

# The Torah

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## Al HaNissim: A Chanukah Prayer Revised to Include 1 Maccabees

While silent about the miracle of oil, *Al HaNissim* calls attention to the lighting of the lampstand in the Temple, even making use of the Talmud's wording, thus leaving the matter open to interpretation.

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*Al HaNissim* in Prayers and Blessings, 1738 Fürth, Bavaria, Germany.

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The *Al HaNissim* prayer, likely composed in the Geonic period (around 7<sup>th</sup> –10<sup>th</sup> cent. C.E.), is recited on Chanukah in both the *Amidah* (daily prayer) and *Birkat Hamazon* (grace after meals).<sup>[1]</sup> The version of the prayer that we say differs from the version found in the Geonic period work, in Tractate Soferim,<sup>[2]</sup> which states that as part of the Modim blessing, we say:

<p>מסכת סופרים כ"ו והודאת פלאות ותשועת כהנים אשר עשית בימי מתתיהו בן יוחנן כהן גדול וחשמונאי ובניו וכן עשה עמנו ה'</p>	<p>Sofrim 20.6 and with acknowledgement of the wonders and the salvation of priests that You wrought in the days of Mattathias son of Yohanan the High</p>
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אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו נסים  
ונפלאות ונודה לשמך לנצח  
ב[רוד] א[תה] י"י הטוב.  
Priest, the Hasmonean and his sons. So  
perform for us Adonai our God and God  
of our ancestors miracles and wonders  
and we will thank Your name forever.  
Blessed are You Adonai, who is good / the  
Good.<sup>[3]</sup>

In contrast to this brief version, our *Al HaNissim* is much lengthier, and more descriptive about the war, and the specifics of the Maccabees' first Chanukah. One major feature of our version that does not appear in the Soferim version is the incorporation of details found also in the Chanukah account in 1 Maccabees into the retelling.

## The *Al HaNissim* Opening

The opening of *Al HaNissim* is common to both Chanukah and Purim:

על הנסים ועל הפרקו ועל הגבורות  
ועל התשועות ועל הנפלאות  
שעשית לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן  
הזה  
For the **miracles**, for the deliverance, for  
the acts of might, for the acts of  
salvation, and for the **wondrous acts** that  
you wrought on behalf of our ancestors in  
those days at this time.

It follows the model of the preceding Modim blessing of the Amidah in its repetitive use of על and its reference to miracles and wonders:

על חיינו המסורים בידך ועל  
נשמותינו הפקודות לך ועל נפשינו  
שבקל יום עמנו ועל נפלאותיך  
וטובותיך שבקל עת  
[F]or our lives that are in Your hand, and  
for our souls that are in Your charge, and  
for Your **miracles** that are daily with us,  
and for Your **wonders** and kindnesses at  
all times.

The prayer then moves on to Chanukah specifically.

## Mattathias the “High Priest”

It begins with the introduction of Mattathias:

בימי מתתיהו בן יוחנן כהן גדול  
חשמונאי ובניו  
In the days of Mattathias, son of  
Yohanan, the high priest, the Hasmonean  
and his sons.

This introduction is similar to how Mattathias is introduced in 1 Maccabees:

<sup>1 Macc 2:1</sup> In those days Mattathias son of Yohanan son of Simeon, a  
priest of the clan of Joarib, moved from Jerusalem and settled in

Modein.<sup>[4]</sup>

While the name of the father is Yohanan in both,<sup>[5]</sup> 1 Maccabees does not say that he was a high priest. Indeed, Mattathias was never high priest, nor was Mattathias' father the famous Yoḥanan (Ḥonya/Onias) the high priest.<sup>[6]</sup> It is possible that the rabbis accidentally conflated two historical personages, or that they wished to present Mattathias as coming from a high priestly line. Alternatively, כהן גדול here may indicate a distinguished priest, as opposed to an official title.

