

The Miracle of the Cruse of Oil

The Metamorphosis of a Legend

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A popular view among historians considers the famous Hanukkah story of the cruse of oil, which appears in the Talmud and seemingly also in the Scholium of *Megillat Ta'anit*, as evidence of the determination of the Sages to erase the memory of the Hasmoneans.

A careful examination of the traditions about Hanukkah in the Scholium of *Megillat Ta'anit* demonstrates, however, that the story, as it appears in the Babylonian Talmud, is a secondary form. The two extant versions of the Scholia offer different traditions in explaining the celebration of Hanukkah. Scholium O makes no mention of finding any oil and offers other reasons for the establishment of the festival. Scholium P does present, among other traditions, an early version of the story, which does not mention any miracle with regard to the finding of the oil. This same episode appears later in the Babylonian Talmud after it had evolved and crystallized, and when all other traditions had been rejected. The Babylonian Talmud is, in fact, the only source for the legend of the bit of oil that lasted eight days. The supernatural basis of this story, as well as its introduction as the only explanation for the celebration of Hanukkah, is a Babylonian manipulation, motivated by literary rather than historical purposes.

THE INTENT BEHIND THE STORY OF THE CRUSE OF OIL

The Babylonian Talmud¹ provides an explanation for the festival of Hanukkah based on a citation from *Megillat Ta'anit*:²

1. *B.Šabb.* 21a. The version presented below is based on the edition of the Talmud printed in Venice in 1520. A selection of alternative versions is presented from the following manuscripts: Toronto, Friedberg 002-9 (Jerusalem, Jewish National and University Library, Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts [hereafter: IMHM], F 70583), hereafter: T; Oxford 366 (IMHM, F18347), hereafter: O; London Or. 5558 n\50 (IMHM, F6519-20), hereafter: L; Vatican 127 (IMHM, F8606), hereafter: V; Munich 95, hereafter: M.
2. *Megillat Ta'anit* is a short Aramaic document from Second Temple times which lists some thirty-five days during the year on which fasting, and in some cases even delivering eulogies for the dead, is prohibited because of festive events and victories which occurred on these dates. On *Megillat Ta'anit* and its commentary, the Scholium, see Vered Noam, "The Scholion to *Megillat Ta'anit*: Towards an Understanding of its Stemma" (Heb.), *Tarbiz* 62 (1993) 59-99, and the bibliography in the footnotes, 55-58; Vered Noam, "Two Testimonies to the Route of Transmission of *Megillat Ta'anit* and the Source of the Hybrid Version of the Scholion" (Heb.), *Tarbiz* 65 (1996) 389-416. For a general review, cf. Joseph Tabory, *Jewish Festi-*

מאי חנוכה [דת"ר] ³ בכ"ה בכסליו ⁴ יומי ⁵ חנוכה ⁶ תמניא [אינון] ⁷ דלא למספד בהון ⁸
[ודלא להתענות בהון]. ⁹

What is the reason for Hanukkah? [For our Rabbis taught:] On the twenty-fifth of Kislev <commence> the days of Hanukkah, which [are] eight, on which one may not eulogize [and may not fast].

The Talmud immediately follows this citation with an explanation involving the famous tale of the miracle of the cruse of oil:

שכשנכנסו יוונים להיכל טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל, וכשגברה מלכות בית
חשמונאי ונצחום, בדקו ולא מצאו אלא פך אחד של שמן ¹⁰ שהיה מונה בחותמו
של כ"ג, ולא היה בו אלא להדליק ¹¹ יום אחד. נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו ח' ימים.
לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאו ¹² ימים ¹³ טובים בהלל והודאה. ¹⁴

For when the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oils in the Temple, and when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed against and defeated them, they made search and found only one cruse of oil (T: a small cruse) which lay with the seal of the High Priest, but which contained sufficient [quantity] only for one day's kindling; yet a miracle was wrought therewith and they kindled [the candelabrum] from it for eight days. The following

vals in the Time of the Mishnah and Talmud (Heb.) (Jerusalem: Magnes Press of the Hebrew Univ., 1995) 307–22 and the bibliography cited there. The critical edition of the *Megillah* and its Scholium which has served scholarship until now is that of Hans Lichtenstein, "Die Fastenrolle: Eine Untersuchung zur jüdisch-hellenistischen Geschichte," *HUCA* 8–9 (1931–32) 257–351. On the merits and shortcomings of this edition, see Noam, "Scholion," 59–60, and 92, n.155. A new edition of mine has recently been published: Vered Noam, *Megillat Ta'anit: Versions, Interpretation, History* (Heb.) (Jerusalem: Yad Itzhak Ben Zvi, 2003). The passages cited below from the *Megillah* and its Scholia are based on this edition, along with minor corrections.

3 דתניא, דתנן [דת"ר] corruption. In the manuscripts:

4 ביה in T; missing in L.

5 [חנוכה] missing in T; יום in L.

6 חנוכה, חנוכה, חנכה. In the other extant manuscripts: [חנוכה].

7 אין in M; אין in V; missing in O T L.

8 [בהון] missing in T; unreadable in L.

9 [ודלא להתענות בהון] This is an erroneous addition. Missing in M V T; unreadable in L.

10 [של שמן] in M; מלא שמן in V; missing in O; קטן in T; קטן של שמן in L.

11 [אלא להדליק] in O; שיעור להדליק אלא in V; אל' כדי להדל' in M; אלא כדי להדליק [אלא להדליק] in L. **Note 11; are the brackets oriented the correct direction?**

12 [ועשאו] missing in M T.

13 [ימים] in V; שמונה ימים in T; ח' ימי' in L.

14 [טובים בהלל והודאה] missing in L.

year they designated and appointed them [the days] a Festival with [the recital of] Hallel and thanksgiving.

Scholars have been puzzled by this explanation which the Sages give for Hanukkah, an explanation not found elsewhere in any of the non-rabbinic sources. According to 1 Maccabees, the festival celebrates the dedication (*hanukkah*, חנוכה) of the Temple and the Temple vessels – the candelabrum (*menorah*), the altar of incense, and the table – and it places particular emphasis on the consecration (also *hanukkah*, חנוכה) of the burnt-offering altar, which was defiled and rebuilt by the Hasmoneans.¹⁵ 2 Maccabees associates Hanukkah with the eight-day Feast of Tabernacles,¹⁶ and it too emphasizes the dedication of the Temple, the consecration of the altar, and the renewal of the sacrifices on the altar.¹⁷ Josephus as well relates Hanukkah to the purification of the Temple by Judah Maccabee. He states that the festival is called φῶτα – “Lights” and offers his own reason for this name,¹⁸ an indication that he is unfamiliar with the miraculous kindling of the candelabrum in the Temple. These descriptions in Josephus and 1 and 2 Maccabees present the dedication of the Temple as the result of the military victories described previously,¹⁹ thus indicating that Hanukkah commemorates a military triumph as well as a religious rededication. This aspect of the festival is reflected in the aforementioned legend too, represented by the laconic phrase, “when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed against and defeated them.”²⁰ In view of the paucity of information about the Hasmoneans in rabbinic literature in general, the story of the cruse of oil stands out as almost the only description offered by the Sages of the high point in the Hasmonean revolt, an event so momentous that it led to the establishment of a festival that was celebrated for all generations. It is a commonly-held view among historiographers that the story of the cruse of oil, which appears both in the Talmud and in the Scholium of *Megillat Ta’anit*, is but one of many examples of what may conceivably be an intent on the part of the Sages to wipe out all traces of the Hasmoneans.²¹ Accordingly, the Sages replaced the historical

15 1 Macc 4:36–60.

16 2 Macc 1:9, 18; 10:6. The author includes the eighth day as part of Sukkot, unlike the later halakhic ruling of the Sages which stressed that it was “a festival unto itself” (*b.Sukkah* 47a, 48a, and parallel sources).

17 2 Macc 10:1–6.

18 *Ant.* 12:325.

19 1 Macc chap. 3, 4; *Ant.* 12:287–315. Note especially Judas’ words (1 Macc 4:36, and the parallel in *Ant.* 12:316): “Now our enemies have been defeated. Let us go purify the sanctuary and restore it.”

20 This aspect is emphasized in the ritual texts of Hanukkah, such as *Al Hanisim* and *Hanerot Halalu*; see n.42 below.

21 One of the main twentieth-century proponents of the theory involving the differences and

reality of the Hasmonean revolt with an incidental, marginal anecdote and, in place of the human victory, substituted a miraculous occurrence that makes no mention of the Hasmoneans themselves.²² During the middle of the twentieth century a shift occurred: Jewish scholars, influenced by the Zionist revival, took pains to prove that the Sages had in fact lent their support to, and identified with, the Hasmoneans.²³ As to the story of the cruse of oil, Alon²⁴ argues that this legend had its origin in the Scholium of *Megillat Ta'anit*, from where it was introduced into the Babylonian Talmud, and that its original context in the Scholium of *Megillat Ta'anit*, following the question regarding the eight-day duration of Hanukkah, indicates that the story was essentially intended to explain the length of the festival – eight days – and not the reason that the festival was instituted.

However, the argument over the intent behind the tale of the cruse of oil is fundamentally flawed. Neither school of thought was familiar with the story's original literary-textual foundation. Careful scrutiny of the traditions regarding Hanukkah that appear in the Scholium of *Megillat Ta'anit* raises questions about most of the information that scholarship has relied upon until now: The story, as it appears in the Babylonian Talmud, is apparently a secondary rendering, which is not based on the Scholium of *Megillat Ta'anit*. It is evident from its original form and context that the episode was never intended to

the hostility that existed between the Hasmonean dynasty and the Pharisaic sages is Victor Aptowitz, *Parteilpolitik der Hasmonäerzeit im rabbinischen und pseudoepigraphischen Schrifttum* (Vienna: Verlag der Kohut-Foundation, 1927). A description of the history of scholarship in this regard is presented by several scholars who reject this theory. For a review of the main arguments and counterarguments see: Gedaliah Alon, "Did the Jewish People and its Sages Cause the Hasmoneans to be Forgotten?" in Alon, ed., *Jews, Judaism and the Classical World* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press of the Hebrew Univ., 1977) 1–17. In the view of Yehoshua Efron, researchers over the generations were influenced by the predominating attitudes of their day, which distorted their conclusions. He reviewed the research in this regard in an attempt to determine the different attitudes prevailing at different periods of time: "The Hasmonean Revolt in Modern Historiography," in Efron, ed., *Research on the Hasmonean Period* (Heb.) (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameyuḥad, 1980) 15–40. For a new approach to the matter, and a description of the research conducted over the last few decades, see Daniel R. Schwartz, "On the Question of the Opposition of the Pharisees to the Hasmonean Dynasty" in Uriel Rappaport and Yisrael Ronen, eds., *The History of the Hasmonean State against the Background of the Hellenistic Era* (Heb.) (Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv: Yad Itzhak Ben Zvi and Ha'universiṭah Hapetuchah, 1994) 442–53; Isaiah Gafni, "The Hasmoneans in Rabbinic Literature," in David Amit and Hanan Eshel, eds., *The Hasmonean Era* (Heb.), *Idan* 19 (Jerusalem: Yad Itzhak Ben Zvi, 1996) 261–76.

