

II Maccabees

¹ 'To their brothers, the [Jews](#) living in Egypt, from their brothers, the [Jews](#) in [Jerusalem](#) and Judaea, greetings and untroubled peace. ² 'May [God](#) prosper you, remembering his covenant with Abraham, [Isaac](#) and Jacob, his faithful servants. ³ May he give you all a heart to worship him and to do his [will](#) with a generous [mind](#) and a willing spirit. ⁴ May he open your hearts to his [Law](#) and his precepts, and give you peace. ⁵ May he hear your [prayers](#) and be reconciled with you, and not abandon you in [time](#) of evil.⁶ Such is our [prayer](#) for you.

⁷ 'During the reign of Demetrius, in the year 169, we [Jews](#) wrote to you as follows, "In the extremity of trouble that befell us in the years after [Jason](#) and his associates had betrayed the Holy Land and the kingdom, ⁸ burning down the [Temple](#) gateway and shedding innocent blood, we prayed to the [Lord](#) and were then heard. And we then offered a sacrifice, with wheat-flour, we lit the lamps and we set out the loaves." ⁹ 'And we now recommend you too to **keep the feast of Shelters in the month of Chislev**, in the year one hundred and eighty-eight.'

¹⁰ 'The people of [Jerusalem](#) and of Judaea, the senate and Judas, to Aristobulus, tutor to King Ptolemy and one of the [family](#) of the anointed priests, and to the [Jews](#) in Egypt, greetings and [good](#) health. ¹¹ 'Since we have been rescued by [God](#) from great danger, we give him great thanks for championing our [cause](#) against the king, ¹² for he it was who carried off those who had taken up arms against the Holy City.

¹⁷ Blessed in all things be our God, who has delivered the sacrilegious over to death! ¹⁸ 'As we shall be celebrating the purification of the [Temple](#) on the twenty-fifth of Chislev, we consider it proper to notify you, so that you too may celebrate it, as you do the **feast of Shelters** and the fire that appeared when Nehemiah, the builder of the Temple and the altar, offered sacrifice. ¹⁹ For when our ancestors were being deported to Persia, the devout priests of the [time](#) took some of the fire from the altar and hid it secretly in a hole like a dry well, where they concealed it in such a way that the place was unknown to anyone. ²⁰ When some years had elapsed, in God's [good](#) time, Nehemiah, commissioned by the king of Persia, sent the descendants of the priests who had hidden the fire to look for it. When they reported that in fact they had found not fire but a thick liquid, Nehemiah ordered them to draw some out and bring it back. ²¹ When they had done this, [Nehemiah](#) ordered the priests to pour this liquid

over the sacrificial materials, that is, the wood and what lay on it. ²² When this had been done, and when in due course the sun, which had previously been clouded over, shone out, a great fire flared up, to the astonishment of all. ²³ While the sacrifice was being burned, the priests offered prayer, Jonathan intoning with all the priests, and the rest responding with Nehemiah.

²⁴ The prayer took this form, "Lord, Lord God, Creator of all things, awesome, strong, just, merciful, the only king and benefactor, ²⁶ accept this sacrifice on behalf of all your people Israel, and protect your heritage and consecrate it. ²⁷ Bring together those of us who are dispersed, set free those in slavery among the heathen, look favourably on those held in contempt or abhorrence, and let the heathen know that you are our God.

³⁰ The priests then chanted hymns accompanied by the harp. ³¹ When the sacrifice had been burnt, Nehemiah ordered the remaining liquid to be poured over large stones, ³² and when this was done a flame flared up, to be absorbed in a corresponding blaze of light from the altar. ³³ When the matter became known and the king of the Persians heard that, in the place where the exiled priests had hidden the fire, a liquid had appeared, with which Nehemiah and his people had purified the sacrificial offerings, ³⁴ the king, after verifying the facts, had the place enclosed and pronounced sacred. ³⁵ To the people on whom the king bestowed it, he granted a part of the considerable revenue he derived from it. ³⁶ Nehemiah and his people termed this stuff "nephtar", which means "purification", but it is commonly called "naphta".

Talmud Shabbat 21b

The Sages taught: The mitzva of Hanukkah is each day to have a light kindled by a person, and his household. And the *mehadrin*, i.e., those who are meticulous in the performance of mitzvot, kindle a light for each and every one in the household. And the *mehadrin min hamehadrin*, Beit Shammai say: On the first day one kindles eight lights and, from there on, gradually decreases. And Beit Hillel say: On the first day one kindles one light, and from there on, gradually increases the number of lights.

The Sages taught: It is a mitzva to place the Hanukkah lamp at the entrance to one's house on the outside, so that all can see it. If he lived upstairs, he places it at the window adjacent to the public domain. And in a time of danger, when the gentiles issued decrees to prohibit kindling lights, he places it on the table and that is sufficient to fulfill his obligation.

We learned there in a Mishnah [Baba Kamma] with regard to damages: In the case of a spark that emerges from under a hammer, and went out of the artisan's workshop, and caused

damage, the one who struck the hammer is **liable**. Similarly, in the case of **a camel that is laden with flax and it passed through the public domain, and its flax entered into a store, and caught fire from the storekeeper's lamp, and set fire to the building, the camel owner is liable**. However, if the **storekeeper placed his lamp outside** the store and it set fire to the flax, **the storekeeper is liable**, as he placed the lamp outside his domain where he had no right to place it. **Rabbi Yehuda** says: If the flax was set on fire **by the storekeeper's Hanukkah lamp** that he placed outside the entrance to his store, **he is not liable**.

22a

Rabba said: **It is a mitzva to place the Hanukkah lamp within the handbreadth adjacent to the entrance**. The Gemara asks: **And where, on which side, does he place it?** There is a difference of opinion: **Rav Aha, son of Rava**, said: **On the right** side of the entrance. **Rav Shmuel from Difti** said: **On the left**. And the *halakha* is to place it **on the left so that the Hanukkah lamp will be on the left and the mezuzah on the right**. One who enters the house will be surrounded by mitzvot (*ge'onim*).

23b

Rava said: **It is obvious to me** that when a person is poor and must choose between purchasing oil to light a **Shabbat lamp for his home** or purchasing oil to light a **Hanukkah lamp**, the **Shabbat lamp for his home takes precedence, due to peace in his home**. Similarly, if there is a conflict between acquiring oil to light a **lamp for his home** and wine for **the sanctification [kiddush] of Shabbat day**, **the lamp for his home takes precedence due to peace in his home**. However, **Rava** raised a **dilemma**: When the conflict is between oil for a **Hanukkah lamp** or wine for **kiddush of Shabbat day**, **what is the ruling in that case? Does kiddush of Shabbat day take priority** because it is **regular**, i.e., it is performed every week, and there is a principle: When there is a conflict between a regular practice and an irregular practice, the regular practice takes precedence? **Or, perhaps the Hanukkah lamp takes precedence due to publicity of the miracle? After he raised the dilemma, he then resolved it on his own and he ruled that, in that case, the Hanukkah lamp takes precedence due to publicity of the miracle**.