Josephus understands the term Hasmonean as a reference to an ancestor of Mattathias, while rabbinic sources seem to imply it was another name for Mattathias himself.<sup>[7]</sup> Either way, the term does not appear in either 1 or 2 Maccabees, and attempts to understand its origin are speculative.

## Rising Against Israel

*Al HaNissim* describes the persecution as the rise of the Greeks over the Judeans.

<p>בְּשָׁעֵמְדָה מְלָכוֹת יוֹן הָרָשָׁעָה עַל עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל</p>	<p>when the evil Greek kingdom rose up against Your people Israel</p>
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The subject here is not when the Greek Empire was founded, almost two centuries earlier, but when it began to persecute “Your people Israel.”

Notably, *Exodus Rabbah* works with this same concept, but about Rome:

<p>שְׁמוֹת רַבָּה י"ב: ב מִשְׁעֵמְדָה אֲדוֹם אָמַר הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא הַסִּיּוֹן הַזֶּה יִהְיֶה בְּיַדְכֶם בַּיּוֹם שֶׁעָשִׂיתִי לָכֶם חֲשׂוּעָה וּבְאוֹתוֹ הָיָו יוֹדְעִים שֶׁאֲנִי גּוֹאֲלְכֶם.</p>	<p>When Edom (=Rome) arose: The Holy One, blessed be He, said, “This sign will be in your hands On the day that I grant you salvation, on that same day, know that I will redeem you.”<sup>[8]</sup></p>
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## Transgressing Torah Laws

The Greeks were trying to make Israel forget Torah and violate its commandments:

<p>לְהַשְׁכִּיחֵם [או: לְשַׁכַּחֵם] תּוֹרַתְךָ וּלְהַעֲבִירֵם מִחֻקֵּי רְצוֹנְךָ.</p>	<p>to make them forget Your Torah and to get them to transgress Your laws</p>
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This claim comes from the book of Maccabees:

<p>*[כדי שישכחו את התורה ומירו את כל החוקים].<sup>[9]</sup></p>	<p>so as to forget the Torah and violate all the commandments.</p>
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## The Time of Distress

The focus now turns to God's fighting Israel's war:

<p>וְאַתָּה בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּים עָמַדְתָּ לָהֶם בְּעַת צָרָתָם.</p>	<p>You, in Your overwhelming mercy, stood by them in their time of distress.</p>
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The Tosefta tells the story of Miriam daughter of Balgah, who apostatized during the Greek persecution, and rebuked the altar (a stand in for God?) for not standing by Israel in the time of their distress:

<p>תּוֹסֵפְתָא סוּכָה דִּכּוּכָה הִלְכָה וְנִשְׂאָתָא לְסַרְדִּיּוֹט אַחַד מִמְּלַכֵי יוֹן וְכַשְׁנֹכְנִסוּ גוֹיִם לְהִיכַל בַּאֲתָה וְטַפְחָה עַל גִּגְוִי שֶׁל מִזְבֵּחַ אָמְרָה לֹא לֹקֵס לֹקֵס אַתָּה הַחֲרַבְתָּ מִמּוֹנֵי שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא עָמַדְתָּ לָהֶם בְּעַת צָרָתָם</p>	<p>t. Sukkah 4:28 She went off and married an officer at the Greek royal house. And when the Gentiles went into the sanctuary, she came along and stamped on the altar, screaming at it: “Lykos! Lykos! [= “wolf” in Greek]. You have wiped out the fortune of Israel and did not then stand up for them in the time of their distress.”<sup>[10]</sup></p>
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## God Fights Their Fight

*Al HaNissim* continues by describing God's actions in cognate accusative form —where the verb and its object come from the same root:

<p>רָבַתְּ אֶת רִיבָם. דִּנְתָּ אֶת דִּינָם. נִקְמִתְּ אֶת נִקְמָתָם.</p>	<p>You fought for them, You brought them justice, You avenged them.</p>
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Similar rhetoric appears in Seder Gan Eden, an obscure midrash from the Islamic period, which describes how the patriarchs and the Ophanim (a type of angel) will gather before the Messiah in the Temple and witness (in a vision?) all the terrible things that happened to Jewish martyrs. The midrash uses the same phrases about God exacting judgment and vengeance:

