Hanukkah Exotica

On the Origin and Development of Some Hanukkah Customs

David Golinkin

In memory of Ro'i Shukrun
on his second *yahrzeit;*
a Maccabbee of our time
who was killed in action
in Lebanon on 25 Av 5757.

Most of the *laws* of Hanukkah are related to the lighting of the *menorah* or *ḥanukkiyah*[1] and are described in detail in the tractate of Shabbat and in the standard codes of Jewish law.[2] In this article we shall describe some of the *customs* of Hanukkah. The main difference between laws and customs is that laws stem from rabbinic interpretations of the Torah and Talmud which then filter down to the Jewish people, while customs usually start with the people and filter up to the rabbis. Through customs, the Jewish people have shown their love for God and tradition and immeasurably enriched all aspects of Jewish observance.[3]

We shall begin with one well-known Hanukkah custom and then proceed to describe four lesser-known customs. In each case we shall try to trace the origin of the custom and some of its permutations throughout Jewish history.

1. The *Dreidel*[4]

The *dreidel* or *sevivon* is perhaps the most famous custom associated with Hanukkah. Indeed, various rabbis have tried to find an integral connection between the *dreidel* and the Hanukkah story. The standard explanation is that the letters 'נ'ג'ה'ש' which appear on the *dreidel* in the Diaspora stand for "נס גדול היה שם" "a great miracle happened there" while in Israel the *dreidel* says 'נ'ג'ה'פ' which means "a great miracle happened here." One nineteenth century rabbi went one step further; he maintained that Jews played with the *dreidel* in order to fool the Greeks if they were caught studying Torah, which

had been outlawed.[5] Others figured out elaborate *gematriot*[6] and word plays for the letters 'נ'ג'ה'ש'. For example 'נ'ג'ה'ש' in *gematria* is 358 which is also the numerical equivalent of משיח or Messiah! 'נ'ג'ה'ש' is also the *gematria* equivalent of the sentence "God is king, God was king and God will be king!"[7] Finally, the letters 'נ'ג'ה'ש' are supposed to represent the four kingdoms which tried to destroy us: *N* = *N*ebuchadnezzar = Babylon; *H* = *H*aman = Madai; *G* = *G*og = Greece; and *S* = *S*eir = Rome.

As a matter of fact, all of these elaborate explanations were invented *after* the fact. The *dreidel* game originally had nothing to do with Hanukkah; it has been played by various people in various languages for many centuries. In England and Ireland there is a game called totum or teetotum which is especially popular at Christmas time. In English, this game is first mentioned as "totum," ca. 1500–1520. The name comes from the Latin "totum" which means "all" and it consisted of a spinning top inscribed with four letters: *T* = Totum = all; *A* = Aufer = take; *D* = Depone = put; and *N* = Nihil = nothing. By 1720, the game was called T-totum or teetotum and by 1801 the four letters already represented four words in English: *T* = *T*ake all; *H* = *H*alf; *P* = *P*ut down; and *N* = *N*othing.

In France, the game of "totum" is first mentioned in 1611. It was pronounced and later spelled as "toton." The four letters on the "toton" represent: *A* = *A*ccipe = take; *D* = *D*a = give; *R* = *R*ien = nothing; and *T* = *T*otum = all. In Sardinia, the four letters represent words in Italian: *M* = Mesu = half; *P* = Pone = put; *N* = Nudda = nothing; and *T* = Tutte = all. Finally, our game of *dreidel* including the letters 'נ'ג'ה'ש' is directly based on the German equivalent of the game: *N* = *N*ichts = nothing; *G* = *G*anz = all; *H* = *H*alb = half; and *S* = *S*tell ein = put in.[8]

Furthermore, even among the Jews, this game has been called many different names. The Jews of medieval France and Italy seemed to have called this game—which was apparently not connected to Hanukkah—תם והצי = whole and half; תם והסר = whole and missing, or תם וכס = whole and half.[9] In German, the spinning top was called a "torrel" or "trundl" and in Yiddish it was called a *"dreidel,"* a *"fargl,"* a *"varfl"* [= something thrown], *"shtel ein"* [= put in], and *"gor, gorin"* [= all]. When Hebrew was revived as a spoken language, the *dreidel* was called כרכר, חזרזר, גלגלן and סביבון, and the latter name is the one that caught on.

