliest reference to Chanukah's several customs. In sum, Chanukah evolved in terms of its ritual celebrations well into the rishonic period at least (the time in which this thesis concludes its survey). Lights in some fashion are present from the beginning, either in terms of a torchlight parade early on, well before the tannaitic era, or by the kindling of lights as the tannaim and Josephus knew it. A Hallel and the giving of thanks (hoda'ah) are traceable to

Hasmonean practice immediately following the purification of the Temple, and by Mishnaic times, these were ritualized annually. Our particular text for a special hoda'ah (al hanissim) on the other hand is relatively late; a rough version of our own prayer comes from Massekhet Sofrim, and is thereupon integrated into geonic ritual, whence it becomes universal, though it received considerable alteration at the hands of rishonim. Hanerot halalu (actually, Hanerot ha'elu in the original version) is also a product of the Massekhet Sofrim ritual. A special Torah reading for Shabbat Chanukah is Tannaitic, but the selection of Zechariah 4 or I Kings 7 as a standardized Haftarah seems unknown until the amoraic age. The blessings over the candles too are argued by 1st-generation amoraim, thus suggesting that there may have been none prior to the Mishnah's codification.

Perhaps the most interesting finding here is a clarification of the many strands of folklore and theology that constitute this holiday's rationale. The kindling of lights and the inclusion of a hoda'ah (in the sense of thanksgiving and/or acknowledgement of God) were central to its rituals from the very outset, but what were these practices intended to denote? Josephus may be closest to the mark when he speculates that the whole thing was a celebration of freedom. The tannaim, on the other hand, had added a theological veneer to the festival's meaning. Ignoring its military aspect, even as they omitted I and II Maccabees from their canon, they transform a military fight for freedom into a divine work of redemption. The Palestinian and the Babylonian communities now branch off in two alternative directions. The Palestinian amoraim

echo the original military victory by preferring a story of finding spears in the Temple, each of which served to carry light, over the cruse of oil narrative that the Babli carried. It is the Babylonians who emphasize the miracle of the oil, and who subsequently understand the candles as an instance of parsomei nissa. By the geonic period, both in Palestine (Massekhet Sofrim) and in Babylonia, the various strands were hopelessly interwoven, so that geonim and rishonim were able to emphasize the Babli's concept of parsomei nissa and the ancient celebration of military victory at the same time.

This thesis is not for the faint-hearted. It is dense in argumentation, packed with source citations, and broad in scope. It comes, however, with a chart appended to lay out the evolution of each custom. All in all it makes for rewarding reading. Aaron Panken has demonstrated an unusual degree of textual competence, and analytic ability in this illustration of Chanukah's evolution.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Lawrence A. Hoffman
Professor of Liturgy

THE LITURGY OF CHANUKAH

AARON D. PANKEN

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Graduate Rabbinic Program
New York, New York

March 18, 1991

Referee: Dr. Lawrence A. Hoffman

Contents

Acknowledgments

Many wonderful people have supported me in the process of preparing this thesis. Primary among them has been my advisor, Dr. Lawrence A. Hoffman. His equal measures of intellectual brilliance and menschlichkeit have inspired me to delve deeply into ancient sources, and to think critically in modern ways. His patience, thought, and sharp editing skills have brought me to new levels of respect for the work of a true scholar.

I am deeply grateful to all my teachers at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. For the past five years, they have taught me the skills necessary to understand texts and the concepts that underlie them. I would especially thank Dr. Michael Chernick, who has taken the time to teach me the ways of the Talmud, and sparked my interest in future study.

The Coolidge Research Colloquium, sponsored by the Association for Religion and Intellectual Life, provided me with a much appreciated opportunity to study in a relaxed, yet challenging atmosphere during the initial phases of this thesis.

On a personal level, I am blessed with an exceptional set of family and friends who have been my support throughout the entire process of researching and writing. My parents have given me everything a son could ever want, and have always been there for me in every way. My sister, a woman whom I will one day be honored to call "colleague," shares with me a love of things Jewish, and a bond that is unbreakable. My grandparents, constant sources of care and concern, make my life that much brighter. This past six months, Lisa Messinger has added to my life immeasurably, showing me the true meaning of partnership, and taking care of me in innumerable ways. For all this, I am truly grateful.

Finally, I am thankful to God for keeping me in life, for sustaining me through this time, and for enabling me to reach this day.

Chapter 1

The Early Chanukah

Introduction

In the mind of the modern Jew, the name Chanukah evokes the most pleasant images of joy; a wondrous time of light, the celebration of past miracles, days of special prayers, the lighting of candles, and delicious foods bubbling over with oil. Chanukah looms large in the contemporary Jewish calendar, in some cases dwarfing the importance of other holidays which once held positions of greater prominence in the Jewish accounting of time.

Our vision of this "festival of lights" is very different from that held by the earliest of our people. The character of the festival, its liturgical and ritual components, and its very significance as a Jewish celebration have undergone vast changes throughout the course of history. The way we celebrate Chanukah in America today would probably mystify the Jews of Palestine at the turn of the millennium, and might even seem odd to a contemporary

of ours in Algeria. Whether one looks across the miles or across the years, Chanukah undergoes a development in time and space, and the results of this development are often surprising.

While basic similarities do exist between the Chanukah of today and of yesterday, of here and of there, it is the evidence of tremendous change that makes the study of Chanukah a fascinating mirror of the times and places where Jews have lived and celebrated. This thesis will concentrate on the changes over time of two broad elements of the Chanukah celebration - the ritual and the liturgy. The work will follow the development of the rituals associated with Chanukah from their infancy in the books of the Apocrypha and Josephus, through the Medieval codifiers. At the same time, this thesis will examine the development of the various liturgical pieces associated with Chanukah, when they began to be included in our liturgy, and how (if at all) their earlier incarnations differed from our present texts. Through this exploration, this thesis will shed light on our "festival of lights," bringing more background and meaning to modern celebrations, as they assume their part in a developing tradition.

The Name Chanukah in the Bible

Our earliest clues to an understanding of the name Chanukah are found in the Bible. The noun Chanukah occurs 12 times in the

entire work, 8 times in predominantly Hebrew sections,[1] and 4 times in the Aramaic of the books of Ezra and Daniel.[2] In both early and late books the meaning is relatively constant: "a dedication for a specific purpose."

In the book of Numbers, the word Chanukah appears to mean an offering for the dedication of an altar:

> This was the dedication offering (chanukat hamizbeach) for the altar from the chieftains of Israel upon its being anointed...
> Numbers 7:84 [3]

> That was the dedication offering (chanukat hamizbeach) for the altar after its anointing."
> Numbers 7:88

In these and the other occurrences in the Torah, the word has the meaning of a dedicatory offering at the initial usage of an altar. In ketuvim, the word begins to refer to the actual dedication:

> A psalm of David. A song for the dedication of the Temple. (chanukat habayit)
> Psalm 30:1

> The Israelites, the priests, and the Levites, and all other exiles celebrated the dedication of the House of God (chanukat bet-Eloha) with joy.
> Ezra 6:16

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[1] Num. 7:10, 11, 84, 88; Ps.30:1; Neh. 12:27 (two occurrences); II Chr.7:9.

[2] Ezra 6:16 and 17; Dan. 3:3, 3:4.

[3] Throughout this thesis, I cite biblical and Talmudic passages my own English translations.

There is, however, one text which uses the word Chanukah in a different way:

> At the dedication (chanukah) of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites, wherever they lived, were sought out and brought to Jerusalem to celebrate a joyful dedication (chanukah) with thanksgiving and with song, accompanied by cymbals, harps, and lyres.
> Nehemiah 12:27

The second use of the word Chanukah is slightly different from the others, in that it has acquired another meaning not the dedicatory offering itself, but the ritual that surrounds the dedication of a Temple. This meaning is more coherent with the later meaning of the word as the name for a joyous holiday.

The verb ch-n-kh makes five appearances in the Biblical text. [4] We first find the verb ch-n-kh in Deuteronomy 20:5, referring to the building and dedicating of a new household:

> "And the officials shall address the troops, as follows: 'Is there anyone who has built a new house but has not dedicated (ch-n-kh) it? Let him go back to his home, lest he die in battle and another dedicate (ch-n-kh) it. Is there anyone who has planted a vineyard but has never harvested it? Let him go back to his home, lest he die in battle and another harvest it. Is there anyone who has paid the bride-price for a wife but who has not yet married her? Let him go back to his home, lest he die in battle and another marry her.' "
> Deuteronomy 20:5-7

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[4] Deut. 20:5 (two occurrences); I K.8:63; II Chr. 7:5; Pro. 22:6.

In this text, ch-n-kh retains the meaning found above, that of "to dedicate to a specific purpose." It would appear that ancient Israelites had a standard dedicatory ceremony for their new homes which indicated that they had taken full possession as new homeowners.

The meaning of the root ch-n-kh, therefore, indicates no connection with a festival of lights per se. Instead, the connection with the dedication of the Temple is present in the early definitions associated with the name Chanukah. It would appear that the notion of dedication was primary in the minds of the very earliest namers of the holiday. As time went by, however, there began a development towards using light as a celebration of this dedication. This, as we shall see, led to the name "Festival of Lights."

Early Sources for the Study of Chanukah

The earliest post-biblical sources for the study of Chanukah are quite limited in their scope. The three major sources for this period are sections of I and II Maccabees, Josephus' Antiquities of the Jews, and a scroll of seemingly pre-Tannaitic origin known as Megillat Ta'anit. Before one can understand the holiday rituals indicated in each text, it is important to understand the nature and dating of these basic sources.

I Maccabees was originally written in Hebrew, but exists only in a Greek translation. The Hebrew original was extant as late as

the 5th century, and is mentioned in the writings of Jerome.[5] After that, however, there is no known citation of the Hebrew text. The Greek text is considered to be a reliable historical work, however, written in the period immediately following the events it describes.[6] Bickerman, for example, describes the work as "objective," written in the style of the Hebrew historical works, and held in high regard as an historical source.[7]

While most scholars agree upon the authenticity of I Maccabees, and, its value as an historical work, they do not agree on its exact dating. Bickerman dates the text sometime during the reign of John Hyrcanus, 135-104 BCE. He suggests that the work made use of the court journal in the period of Jonathan and Simon. The book, then, would be the official description of the rise of the Hasmoneans, representing that dynasty's position on the revolution it had brought about. [8] In light of the text's references to John Hyrcanus in a manner indicating his recent death, Rankin places the date of its writing between 100 and 63

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[5] Jonathan A. Goldstein, *The Anchor Bible: I Maccabees* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1976), pp. 14-15.

[6] Rev. Oliver Shaw Rankin, *The Origins of the Festival of Hanukkah* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1930), pp. 5-7.

[7] Elias Bickerman, *The God of the Maccabees*, trans. Horst R. Moehring (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), p. 94.

[8] Bickerman, p. 94.

BCE, after the death of John Hyrcanus, yet before Pompei.[9] Goldstein, like Bickerman, cites the pro-Hasmonean thrust of the work, but argues that the work is later, and comes as a deliberate propagandist affront to the rule of the Romans.[10]

Goldstein places the terminus a quo for the text at 104 BCE, based on his assessment of the date of John Hyrcanus' death. For the terminus ad quem, Goldstein argues that the book exhibits some small pro-Roman tendencies, which would not have been present after 91 BCE, because of the Social and Mithradactic Wars among other problems. Goldstein supports his dating of 104-91 BCE by pointing out other references in I Maccabees which cohere with the reign of Alexander Jannaeus. [11]

In I Maccabees, then, we have a text which surely originated in the period from 135 to 63 BCE, probably during the early part of that period, during the reign of John Hyrcanus or Alexander Jannaeus. While the exact dating remains unknown, what is certain is the authentic, accurate historical nature of the work, making it a reliable source for the early study of the festival of Chanukah.

In contrast, II Maccabees does not prove quite as reliable. Bickerman describes the work as an excerpt from a lost five-volume

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[9] Rankin, p. 6.

[10] Goldstein, p. 73.

[11] Goldstein, pp. 62-3.

history by Jason of Cyrene (see II M. 2:23 for this attribution). This historical account attempts to describe the feelings and emotions of people involved in the story, typical of the Greek style of historiography. While the telling of the story may be inherently Greek, however, the order of the events depicted follows that of I Maccabees closely, implying the existence of a strong Hebraic influence. Bickerman describes parts of II Maccabees as a letter to the Jews of Egypt, asking them to observe Chanukah. This reconstruction is accepted by later scholars in their analyses of the work.[12]

Solomon Zeitlin takes up where Bickerman leaves off. Like Bickerman, he points out the text's self-definition as a letter to the Jews of Egypt (II M. 1:1), encouraging them to celebrate the "feast of dedication." He sees the text as a support for Chanukah, tying the holiday to anything which would encourage the Egyptians to celebrate it. He sees the connection with Sukkot (II M. 1:9) as a convincing tool, used by the author to tie a non-biblical holiday to the biblical foundation of Sukkot. Additionally, Zeitlin links the "viscous liquid" which turns into fire (II M. 1:21-2) with a popular Iranian myth of liquid fire from heaven, which may have been prevalent in Egypt at the time. Zeitlin sees

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[12] Bickerman, p. 95.

textual references to Nehemiah, Solomon, and Moses as further authentication of the holiday for the Jews of Egypt.[13]

Historians such as Walter Kolbe have portrayed II Maccabees as partially the work of a later forger, especially the sections II M. 1:1 - 2:19, and chapter 11. These sections, according to Kolbe, would have been written much later than the rest of the book, perhaps as late as the early Christian era. Other historians are more reluctant to call any section of the text false, disputing instead the date of the work. Rankin mentions at least six different dating schemes for the general material in II Maccabees: from 125 BCE, in the reign of John Hyrcanus, to 63 BCE, immediately before Pompei takes over Jerusalem.[14]

More recent scholarship, especially that of Goldstein, sees II Maccabees as a later work, abridged from the work of Jason of Cyrene between 78 and 63 BCE. He bases his opinion on his study of I Maccabees. In I Maccabees, the author provides pro-Hasmonean propaganda. Remnants of the historical account of Jason of Cyrene as they appear in II Maccabees are politically opposite to the pro-Hasmonean account. Goldstein believes that Jason's work was written afterwards, as a response to I Maccabees. He pinpoints the date of Jason's work at 86 BCE. From this date, he uses parallels

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[13] Solomon Zeitlin, "Hannukah: Its Origin and Significance," JQR N.S. 29 (1938), p. 22.

[14] Rankin, pp. 7-13.

in language to prove the redaction date of II Maccabees to be after 78/7 BCE. Goldstein's final dating of II Maccabees is between 78 BCE and 63 BCE. [15]

Accepting Goldstein's estimate, it would seem that II Maccabees is both a response to I Maccabees, and a letter of encouragement to the Jews of Egypt. Since most of the sections pertinent to Chanukah are included in the letter to the Jews of Egypt, it is possible that this material would be of less historical value than the descriptive historical narratives of I Maccabees. In his desire to convince the Jews of Egypt to observe Chanukah, the author of II Maccabees may have twisted the historical verities of his day to prove his point. This bias would place the accuracy of II Maccabees on a precarious footing, making it somewhat suspect in terms of the study of Chanukah's origins. In this study, it will be considered less probative than texts from other sources.

Aside from these apocryphal references, two other texts that shed some light on the festival. In all his twenty volumes of Antiquities of the Jews, Josephus begins with Adam and covers the whole history of the Jews until 66 CE. Part of this work covers the period of the dedication of the Temple, allowing us another

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[15] Jonathan A. Goldstein, *The Anchor Bible: II Maccabees* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1983), pp. 71-83.

glimpse into the beginning of Chanukah. The work was completed when Josephus was 56 years old (around the year 94 CE). [16]

Josephus wrote the Antiquities at the urging of Epaphroditus in Rome, who became his patron after the deaths of Vespasian and Titus. Epaphroditus was evidently a highly regarded scholar in Rome, who wanted Josephus to bring the whole of Jewish history to the Greek-speaking world. [17] Beginning in book twelve, Josephus covers the Maccabean and Hasmonean period, possibly using I Maccabees as a source. [18] Since Josephus was writing for a Greek-speaking population, he employs a non-Hebraic style, attempting to enliven the work for his Roman audience. This style can detract from the objective nature of his work, adding elements that may have arisen from other legends, rather than from history. Nonetheless, if we can compensate for his biases, Josephus remains a useful source for what actually occurred,

The final early source for Chanukah is Megillat Ta'anit. Megillat Ta'anit, the "fasting scroll," lists the 36 days of the year, including holy days, when one may not fast. It is mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud as the authoritative list of days when

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[16] *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. "Josephus Flavius."

[17] E. Mary Smallwood, introduction, *The Jewish War*, by Josephus (New York: Dorset, 1985), pp. 15-6.

[18] *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. "Josephus Flavius."

fasting and memorial eulogies are prohibited.[19] According to a tannaitic source,[20] it was compiled by Hananiah b. Hezekiah and his company, but the appendix to the Megillah gives the author as Eliezer, the son of Hananiah, and one of the leading rebels against the Romans. This attribution would provide us with another viewpoint in trying to form an accurate image of early Chanukah.

Solomon Zeitlin describes Megillat Ta'anit as a list of 36 days on which there were significant events and victories in the history of the Second Temple. Because of the joyous nature of these events, Jews were to avoid fasting during these times. Zeitlin suggests that the text was redacted either during the time of Bar Kochba or late in the Second Temple period. He considers the text to be a literary remnant of a once-thriving rebel party. The purpose of the list of victories is to strengthen the spirit of the revolt. In terms of its historical use, it is helpful as a parallel to the facts and dates in Josephus' works. Scholia were later added to Megillat Ta'anit, written in Mishnaic Hebrew, and based upon the original Hebrew of I Maccabees, Talmudic literature, and other unknown sources. Since these sections are

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[19] RH 18a.

[20] Shab.13b.

added later, the actual historical value of these is extremely limited.[21]

There is one other apocryphal text that is sometimes associated with Chanukah. The book of Judith tells the story of a beautiful young woman who takes drastic measures to interfere with the plans of Holofernes, a ranking commander of the Syrian army. As Holofernes is about to invade Jerusalem, Judith uses her wits and charm to access his tent and surreptitiously remove his head. She then leads the people of Israel into a victorious battle with the remaining Syrian forces. The story is wonderful, and has many parallels with the story of the Maccabees. Unfortunately for students of liturgy and ritual, there is no mention of any ritual or liturgy related to Chanukah. Aside from pure literary enjoyment, this book is of limited value to the current study. [22]

One other text also recognizes the festival of Chanukah. Chanukah is mentioned in John 10:22 as a holiday that occurs in the winter. This shows that Chanukah was celebrated, but provides little more in the way of concrete information. The latest of the gospels, the text here was compiled sometime in the early part of

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[21] *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. "Megillat Ta'anit." For a critical edition, see Hans Lichtenstein, "Die Fastenrolle: Eine Untersuchung Zur Jüdisch-Hellenistischen Geschichte," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 8-9(1931-2): 257-351.