<p>סֵדֶר גַּן עֵדֶן וְאוֹתָם הָאוֹפָנִים כֻּלָּם יִנְשְׂאוּ וְעוֹלִין אֶצֶל מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא וְנִשְׁבַּע לָהֶם לְלַבּוֹשׁ בְּגָדֵי נִקְמָה וְלָדוֹן אֶת נִקְמָתָם מִן הָאוֹמוֹת, שְׁנֵאמַר (תְּהִלִּים קי"ו) "יֵדִין בְּגוֹיִם מִלֹּא גוֹיּוֹת." [11]</p>	<p>Seder Gan Eden The all the Ophanim will go up to the King of Kings, the Blessed Holy One, and He will make them swear to put on the clothing of vengeance, and to bring avenging judgment against the peoples of the world, as it says (Ps 110:6): “He works judgment upon the nations, heaping up bodies.”</p>
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## Many Versus Few

מְסַרְתָּ גְבוּרִים בְּיַד חֲלָשִׁים וְרַבִּים  
בְּיַד מְעַטִּים

You delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak, **the many into the hands of the few**

This imagery of mighty versus weak, and more specifically the phrase “many in the hands of the few” comes from Judah Maccabee’s speech before the fateful Chanukah battle in 1 Maccabees:

מקבים א ג:יח \* [ויאמר יהודה: נקל הוא להסגיר רבים ביד מעטים ואין הבדל לפני השמים להושיע ברבים או במעטים. ג:ט כי לא ברוב חיל הוא ניצחון במלחמה כי אם מן השמים הכוח.] [12]

1 Maccabees 3:18 Judah said: It is easy for **many** to be delivered **into the hands of the few**. Heaven sees no difference in gaining victory through the many or through the few. 3:19 It is not on the size of the army that victory in battle depends, but strength comes from heaven.

## Wicked Versus Pious

The next phrases are ambiguous, indicating both Greeks and Hellenizers:

וְטָמְאִים בְּיַד טְהוֹרִים וְרָשָׁעִים בְּיַד  
צְדִיקִים וְנֹדִים בְּיַד עוֹסְקֵי תוֹרַתְךָ

the defiled into the hands of the undefiled the wicked into the hands of the righteous and the perpetrators into the hands of the those committed to Your Torah.

While the Greeks themselves would fit this description, variations on these terms are used to refer to the wicked of Israel in late biblical writings:

דניאל יא:לב וּמְרִשְׁעֵי בְרִית יְהוָה  
בְּחֻלְקוֹת וְעַם יְדַעֵי אֱלֹהֵיוּ יִחְזְקוּ  
וְעָשׂוּ.

Dan 11:32 He will flatter with smooth words **those who act wickedly** toward the covenant, but the people devoted to their God will stand firm.

נחמיה ט:טז וְהֵם וְאֲבֹתֵינוּ הִזְדוּ  
וַיִּקְשׂוּ אֶת-עַרְפָּם וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ  
אֶל-מִצְוֹתֶיךָ.

Neh 9:16 But they—our fathers—**acted presumptuously**; they stiffened their necks and did not obey Your commandments. [13]

The contrast with the positive, Israel-oriented phrase “those committed to Your Torah,” is paralleled in 1 Maccabees:

מקבים א ד:מב \* [ויבחר כוהנים  
תמימים חפצים בתורה]. [14]

1 Macc 4:42 He (Judah) appointed  
unblemished priests committed to the  
Torah.

## Magnification of God's Name

ולך עשית שם גדול וקדוש בעולםך  
And You had Your **name magnified** and  
sanctified in Your world.