22 For an analysis of this approach to rabbinic sources dealing with the Hasmoneans, see the bibliography in Efron, "Hasmonean Revolt," n. 84.

23 See Alon, "Did the Jewish People," and Efron, "Hasmonean Revolt," and the bibliography in Schwartz, "Opposition," 442–43, 452–53. For the reasons for the change of direction in the research, see Schwartz.

24 Above, n. 21.

replace historical events with miraculous ones, as claimed by one school of researchers, nor was it originally intended to explain the length of Hanukkah, as claimed by the other school. More importantly, an examination of the story in its original context, alongside the other rabbinic traditions regarding Hanukkah that appear in the Scholium, indicates that it would be a mistake to regard it as the only representation of the attitude of the Sages to Hanukkah and, indirectly, to the Hasmoneans.

TRADITIONS REGARDING HANUKKAH IN THE SCHOLIUM

The Scholium, the Hebrew commentary on *Megillat Ta^canit*,²⁵ explains the nature and times of the events listed in this ancient text. The explanatory materials include historical stories, homilies, and *aggadot* relating to the festivals listed in the Scroll. From my own research on the Scroll and its Scholium,²⁶ it has become abundantly clear to me that the Scholium appearing in printed editions is not a single treatise, but a combination of two separate works, of two different versions of the Scholium. One version, Scholium O, is preserved in the Oxford manuscript in the Bodleian Library, Michael 388 (Neubauer Catalogue no. 867.2); the other version, Scholium P, is preserved in the Parma manuscript, Palatine Library, De Rossi Collection, no. 117.²⁷ The two Scholia differ in content, structure and style. Each of these two original versions contains ancient authentic material alongside later meaningless formulations of no intrinsic worth. Most of the corruptions, discordances and later reworkings that appear in the printed editions of the Scholium come from a secondary, medieval hybridization of the two versions, hereafter referred to as the “hybrid version.” The hybrid version is what appears in all of the other manuscripts, and it is this version that also made its way into the printed editions and was the source used by nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century scholars. It also left its misleading imprint on the Lichtenstein edition,²⁸ used by scholars over the last seven decades. The absence in the scholarship of the most basic knowledge about the way the work evolved and how it was transmitted left its mark also on the tale of the cruse of oil. Reconstructing the Scholia’s original traditions regarding Hanukkah, and removing from these the impediment of the hybrid version, sheds new light on the evolution of the story of the cruse of oil in particular, on the traditions regarding Hanukkah in rabbinic literature in general, and even on the connection between the Babylonian Talmud and the two versions of the Scholium of *Megillat Ta^canit*.

25 For the literature on the subject, see n. 2 above.

26 Noam, “Scholion”; Noam, “Two Testimonies.”

27 For a description of the MSS, their nature and interrelationships, see Noam, “Scholion,” 60ff.

28 Above, n. 2.

The chart below presents the two original versions of the Scholium, as well as the later hybrid version, which is based on the Cambridge manuscript, Cambridge University Library, Add.648/9. The text of *Megillat Ta'anit* that is explained in the Scholium appears in bold letters at the beginning of each of its versions. The story of the cruse of oil, as presented in each of the Scholia, is highlighted with an alternate typeface in the Hebrew text and *italicized* in the English translation. Symbols used in the Hebrew represent the following: ++, word/s within were added between the lines of the manuscript; [[], a tear in the manuscript, supplemented by the author of this article; °, unclear letter in the manuscript; { }, erased in the manuscript.

	<i>Scholium P</i>	<i>Scholium O</i>	<i>Hybrid Version (H)</i>
1	בעשרים וחמשה בו	בעשרים וחמשה ביה	בעשרין וחמשה ביה 1
2	חנכת יומין תמניא	יומי חנוכה	יום חנוכה תמניא יומין 2
3	ודלא למספד	דלא למספד	דלא למספד 3
1	מפני שטמאו גוים		כשנכנסו גוים להיכל 1
2	את בית המקדש		טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל 2
3	וכשתקפה מלכות		וכשגברה יד 3
4	בית חשמונאי		בית חשמונאי 4
5	בדקוהו ומצאו בו		ונצחום בדקו ולא מצאו 5
6	שמן טהור		אלא פך אחד 6
7			שהיה מונח בחותמו 7
8			של כהן גדול שלא נטמא 8
9			ולא היה בו {אלא להדליק} 9
10			+להדליק אלא+ 10
11			יום אחד ונעשה בו נס 11
12	והדליקו בו את הנרות		והדליקו ממנו שמנה ימים 12
13	כל אותן ימים		לשנה אחרת 13
14	שהדליקו בהם את הנרות		14
15	עשאוים יום טוב		קבעום שמנה ימים טובים 15
16			ומה ראו לעשות חנוכה 16
17			שמנה ימים 17
18	והלא חנכה שעשה	בימים הראשונים חניסוֹיִסֵּת	והלא חנוכה שעשה 18

	<i>Scholium P</i>	<i>Scholium O</i>	<i>Hybrid Version (H)</i>	
19	משה אינה	משה	משה במדבר לא עשה	19
20	אלא שבעה		אלא שבעת ימים	20
21			שנאמר ומפתח אהל מועד	21
22			לא תצאו שבעת ימים וגו'	22
23	שנ' ויהי המקריב		ואומר ויהי המקריב	23
24	ביום הראשון את קרבנו		ביום הראשון את קרבנו וגו'	24
25	ובשביעי בשבת	זֶאת חנוכת המזבח	ובשביעי	25
26	הקריב אפרים		הקריב אפרים	26
27	והלא חנכה		וכן מצינו בחנוכה	27
28	שעשה שלמה אינה אלא	משלמה ואילך	שעשה שלמה שלא עשאה	28
29	שבעה	חנוכת משה וחנוכתו	אלא שבעת ימים	29
30	שנ' כי חנכת המזבח	שנ' כי חנוכת המזבח	שנ' כי חנוכת המזבח	30
31	שבעת ימים	שבעת ימים	עשו שבעת ימים	31
32	והחג שבעת ימים		והחג שבעת ימים	32
33	מה ראו לעשות זו		ומה ראו לעשות חנוכה זו	33
34	שמונה	משנטל בית הלבנון ושמונה	שמונה ימים	34
35			אלא בימי מלכות יון	35
36		חנוכת בית חשמונאי	נכנסו בית חשמונאי	36
37		לדורות	להיכל	37
38		ולמה נוהגת לדורו[[ת]]	ובנו את המזבח	38
39		שעשאוים בצאתם מצרה	וסדוהו בסיד ותקנו בו	39
40		לרותה ואמרו בה הלל	כלי שרת והיו מתעסקין בו	40
41		והדליקו בה נרות בטהרה	שמונה ימים ומה ראו	41
42		שכשכנסו יונים להיכל	להדליק את הנרות	42
43	אלא בימי יון	טמאו כל הכלים	אלא בימי מלכות יון	43
44	נכנסו בני חשמונאי+	ולא היה שמן במה להדליק	שנכנסו בני חשמונאי	44
45	להר הבית ושבעה שפורדין	וכשגברו מלכות	להיכל שבעה שפורדים	45
46	של ברזל היו	בית חשמונאי מצאו פך	של ברזל	46
47	בידיהם וחברום בבעץ	אחד בחותמו של כהן גדול	בידם וחפורם בעץ	47

	<i>Scholium P</i>	<i>Scholium O</i>	<i>Hybrid Version (H)</i>
48	והיו מתעסקין בהם	ונעשה נס והדליקו ממנה	48 והדליקו בהם את הנרות
49	כל שמנה	עד שמונה ימים	49
50	ומה ראו לגמור בהם	ומצאו מזבח סתור ותקוהו	50 ומה ראו לגמור בהן
51		כל שמנה וכלי שרת	51
52	את ההלל	ולכך נוהגת שמונה	52 את ההלל
53	ללמדך שכל תשועה	והיתה חִינַכַת המזב[[ח]]	53 אלא שכל תשועה
54	ותשועה שעשה		54 ותשועה שהקב"ה
55	הק'ב'ה' לישראל		55 עושה להם לישראל
56	הן מקדימין לפניו		56 היו מקדימין לפניו
57	בהלל		57 בהלל בשירה
58	ובשבח		58 ובשבח ובהוראה
59	וכן הוא אומ' בספר עזרא		59 כענין שנ'
60	ויענו כל העם בהלל		60 ויענו בהלל
61	ובהודות ליי' כי טוב		61 ובהודות ליי' כי טוב
62	כי לעולם חסדו על ישראל		62 וגומ'
63	וכל העם הריעו תרועה		63
64	גדולה בהלל ליי' על הוסד		64
65	בית יי' ואומ' ליי' הישועה		65
66	על עמך ברכתך סלה		66
67	לקב"ה לעשות לנו		67
68	נסים ונפלאות ולנו		68
69	להללו ולברכו		69
70	שנ' על עמך ברכתך סלה		70
71	מצות נר חנכה נר אחד		71 מצות חנוכה נר
72	לכל בית		72 איש וביתו
73	נר אחד לכל נפש והמהדרין		73 והמהדרין נר לכל נפש ונפש
74	והמהדרין מן המהדרין וכו'		74 והמהדרין מן המהדרין
75	כדאיתא בכמה מדליקין		75 בית שמאי אומרים

