



1. **Talmud Bavli, Megillah 14a (Soncino Translation)**

Our Rabbis taught: 'Forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses prophesied to Israel, and they neither took away from nor added to what is written in the Torah save only the reading of the Megillah'. How did they derive it [from the Torah]? — R. Hiyya b. Abin said in the name of R. Joshua b. Korha: If for being delivered from slavery to freedom we chant a hymn of praise, should we not do so all the more for being delivered from death to life?

2. **Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 21b (Soncino Translation)**

What is Hanukkah? 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 day's lighting only; yet a miracle was wrought therein and they lit [the lamp] therewith for eight days. The following year these [days] were appointed a Festival with [the recital of] Hallel and thanksgiving.

3. **Shut Chatam Sofer Yoreh Deah 233 (Translation from Koren Yom HaAtzmaut Machzor)**

Establishing a holiday on the day of a miracle is a biblical obligation, as it is an *a fortiori* argument from the Torah. In my humble opinion, the day of Purim and the days of Hanukkah are from the Torah! However, what to do on them – whether to send portions of food or to light candles or to commemorate them in some other way – is of rabbinic origin. Whoever does nothing to commemorate the days of Hanukkah and Purim violates a biblical positive command!

4. **Rambam Hilchot Megillah uChanukah 3:1, 3**

In [the era of] the Second Temple, the Greek kingdom issued decrees against the Jewish people, [attempting to] nullify their faith and refusing to allow them to observe the Torah and its commandments. They extended their hands against their property and their daughters; they entered the Sanctuary, wrought havoc within, and made the sacraments impure. The Jews suffered great difficulties from them, for they oppressed them greatly until the God of our ancestors had mercy upon them, delivered them from their hand, and saved them. The sons of the Hasmoneans, the High Priests, overcame [them], slew them, and saved the Jews from their hand. They appointed a king from the priests, and sovereignty returned to Israel for more than 200 years, until the destruction of the Second Temple. Accordingly, the Sages of that generation ordained that these eight days, which begin from the twenty-fifth of Kislev, should be commemorated to be days of happiness and praise [of God].

5. **Rabbi Meshulam Rath, Shut Kol Mevaser 1:21**

It is obvious in our case, which is relevant to the entire community of Israel and includes deliverance from slavery to freedom (we were redeemed from the subjugation of kingdoms, and we have become free men and have achieved political independence) as well as deliverance from death to life (we were saved from the hands of our enemies who sought to exterminate us) – certainly we have an obligation to institute a holiday! And it was proper that it was established specifically on this day, which was the central miracle, that we went from slavery to freedom through the declaration of independence.

6. **Reflections on the Six-Day War After a Quarter Century, Tradition Summer 1992, R. Dr. David Berger**

In determining whether a particular historical process is a miracle, context is almost everything. For the non-believer, the context of faith is entirely absent, and for such a person, the Israeli capture of Jerusalem, the unraveling of Communism, and the events of the Gulf War can reasonably be attributed to "social, political, military or economic factors." Where faith is present, context takes on a broader meaning encompassing both theology and historical evaluation. Do I believe that God intervenes frequently even in everyday affairs of relatively little moment? Do I think that this is a period of *hester panim* in

