

Oil For Chanukah: A Guided Study

There is so much prophecy surrounding the Chanukah story. "The abomination of desolation" that Yeshua spoke of in Matthew 24 comes directly from Daniel's prophecies that were fulfilled in the days of the Maccabees. Since prophecy is cyclical, with greater and lesser fulfillments, understanding the Chanukah story (and Purim for that matter) is critical to understanding the things that unfold in the Book of Revelation and the latter days. These stories give a blueprint of what the spirit of antichrist seeks to do and how he goes about accomplishing his will. But even more importantly, these accounts describe the righteous acts of the saints and how to be an overcomer.

What is the history of Chanukah? Is Chanukah Biblical? Should we avoid using the eight branched Chanukiah? Is Chanukah pagan? Does the Torah allude to Chanukah? Is observing Chanukah "adding to the Torah"? Is Chanukah an important commemoration? Did Yeshua keep Chanukah or speak about the Maccabees?

Rather than writing a teaching article, I have given the reader study texts and questions with a few sprinkles of information. Our minds are much more likely to retain information if we have sought answers through personal discovery. At the end, there is a list of the Psalms, blessings, and the lyrics to a classic Chanukah song. If you don't have a copy of the apocryphal books, you can read them online for free:

Read 1 & 2 Maccabees [here](#).

Read the Josephus' account of Chanukah's history [here](#).

The Meaning of Chanukah

Study Texts: Genesis 14:14, Deuteronomy 20:5, Proverbs 22:6, 1 Maccabees 3:55-56

Each of the passages above has a form of the word *chanak* (the root of chanukah), which means to dedicate, to train, or to narrow.

1. How are 'train up' and 'dedicate' related?
2. What is the context of Deuteronomy 20?
3. Why do you think it was important for a man to dedicate his house before going to war?
4. How can this law be spiritually applied to one's life? Are we at war now?
5. In what way do you think Abraham trained his men? Allow Genesis 18:19 to inform your answer.

6. Based on your answer to number five, in what way should one train their child?
7. Can training a child also be considered dedicating them to the LORD?
8. All the above study texts are about one's house or one's servants or one's children who are raised in their house. Other places with forms of *chanak* are usually in the context of dedicating Adonai's House. How are these concepts related? Does this narrow or expand your understanding of dedication?

The Moedim (Appointed Times)

Study Text: Lev. 23:1-24:4

1. Do you think it is significant that right after the summary of the moedim (feast days), the Torah immediately mentions the oil for the menorah, and how its lamps should ascend or go up continually (tamid)? Why or why not?

Note: Recall that there are NO chapter or verse breaks on a Torah scroll. Leviticus 23 and 24 are one fluid text. According to page 99 of Artscroll's Mesorah series on Chanukah, the juxtaposition of Lev. 23:44 and Lev. 24:1-2 infers that the Torah anticipated a future time when the kindling of the menorah would be an annual festival that would follow Sukkot. Obviously, this is only hinted at; it is an allusion, not a hard fact. However, it is interesting to at least consider since the prophecies surrounding the Chanukah story teach one about the final redemption and restoration, of which the moedim of Leviticus 23 also teach. For more allusions based on juxtaposition, see the section after the conclusion.

Study Text: 2 Maccabees 1

1. Why were the Jews celebrating Sukkot (Booths) in the ninth month (Chislev = Kislev), and not the seventh?
2. Can you list a precedence for this from the Torah? Or do you find their reasoning presumptuous?

Study Text: Numbers 9:6-12

1. The above passage teaches about Pesach Sheni - the second (chance) Passover. Based on this ruling of Moses (by the Word of Adonai), is there a Torah Seed or precedent for the possibility for a second Sukkot too? Why or why not?
2. What does Sukkot commemorate (Lev. 23:42-43)?