Magnifying God's name is also present in the opening of Kaddish, another prayer from the Geonic period:

יהגדל ויהקדש שמה רבא בעלמא  
May His **name** become **magnified** and  
sanctified in the world.<sup>[15]</sup>

The phrase is biblical, appearing in the book of Samuel, in the context of God promising to make David's name great:

שמואל ב ז:ט וְאֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר  
הֵלַכְתָּ וְאַכְרַתָּה אֶת כָּל אֹיְבֶיךָ  
מִפְּנֵיךָ וְעָשִׂיתִי לְךָ שֵׁם גָּדוֹל כְּשֵׁם  
הַגְּדֹלִים אֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ.

2 Sam 7:9 and I have been with you  
wherever you went, and have cut down  
all your enemies before you. Moreover, I  
**will magnify your name** like that of the  
greatest men on earth.

The Geonic uses of the term is inverted, with people magnifying God's name.

## Israel's Redemption

ולעמך ישראל עשית תשועה גדולה  
ופרקו כהיום הזה.  
Regarding Your people Israel: You  
performed a great deliverance and  
redemption unto this very day.

The use of the Aramaic synonym for salvation, פּוּרְקוֹן, is common in geonic liturgy. For example in this Shabbat prayer recited after the Torah reading service:

יקום פּוּרְקוֹן מִן שְׁמַיָא... וְתַתְּפָרְקוּן  
וְתַשְׁתַּבְּחוּן מִן כָּל עָקָא.  
May **salvation** arise from heaven... And be  
**saved** and redeemed from all trouble.<sup>[16]</sup>

## Purifying the Sanctuary

ואחר כן באו בניך לדביר ביתך,  
 ופנו את היכלך, וטהרו את  
 מקדשך,

Afterwards, Your children entered the  
 Holy of Holies of Your Abode, cleaned out  
 Your Temple, purified Your sanctuary,

Clearing out profaned materials from the Sanctuary and purifying it seems to be drawn from a more detailed account in 1 Maccabees:

\*] מקבים א ד:מג והם טיהרו את  
 המקדש ונשאו את אבני השיקוץ  
 אל מקום טמא. ד:מד ויוועצו על  
 אודות מזבח העולה המחולל, מה  
 יעשו לו, ד:מה ותיפול להם עצה  
 טובה להורסו... ד:מו וניחו את  
 האבנים בהר הבית... ד:מו ויקחו  
 אבנים שלמות, כדת, ויבנו מזבח  
 חדש, כמו הראשון. ד:מח ויבנו את  
 המקדש ואת פני הבית ואת  
 החצרות קידשו.[17]

1 Macc 4:43 They purified the sanctuary  
 and removed the defiled stones into an  
 unclean place. 4:44 They deliberated  
 what to do with the profaned altar. 4:45  
 And they thought it best to tear it down...  
 4:46 and they stored the stones in the  
 Temple... 4:47 Taking uncut stones as  
 prescribed by the Torah, they built a new  
 altar after the pattern of the old. 4:48  
 They repaired the sanctuary and  
 hallowed the interior of the house and  
 the courts.

## Lighting Candles

והדליקו נרות בחצרות קדשך  
 and kindled lights in the courtyards of  
 Your sanctuary.[18]

In all likelihood, the author of this prayer would have known the miracle of the oil account found once in the Talmud.

בבלי שבת כא: בדקו ולא מצאו אלא  
 פך אחד של שמן שהיה מונח  
 בחותמו של כהן גדול, ולא היה בו  
 אלא להדליק יום אחד. נעשה בו נס  
 והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים. לשנה  
 אחרת קבעום ועשאום ימים טובים  
 בהלל והודאה.

b. Shabbat 21b they searched and came up  
 with only one cruse of oil with the seal of  
 the High Priest, only enough for one day  
 of lighting. A miracle occurred and they  
 lit from it for eight days. The next year,  
 they designated these days as holidays by  
 reciting “Hallel” and “Hodu.”[19]

