



חזכה On:

על הנסים ועל הפרקן, ועל הגבורות, ועל התשועות, ועל המלחמות שעשית לאבותינו בימים ההם ובזמן הזה.

בימי מתתיהו בן יוחנן כהן גדול חשמונאי ובניו, בשעמדה מלכות יון הרשעה על עמך ישראל להשפיתם תורתך ולהעבירם מחקי רצונך, ואתה ברחמך הרבים עמדת להם בעת צרתם, הבת את ריבם, דגת את דינם, נקמת את נקמתם, מסרת גבורים ביד חלשים, ורבים ביד מעטים, וטמאים ביד טהורים, ורשעים ביד צדיקים, ויודים ביד עוסקי תורתך. ולך עשית שם גדול וקדוש בעולמך, ולעמך ישראל עשית תשועה גדולה ופרקן בהיום הזה. ואחר בן באו בגיף לדייר ביתך ופנו את היכלך, וטהרו את מקדשך, והדליקו נרות בחצרות קדשך, וקבעו שמונת ימי חנכה אלו יהודות ולהלל לשמך הגדול.

פזרים On:

על הנסים ועל הפרקן, ועל הגבורות, ועל התשועות, ועל המלחמות שעשית לאבותינו בימים ההם ובזמן הזה.

בימי מרדכי ואסתר בשושן הבירה, בשעמד עליהם הקון הרשע, בקש להשמיד, להרג ולאבד את כל היהודים, מנער ועד זקן, טף ונשים, ביום אחד בשלשה עשר לחודש שנים-עשר, הוא חודש אדר, ושללם לבזו. ואתה ברחמך הרבים הפרת את עצתו, וקלקלת את מחשבתו, והשבות לו גמולו בראשו, ותלו אותו ואת בניו על העץ.

על הנסים — for the miraculous deliverance. The Modim blessing, into which this prayer is inserted on Hanukkah, Purim, and Israel Independence Day, speaks about “Your miracles that daily attend us.” Mention is therefore made here of each of the so-called “minor” holidays, those added after the time of the Torah, since each has a miraculous deliverance connected to it. Each commemorates the deliverance of Israel from its enemies under difficult circumstances. The miracles referred to are not supernatural interferences in nature, but rather God working through history. We experience the ability to overcome adversity as a divine act.

ובזמן הזה — until our time. The wonders of deliverance are not confined to ancient times. They have occurred in modern times as well. In recent times a third holiday, Yom Ha-atzma'ut, Israel Independence Day, has been added to the two ancient ones. Here too we see a wonder, in the establishment of the State of Israel and its ability to overcome its adversaries. The prayer for Yom Ha-atzma'ut does not appear here since this service is intended for Friday afternoon before Shabbat; Yom Ha-atzma'ut is never commemorated on Friday, in order to avoid possible desecration of Shabbat.

בימי מתתיהו — In the days of Mattathias. The revolt against the Syrians was also an internal conflict between Jewish Hellenists and those remaining true to Judaism. The priest Mattathias and his sons led the struggle and gained control of the Temple in 164 B.C.E.

להשפיתם תורתך — abandon Your Torah. Under the rule of the Syrians and the Hellenists, the Torah, which was the official law of Judea, was first made optional and then outlawed altogether.

והדליקו נרות — and kindled lights. The Menorah, a seven-branched candelabrum representing the universe and also the Tree of Life, is the ancient symbol of Judaism. See Exodus 25:31–40. It was kindled every evening and burned continually through the night in the Sanctuary. Rekindling this light was one of the major features of the rededication ceremony of Hanukkah by the Maccabees, and is commemorated by the lighting of lamps each night of the festival in our own day.

בימי מרדכי — In the days of Mordecai. The story of Purim is related in the biblical Book of Esther, which is set in Persia, probably during the reign of King Xerxes I (486–465 B.C.E.). Many scholars believe that Esther was written some-

time in the second century B.C.E. and is historical fiction, weaving together several traditions of various events that were typical of the life of Jews in the Persian diaspora.

