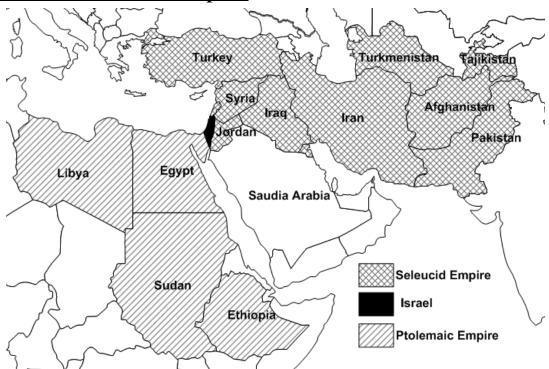
מאי חנוכה? The Hidden Story of Hannukah

I. Historical Context of the Hannukah Story

1. Timeline

- **323 BCE** Death of Alexander the Great → division of the Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires
- 198 BCE- Seleucid conquest of the Land of Israel under Antiochus III
- 175–164 BCE- Antiochus IV Epiphanes rules over Seleucid empire
- **174 BCE-** Jason Oniad purchases role of high priesthood and turns Jerusalem into Antioch, a Hellenistic polis
- **171 BCE** Menelaus replaces Jason as high priest; period of radical Hellenization, beginning of violence, and introduction of foreign deities into the Temple
- **168 BCE** earliest attempts at an organized uprising led by a group of priests called the Hasidim
- 167/66 BCE, Winter- persecutions were enacted by Antiochus IV Epiphanes
- 166/65 BCE- Matityahu dies and Maccabees taken control of Judea
- **164 BCE, December** Judah and his men captured Jerusalem; cn the 25th of Kislev Judah purified the Temple, relit the Menorah, and reorganized the sacrificial worship to conform to the Jewish tradition

2. Seleucid and Ptolemaic Empires



II. Rabbinic Understanding of the Miracle

3. תלמוד בבלי מסי שבת כא:

מאי חנוכה? דתנו רבנן: בכ"ה בכסליו יומי דחנוכה תמניא אינון, דלא למספד בהון ודלא להתענות בהון. שכשנכנסו יוונים להיכל טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל, וכשגברה מלכות בית חשמונאי ונצחום, 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.

3. Talmud Bavli Masechet Shabbat 21b

What is Chanuka? Our Rabbis teach: 'On the twenty fifth of Kislev, there are the eight days of Chanuka, during which we do not eulogize nor fast.' When the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oil in the Temple. When the Hasmonean monarchy became strong and overcame them, they searched and could find only one jar of oil stamped with the seal of the kohen gadol. This jar contained only enough oil to last for one night, but a miracle happened and it remained lit for eight days. The next year, they established these days as holidays with praise and thanksgiving.

4. ברכת המזון, נוסח אשכנז

בּימֵי מַתּתְיָהוֹ בֶּן יוֹחָנָן כֹּהֵן נָּדוֹל חַשְׁמוֹנָאִי וּבָנִיוֹ כְּשֶׁעְמְדָה מַלְכוּת יָוָן הַרְשָׁעָה עַל עַמְּדְ יִשְׂרָאֵל
לְהשׁכִּיחָם מִתּוֹרָתָדְ וּלְהַעֲבִירָם מֵחָקֵּי רְצוֹנָדְ וְאַתָּה בְּרַחֲמֶידְ הָרַבִּים עַמַדְתָּ לָהֶם בְּעֵת צָּרָתָם רַבְּתָּ
אֶת רִיבָּם דַּנְתָּ אֶת דִּינָם נָקַמְתָּ אֶת נִּקְמָתֶם מָסַרְתָּ גִּבּוֹרִים בְּיֵד חַלְּשִׁים וְרַבִּים בְּיַד מְעִשִּים
וּטְמֵּאִים בְּיֵד טְהוֹרִים וּרְשָׁעִים בְּיַד צַדִּיקִים וְזֵדִים בְּיֵד עוֹסְקֵי תוֹרָתֶדְ וּלְדְ עָשִׂיתָ שִׁם נָּדוֹל וְקַדוֹשׁ
בְּעוֹלְמֶדְ וֹלְעַמְּדְ יִשְׂרָאֵל עָשִׂיתָ תְּשׁוּעָה גְּדוֹלָה וּפֻּרְקוֹן כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְאַחַר כַּדְ בָּאוּ בָנֶידְ לִדְבִיר בִּיתֶדְ
וּפְנוֹ אֶת הֵיכָלֶדְ וְטְהַרוּ אֶת־מִקְדָּשֶׁדְ וְהִדְלִיקוּ נֵרוֹת בְּחַצְרוֹת קַדְשֶׁדְ וְקַבְעוּ שְׁמוֹנַת יְמֵי חֲנָכָּה אֵלוּ
לִּמִלְ לִשְׁמִךְ הַנְּבִוֹל לִשְׁמִךְ הַבְּיִלִּין

4. Birkat Hamazon, Ashkenazi

In the days of Matitya son of Yohanan, the high priest, the Hashmonay and his sons when the qicked Greek empire arose against your people Israel to make them forget your Torah, and to remove them from the ordinances of your will and You with your great mercy You stood at the time of their suffering, You battled their battles, You judged their laws, You took vengeance upon their vengeance, You gave up over the mighty into the hands of the weak, and the masses in the hands of the few, and the impure into the hands of the pure, and the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the intentional sinners into the hands of those that are engaged in your Torah. To You You made your holy and great name in your world and for your people Israel You made a great salvation and deliverance as You do this day. And then afterwords your children came to the inner chambers of your house cleared your sanctuary and purify it your holy Temple and lit candles in your holy courtyard. And they fixed these eight days of Hanukkah – With complete praise and thanks, and you did for them miracles and wonders and we will thank your great name, forever.