Study Text: 2 Chronicles 29:1- 30:27

1. What is chapter 29 about?
2. Instead of the word *chanak* (H2596), dedicate, the word that appears most often in chapter 29 is sanctify (H6942). How are these words related? How are they different?
3. For what reason did King Hezekiah proclaim a Passover in the second month? Were the conditions he based his decision upon identical to the conditions Moses gave for a Pesach Sheni in Numbers 9?
4. Did you think King Hezekiah, the Levites, and the people “added to the Torah” by eating the Passover other than the Torah prescribes?
5. Do you think Hezekiah and the Assembly (Judges) made a good, godly decision?
6. If yes, could their actions be described as following the Spirit of the Torah?
7. Hezekiah added an additional seven days to Unleavened Bread. Was this “adding to the Torah”?
8. Was Adonai’s response favorable toward Hezekiah and the people? (vs. 20)
9. In verses 10-12, which tribes “laughed them to scorn and mocked them” when they heard the King’s proclamation and invitation to eat the Passover in the second month?
10. Do you think this happens today among God’s people? If so, give an example.

Study Text: 2 Chron. 7:8-10

1. Is there a relationship between the Temple dedication and Sukkot?

2. Based on your answers above, do you think that the Maccabees had a precedent from the Tanakh (OT) for establishing a late Sukkot festival and tying it to the rededication of the Temple?

What About the Chanukiah?

Study Text: Exodus 30:22-38

In verses 32-33 and 37-38, the Torah explicitly states that the anointing oil and incense prescribed for the Tabernacle (and Temple) were not to be made or used for any other purpose. They were to be kept set apart, holy, and were not to be copied for personal or mundane use. Based on these verses Jewish halachah ruled that one should not make anything related to the Tabernacle or Temple in its exact form, including the Temple furniture. Menachot 28b says:

And it is taught in another baraita: A person may not construct a house in the exact form of the Sanctuary, nor a portico [akhsadra] corresponding to the Entrance Hall of the Sanctuary, nor a courtyard corresponding to the Temple courtyard, nor a table corresponding to the Table in the Temple, nor a candelabrum corresponding to the Candelabrum in the Temple. But one may fashion a candelabrum of five or of six or of eight branches.¹

1. Based on the Jewish understanding of Exodus 30, do you think it is wrong for them to avoid making replicas of the Temple furniture? Why or why not?
2. In its simple meaning, a menorah is simply a lamp, an object that contains and gives light. Do you think all candlesticks or candelabrams should have exactly seven branches because the Tabernacle/Temple menorah had seven? Why or why not?
3. Is it possible that people who avoid using replicas of the Tabernacle/Temple furniture and those who make use of replicas of the very same, both do so to please and honor God? Using the Bible, make a case for each line of reasoning.

King Solomon's Menorot

Study Texts: 1 Kings 7:48-51, 2 Chron. 4:7

1. How many menorahs did the First Temple have?
2. Did King Solomon "add to the Torah"?

¹ Sefaria.org translation of Menachot 28b

3. How did Adonai respond in 2 Chron. 5:11-14 and 7:1-3?

Prophecy: Completing the House of Adonai

Study Texts: Haggai 1:1-2:23, Ezra 6:13-18, Zechariah 4:1-14

Haggai (Chaggai) means, “My Feast.” This minor prophet had four messages for Judah encouraging them to finish building Adonai’s House after the Babylonian captivity. He warned them that if they failed to finish the work, poverty and famine would continue. His messages came to the people when they were weak and vulnerable. They were fresh from exile and had experienced great opposition as they tried to rebuild the Temple. The resistance was so fierce that the people had to stop rebuilding (Ezra 4:24). But unlike most other prophets, the people actually listened to Chaggai! They obeyed the Word from Adonai and began rebuilding despite their struggles in the natural realm.