[22] Cf. Carey A. Moore, *The Anchor Bible: Judith* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1985).

the second century. While it provides one more reference to Chanukah, it does not warrant inclusion in this study because it gives no information on the liturgy and ritual of Chanukah. [23]

With the four relevant texts cited above, it is possible to establish a good picture of the early Chanukah ritual. For a broader picture of the early history of Chanukah, it is important to make note of two other considerations. First, we will consider the dating of the actual events which led up to the celebration of Chanukah. Second, we will explore the numerous theories surrounding the initial character of the holiday.

The Dating of the Dedication of the Temple

> At the end of the year 167 BCE, approximately in December, by order of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, King of Syria, and so ruler of the Jews, the Temple on Zion was desecrated and given over to the uses of idolatry. At the same time the law of Moses was rescinded by a decree of the King....Pigs were offered even upon the altar of the Sanctuary in Jerusalem, upon which every day, in early morning and at the approach of evening, offerings had been made to the God of Israel....Never before and never thereafter was the spiritual existence of Israel so imperiled. [24]

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[23] Raymond E. Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1966), p. 401.

[24] Elias Bickerman, *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees*, ed. Louis Finkelstein (United States: Schocken Press, 1962), pp. 93-4.

This vivid description of the events in 167 BCE sets the scene for our dating the desecration and subsequent dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem. Hard times had befallen the Jews in Judea, giving rise to a rebellious band of Hasmoneans who would save the day. According to Bickerman, "approximately in December," the Syrian army took over the Temple in Jerusalem for their own sacrificial purposes, paying no heed to the sensitivities of the Jews and their Torah. Because of the might of the Syrian army, and the concurrent strength of Menelaus' Hellenizing reform party, most Jews were forced to obey the pagan wishes of their new rulers. Over the next three years, altars were built in front of the doors of all houses, and sacrifices offered upon them, all in order to "make a public display of zeal for the new paganism." Those who refused were killed before the King.

In response to the situation, many people left Jerusalem and headed for the countryside, where it was easier to evade the watchful eye of the Syrians. Pockets of armed resistance sprang up, and in 166 BCE, Antiochus IV Epiphanes instituted searches for these rebels throughout Judea. Mattathias, leader of these rebel groups, decided on his own authority to fight defensively on the Sabbath, allowing his army a better chance in the war with the Syrian invaders. With the death of Mattathias in 166 BCE, leadership passed on to Judah "Maccabee."

Judah waged war against the Syrians in guerrilla fashion, travelling stealthily from place to place, appearing where he was

least expected. He struck repeatedly at the encampments of the Syrian troops, who eventually recognized him for the threat that he was. In the fall of 165 Judah controlled the road from Jaffa to Jerusalem, cutting off communication between the Syrians in Jerusalem and their government to the north. This situation did not sit well with the poorly-financed Syrian army, who had a major war going on in the Far East, so they negotiated a compromise that allowed the Jews to return to their homes. In March of 164, many of the Jews who had fled to the wilderness were able to return to Jerusalem in peace.

Only one problem remained. The High Priest Menelaus was still very much bent on Hellenizing the Jews, and still very much in control of Jerusalem. To resolve this situation, Judah planned an attack on the Temple, and made a sudden descent upon Jerusalem. It was the 25th of Kislev, precisely three years after the Hellenizing party had offered the first pagan sacrifice upon the altar, that Judah carried out the ancient tamid offering on the altar in the Temple.[25]

While there is only minor scholarly disagreement about most of the events of this story, there is extensive disagreement about the dating of the final dedication of the Temple. Using the early sources noted above, we find three hints about the date of the

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[25] For a full account of the story, see Bickerman, *From Ezra*, pp. 93-135.

dedication of the Temple. The first comes in the book of I Maccabees:

> On the fifteenth day of Kislev in the year 145 the king had an abomination of desolation built upon the altar, and in the outlying towns of Judah they built illicit altars, and at the doors of the houses and in the squares they offered illicit sacrifices.
>
> I M. 1:54-5

> They rose early on the morning of the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month (that is, the month of Kislev), in the year 148, and they brought a sacrifice according to the Torah upon the new altar of burnt offerings which they had built. At the very time of the year and on the very day which the gentiles had profaned the altar, it was dedicated to the sound of singing and harps and lyres and cymbals.
>
> I M. 4:52-4

The dating system in I and II Maccabees follows the Seleucid Calendar (A.S.). This calendar begins its accounting of time in Tishri of 312 BCE, with Ptolemy's victory in the Battle of Gaza.[26]

A chronological anomaly arises from a comparison of I and II Maccabees. Starting with a date of 312 BCE for the initiation of the Seleucid Calendar, I Maccabees tells us that the dedication of the Temple takes place 148 years afterwards, or in the autumn of 164 BCE. The problem with this dating arises when we compare it to the dating in II Maccabees:

> After purifying the Temple, they made another altar. Using the fire they got by igniting stones, for the first time in two years they offered sacrifices and

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[26] Zeitlin, pp. 27-8.

> incense and installed the lights and set out the showbread.
>
> II M. 10:3

This account directly contradicts the dating in I Maccabees 4:52, which designates a period of three years between the destruction of the Temple and its rededication. In II Maccabees, this period is only <u>two</u> years long. Therefore, II Maccabees suggests a dating for the dedication of Tishri 147 A.S., or in December 165 BCE. This difficulty can be resolved in two different ways.

Zeitlin blames the inconsistency on the difference between the Jewish and Greek designations of the year. On the one hand, the Greeks began their counting of the Seleucid calendar in the year of the Battle of Gaza. For the Greeks, then, the year 312 BCE became the first year in their counting, or 1 A.S. The Jews, unlike the Greeks, dated their years beginning in the autumn, so that when they began the new calendar, they counted the first year as already over by their early autumn new-year. This made year one for the Greeks actually count as year two for the Jews. Thus, in the Jewish reckoning, 312 BCE represents the year 2 A.S. Taking into account the Jewish origin of I Maccabees, and the Greek origin of II Maccabees, it is to be expected that they differ in dates by one year. The actual date for the dedication of the Temple, according to Zeitlin, is in the autumn of 165 BCE. [27]

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[27] Zeitlin, pp. 27-8.

Goldstein offers another possibility. He dates the restoration of the Temple to 164 BCE, based on his understanding of II Maccabees. The manuscript tradition of II Maccabees makes it almost certain that the author intended to designate the two-year period between desecration and rededication. [28] He sees Jason's history as a work designed to discredit I Maccabees. From Jason's perspective, Antiochus IV dies after hearing of the Jews' victory over his forces. According to his understanding of history, the restoration of the Temple must have occurred before this 148 A.S. (165 BCE), the year of Antiochus' death. Jason thus had an upper limit of three years for the period in which the Temple suffered pagan sacrifice.

On the other hand, Jason knew that the Temple suffered pagan sacrifice for over one year. Thus, between the lower bound of one year, and the upper bound of three years, Jason chose two years as a compromise solution. This represents a restoration of the Temple in December 165 BCE. [29]

But Goldstein does not accept Jason's dating as accurate. Rather, he credits I Maccabees with the actual chronology, and thus accepts the date of the restoration as 25 Kislev, 164 BCE.

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[28] There is only one manuscript out of many (Sy II) that mentions a three-year period. The proof is almost overwhelming, ruling out a scribal error. See Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, p. 82.

[29] Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, p. 83.

There is one additional textual basis for the dating of the restoration of the Temple. This appears in Josephus' Antiquities:

> This desolation happened to the Temple in the hundred forty and fifth year, on the 25th day of the month Appelus, and on the hundred fifty and third Olympiad, but it was dedicated anew, on the same day, the twenty-fifth of the month Appelus, on the hundred and forty-eighth year, and on the hundred and fifty-fourth Olympiad.
>
> Josephus' *Ant.* 12:7:6

In Josephus' dating, which follows that of I Maccabees, we see further support for Goldstein's three year hiatus between events. It would appear, that the desecration of the Temple took place on the 25th of Appelus in 145 A.S., or 25 Kislev, 167 BCE. Goldstein would agree on the year, but would select 15 Kislev as the date of desecration. The rededication of the Temple, which took place three years later, occurred on 25 Appelus, 148 A.S., or 25 Kislev, 164 BCE.

From what we have learned about the character of our earliest sources, these seem the best approximations possible. For the rest of this work, then, we will assume that the desecration of the Temple occurred during Tishri, 167 BCE. According to I Maccabees and Josephus, the restoration of the Temple occurred three years later, in Tishri, 164 BCE. Chanukah, as a festival, had its beginning with these two events, and was celebrated yearly starting in 163 BCE.

Additional Theories relating to the Beginning of Chanukah

Many theories link Chanukah to other festivals prevalent throughout the ancient world. Chanukah has thus been connected to the Jewish Festival of Sukkot, and to the Greek Dionysian festival. Many scholars connect light-centered pagan sacrifices to the oil lamps which are a standard part of the Chanukah festival. Reviewing these theories will place the beginning of Chanukah in its early ritualistic context.

Scholars who connect the holidays of Sukkot and Chanukah base their theories on specific references found in II Maccabees:

> And now we ask you [the Jews of Egypt] to celebrate the Days of Tabernacles in the Month of Kislev.
> II M 1:9

> Inasmuch as we are about to celebrate, on the twenty-fifth of Kislev, the Purification of the Temple, we thought to let you know, so that you, too, might celebrate it as Days of Tabernacles and Days of the Fire...
> II M 1:18

> Joyfully they held an eight-day celebration, after the pattern of Tabernacles, remembering how a short time before they spent the festival of Tabernacles like wild beasts, in the mountains and in the caves. Therefore, holding wreathed wands, and branches bearing ripe fruit, and palm fronds, they offered songs of praise to Him [sic] Who had victoriously brought about the purification of His Place.
> II M. 10:6-7

II Maccabees thus establishes a distinct parallel between Sukkot and Chanukah. Indeed, the two holidays do seem strangely similar.

Rankin draws our attention to four common elements. 1) Sukkot and Chanukah are both eight days in duration. As celebrated in Palestine, Sukkot lasted seven days, but when shemini atseret is added, the duration extends to eight days; 2) the singing of praises,as noted in II M. 10:6-7 is equated with the singing of the hallel, as it was sung on all three pilgrimage festivals (and also, later, during Chanukah); 3) the carrying of branches and fruits during Chanukah would solidify the connection with Sukkot; 4) during Sukkot, the women's court of the Temple was illuminated. Some scholars connect this with the illumination of homes during Chanukah. [30]

Rankin suggests that the connection between the two holidays is rooted in their both marking a new year. Falling during the end of December, Chanukah is equated with the Syrian new year. But Exodus 23:16 associates Sukkot, too, with some celebration of the new year:

> ...and the Feast of the Ingathering [Sukkot] at the end of the year, when you gather in the results of your work from the field.
> Exodus 23:16

Both Sukkot and Chanukah celebrate new years. [31]

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[30] Rankin, pp. 91-98.

[31] Rankin, pp. 203-4.

One problem with Rankin's speculations is the origin of the text in II Maccabees, which was penned carefully to make Chanukah palatable and important to the Jews of Egypt, and might therefore have deliberately paired it with Sukkot. Coming in the fall, lasting eight days, having a hallel, and having some element of illumination, Sukkot was the perfect candidate for a holiday which would give some backing to the Chanukah festival. The author of the letter in II Maccabees saw this possibility, and made it an even stronger case by adding the carrying of fruits and branches to Chanukah. He then mentioned it three times during his work, to ensure the prominence of the connection in the minds of his readers. Checking the texts of I Maccabees, Josephus' Antiquities, and Megillat Ta'anit, the reader finds no trace of the connection between Chanukah and Sukkot. The paucity of textual evidence demonstrates that the connection between Chanukah and Sukkot has little or no factual basis.

Another holiday connected to Chanukah comes from outside the pale of Jewish tradition. Wellhausen postulates a connection between Chanukah and the Dionysian festival:

> [This festival on the 25th of Kislev was] a nature-festival of the winter-solstice and had first found entrance to Jerusalem through the heathen, as a Dionysus-celebration, and thereafter had not been abolished, but had been rendered harmless through reinterpretation. [32]

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[32] Rankin, p. 105.

This celebration of Dionysus took place during the 25th of every month, which happened also to be the day of Antiochus IV's birthday. [33] Wellhausen bases his claim on the festival called Dusares, known from Petra, which took place on the 25th of December. Dusares was known by Greeks as Dionysus. It was a holiday that celebrated the Lord of heaven, and the Greek god Zeus Olympius. Wellhausen reasons that the people of Judah would call that god ba'al shamayim. It would not be a great step, then, to establish a holiday which celebrated the victory of this god over other forces. Wellhausen believes that this holiday became Chanukah. [34]

Rankin suggests another theory for the pagan beginnings of Chanukah. He points out that most festivals are held at times which relate to natural events. Chanukah, takes place around the time of the winter solstice, the time of utmost darkness in the world. It would be quite natural for a holiday that involved light to develop in this time frame. There was a festival in Egypt, celebrated at this time of darkness, called the Kronia festival. In Rome, they celebrated Saturnalia, a festival in which people waited for the return of the sun. In Alexandria, there is evidence

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[33] Cf. II M. 6:7.

[34] Rankin, p. 106.

of a similar festival known as Kikella. [35] In fact, light holds a position of paramount importance in almost every religion. [36]

Rankin suggests that Chanukah is the Jewish adoption the festival of Kronos-Helios. Kronos was a Syrian god, celebrated every year for the thirty days starting November 18th. Similarly, Helios was a winter holiday celebrated by the Licinians. During both of these holidays, worshippers would make home sacrifices on conical pillars near the doors of their homes. Many scholars say that the festivals were identical. Rankin combines the names of the festivals, calling them "the festival of Kronos-Helios." He maintains that the light element of Chanukah is representative of the reign of God, as it was in the pagan festivals.[37] The Chanukiah, Rankin continues, is related to the conical pillars upon which the worshippers of Kronos-Helios gave sacrifices near their doors.[38]

From Rankin's hypothesis, it would seem that many of the elements of celebration present in Chanukah come from the pagan rituals which surrounded the early celebrants. If Chanukah definitely began in this manner, it would provide us with

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[35] Rankin, p. 193.

[36] For a full study of this phenomenon, see Mircea Eliade, *Mephistopheles and the Androgyne*, trans. J. M. Cohen (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965).

[37] Rankin, pp. 191-205.

[38] Rankin, p. 140.

incontestable sources for the various elements we find in its celebration. Unfortunately, it is nearly impossible to prove the veracity of one theory or another. We are left with many theories, all interesting, yet none conclusive.

The study of the early history of Chanukah tells us that there was probably some pagan element in its origin. Unfortunately, we are unable to accurately gauge paganism's influence, and in any event, the main focus of this study is the ritual developed by Jews in the years subsequent to Chanukah's origins, whetever these origins may have been. With much of our early groundwork in place, we are now ready to move on to the central theme of this chapter.

The Ritual and Liturgy of the Early Chanukah Celebration

Utilizing the four sources outlined above, we will now reconstruct the early liturgy and ritual of the Chanukah festival, beginning with the earliest source, I Maccabees, which incorporates the following description of the holiday celebration:

> They celebrated the dedication of the altar for eight days, joyfully bringing burnt offerings and sacrificing peace offerings and thank offerings. They decorated the front of the nave with golden cornices and bosses and restored the gates and the chambers and fitted them with doors. The people were overjoyed as the shame afflicted by the gentiles was removed. Judas and his brothers and the entire assembly of Israel decreed that the days of the dedication of the altar should be observed at their time of year annually for eight days, beginning with

> the twenty-fifth of the month of Kislev, with joy and gladness.
>
> I M. 4:56-60

Among the interesting aspects of the description in I Maccabees, is the fact that the festival of the dedication already lasts eight days. Clearly, from the very beginning of the holiday, Jews have celebrated Chanukah for a period of eight days. Most Jewish holidays last seven days in Palestine, and are only extended to eight days when the date of their beginning is in doubt. Chanukah turns out to be the longest of the Jewish holidays. This is especially strange, when one considers that it commemorates a post-Scriptural miracle. Nonetheless, the sources are unanimous that it lasts for eight days.

During the dedication festivities, the Maccabees brought the regular burnt offerings, as required by the Torah. They also offered at least one additional sacrifice, of "thanks" and "praise." These offerings may have been the beginning of two of the prominent themes in our present-day Chanukah celebration. Currently, we recite hanerot halalu, cited in the eighth-century masechet soferim. Hanerot halalu explains that we light the Chanukah candles "in order to thank and to praise Your [God's] great name." Though the prayer comes from a later period, its theme is evident in I Maccabees. The theme of praise and thanksgiving develops early in the celebration of Chanukah, and stays with us through today.

Also in I Maccabees, we find the Hasmoneans decorating the Temple so that it may be appropriate for the service of God. There may be some connection between the idea of decorating the Temple, and the restrictions on the use of the light of a Chanukah lamp. Both decorations and Chanukah lights are used only for the sake of their beauty, and never for profit or gain. The concept of hidur mitzvah may thus have its origin in this Temple setting, long before it became part of any written tradition.

There could also be a direct link between the replacement of the doors of the Temple, and the Tannaitic placement of the Chanukiah next to the doors of the home. The idea of solid doors (and the keeping out of the infidel) is a powerful image to a people who have been subjected to poor treatment by invading armies. Also, as noted above, pagan worship often took place on altars near the doors of the home. Furthermore, the image of the door is constant throughout the Chanukah celebrations of the centuries.

Finally, in the text in I Maccabees, we see the beginning of a most joyous holiday. The word "joy" appears more than any other word in the narrative, three times in one tiny descriptive passage. This is consistent throughout all the texts we have, including Josephus and II Maccabees. For all these texts to agree, Chanukah must have been celebrated from the beginning with tremendous rejoicing among all the people of Israel.

The source in II Maccabees, while very interesting, is historically suspect. Written after I Maccabees, with an overwhelming political bias, it would seem less authentic in any discussion of early ritual. It says:

> On the very same date on which the temple was profaned by foreigners occurred the purification of the temple, on the twenty-fifth of the ninth month (that is, Kislev). Joyfully they held an eight-day celebration, after the pattern of Tabernacles [Sukkot], remembering how a short time before they spent the festival of Tabernacles like wild beasts, in the mountains and in the caves. Therefore, holding wreathed wands, and branches bearing ripe fruit, and palm fronds, they offered songs of praise to Him [sic] Who had victoriously brought about the purification of His Place. By vote of the commonwealth they decreed a rule for the entire nation of the Jews to observe these days annually.
>
> II M. 10:5-8

Of note in II Maccabees is an almost identical declaration of the holiday to that found in I Maccabees. Both indicate that the Israelites voted on the future of Chanukah celebrations. In I Maccabees, Judah, his brothers, and the entire assembly of Israel unanimously decree that the holiday be added to the annual calendar. In II Maccabees, the entire commonwealth decrees the observance of the holiday in years to come. Whatever actually occurred, the sense of unanimity is striking, especially when seen in these two divergent texts.