Thus the *dreidel* game represents an irony of Jewish history. In order to celebrate the holiday of Hanukkah which celebrates our victory over cultural assimilation, we play the *dreidel* game which is an excellent example of cultural assimilation! Of course, there is a world of difference between imitating non-Jewish games and worshiping idols, but the irony remains nonetheless.

2. *Katovess*[10]

The custom of Hanukkah *katovess* is first attributed to Rabbi Israel Isserlein (Austria, 1390–1460), after which the word is used frequently in Hebrew and

Yiddish until the twentieth century. Unfortunately, neither the etymology nor the pronunciation of the word is clear and suggests etymologies that run from Greek to Russian to Polish to French to German to Anglo-Saxon![11] But the meaning of the word is clear; Hanukkah *katovess* were word games and riddles which were especially popular at the festive meals of Hanukkah and were frequently connected to the Hanukkah candles. The following examples are taken from *Leket Yosher* in which R. Yosef (Yozl) Ben Moshe of Hoechstaedt describes the customs of his beloved teacher R. Israel Isserlein:[12]

A) "Remove my cloak (בגד) from me, then you will find my number." Yozl (יוזל) in *gematria* is 53; בגד in *gematria* is 9. If you remove 9 from 53 you get 44, which is the number of candles needed for the eight nights of Hanukkah including the *shamash!*

B) "If the servant falls you must attend to him; but if the master falls, no one comes to set him up." This riddle refers to the laws of the Hanukkah candles. If the *shamash* or "servant" goes out you must relight it. This is because you are not allowed to derive benefit from the Hanukkah candles, so if you inadvertently use the light you are, so to speak, using the *shamash.* But if the "master" or Hanukkah candle goes out you don't have to relight it because once you lit it, you have fulfilled the *mitzvah.*[12a]

C) "ושר שמריה יהי רם שרשו" was written by Shmerel or Shmaryah and it means "Shmaryah sang, may his root (or origin) be elevated" which sounds like nonsense. But Shmerel was really quite clever since this *katovess* is a palindrome which reads the same in both directions!

D) The last *katovess* we shall quote was written once again by Yosef of Hoechstaedt: "טבת יוסף לעד. גם אץ זן הרש כחק" which means "You treated Joseph well forever, he also quickly fed the poor according to law." This *katovess* not only describes the activities of Joseph in Egypt and hints at the name of its author, but manages to use every letter of the Hebrew alphabet once!

Hanukkah *katovess* are no longer in vogue, but it would be good to revive this beautiful custom which flourished in Germany and Eastern Europe for at least four hundred years.[13]

3. Card-Playing on Hanukkah[14]

The Ashkenazi custom of playing cards on Hanukkah is first mentioned as a permitted activity in the responsa of R. Jacob Weil (d. before 1456).[15] The custom book *Leket Yosher* mentioned above reports that R. Israel Isserlein (1390–1460) was opposed to the custom because the children used to play cards by the light of the Hanukkah candles and it is forbidden to derive benefit from the Hanukkah candles as explained above.[16] Rabbi Israel Bruna (1400–1480), on the other hand, relates that the community "made a *takkanah*

[= communal ordinance] not to play cards except on days when *tahanun* is not said,[17] *and on Hanukkah and the like it is permissible to play cards.*"[18]

The custom book of R. Yuzpe Shamess (1604–1678) describes the customs of his native Worms in great detail from 1648 until shortly before his death. He relates that in 1638 Rabbi Benjamin Hacohen (d. 1645) forbade card-playing during the year, but allowed it during Hanukkah. His successor, R. Meshulam Eliezer Zussman, however, imposed a "large fine" against men and women who played cards together on Hanukkah.[19] It is not clear if he objected to card-playing or to the mingling of the sexes or to both!