<i>Scholium P</i>	<i>Scholium O</i>	<i>Hybrid Version (H)</i>		
76		יום ראשון מדליק שמנה	76	
77		מכאן ואילך פוחת והולך	77	
78		וב"ה אומרים יום ראשון	78	
79		מדליק אחד מכאן + ואילך +	79	
80		מוסיף והולך	80	
81		שני זקנים היו בצידן	81	
82		אחד עושה כדברי ב"ש	82	
83		ואחד עושה כדברי ב"ה	83	
84		זה נותן טעם לדבריו	84	
85		וזה נותן טעם לדבריו	85	
86		זה אומר כפרי החג	86	
87		וזה אומר מעלין בקדש	87	
88		ואין מורידין	88	
89		מצות הדלקתה	89	
90		משתשקע החמה	90	
91		עד שתכלה רגל מן השוק	91	
92		ומצוה להניחה על פתח	92	
93		ביתו מבחוץ ואם היה	93	
94		דר בעליה מניחה בחלון	94	
95		הסמוכה לרשות הרבי'	95	
96		ואם מתירא מן הגוים	96	
97		מניחה על פתח ביתו	97	
98		מבפנים ובשעת הסכנה	98	
99		מניחה על שלחנו ודיו	99	
1	On the twenty-fifth day of it [Kislev]	On the twenty-fifth day of it [Kislev]	On the twenty-fifth day of it [Kislev]	1
2	[commence] the eight days of Hanukkah	[commence] the days of Hanukkah	[commence] the day [sic] of Hanukkah, which are eight days	2
3	and [on which] eulogizing the dead is forbidden	[on which] eulogizing the dead is forbidden	[on which] eulogizing the dead is forbidden	3

	<i>Scholium P</i>	<i>Scholium O</i>	<i>Hybrid Version (H)</i>	
1	<i>Because the heathens defiled</i>		<i>When the heathens entered the Temple</i>	1
2	<i>the Temple.</i>		<i>they defiled all the oils in the Temple.</i>	2
3,4	<i>And when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed,</i>		<i>And when the Hasmoneans overpowered</i>	3,4
5	<i>they searched it and found in it</i>		<i>and defeated them, they made search and found</i>	5
6	<i>pure oil</i>		<i>only one cruse</i>	6
7			<i>which lay with the seal</i>	7
8			<i>of the High Priest which was not defiled</i>	8
9			<i>but which contained sufficient</i>	9
10			<i>for kindling only</i>	10
11			<i>for one day and a miracle was wrought therewith</i>	11
12	<i>and they kindled the lights therewith.</i>		<i>and they kindled from it for eight days.</i>	12
13	<i>All of those days</i>		<i>The following year</i>	13
14	<i>on which they kindled the lights</i>			14
15	<i>they appointed a festival.</i>		<i>they designated them [the days] an eight-day festival.</i>	15
16			<i>And why did they determine to celebrate Hanukkah</i>	16
17			<i>for eight days?</i>	17
18	<i>And was not the dedication [תנוכה] performed</i>	<i>And in former days the dedication [תנוכה]</i>	<i>And was not the dedication [תנוכה] performed</i>	18
19, 20	<i>by Moses only seven [days]?</i>	<i>by Moses</i>	<i>by Moses in the desert only seven days?</i>	19, 20
21, 22			<i>As is stated, "And ye shall not go out from the door of the tent of meeting for seven days" etc.</i>	21, 22

	<i>Scholium P</i>	<i>Scholium O</i>	<i>Hybrid Version (H)</i>	
23, 24	As is stated: "And he that presented his offering the first day"		And it says: "And he that presented his offering the first day," etc.	23, 24
25	And on the seventh day, on the Sabbath,	"This was the dedication of the altar"	And on the seventh [day]	25
26	Ephraim presented his offering.		Ephraim presented his offering.	26
27	And was not the dedication		And so have we found that the dedication	27
28	performed by Solomon only	From Solomon onward	performed by Solomon was	28
29	seven [days]?	the dedication of Moses [was celebrated] as well as Solomon's dedication.	only seven days.	29
30, 31	As is stated: "for [they observed] the dedication of the altar seven days	As is stated: "for [they observed] the dedication of the altar seven days"	As is stated: "for they observed the dedication of the altar seven days	30, 31
32	and the feast seven days."		and the feast seven days."	32
33	Why did they choose to celebrate this one		And why did they choose to celebrate this dedication	33
34	for eight [days]?	And eight [days] when the House of Lebanon was taken(?)	for eight days?	34
35			Because in the days of the Greek kingdom	35
36		The dedication of the Hasmoneans	the Hasmoneans entered	36
37		[was to be celebrated] for [all] generations.	the Temple	37
38		And why is it celebrated for all generations?	and built the altar	38
39		For they observed them when they emerged from distress	and covered it in plaster and repaired	39
40		to relief and they recited on it the Hallel	the service vessels and they were occupied with it	40

continues

<i>Scholium P</i>	<i>Scholium O</i>	<i>Hybrid Version (H)</i>	
41	And they kindled the lights on it in purity.	for eight days. And why did they determine	41
42	<i>For when the Greeks entered the Temple</i>	to kindle the lights?	42
43 Because in the days of Greece	<i>they defiled all the vessels</i>	Because in the days of the Greek kingdom	43
44 the Hasmoneans entered	<i>and there was no oil with which to kindle.</i>	when the Hasmoneans entered	44
45, 46 the Temple Mount and seven iron spits	<i>And when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed they found one cruse</i>	the Temple, seven iron spits	45, 46
47 did they have in their hands, and they (joined) [overlaid] them with tin	<i>with the seal of the High Priest</i>	did they have in their hand and they overlaid them with tin	47
48 and they were occupied with it	<i>And a miracle was wrought and they kindled [the lights] from it</i>	and kindled the lights therein.	48
49 all eight [days].	<i>Up to eight days.</i>		49
50 And why did they determine to finish/recite on them	And they found a demolished altar and they repaired it	And why did they choose to finish/recite on them	50
51	all eight [days] as well as the service vessels		51
52 the Hallel?	And it is therefore celebrated for eight [days].	the Hallel?	52
53 To teach that for each and every	And there was the dedication of the altar.	Because for each and every	53
54 salvation that the Almighty		salvation that the Almighty	54
55 wrought in Israel		wrought in Israel	55
56 they greet Him		They would greet Him	56
57 with Hallel		with Hallel, with song	57
58 and with praise.		and with praise and with thanksgiving.	58
59 And thus is it stated in the Book of Ezra:		As the matter is stated:	59

<i>Scholium P</i>	<i>Scholium O</i>	<i>Hybrid Version (H)</i>	
60 “And the entire nation sang one to another in praising		“And they sang one to another in praising	60
61 and giving thanks unto the Lord: ‘for He is good,		and giving thanks unto the Lord: ‘for he is good,”	61
62 for his mercy endureth forever toward Israel.’		etc.	62
63 And all the people shouted			63
64 with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation			64
65 of the house of the Lord was laid.” And it states: “Salvation belongeth unto the Lord;			65
66 Thy blessing be upon Thy people. Selah.”			66
67 It is for the Almighty to perform for us			67
68 miracles and wonders and it is for us			68
69 to praise and bless Him			69
70 As is stated: “Thy bless- ing be upon Thy people. Selah.”			70
71 The precept of Hanukkah [demands] one light		The precept of Hanukkah [demands] one light	71
72 for each household		for a man and his house- hold	72
73 and the zealous [kindle] a light for each member [of the household]		and the zealous [kindle] a light for each and every member [of the house- hold]	73
74 and the extremely zealous, etc.		and the extremely zealous	74

Column 3, line 74: Should an "[etc.]" be
inserted after the word "zealous"?

<i>Scholium P</i>	<i>Scholium O</i>	<i>Hybrid Version (H)</i>	
75	As is cited in [the second chapter of <i>b.Šabbat</i>] <i>Bameh Madlikin</i> – “With what may we kindle [the Sabbath lights]?”	Bet Shammai maintain:	75
76		On the first day eight [lights] are kindled	76
77		and thereafter they are gradually reduced.	77
78		And Bet Hillel say: On the first day	78
79		one is kindled and thereafter	79
80		they are progressively increased.	80
81		There were two old men in Sidon,	81
82		One observed according to Bet Shammai	82
83		And the other according to Beth Hillel.	83
84		The former gave a reason for his action	84
85		and the latter gave a reason for his action.	85
86		The former stated that it should correspond to the bullocks of the Festival	86
87		and the latter stated, because we promote [in matters of] sanctity	87
88		but do not reduce.	88
89		It is incumbent to kindle it	89
90		from sunset	90
91		until there is no wayfarer in the street.	91

<i>Scholium P</i>	<i>Scholium O</i>	<i>Hybrid Version (H)</i>	
92		And it is incumbent to place it by the door	92
93		of one's house on the outside; and if one	93
94		dwells in an upper chamber he places it at the window	94
95		nearest the street.	95
96		And if one is afraid of the Gentiles	96
97		one places it at the door of one's house	97
98		on the inside, and in times of danger	98
99		it is sufficient to place it on the table.	99

Each of the two original versions of the Scholium (P, O) incorporates several traditions regarding Hanukkah, while the hybrid version contains all of them. The following are the topics appearing in each of the versions:

<i>Scholium P</i>	<i>Scholium O</i>	<i>Hybrid Version</i>
<i>The miracle of the cruse of oil</i> (1-15)	A comparison with the dedications of Moses and Solomon (18-34)	<i>The miracle of the cruse of oil</i> (1-15)
A comparison with the dedications of Moses and Solomon (18-34)	<i>The miracle of the cruse of oil</i> (36-49)	A comparison with the dedications of Moses and Solomon (16-34)
	The repairing of the altar (50-53)	The repairing of the altar (35-41)
The iron spits (43-49)		The iron spits (41-48)
Why did they determine to recite the Hallel? (50-70)		Why did they determine to recite the Hallel? (50-62)
The manner of kindling the lights (71-75)		The manner of kindling the lights (71-99)

From this point onward we will discuss each unit separately and then explore the way the different units were combined. In light of this analysis, we will discuss the story of the cruse of oil, its origin, the way it evolved, and its place among the other units in the Scholia.

UNITS OF THE SCHOLIA AND PARALLEL VERSIONS

THE DEDICATIONS OF MOSES AND SOLOMON

The two versions of the Scholium compare the Hasmonean dedication to Moses' dedication of the Tabernacle and Solomon's dedication of the Temple. Scholium P asks about the difference between the Hasmonean dedication, which was celebrated for eight days, and the other two dedications, which lasted seven days: "Why did they determine to celebrate this one for eight [days]?" (lines 33–34). Against the background of all biblical consecrations of the Tabernacle and the Temple, which lasted seven days,²⁹ the duration of eight days of Hanukkah is indeed puzzling. In the books of Maccabees it is never clearly explained. 2 Maccabees (10:6; 1:9, 18) does create a connection between the festival of Tabernacles and Hanukkah, but the author does not state explicitly that the duration of the biblical festival is the reason for the duration of the Hasmonean one. Scholarship has offered different solutions to this riddle,³⁰ but it seems that the historical truth behind the eight days of Hanukkah is still rather vague. Scholium P's answer to this question appears in the next unit, in the story of the iron spits: "Because in the days of Greece the Hasmoneans entered . . . and they were occupied with it all eight [days]" (lines 43–49). In other words, the erecting of a new candelabrum for the Temple out of iron bars – perhaps fashioning it out of their own weapons (see below) – took eight days, and therefore the dedication by the Hasmoneans lasted eight days and not seven.