Josephus continues this theme of unanimous agreement in his description of the beginnings of Chanukah:

> (12:7:6) So on the five and twentieth day of the month Caslev, which the Macedonians call Appelus,

> they lighted the lamps that were on the candlestick, and offered incense upon the (altar of incense), and laid the loaves upon the table (of shew-bread), and offered burnt offerings upon the new altar (of burnt-offerings).
>
> (12:7:7) Now Judas celebrated the Festival of the restoration of the sacrifices of the Temple for eight days; and omitted no sort of pleasure thereon; but he feasted them upon very rich and splendid sacrifices; and he honored God, and delighted them by hymns and psalms. Nay, they were so very glad at the revival of their customs, when, after a long time of intermission, they unexpectedly had regained the freedom of their worship, that they made it a law for their posterity, that they should keep a festival on account of the restoration of their temple worship, for eight days. And from that time to this we celebrate this festival and call it Lights. I suppose the reason was, because this liberty beyond our hopes appeared to us; and that thence was the name given to the festival.
>
> Antiquities 12:7:6-7

It is worthwhile to spend a moment comparing some aspects of Josephus' description with the description found in I Maccabees. As Solomon Zeitlin points out, the name of the holiday in I Maccabees is "the days of the dedication of the altar." In Josephus' epic, it is called "the festival of lights." [39] It would appear that Chanukah underwent some radical changes in the years between the conclusion of I Maccabees and the writing of the Antiquities. While there is one indication of lighting the candles in the Temple in I Maccabees (I M. 4:50), the lighting is not central to the holiday. Instead, the emphasis is on the dedication of the Temple, and the re-creation of the altar. In

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[39] Zeitlin, pp. 8-9.

contrast, Josephus gives the lights a central place, naming the entire holiday after them.

From the texts we have, it is very hard to pinpoint exactly when Chanukah shifted from a holiday centering around the dedication of the Temple to a holiday focusing on Josephus' concepts of light and freedom. From a comparison of these texts, we can tell that the lights were a part of Chanukah at the time of the completion of I Maccabees, possibly as early as 135 BCE. The lights grew in significance, becoming the overwhelming focus of the holiday sometime in the first century CE, i.e., prior to Josephus, writing in the year 90. Beyond this broad dating, it is impossible to be more exact. By 100 CE, it appears that the custom was firmly in place. Solomon Zeitlin differentiates the dedication aspect, which he sees as the focus of the religious ceremony in Temple times, from the popular perspective, which fastened on the idea of a victory over the enemy:

> In the Temple it was celebrated by bringing sacrifices and singing hymns and it was known by the name of Hanukkah, i.e., the festival of the dedication. The people, however, privately celebrated this holiday with lights because this festival, besides being in commemoration of the dedication of the altar, was also celebrated in commemoration of the victory of the Jews over the Syrians with the re-establishment of the Jewish State. Thus, besides being a religious festival it was also a national one. The people marched in the streets with torches. In later periods, when for political reasons it was impossible to have the celebration in the streets with torches, they confined this part of the festival to kindling

> lights in their own houses, and, therefore, Josephus calls Hanukkah the festival of Lights, as the people knew it.[40]

For Zeitlin, then, the holiday always held a dual meaning. First, for those people associated with the inner workings of the Temple, the holiday took on religious significance - that of reenacting the purification of the Temple. For those outside the Temple, there was a concurrent celebration of the victory over the Syrians. This public aspect of the holiday took the form of marching and parading, with people holding torches and singing. I Maccabees, written by a pro-Hasmonean Temple advocate, concentrated on the workings of the holiday inside the Temple court, ignoring the rejoicing in the streets. Josephus, an anti-Temple historian ignored most of the Temple celebration, and described only what went on in the street.

One final text that sheds some light on the early study of Chanukah is Megillat Ta'anit. In the Ur-text of this document as Lichtenstein defines it,[41] there is little concrete evidence as to the ritual of Chanukah. It tells us:

> On the twenty-fifth [of Kislev] is Chanukah. Eight days without lamentation.
>
> megillat ta'anit to 25th of Kislev

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[40] Zeitlin, pp. 8-9.

[41] Lichtenstein, p. 341.

The minute amount of information we get from this reference is twofold: no fasting was allowed on Chanukah and there was no lamentation, that is, there were no eulogies for those who were buried during Chanukah. While there is more information to be gleaned from the following lines of megillat ta'anit, it is not appropriate to this time period, for it was written in the Mishnaic period. These two rulings combine to reinforce the festive nature of Chanukah, since it was prohibited to do anything which would force sadness upon Israel during this happy time of year.

Conclusion

From our earliest sources, it is possible to reconstruct the festival in various stages of its development, among various groups. The common elements which arose in this early period include a joyous festival, eight days of celebrations, and hymns and singing of praises to God the redeemer. Some works also include the waving of branches and the bearing of fruits; the absence of fasting and lamentations; and the celebration of liberty and freedom.

During this period there is little in the way of solid, specific development of liturgy or ritual. Instead, the concepts and themes which will pervade the festival through the centuries are set by the actions of its early celebrators. In the next

chapter, we will trace the further development of these themes as they grow into the ritual which forms the basis for our celebrations today.

Chapter 2

The Development of Chanukah in the Tannaitic Period

During the Tannaitic period, Chanukah begins to develop its own distinctive rituals and liturgy. While no exact text of the blessings seems to have emerged, and while there is no legal ruling as to the precise time and place of lighting Chanukah lamps, the lighting of the lamps did occur during the Tannaitic period. In the home, fasts are prohibited, women may mourn only in a limited fashion, and the hallel is recited. In the synagogue, the first liturgical changes are evident during this period, with alterations to the regular Torah readings, and additions to the service during musaf. These changes signify the important position of Chanukah in the developing Jewish calendar.

The best known source for Tannaitic material is the Mishnah, compiled by Rabbi Judah the Prince, circa 200 CE. Unfortunately, there are a scant six references to Chanukah in the Mishnah. Unlike other holidays, there is no full tractate dedicated to it. In other Tannaitic sources, the story is much the same, with five references in the collection of baraitot called the Tosefta, and three Tannaitic Baraitot mentioning Chanukah in the Babylonian Talmud. One additional source, the Tannaitic sections of the scholion of Megillat Ta'anit (as defined in the source-critical text of Hans Lichtenstein),

provides some information, but does not include much specific data on the ritual practice of its period. Instead, Megillat Ta'anit concentrates on the story of the original dedication of the Temple. Despite the paucity of directly relevant material, we will now attempt to piece together a picture of the celebration of Chanukah during Tannaitic times.

The Mishnah

The Mishnah generally portrays Chanukah as a holiday of joy and celebration, and disallows any type of sad behavior. At the most basic level, the Rabbis of a local town "may not decree a public fast ...during [the Feast of] the Dedication." [1] This is indicative of the restraints placed upon any non-joyous activity. Another indication is the Mishnaic prohibition on mourning:

> On the first day of the month, or on Chanukah, or on Purim, women may sing dirges or beat their hands, but they may not wail. [2]

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[1] M. Tan. 2:10, Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933). All further references to the Mishnah will utilize this translation. A similar story, about a fast in Lod appears in T. Tan. 2:5, and also in RH 18b. This story tells of a declared fast in Lod, whereupon Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua go down to Lod and begin breaking the rules of fasting to demonstrate that there should be no fasting during Chanukah.

[2] M. MK 3:9.

The eight days of Chanukah carried serious significance in the spiritual life of the Palestinian community. Even at an important event such as the death of a member of the family, there was to be some consideration of the mood set by Chanukah.

Chanukah also caused changes in the calendar-keeping practices of the Rabbis. In Tannaitic times, the beginning of the month represented a social problem. Though the Rabbis probably knew sufficient mathematics and astronomy to predict the new moon without actually observing it, they retained the ancient method of setting the new moon only by sighting it. Furthermore, they retained the centrality of the patriarch demanding that witnesses appear before him only. Messengers would then be sent to report when the new moon had been seen. These messengers, however, were not sent out every month, but only on those months with a significant holiday in them. Chanukah was included in this list:

> Because of six New Moons do messengers go forth [to proclaim the time of their appearing]: Because of Nisan, to determine the time of Passover, because of Ab, to determine the time of the Fast; because of Elul, to determine the New Year; because of Tishri, to determine aright the set feasts; because of Kislev, to determine the time of [the feast of] the Dedication, and for Adar because of Purim.... [3]

The inclusion of Chanukah in this auspicious listing of holidays, gives us some insight into the importance associated with the

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[3] M. RH 1:3.

feast. All important holidays, aside from those which are easily calculable from the dates of known holidays (Sukkot, or Shavuot, for example) are included in this list. In the mindset of the Tannaim, Chanukah was an important holiday which deserved to be celebrated at the proper time.

The dating of Chanukah is important for another reason. Chanukah also appears as a delimiter of a time period in the Mishnah.[4] The passage tells us that until Sukkot, one who brings first-fruits to the Temple may recite the appropriate vow.[5] From Sukkot until Chanukah, one may bring the first-fruit offerings, but may not recite the vow. This is an indication of the common understanding of the dating of Chanukah. Were Chanukah an unknown holiday, it would have made no sense to use it as a terminus ad quem for the practice. Its use as such implies that it was a generally recognized holiday in the Jewish community by the time of the Mishnah.

While there is no direct Mishnaic statement on the lighting of lamps, lighting them seems to have become commonplace. In an interesting manner, the following Mishnaic passage lets us know that Chanukah lamps were certainly in use by the time of the compilation of the Mishnah:

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[4] M. Bik. 1:6.

[5] Cf. Deut. 26:4-10, for the appropriate vow.

> If a camel laden with flax passed by in the public domain and its load of flax entered into a shop and caught fire from the shopkeeper's light, and so set fire to a large building, the owner of the camel is culpable; but if the shopkeeper left his light outside, the shopkeeper is culpable. R. Judah says: If it was a Hanukkah-light he is not culpable. [6]

This amusing story of an over-burdened camel demonstrates that Rabbi Judah recognized the obligation of the Chanukah lamp. Chanukah lamps, probably placed near the door of the house, were commonplace enough to be considered as a relevant factor in the resolution of a damage suit.

The Mishnaic picture of Chanukah includes two specifications of practice for the holiday. Interestingly, these have to do with synagogue practice alone, and ignore the existence of any home ceremony. In Mishnah Megillah, we find our earliest pieces of evidence for a special Torah reading during Chanukah:

> At all these times they break off [from the set order in the reading of the Law]: on the first days of the months, at the [Feast of the] Dedication, at Purim, on days of fasting... [7]

> At the [Feast of the] Dedication [they read the section] 'The Princes.' [8]

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[6] M. BK 6:6. An almost identical version may be found in T. BK 6:28, and in a baraita in Shab. 21b.

[7] M. Meg. 3:4.

[8] M. Meg. 3:6.

Chanukah has become a liturgical event, not only in the home, but in the synagogue as well. By the end of the second century CE, it is clear that Chanukah had become a small, but meaningful addition to the liturgical tradition of the synagogue.

Second, these statements tell us that there was already a standard Torah portion that was read during Chanukah. The portion called "the princes" is that of Numbers 7:1-89, in which Moses finishes setting up the Tabernacle. After he completes his work, all the princes of the tribes of Israel bring forth their offerings, and sacrifice them before God. This reading is appropriate to the festival of Chanukah in two ways. First, like the Hasmoneans in the Temple, Moses establishes the Tabernacle as the main place of worship for the Israelites. Second, at the end of the process of dedication, the officiants offer sacrifices before God. The parallels between the two stories are striking. It is difficult to think of a more appropriate Torah portion for use during Chanukah.

The Mishnaic picture of Chanukah indicates a holiday in an early stage of development. It seems that while a Torah portion is set, and the interruption of the cycle is noted, there are no other requirements in terms of synagogue observance. At home, candle lighting is not mentioned as an halachic obligation, nor are there any blessings mentioned inside or outside of the synagogue. It would seem that the holiday was observed, but was not fully defined at the time of the compilation of the Mishnah.

Tannaitic Baraitot in the Talmud

Other Tannaitic sources give us a similar picture, with just a few more details. Three major baraitot in Shab. 21b provide essential information about Chanukah. The first reinforces the information we have from our earlier sources about the early celebration of Chanukah, while initiating a new motif in the Chanukah story:

> What is the reason for Chanukah? For our Rabbis taught: On the twenty-fifth of Kislev [commence] the days of *Hanukkah*, which are eight on which a lamentation for the dead and fasting are forbidden. For when the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oils therein, and when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed against and defeated them, they made search and found only one cruse of oil which lay with the seal of the High Priest, but which contained sufficient for one days lighting only; yet a miracle occurred, and it lasted eight days. The year after, they set and made days of gladness, with psalms [hallel] and prayers of thanksgiving [hoda'ah].

While echoing the Mishnaic prohibitions on mourning and fasting, this baraita offers a systematic restatement of the Chanukah story. It lets us know, once again, that Chanukah was celebrated from the year after the dedication of the Temple. In addition, it provides us with the earliest version of the story of the cruse of oil, a tale never found in earlier texts! While this is the most familiar story for the modern Jew, it does not seem to be present before the Tannaitic period, and in fact was insignificant enough in 200 CE to have escaped mention in the Mishnah.

The cruse story is designed, perhaps, to explain Chanukah in terms the Rabbis liked - the terms of a divine miracle. The Rabbis might have been hesitant to celebrate a military victory per se, since they themselves had little military might. Further, they may have hesitated to celebrate military power and Jewish rebelliousness in the period of the late Roman empire. Then too, they were not particularly enamored of the Hasmonean priesthood, since the Hasmonean monarchy had broken with the Pharisees under Alexander Jannaeus.[9] They could feel more comfortable, however, with this transformation of the earlier holiday. If the Rabbis could put a divine miracle into the story of Chanukah, it would become acceptable for celebration in their community.

This baraita reflects another major concern of the Rabbis. The duality of purity and impurity held tremendous power during the Tannaitic period. Fully one sixth of the entire Mishnah is dedicated to subject of purity. Thus, the Greeks, could profitably be pictured as entering the Temple, and immediately defiling the oil. This would seem a projection of Tannaitic purity concerns onto the earlier days of the Maccabees, since we see little indication of Maccabean concern for the purity of oil in pre-Tannaitic texts.

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[9] Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (New York: Athenuem, 1959), pp. 256-7.

The final important piece of information comes with this baraita's notification that the holiday is celebrated by the singing of hallel and hoda'ah. There are two ways to read this passage. It is possible to say that the holiday was celebrated with hallel in the sense of "praise of God." It is also possible that this statement indicates a recitation of the specific psalms which make up the prayer we call "hallel." One discussion which appears in similar form in both the tosefta and Ta'anit, sheds further light on the hallel:

> [On] eighteen days and nights we finish the hallel, and they are these: the eight days of Sukkot, and the eight days of Chanukah, the first day of Passover... [10]

Thus, we see that the word hallel means the actual recitation of a specific set of psalms, possibly 113-118, as is our custom, though possibly some other combination, or even psalms 113 and 114, as the Mishnah's discussion of Passover may indicate.[11] Indeed the determination of the hallel psalms may have changed throughout the Tannaitic era. Whatever the case, recitation of some psalms as a hallel was an integral part of the celebration of Chanukah.

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[10] From T. Suk. 2:3. A similar version, repeated in the names of Rabbi Yochanon and Rabbi Shimeon ben Yehotsedek, may be found at Tan. 28b. Some manuscripts of the tosefta have the word "read" in place of "finish."

[11] M. Pes. Ch. 10.

As for the word hoda'ah as mentioned in the Talmudic baraita above, it would appear to indicate simple thanksgiving, or more likely, acknowledgement (lehodot can mean both, as we see from Psalm 118). I am unaware of any specific formulaic thanksgiving ceremony in extant texts from this period. By the end of the Tannaitic period, the word hoda'ah has not assumed a specialized liturgical meaning.

With all its activity in the synagogue, Chanukah had not disappeared from the home. Another baraita provides us with our most detailed information on the home celebration of Chanukah. In Shabbat, we see the Rabbis' discussion of the actual obligation of lighting the Chanukah lamp:

> Our Rabbis taught: The precept of *hanukkah* [demands] one light for a man and his household; the zealous [kindle] a light for each member [of the household]; and the extremely zealous,- Beth Shammai maintain: On the first day eight lights are lit and thereafter they are gradually reduced; but Beth Hillel say: On the first day one is lit and thereafter they are progressively increased. [12]

Clearly the lighting of Chanukah lamps was very much in place during the Tannaitic period, and had been so, at least in scholarly circles, since the period of the zugot! If we assume that the attributions of these viewpoints are correct, then the lighting of Chanukah lamps may have been a religious obligation as early as the beginning of the first century CE, and was certainly

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[12] Shab. 21b.

considered binding by the end of the Tannaitic period, circa 200 CE.

As it appears in Shabbat, the baraita deals with the issue of how many candles to light each night. To Bet Shammai, the obligation is to light eight lights the first night, then seven on the second, then six on the third, and so on, down to one on the last night. The symbolic advantage to this is its symbolism of the amount of oil left in the cruse. The cruse of oil begins full (eight lights) and ends empty (a single light).

In contrast, Bet Hillel suggests that you light one light on the first night, two on the second, and so on, up to eight on the last night. The Tannaitic compiler of this material gives us no justification for this sequence, but one is suggested in a later Amoraic passage (see chapter 3). One might also suggest that the blaze of lights on the final night of Chanukah is far more dramatic, giving the holiday a more enticing ritual tension, as dark gives way to light.

Whatever the reasons behind these two systems, there were definitely two competing customs when it came to the lighting of the Chanukah lamps. While the Talmud gives us no overt ruling on which custom to follow, we assume that halachah follows Bet Hillel, since this is not one of the exceptional cases delineated by the Talmud as an instance when Bet Shammai prevails. Not surprisingly, we find that our custom today follows Bet Hillel.

In terms of the minimum obligation of Chanukah, the Rabbis required the lighting of one light for each adult male and his household, while allowing those around him to light the lamps if they chose. There is no mention in the Tannaitic material of women, or children, but it would seem that they would be permitted to light lamps as well, though not required to do so. The phrasing of the commandment, using the words "kol echad v'echad," surely indicates that all could participate.

Our final baraita gives us insight into the beginnings of the custom of placing the Chanukah light next to the door:

> Our Rabbis taught: It is incumbent to place the *Hanukkah* lamp by the door of one's house on the outside; if one dwells in an upper chamber, he places it at the window nearest the street. But in times of danger it is sufficient to place it on the table. [13]

During the Tannaitic period, then, the Chanukah lamp began to be placed by the door. Those who have a door which opens into the street are obligated to place the Chanukah lamp outside of their door, in the public way. Those who live in an upper chamber must place it by the window. The purpose of this is to display the lamp to those in the street. While the custom goes unexplained here, the concept behind it is probably similar to the later idea of publicizing the miracle. While stressing the importance of this publicity, the Rabbis realize that the importance of Jewish

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[13] Shab. 21b.

observance must come after the sanctity of Jewish life. This explains the inclusion of the clause about "times of danger."