Rabbi Yair Hayyim Bachrach (1638–1702) of Worms describes the efforts of his father Rabbi Moshe Shimshon Bachrach (1607–1670) to abolish card-playing on Hanukkah:

> And it annoyed my pious father that the miraculous days [of Hanukkah] which were established to thank and praise God should be designated for card-playing and frivolity. And he tried to forbid it and move it to the eight days of their festival [= between Christmas and New Year] which would not entail canceling commercial transactions because people stay at home [in any case], but he did not succeed because they would not agree to change the custom.[20]

Indeed, R. Yosef Yuzpe Kashman Segal of Frankfurt reports in 1718 that "in all the communities they decreed not to play cards all year long *except for Hanukkah and Purim when they allowed it.*"[21]

Rabbi Moshe Shimshon Bachrach was not the only rabbi opposed to card-playing on Hanukkah. Rabbi Yechiel Michal Epstein (1829–1908) of Navarodok, Russia vented his spleen against this custom in the *Arukh Hashulhan* (*Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 670:9), which is now one of the standard codes of Jewish law: "But those who play cards [on Hanukkah] their punishment is great, and due to our many sins this leprosy has spread among the house of Israel!"

An almost contemporaneous account of card-playing on Hanukkah can be found in Herman Leder's Yiddish memoir *Reisher Yidn* which describes the Jews of Reishe (Rzeszow) in Galicia ca. 1900:

> We were far removed from mischief and foolishness. We did not devote ourselves to such things, not even to idle talk, except for Hanukkah when we stopped learning for several hours a day and played cards or watched as others played. I was one of the latter because I never had any money, and without money, one cannot play cards. So I stood around and *kibbitzed*. Frequently, the one I was standing next to and at whose cards I was looking lost every round. Suddenly, he woke up, so to speak, from his sleep, turned around to me, and said in a loud voice: "Get away from here you jinx! You are unlucky! I am losing because of you!" So I immediately went away; after that, not one of the players wanted me to stand near him.[22]

Finally, a word must be said about the cards themselves. In Yiddish, they were called *kvitlekh* which means little notes or *klein shass*, which means a small

Talmud (sic!) or *tilliml,* which means a small book of Psalms (sic!) or *lamed alefniks,* which means "31ers." The latter name stemmed from the fact that the deck had 31 cards, one for each of the 31 kings of Canaan mentioned in Joshua, Chapter 12. These cards were usually hand-painted by the teacher or the children in *ḥeder* and the card game played was very similar to black jack.[23]

4. Cheese on Hanukkah[24]

In his glosses to the *Shulḥan Arukh* (*Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 670:2) Rabbi Moshe Isserles (Cracow, 1525–1572) relates:

> It is customary to recite songs and praises [to God] at the festive meals which are common [on Hanukkah] and then the meal becomes a *mitzvah* meal. *Some say that one should eat cheese on Hanukkah* because the miracle occurred through milk which Judith fed the enemy (*Kol Bo* and R"an).

Indeed, that is what the *Kol Bo* and R"an say. The R"an is R. Nissim Gerondi (Spain, ca. 1310–1375). In his commentary to Rabbi Yitzhak Alfassi (the Rif) on Shabbat 23a (catchword שאף) he says that "it says in a *midrash* that the daughter of Yoḥanan [the High Priest] fed the enemy leader cheese to get him drunk and cut off his head and they all fled, and therefore it is customary to eat cheese on Hanukkah."

The *Kol Bo,* which is an anonymous halakhic work written in Provence in the early fourteenth century, has a slightly different version of the story. It says that the daughter of Yoḥanan the High Priest fed the Greek King "a cheese dish in order that he become thirsty and drink a lot and get drunk and lie down and fall asleep." That is what transpired; she then cut off his head and brought it to Jerusalem and when his army saw that their hero had died, they fled "and that is why it is the custom to cook a cheese dish on Hanukkah."[25]

The question, of course, is where did the R"an and *Kol Bo* find this story? It sounds like the story of Judith and Holifernes as found in the Apocryphal Book of Judith. Indeed, cheese is mentioned in some ancient versions of Judith 10:5 which lists the foods that Judith took with her when she left the besieged city to visit Holifernes.[26] Nevertheless, Judith 12:17–20 which describes the way in which Judith got Holifernes to go sleep says explicitly that Judith gave him *wine* to drink and not a cheese dish! In any case, the Book of Judith seems to have been written in Hebrew but has only reached us in Greek translation and was unknown to medieval Jews. They, however, knew the story of Judith from medieval Hebrew sagas called "The Story of Judith" and the like. Some eighteen versions of the medieval story have been published until now and they can be divided into four types.[27] Most of those versions, like the Book of Judith itself, say that Judith gave Holifernes *wine* to drink, but *two* of the versions do indeed mention milk or cheese.