1. In Chaggai 2:10-23, the word of the LORD came to him on the 24th day of the ninth month (Kislev). Later, Chanukah, which is also about the House of Adonai, occurred on the 25th of Kislev. Verse 18 says, “from this day onward...” What did Adonai promise His people and his prophet named “My Feast” from this day (24th) and onward (25th)?
2. Do you think the date in Chaggai could be an allusion to Chanukah – the Dedication of the House of Adonai?
3. Who was Zerubbabel?
4. Who are the two olive trees that pour oil into the golden menorah of his vision?
5. Do you find it interesting that the building, rebuilding, and eventual dedication of Adonai’s House is juxtaposed with the menorah? Why or why not?

This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the LORD of hosts.” The menorah was supplied with oil from the two olive trees without the help of any man pouring in the oil or trimming the wicks; thus, the House of Adonai would be built by Zerubbabel, not with the strength of man, but by the Spirit of God.

6. In Zechariah’s vision, the menorah miraculously burns with oil without man’s intervention. Does this remind you of another story? If so, which one?

The Beast Kingdom(s)

Study Texts: Daniel 2:31-45, 7:1-8:27, Revelation 13

The statue and the four beasts mirror one another as they describe the world's superpowers or ruling kingdoms. Notice they are all part of "one" statue. So, while they are described as different types of beasts in chapters 7-8, they are still the same (one) image of the beast figured in the statue, with the head being Mystery Babylon.

This implies that other nations will conquer and succeed Babylon, but Babylon remains to be the spiritual head of the image. First the Medes-Persians conquer Babylon, followed by the Greeks, and then finally Rome seized control as the "iron" legs. But in Daniel's personal vision of the beasts, this last kingdom is different than all the others. The iron legs become feet and toes of partly iron (Rome) and partly clay. For two millennia, long since Rome fell, Rome's iron strength has been at the head of all world powers, including the United States. Most western civilizations can be traced back to the Greco-Roman culture, which is in reality, rooted in the head, Babylon. Many say, "All roads lead to Rome." But truly, all roads (but One) lead to Babylon. In Revelation 13, the first beast is an obvious mixture of the beasts from Daniel's vision.

The Maccabees lived in time after the swift, shaggy goat with one horn, figuring Alexander the Great, had conquered the two horned ram or Medo-Persia. But as soon as Alexander had conquered the world, he died at a tragically young age. His kingdom was split between his four generals. His one horn was broken off and four arose in its place. One of those horns outgrew the others, the fourth one, which was Seleucus. His allotment included the land of Israel. It was from Seleucus' line that Antiochus Epiphanes rose to power. This was just under two hundred years before Yeshua was born.

The "abomination of desolation" was committed by Antiochus Epiphanes, whose name means "God manifest." He stationed a Syrian guard of soldiers to permanently punish Jews with death if they were found practicing any form of their faith. In the Temple at Jerusalem, in the Holy of Holies, he erected an image of Zeus, and he slaughtered a pig on the holy altar. This is the Abomination of Desolation, but according to Yeshua, there will be another one after this manner (Matthew 24 – examined in a later study text).

1. How do the prophecies in Daniel relate to the Chanukah story?

The Shepherd Messiah and Chanukah

Study Texts: Isaiah 44:21-28, Ezekiel 34, Micah 5:1-15, John 10

Both Chanukah and Purim occur in the "winter." They are NOT part of the Big Seven Moedim of Leviticus 23, but they serve a purpose and teach a vital lesson to Adonai's people. Two mentions of "winter" occur in the NT in context with Yeshua:

John 10:22-23 (NASB) At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; 23 it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon.

Above, Yeshua was at the Temple during the Feast of Dedication or Chanukah. The surrounding context, especially His discourse about being "The Good Shepherd," and the Jews request that He speak plainly to them if He is the Christ, are traditional Jewish expectations at Chanukah based on the words of the prophets.