The picture that is formed by the baraitot in the Talmud points to a holiday with the specific home practice of lamp-lighting, and the placement of the lamp within sight of the public way. There was a variance in the number of lamps lit each night, depending on the "zealousness" of the household. Finally, there was some division among the schools as to whether one started with eight candles, or one candle. These are the major issues outlined in the Talmudic Baraitot. What remains for us now, is to examine the Tannaitic material in Megillat Ta'anit, and in the Tosefta.

Other Tannaitic Material - The Tosefta and Megillat Ta'anit

Aside from the aforementioned sources in the Tosefta, there is only one reference with any import to the ritual setting of Chanukah. This comes in Tosefta Berachot:

> Any holiday when there is no musaf added to the service, as in Chanukah or Purim, during shacharit and minchah [the worshipper] prays the shemonah esreh and says words corresponding to the appropriate event. If [the worshipper] does not say it [the additional prayer], they should not repeat it [start again at the beginning of the shemonah esreh, since they have not fulfilled their obligation - i.e. this is not an obligation on the highest level][14]

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[14] T. Ber. 3:10.

Since, during Chanukah, there is no musaf service added on account of the holiday, the only place that additions can be made is in the shemonah esreh of the regular services. While this text does not tell us when to make the addition, later texts place the addition in the hoda'ah, a ruling that coheres with other Tannaitic traditions to this effect.[15] Although Chanukah and Purim are important enough to bring a timely addition to the tefillah, they are not important enough to warrant the highest level of halachic obligation, that of the reader's repetition of the tefillah should he forget the addition.

In Megillat Ta'anit, there is little actual descriptive material that proves to be of use. Lichtenstein identifies parts of the scholion as Tannaitic in origin. These parts are filled with large sections of narrative material, mostly telling the story of the origin of Chanukah. This narrative material does, however, raise some interesting questions.

First, it points to a discrepancy in the number of days in Chanukah. The dedication of Moses, in Leviticus 9:33 took eight days. The dedication of Solomon lasted eight days as well, according to II Chronicles 7:9. Why does the dedication associated with Chanukah last for eight days? Depending on which text of Megillat Ta'anit you choose, there may be more than one answer:

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[15] Cf. pp. 41-43.

> Version 1
> What did they see that made them make this Chanukah eight days long? In the days of the rule of Greece, the Hasmoneans entered the Temple, and built the altar, and they whitewashed it and all seven (!) days they were repairing the instruments of service.[16]

In light of this text, it would appear that Chanukah is celebrated for eight days because of the physical state of the Temple when the Hasmoneans took it over. The Syrians (or Greeks in this text) must have left it in such poor condition that when the Jews re-entered the Temple, it took them seven days to clean it, and one day to offer the appropriate sacrifices. Thus, the total here would have been eight days because of the time spent servicing what the Syrians had destroyed.

In our second version, there appears a motif which will become prevalent in the Palestinian development of the story of Chanukah:

> Version 2
> What did they see that made them make this Chanukah eight days long? In the days of the rule of Greece, the Hasmoneans entered har habayit with seven spears of iron and connected them with wood, and they were busy with them all eight [days].[17]

In this version, we see the "seven spears of iron" explanation of the lighting of Chanukah lamps. In Palestinian tradition, it seems that seven spears of iron were commonly thought to have been found

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[16] Lichtenstein, p. 341.

[17] Lichtenstein, p. 341.

in the Temple. These were bound together to form the menorah and used for worship in the Temple. According to version 2, it took eight days to make this arrangement suitable for use in the Temple. Thus, the dedication took eight days, and Chanukah should be celebrated for eight days.

Either of these texts would assert that the Hasmoneans spent eight days in the Temple when they dedicated it. It would seem logical that the dedication did take eight days, and that Chanukah is modelled after that time period. This is in direct conflict with the other stories of the dedication of the Temple,[18] which took seven days each time. This conflict leads the author of this section of Megillat Ta'anit to include the explanation of the eight days of Chanukah. It must have been a very pertinent question during Tannaitic times.

A final question raised in Megillat Ta'anit is that of the practice of Chanukah throughout the generations. Why is it that we light lamps on Chanukah every year? It would appear that the author of the Tannaitic section of Megillat Ta'anit would have us believe that the lamps we light are symbolic of our "exit from anguish and oppression, [19] into spirit [betseitam metsarah leruchah]:"

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[18] Solomon's dedication, Cf. II Chr. 7:9. Moses' dedication, Cf. Lev. 8:33.

[19] Cf. similarity with the words of Josephus on p. 30.

> And why is this practiced throughout the generations? Only because they made their exit from anguish and oppression, into spirit. And they said hallel, hoda'ah, and they lit lamps of pure [oil].[20]

This is the best generalized Tannaitic description of the Chanukah celebration. Chanukah was a time of joy and celebration, symbolic of the departure from anguish and oppression, representing a new venture into the world of the spirit. All manner of praise and thanksgiving were appropriate, as were the joyous lighting of lamps.

The Jews of the Tannaitic period celebrated Chanukah in the following ways: 1) they completed the hallel every day; 2) they lit lamps of pure oil, placed next to their doors, or as near to the street as possible, but they said no set berachot. The number of lamps lit each night varied depending on the school you followed, and your level of zealousness; 3) in the synagogue, Torah was read, from the section called the "princes" in Numbers 7; 4) with an alteration to the shemonah esreh, Tannaitic Jews said hoda'ah.

While there is not a tremendous amount of material which deals with Chanukah in Tannaitic literature, it is possible to reconstruct the major elements of the celebration of Chanukah. The Tannaitic period was one of major growth, during which the celebration of Chanukah changed dramatically, both in the home and

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[20] Lichtenstein, p. 341.

in the synagogue. In turn, two stories developed to explain the roots of Chanukah. The story of the miracle of the oil first surfaces here. The alternate story of Chanukah, that of the eight spears, also appears during this period. As practice began to be more defined, people looked for new ways to explain the reason behind the Chanukah celebration. This search seems to have been fulfilled during the Tannaitic period, and many of the answers chosen then remain with us today.

Chapter 3

Chanukah in the Babylonian Amoraic Tradition

The Amoraic period in Babylonia marks the single most intensive period of development in the history of Chanukah. During this time, the loose liturgical traditions of Chanukah begin to solidify into the structured corpus that exists today. The Babylonian Amoraim examine every aspect of the celebration with a decided emphasis on making specific regulations regarding the ritual of Chanukah.

In their discussion of the Chanukah home ceremony, the Amoraim touch on the following issues: 1) the reason behind the lighting of Chanukah lamps -- pirsum hanes -- the publicity of the miracle; 2) The specifics of the obligation: how, when, and where one lights Chanukah lamps, who may do so, and the appropriate uses for the light from the Chanukah lamp; 3) the blessings which go with the lighting and sighting of a Chanukah lamp; and 4) miscellaneous legal rulings dealing with mourning and fasting during Chanukah.

The material dedicated to liturgical customs of the home and synagogue is rather limited by comparison. In fact, the Babylonian Amoraic exploration of the liturgy revolves around only three issues: the reading of the Torah and Haftarah for Chanukah, the recitation of the hallel, and changes to the birkat hamazon and tefillah.

In this chapter, we will recount the questions and answers offered for all of these issues, as they arise in the Babylonian Talmud. We will begin with the most basic concept behind all the obligations of Chanukah, the publicity of the miracle.

1) The basic rubric of Chanukah - pirsum hanes

The underlying idea that the Rabbis see in Chanukah is pirsum hanes, or "the publicity of the miracle." Pirsum hanes dictates that one must place the burning Chanukah lamp in a public place, since this will tell all passersby of the miracle that God performed for the Hasmoneans. This concept of publicizing the miracle becomes the basis for many halachic decisions which shape the home rituals of Chanukah:

> Rabbah considered: [if one were] choosing between [purchasing oil for] the Chanukah lamp or [the wine for] the sanctification of the day [because it was impossible to do both, for financial reasons], which should one choose [to purchase]? The sanctification is preferable because it occurs more often during the year, but the Chanukah lamp advertises the miracle. After considering, he found it obvious. The Chanukah lamp is preferable because of the advertising of the miracle. [1]

Usually, the Rabbis decide the precedence of ritual obligations based on their frequency. This logic implies that Shabbat should take precedence over Chanukah, and wine for the Shabbat kiddush should certainly be purchased before one spends money on the oil

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[1] Shab. 23b.

for the Chanukah lamp. Abandoning the Rabbis' regular way of deciding the precedence of the holidays, Rabbah finds it obvious that the Chanukah lamp is more important than even the sanctification of Shabbat, normally of the greatest importance in the scheme of the holidays. The reason given is that the advertising of the miracle is more important. Realizing the gravity of the sanctification of the Shabbat, the Amoraic Rabbis must view pirsum hanes as a precept of considerable import.

In setting the regulations to be followed during Chanukah, the Rabbis of Amoraic Babylonia keep this precept well in mind. Pirsum Hanes touches every aspect of the Chanukah celebration, from the positioning of the lamps, to the timing of the lighting. Publicizing the miracle will be the common rubric which provides a conceptual overlay for all Rabbinic decisions on the ritual of Chanukah.

2) The Mitzvah of Chanukah

The Bavli presents a lengthy discourse on the question of lighting from one lamp to the next. In ancient times, Chanukah lamps were designed with little vessels filled with oil and a wick, so that it was possible to lift one up and light its neighbor from it. In this extremely complicated sugya, the Rabbis examine the question of the basic ritual obligation of Chanukah, trying to define the actual mitzvah incumbent on every Jew during the eight days of the festival:

> Rav said: One may not light from lamp to lamp. And Samuel said: One may....Abaye said that his master [Rabbah] would follow...Samuel [regarding this issue]. One may light from lamp to lamp....
>
> One of the Rabbis sits before Rabbi Ada bar Ahavah [and ponders the reasons behind these positions]. He sits and says: Rav's reason [that we don't light from lamp to lamp] is the cheapening [bizui] of the mitzvah. He [Rabbi Ada bar Ahavah] said: Do not heed him! The reason is that it impairs [makhechish] the precept.
>
> When would this [either cheapening or impairing] matter? It matters when one lights from lamp to lamp. For if we say [the reason behind it is] the cheapening of the mitzvah we may light from lamp to lamp [and we would still fulfill the obligation. In other words, it would appear that the person lighting was doing a poor job of it, but the obligation would still be fulfilled by the lighting.].
>
> But for one who says that it is because of impairing the mitzvah, lighting from lamp to lamp would be forbidden. [Since it actually impairs the performance of the mitzvah, and the obligation is not fulfilled]....[2]

The general question here is whether one is permitted to use one Chanukah lamp to light another Chanukah lamp. There are two different ways of lighting, based on this sugya. First, one may light the lamps normally, lighting a chip of wood (probably from the home fire) for each lamp, and then lighting the lamp directly from the chip. The other way of lighting, from lamp to lamp, is under dispute in this passage. The person lighting would kindle one lamp, and then use that lamp to light all the other lamps.

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[2] Shab. 22a-b.

Rav's problem with the practice of lighting from lamp to lamp could be based on pirsum hanes in two different ways. If the lamp is lit for the sake of Chanukah, it is dedicated to a sacred purpose, that of publicizing the miracle. If we use this dedicated lamp to light another lamp, we change the purpose assigned to the first lamp. The first lamp stops performing pirsum hanes, and assumes the role of a lighting instrument. By lighting another lamp from the first lamp, Rav claims, the first lamp ceases to publicize the miracle, interrupting the performance of the mitzvah of Chanukah.

On another level, if the lamp is used to light another lamp, it appears as if the light from the first lamp is diminished. Instead of each new lamp being a pure addition of new light, it would look as if one small light were merely spreading out over the lamps. Rav would say that any threat to pirsum hanes threatens the fulfillment of the mitzvah. If the light from the first lamp is diminished to light the others, people might not associate the lamps with the miracle of Chanukah, and pirsum hanes may not be achieved. Rav, therefore, calls it "impairing" the percept.

Samuel, on the other hand, does not permit lighting from lamp to lamp for a totally different reason. If you light from one lamp to another, it looks as if you are not taking the time to light each lamp separately. To give the respect due this mitzvah, one needs to light each lamp separately, and to avoid doing the

"convenient" thing by lighting the lamps from each other. This would appear as if one were spurning the obligation. Thus, Samuel calls it "cheapening" the mitzvah.

The Talmud now brings in a test case. If one were to light a Chanukah lamp from another with a secular chip, Rav would not permit it, since it too diminished the light of the lamp, and used an unsanctified chip to transfer sanctified light. Samuel, in the interest of consistenccy, should also prohibit this lighting, since it did not show respect to the obligation. Therefore, the Talmud tells us:

> ...If you say that Rav and Samuel differ over the [direct lighting] from lamp to lamp, but [for lighting] with a chip Samuel forbids it, this is not a refutation. But, if you say that Samuel permits lighting with a chip also, then this is a refutation....

Since the sanctified light would be transferred by an unsanctified chip, Rav would never permit it. Samuel's opinion, on the other hand, proves controversial. If Samuel believes that one may transfer light from lamp to lamp with a chip, then that would refute his position that lighting from lamp to lamp is permissible. Why? The use of the secular chip would clearly denigrate the mitvzah as much as lighting from lamp to lamp, meaning that Samuel would be holding an inconsistent position. If, on the other hand, Samuel says that a chip may not be used, his argument stands.

> ...Rav said: [And how do you explain this story:] The western lamp in which was placed the same amount of oil as the other lamps, and the others were lit

> from it, but it still burned longer. Here, since the lamps are in fixed positions, it is not possible that he didn't take [a chip] and light them! [3]
>
> This is a problem for [both] the one who speaks of "cheapening the mitvzah," or "impairing the mitzvah" [since lighting with a secular chip is forbidden under both systems]. R. Papa reconciled it by saying that there were long wicks. [So that light could move from lamp to lamp without the chip as an intermediary] But doesn't this [still] cause a problem for one who says "impairing the mitzvah?" Yes, it does....

Even with R. Papa's fine suggestion, Rav's two problems still plague us - the problem of sharing the light from one lamp with another, and the problem of using a lamp instrumentally to light the next while it is fulfilling pirsum hanes. Even when one uses a wick to light the other lamps, that threatens pirsum hanes.

This debate about impairing or cheapening comes to an end, since Biblical proof is adduced from Leviticus that would permit lighting from lamp to lamp. (It seems that Samuel has won this round!) But the main question remains: What is the primary mitzvah of Chanukah? The text continues, going back to the original question:

> ...What do we resolve? R. Huna b. Joshua said: We see that if lighting constitutes the [primary] mitzvah [of Chanukah], then we may light from lamp to lamp. If placement [in a conspicuous place - i.e., pirsum hanes] constitutes the [primary] mitzvah, then we may not light from lamp to lamp....

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[3] Cf. Men. 78b.

We now look at the problem from another vantage point. Two new possibilities for the primary mitzvah of Chanukah are laid out before us. If lighting of the lamp is the primary mitzvah, then once it has been lit, the lighter's obligation has been fulfilled. Moving the lamp after it is lit is irrelevant, and thus one may light from lamp to lamp. On the other side, if the primary mitzvah is the placement of the lamp where everyone can see it, this would preclude lighting from lamp to lamp, since after each lamp was lit, it would have to be lifted out of place to light the next, invalidating the mitzvah.

The text resolves these varying viewpoints by offering two impossible solutions (A and B), before coming to its final resolution (C):

> Does the lighting or the placing constitute the mitzvah?
>
> **A:** Come and hear. Raba said: One who holds the [lit] lamp and stands does not do anything. We learn from this that the placement constitutes the mitzvah. - No! One seeing this person would think that he was doing it of his own accord [and since the observer did not understand why he was holding it, pirsum hanes would not take place].
>
> **B:** Come and hear. Raba said: One who lights it inside and brings it outside does nothing. It is well if you say that the lighting constitutes the mitzvah, but from this we see that the lighting must be done in the proper place, and therefore, he does nothing [he has not fulfilled the commandment]. But if you say that the placing is the commandment, why does he do nothing? Here, also the observer could say that he was doing it of his own accord.
>
> **C:** Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said: A lantern that was burning all day until the end of Shabbat is

> extinguished and relit. It is well if you say that lighting constitutes the mitzvah, that's correct. But, if you say that placing constitutes the mitzvah, instead of merely "he extinguished it and relit it," it should have said "he extinguished it, lifted it up, placed it, and relit it." Moreover, since the blessing we say is "who sanctified us with mitzvotav, and commanded us to light the Chanukah lamp," we learn from this that lighting constitutes the mitzvah. That proves it![4]

From the two impossible solutions above, our final resolution emerges. The Rabbis decide that the primary mitzvah of Chanukah is the lighting of the lamp. While placement is a consideration, a lit lamp in the right place may still be misinterpreted. Thus, it is the lighting of the lamp which will best fulfill the obligation of publicizing the miracle.

We learn two important facts from this sugya. First, we see that the Rabbis viewed the obligations of Chanukah through the prism of pirsum hanes. In the debate between Rav and Samuel, and indeed, in every part of this discussion of Chanukah lamps, every point had its basis in the concept of pirsum hanes. This heavy reliance on pirsum hanes is typical of the Amoraic treatment of ritual questions pertaining to Chanukah. Second, by the end of this sugya we know what the Rabbis felt was the primary mitzvah of Chanukah, and how they arrived at that priority. The lighting of the lamp was of the utmost importance, even when one lit from lamp to lamp, or moved the lamp from its position.

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[4] Shab. 22b.

While the primary mitzvah may be clear, its observance had already given rise to two different systems of practice. As we saw above,[5] Bet Hillel and Bet Shammai differ as to the lighting of the lamps. There is Amoraic proof that these two customs existed side by side in practice:

> Rabbah bar Bar Chanah said in the name of R. Yochanon: Two elders were in Sidon. One did [the mitzvah] according to Bet Shammai, while the other did [it] according to Bet Hillel. This one gave the reason as because of the bullocks of Sukkot, while this one gave the reason that we only increase in matters of holiness, and never decrease. [6]

The customs of the two schools were practiced simultaneously, at least in Sidon, and probably in other areas throughout the Talmudic world. The reason attached to Bet Shammai's opinion is because of the bullocks that were sacrificed during Sukkot; thirteen the first day, then twelve, and so on, decreasing in number each day of the holiday. [7] The Amoraim who interpreted the views of Bet Shammai found this to be an appropriate model for the Chanukah lamps. (Here we see another mysterious connection with Sukkot. Whether this is based on some knowledge of II Maccabees or some other reasoning is difficult to fathom.)