Ma'aseh Yehudit, which was first published in *Sefer Hemdat Yamim,*

Livorno, 1763, says that Judith *"opened the milk flask* and drank and also gave the king to drink, and he rejoiced with her greatly and he drank very much wine, more than he had drunk in his entire life."[28] In other words, according to this version of the story, Judith gave Holifernes both milk and wine. It is clear that the author was influenced by the Story of Yael and Sisera in the Book of Judges because the phrase in italics was borrowed from Judges 4:19.

Megilat Yehudit published by Haberman from an Oxford manuscript relates that Judith after fasting asked her maidservant to make her two *levivot* [= pancakes or fried cakes]. The servant made the *levivot* very salty and added slices of cheese. Judith fed Holifernes the *levivot* and the slices of cheese "and he drank [wine] and his heart became very merry and he got drunk and he uncovered himself within his tent and he lay down and fell asleep."[29]

Finally, the milk and cheese version of the Judith story is mentioned in a Hebrew poem for Hanukkah published by R. Naftali Hacohen in 1757:

> . . . It is *mitzvah* to eat and rejoice,
> *eating cheese*—one cannot force.
> It is customary to remember, not to forget,
> The story of Judith who did it on purpose,
> *To feed him milk* to make him sleep.[30]

5. The Scroll of Antiochus[31]

There is one custom which we would expect to find on Hanukkah which is missing—the reading of a scroll in public. After all, on Purim we read the Scroll of Esther every year in order to publicize the miracle. Why don't we read a scroll on Hanukkah in order to publicize the miracles which God wrought for our ancestors in the days of Matityahu and his sons? The result is that most Jews only know the legend about the miracle of the cruse of oil (B. Shabbat 21b) and not about the actual military victories of the Maccabees.

The answer is that, in truth, there *is* such a scroll which was read in private or in public between the ninth and twentieth centuries. It is called "The Scroll of Antiochus" and many other names and it was written in Aramaic during the Talmudic period and subsequently translated into Hebrew, Arabic and other languages. The book describes the Maccabean victories on the basis of a few stories from the Books of the Maccabees and B. Shabbat 21b with the addition of a number of legends without any historic basis whatsoever. The scroll is first mentioned by *Halakhot Gedolot* which was written by Shimon Kayara in Babylon ca. 825 C.E.: "The elders of Bet Shammai and Bet Hillel wrote *Megillat Bet Hashmonai* [= the scroll of the Hasmonean House]. . . ."[32]. Rav Saadiah Gaon (882–942) calls it *"kitab benei hashmonay,"* the book of the sons of the Hasmoneans, and he also translated it into Arabic.[33] Rav Nissim Gaon (North Africa, 990–1062) calls it in Arabic "the scroll of the sons of the Hasmoneans."[34]

Furthermore, we know that this scroll was read in public at different times and places. Rabbi Isaiah of Trani (Italy, ca. 1200–1260) says that "in a place where they are accustomed to read *Megilat Antiochus* [= The Scroll of Antiochus] on Hanukkah, it is not proper to recite the blessings [for reading a scroll] because it is not required at all."[35]

In *Maḥzor Kaffa,* which was published in the Crimea in 1735, the Scroll of Antiochus is printed in Hebrew and preceded by the following instructions: "It is customary to read *Megilat Antiochus* during *minḥah* [= the afternoon service on Shabbat] after *kaddish titkabbel* [= the reader's *kaddish*] in order to publicize the miracle [of Hanukkah]. . . ."[36]

Rabbi Yahya ben Yosef Zalih, who was the leading rabbi in San'a, Yemen ca. 1715, says "that some read *Megilat Antiochus* on *Shabbat* [of Hanukkah] after the *haftarah.* This is not required; it is only a general mitzvah to publicize the miracle among the Jewish people."[37] But Rabbi Amram Zabban of G'ardaya in the Sahara Dessert viewed this reading as a *requirement.* In his *Sefer Hasdei Avot* published in 1926 he states:

> *Megilat Antiochus* according to the custom of the holy city of G'ardaya, may God protect her. The cantor should read it in public in the synagogue after the Torah reading on the *Shabbat* during Hanukkah. And he reads it in Arabic translation so that the entire congregation should understand [in order to] publicize the miracle which was done to our holy ancestors, may their merit protect us . . . translated from the Hebrew from *Siddur Bet Oved* of R. Yehudah Shmuel Ashkenazi [Livorno, 1853].[38]

This is a fascinating passage. Rabbi Zabban translated *Megilat Antiochus* from Hebrew into Arabic in 1926 so that the entire congregation would understand it. He seems unaware that Arabic translations already existed. He also presents this custom as a required activity despite the fact that he seems to have made it up! Perhaps he had heard that this was an accepted custom in other communities and wished to imitate them.