By proclaiming Himself as The Good Shepherd in this chapter, Yeshua plainly told them who He was. What do shepherds have to do with Chanukah? Learn more in Dr. Alewine's book on Chanukah called, *The Seven Shepherds: Hanukkah in Prophecy*.²

1. In Isaiah 44, Cyrus is called a shepherd. Why? What does he do for Israel?
2. What are the qualities of evil shepherds in Ezekiel 34? Who is the good shepherd?
3. After you've read 1 Maccabees, compare the evil shepherds with the Jews who compromised with the Seleucid Greeks and other Gentiles. They even encouraged others to do the same. What was their reasoning for cooperating with Antiochus?

Study Texts: Matthew 24:15-20, Revelation 12:1-6, 1 Maccabees 1:1- 2:41, 2 Maccabees 5:24-27

Another place Messiah speaks of winter is in Matthew 24 (see also Mark 13):

Matthew 24:15-20 (NASB) Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.

17 Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house.

18 Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak.

19 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

20 But **pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.**

² https://www.amazon.com/Seven-Shepherds-Hanukkah-Prophecy-Books-ebook/dp/B06XP187BR/ref=sr_1_1?crd=3SAOE9NCMQKEL&keywords=the+seven+shepherds&qid=1671295806&prefix=the+seven+shepherd%2Caps%2C156&sr=8-1

Consider the context and timing of the events in 1 Maccabees 1-2. Mattathias and his sons refused to bow down to the demands of the Seleucid Greeks. They would not give up their covenant with God or profane His holy altar, the Sabbath, or the feasts at the risk of their own lives. They would not submit to this spirit of antichrist.

1 Maccabees 2:27-30 (KJVA) And Mattathias cried throughout the city with a loud voice, saying, Whosoever is zealous of the law, and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me.

28 So he and his sons fled into the mountains, and left all that ever they had in the city.

29 Then many that sought after justice and judgment **went down into the wilderness**, to dwell there:

30 Both they, and their children, and their wives; and their cattle; because afflictions increased sore upon them.

1. In Matthew 24, where does Yeshua tell his followers to flee?
2. Where did the Maccabees flee to?

1 Maccabees 2:31-41 (NRSVA) And it was reported to the king's officers, and to the troops in Jerusalem the city of David, that those who had rejected the king's command had gone down to the hiding places in the wilderness.

32 Many pursued them, and overtook them; **they encamped opposite them and prepared for battle against them on the sabbath day**.

33 They said to them, "Enough of this! Come out and do what the king commands, and you will live."

34 But they said, "**We will not come out, nor will we do what the king commands and so profane the sabbath day.**"

35 Then the enemy quickly attacked them.

36 But they did not answer them or hurl a stone at them or block up their hiding places, 37 for they said, "Let us all die in our innocence; heaven and earth testify for us that you are killing us unjustly."

38 **So they attacked them on the sabbath, and they died**, with their wives and children and livestock, to the number of a thousand persons.

39 When Mattathias and his friends learned of it, they mourned for them deeply.

40 And all said to their neighbors: "**If we all do as our kindred have done and refuse to fight with the Gentiles for our lives and for our ordinances, they will quickly destroy us from the earth.**"

41 So they made this decision that day: "**Let us fight against anyone who comes to attack us on the sabbath day; let us not all die as our kindred died in their hiding places.**"

1. Aside from the mountains, where else do God's people flee to in the Book of Maccabees and the Book of Revelation?

2. In Matthew 24 Yeshua says, “Pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.” What happened to the Maccabees on the Sabbath?
3. What decision did they make about war and the Sabbath as they opposed a type of the antichrist?
4. What season was it? (1 Mac. 1:54)
5. On what day was the abomination of desolation set up? On what date was the altar polluted? (1 Mac. 1:59)
6. Do you think Yeshua was making direct references to the Chanukah story in Matthew 24 to help us understand the end of the age? Why or why not?

Dr. Alewine delivered a message entitled “Pray That Your Flight Not Be in Winter” in 2016 at a Chanukah conference in Nashville, TN. I encourage you to watch it [here](#).