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[5] Cf. p. 44.

[6] Shab. 21b

[7] Num. 29:12.

Seeing that the celebration of Chanukah was a matter of holiness, Bet Hillel felt it was inappropriate to reduce the number of lamps each night. Perhaps in the eyes of Bet Hillel, the light represented God's presence. If you started with eight lamps, then the final night would be a disappointment, and an insult to God, since there would be less of God's symbolic presence than when the holiday began. Bet Hillel's reason, as stated by the Babylonian Amoraim, is that we always increase in matters of holiness, and should never decrease. This precept applies to the Chanukah lamps.

Samuel concurs with Bet Hillel's assessment of the holiness of the light from the Chanukah lamp:

> R. Judah said in the name of R. Asi (in the name of Rav): It is forbidden to count coins by the light of a Chanukah lamp. When he said this before Samuel, he said: It is because the light contains holiness....[8]

From Samuel's perspective, the light from a Chanukah lamp is dedicated to a holy purpose, and may not be used for secular goals like the counting of money.

Leaving our consideration of the holiness of the light, we turn to the specific directions for the lighting of the Chanukah lamp. First, the Rabbis examine the exact specifications of the lamp:

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[8] Shab. 22a.

> R. Isaac bar Redifah said in R. Huna's name: one lamp with two wicks counts for two people. Rabbah said: If one fills a vessel with oil, and encircles it with wicks, and covers it with a vessel, it is credited to many people. If one does not cover it, they have made a type of campfire, and it doesn't count for even one. [9]

In this description, a Chanukah lamp is made of a covered vessel filled with oil, with at least one wick per person. By establishing this rule, Rabbah wanted to ensure that there was a distinction between regular home fires, virtually omnipresent at night, and the burning lights of Chanukah. The difference in physical appearance would help to further the process of pirsum hanes.

A Chanukah lamp may use any type of oil, but certain oils ar preferable:

> R. Joshua ben Levi said: All oils are good for us, but olive oil is among the best. Abaye said: Originally, the master (Rabbah) used to seek poppy oil. He said it gave him more light. When he heard about the idea of R. Joshua ben Levi, he sought olive oil. He said: This yields a clearer light. [10]

If the light of the Chanukah lamp represented God's presence, as we saw above,[11] then it was important that this presence was as striking as possible.

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[9] Shab. 23b.

[10] Shab. 23a.

[11] Cf. p. 63.

The Rabbis now address the question of the timing of the mitzvah:

> The mitzvah of Chanukah applies from the setting of the sun until the last foot has left the marketplace, so shouldn't we rekindle [a lamp that has gone out]? No. One who has not lit must light, any time within the specified time period.
>
> "Until the last foot has left the marketplace." When is that? Rabbah b. Bar Chanah said in the name of R. Yochanon: Until the feet of the Tarmodians have ceased. [12]

This passage tells us about the legal limits on the time of lighting the Chanukah lamp. The time of the lighting is from the setting of the sun until the last foot has left the marketplace. If the lamp should go out, there is no obligation to rekindle it, since the act of lighting, and thus the mitzvah, has already taken place.

In terms of the timing of the mitzvah, there is little in the way of precise information from this period. One may light any time from sunset until the Tarmodians' feet leave the marketplace. The Tarmodians were a people from the oasis of Palmyra, in the Syrian desert. They were sellers of lighting equipment, and were thus prone to working later than other merchants in the market. [13]

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[12] Shab. 21a

[13] I. Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud; Shabbat I* (London:Soncino Press,1938), p. 91. Cf. Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Talmud* (Philadelphia: Chorev Press, 1903), p. 1648.

By basing the end of the obligation period on the Tarmodians' bedtime, the Rabbis extended the time of performing the mitzvah as late as possible while there were still passersby in the street. The fact that the mitzvah extends until the very last person leaves the street is sensible, since pirsum hanes cannot occur if there are no people outside. In an agrarian society, where people stay out only until the close of the last market stall, it seems the best delimiter possible, and is fully coherent with the basis for the obligation.

Although placement was not the primary mitzvah, the Rabbis still find it worthwhile to dictate the precise placement of the lamp:

> Rabbah said: The mitzvah is to place the Chanukah lamp in the closest handbreadth [8-10 cm.] to the door. And where is it placed? Rav Acha bar Rabbah said: on the right side. R. Shmuel of Difti said: on the left side. And the halachah is on the left side, so that there will be the Chanukah lamp on the left, and the mezuzah on the right. [14]

The Chanukah lamp is to be placed in the closest handbreadth to the door. This is to ensure that the lamp is visible from the street. And, lest a shorter person be left out of the holiday, the Rabbis also establish an upper bound for the height of lamp placement:

> Rav Cahana said: R. Natan bar Minyomi interpreted in the name of R. Tanchum: A Chanukah lamp that is placed above twenty cubits [from the ground] is

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[14] Shab. 22a.

> unfit, like a sukkah or cross-beam over the entrance of an alley. [15]

Above the upper limit, the Chanukah lamp would not fulfill its purpose of publicity, and its lighting and placement would be for naught. There is another opinion on this ruling, which selects ten cubits as its height limit.[16]

Other questions regarding placement abound in the Amoraic literature. In the case of a house with a courtyard, or other architectural layouts which have more than one entrance, there are specific instructions as to the placement of the Chanukah lamp:

> R. Huna said: A courtyard with two openings needs two lamps. Rabbah [said]: This was said only if [the openings are on] two sides, if they are on one side, you don't need [two lamps]....
>
> ...It is because of the suspicion of the townspeople, who may pass this opening and not that, and they would say: just as there is no lamp at this opening, there is no lamp at that opening.[17]

Thus, to prevent townspeople from thinking that a family is avoiding observance of the mitzvah of Chanukah, this situation requires the lighting of two lamps.

The question now arises as to who will light the Chanukah lamps. The Tannaitic assumption is still in force, in that it is assumed that the male head of the household will light the lamps.

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[15] Shab. 21b-22a.

[16] Shab. 21b.

[17] Shab. 23a.

Minors, or others who are not obligated, may light Chanukah lamps, but they cannot exempt others from their obligations:

> Now that we've said that the lighting is the mitzvah, a person with a hearing disability, or a mental disability, or a minor who lights the lamp does nothing [does not fulfill the mitzvah]...

One with a disability was not obligated to complete this mitzvah. Note, however, that the Rabbis would not prohibit this person from participating in the lighting of chanukah lamps. It is only that they are unable to fulfill the household obligations because they are not obligated themselves. [18]

Women, on the other hand, according to R. Joshua ben Levi, were involved in the miracle of Chanukah, and are thus obligated:

> ...A woman, of course, lights the lamp, as R. Joshua ben Levi said: women are obligated in the lighting of Chanukah lamps, since they were involved in the same miracle....

Women are obligated to light the lamps, and can also take on the obligation of the household. Guests, too were obligated:

> ...R. Sheshet said: A guest is obligated in the lighting of the Chanukah lamp.[19]

Thus, every person in the household over the age of majority and without a disability, whether they lived there permanently or not, was obligated in the lighting of Chanukah lamps.

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[18] Cf. Ber. 20b, for a discussion of this concept.

[19] Shab. 23a.

Through this series of sugyot, the Rabbis have defined the specifics of the Rabbinic mitzvah of Chanukah - the mitzvah of lighting the lamp. What remains now is to examine the Amoraic formulation of the blessings, as well as the changes that Chanukah brought to the liturgy of the synagogue and home.

3) The blessings upon viewing or lighting a Chanukah lamp

Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of the Amoraic period is the creation of the blessings for the lighting of the Chanukah lamps. While it is possible that some kind of blessings were said in Mishnaic times, the first written edition appears in the Talmud:

> R. Chiya bar Ashi said in the name of Rav: One who lights a Chanukah lamp must say a blessing.
>
> Rav Jeremiah said: One who sees a Chanukah lamp must say a blessing.
>
> R. Judah said: On the first day, one who sees it says two blessings, and one who lights it says three blessings. From that day on, one who lights it says two blessings, and one who sees it says one blessing.
>
> What does this mean? zeman is omitted.
>
> Why is nes included? Because the miracle occurred on all eight days.

One who lights on the first night says three blessings, after the first night, only two. One who sees the lamp, says two blessings on the first night, and only one on the additional nights. While saying a blessing upon seeing a Chanukah lamp may seem strange to

us, it was a custom until relatively recently. We find it in both the Mishneh Torah, [20] and the Shulchan Arukh. [21]

Aside from the blessing that one would say upon seeing a Chanukah lamp, the blessing structure set out in the Talmud is basically equivalent with our practice today. According to the Talmud, there are three blessings, one for hadlakah (the lighting = asher kidishanu bemitsvotav vetzivanu lehadlik ner shel Chanukah), one for nes (the miracle = sheasah nisim lavoteinu bayamim heheim bazman hazeh), and the third for zeman (time = shehechiyanu v'kiyemanu v'higianu lazman hazeh). The blessings would be said as follows:

	First night	Additional Nights
Lighter	hadlakah nes zeman	hadlakah nes
Viewer	nes zeman	nes

Except for the blessing of zeman, the blessings are continued throughout all the nights of Chanukah, since they are relevant every night. The blessing over the hadlakah or lighting, is not said by one who does not light a lamp. The zeman blessing is not said except on the first night, since its text includes "and has helped us to reach this season." On the second night, since we

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[20] MT, Hilkhot Chanukah 1:4.

[21] Shulchan Arukh, Orakh Chaim 676.

have already "reached this season" on the first night, we have no reason for reciting that blessing.

4) Miscellaneous legal rulings

Because of the joyousness of the season, the rules of fastin and mourning were changed during Chanukah. As we know from the story about events in Lod, [22] fasting is already prohibited in Tannaitic times. This same story appears in the Talmud, showing us that fasting during Chanukah was prohibited throughout the Amoraic period as well.

In the case of mourning, a statement in Moed Katan rules out mourning, but makes an exception for a talmid chakham:

> Rav Papa said: In the case of a talmid chakham [who died] no respect is paid to the festival [period]. And even less so during Chanukah or Purim. This ruling applies in his presence, but away from him, no lamenting is allowed. [23]

This statement indicates a change in the regulations on mourning during the festival. In Tannaitic times, certain forms of mourning were limited during Chanukah by a prohibition on women wailing and crying out. In Amoraic times, when one was in the presence of a

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[22] Cf. p. 36, n. 1.

[23] M.K. 27b.

talmid chakham who had passed away, all forms of mourning were allowed. The Rabbis base their ruling on the joyous Toraitic festivals, during which one is allowed to mourn for a talmid chakham. If mourning is permissible during a Toraitic festival, then mourning would certainly be permissible during Chanukah..

5) Changes to the liturgy of during Chanukah

The Amoraic Rabbis inherited three traditions from the Tannaitic period: 1) the recitation of the hallel; 2) the addition of some reminder of Chanukah during the tefillah, and, new in this period, to the birkat hamazon; and 3) the alteration of the Torah portion. These liturgical rulings resurface during the Amoraic period in much their same form, though there are some changes to the Tannaitic practice.

We saw that the Torah portion read on Chanukah is from the section called "princes." The Talmud, however, goes further, assigning the Haftarah readings as well. If only one Shabbat falls during Chanukah, the Haftarah reading is Zachariah's dream where an angel shows him, among other things, seven lights. (Zach. 4) If two Shabbatot fall during Chanukah, then the lights of Zachariah become the first Haftarah reading, and the lights of Solomon (I Kings 7:40-50) the second. [24]

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[24] Meg. 31a.

The most complicated case of all is when Rosh Chodesh Tevet falls on Shabbat, mandating three different readings on one day. The Rabbis decide the order of the Torah readings in the normal way, by the frequency of the holidays. Since Shabbat is most frequent, followed by Rosh Chodesh, the reader would take out three Torah scrolls, and read from the portion for Shabbat first, then from the portion for Rosh Chodesh, and then from the portion for Chanukah. [25]

The Amoraic period demonstrates relatively little development of the synagogue liturgy. As in Mishnaic times, the hallel is said on account of the miracle. One comment in Arachin tells us that hallel is only said on account of miracles which happened in the land of Israel. Therefore, we do not say hallel during Purim, but we do during Chanukah. [26] Aside from this passage, there is no development of the discussion of hallel during Chanukah. Likewise, we find no growth in the Tannaitic custom of making additions to the musaf liturgy for Chanukah. [27]

In the home liturgy, however, we find the first indication of changes to Birkat hamazon:

> The Rabbis asked: Is Chanukah to be mentioned in the grace after meals? Since it is a Rabbinical

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[25] Meg. 29b, Cf. Yom. 60a.

[26] Ar. 10b.

[27] Cf. Shab. 24a-b.

> institution, we do not mention it. Or perhaps it is mentioned because of publicity of the miracle?
>
> Rabbah said in the name of R. Sechora in the name of R. Huna: we are not obligated to mention it, but if we do, we do so in the hoda'ah [the second blessing in birkat hamazon].
>
> Rabbi Huna b.Judah came before Raba and mentioned it during the prayer uv'neh Yerushalyim. R. Sheshet said to them: It is as in the tefillah. What is inserted in the tefillah in the hoda'ah, so in the birkat hamazon. [28]

Chanukah was recalled in the birkat hamazon during the second blessing, birkat ha'arets. During the tefillah, the holiday is recalled during the hoda'ah. What do these two blessings have in common? They both contain the concept of thanking God for the miracles God performed. In birkat hamazon, birkat ha'arets starts with "we thank you, Adonai our God...for You brought us out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed us from the house of bondage." In the hoda'ah, it says:

> We thank You, our God and the God of our ancestors forever....From generation to generation we will thank you...for your miracles which are with us every day.

The reason to mention Chanukah in these prayers is to thank God for the miracles and wonders which God did for the Jewish people. Since we are already thanking God for miracles in these prayers, they become the context for the liturgical additions of Chanukah.

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[28] Shab. 24a.

This tradition gives rise to our current tradition of adding al hanisim into the birkat hamazon and the tefillah. While al hanisim has yet to come to the attention of the Babylonians, it becomes the accepted way of mentioning Chanukah. It is quite possible that early, orally transmitted versions of al hanisim were circulating in Babylonia during the Amoraic period.

Conclusion

The Amoraic period brought considerable growth to the traditions of Chanukah. The Rabbis concentrated primarily on regulating the specifics of the home ceremony, compared to their minimal attention paid to the liturgy of the synagogue. The main mitzvah of Chanukah was defined as the lighting of the lamps, the act of which was not to be cheapened in any way. Their function was defined to as publicity of the miracle which God did for the Hasmoneans. The lamps of Chanukah thus became a symbolic celebration of God's presence in the life of the Jews, and a remembrance of a great miracle.

Chapter 4

The Post-Mishnaic Palestinian Tradition

During the Amoraic period, Chanukah developed differently in Palestine than it did in Babylonia. This growth is reflected in three major sources: 1) The Palestinian Talmud; 2) Massekhet Soferim; and 3) Pesikta Rabbati. These sources provide a striking contrast between the Palestinian and the Babylonian traditions of Chanukah, and point to important innovations in the celebration of the holiday.

1) The Palestinian Talmud

We know relatively few concrete facts regarding the compilation process of the Palestinian Talmud. Louis Ginzberg indicates that the Palestinian Talmud "maintains complete silence about its history." [1] During the middle of the fourth century, the three oldest sections of the Palestinian Talmud (those containing commentary on Mishnaic civil law) were compiled in Caesarea, then the seat of the Roman government of Palestine. In 351 CE the Roman government responded to a series of outbreaks in the Jewish community by decimating the communities of Tiberias, Sepphoris, and Lydda. These three important seats of Jewish learning were

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[1] Louis Ginzberg, *On Jewish Law and Lore* (New York: Atheneum, 1981), p. 24.

virtually destroyed, leaving a frightened Jewish community with limited options for continued Jewish life in Palestine. While many fled to Babylonia, some stayed and studied in Tiberias, the remaining Palestinian center of learning.

In Tiberias, under the ever-strengthening arm of the Christian world, scholars hastily incorporated the three works of the "Caesarean" commentary on the Mishnah into their own works, creating a new collection of commentaries on the Mishnah. The Tiberian scholars brought in opinions and commentary from other schools around Palestine, including what was left of the schools of Lydda and Sepphoris. This wide range of source material gives the Palestinian Talmud more breadth, but makes it confusing in its lack of unified opinions.

The Palestinian scholars edited their Talmud in order to preserve the customs of their Jewish community as Christian persecution destroyed it. While the redactors of the Babylonian Talmud spent 100-200 years in the process of collecting and editing, the Palestinians apparently completed their work much more quickly, in less than fifty years. This accounts for the tremendous difference in the character of the two Talmuds. The Palestinian Talmud shows greater repetition, less continuity, and more contradictions than its Babylonian counterpart.[2]

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[2] Ginzberg, pp. 24-28.

The whole of the Palestinian Talmud was completed between 35 CE and approximately 400 CE. By the time of the demise of the Academy in Tiberias in 421 CE, the completed Palestinian Talmud was already the major commentary on the Mishnah for those who lived in Palestine. For the purposes of this study, it is assumed to be useful for understanding the Palestinian practice of Chanukah through the fourth century.

Much of the material relating to Chanukah found in the Palestinian Talmud is virtually the same as the material found in the Mishnah, the Tosefta, or the traditions found in the Babylonian Talmud. This similarity stems from the traditions that make up the Mishnah itself. The body of traditions from which the Mishnah was compiled provides the common basis for both Talmuds, and the Tosefta. In addition, the Palestinian community was not isolated from the outside world during the compilation of the Palestinian Talmud. There are multiple examples of interactions between the world of Babylonia and the world of Palestine. The activities of traders, merchants, nechutei (messengers who traveled from Palestine to the outside world), and other travelers kept the connection between Eretz Yisrael and the Diaspora strong. These travelers brought letters back and forth, allowing similar material to change hands and appear in numerous texts. Thus, texts from diverse sources appear in the Palestinian Talmud regarding Chanukah, with material from a wide range of academies.

1a) The Home Ceremony in the Palestinian Tradition

A curious passage brings us the Yerushalmi's view of using the lights of Chanukah for profane purposes:

> R. Tachlifa asked R. Chasda: Didn't the teacher tell us also that during Shabbat which falls during Chanukah it is forbidden to look at coins by the light of the Chanukah lamp? But this isn't likely [This is not likely because one does not generally count coins on Shabbat, anyway, since money falls into the category of muktzeh.]! [3]

This passage shows us a prohibition in the early stages of development. During the early Amoraic period in Palestine, counting coins by the light of the Chanukah lamp was forbidden *only* on Shabbat! The Bavli treats this prohibition differently, prohibiting counting coins by the light of the Chanukah lamp altogether. This custom developed from its early form in the Yerushalmi into a later form found in the Bavli. It began as a Shabbat restriction, and grew to forbid the use of Chanukah lamps for profane purposes at any time during the holiday.