Apropos the mention of the dedication of the Tabernacle in the desert, Scholium P cites verses from the Bible as evidence that the dedication lasted seven days: "And he that presented his offering on the first day . . . And on the seventh day, on the Sabbath, Ephraim presented his offering" (lines 23–26). These verses deal with the presents brought by the chieftains of the tribes following the dedication of the Tabernacle (Numbers 7:12). It is surprising that the Scholium cites these verses as the source for the seven days of the dedication of the Tabernacle, rather than citing the biblical verses that deal with

29 See Lev 8:33–35; 1 Kgs 8:65; 2 Chr 7:9.

30 Tabory, *Jewish Festivals*, 370 n.9; 375 n.24 lists a comprehensive bibliography. See his own suggestion (374) with reference to the purification and consecration of the altar and the Temple in the days of Hezekiah, which lasted eight days.

the seven days of consecration (מִיְלֻרְאִים) (see Lev 8:33–35). The presentation of the offerings of the chieftains lasted *twelve days* (see Num 7:10–88), and according to rabbinic tradition, did not coincide at all with the days of consecration. Even more surprising is the mention of the presentation of the offering of Ephraim on the seventh day. Since the chieftains continued the presentations of their offerings on the days after Ephraim's offering, how does the day on which Ephraim presented his offering serve as evidence that the dedication of the Tabernacle lasted seven days? In this regard the hybrid version (lines 21–22) offers an additional verse that does not appear in the other versions of the Scholium: “And ye shall not go out from the door of the tent of meeting seven days” (Lev 8:33), which refers to the seven days of consecration. Perhaps the hybrid version is preserving the original source of P, or perhaps this is a later supplement.

Mention of the dedication of the chieftains in Scholium P remains unclear. However, several connections between the offerings of the chieftains and Hanukkah may be found in various sources. The paragraphs narrating the offerings of the chieftains are read from the Torah in the synagogue during Hanukkah, thus giving them an important place in the laws of the festival.³¹ A *midrash* involving the commandment given to Aaron to light the candelabrum in the Tabernacle (Num 8:1–3) associates the Hasmonean Hanukkah with Aaron's sorrow at not presenting any offering of his own at the dedication of the chieftains.³² A different *midrash*, which completely negates the plain meaning of the biblical text, asserts that work on the Tabernacle was completed on Hanukkah.³³ Furthermore, in the same manner that the Scholium mentions the offering of Ephraim on the seventh day apropos the mention of the *seven days* of the dedication of the Tabernacle, there is a *midrash* that connects the presentation of Manasseh's offering on the *eighth* day with the *eight-day* Hasmonean festival of Hanukkah.³⁴ In addition, the wording in the Scholium, “on the seventh day, on the *Sabbath*, Ephraim presented his offering” alludes to yet another *midrash*, according to which the seventh day of the offering of the

31 *M. Meg.* 3:6

32 For the reference see Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (7 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1946) 6:79 n. 420.

33 *Pesikta Rabbati* 6 (ed. Meir Friedmann [Vienna: self-published, 1880] 24a); *Midrash Tanhuma*, *Pekudei* 11; *Midrash Tanhuma* (ed. Solomon Buber [Vilna: Romm, 1885]) *Pekudei* 6, p. 130; *Bemidbar Rabbah*, *Naso* 13.1 (51a).

34 With regard to the verse, “On the eighth day Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur, chieftain of the children of Manasseh,” *Midrash Tanhuma* in *Naso*, 29 begins its homily, “Let our master teach us: A Hanukkah light. . . .” This passage is also found in *Pesikta Rabbati* and in the *She'iltot*, and the surprising *halakhah* that it contains with regard to kindling with a used candle is dealt with at length in the scholarly literature. See Victor Aptowitz, “Untersuchungen zur Gao-näischen Literatur,” *HUCA* 8–9 (1931–32) 383–95.

chieftains occurred on the Sabbath, and the offering of Ephraim suspended the Sabbath;³⁵ however, it is unclear how this *midrash* relates to the context under discussion.

As to Scholium O, the text of the Oxford manuscript is very fragmented and corrupt, thus making it difficult to reconstruct the underlying original version. Perhaps Scholium O intended to offer a list of the different Hanukkahs that had been celebrated since “the former days” (see line 18), all of which had been discontinued, with the exception of the Hasmonean Hanukkah: “And in the former days the dedication by Moses . . . From Solomon onward the dedication of Moses [was celebrated] and also his [Solomon’s] dedication . . .” (lines 18–29). These Hanukkahs were discontinued, but “the dedication of the Hasmoneans [was to be celebrated] for [all] generations.” (lines 36–37). In contrast to Scholium P, Scholium O draws an analogy between the Hasmonean dedication and the dedications of Moses and Solomon to *explain* rather than to *pose a question* about the eight days of the Hasmonean Hanukkah. Following this explanation, Scholium O offers no further explanations for the number “eight” (in contrast to Scholium P), as the analogy is in itself the explanation. It would appear that Scholium O finds an allusion to the eight days in the mention of the number “eight” appearing in the description of Solomon’s dedication of the House of Lebanon. The vague, corrupted sentence in Scholium O, “And eight [days] when the House of Lebanon was taken(?) (line 34), may be a vestige of an explanation for eight days, since the verses in the Bible relating to Solomon’s dedication also mention an “eighth day”: “And on the *eighth* day they held a solemn assembly; for they kept the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days . . . Thus Solomon finished the house of the Lord, and the king’s house . . .” (2 Chronicles 7:9–11); “On the *eighth day* he sent the people away . . .” (1 Kings 8:66).³⁶ Perhaps it was the intention of Scholium O to find support for eight days in the eight days of Solomon’s dedication. Possibly, it was connecting the “eighth day” appearing in the citation to the dedication of the “king’s house” referred to in 2 Chronicles (7:11), which may have taken place on the eighth day, and thus the mention of the “House of Lebanon” (i.e., the king’s house) in the Scholium.³⁷ But it is also conceivable that the “House of Lebanon” mentioned here is a metaphor for the Temple itself, as is commonly found in the *midrash*.³⁸ 2 Maccabees lends support to

35 *Tanhuma*, *Naso*, 28; *Bemidbar Rabbah*, *Naso* 14.1 (57b); *b.Moʿed Qat.* 9a (see the pseudo-Rashi commentary, regarding the words “and an individual offering”).

36 According to 2 Chronicles, he sent the people away only on the twenty-third of the month. See *b.Moʿed Qat.* 9a; *Berešit Rabbah* 35 (eds. Julius Theodor and Chanoch Albeck [Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1965] 332).

37 If so, perhaps it should be emended to: when the house of Lebanon was *completed*.

38 Perhaps the citation of the verse, “This was the dedication-offering of the altar” in the context

this hypothesis and also offers an important parallel comparison with the dedications of Moses and Solomon. The prophecy, attributed to Jeremiah, addressed to the exiles on their way to Babylon includes the following:

Unknown shall the spot be [the spot where the tent of meeting, the ark and the altar of incense were hidden, upon the exile to Babylon] until the Almighty gathers the people together again, and mercy come; then indeed shall the Lord disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord shall be seen, even the cloud, *as in the days of Moses it was visible, and as when Solomon prayed that the place might be consecrated with solemn splendor*. It was also narrated how he in his wisdom, sacrificed *at the dedication and completion of the Temple*; as Moses prayed to the Lord, and fire descended from heaven . . . so Solomon also prayed and the fire descended and burned up the burnt-offerings . . . *and likewise, Solomon too kept the eight days*. (2 Macc 2:8–10, 12)

These verses compare the future redemption of the exiles with the dedication of Moses and the dedication of Solomon, while verse 12 notes: “and likewise, Solomon *too* kept the *eight days*.” It would appear that the words “likewise” and “too” (ὡσαυτως, και) allude to a comparison of the eight-day dedication of the Temple by Solomon with the eight-day dedication of the Tabernacle by Moses, according to the author of 2 Maccabees. This passage in 2 Maccabees deals with a fire coming down from heaven both for Solomon and for Moses, and the Pentateuch states that after the seven days of consecration, precisely “on the eighth day,” there came forth “a fire from before the Lord . . . upon the altar” (Lev 9:1, 24). It would appear, as already noted by scholars, that underlying the great emphasis on eight days in this passage is the eight-day Hasmonean Hanukkah.³⁹

of the dedication by Moses was also intended to offer grounds for the eight days of Hanukkah from the eight days of consecration by Moses. What appears in the extant Scholium O may conceivably be a remnant of an association made in the original Scholium O between the *eighth* day of consecration and the last day of the presentation of the offerings of the chieftains, which is the day of “the dedication-offering of the altar, on the day when it was anointed.” It is this particular portion of the Torah that is customarily read on the eighth day of Hanukkah. The sages, however, tended to identify the eighth day of consecration specifically with the *first* day of the chieftains’ offerings.

39 See for example the editions of Abraham Kahana, *Hasefarim Haḥisoniyim* (Heb.) (vol. 2; Tel-Aviv: Hotsa’at Me’orat, 1937) 2.1:182–83; Solomon Zeitlin and Sidney Tedesche, *The Second Book of Maccabees* (New York: Harper, 1954) 112–13; Jonathan A. Goldstein, *2 Maccabees*, AB 41A (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday/Anchor, 1984) 186. With regard to the problems involved in these verses in general, see Goldstein, 184–86.

We have not found any attempt in rabbinic literature to demonstrate that Solomon's dedication of the Temple was an eight-day celebration, nor have we found any comparisons of the lengths of the dedications (חנוכות) in general.⁴⁰ However, another interesting association between Hanukkah and Solomon is found in *Berešit Rabbah*:⁴¹

א"ר לוי... ואותן שבעת ימים [= של חנוכת שלמה] היו ישראל אוכלין ושותין
ושמחים ומדליקים נרות (!).