which natural processes almost invariably prevail? Do I consider divine intervention more likely in Jewish history than in the affairs of the nations of the world? Do I assign a positive, negative or neutral evaluation to the event under consideration? Do I regard it as a passing episode or as a critical development in human history? Although God's knowledge is unlimited and the possibility of His intervention is always present, many major authorities have maintained that miraculous intervention in the daily lives of ordinary Jews is relatively infrequent, and some degree of uncertainty extends to larger matters as well. I am inclined to believe, for example, that God had something to do with the low casualty rate following the launching of Scud missiles toward Israel, but I do not feel that my faith requires the categorical affirmation that He changed the flight path of a particular missile or caused its warhead to malfunction. Nonetheless, there are events that are so earthshaking within the context of Jewish belief that the failure to attribute them to divine intervention leaves Judaism bereft of meaningful faith in the God of Hazal and of the prophets. The establishment of the State of Israel and the capture of Jerusalem are such events. Given the most fundamental assumptions about providence, the goodness of God and His concern for the Jewish people, the position that developments of such magnitude came about wholly through the working of an impersonal historical process is inadmissible. It banishes God from history and declares in effect that "the lord has forsaken the earth" (Ezek. 8:12; 9:9). If the hand of God is not to be found in these events, where is it to be found? One of the great ironies in contemporary Jewish piety is that many deeply religious Jews have inverted the hierarchy of providential events. For many non-Zionist Orthodox Jews, the operation of micro-providence is taken for granted to the point where innumerable events in the lives of prominent Rabbis are confidently regarded as miracles. At the same time, the return of the land of Israel to the Jewish people is assigned no religious value whatever. It is true that God intervenes to protect the land: He guides Scud missiles to targets of brick and stone in large measure because of the merit generated by students studying in Israeli yeshivot. Nonetheless, He appears to have played no role in the establishment of the State. This position is so incongruous that it is rarely if ever formulated in such stark terms; nevertheless, I believe that it is a fair extrapolation from the rhetoric and behavior of many religious Jews....

7. The Religious Significance of Yom HaAtzmaut, Rabbi Chaim Druckman (Translation from Koren Machzor)
"The Many into the Hands of the Few": On the eve of the declaration of independence of the State of Israel, the Arab countries declared that within a week, they intended to wipe out the entire Yishuv (Jewish population) in the Land of Israel. The Arab armies' proclamation, "We will drive you into the sea," was not a figure of speech, but rather a serious threat to invade the Land of Israel from the north, east, and south, so that the Mediterranean Sea to the west would be the Jews' last refuge... Is there a better example of "the many into the hands of the few"? On Hanukkah, we repeatedly recite the Al HaNissim prayer in which we thank God for delivering "the many into the hands of the few." The Hanukkah miracle took place more than two thousand years ago – but this wondrous event has happened also in our time! God delivered the many into the hands of the few, and thus saved us from certain death and gave us the gift of our own lives – is it not appropriate that we thank Him for this.

8. Devarim 8

When you have eaten your fill, and have built fine houses to live in, and your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold have increased, and everything you own has prospered, beware lest your heart grow haughty and you forget the LORD your God—who freed you from the land of Egypt, the house of bondage; who led you through the great and terrible wilderness with its seraph serpents and scorpions, a parched land with no water in it, who brought forth water for you from the flinty rock; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers had never known, in order to test you by hardships only to benefit you in the end— and you say to yourselves, "My own power and the might of my own hand have won this wealth for me. Remember that it is the LORD your God who gives you the power to get wealth, in fulfillment of the covenant that He made on oath with your fathers, as is still the case.

9. A Zionist Hanukkah, Rabbi Peretz Rodman

The lyrics of the popular Hanukkah song *Mi y'mallel* ("Who can recount...?") were written by one of the creators of Hebrew folk music in the early 20th century, Menashe Ravina (1899-1968). He begins by reworking the verse "Who can recount the mighty acts of the Lord, recite all His praises?" ([Psalms 106:2](#)) into this: "Who can recount the mighty acts of [the people] Israel? Who can count them? / In every generation a hero arises, redeemer of the people." Praise of God has yielded to praise of military victors, and the title of "redeemer" (*go'el*) is now applied to a human rescuer, not a divine one. Similarly, traditional liturgical texts refer to God when they use the terms *moshia'* (savior) and *podeh* (redeemer), but the song *Mi Y'mallel* next speaks not of God but of the Maccabees in those terms...It will not be by a miraculous divine intervention that the Jews are delivered from repeated persecution and exile, claims the songwriter. Using the Maccabees as his model, he advocates that the Jewish people take their fate into their own hands and, rather than responding with flight, adaptation, or martyrdom, instead take up arms against their oppressors.

10. Translation of Song by Aharon "Zeev"

We are carrying torches. In the dark night the paths shine beneath our feet, and whoever has a heart that thirsts for light— let him lift his eyes and his heart to us and come along. No miracle happened for us. No cruse of oil did we find. We walked through the valley, ascended the mountain....