Analyzing the blessing for lighting the Chanukah lamps, we find that the versions in the Palestinian Talmud are earlier versions of our current blessing, but they have yet to acquire a fixed formula:

> How do we say a blessing over the Chanukah lamp? Rav said "Blessed [are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe] who has sanctified us with divine mitzvot

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[3] P.T. Shab. 4:2.

> and commanded us regarding the commandment of lighting the chanukah lamp [al mitzvat hadlakat ner chanukah]...
>
> What about Chanukah, which is [a commandment that comes] from the Rabbis? He [or she] says: regarding the commandment of the Chanukah lamp [al mitzvat ner chanukah]...
>
> What did R. Joshua ben Levi say about Chanukah? What about the lulav that is Toraitic and we say "regarding the elders' commandments" [al mitzvat zekenim]? Chanukah, which comes from the Rabbis, we should even more so [say "regarding the elders' commandments"]. [4]

While the basic wording is similar, this text indicates that variations of the blessing were said throughout Palestine. In this loosely-redacted section, two different blessings are suggested: al mitzvat hadlakat ner chanukah and al mitzvat ner chanukah. A third possibility is considered, that of using al mitzvat zekenim, but it is a questionable option, for the redactors do not know what blessing R. Joshua ben Levi actually used. This indicates a loose tradition, still very much in the process of development.

Immediately following this text, we see further evidence of liturgical development in progress:

> Chiyah the student of Rav says a blessing each and every time [he lights a Chanukah lamp]. R. Huna says a blessing but once. R. Huna in the name of R. Joseph gives the reason for his actions as [based on the practice of] demai, [doubtfully tithed produce, the tithing of] which is taken every day, but only derabanan. [In the taking of demai, the blessing is said only once, at the beginning of the tithing]. What is true for demai is also true for all the

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[4] P.T. Suk. 53:4.

> remaining days [of the year] and we don't say a blessing for them. [5]

Not only were there variations in the text of the blessings, there were variations in whether a blessing was said from night to night. Chiyah said a blessing every time he lit a lamp. R. Huna, on the other hand, said a blessing only on the first night. He supported his practice by comparing it to the tithe called demai, the doubtful tithe which may be taken at night or by a naked man. Demai is similar to Chanukah in that it is derabanan and observed over a period of time. R. Huna reasons that like demai, Chanukah should have its blessings said at the beginning of the time period, and not during the remainder of its duration.

This concept may have influenced the Babylonian traditions as well. The idea that some blessings are appropriate only on the first day may be behind the Babylonian decision to require the shehechiyanu only on the premiere night of Chanukah. This ruling could possibly have been brought to Babylonia through exposure to the concept put forward by R. Huna.

It would seem from this description of the blessings that there was only one blessing in Palestinian tradition. The shehechiyanu and sheasah nisim blessings were not in use in Palestine by the time of the redaction of the Palestinian Talmud. In light of this fascinating discovery, we can reconstruct the

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[5] P.T. Suk. 53:4

chronological development of the blessings over the lights in this manner: 1) The blessing noted in the Palestinian Talmud was the initial blessing. It was used, in various forms, throughout most of the early Amoraic world. Some Rabbis said the blessing every night, others recited it only on the first night; 2) After the redaction of the Palestinian Talmud, further development continued in the Babylonian schools, which added the blessings of shehechiyanu and sheasah nisim, and fixed the precise wording of the various blessings. In light of the view put forth by R. Huna, there were some blessings which should be said only on the first night. Combining the three-blessing system with the view of R. Huna, the Babylonian Amoraim assigned the shehechiyanu as the blessing which was only appropriate to the first day. This tradition became fixed in the Babylonian community before the final redaction of the Babylonian Talmud.

In addition to giving us new insights on standard Babylonian questions, the Palestinian Talmud also gives us one entirely new question. We are witness to a debate about the use of condemned oil in the Chanukah lamp, a question which no other Rabbinic text considers:

> What of the oil of terumah [that is condemned to be burned on account of contamination]? The house of R. Yannai said it was permissible to light condemned oil on Chanukah. R. Nisa said: I do not [allow it]. I follow the wisdom of my father. My mother used to say: "Your father would say: 'One who does not have

> secular oil [for use in the lamp] should kindle unclean oil on Chanukah.'" [6]

This final Talmudic text provides us with an answer to our new question. It seems that it is better to use secular oil - oil which remains undedicated to another purpose - for lighting the Chanukah lamp. However, if one has no secular oil, it is permitted to light oil that has been condemned.

1b) The Chanukah synagogue liturgy in the Palestinian Talmud

Extensive similarity exists between the synagogue service of Babylonia and that found in Palestine. Regarding the addition to the musaf service, the opinion of the Palestinian Talmud is identical with that of the Bavli.[7] Another discussion with identical ultimate outcomes arises from the Palestinian Talmud's discussion of hallel during Chanukah. The same baraita appears in the Palestinian Talmud and the Tosefta,[8] listing the eighteen days when one says hallel in the Land of Israel. While no new information is given about the hallel or musaf, we know that these traditions continued in Palestine after the time of the Tosefta.

Above, we saw that the Babylonian Talmud allows mourning for a talmid chakham.[9] The Palestinian Amoraim fall on the opposite

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[6] P.T. Ter. 48:2

[7] P.T. Ber. 7:3 & 11:3, P. T. Tan. 67:3.

[8] P.T. Suk. 54:3 & T. Suk. 2:3.

[9] Cf. p. 71.

side of the mourning debate, prohibiting even the mourning of a renowned scholar during Chanukah. The text which addresses mourning in the Yerushalmi describes a case when the Rabbis make a mistake:

> R. Tanchum, son of R. Ilai died during Chanukah. R. Dosah died on the new month [during Rosh Chodesh] of Nisan. They held a funeral for him. They thought that they were following the opinion of the Rabbis, but they checked and found that they were not following the opinion of the Rabbis. [10]

The Rabbis choose to use a negative example, showing that one does not engage in funerals during the time of Chanukah, presumably since mourning is forbidden. Using disparate texts, the Talmuds conclude with different regulations.

An example of similar outcomes from disparate texts may be found in the Palestinian Talmud's discussion of recalling Chanukah during birkat hamazon:

> R. Zerikan [as he is called in the Yerushalmi, He is known as R. Zerikah in the Bavli,] the son-in-law of R. Zerikan mentioned Chanukah in the [second blessing of the birkat hamazon called] "the land," and they praised him. [11]

A similar statement in Shab. 24a, obligates one to recall Chanukah during birkat hamazon, because it is mentioned in the hoda'ah during the tefillah. In the Palestinian text, it seems that

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[10] P.T. M.K. 83:4.

[11] P.T. Ber. 11:4.

recalling Chanukah is not a requirement, merely a suggestion for a praiseworthy deed. Recalling Chanukah in birkat hamazon was a common practice in both places, but in Babylonia it was considered obligatory, while in Palestine it was merely desirable. This is another sign of the liturgical freedom in the time of the Palestinian Academies.

Some of the more concrete differences between the Bavli and the Yerushalmi give us tremendous insight into the Amoraic development of Chanukah customs. While Torah-reading during Chanukah followed similar rules in Babylonia and Palestine, the Palestinian text indicates a custom in the process of change:

> Isaac the trader asked R. Isaac: What do we read when Chanukah and Rosh Chodesh coincide? Three [aliyot] for Rosh Chodesh and one for Chanukah.
>
> R. Phineas, R. Simon, and R. Abba bar Zimna stated in the name of R. Abodemi of Haifa: They read three for Chanukah and one for Rosh Chodesh to indicate that the fourth passage is only read on account of Rosh Chodesh.
>
> Bar Shilmaya the scribe asked R. Mana: But what if Rosh Chodesh of Chanukah falls on Shabbat? Seven people are still called to the Torah! Then can you say that the fourth passage comes only on account of Rosh Chodesh on this day? [No!]
>
> He [R. Mana] replied to him [to Bar Shilmaya]: That's a trivial question. [12]

This confusing text avoids giving a direct answer to its own question. Here, the question is addressed differently than in its

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[12] P.T. Tan. 67:3.

companion text in the Bavli.[13] Instead of describing the number of scrolls that the reader will take from the ark, the Palestinian Talmud speaks simply of the number of aliyot called to the Torah. Within that number, it assigns some readings to Chanukah, and some to Rosh Chodesh. Since this passage is unclear in its final outcome, it would seem that there were multiple ways of reading Torah during the various combinations of Chanukah, Shabbat, and Rosh Chodesh. This differs markedly from the uniformity of practice in the Babylonian Talmud, which seems more set by the time of its later redaction.

From this evidence, we conclude that in Palestine the number of Torah readers was variable until after 400 CE. Later, by the time of the redaction of the Babylonian Talmud, the number of Torah readers was set, giving us our more rigid text in the Babylonian Talmud. This would suggest that our current practice was fixed sometime in the sixth century in Babylonia.

As the earliest Palestinian source, the Palestinian Talmud sketches a vivid picture of a celebration in constant development during the early Amoraic period. Other Palestinian texts extend this picture, with changes that are drastically different from the development of Chanukah in Babylonia.

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[13] Cf. pp. 72-3.

2) Chanukah in Massekhet Soferim

A late Palestinian source, Massekhet Soferim is not regarded as a complete unit, but thought of as a three-part redacted work. Much of Massekhet Soferim came from early Palestinian traditions. While the exact date of its compilation is unclear, the majority of scholars agree that it is a Palestinian source, and that its final redaction came sometime after the redaction of the Babylonian Talmud.[14] Most likely it was compiled during the middle of the eight century. Massekhet Soferim is a valuable source for tracing the development of the later Palestinian traditions after the compilation of the Palestinian Talmud. Chapter 20 of Massekhet Soferim encompasses a detailed discussion of Chanukah.

We find similar texts in Massekhet Soferim and other sources regarding the time period of observing the Chanukah lighting, [15] the number of candles lit each night, and the placement of the candles in the public way.[16] Massekhet Soferim constructs the Torah-reading ritual in exactly the same terms as the Bavli.[17] Almost identical as well, are the home blessings, aside from one

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[14] *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. "Soferim." Cf. Hermann Strack, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (New York: Atheneum, 1972), 73.

[15] Massekhet Soferim 20:4.

[16] Massekhet Soferim 20:5.

[17] Massekhet Soferim 20:10-12.

major difference - the addition of hanerot haeilu (the precursor to our current prayer - hánerot halalu). [18]

2a) The home ceremony

Beyond these similarities, there are ample differences between the early Palestinian or Babylonian Amoraic traditions and what we find in Massekhet Soferim. First, regarding the specifications of the Chanukah lamp, we find two new regulations:

> What are the regulations regarding Chanukah? The Rabbis said: On the twenty-fifth day of Kislev the Chanukah lamp is kindled, and it is forbidden to use an old lamp [with burnt oil on it]; but if a person has only an old lamp, he must thoroughly heat it in fire [to remove the burnt oil]; nor may [the Chanukah lamp] be moved from its place before it goes out. [19]

The Chanukah lamp must be new. If it is old, and it has burnt oil on it, it is considered unseemly, and inappropriate for use during Chanukah. The solution, then, is to burn the oil off by burning the lamp in a fire. After this is done, the lamp is acceptable for use on Chanukah. It is also possible that the Rabbis wanted to

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[18] Massekhet Soferim 20:6.

[19] Massekhet Soferim 20:3.

avoid burning old oil which may have been dedicated to another purpose. [20]

The strict statement that "one may not move the lamp from its place until it goes out" differs from the opinions found in other sources. The prohibition in other sources on moving the lamp lasts only until the last foot has left the marketplace, while this prohibition lasts until the lamp goes out, whenever that occurs. This may indicate a tightening of the earlier tradition, intended to further the precept of pirsum hanes by extending the period during which the lamp is burning.

When lighting Chanukah lamps during the day, the text denies the need for a blessing:

> If it [the Chanukah lamp] was lit in daytime, one cannot enjoy the light, nor may the benediction be said over it; for so the Rabbis said: No benediction is to be pronounced over the lamp unless one enjoys its light. [21]

In this passage, the light or heat from the lamp must be enjoyed before the blessing may be said. This is indicative of a major rift in the conceptualization of the Chanukah lamps between Palestine and Babylonia. The Babylonians, to whom pirsum hanes meant everything, would not permit one to enjoy the sensing of a Chanukah lamp. In Palestine, on the other hand, the obligation of

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[20] Cf. p. 93 regarding burning old oil.

[21] Massekhet Soferim 20:4.

the Chanukah lamp was that a person enjoy its light. One would have to sense its light and warmth, and could thus fulfill the mitzvah of Chanukah. Proof of this comes below, in hanerot haeilu. It says that we "are only to look at them, in order that we may give thanks to Your Name...."[22] Thus, during the day, when the heat and light from the lamp do not arrive directly on one's body, one could not fulfill the mitzvah, and consequently, would not be required to say a blessing.

Another important custom is indicated in this passage. The Immediately following the last passage, it reads "There is no need, however, to be concerned about changing the wick before it goes out." Jews of Palestine changed their wicks when they lit lamps at night, enabling one lamp to burn for a longer period of time. This allowed one lamp to burn throughout the entire period of obligation, from the setting of the sun to. During the day, however, since there was no limited period in which the mitzvah had to be observed, this practice was unnecessary.

In the blessings suggested by Massekhet Soferim, there is one very important addition to the prayers found in the Babylonian Talmud. That is the presence of hanerot haeilu:

> In what manner do we recite the blessings? On the first day, the person who kindles says three blessings while the onlooker says two. The person who kindles says: "Blessed are You, Adonai, who has sanctified us by Your commandments and commanded us

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22 Cf. below for complete text.

> to light of Chanukah." Then he says: "We kindle these lights [hanerot haeilu] on account of the deliverances and the miracles and the wonders which You did for our ancestors, through Your holy priests [the Maccabees were a priestly family]. During all eight days of Chanukah, these lights are sacred, and it is not permitted to make any profane use of them, but we are only to look at them, in order that we may give thanks to Your Name for Your wonders, Your miracles, and Your deliverances. Blessed are You, Adonai, who has kept us in life [and sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season]." He says, "who made miracles for our ancestors [sheasah nisim la'avoteinu]." [23]

We note first that this text inverts the order of the second and third blessings as compared with the Babylonian Talmud.[24] Moreover, there is the substantial addition of hanerot haeilu, in its earliest extant form. This text becomes a staple of the Chanukah celebration, and, as we shall see, is adopted into our current practice by the Geonic prayerbook editors. We currently say it after the three blessings, and not during them, as described by Massekhet Soferim. Hanerot halalu, as it is called today, is clearly of Palestinian origin for two reasons: 1) We find it first in Massekhet Soferim, a Palestinian text collected from Palestinian source material; 2) It is neither found nor mentioned in any Babylonian texts at all, until well into the Geonic period, after this text was redacted. It is likely that the text originated in Palestine during the late Amoraic period, and was brought to the Geonim in Massekhet Soferim, or other texts

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[23] Massekhet Soferim 20:6.

[24] Cf. p. 70 above.

which traveled to Babylonia. But, the Geonic editors placed it after the blessings in their system, since the blessing structure was already set, and it was easier to add a new element at the end, rather than to insert it in the middle.

2b) Massekhet Soferim and changes in the synagogue liturgy

Massekhet soferim describes the additions made to the tefillah in a way different from other texts:

> The reader says atah kadosh in the tefillah of Chanukah, and similarly on Rosh Chodesh and during chol hamoed, because "the original burnt offering [Num. 28:15]" is written in connection with them. And R. Chiya taught: On any day on which there is musaf and during Chanukah, kedush[at hayom] is said because hallel is included [in the service]. Some maintain [that it is said] on Purim also, because the scroll of Esther is read on it. [25]

The practice of reciting a kedushat hayom during Chanukah does not find its way into the Geonic prayer books. If it was practiced at all, it was common only in certain parts of Palestine. There is no other text that even mentions it. Both Massekhet Soferim and the Babylonian Amoraim suggest another way of mentioning Chanukah in the tefillah -- during the hoda'ah [26] -- and the Geonim may have preferred this as more appropriate, since other miracles are remembered during the hoda'ah.

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[25] Massekhet Soferim 20:7.

[26] Massekhet Soferim 20:8, Shab. 24a.

One other important innovation in the text of Massekhet Soferim is the the first crude version of al hanisim, which accompanies the recollection of the miracle in the hoda'ah:

> And they say in the hoda'ah: [Thank You] for the wonders [felaot] and salvation [teshuot] of Your priests which You brought about in the days of Mattathias, son of Yochanon the High Priest, and the Hasmoneans his children. So also, Adonai our God and God of our ancestors, perform for us miracles and wonders [nisim v'niflaot] and we will give thanks to Your Name forever. [then continue with the hoda'ah] Blessed are You, Adonai, good [is Your name, and to You it is pleasant to give thanks - hatov shimcha u'lecha naeh lehodot]...[This is also] mentioned in the birkat hamazon. [27]

This custom of mentioning the miracles during the hoda'ah remains with us throughout the Geonic prayer books and our later texts. This crude version of al hanisim coincides with the exact wording of parts of our later manuscripts. While the prayer increases in length as more material collects, this basic form remains.

Massekhet Soferim also mentions the reading of hallel during Chanukah, enumerating exactly which verses are to be read. According to this text, one must recite the hallel in a pleasant musical setting, saying the blessing at the beginning. This does not differ substantially from the practice in Babylonia. [28]

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[27] Massekhet Soferim 20:8.

[28] Massekhet Soferim 20:9.

While the Torah readings suggested in Massekhet soferim resemble those of other sources, the suggested maftir on Shabbat does not. Instead of reading one of the passages on light, as the Bavli would suggest, the Palestinians connect Chanukah with the dedication of the Temple of Solomon, and read I Kings 7:51-8:21. The portion chronicles the sacrifices of Solomon, as he rededicates the Temple in Jerusalem.

In choosing this text as their maftir, The Palestinian Rabbis highlight one aspect of Chanukah which is played down in Babylonian texts. After a few centuries of Diaspora life, the dedication of the Temple has diminished in importance as a religious concept for the Babylonians. Even after six centuries, it is evidently a concept of great power to the Palestinian Rabbis. Here, the main contrast between the two schools is self-evident. On one hand, the Babylonian Rabbis focus their textual discussion on the home ceremony, touch briefly on the synagogue, and virtually ignore the idea of Chanukah as a celebration of the dedication of the Temple. The Palestinian Rabbis, on the other hand, spend less time discussing the home service, and concentrate more on the synagogue service (their replacement for the Temple service). This slight difference in focus leads to subtle changes in the rituals of Chanukah, like this change in the maftir.