Indeed, the end of *Al HaNissim* is nearly identical to the Talmudic formulation.<sup>[20]</sup> Yet, *Al HaNissim* does not mention it, and instead follows the account of 1 Maccabees in this detail as well:

\*] מקבים א ד:מט ויעשו כלי קודש  
 חדשים, וביאו את המנורה... ד:  
 ויקטירו על גבי המזבח ויעלו את

1 Maccabees 4:49 They made also new holy  
 vessels, and into the temple they brought  
 lampstand... 4:50 ... and lit the lamps on

הנרות אשר על המנורה ויאירו  
[21] במקדש.      the lampstand that they might give light  
in the Temple.<sup>[22]</sup>

Still, the fact that Al HaNissim mentions the lampstand at all, and writes in ways so similar to the Babylonian Talmud, implies that the author wished to call this story to mind, allowing for ambiguity in meaning.

The passage recited after lighting the Chanukah candles follows suit. Although it knows the Babylonian Talmud's account, it makes no mention of the miracle of the oil, preferring *Al HaNissim*'s more generalized terminology:

הנרות הללו שאנו מדליקין, על  
הנסים ועל הנפלאות ועל התשועות  
שעשית לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן  
הזה, על ידי כהניך הקדושים.  
We kindle these lights for the miracles,  
for the wondrous acts, and for the acts of  
salvation which You wrought then at this  
time for our ancestors through Your holy  
priests.

וכך שמונת ימי החנכה הנרות הללו  
קדש הם ואין לנו רשות להשתמש  
בהם, אלא לראותם בלבד, כדי  
להודות ולהלל לשמך הגדול על  
נסיך ועל נפלאותיך ועל ישועתך.  
For all eight days of Chanukah these  
lights are special, used only for gazing,  
that we may give thanks and say Hallel to  
Your great name for Your miracles, for  
Your wondrous acts, and for Your acts of  
salvation.

These texts, and that of Tractate Soferim (quoted above), stand in contrast to the explicit reference to the miracle of the oil in Megillat Antiochus (§76–80).

## Designating Eight Days of Hanukah

וקבעו שמונת ימי חנכה אלו  
and designated these eight days of  
Chanukah

According to 1 Maccabees, Judah himself established the eight-day festival of Chanukah upon purifying the Temple, and note the use of the term dedication, which is where Chanukah derives its name:

\* [מקבים א ד:ג] בזמן וביום אשר בו  
חיללו אותו הגויים, ב[יום] שהוא  
נחנך בשירים ובקתרוסים,  
בכינורות ובמצלתים... ד:ו ויעשו  
את חנוכת המזבח ימים שמונה,  
ויעלו עולות בשמחה וזבחו זבחים  
שלמים ותודה... [23]

<sup>1 Macc 4:5 4</sup> At the very season and on the  
very day that the nations had profaned it,  
it **was dedicated** with songs and harps  
and lutes and cymbals... <sup>4:56</sup> So they  
celebrated **the dedication of the altar** for  
eight days and joyfully offered burnt  
offerings; they offered a sacrifice of well-  
being and a thanksgiving offering...



\* [ד:נט ויקבעו יהודה ואחיו וכל  
 עדת ישראל כי יוחגו ימי חנוכה  
 המזבח בזמניהם, מדי שנה בשנה,  
 ימים שמונה, מן החמישה ועשרים  
 בחודש כסלו, בשמחה  
 ובששון.]<sup>[24]</sup>

4:59 Then Judas and his brothers and all  
 the assembly of Israel determined that  
 every year at that season the days of  
**dedication of the altar** should be  
 observed with joy and gladness for eight  
 days, beginning with the twenty-fifth  
 day of the month of Kislev.<sup>[25]</sup>

## Reciting Hallel and Hodu

The prayer ends by stating that the purpose of establishing Chanukah was to  
 “*hodu*” and “*hallel*”:

להודות ולהלל לשמך הגדול  
 for reciting [the prayers known as]  
 “Hodu” and “Hallel” to Your great  
 Name.