R. Levi said . . . and during those seven days [of the dedication of Solomon] the Israelites ate and drank and were joyous and *kindled lights* (!).

In summary, Scholium O and Scholium P are unclear, fragmented and corrupt. In spite of this, they appear to be preserving an ancient *midrash*, also preserved in 2 Maccabees, which essentially compares the Hasmonean dedication to the dedications of the Tabernacle and the Temple. The tradition in Scholium O, which appears to find support for the eight days of the Hasmonean dedication in an eight-day dedication by Solomon, is closer to the tradition in 2 Maccabees than is Scholium P, which contrasts the seven days of Solomon and the eight days of the Hasmonean dedication. Scholium O is thus closer to an even earlier tradition known to Jason of Cyrene, the author of the earlier, more extensive work on which 2 Maccabees was based. This tradition has no explicit parallel version in the rabbinic literature, yet one trace of it nevertheless remained in *Berešit Rabbah*.

THE IRON SPITS

According to Scholium P (lines 43–49), the Hasmoneans erected a new candelabrum in the Temple by improvising one out of seven iron spits.⁴² This activity lasted eight days, and consequently Hanukkah is celebrated for eight days. The episode of the spits appears to be missing from Scholium O (however, see below). The episode of the spits is mentioned in a *baraita* in the Babylonian Talmud:⁴³

40 *Pesikta Rabbati* 2 (ed. Friedmann, 7a) lists “seven dedications.” But the dedication of Solomon is not listed there at all, nor are the eight days of the Hasmonean Hanukkah or any other Hanukkah mentioned in that context.

41 *Berešit Rabbah* 35:3 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 332).

42 With regard to the commonly accepted explanation as to the nature of these spits, as well as his own ideas on the subject, see Daniel Sperber, “The Spits of the Maccabees: What Were They?” (Heb.), *Sinai* 53 (1963) 280–82.

43 *B. Roš Haš.* 24a; *b. Abod. Zar.* 43a; *b. Menaḥ.* 28b. Cf. *Pesikta Rabbati* 2 (ed. Friedmann, 5a).

כדתניא, לא יעשה אדם בית תבנית היכל, אכסדרה תבנית אולם... מנורה כנגד מנורה. אבל עושה של חמשה ושל ששה ושל שמונה [קנים] ושל שבעה לא יעשה אפי' של שאר מיני מתכות [לפי שכיוצא בהן כשירה לפנים (רש"י)]. רבי יוסי בר יהודה אומר אף של עץ לא יעשה כדרך שעשו מלכי בית חשמונאי. אמרו לו משם ראייה, שפודין של ברזל היו וחיפום בבעץ. העשירו עשאוים של כסף, חזרו העשירו עשאוים של זהב.

As it has been taught: A man may not make a house in the form of the Temple, or a porch in the form of the Temple court, . . . or a candelabrum after the design of its candelabrum. He may, however, make one with five or six or eight [branches], but with seven he may not make it, even though it be of other metals [since a candelabrum of other metal besides gold would have been permissible in the Temple – Rashi]. R. Jose b. Judah says: Also of wood he may not make it, because thus did the Hasmoneans make it. [The Rabbis] said to him: Is any proof to be deduced from that? The spits were of iron and they overlaid them with tin. When they grew rich, they made them of silver. When they grew richer still, they made them of gold.

The *baraita* does not contain the complete version of the event (“Because in the days of Greece the Hasmoneans entered . . .”) but only makes an allusion to it. On the other hand, the continuation “When they grew rich they made them of silver . . .” is not mentioned in the Scholium. The passage in the Scholium does not appear to be based on the tradition in the *baraita*, but quite the opposite: the *tanna'im* engaging in the dispute in the *baraita* are referring to an ancient tradition which reported the story in its entirety, a story similar to that which appears in the Scholium.⁴⁴ The wording in Scholium P, “and they joined [והבררום] them with tin” is probably a graphic corruption of the original word (overlaid, והיפום) found in parallel versions. The sentence, “and they were

44 However the *midrash* in *Pesikta Rabbati* 2: “And why do we kindle lights on Hanukkah . . . entered the Temple and found therein eight iron spits” is suspected of being a later version, which may already be based on the language in the Babylonian Talmud. The expression “and found therein” may have been taken from the incident of the cruse of oil which they found in the Temple; it does not fit in with the event under discussion. (According to the Scholium, the spits were brought into the Temple from outside.) The wording “eight spits” does not make sense and is undoubtedly a corruption by printers. This is borne out by the *baraita* presented above, which proves that a candelabrum with eight branches may not be used in the Temple. Cf. Friedmann, *Pesikta Rabbati*, 5a n.5. His hypothesis is verified by the **manuscripts** of *Pesikta Rabbati* that **was** brought to my attention by Dr. Benjamin Elizur (and not as according to Alon, “Did the Jewish People,” 14).

Is one or more MS(S) correct here?

occupied with it all eight [days],” which concludes the episode in Scholium P, is rather surprising. It should not take eight days to make branches for a candelabrum out of iron spits for kindling the lights! In fact, this sentence does not appear in the parallel versions (neither in *Pesiqta Rabbati*,⁴⁵ nor in the reconstructed parallel version of Scholium O, see below). An examination of the introductory sentence to this section in Scholium P, which repeats the historical context of the story from its very beginning (“Because in the days of Greece the Hasmoneans entered the Temple Mount . . .”), indicates that this passage was originally a separate unit, unrelated to what preceded it in the Scholium, and was not originally intended to explain why Hanukkah is celebrated specifically for eight days. The redactor of Scholium P apparently incorporated a short, ancient passage regarding the iron spits into his work as an answer to the question appearing at the end of his preceding unit: “Why did they determine to celebrate this one for eight [days]?” and therefore appended to the end of the story of the spits that the Hasmoneans were “occupied” with it for eight days.

BUILDING THE ALTAR

ומצאו מזבח סתור ותקנוהו And they found a demolished altar and they repaired it

כל שמנה וכלי שרת All eight [days] and the service vessels

ולכך נוהגת שמונה And it is therefore celebrated for eight [days]

והיתה חנכת המזבח And there was the dedication [חנכת] of the altar.

This tradition is found only in Scholium O (lines 50–54), and it has no parallel version, either in Scholium P or anywhere else throughout rabbinic literature! It should be emphasized that in the few places where we did find explicit reference by the Sages to the reason for establishing the festival of Hanukkah⁴⁶ there is no mention of the dedication of the altar as an explanation for Hanuk-

⁴⁵ See the two preceding notes.

⁴⁶ Such as the episode of the iron spits in *Pesikta Rabbati* (above, n. 44), the miracle of the cruse of oil in *b.Šabb.* 21b, the victory and the purifying of the Temple in the later version of the prayer, “We thank Thee for the miracles” (*Al Hanissim*), and the “miracles” and “salvations” mentioned in general in the prayer, “We kindle these lights” (*Hanerot Halalu*). Cf. also the version appearing in *Masekhet Soferim* 20:4, ed. Michael Higger (New York: Debe Rabanan, 1937) 343–44: *Hanerot ha’elu* and in the ancient Erez Israel version of *Al Hanisim* (which begins *ukenisei pela’ot*; *Masekhet Soferim* 20:6, 346).

kah. This tradition is closer to that of 1 Maccabees (4:42–59) which specifically regards the dedication of the altar and not the kindling of the candelabrum as the reason for Hanukkah.⁴⁷ Apparently, the dedication of the altar was the focal point of the dedication of the Temple, and therefore in 1 Maccabees⁴⁸ the festival is called “the dedication of the altar [חֲנוּכַת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ],” and for all generations — “Hanukkah.” The altar was also a focal point in the dedication of the Tabernacle, in the dedication by Solomon, and in the dedication of the Second Temple.⁴⁹ The extant Scholium O is unclear and corrupt (“And they found a demolished altar and they repaired it all eight [days] and the service vessels”!), but an important medieval work which cites Scholium O may help reconstruct it. R. Isaac b. Moses of Vienna, the author of *Or Zaru’a*,⁵⁰ in regard to the laws of Hanukkah, offers an explanation for the eight-day miracle of the cruse of oil in the name of his rabbi, R. Judah b. Isaac, better known as R. Judah Sir Leon.⁵¹ His explanation is based on *Megillat Ta’anit*:

„מאי חנוכה דתניא בעשרים וחמשה בכסלו [...] ונעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים לשנה אחרת קבעום ימים טובים בהלל ובהודאה” [...] והא דנעשה נס שהיה דולק שמונה ימים פי' מורי רבי יהודה בר' יצחק משום שהיו טרודים כל ז' ימים בבנין המזבח ובכלי שרת, דאמרי במגילת תענית: ולדורות חנוכה בית חשמונאי ולמה היא נוהגת לדורות, אלא שעשאוהו בצער ואמרו בו הלל והודאה, והדליקו בו נרות בטהרה. לפי שנכנסו יונים בהיכל וטמאו כל הכלים, ולא היה להם במה להדליק שמן, וכשגבר' יד בית חשמונאי הביאו שבעה שיפורי ברזל וחיפום בבעץ והתחילו להדליק. ולמה היא נוהגת להדליק שמונה, אלא שסותרו המזבח ובנאוהו, וכל שבעת הימים היו מתקנים בכלי שרת. ופי', דמיד היו מתקנין שמן אחר, אלא שהיו טרודין להכין ולטוהר כלי שרת ולעשות המזבח, ולא יכלו ליקח שמן אחר. ולכך נעשה נס בפך שמן ונתקיים שמנה ימים, ולפיכך נקרא חנוכה על שם חנוכה המזבח שנסתר ובנאוהו.

47 It also mentions the candelabrum, the altar of incense and the table. However, the main emphasis is on the building and dedication of the altar. The contradiction between these two traditions about the candelabrum and the altar has already been considered by R. Judah Sir Leon; see below.

48 1 Macc 4:56, 58.

49 See Lev 9:24; Num 7:10 ff., 84 ff.; 1 Kgs 8:22, 62–64, 2 Chr 7:1–5; Ezra 3:2.

50 R. Isaac lived in Germany and France during the second half of the thirteenth century. See Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Tosafists: Their History, Works, Methods* (Heb.) (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes Press of the Hebrew Univ., 1980) 1:436–47; *Or Zaru’a* (2 vols.; Zhitomir: Shapira, 1862) 2:321.

51 R. Judah lived in Paris during the beginning of the thirteenth century. For more about him, see Urbach, *Tosafists*, 320–35, and more recently Israel M. Ta-Shma, *Exegetical Literature on the Talmud in Europe and North Africa* (Heb.) (Jerusalem: Magnes Press of the Hebrew Univ., 2000) part 2, 107–8.