Antiochus Epiphanes: An Example of an Antichrist **Study Texts: 1 Maccabees 1, 2 Maccabees 6:1-16**

Chapter one of 1 Maccabees outlines the desecration of Adonai’s House and the unholy edicts that Antiochus thrust upon God’s people.

Antiochus Epiphanes Commanded:

- You shall profane the Sabbath.
 - You shall profane the festivals, new moons, & holy days of Adonai.
 - You shall set up idols.
 - You shall eat unclean animals.
 - You shall not sacrifice to YHWH Elohim.
 - You shall not circumcise your sons.
 - You shall forget the Torah of Adonai.
1. Why do you think Antiochus chose these things for Adonai’s people to stop or start doing?
 2. Do you think the enemy uses similar edicts today to attack Believers? Why or why not?
 3. If you were the enemy, would you want God’s people to learn about the Chanukah story? Why or why not?

The End of Antiochus

Study Text: 2 Maccabees 10:1-9

1. On what month and day was the God's sanctuary purified and rededicated?
2. How long did the celebration last?
3. What feast from Leviticus 23 was it associated with? Why?

The Harlot, the Beast, and Babylon

Study Text: James 4:1-14, Revelation 17:1- 18:24

1. What does the spirit of antichrist as expressed through Antiochus have in common with the Harlot, Beast, and Mystery Babylon?
2. What constitutes an adulteress or harlot according to James 4:4?

The Overcomers

Study Texts: 2 Maccabees 6:18-31, 2 Maccabees 7:1-42, Revelation 2:8-11; 3:7-13; 15:1-8

1. What do the assemblies of Smyrna and Philadelphia have in common with the Maccabees in these study texts?
2. What do the overcomers in Revelation 15 sing?
3. What is revealed and opened in heaven after the praise of the overcomers?

Does the Torah make allusions to Chanukah?

The Dedication of the Tabernacle

Study Text Numbers 7:1 - 8:1-3

The first mention of chanukah or dedication occurs in Numbers 7:88. This chapter enumerates the offerings from each tribe of Israel for the service of the Tabernacle. In the first study text above (Leviticus 23:1-24:4), an allusion was drawn from the juxtaposition of verses in the Torah. Jewish hermeneutics calls this semukhim. A similar juxtaposition occurs in Numbers 7-8. Chapter seven describes the dedication of the Tabernacle and chapter eight begins with the

menorah. The rabbis see this as another allusion to the Feast of Dedication or Chanukah. After the Maccabean war ended, the Jews cleaned, repaired and rededicated the Temple, and then lit the menorah, which is the same order from the study text in Numbers.

The Court of the Tabernacle, Bronze/Copper, and Greece

Study Text Exodus 27:18-21, Daniel 2:36-45

The very last word (in Hebrew) of Exodus 27:19, which is also the last word of Torah Portion Terumah, is *nechoshet* or copper/bronze. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue, the Grecian empire was figured by the belly and thighs of bronze. The sockets and pins of the Tabernacle's court were also made of *nechoshet*. The very next verse charges the children of Israel to bring pure olive oil to keep the menorah burning continually.

Like the previous study text, this juxtaposition is considered to be an allusion to Chanukah. The Greeks were the world empire in the time of the Maccabees, and Antiochus Epiphanes removed the menorah and other holy objects from the Temple. After the Maccabees cleansed the Temple, one of the first things they did was light the menorah.

1. Do you think the above allusions are coincidence, conjecture, or helpful hints?

Final Questions

1. Did you make any new connections from this study?
2. Do you think the Festival of Chanukah is an important commemoration? Why or why not?
3. Do you think celebrating Chanukah is adding to the Torah, or is it a festival that grew out of the Good Seed of the Torah?
4. Do you think Yeshua observed Chanukah and found value in its commemoration?
5. Do you think Chanukah is prophetic?