*Hodu* may designate a specific liturgical response, as also implied in Psalms:

תהלים קיח:א הודו ליהוה כי טוב כי  
 לעולם חסדו.  
 Ps 118:1 Praise YHWH, for He is good, His  
 steadfast love is eternal.<sup>[26]</sup>

*Hallel* may designate the liturgical use of Psalms 113–118, as is the practice on  
 Chanukah. The two terms appear together in Chronicles:

דברי הימים ב ה:יג ויהי כאחד  
 (למחצרים) [למחצרים]  
 ולמשררים להשמיע קול אחד  
 להלל ולהודות ליהוה...  
 2 Chron 5:13 The trumpeters and the  
 singers joined in unison **to praise and  
 extol** YHWH...<sup>[27]</sup>

The final words of the prayer return to the magnification of God’s name, as  
 seen above.

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## Adding 1 Maccabees to an Earlier Version

The unusual inclusion of material from 1 Maccabees—a work never quoted in rabbinic literature—is unique to this prayer. As noted at the beginning, other than the reference to Mattathias son of Yoḥanan, nothing in the Soferim version connects to the account in 1 Maccabees.

Our *Al HaNissim* likely reflects a revision—either of the version in Soferim or some other early prayer. The authors of this revision not only knew 1 Maccabees but used it to expand an already existent Chanukah prayer to reflect the tenor of its telling of the story, one that is quite different than the Chanukah story in the Babylonian Talmud.

Yet by mentioning the lampstand, they called attention to the story in the Talmud, thereby finessing the basis of Chanukah – be it the miraculous victory, the rededication of the Temple, or the miracle of the oil. As a consequence, all can find their way to welcome in the celebration of the festival of lights.<sup>[28]</sup>

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## Footnotes

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1. For some of the variations, see *Maḥzor Vitry*. R. Simḥah Me-Vitry, ed. A. Goldschmidt, 6 vols. Jerusalem: Oṣar Ha-Posqim, 5764-5769 (2004–2023), 1:116; and Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, trans. Raymond P. Scheindlin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society), 1993, p. 52; trans. of התפילה בישראל בהתפתחותה ההיסטורית (Dvir: Tel Aviv, 1972); orig. *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Leipzig: G. Fock, 1913).
2. See Myron B. Lerner, “The External Tractates,” in *The Literature of the Sages, First Part*, ed. Shmuel Safrai, *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum 2* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), 367–403 [397–400]. Lerner argues that the work was edited in the Geonic period, in a place that had both Palestinian and Babylonian traditions.
3. For הטוב (Good) as an epithet for God, see my forthcoming book *The Rhetoric of the Jewish Liturgy: A Historical and Literary Commentary on the Daily Prayer Book* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, forthcoming), Chapter 8, n.326. Here it corresponds to the Divine epithet at the conclusion of the Modim blessing, הטוב שקך (‘‘Your name is Good’’), or הטוב לך להודות.
4. Translations from NRSVue with slight adjustments.

5. A Genizah version mentions only Mattathias. See Stefan Reif, *Jewish Prayer Texts from the Cairo Genizah: A Selection of Manuscripts at Cambridge University Library* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), p. 274, with n. 16.
6. Editor's note: For more on the relationship between the Hasmoneans and the Oniads, see Daniel R. Schwartz, "The Hasmoneans Usurped the High Priesthood from the Oniads," *TheTorah* (2023).
7. See discussion in Mitchel First, "The Identity and Meaning of Chasmonai," *The Seforim Blog* (2013).
8. The midrash may be borrowing from the Geonic prayer, as is implied by its use of the term תְּשׁוּעָה "salvation," which appears later in the prayer:

וְלַעֲמֹד יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲשִׂיתָ תְּשׁוּעָה גְדוֹלָה  
וּפְרִקוֹן כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה.  
Regarding Your people Israel: You performed a  
great **salvation** and redemption unto this very  
day.