“What is the reason for Hanukkah? For our Rabbis taught: On the twenty-fifth of Kislev [. . .] and a miracle was wrought therewith and they kindled [the candelabrum] from it for eight days. The following year they appointed them [the days] an eight-day festival with [the recital of] Hallel and thanksgiving.” [. . .] and a miracle was wrought and it remained kindled for eight days. My teacher, R. Yehudah ben R. Yitzhak, explained that it was because they were occupied all seven days with the building of the altar and with the service vessels, as is stated in *Megillat Ta’anit*: “The dedication of the Hasmoneans [is to be celebrated] for [all] generations. And why is it celebrated for all generations? Because they performed it in sorrow and recited on it the Hallel and thanksgiving, and they kindled the lights on it in purity. Because the Greeks entered the Temple and defiled all the vessels, and they had nothing with which to kindle the oil. And when the Hasmonean dynasty had the upper hand, they brought seven iron spits and covered them with tin and began to kindle. And why are the lights kindled for eight [days]? Because they demolished the altar and rebuilt it, and all seven days they were repairing the service vessels.” That means, they could immediately have prepared other oil, but they were occupied preparing and purifying the service vessels and building the altar, and they could not buy other oil. And thus a miracle occurred with the cruse of oil and it lasted for eight days. Therefore, it is called Hanukkah [dedication], because of the dedication of the altar that was demolished and which they rebuilt.

R. Judah Sir Leon is trying to harmonize the reason given in the Talmud for the eight days – the miracle of the cruse of oil – with the reason given in *Megillat Ta’anit* (both the Megillah and the Scholium are referred to as *Megillat Ta’anit* in medieval citations) – “And why are the lights kindled for eight [days]? Because they demolished the altar and rebuilt it, and all seven (!) days they were repairing the service vessels.” He suggests viewing the miracle of the cruse of oil as the direct reason for the eight days of Hanukkah, and the time it took to rebuild the altar as the indirect reason: the length of the miracle of the cruse of oil was the outcome of being occupied with repairing the altar. R. Judah’s effort at harmonization indicates that he was well aware of the contradictions involved in the different Hanukkah traditions, and even of those involved in the very name of the festival – *Hanukkah* (“Therefore, it is called Hanukkah, because of the dedication of the altar”), and *Orot*, “Lights,” involving the kindling of the candelabrum. The citation quoted by R. Judah Sir Leon may be able to correct several of the corruptions appearing in the Oxford manuscript with regard to the repairing of the altar:

*Scholium O – MS Oxford**Scholium O – Or Zaruḥa*

ומצאו מזבח סתור ותקנוהו	אלא שסתרו המזבח ובנאוהו
כל שמנה וכלי שרת	וכל שבעת הימים היו מתקנים בכלי שרת
And they found a demolished altar and they repaired it	Because they demolished the altar and rebuilt it,
all eight [days] and the service vessels.	and all seven days they were repairing the service vessels.

From the wording of Sir Leon's reason, "because they were occupied all seven days," as well as from the citation, it appears that the Scholium that he was quoting read "seven days" and not "eight."⁵² Perhaps what the Scholium was saying was that the altar was demolished and rebuilt in one day, but it took seven days to purify all of the service vessels, as they had been defiled and, according to halakhic requirements, had to be sprinkled with sin-offering water on the third and seventh days. The version appearing in the Oxford manuscript was apparently corrected at a later date from "seven" to "eight," and the copyist transferred the purification activities from the "service vessels" to the "altar." As to Sir Leon's version: "they demolished the altar and rebuilt it," instead of "and they found a demolished altar and they repaired it," this is an original version, which is verified by 1 Maccabees and rabbinic literature:

And they took counsel concerning the altar of burnt offerings, which had been profaned . . . so they pulled down the altar . . . and built a new altar after the fashion of the former [one]. (1 Macc 4:44–47)⁵³

. . . גנזו בני חשמונאי את אבני המזבח ששיקצום מלכי יוון (מידות א ו).

. . . wherein the Hasmoneans had hidden away the stones of the altar which the kings of Greece had defiled. (*m.Mid* 1.6)⁵⁴

Apparently, the description of the demolishing of the altar by the Hasmoneans was not understood by one of the copyists after Sir Leon's day, and the lan-

52 For this suggestion I am indebted to Professor Menachem Kister.

53 See also *Ant.* 12:318.

54 Cf. *b.Yoma* 16a; *b.Abod. Zar.* 52b; *Midrash Hagadol Exodus* 20.21 (ed. M. Margalot [Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1956] 443); David Hoffmann, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai on Exodus* (Frankfurt: J. Kauffmann, 1905) 115, saw a remnant of the *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai* in a citation from *Midrash Hagadol* and included it in his edition, but the passage does not appear in the J.N. Epstein - E. Z. Melamed edition (Jerusalem: Mekize Nirdamim, 1955).

guage was intentionally “corrected” from “they demolished the altar” to “and they found a demolished altar.”

As to the “service vessels,” Josephus uses the identical expression in *Jewish War* (1:39) and in exactly the same context. He relates that Judah Maccabee “made *new service vessels* (λειτουργιας σκευη), and brought them into the Temple, because the former vessels had been profaned. *He built another altar. . .*”

HALLEL

The reciting of Hallel is mentioned briefly in the second unit of Scholium O: “and they recited on it the Hallel, and they kindled the lights on it in purity” (lines 40–41). Scholium P devotes an entire unit to Hallel (lines 50–70) which incorporates verses from the Bible and begins with the formal introduction: “And why did they determine to recite on them the Hallel?” It quotes a fairly close approximation of Ezra 3:11, “And they sang one to another in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord: ‘for He is good. . . .’” This allusion to the time of Ezra was apparently to find a basis for reciting Hallel during the Hasmonean dedication of the Temple based on the Hallel recited at the laying of the foundation of the Second Temple.⁵⁵ The quote is followed by a homiletical interpretation of the verse “Salvation belongeth unto the Lord. . . [לְהַלְלוּ ה' בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁעוּרָה]” (Psalms 3:9), which suggests that Hallel is recited on any occasion of salvation. There is no known parallel version to this rather nice interpretation, and Graetz⁵⁶ surmises that it is based on a “lost *baraita*.”

The actual obligation of reciting Hallel on Hanukkah is found in the *Tosefta*⁵⁷ and is discussed in the Talmud.⁵⁸ This practice appears to have ancient roots, which go back to the time of the events themselves. The reciting of Hallel is alluded to already in 1 Maccabees: “On that day was it dedicated afresh, *with songs and harps and lutes and with cymbals. . .*” (1 Macc 4:54). 2 Maccabees, which notes that Hanukkah was a substitute for Sukkot, describes the *thanksgiving* (הודיה) with “wands wreathed with leaves and branches bearing ripe fruit and palm fronds” (2 Macc 10:7), no doubt referring to the shaking of the *lulav* while saying “O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good” as is practiced on Sukkot. According to the halakhic ruling of the *Tosefta*,⁵⁹ Hallel is recited only on the first night and day of Passover, whereas it is recited on all eight

55 An analogy between these events is already alluded to in 2 Maccabees 1–2. Cf. a similar reason for reciting the Hallel cited by Tabory (*Jewish Festivals*, 387 and n.66, in the name of *Shibbolei Haleqet*, and additional reasons for reciting Hallel on Hanukkah collected by him.

56 Heinrich Graetz, “Die Halleluja und Hallel Psalmen,” *MGWJ* 28 (1879) 203, n.1

57 *T.Sukkah* 3.2 (ed. Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta Mo'ed* [New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962] 266) and it appears in the Talmud; cf. the parallel passages listed by Lieberman.

58 *B.ʿArak*. 10a

59 See n.57 above.

days of Sukkot. In the Land of Israel, the half Hallel was never recited, nor was it customary to recite Hallel on the intermediate days of the festivals (*Hol hamo'ed*) or on the New Moon (*Rosh Hodesh*).⁶⁰ Hence, Sukkot was the festival of Hallel par excellence,⁶¹ and it is therefore not surprising that the practice of reciting Hallel was copied to Hanukkah. The verse "O give thanks unto the Lord" is the very same verse that was recited at the dedication of the Second Temple (Ezra 3:11): "And they sang one to another in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord: 'for He is good . . .' [וַיִּעֲנוּ בְהַלֵּל וּבְהוֹדוֹת לַה' כִּי טוֹב]"; and the author of 2 Maccabees was aware of this similarity. He mentions the reciting of Hallel at the start of the laying of the foundation of the Second Temple: "Then the priests sang the hymns" (2 Macc 1:30). Josephus as well points out that Judah Maccabee sang many "hymns and psalms" (*Ant.* 12:324). And indeed, the words "hymns" (הלל) and "thanksgiving" (הודיה) are deliberately incorporated into all of the versions of the "We thank thee for the miracles" (*Al Hanisim*) prayer and "We kindle these lights" (*Hanerot Halalu*) prayers. As a result, Graetz⁶² surmised that the law regarding the reciting of Hallel was conceived originally by the Hasmoneans on Hanukkah. The repeated mention in both Scholia of the reciting of Hallel during Hanukkah is, in my opinion, further evidence of the ancient nature of their traditions. It is an echo of a time when Hallel was not recited often, a vestige of the ancient Hasmonean Hanukkah with its spontaneous outpouring of Hallel, thus creating the unique connection between Hallel and Hanukkah.⁶³ Apparently, the uniqueness of this association became obscured when Hallel began to be generally recited on the New Moon and on the intermediate days of Passover, and once the memory of the historical events began to fade.

THE METHOD OF KINDLING THE LIGHTS

Scholium P presents a parallel version of the famous *baraita* regarding the dispute between the House of Shammai and the House of Hillel over the kindling of the Hanukkah lights. Scholium P presents the beginning of this *baraita* with somewhat different wording. It is difficult to determine whether the differences are the result of different traditions or are a loose paraphrasing of

60 See *t.Pesah.* 10:8 (ed. Lieberman, 197); *b.Ta'an.* 28b; cf. Lieberman's discussion, *Tosefta Ki-Fshutah, Mo'ed* (3 vols.; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962) 1:872.

61 With regard to the unique connection between Sukkot and the reciting of Hallel, see S. Stein, "The Liturgy of Hanukkah and the First Two Books of Maccabees," *JJS* 5 (1954) 100–6.