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Psalms for Chanukah: Psalm 30, 91, 67, 133, & 33

Psalm 30 is a song of David at the dedication (chanukah) of the House. Since David wasn't alive at the time of the dedication of the First Temple, Jewish commentators suggest that he penned this song with intentions for it to be read/sung when Solomon built the House he envisioned from the LORD. Some think this Psalm was a dedication song for David's personal home,³ but the title in Hebrew says, "The House," not "my house." *The House* is an idiom for God's House or what we often call the Temple.

In Jewish tradition, **Psalm 91** was composed by Moses upon the completion of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). Since Chanukah is a dedication of Adonai's House, the thematic connection makes it an appropriate Psalm for this season.⁴ Psalm 67 has forty-nine words in Hebrew and seven verses. It is read during the counting of the Omer because of this special alignment, but it is also read at Chanukah since seven can always allude to the seven branched golden menorah.

Psalm 133 depicts David's dream of unity, harmony, and brotherly love in Israel. War, persecution, oppression, and exile takes a toll on our souls. Stories like Chanukah emphasize brothers turning against one another when great pressure and the threat of death sweeps across Adonai's nation. We are no exception to this reality, which is why Yeshua warns us of this in Mark 13. Just before he mentions the "abomination of desolation," He says this about the latter days:

Mark 13:12-13 (NASB) "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. 13 You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved."

Having endured many national invasions, wars, pogroms, and slaughters throughout the millennia, Jews know this all too well. Many of them were massacred by the hands of Christians. Psalm 133 is read during the remembrance of Chanukah so one doesn't forget God's promise of a final restoration where Messiah will usher in true shalom and a time when His people will be in perfect unity.

Psalm 33 is a song of praise and gratitude for God's faithfulness, righteousness, justice, and chesed (lovingkindness). His mighty works are extolled and proclaimed, and Chanukah was one of the times He wrought miracles for Israel despite great odds. Thus, it is appropriate to praise Him at this season.

³ Personal homes were indeed meant to be dedicated: Dt. 20

⁴ The Artscroll Mesorah Series: *Chanukah*, p. 142 (1981)

Chanukah Blessings

First Blessing

Recited every night

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to kindle the Hanukkah light. (Amen.)

Second Blessing

Recited every night

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, King of the Universe, Who did miracles for our forefathers in those days and at this season. (Amen.)