3) Chanukah in Pesikta Rabbati

The dating of the final passage in our textual excursion to Palestine lies buried under a massive heap of scholarly debate. While the suggested dates for the compilation of Pesikta Rabbati vary from the third century to the ninth, the most probable estimate given by Braude is the seventh century. The text can be called Palestinian because of its uniquely Palestinian spellings of many words. In addition, in discussing the holidays, it offers one day for holidays which would have been celebrated for two anywhere outside of Palestine. Furthermore, the tradents cited in this work are, without exception, Palestinian teachers from the third and fourth centuries. The author of Pesikta Rabbati, like the author of Massekhet Soferim, collects these traditions, and redacts them into their final form sometime in the late sixth or seventh century.[29]

Pesikta Rabbati holds only one major insight relating to Chanukah. It begins its discourse on Chanukah by recounting a theme that we saw previously in Megillat Ta'anit. [30] This telling of the story of Chanukah shows that while the Babylonian Rabbis were telling the story of the miraculous cruse of oil, the Palestinian Rabbis told a story of seven spears:

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[29] William G. Braude, *Pesikta Rabbati* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 20-26.

[30] Cf. p. 49.

> And why are lamps kindled during Chanukah? At the time that the sons of the Hasmonean, the High Priest, triumphed over the kingdom of Greece- the time referred to in the verse, "When...I raised up my sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece [Zech. 9:13] - upon entering the Temple they found there rods of iron which they grooved out and then kindled wicks in the oil which they poured into the grooves.[31]

Here, the lighting of Chanukah lamps is based upon the lighting of rods of iron (spears) which had grooves carved into them to hold the oil. There is no mention of a miraculous cruse of oil in this Palestinian source. Nor do other Palestinian sources mention any cruse of oil. Apparently, this signifies a rift in the understanding of the miracle. In Babylonia, the emphasis rests on the miracle of the cruse of oil, in that God miraculously re-established Temple worship for the people Israel. Palestinian texts emphasize the military victory, incorporating spears into the Talmudic pictures of the first lamps. Because of the Palestinian Rabbis' alternate understanding of Chanukah, the concept of pirsum hanes never reaches the level of importance that we see in Babylonia.

The dichotomy between alternate conceptualizations of the Chanukah miracle is evident even today, in the differing celebrations of Chanukah in Israel and the Diaspora. Israelis tend to define the holiday in more militaristic terms, equating themselves with the Maccabees, showing that God is on the side of

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[31] Braude, p. 50.

Israel. In America, however, the military meaning of Chanukah is lost on most Jews, and the miracle of the cruse of oil becomes the focus. Chanukah is a holiday with a dual nature, interpreted, as all holidays are, in the light of the surrounding culture.

Conclusion

Chanukah's dual nature is evident when one compares Babylonian and Palestinian sources. Palestinian texts highlight Chanukah's connections with the Land of Israel - emphasizing the concepts of rededicating the Temple, additional prayers in the synagogue (which is modeled after the Temple worship), and the military nature of the victory over the Syrians. This is in sharp contrast with the Babylonian texts, which focus more on the miracle, the home service, and the joyous lighting of the lamps of Chanukah.

While Palestinian and Babylonian texts differ in these basic aspects of their conceptualization of Chanukah, there are also many shared practices which evolve over the course of the Amoraic period. In this historical phase, many customs were reshaped or added, expanding and changing the liturgy of Chanukah. The Palestinian Amoraim were inheritors of a rich Chanukah liturgy, but they were equally innovative; both al hanisim and hanerot haeilu are Palestinian Amoraic innovations. This creative combination of innovation and inheritance left an important mark on the liturgy of Chanukah.

Chapter 5

Chanukah in the Geonic Period

The geonic period takes its name from the chief religious leaders in Babylonia, who were known as geonim. The exact beginning of the period is under dispute; estimates range from 589 CE to the middle of the seventh century. Sherira Gaon uses the title Gaon when referring to the heads of the Academies as early as 589. Another source cited in the Iggeret uses the term as early as 540-560 CE. Other scholars have a more conservative dating for the start of the period, postulating that the title came into use only in 657 CE, with the Arab conquest of Babylonia. The end of the geonic period is easier to pinpoint. It is almost half a millennium later, in 1034, with the decline of the Baghdad Caliphate, and the consequent demise of the last great Gaon. The title lingered longer still, but with the death of Hai, to all intents and purposes, the geonic age had ended. [1]

Most of the information from this period comes to us in the form of responsa, written answers to the questions that foreign Jews brought to the attention of the geonim. Responsa were helpful to the Jews in foreign lands, in that they could address a central Jewish source with their Jewish questions. Responsa were even more helpful to the geonim, in that they made it possible for the

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[1] *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. "Gaon."

geonim to claim control of the spiritual lives of the Jews of distant lands. The centralization of Jewish power by the geonim was a reflection of the Caliphate's consolidation of the government in the surrounding Islamic society.

As the geonim increased their influence in the Jewish world, they began to state laws in decisive terms, leaving no room for debate. This characteristic tendency of decisive judgments left us with a wealth of useful material among the geonic responsa, chief among which is Seder Rav Amram Gaon, compiled by the Gaon in Sura from 858 to 871 CE. Some fifty years later, during his turbulent reign as Gaon in the same Academy, Saadiah Gaon compiled his prayerbook, Seder Saadiah. [2] As complete collections of Geonic liturgy, these two geonic prayerbooks are profoundly helpful for studying the exact nature of prayer in the geonic period. Both include sections on Chanukah, with halachic descriptions and the extant liturgy. The wealth of geonic material in the prayerbooks, especially in Seder Rav Amram, comes mostly from Babylonian sources, but some Palestinian material finds its way into these compilations. Some issues follow the Talmudic traditions to the letter, while others develop in new ways.

The new material in the geonic sources fits into four broad categories. First, we find an interesting new account which is a

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[2] Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), p. 5.

geonic story for the eight days of Chanukah. Second, the geonic sources extend the debate on the lighting of the Chanukah lamp. Third, there are slight changes in some of the blessings from the Babylonian Talmud. Finally, each prayerbook provides us with a distinct version of the prayer al hanisim, showing that by the geonic period, it had developed beyond its Palestinian Ur-text.

1) The geonic story of the eight days of Chanukah

In Otsar Hageonim we find a fascinating responsum from Hai Gaon which outlines a new story explaining the eight days of Chanukah. Unlike the Palestinian story of the spears, or the Babylonian story of the cruse of oil, this story relies on geographic fact for its explanation of the eight days we celebrate:

> Why do we celebrate eight days of Chanukah? Because of the miracle that happened when the Greeks desecrated, etc. And what is the reason that less or more than eight nights of Chanukah would not suffice?
>
> Because the oils come from the tribe of Asher, as it is written: "May he dip his foot in oil." [Deut. 33:24] [Deuteronomy mentions the tribe of Asher with this reference, which Hai Gaon implies is a connection between Asher and oil.] There was a place belonging to it [Asher] which was called Tekoa, as we say [in the gemara] "Tekoa which is learned in [the ways of] oil," for from it come the oils. And from there to Jerusalem and back was an eight day walk. And this we said in Menachot.[A variant says this appears in the Yerushalmi. This does not appear in Menachot.] And therefore, he waited for them until they brought pure oil from

there, and this is the oil that gave them an eight day miracle. [3]

This story bases the eight days of Chanukah on the amount of time it took to get pure oil from Tekoa to Jerusalem. This eight-day round trip was the time the Hasmoneans had to wait before they could offer the necessary sacrifices for the rededication of the Temple. Without pure oil, they could not light the menorah in the Temple, which they needed lit before they could begin the Temple Service. This story is unique in its extra-Temple focus. It is also unique in that it originates during the geonic period, all other attempts to solve this problem being Amoraic or earlier.

2) The Lighting of the Chanukah Lamps

Geonic prayerbook editors culled material from a variety of different sources. On the issue of lighting Chanukah lamps, the source referred to most frequently must have been the Babylonian Talmud, since most of the material in the prayerbooks follows it closely. In general, the same issues arise in the prayerbooks as in the Talmuds and the results of geonic discussion is, as often as not, nothing more than a codification of previously set precepts. Significant alterations to the Talmudic material are rare, yet not unheard of.

One of these significant alterations comes in the geonic extension of the period when it is permissible to light Chanukah

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[3] Benjamin Menasseh Lewin, *Otsar Hageonim*, Vol 2, Shab., # 67.

lamps. The Talmuds tell us that lighting is forbidden beyond the time when the last foot has left the marketplace. In geonic sources, if it is impossible for a person to light the lamps because of an accident or the like, they may perform their obligation later. The geonim interpret the previous time limit as stricter than necessary, to encourage prompt performance of the mitzvah. [4]

Oddly enough, in the same geonic responsum, we also find the author pursuing the opposite tendency. While in the first sentence he permits lighting to take place later, this Gaon also tries in the next to be more exacting about the limit for the lighting. Reading the Talmud, he found that he did not understand the precise definition of a "Tarmodian," so he tried to understand to whom that title belonged. His answer is:

> And who is a Tarmodian? [These were] poor people who did work in the field, or as workers [engaged in manual labor] or fruit-guards who [returned home] later, after all [other] people, after dark.
>
> There was wood near us to start a fire and to warm yourself. But, the Tarmodians put [together] a quantity of prickly trees and thorns and [this is] because they did not have the necessary capital to buy [wood] in the marketplace. They thus collected [wood] after their work. These same Tarmodians were the last people [out at night]. [5]

This geonic reconstruction of Talmudic times tells us that the Tarmodians were a poor people who could not afford to buy wood for

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[4] Lewin, # 64.

[5] Lewin, # 64.

their home fires. They worked late, and would be the last people out at night. This resolution of the problem of defining a Tarmodian helps in our understanding of why the sleep habits of Tarmodians are connected to the fulfillment of the mitzvah. From the perspective of publicity of the miracle, lighting lamps after the departure of the Tarmodians would be useless, since pirsum hanes could not possibly apply to an empty street. Publicity requires onlookers.

The Geonic prayerbook of Rav Amram gives this time limit another purpose. The lamp is meant to burn throughout the whole of this time period, during which time one is not permitted to use the light of the lamp for profane purposes. But, after the Tarmodians go to bed, it is acceptable to let the lamp burn itself out, or to use its light for profane purposes, such as counting coins or the like. [6] The geonim are suggesting that the Chanukah lamp is dedicated to a specific divine purpose. Profane purposes should not interfere with the holy purpose. After the Chanukah lamp has achieved its purpose, once the miracle has been publicized to all passersby, it may return to being a secular lamp used for everyday activities.

In a passage on this topic, Seder Rav Amram allows the relighting of the Chanukah lamp up to five times:

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[6] Daniel Goldschmidt, ed., *Seder Rav Amram Gaon* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1971), p. 100.

> And if it goes out, it is permissible to light it up to five times, until all the oil in it is finished. [7]

Why Rav Amram Gaon decides on this limit with such conviction, we may never know. What is clear, is that the relighting of lamps was a practice during geonic times, and that the lamp was to remain lit from the setting of the sun to the bedtime of the Tarmodians, when the last person left the streets. The continuously burning lamp has the best chance of attracting public attention.

In this same responsum, we see that it is important to distinguish the Chanukah lamp from an everyday lamp. Amram indicates a custom of covering the Chanukah lamp, something which is only hinted at in pre-geonic sources:

> It is forbidden to use an ordinary lamp. Instead, we cover it with a vessel, so that it will be seen [and stand out] a bit, so that they will recognize that [it is a] Chanukah lamp.
> And if the wind blows, or there is fear of thieves, it suffices to place it on a table.

One might suggest that the purpose of covering the lamp is to allow it to glow even on a windy day. This seems doubtful, however, since Amram defines the covering in the context of making the lamp visually distinctive. Also, the wind blowing is tied to the fear of thieves, both of which are reasons for keeping the

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[7] Goldschmidt, p. 100.

lamp indoors. It would seem that any danger to the lamp is ample grounds for bringing it indoors.

In Seder Sa'adiah we find another opinion. If it is possible, one is required to place the lamp outside. If this, however, should become impossible, and for some reason it is necessary to place the lamp inside, one is required to erect a special table for the sole purpose of supporting the Chanukah lamp. This indicates that even though the lamp is meant to be outside, in a special place near the door, it must still retain a place of prominence even when it is in the home. This, again, is probably to facilitate pirsum hanes.

One geonic responsum goes into detail about the physical construction of the Chanukah lamp:

> I found in the responsa of the geonim that we smoke a glass vessel in the smoke of olive oil until it becomes blackened. Then we scrape the blackness off, add a little more oil, and rub it and dry it in the sun, and then brush it with the liquid [probably with more oil]. [8]

This description highlights the geonic fascination with the oil in the Chanukah lamp. The lamp itself is even rubbed with oil! This oil and the blackening smoke will make the lamp stand out among all other lamps, further publicizing the miracle.

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[8] Lewin, # 69.

The geonim answer one other question missed by the Amoraim. There is always at least one Shabbat during Chanukah, and sometimes two. On Friday nights in Chanukah, we are obligated to light both Shabbat and Chanukah lamps. The Amoraim never addressed the question of the order in which one would light these lamps. To be sure, the issue probably seems obvious to us today. But it was not so obvious, apparently, in geonic times:

> And that same day from among these eight, or those two days, that fall on Shabbat, one first lights the Chanukah lamp, and afterwards the Shabbat lamp, because if one starts with the Shabbat lamp, it would be [Shabbat, and thus we would be] forbidden to light anything afterwards. [9]

One might think, because of the general precedence enjoyed by Shabbat as against the infrequent Chanukah, that you light the Shabbat lamp first. Just the opposite holds, because Shabbat officially begins with the lighting of the Shabbat lamp, and it is forbidden to light any lamp during Shabbat. Chanukah lamps must be lit first.

3) The Geonic Blessings

In Seder Rav Amram, the number of blessings for the lighting of the Chanukah lamps agrees completely with Babylonian Talmud.

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[9] Simcha Assaf, Israel Davidson, and Issachar Joel, editors, *Siddur Rav Sa'adiah Gaon* (Jerusalem: Mikitzei Nirdamim, 1985), p. 255. Cf. Lewin, # 71.

One who sees a Chanukah lamp on the first day must recite two blessings, after the first day, they must recite one. One who actually lights the lamp has one additional blessing. While the texts in the Babylonian Talmud are not helpful enough to give us the exact text of the blessings, they do provide us with enough information to know that the structure of the blessings has stayed intact from the Amoraic to the geonic period. Sa'adiah retains the basic form of these blessings, but introduces two subtle differences in the texts. These differences are indicated in bold:

> 1) Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam asher **kadash** bemitzvotav vetzivanu lehdalik ner **[shel]** Chanukah.
>
> 2) Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam, sheasah nisin lavoteinu **[bayamim hahem]** bazman hazeh.
>
> 3) [Shehechiyanu - as in the Babylonian text] [10]

These changes are relatively innocent: kadash instead of our usual kidishanu; shel missing in the first blessing; and the lack of bayamim hahem in the second. The wording of the Chanukah blessings must therefore have been almost fully evolved by the time of the geonim. The blessing structure, set in Amoraic times, had specific texts assigned to it only in the early geonic period.

The one missing liturgical piece is the Palestinian tradition of Hanerot halalu which is incorporated in no geonic texts, a situation that is odd, since other Palestinian works do appear (al

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[10] Assaf, p. 255.

hanisim, for example -- see below). Since both al hanisim and hanerot halalu appear in Massekhet Soferim, it is not clear why this text is left out of the blessings.

4) Al Hanisim

This final geonic inclusion shows that the geonim included Palestinian as well as Babylonian material in their prayerbooks. As we saw in the chapter 4, al hanisim was an addition made to recall Chanukah in the hoda'ah of the tefillah and in the second blessing of birkat hamazon. It was added to all services in which there was a tefillah during Chanukah, including the musaf services of Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh. Both Sa'adiah and Amram include their own versions of this prayer in their prayerbooks. There are some differences between the versions, but the basic themes are identical:

> Amram's version
> [Differences between the two texts are in bold, material found only in Sa'adiah's version is bracketed and included in Amram's version.]
>
> And during Chanukah when we say the tefillah, during the hoda'ah one recalls:
> [We thank You] for the miracles and **for** the mighty deeds and **for** the triumphs, and **for** the wars, and **for** the liberation, and **for** the redemption that You did for **[us and for]** our ancestors in those days and at this time. In the days of Mattathias son of Jochanon, the High Priest and the Hasmonean, and his sons, when the **evil** rule of Greece stood against Your people Israel to deny them Your Torah and to bring them away from the laws of Your will. But You, with Your great mercy **in Your hand [beyadecha]**, stood with them in their time of need. You championed their cause, defended them in their struggle, and plotted their revenge for them. You

> delivered the heroes into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, **[the impure into the hands of the pure,]** the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the willful transgressors into the **hand [palm]** of **those who busy themselves with Your Torah [the ones who do Torah]**. You made a great and holy name for Yourself **in Your world, and** for Your people Israel, You brought about a great triumph and redemption [which we remember] until this day. And afterwards, Your **children [people]** entered Your Holy of Holies and liberated Your shrine, and lit lamps in Your holy courtyard. **[You are blessed and exalted.]**
>
> **And they set eight days of praise and thanks to Your name, just as You brought about a miracle for them, make for us, our God, miracles and wonders in this time. And we will thank Your glorious name, selah.** [11,12]

As is clear from the texts above, the basic structure of al hanisim stays the same. The geonim, then, took al hanisim from its simpler form in the Palestinian tradition,[13] and built upon it until lengthened versions like these were in use in their synagogues. The final text of al hanisim, as we have it, probably took shape after the geonic period, sometime during the Rishonic period in Europe.

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11 Goldschmidt, p. 97-8.

12 Assaf, p. 255.

13 Cf. p. 99.

Conclusion

The geonic period relied heavily on the Babylonian tradition for much of its material. Through the study of responsa, we find that the geonim took Babylonian structures and fortified them with their own additional supports. They specified the materials used in the Chanukah lamp, determined more exacting time-bounds for the lighting of the Chanukah lamp, and specified the blessings. From the Palestinian tradition, they took al hanisim and expanded its text, but omitted the hanerot haeilu, for reasons unknown to us as yet.

The geonic period was a period of canonizing the liturgy of Chanukah. The creative spontaneous liturgy that began the period, began to be written down. With the advent of the first prayerbooks, a new uniformity dawned in the Chanukah liturgy. All of our current liturgy (with the exception of maoz tzur and hanerot halalu) is based directly on the writings of the geonic period.

Chapter 6

Chanukah in the early Rishonic Period

Before the decline of the Caliphate in Baghdad in the eleventh century, Jews settled throughout Europe and North Africa and became independent, thus completing a process they had begun as early as the days of Sherira (and in some places, even earlier). The Jewish communities of Europe soon flourished, reaching new heights of Jewish study, creation and ritual.