המון הרשע — the wicked Haman. Haman, the villain of this melodrama, is a descendant of the Amalekites, the traditional enemies of God and Israel. In this way he represents all the enemies who have tried to destroy us.

בשלשה עשר ... אדר — the thirteenth of Adar. The planned slaughter did not take place, however, since the Jews were allowed to defend themselves. Purim itself is celebrated on the following day, as a victory banquet would be.

**The Rededication
(From the Apocrypha)**

Taking uncut stones as prescribed by the Torah, they (the Jews) built a new altar after the pattern of the old. They repaired the sanctuary and sanctified the interior of the house and the courts. They also made new sacred vessels, and they brought the candelabrum and the altar of incense and the table into the nave. They burned incense on the altar and kindled the lights on the candelabrum so that they illuminated the nave. They set loaves upon the table and hung the curtains and brought to completion all the work which they had done. They rose early on the morning of the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month (that is the month of Kislev) in the year 148 and they brought a sacrifice according to the Torah upon the new altar of burnt offerings which they had built. At the very time of year and on the very day on which the gentiles had profaned the altar, it was dedicated to the sound of singing and harps and lyres and cymbals. The entire people prostrated themselves and bowed and gave thanks to Heaven Who had brought them victory. . . . Judah and his brothers and the entire assembly of Israel decreed that the days of the dedication of the altar should be observed at their time of year annually for eight days, beginning with the twenty-fifth of the month of Kislev, with joy and gladness.

I Maccabees 4:47–59

On Hanukkah:

We thank You for the miraculous deliverance, for the heroism, and for the triumphs of our ancestors from ancient days until our time.

In the days of Mattathias son of Yoḥanan, the heroic Hasmonean *Kohen*, and in the days of his sons, a cruel power rose against Your people Israel, demanding that they abandon Your Torah and violate Your mitzvot. You, in great mercy, stood by Your people in time of trouble. You defended them, vindicated them, and avenged their wrongs. You delivered the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the corrupt into the hands of the pure in heart, the guilty into the hands of the innocent. You delivered the arrogant into the hands of those who were faithful to Your Torah. You have revealed Your glory and Your holiness to all the world, achieving great victories and miraculous deliverance for Your people Israel to this day. Then Your children came into Your shrine, cleansed Your Temple, purified Your sanctuary, and kindled lights in Your sacred courts. They set aside these eight days as a season for giving thanks and chanting praises to You.

On Purim:

We thank You for the miraculous deliverance, for the heroism, and for the triumphs of our ancestors from ancient days until our time.

In the days of Mordecai and Esther, in Shushan, the capital of Persia, the wicked Haman rose up against all Jews and plotted their destruction. In a single day, the thirteenth of Adar, the twelfth month of the year, Haman planned to annihilate all Jews, young and old, and to permit the plunder of their property. You, in great mercy, thwarted his designs, frustrated his plot, and visited upon him the evil he planned to bring on others. Haman, together with his sons, was put to death on the gallows he had made for Mordecai.

According to [the Book of Esther itself] this feast of Purim originated in the escape of the Jewish people from a threat of total annihilation. From the way the story is told, however, it is fairly evident that though its core may well be some such peril and deliverance, they cannot have happened exactly in the manner related. For the Book of Esther may be described, if one stretches a point or two, as a mock-learned disquisition to be read as the opening of a carnival-like celebration. . . . Must we conclude, then, that our author was a religiously indifferent man? Not at all. The holiday whose cause he was pleading was, in his time no less than in ours, not one of licit levity . . . If the book is read in the spirit in which it is written, all misgivings — on the scores of both credibility and spirituality — will be dissipated, the very extravagances and historical improbabilities will be relished, and the ingenuity of the plot will be admired.

H.L. Ginsberg