62 Graetz, "Hallel Psalmen," 207–8.

63 Accordingly, there is no reason to question the non-recital of Hallel on Purim (see *b.Meg.* 14a). It is the reciting of Hallel throughout the eight days of Hanukkah that constitutes a departure from the norm!

the same tannaitic law. The *baraita* appearing in the Scholium was cut short in the extant manuscript or in one of its precursors by a copyist who simply refers the reader to the Talmud: “. . . etc. As is cited in [*b. Šabbat*] ‘*Bameh Madlikin*’ (With what may we kindle [the Sabbath lights?]).” Therefore, it is impossible to know whether Scholium P contained additional units and how much of the *baraita* itself was actually quoted.

THE CRUSE OF OIL IN THE SCHOLIA TRADITIONS

Scholium P begins its explanation about Hanukkah with the story of the cruse of oil. This is also the explanation given in the Talmud, in the discussion, “What is the reason for Hanukkah?” (מאי חנוכה) quoted in the introduction to this article. However, there are distinct differences between the version appearing in Scholium P and the version appearing in the Talmud:

*b. Šabbat 21b*⁶⁴

Scholium P

שכשנכנסו יוונים להיכל טמאו	מפני שטמאו גוים
כל השמנים שבהיכל	את בית המקדש
וכשגברה	וכשתקפה
מלכות בית חשמונאי	מלכות בית חשמונאי
ונצחום	
בדקו ולא מצאו אלא	בדקוהו ומצאו בו
פך אחד של שמן	שמן טהור
שהיה מונח בחותמו של כ"ג	
ולא היה בו אלא להדליק יום אחד	
נעשה בו נס	
והדליקו ממנו ח' ימים	והדליקו בו את הנרות
	כל אותן ימים
	שהדליקו בהם את הנרות
לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאו	עשאו
ימים טובים	יום טוב
בהלל והורדא	

For when the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oils in the Temple, and when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed against and defeated them,

Because the heathens defiled the Temple.
And when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed,

64 The text is based on the Venice edition (1520).

*b.Šabbat 21b**Scholium P*

they made search and found only one cruse of oil which lay with the seal of the High Priest, but which contained sufficient quantity for only one day's kindling. Yet a miracle was wrought therewith and they kindled [the candelabrum] from it for eight days. The following year they designated and appointed them [the days] a festival with [the recital of] Hallel and thanksgiving.

they searched it and found in it pure oil

And they kindled the lights therewith. All of those days on which they kindled the lights they appointed a festival.

Scholium P does not refer explicitly to defiled oil, nor specifically to the finding of a sealed cruse of oil, but refers simply to "pure oil." Furthermore, the main thrust of the Babylonian version of the episode – the miracle of the small quantity of oil that "contained sufficient quantity for only one day's kindling, yet a miracle was wrought therewith and they kindled [the candelabrum] from it for eight days" is omitted from the episode appearing in Scholium P. Instead, there is a rather vague reason for the eight days of the festival: "All of those days on which they kindled the lights they appointed a festival." The unconvincing nature of this seemingly appended explanation for the eight-day period is further evidenced by Scholium P's need for an alternative explanation, according to which, "they were occupied with" erecting a candelabrum from "iron spits" (above) also "all eight [days]." By contrast, Scholium O ascribes an eight-day period of activity specifically to the rebuilding of the altar (see above). In the other units of Scholia O and P, the number eight appears to be an artificial addition that was offhandedly appended to the various purification activities in the Temple. The same seems to be true regarding the cruse of oil. The eight days of kindling described in Scholium P are clearly not an integral part of the story of the kindling of the candelabrum. The version of the episode without the explanation of the eight days, as it appears in Scholium P, is an original version whose subject is the renewal of the Temple service, including the kindling of the candelabrum by the Hasmoneans, *with no mention of a miracle or an eight-day motif*. A parallel event involving a "finding" that facilitated the renewal of the Temple service during "the days of the Greek kingdom" is found in the Jerusalem Talmud:

בימי מלכות יוון היו משלשלין להם שתי קופות של זהב והיו מעלין שני כבשים פעם אחת שילשלו להם שתי קופות של זהב והעלו להן שני גדיים באותה השעה האיר הקב"ה את עיניהם ומצאו שני טלאים בלישכת הטלאים. (ירושלמי תענית ד ה, דף סח עמוד ג)

During the days of the Greek kingdom, they would send down to them two cages with gold and they would send up two sheep. Once they sent down two cages with gold and they sent up to them two kids. *At that moment the Almighty enlightened them and they found two lambs in the chamber of lambs.* (*y.Ta'an.* 4:6, 68c)

Just as in the above example they “found . . . lambs” and presented the daily offering in spite of scheming by the Greeks, here too they “found in it pure oil” with which to kindle the candelabrum. In Scholium P however, the author “appends” the eight-day motif to the end of the story: “They searched it and found in it pure oil” (and note: it does not mention that “it contained sufficient quantity for only one day’s kindling”!); “All of those days on which they kindled the lights they appointed a festival.” This superficial explanation for the eight days is similar to the other explanations appearing in O and P: “And they were occupied with it [the spits] all eight [days]”; “And they found a demolished altar and they repaired it all eight [days].” The author found it necessary to resort to farfetched explanations of the eight days. Apparently he was unaware of the elegant explanation of a bit of oil that miraculously lasted for eight days in the parallel passage in the Babylonian Talmud. This would indicate that the version of the episode appearing in the Scholium predates the Babylonian version. Apparently, the redactor was as yet unfamiliar with the more advanced and developed Babylonian version. It was the Babylonian Talmud that transformed the superficial connection between the kindling and the eight days into the story of a “cruse of oil . . . a miracle was wrought therewith.”⁶⁵ This adaptation of the episode was apparently intended to replace the original flimsy explanation for the eight days with a new explanation that would be both satisfactory and appealing. The possible background of the story may be identified in the biblical miracle of the bit of oil that miraculously turned plentiful (2 Kings 4:1–7). The motif of a miraculous reaction from Heaven to a human activity at the beginning of the Tabernacle/Temple service is also an ancient

65 There are those who also place the episode of the cruse of oil in its more developed form at a later date, but for different reasons, involving the development of *halakhah*. Since the decree of “the eighteen matters” (*m.Šabb.* 1:4), which established that the oil of gentiles becomes defiled, occurred only at the end of Second Temple times, the story involving defiled oil could not have been composed earlier; see Lichtenstein, “Die Fastenrolle,” 275–76.

motif.⁶⁶ From a comparison of the versions of the Scholium and the Babylonian text, it would appear that the anonymous editor was blessed with a literary bent of mind, unencumbered by any political agenda.

This state of affairs demands a renewed inspection of the well-known talmudic tale of the cruse of oil. Essentially, the episode is *not a story of a miracle* but rather the story of the *renewal of the Temple service*. The motif of eight days was a later addition to the story, just as it was a later addition to the other activities involved in the renewal of the Temple service – the erecting of the candelabrum and the rebuilding of the altar. In Scholium P this connection is still hesitant and flimsy, while the explanation presented in the Talmud is already well developed and polished, inventing a new motif of a bit of oil that miraculously lasted for eight days.

Thus far we have been dealing with Scholium P. Scholium O, however, does appear to recount the story of the miracle:

שכשנכנסו יונים להיכל, טמאו כל הכלים ולא היה שמן במה להדליק וכשגברו
מלכות בית חשמונאי מצאו פך אחד בחותמו של כהן גדול ונעשה נס והדליקו
ממנה עד שמונה ימים.

For when the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the vessels, and there was no oil with what to kindle, and when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed, they found one cruse with the seal of the High Priest, and a miracle was wrought and they kindled [the lights] from it up to eight days.

This is the complete account of the “miracle of the cruse of oil.” The wording of the incident, however, was corrupted: It is not “oils” (שמנים) that were defiled, as in the talmudic story of the cruse of oil, but instead, “all the vessels.” Generally, the meaning of the word “vessels” (כלים) in the context of the Temple service refers to the Temple service vessels and not containers for storage of oil. The next sentence is syntactically incorrect. It states, “There was no oil with what to kindle” (לא היה שמן במה להדליק) instead of “There was no oil with which to kindle” (לא היה שמן להדליק בו). The citation about Hanukkah taken from Scholium O⁶⁷ by the author of *Or Zaru'a* in the name of his rabbi, which was referred to earlier, differs from the extant Scholium O (below), particularly with regard to those sentences which appear to relate to the miracle of the cruse of oil:

66 See Lev 9:24; 1 Kgs 8:10–11; 2 Chr 7:1; 2 Macc 1:22.

67 The quoted text that appears before and after the unit under discussion clearly indicates that the citation is from Scholium O. Compare the complete passage in *Or Zaru'a*, as presented above, with the version appearing in Scholium O in the chart at the beginning of this article.

Scholium O – MS Oxford

Scholium O – Or Zaru'a

שכשנכנסו יונים להיכל טמאו כל הכלים
 ולא היה שמן במה להדליק
 וכשגברה מלכות בית חשמונאי
 מצאו פך אחד בחותמו של כהן גדול
 ונעשה נס והדליקו ממנה עד שמונה
 ימים.

לפי שנכנסו יונים בהיכל וטמאו כל הכלים
 ולא היה להם במה להדליק שמן
 וכשגברה יד בית חשמונאי
 הביאו שבעה שפודי ברזל וחפוס בבעץ
 והתחילו להדליק.

For when the Greeks entered the
 Temple, they defiled all the vessels

Because the Greeks entered the
 Temple and defiled all the vessels

and there was no *oil with what to
 kindle*

and they had nothing *with which to
 kindle the oil.*

And when the Hasmonean dynasty
 prevailed,

And when the Hasmonean dynasty
 gained the upper hand

*they found one cruse with the seal of
 the High Priest*

*they brought seven iron spits and
 covered them with tin*

*And a miracle was wrought and they
 kindled [the lights] from it for up to
 eight days*

and began to kindle.

