

Chanukah, Historically- Comprehension Questions -

Sefer Maccabim I, 4:35-60

Instructions: Please complete the questions below to review and check for understanding of this primary source. For questions 3 and onward, please cite the verse(s) number(s) OR the first and last words where you found the answer.

1. According to historians, who wrote *Sefer Maccabim I*? When was it written?

2. According to historians, why is this author particularly reliable?

3. What motivated Judah (the Maccabee) to decide to go up to Jerusalem and clean the *Beit HaMikdash*?

4. What did Judah and his army see when they reached the *Beit HaMikdash*?

5. What did they do to show their grief?

6. What did they do with the old *mizbeach* and why?

7. With what did they build a new *mizbeach*? Why in this way?

8. Where did the *menorah* come from? What did they do with it?

9. What happened on the 25th of *Kislev* that year?

10. How did the people celebrate? And for how long?

11. What were they celebrating?

Antiquities of the Jews

Instructions: Answer the questions below to review and check for understanding of this primary source. For question 6 and onward, please cite or quote from the text where you found the answer.

1. In what 2 ways can we see that Josephus was from aristocratic parentage?

2. Give two examples of how we see that Josephus was highly educated beyond the world of the *Beit HaMikdash*:

3. How did Josephus end up working for the Romans?

4. What are the two major works that Josephus wrote, what is each about, and for whom did he write them?

5. Give one reason why Josephus is an important source of information and one reason why he was considered a “traitor:”

6. What motivated Judah to go up to Jerusalem and offer sacrifices?

7. What did Judah and the people find when they got to the *Beit HaMikdash*?

8. How did they all react at first? (2 examples)

9. What did Judah and the people have to do to make the *Beit HaMikdash* usable again? (3 examples)

10. On what date did Judah and the people begin their 8-day celebration? What were Judah and the people celebrating for eight days? (2 answers)

11. Share two examples of how they celebrated:

12. What did Judah call it? What reason does Josephus give for that name?

13. How do we see the “military” focus of this account?

***Al HaNissim* for Chanukah**

Instructions: Answer the questions below to review and check for understanding of this primary source. For questions 4 and onward, please cite from Al HaNissim (you can quote first and last words) to support your answer.

1. In which *tefillot* do we insert *Al HaNissim* on Chanukah?

2. During which time period was *Al HaNissim* authored? Who was the (possible) author?

3. How does Rashi on *Shabbat* 21b help us understand that the practice of saying *Al HaNissim* goes back to the origins of the Chanukah celebration?

4. What kind of prayer is this (praise, request, thanksgiving...)? And what is the overall purpose of this prayer?

5. Which foreign power is the enemy? What are the two things that they do to the Jews?

6. God put the ____ in the hands of the _____. Give 3 adjectives to describe the Jews. Give 3 adjectives to describe the enemy.

7. Cite 3 things that the Jews did when they came to the *Beit HaMikdash*:

8. What is the reason given for “establishing the 8 days of Chanukah?”

9. What is the focus of this prayer?

10. What part of the Chanukah story is missing from this prayer?

Shabbat 21b, “Mai Chanukah”

Instructions: Answer the questions below to review and check for understanding of this primary source. Questions 1-3 are from the background material. From question 4 and onwards, please cite from Shabbat 21b.

1. In which parts of the Talmud do we find discussions regarding Chanukah?

2. What is the primary focus of discussions regarding Chanukah? Cite two examples.

3. Where is the “*mai chanukah*” discussion found originally? Approximately how long after the events of Chanukah (approx. 165 BCE) was this source recorded?

4. What is the Gemara asking about in its question “What is Chanukah?”

5. According to *Megillat Ta’anit*, on what date does Chanukah begin? How long does it last? What may one NOT do during those days?

6. What is deemed a “miracle” in the Gemara?

7. Based on the Gemara, what is it that we are celebrating and giving thanks for on Chanukah?

8. How is the Gemara somewhat ambiguous regarding the focus of the celebration?

9. What is mentioned in the Gemara that has NOT been mentioned in the other three sources (*Sefer Hamaccabim*, Josephus, *Al Hanissim*)?