9. The Hebrew here is the translation of Uriel Rappaport, ספר מקבים א [The First Book of Maccabees], בין מקרא למשנה [Between Bible and Mishnah] (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2004), 116. The Greek reads: ὥστε ἐπλαθῆσθαι τοῦ νόμου καὶ ἀλλάξει πάντα τὰ δικαιώματα.
10. Translation from Jacob Neusner, *The Tosefta* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 1.584, with adjustments.
11. Text is from Judah Eisenstein, *Otzar Midrashim*, p. 87.
12. Hebrew translation from Rappaport, *The First Book of Maccabees*, 143. The Greek reads: καὶ εἶπεν Ἰουδαῖς Εὐκροπὸν ἐστὶν συγλαισθῆναι πολλοὺς ἐν χερσὶν ὀλίγων, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν διαφορὰ ἐναντίον τοῦ οὐρανοῦ σφῆζειν ἐν πολλοῖς ἢ ἐν ὀλίγοις.
13. Later in the same chapter, this term is repeated:

נחמיה ט:כט וְתַעֲדוּ בָהֶם לְהַשִּׁיבָם אֵל  
תּוֹרַתְךָ וְהִמָּה תְּוִידוֹ וְלֹא שִׁמְעוּ לְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ  
וּבְמַשְׁפָּטֶיךָ...  
Neh 9:29 You admonished them in order to turn  
them back to Your Teaching, but they **acted**  
**presumptuously** and disobeyed Your  
commandments...

14. Rappaport, *The First Book of Maccabees*, 162. The Greek reads: καὶ ἐπέλεξαι ἱερεῖς ἀμώμους θελητὰς νόμου,
15. The line alludes to the terminology of what is known as "the miniature Shema" recited before the morning prayers (Shaharit):

קַדַּשׁ אֵת שְׁמֶךָ עַל מַקְדְּשֵׁי שְׁמֶךָ וְקַדַּשׁ  
אֵת שְׁמֶךָ בְּעֵלְמֶךָ וּבִישׁוּעֶתְךָ תְּרוּם וְתַגְבִּייה  
קַרְנֵנוּ, בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ מִקְדַּשׁ אֵת שְׁמֶךָ  
בְּרַבִּים.  
**Sanctify Your Name** through **those who**  
**sanctify Your Name** and **sanctify Your Name**  
in Your world. And by Your salvation may our  
status be raised and exalted. Blessed are You  
Adonai who **sanctifies Your Name** in public.

16. Also in one version of the Kadish:

וַיִּצְמַח פְּרוּחַ מְשִׁיחָא וַיִּקְרַב (קצ) מְשִׁיחָא And may His salvation blossom, and the (end)  
time of his Messiah approach.

17. Rappaport, *First Book of Maccabees*, 163. The Greek reads:

<sup>1 Macc 4:43</sup> καὶ ἐκαθάρισαν τὰ ἅγια καὶ ἦραν τοὺς λίθους τοῦ μασμοῦ εἰς τόπον ἀκάθαρτον. <sup>4:44</sup> καὶ ἐβουλεύσαντο περὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου τῆς ὀλοκαυτώσεως τοῦ βεβηλωμένου, τί αὐτῷ ποιήσωσιν. <sup>4:45</sup> καὶ ἔπεσεν αὐτοῖς βουλή ἀγαθὴ καθελεῖν αὐτό... <sup>4:46</sup> καὶ ἀπέθεντο τοὺς λίθους ἐν τῷ ὄρει τοῦ οἴκου... <sup>4:47</sup> καὶ ἔλαβον λίθους ὀλοκλήρους κατὰ τὸν νόμον καὶ ᾠκοδόμησαν θυσιαστήριον καινὸν κατὰ τὸ πρότερον. <sup>4:48</sup> καὶ ᾠκοδόμησαν τὰ ἅγια καὶ τὰ ἐντὸς τοῦ οἴκου καὶ τὰς αὐλὰς ἡγίασαν.