From this period, known later as that of the Rishonim, we have a wealth of sources, two of which we shall examine here as examples of the Chanukah liturgy after the geonim. The first, the Machzor Vitry ("The Vitry Prayerbook"), comes from Vitry, France, a small town in the Marne province. Written by Simchah ben Samuel, a colleague and student of Rashi, it is the most complete prayerbook of its type. More comprehensive than even the geonic prayerbooks, its expansive scope includes liturgy for marriage, ritual slaughter, and halachic discussions of the laws of Shabbat. The most accurate dating of the original text sets this compilation's origin in the late eleventh century, before the death of the author in 1105 CE. [1]

Almost a century later and a few hundred miles to the southeast, Moses Maimonides completed his Mishneh Torah in 1180,

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[1] *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. "Machzor Vitry."

after ten years of arduous composition. Maimonides served as the official leader of the Jewish community of Fustat in Egypt and as the court physician to the king in Cairo. When not at work, he studied extensively, securing his place as the foremost interpreter of Jewish law in his time. Maimonides' Mishneh Torah was primarily a legal code, written to make the Oral Torah accessible to all, in succinct, unambiguous Hebrew. In his section on Chanukah, called Hilkhot Chanukah, Maimonides puts forth his decisions on the standard legal questions raised by earlier sources about Chanukah.

Much Rishonic time is spent recording opinions that they inherited from earlier generations. Much that the Rishonim say is therefore simply an iteration of what we have already seen. The structure of the blessings, set almost a thousand years before in the Babylonian Talmud, is repeated in both the Machzor Vitry and the Mishneh Torah. The Machzor Vitry includes the full text of all three blessings, and the actual wording of the blessings is identical with our current practice. [2]

No decision on reading the Torah during Chanukah appears in the laws of Chanukah of the Mishneh Torah, but the Machzor Vitry provides us with a repetition of the Babylonian Torah reading

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[2] Simon Halevi Hurwitz, Ed., *Machzor Vitry* (Nuremberg: Mekitzei Nirdamim, 1923) p. 199. Referred to as MV hereafter.

tradition. [3] Aside from this strange Maimonidean dearth of information on the Torah reading, most basic laws are consistent with the traditions found in Geonic sources. The hallel is said in the same manner as prescribed in earlier sources, and, likewise, additions to the birkat hamazon and the tefillah remain unchanged.

1) Changes in the home ceremony during the Rishonic Period

Despite the highly structured nature of the blessings set in earlier texts, there is one discussion in which the Mishneh Torah mentions a peculiar custom. A variant custom is accepted in some places was to follow the three regular blessings of the home ceremony with a fourth:

> Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, the God who champions our causes, and defends us in our struggles, and makes revenge for us, frees us from our troubles, and demands a penalty from our sworn enemies.
> Blessed are You, Adonai, who frees Israel from all their trouble, the saving God. [4]

This blessing brings together the themes of al hanisim, albeit in different words. Clearly, this is a custom followed only in some communities, and is therefore not popular enough for Maimonides to declare it a law. The fact that Rambam cites it indicates that it was recited by some substantial community of Jews of his day. This addition of a full blessing, with a sizable text and chatimah, is

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[3] MV, p. 202.

[4] Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Chanukah, 1:3.

remarkable, considering the usual Rishonic stasis in the blessing structure. While this does not imply that this blessing was prevalent among the Jews of North Africa, it does indicate a fluid liturgy, not yet totally frozen by the wind of codification. The geonic legislation had not universally excluded other local customs.

While one might be tempted to link this blessing with the Palestinian tradition of hanerot haeilu, it would be a hasty conclusion. It is true that this text comes during the same ceremony, and in the correct place liturgically. Unfortunately, the themes of this blessing will not allow us to uphold this hypothesis. Hanerot haeilu centers around the idea of the holiness of the lamps. This prayer never mentions that theme, instead focusing on the actions of God. The language in this prayer aligns better with the language of al hanisim than hanerot haeilu.

Outside of this peculiar blessing, there are few other cases of Rishonic changes in geonic mandates. The Mishneh Torah's development of the obligation of Chanukah tells us that anyone who is obligated to hear the megillah during Purim, is likewise obligated to light the Chanukah lamp. This obligates men, women, converts, and freed slaves to light the Chanukah lamps. Parents, who are responsible for teaching their young about the megillah, are responsible for instructing them to light the lamps. This

broader obligation had not been spelled out as concretely in earlier sources. [5]

In Northern Europe, among the general populace, there was a tendency to light the lamps inside one's house. We see this most clearly in Machzor Vitry:

> And the time when one can light it is until the last foot leaves the marketplace, because there is no pirsum hanes after the last foot has left the marketplace. But, for those of us who light inside, it is a sign for the members of the household until the break of dawn. [6]

When lighting a lamp inside your home, pirsum hanes continues all night long. Since the people who live in your home are there all night, the lamp can publicize the miracle all night.

The Mishneh Torah, however, reflecting Sephardic usage-- and, we might say, like any good work written by a doctor,-- has a second opinion:

> In times of danger, a person places the Chanukah lamp inside his house on the inside. And even if he places it on a table it is enough [to fulfill the requirement]. Inside the house, he needs the light of another lamp for personal use [in other words, if he wants to read or count coins, he must have another lamp burning]. If there is a fire burning there, he does not need another lamp. But if he is an important man, who is not accustomed to use the light of a fire, he needs another lamp. [7]

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[5] Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Chanukah, 1:4.

[6] MV, p. 201.

[7] Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Chanukah, 2:9.

Maimonides allows the lamp to be used inside only in times of danger. This is in direct opposition to the view expressed in the Machzor Vitry. Here, Rambam is even stricter than the geonim, establishing rules to prevent the inside lamp from being used for profane purposes. He adds that even an important person is not exempt from this ruling; important people require the use of a separate lamp, if the fire does not satisfy the need for light.

The blessing over a lamp that one sees but does not light, is repeated in the legal rulings of the Mishneh Torah. [8] The basic ruling of the Babylonians prevails, although Maimonides specifies the regulation only when one has yet to fulfill the mitzvah personally. If people have lit their own lamp in their house before seeing the new one, no blessing is required. This ruling coincides with Machzor Vitry. [9]

The time period for lighting the Chanukah lamp is defined in the most specific terms in the Mishneh Torah. Maimonides asks:

> What is this time period [between the setting of the sun and when the last foot leaves the marketplace]? About half an hour or more....If one lights a lamp and it goes out, one need not rekindle it another time. [10]

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[8] Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Chanukah, 1:4.

[9] MV, p. 201.

[10] Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Chanukah, 2:5.

This is the first specific definition of this time period, and it is short indeed! Furthermore, the lighter need not rekindle the lamp if it should go out. Maimonides is striking a truly lenient position with respect to pirsum hanes, considering that very few people might see a lamp lit for only thirty minutes. This text is truly novel in its shortness of obligation.

The final question related to the home ceremony comes up in Machzor Vitry. What happens to a person who has missed the proper period for lighting of the lamp? Should they light the lamp after the period, or even during the next day? Simchah ben Samuel's answer is:

> You asked about the Chanukah lamp that is not lit at night. I am inclined to think that if one has not lit [the lamp within the proper period], one should not light a new one at all. As it is taught: the obligation extends from the setting of the sun, etc.
>
> But others say that if one has not lit a lamp [in the proper period], one should do so. The meaning of this is that from here on in, one does not perform the mitzvah in the best way.
>
> In a related matter, one must light at night and not during the day. This is because of pirsum hanes. And at night, there are [people] retiring [from their day's work] and the light of the lamp can publicize the miracle. But during the day, that will not occur. Even less so during the rest of the nights can one [make up the last light by lighting an extra lamp on another night,] for the passing day invalidates the sacrifice. [11]

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[11] MV, p. 201.

In the case of a sacrifice, the passing day invalidates the previous day's sacrifice, so one is not allowed to perform sacrifices on the day after they are due. Likewise, it is prohibited to light a Chanukah lamp the day after it is due to be lit. Even lighting the lamp late at night is prohibited by the author, since the appropriate time has passed. The lighting should be done during the appropriate time period, to best fulfill the requirement of pirsum hanes.

2) Work on Chanukah

Machzor Vitry is unique in that it is the earliest extant reference to the establishment of a prohibition on work during Chanukah:

> And also, [we have heard of] one whose custom it is not to work during Purim and Chanukah. This is the custom of yom tov [only!]. Do not accept it! [12]

There may have been those who prompted this question by claiming that Chanukah was a holiday which liberated them not only from Greek oppression, but also from their work. In this responsum, however, there is no ambivalence: Jews went to work during Chanukah. The mere possibility of avoiding work may threaten the main directive of Chanukah. If people do not go to work, then there can be less pirsum hanes, since there are fewer people around to see the burning lamps at night. It is difficult to

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[12] MV, p. 201.

believe that Chanukah ever had much possibility of becoming a holiday with a labor prohibition .

3) Al Hanisim

Our early Rishonic sources tell us that the recitation of al hanisim was a continuing practice. The Rishonim report that it was to be included during Chanukah in the geonic fashion: that is, in the hoda'ah of the tefillah, and also during the second blessing of the birkat hamazon. The extant text, found in Machzor Vitry is consistent with the Geonic texts, showing little further development. It seems that the Rishonim chose Amram's text over Sa'adiah's:

> For the miracles, and for the redemption, and for the mighty deeds, and for the wars, liberation, and redemption that you brought about for us and for our ancestors in those days and at this time. In the days of Mattathias son of Jochanon, the Hasmonean High Priest and his sons, the evil rule of Rome stood against them, and against Your people Israel, [trying] to deny them Your Torah, to bring them away from the laws of Your will. And in Your great mercy, You stood with them in their time of trouble. You championed their cause, You defended them in their struggle, and plotted their revenge for them. You delivered the heroes into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the evil into the hands of the righteous, and the willful transgressors into the hands of those who busy themselves with Torah. You made a great and holy Name for Yourself in Your world, and for Your people Israel, You brought about a great triumph and redemption [which we remember] until this day. And afterwards, Your children went into Your Holy of Holies and freed Your shrine, and purified Your Sanctuary and lit lights in Your holy courtyard. And they set these eight days of Chanukah to thank and praise You, * our God and the God of our ancestors for the greatness of Your miracles and

> Your wonders. As You have done miracles and mighty deeds for our ancestors in those days at this time, also make for us, Adonai our God, wonder and miracles for [our] good in this time. [13]

We learn from this text that the tradition of al hanisim continued into the Rishonic period, and that there were still variations and development going on in the early part of the Rishonic period. While this text is very similar to our current text, the section at the end, from the asterisk on, is not found in our current liturgy. It appears that al hanisim continued to grow and develop throughout the Rishonic period, until it reached its final form.

Conclusion

The Rishonic period is one of little liturgical creativity. Instead, the Rishonim concentrated on the ultimate goal of the geonim: precise specification of the requirements of the lighting and the other aspects of Chanukah. The geonim (and sometimes even the Amoraim), however, had already made exacting statements about most liturgical aspects of Chanukah, leaving little room for development in areas like the Torah reading, or the structure of the blessings.

Only the rare innovation surfaces in this period. We see the discussion of a prohibition on work for Chanukah. The inside

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[13] MV, p. 198.

lighting of Chanukah lamps is discussed, and opinion is split between our two sources. Finally, we see some minute changes in the al hanisim which bring it further on its path of development to our current version. All in all, the Rishonic period had a very limited effect on the liturgical traditions of the Chanukah celebration.

Conclusion

After an exploration of over twelve centuries of the developing Chanukah ritual, we can now explain approximately when and where each custom of Chanukah received its start. Since traditions are often in place long before they become part of the written record, it is possible only to estimate the date by which the custom was in common practice. The findings of this study are easiest to comprehend in Appendix 1, where you will find a chart displaying all the customs of Chanukah, their periods of development, and the rationales which justify them.

The lights of Chanukah have been present in the celebration since the time of I Maccabees, although they did not assume a central place in the celebration until perhaps as late as Josephus. Josephus calls Chanukah the "festival of lights," indicatiing that the lights represented the God's liberation of the Jews from pagan sacrifice. The first tradition we have which authenticates the actual lighting of Chanukah lamps in any concrete way is from Bet Hillel and Bet Shammai, which can be dated during the period of the zugot, before 70 CE. With proof in Josephus and the Talmudic baraita, it is safe to say that the lighting of Chanukah lamps was a common practice by the early first century CE, if not earlier.

Hallel and hoda'ah evolved next, appearing at first as lone citations in I Maccabees that descirbed the sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise offered by the Hasmoneans upon their return to the Temple. In the Mishnah, hallel and hoda'ah are mentioned again, and they remain a consistent part of the ritual in all extant texts up until the Mishneh Torah. As the custom evolves, the text becomes specified. After al hanisim is written in pre-eighth-century Palestine, it is brought into the service as the remembrance of Chanukah by the Geonic prayerbooks. By the time of the Rishonim, the custom of saying al hanisim is well entrenched, with a long history behind it.

After the development of hallel and the hoda'ah, comes the emergence of the Chanukah Torah reading. Although this is never mentioned in the earliest texts on Chanukah, it does appear in Tannaitic texts, giving it a time of origin before 200 CE. While the portion of the "princes" is consistently noted as the Torah reading, no Haftarah is specified until the Babylonian Talmud, when the Rabbis select a portion of Zachariah's dream about lights. If there should be a second Shabbat in Chanukah, the Rabbis rule that we read the story of Solomon's lights in I Kings. The Torah reading remains relatively static from then on, with only minor fluctuations in assigned portions during Geonic and Rishonic times.

The eight days of Chanukah, oddly unique among the festivals demand explanation by the Amoraim in both Babylonia and Palestine.

The Rabbis of the two regions come up with strikingly different answers to the same question. In Babylonia, the story of the cruse of oil reigns supreme. In Palestine, the Rabbis recount the eight days it took to clear the pagan implements out of the Temple and light seven spears for the menorah. In a later development, the Geonim write their own story. They tell us that it is an eight day walk, roundtrip, from Jerusalem to Tekoa, the source of pure oil. According to the Geonic story, the Maccabees waited these eight days for the pure oil they needed to rededicate the Temple.

We note that each set of Rabbis, living under different conditions, needed a story which they could call their own. For the Babylonians, it was a story of a miracle that gave the religious ceremony its greatest meaning. For the Palestinians, fear of armed struggle with an outside invader brought spears into the victorious symbolism of their tale. For the Geonim, it was a holy pilgrimmage to Tekoa, perhaps symbolic of their own desire to journey back to the holy land. Whatever the individual tale, the meaning is tailored to make it meaningful in the age in which it surfaces.

The last great piece in the development of the Chanukah ritual was the structure of the blessings. While there may have been individual blessings which were said during the Tannaitic period, we find no sufficient proof to support this conclusion. By the time of the Talmud, in both Babylonia and Palestine, there is a specific structure to the blessings of Chanukah. The Babylonian Talmud does not include the precise texts of its blessings. The

Palestinian Talmud, on the other hand, does include its blessings which are similar (but not identical) to the blessings we say today. Since both Talmuds include the custom of saying blessings, it is probable that this three-blessing structure developed towards the end of the Tannaitic period, possibly around the time of the compilation of the Mishnah. It is possible that Rabbi Judah did not include the blessings in the Mishnah, perhaps because the Mishnah tends to concentrate primarily on Toraitic material. Whatever the case, it is likely that the blessings were developing during the Tannaitic period, but the ultimate structure is set in the Talmuds. The Geonim and early Rishonim follow the Babylonian Talmud precisely in terms of the structure of reciting the blessings, and provide us with our current texts.

Perhaps the most interesting finding of this study is the difference between the two major schools of interpretation of Chanukah. One can clearly differentiate between two totally different conceptualizations of Chanukah. While some of the customs coincide under both of the ideological structures, the meaning behind them is radically different.

The earlier conceptualization of Chanukah treats the holiday simply as the celebration of a military victory. In the works of Josephus, we see a tendency to equate the holiday with a celebration military liberation from oppression. While he calls the festival "lights," there is little evidence that the lights of Chanukah had taken a central place in the remembrance of the victory. Later, the Palestinian Rabbis tell the story of the seven

spears in the Temple, which are found and converted into a menorah. The blatant symbolism of converting a spear into a religious object, leaves no doubt that Chanukah became the celebration of a military holiday, even while it celebrated the restoration of the Temple. Note, also, in support of this theory, that we find no concept of pirsum hanes in Palestinian traditions. The miracle did not have any part in the Palestinian celebration of Chanukah.

The other conceptualization of Chanukah, however, focuses almost exclusively on the miracle. This attitude is prevalent in the Babylonian tradition. If God performed a miracle, it is necessary to remember that miracle, and therefore, to publicize it to the rest of the world. Virtually all of the Babylonian traditions develop from this basic precept -- pirsum hanes. This is an entirely different approach from that found in the Palestinian community. This approach is carried on by the Geonim, even while they incorporate certain Palestinian traditions into their celebration.

In the final analysis, we learn that Chanukah is a holiday with two very different stances of interpretation. It developed from two loosely structured festivals, celebrating, alternately, freedom and God's miracle, into a finely orchestrated ritual drama which holds evolving symbolic meaning in each age. But while meanings change from age to age, the common elements which link our celebration with that of our forebears are constant. Chanukah, the Jewish festival of lights, miracles, and military victories,

remains full of poignant symbolism, as it has through the centuries.

Appendix

Custom	Early Texts	Tannaitic Pd.	Babylonian Amoraic Pd.	Palestinian Amoraic Period	Geonic Period	Rishonic Pd.
Chanukah Lamps Rationale:	Yes Jos. - celebrates freedom	Yes Spear story or Miracle	Yes publicizes miracle	Yes Seven Spears story	Yes publicizes miracle	Yes publicizes miracle
Hallel and Hoda'ah Rationale:	Yes I Macc.- no reason given	Yes thanks God for redemption	Yes publicizes miracle	Yes military victory	Yes military victory	Yes military victory
Addition to Birkat Hamazon	No	No	Yes - unspecified text in 2nd blessing	Yes - al hanisim	Yes - al hanisim	Yes - al hanisim
Chanukah Torah reading Num. 7:1-89	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chanukah Haftarah reading 1st Shabbat Text 2nd Shabbat Text	No	No	Yes Zach. 4 I Kings 7:40-50	Yes Zach. 4 I Kings 7:51-8:21	Zach. 4 I Kings 7:40-50	Zach. 4 I Kings 7:40-50
Specified Blessings 1st night 2nd+ nights	No	No	Yes - 3 for lighting, 2 for seeing 2 for lighting, 1 seeing	Yes - 3 for lighting, 2 for seeing 2 for lighting, 1 seeing	Yes - 3 for lighting, 2 for seeing 2 for lighting, 1 seeing	Yes- MV - 3 for lighting, 2 for seeing MV - 2 for lighting, 1 seeing MT - one add'l blessing in each case
Eight Days Rationale:	Yes none	Yes Spear story or eight days of preparation	Yes Cruse of oil	Yes Spear story	Yes 8 day trip to Tekoa for oil	Yes Miracle
Prohibition on mourning	No	Yes	Yes, except for talmid chakham	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prohibition on fasting	No	Yes - Lod story	Yes - Lod story	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
Al Hanisim	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hanerot Haeilu	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

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