The version of *Megillat Ta'anit* (i.e., Scholium O of *Megillat Ta'anit*) that was quoted by R. Isaac of Vienna in *Or Zaru'a* and his rabbi, R. Judah Sir Leon, contained the incident of the iron spits, and *not the story of the cruse of oil!* *Or Zaru'a* cites the miracle of the cruse of oil *from the Talmud*. R. Judah Sir Leon's previously-mentioned attempt to reconcile the contradicting traditions of the dedication of the altar in *Megillat Ta'anit* and the miracle of the cruse of oil in the Talmud, indicates that the story of the cruse of oil did not appear at all in his *Megillah*, but only in the Talmud. His Scholium O contained only the incident of the spits. Today's extant Oxford manuscript is clearly not an original version. It does not refer to "oils" (שמנים) that were defiled, as in the story of the miracle of the cruse of oil, but "all the vessels" (כל הכלים), including the candelabrum. The syntactically incorrect sentence "there was no oil with what to kindle" (לא היה שמן במה להדליק) is an intentional distortion of the original sentence: "and they had nothing with which to kindle the oil" (לא היה) (במה להדליק שמן). It was not *oil* that was missing, but rather a *candelabrum*. The

event that fits in here is the story of the *spits* and not the story of the *oil*. It would appear that the story of the spits in Scholium O was intentionally and clumsily replaced by the story of the cruse of oil taken from the Babylonian Talmud, and this occurred only after the time of R. Isaac of Vienna, the author of *Or Zarua*.

The hybrid version of the Scholium closely follows the structure of Scholium P with regard to Hanukkah. Incorporated in between the units of Scholium P is an episode from Scholium O (the repairing of the altar). This, typically, is one of the methods used by the redactor for combining the two versions.⁶⁸ In the case of the miracle of the cruse of oil, the hybrid version replaces the version found in Scholium P with the Babylonian version. This too does not in any way constitute a departure from normal practice. The redactor of this compilation repeatedly incorporated units from the Babylonian Talmud and even replaced original passages of the Scholium with parallel passages from the Talmud.⁶⁹ The end of the Scholium also contains several units which were taken from the Babylonian Talmud.⁷⁰ However, in the case of the cruse of oil, the dependence of the author of the hybrid version on the Babylonian Talmud led to an erroneous belief that was widely held and firmly entrenched among scholars, i.e., that the miracle of the cruse of oil is presented in both the Babylonian Talmud and *Megillat Ta'anit*. In fact, it appears only in the Talmud, from which it was later copied into the hybrid version of the Scholium.

An indirect outcome of comparing the traditions regarding Hanukkah in the Babylonian Talmud and in the Scholia is that we obtain an indication of the value and origins of Scholium O and Scholium P. These two extant scholia, although fragmented and corrupt, preserve authentic and important traditions. The tradition in Scholium O involving the building of the altar and the

68 See Noam, "Scholion," 74–84.

69 See Noam, "Scholion," 84 and n.115.

70 "The precept of Hanukkah demands one light for a man and his household"; "There were two old men in Sidon"; "Its observance is from sunset." In the last unit, the redactor apparently decided to incorporate his own *halakhah*. Before presenting the passage from the Babylonian Talmud, "But in times of danger it is sufficient to place it on the table," he adds: "But if one is afraid of Gentiles, one places it at the door of one's house on the inside." This type of law appears in the medieval halakhic responsa of Germany. The author of the *Haggahot Maimuniyyot* on Maimonides' laws of Hanukkah in the *Mishneh Torah* 4:9 states in the name of Rabbenu Simḥah: "That we who kindle inside . . . all of the laws regarding where to kindle apply as for outdoors . . ."; and compare to the words of Maimonides himself, *Hilkhot Hanukkah*, 4:8: "In times of danger a person may place the Hanukkah light *inside his house from within and it is even (!) sufficient to place it on the table.*" And in *Shibbolei Haleqet* 185, the laws of Hanukkah 72a: "R. Ephraim of blessed memory used to say, Now in these times when we do not kindle outdoors, it is best to place it on the right side from within, and there are those who dispute this. . . ."

repairing of the service vessels does not appear at all in the Babylonian Talmud, nor does the comparison with the dedications of Moses and Solomon. The incident of the iron spits, which was part of the original Scholium O, is in fact alluded to in the *baraita* cited in the Babylonian Talmud, but the version in the Scholium appears to be an earlier version than that of the *baraita*, and it is also not familiar with many of the details mentioned in the *baraita*. As to Scholium P, its presentation of the homiletical interpretation regarding Hallel, and the comparisons it makes with the dedications of Moses and Solomon have no parallel version whatsoever, either in the Talmud or in rabbinic literature in general. The *baraita*, “The precept of Hanukkah [demands] one light” is the only unit that might have been the same as, or similar to, what appears in the Babylonian Talmud, but it was cut short by copyists. The original Scholium O made no mention whatsoever of the story of the cruse of oil; Scholium P presents it in an earlier, more primitive version. These substantial differences in content clearly indicate that there is no genetic connection between the explanation in the Talmud and the scholia in their extant form. Even though Scholia O and P are considerably inferior to the Talmud in syntax and style, they incorporate unique ancient sources, not a trace of which are to be found either in the Talmud itself or in the rabbinic literature in general, but which are verified by such external sources as Maccabees and Josephus. Furthermore, we happened upon one tradition – the miracle of the cruse of oil – which appears in Scholium P in an early variant, while the very same tradition appears in the Babylonian Talmud in a later, reworked version, indicating that Scholia O and P were written and redacted in an atmosphere as yet unencumbered by the influence of the Babylonian Talmud. Interestingly, the miracle of the cruse of oil is conspicuously absent in the ancient Erez Israel *piyyutim*. Mention should be made here of the words of Shulamit Elizur:⁷¹

As with all of the early Erez Israel *paytanim*, the famous miracle of the cruse of oil is not alluded to here [the *piyyut* “*Eid nakhon lesal'i*” by Kallir]. This story, which originated in the Babylonian Talmud, does not appear in any Erez Israel source. The silence of both the midrashic as well as the *paytanic* sources in this regard indicates that in Erez Israel at that time this story was as yet unknown.

It would appear that we may also deduce from this something about the antiquity and Erez Israelian provenance of the original traditions of the Scholia.

71 Shulamit Elizur, “The Hanukkah *Piyyutim*: Symbol vs. Reality,” in *The Hasmonean Era* (Heb.), 303–10. I wish to thank Prof. Elizur for her generous help with regard to the *piyyut*.

CONCLUSION

The story of the miracle of the cruse of oil illustrates several of the impediments that rabbinic literature places in the way of the attempt to reveal the “attitude of the Sages” to a particular subject: the multitude of variations appearing in this literature; the dynamic and fluid way in which it is transmitted; the domineering influence of the Babylonian Talmud over parallel or earlier traditions – all of which may contribute to the creation of a distorted picture.

The extant versions of the Scholia offer three different traditions that explain why we celebrate Hanukkah:

1. Finding pure oil and kindling the candelabrum
2. Erecting the candelabrum from iron spits
3. Building the altar

Of the three explanations, the tradition of the iron spits is the only one that is common to both Scholium O and Scholium P. Both scholia also make a comparison between the Hasmonean dedication (Hanukkah) and the dedications of Moses and Solomon. The wording of the units, particularly the introductory and concluding sentences, indicates that each unit was originally written separately, and the intermediate wording that joins the units in each of the versions, is unconvincing and forced. It can be assumed that several different folk traditions regarding Hanukkah were circulating among the populace during Second Temple times. There were traditions connecting the date of Hanukkah to the renewal of the sacrificial service on the altar. Others tied it to the kindling of the lights in the candelabrum, whether by finding pure oil or by improvising a new candelabrum. Both explanations follow from the two names of the festival, which were known already in Second Temple times – *Hanukkah* and *Orot*, “Lights.” Both incidents are mentioned among the purification efforts of the Hasmoneans in the books of Maccabees and in the testimony of Josephus.⁷² The reason behind the eight-day celebration of the festival was apparently vague from early on. As a result, artificial “pretexts” for the number eight were appended to each of the traditions, in the Scholium as well as in other

72 Even though they also emphasize the showbread and the incense, the festival is connected specifically to the dedication of the altar. It should also be noted that all of the activities involved in the purification of the Temple, as recounted in 1 and 2 Maccabees, were not known to the authors of the two Scholia. Even though 2 Maccabees alludes to the dedications of Moses and Solomon as the reason for the eight days of Hanukkah, Scholium O is not familiar with the explanation given in 2 Maccabees that the eight days are a substitute for Sukkot. This is further evidence for the impression we get that the versions of the scholia have no direct connection with 1 and 2 Maccabees.

sources: “repairing” the altar and the service vessels took eight days; they were “occupied” with the spits for eight days; according to the Babylonian Talmud, the oil lasted eight days; and the printers of *Pesikta Rabbati* even emended the number of spits from seven to eight.⁷³ It is apparent that the redactors of the different versions of the scholia collected these traditions and patched them together. One of their methods of combining the units was presenting one episode as the reason for establishing the festival itself, and another as the reason for celebrating it for eight days. Scholium P presents the incident of the *oil* as the reason for establishing the festival, and prefaces the incident of the *spits* with the question, “Why did they determine to celebrate this one for eight [days]?” At the end of this episode we find the unconvincing “and they were occupied with it all eight [days]” appended to it.⁷⁴ In Scholium O, the question of “Why is it celebrated for all generations?” precedes the episode of the *spits*, while the building of the *altar* explains that “it is therefore celebrated for eight [days].” In other words, the motif of eight days was not originally included in these explanations. The tradition regarding the finding of oil also did not constitute an explanation for the eight days in the first stage of its evolution.

Scholium O makes no mention whatsoever of finding any oil, and it offers other reasons for celebrating Hanukkah. Scholium P presents an early version of an episode involving the finding of oil, and rather flimsily connects it to eight days, while also providing a series of alternative explanations. This same episode later appears in the Talmud in a more developed, crystallized form which has thrust aside other traditions. In actuality, the Babylonian Talmud is the sole source of an episode involving oil that lasted for eight days! This tradition eventually found its way into Scholium O and corrupted the original version; it even replaced the ancient variation of Scholium P appearing in the hybrid version. The power of this tradition, today and over the generations, compared to that of the other Hanukkah traditions, is an instructive example of the ultimate dominance that the Babylonian Talmud and its traditions achieved in Jewish literature and culture. This dominance, however, is a reflection of later cultural processes, and not of the approach of the Sages themselves. In essence, the reason for Hanukkah given by the Sages is the same reason as that found in Second Temple non-rabbinic sources: the Hasmonean renewal of the Temple service in its various forms. The supernatural basis of the story of the cruse of oil, as well as its representation as the only explanation for the celebration of Hanukkah, is a function of Babylonian inventiveness, motivated by literary rather than political reasons.

73 See n. 44 above.

74 Indeed, this concluding sentence is not found in the parallel versions of Scholium O, the *baraita* of the Babylonian Talmud, or *Pesikta Rabbati*.