Third Blessing

Recited on first night only

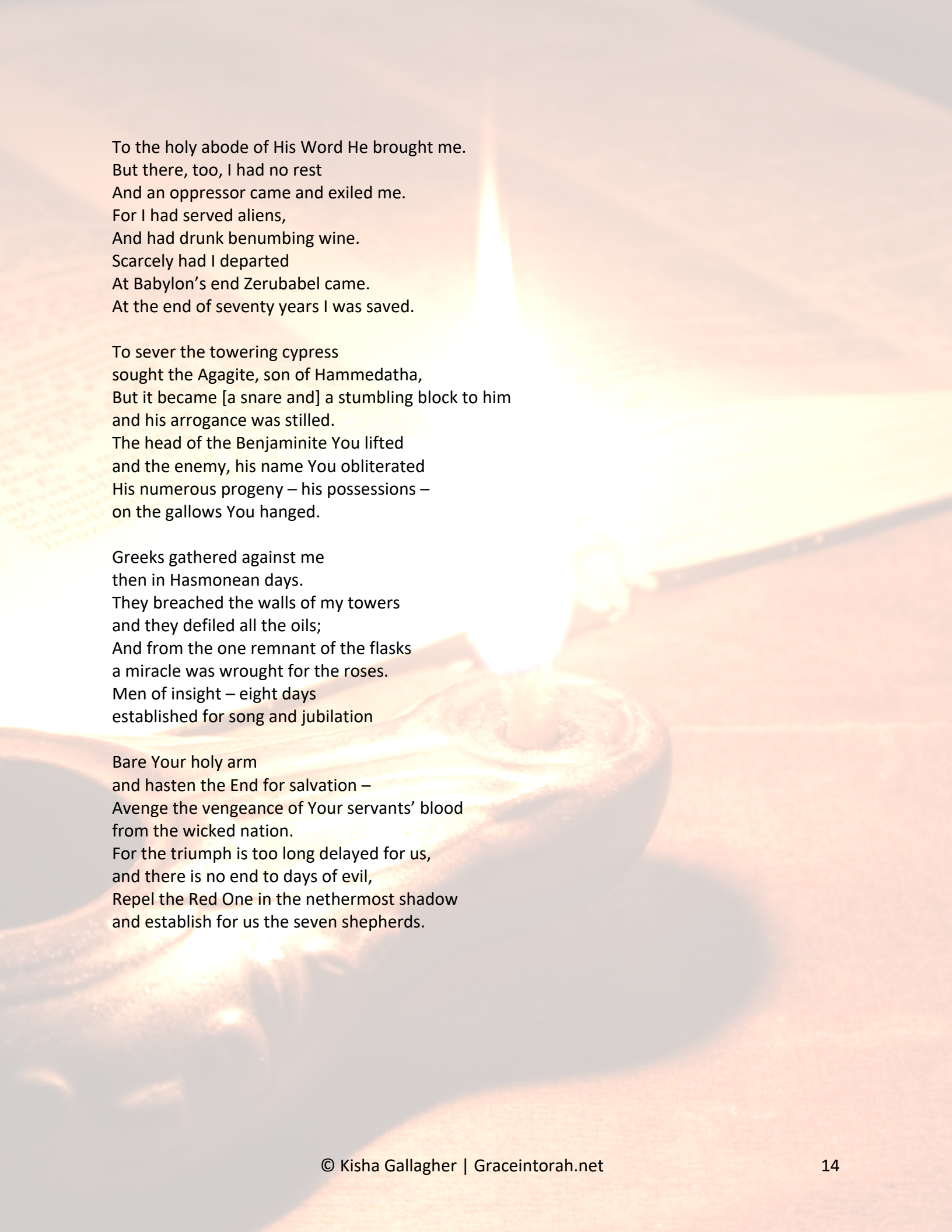
Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, King of the Universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season. (Amen.)

Maoz Tzur (Rock of Ages) – Chanukah Song

This song has been a Chanukah tradition since the thirteenth century. It has SIX stanzas, as it recalls all the themes you have studied above. Hopefully, it will have much more meaning after reviewing the history of Chanukah and what is to come.

O mighty stronghold of my salvation,
to praise You is a delight.
Restore my House of Prayer
and there we will bring a thanksgiving offering.
When You will have prepared the slaughter
for the blaspheming foe,
Then I shall complete with a song of hymn
the dedication of the Altar.

My soul had been sated with troubles,
my strength has been consumed with grief.
They had embittered my life with hardship,
with the calf-like kingdom's bondage.
But with His great power
He brought forth the treasured ones,
Pharaoh's army and all his offspring
Went down like a stone into the deep.



To the holy abode of His Word He brought me.
But there, too, I had no rest
And an oppressor came and exiled me.
For I had served aliens,
And had drunk benumbing wine.
Scarcely had I departed
At Babylon's end Zerubabel came.
At the end of seventy years I was saved.

To sever the towering cypress
sought the Agagite, son of Hammedatha,
But it became [a snare and] a stumbling block to him
and his arrogance was stilled.
The head of the Benjaminite You lifted
and the enemy, his name You obliterated
His numerous progeny – his possessions –
on the gallows You hanged.

Greeks gathered against me
then in Hasmonean days.
They breached the walls of my towers
and they defiled all the oils;
And from the one remnant of the flasks
a miracle was wrought for the roses.
Men of insight – eight days
established for song and jubilation

Bare Your holy arm
and hasten the End for salvation –
Avenge the vengeance of Your servants' blood
from the wicked nation.
For the triumph is too long delayed for us,
and there is no end to days of evil,
Repel the Red One in the nethermost shadow
and establish for us the seven shepherds.