The Jews of Kurdistan, on the other hand, used to read the Scroll of Antiochus *at home* during Hanukkah.[39] Rabbi Yosef Kafah (1917–2000) reports that his grandfather Rabbi Yihye Kafah (1850–1932) used to teach it to his pupils in Yemen in the Aramaic original along with the Arabic translation of Rav Saadiah Gaon.[40]

It would seem that there is no point in reviving the specific custom of reading the Scroll of Antiochus in public because that work is legendary in nature and not a reliable source for the events of Hanukkah. But we do possess such a source for those events—the First Book of Maccabees, which was written in Hebrew in the Land of Israel by an eyewitness to the events described therein.[41] Therefore, we should thank Rabbi Arthur Chiel who published the First Book of Maccabees, Chapters 1–4 as a separate booklet twenty years ago under the title "The Scroll of Hanukkah."[42] It is intended for reading in public or in private during the holiday. We should adopt this beautiful custom and begin to read those chapters in public every year on the Shabbat of

Hanukkah after the *haftarah.* By so doing, we will be reviving the custom of reading a "scroll" on Hanukkah but, more importantly, we will thereby disseminate the oldest surviving account of the "miracles and triumphs" which God performed for the Jewish People "in those days at this season."

There are many other Hanukkah customs worth investigating,[43] but these examples will suffice to show how the Jewish people have enriched and enhanced the Festival of Lights.

NOTES

Abbreviations:

EJ	*Encyclopaedia Judaica,* Jerusalem, 1972
Fried	Natan Fried, *Sinai* 64 (5729), pp. 97–140
Rivkind	Yitzhak Rivkind, *Der Kampf Kegn Azartshpielen Bei Yidn* (New York: YIVO, 1946).
Sefer Hamo'adim	Yom Tov Levinsky, ed., *Sefer Hamo'adim,* Volume 5 (Tel Aviv, 5714).
Simons	Hayyim Simons, *Sinai* 115 (5755), pp. 57–68
Sperber	Daniel Sperber, *Minhagei Yisrael,* Vols. 1–6 (Jeruslam: Mossad Harav Kuk, 1989–1998).

1. In the Diaspora, the Hanukkah lamp is called a *menorah;* in Israel it's called a *hannukiya.* Technically speaking, the *menorah* is the seven branched candelabrum which was used in the Tabernacle and in the Temple in ancient times (Exodus 37:17–24; Numbers 8:1–4) and should not be used to describe a Hanukkah lamp.

2. *Bavli Shabbat* 21b–23b; *Mishneh Torah,* Laws of Megillah and Hanukkah 3–4; *Shulḥan Arukh Oraḥ Hayyim* 670–684. For various articles related to Hanukkah candles and lamps, see Sperber, Volume 5.

3. Regarding customs, see *EJ,* Vol. 12, cols. 4–26 and Menachem Elon, *Jewish Law: History, Sources and Principles,* Volume II (Philadelphia and Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1994), pp. 880–944.

4. This section is based on Israel Abrahams in Emily Solis-Cohen, ed., *Hanukkah: The Feast of Lights* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1937, pp. 105–106; Rivkind, pp. 49–54; *Sefer Hamo'adim,* pp. 225–226; Akiva Ben Ezra, *Minhagei Hagim* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 5723), pp. 138–139; Sidney Hoenig in Philip Goodman, ed., *The Hanukkah Anthology* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1976), pp. 265–266; and Uri Sela, *Yediot Aharonot,* 27 Heshvan 5748.