18. Although the authors of the prayer almost certainly lit Chanukah candles, Al HaNissim makes no mention of this practice here.

19. This may refer to Al HaNissim which is incorporated in the Modim (= Thanksgiving); see the beginning of the citation from *Massekhet Sofrim*, above, at n. 1; and Jonathan Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, Anchor Bible 42 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 286–287. Regarding the alleged parallel in *Megillat Ta’anit*, see Vered Noam, “The Miracle of the Cruse of Oil: The Metamorphosis of a Legend,” *HUCA* 73 (2002), pp. 191–226.

20. Note the overlapping phrases in bold:

וַיִּקְדְּשׁוּ קַדְשֵׁי הַבְּחֵרִים וַיִּקְדְּשׁוּ הַבְּחֵרִים וַיִּקְדְּשׁוּ הַבְּחֵרִים **and kindled lights** in the courtyards of Your  
sanctuary, **and designated these eight days of**  
וַיִּקְדְּשׁוּ הַבְּחֵרִים וַיִּקְדְּשׁוּ הַבְּחֵרִים וַיִּקְדְּשׁוּ הַבְּחֵרִים **Chanukah for reciting “Hodu” and “Hallel”**  
לְמִנְחָתְךָ הַגָּדוֹל.  
to Your great Name.

21. Rappaport, *First Book of Maccabees*, 163. The Greek reads:

<sup>1 Macc 4:49</sup> καὶ ἐποίησαν σκεύη ἅγια καινὰ καὶ εἰσήνεγκαν τὴν λυχνίαν... <sup>4:50</sup> καὶ ἐθυμίασαν ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον καὶ ἐξήψαν τοὺς λύχνους τοὺς ἐπὶ τῆς λυχνίας, καὶ ἔφαινον ἐν τῷ ναῶ.

22. Even so, by choosing to highlight this part of the story, they call attention to the practice and perhaps even to the Talmudic account, without saying so explicitly.

23. Rappaport, *First Book of Maccabees*, 164. The Greek reads:

<sup>1 Macc 4:54</sup> κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἡμέραν, ἐν ἣ ἐβεβήλωσαν αὐτὸ τὰ ἔθνη, ἐν ἐκείνῃ **ἐνεκαινίσθη** ἐν ᾧδαῖς καὶ κισθάραις καὶ κινύραις καὶ κυμβάλοις... <sup>4:56</sup> καὶ ἐποίησαν **τὸν ἐγκαινισμόν τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου** ἡμέρας ὀκτώ καὶ προσήνεγκαν ὀλοκαυτώματα μετ’ εὐφροσύνης καὶ ἔθυσαν θυσίαν σωτηρίου καὶ αἰνέσεως.

24. Rappaport, *First Book of Maccabees*, 165. The Greek reads:

<sup>1 Macc 4:59</sup> καὶ ἔστησεν Ἰουδας καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ πάσα ἡ ἐκκλησία Ἰσραὴλ ἵνα ἄγωνται αἱ ἡμέραι **τοῦ ἐγκαινισμού τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου** ἐν τοῖς καιροῖς αὐτῶν ἐνιαυτὸν

κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν ἡμέρας ὀκτὼ ἀπὸ τῆς πέμπτης καὶ εἰκάδος τοῦ μηνὸς Χασελευ μετ' εὐφροσύνης καὶ χαρᾶς.

25. We see the same claim in 2 Maccabees:

<sup>2 Macc 10:9</sup> They celebrated it for **eight days** with rejoicing, in the manner of the Festival of Sukkot... <sup>10:11</sup> They decreed by public edict, ratified by vote, that the whole nation of the Jews should observe these days **every year**.

26. 1 Chronicles 16:34, 41; 2 Chronicles 5:13; 7:3, 6; 16:41; 20:21.

27. See also, in the same order, 1 Chr 16.4; 23:30.

28. See also my [“The Books of Maccabees and the Al HaNissim Prayer for Hanukah.”](#)



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