5. Rabbi Azriel Selig Krelinstein as quoted by R. Yitzhak Wendrovsky, *Minhagei Bet Ya'akov,* second edition (New York, 5671), pp. 139–140 which is quoted in turn by R. Avraham E. Hirschowitz, *Otzar Kol Minhagey Yeshurun,* second edition (Lwow, 5690), pp. 50–51.

6. A *gematria* is an explanation based on the fact that every Hebrew letter has a numerical value, so if word x = 100 and word y = 100 this can become the basis for a homiletical explanation connecting the two words. Regarding *gematria,* see *EJ,* Vol. 7, cols. 369–374 and the literature cited there; Shmuel Sambursky, *Tarbitz* 45 (5736), pp. 268–271; and Itamar Greenwald in Moshe Bar-Asher, ed., *Sefer Hayovel L'mordekhai Breuer* (Jerusalem, 5752), pp. 823–832.

7. This sentence is found in the Torah service on Shabbat and festivals.

8. Regarding these different games, see note 4 above; *The Oxford English Dictionary,* Vol. XI (Oxford, 1933), p. 143 s.v. Teetotum and p. 180 s.v. Totum; *Le Grand Robert de la Langue Francaise,* 12th edition, Vol. IX (Paris, 1992), p. 369, s.v. Toton; *Tresor de la Langue Francaise,* Vol. 16 (Paris, 1994), pp. 367–368, s.v. Toton.

9. See above, note 4. For thirteenth century Italy, see *Shibboley Haleket Hashalem,* ed.

Buber (Vilna, 5647), p. 94 which is also quoted in *Sefer Ha'agur Hashalem,* ed. Hirschler (Jerusalem, 5720), p. 90.

10. For the sources and etymology of this word, see my Hebrew article in *Sinai* 106 (5750), pp. 175–183 along with the additions by H. Guggenheimer, ibid., 108 (5751), pp. 175–176 and Berakhah Fischler, *Leshoneinu La'am* 44 (Tevet-Adar 5753), pp. 88–92.

11. See my article, pp. 179–183.

12. *Leket Yosher,* ed. J. Freimann (Berlin, 5663), section *Oraḥ Hayyim,* p. 153.

12a. See *Shulḥan Arukh Oraḥ Hayyim* 673:1–2.

13. In 1820, an anonymous author published a Hebrew booklet in Breslau called *Hanukah Ktoviss V'gam Miley Div'dihuta* which contains thirty *katovess* for Hanukkah. A copy of this extremely rare pamphlet can be found in the Rare Book Room of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

14. This section is based on Yitzhak Rivkind, *Hadoar* 5/7 (1 Tevet 5686), pp. 101–102 and 5/9 (22 Tevet 5686), pp. 133–134; Rivkind, pp. 48–49; *Sefer Hamo'adim,* pp. 229–230; and Akiva Ben Ezra (above, note 4), pp. 136–138. The sources quoted use the Hebrew root שחק which can mean gambling or cardplaying. Since some of the sources explicitly mention cards, we have consistently translated שחק as cardplaying.

15. *Responsa of R. Ya'akov Weil* (Jerusalem, 5748), No. 135.

16. See notes 12 and 12a above.

17. *Taḥanun,* a prayer of supplication, is not recited on Shabbat, festivals, Hanukkah, Purim and other holidays.

18. *Responsa Mohari [= R. Israel] Mibruna* (Stettin, 1860), No. 136.

19. *Minhagim dk"k Wermaiza L'rabi Yuzpe Shamesh,* second edition (Jerusalem: Machon Yerushalayim, 5752), pp. 238–239.

20. *Responsa Havot Yair* (Jerusalem, 5757), No. 126. It is worth noting with regard to Rabbi Bachrach's suggestion, that Jews in Eastern Europe used to play cards and avoid learning Torah on Christmas eve which they called "nitl nacht" which is a corruption of the "night of Natali" Domini [= the birth of the Lord]. See Rivkind, p. 54; Sperber, Vol. 3, pp. 93–95 and Vol. 4, pp. 329–330.

21. *Noheg Katzon Yosef,* second edition (Tel Aviv, self-published, 5729), p. 188, par. 12.

22. Herman Leder, *Reisher Yidn* (Washington, DC, 1953), p. 186. For similar Eastern European stories from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Sholom Aleichem as quoted by David and Diane Roskies, *The Shtetl Book* (New York: KTAV, 1975), pp. 224–227 and Murray Stadtmauer, *My Father's Century* (New York: JCBH Press, 1999), pp. 8–9.

23. For the rules of "Lamed Alef," see *Sefer Hamo'adim,* pp. 229–231. For pictures of the cards, see Rivkind, p. 43 and Roskies (above note 22), p. 225.

24. For a recent article on this topic, see Simons. The conclusions presented below were reached long before that article appeared.

25. *Kol Bo,* ed. Lemberg, 5620, para. 44, fol. 3c which is also found in the related work *Orḥot Ḥayyim* by R. Aaron Hacohen of Lunel (Florence, 1750), Laws of Chanukah, para. 12, fol. 118a.

26. See Yehoshua Grintz, *Sefer Yehudit* (Jerusalem, 5717), p. 148, end of note 5 and Simons, p. 58.

27. Grintz, *Sefer Yehudit,* pp. 196–208, 212 discusses twelve versions of the medieval story which he divides into four types. Additional versions were published by Israel Adler in Charles Berlin, ed., *Studies in Jewish Bibliography . . . in Honor of Dr. I. Edward Kiev* (New York: KTAV, 1971), Hebrew section, pp. 1–8; A. M. Haberman, *Hadashim Gam Yeshanim* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1975), pp. 45, 56, 60, 72; and David Shulevitz, *Genuzot,* 1 (5744), pp. 165–168.

28. This *midrash* was reprinted by A. Jellinek, *Bet Hamidrash,* Part 2 (Leipzig, 5613), p. 19 and by J. D. Eisenstein, *Otzar Midrashim,* Vol. 1 (New York, 1915), p. 207. Simons, p. 60 copied from *Sefer Hemdat Yamim,* but does not mention the more accessible Jellinek and Eisenstein editions.

29. Haberman (note 27, above), p. 45 which is copied from Ms. Oxford 2746. Simons, p.

60 copied this passage from Ms. Oxford but seems unaware that it had been published by Haberman.

30. R. Naftali Katz, *Sha'ar Naftali* (Bruna, 5517), p. 36 quoted by *Sefer Hamo'adim,* p. 282 and Simons, p. 64. For *aḥaronim* (later authorities) who mention this custom, see Simons, pp. 62–64.

31. There is a vast literature regarding this scroll. See *EJ,* Vol. 14, cols. 1045–1047 and the literature cited there; the critical edition of the Aramaic text published by M. Z. Kaddari in *Bar Ilan* 1 (5723), pp. 81–105; the Hebrew and English versions in Philip Birnbaum, ed., *Daily Prayer Book* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1949), pp. 781–794; Fried; and Sperber, Volume 5, pp. 102–120 which includes a bibliography.

32. *Halakhot Gedolot,* ed. Venice, 5308 [= Warsaw, 5635], fol. 141d.

33. Rav Saadiah Gaon, *Sefer Hagaluy,* quoted by Fried, p. 109, note 68. For Saadiah's preface to his Arabic translation, see *PAAJR* 14 (1944), pp. 1–23.

34. R. Nissim Ga'on, *Hibbur Yafeh Meihayeshu'a,* ed. H. Z. Hirschberg (Jerusalem, 5714), pp. 2–3.

35. Tosfot R"id to *Sukkah* 44b catchword Havit, Lemberg, 5629, fol. 31b.

36. Quoted by Fried, p. 114.

37. *Tiklal Etz Ḥayyim,* Vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 5722), fol. 163a.

38. Quoted by Fried, pp. 114–115.

39. Erich Brauer, *Yehudei Kurdistan* (Jerusalem, 5708), p. 273.

40. R. Yosef Kafah, *Halikhot Teiman,* third edition (Jerusalem, 1982), p. 38.

41. *EJ,* Vol. 11, cols. 656–658.

42. Rabbi Arthur Chiel, *Megilat Hanukkah* (New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 1980), 61pp.

43. Such as *latkes, sufganiyot, hanukkah gelt, hanerot hallalu, ma'oz tzur, ḥanukkiyah* designs, lighting candles in the synagogue, Pslam 30 as a special psalm for the day, and more.

Rabbi David Golinkin is president, rector, and professor of Jewish Law at the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem. His latest books include Ginzei Rosh Hashanah *and* Responsa in a Moment.