

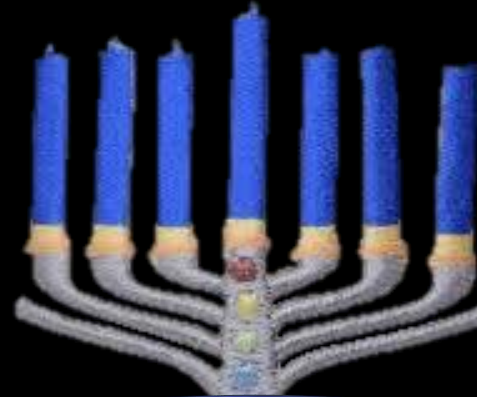


CHRIST
Baptist Church
THE SECOND BAPTIST CHURCH OF
BURLINGTON, NEW JERSEY

THE FALL FEASTS OF ISRAEL

- ❖ Rosh Hashanah
- ❖ Yom Kippur
- ❖ Sukkot
- ❖ Hanukkah

Mitch and Zhava Glaser



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Happy Hanukkah!





After the redemption of Yom Kippur, and the rejoicing of Sukkot, there are two other Jewish holidays called **Shemini Atzeret** and **Simchat Torah**

- **Shemini Atzeret – the eighty day of assembly**

- In Second Temple times, it appears to have been a day devoted to the **ritual cleansing of the altar** in the Temple.

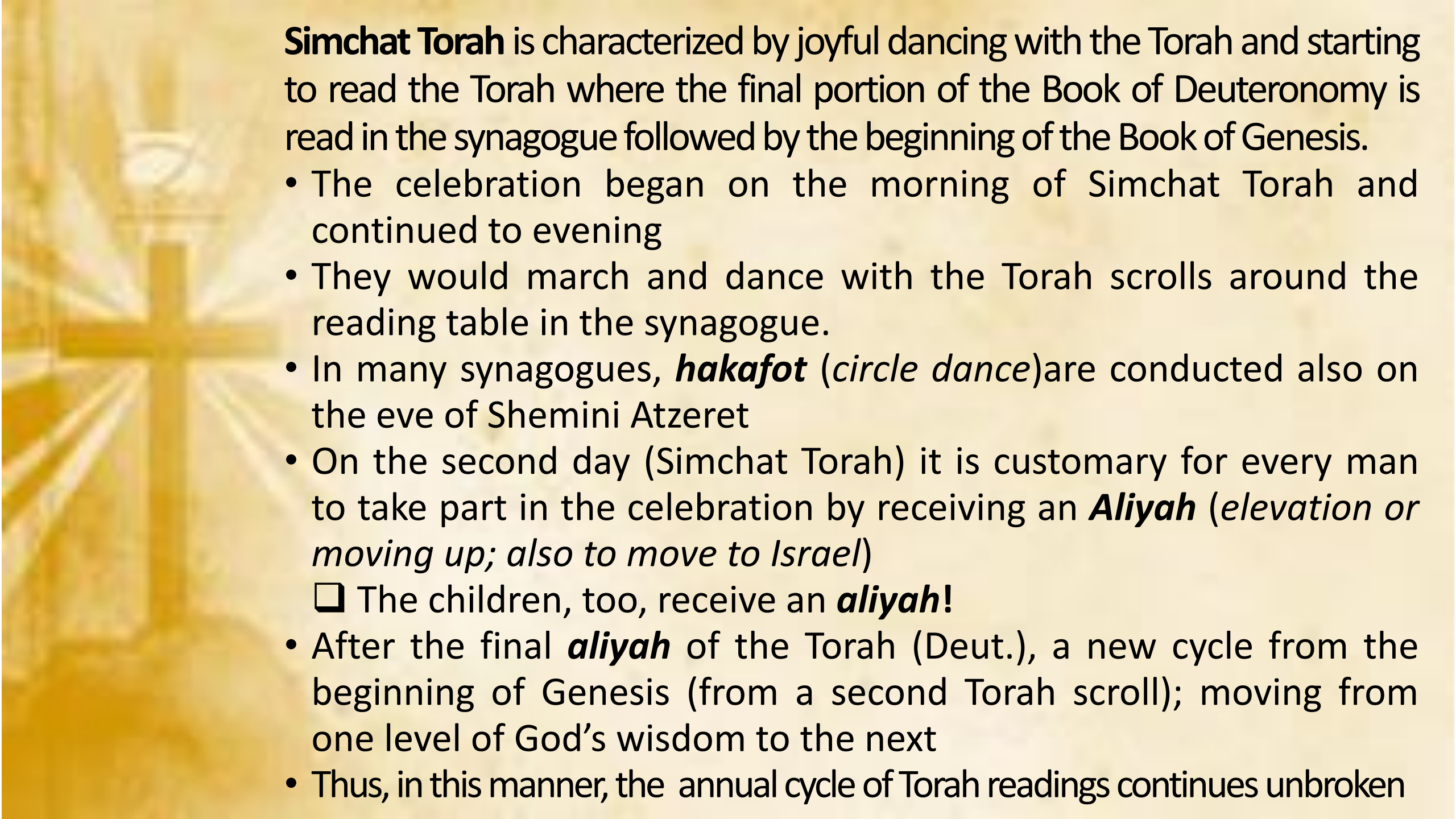
- With the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, this function of the day became obsolete.

- It also** marked the beginning of the rainy season in Israel and, therefore includes the year's first prayer for the former rain

- **Simchat Torah “Rejoicing in Torah”** is a celebration of the conclusion of one year and the beginning of another annual cycle of readings from the Torah.

- Unlike the first two festivals which was centered in the Temple, Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah are centered in the synagogue and community.

- Some would even eat the Shemini meal in the sukka



Simchat Torah is characterized by joyful dancing with the Torah and starting to read the Torah where the final portion of the Book of Deuteronomy is read in the synagogue followed by the beginning of the Book of Genesis.

- The celebration began on the morning of Simchat Torah and continued to evening
- They would march and dance with the Torah scrolls around the reading table in the synagogue.
- In many synagogues, ***hakafot*** (*circle dance*) are conducted also on the eve of Shemini Atzeret
- On the second day (Simchat Torah) it is customary for every man to take part in the celebration by receiving an ***Aliyah*** (*elevation or moving up; also to move to Israel*)
 - The children, too, receive an ***aliyah!***
- After the final ***aliyah*** of the Torah (Deut.), a new cycle from the beginning of Genesis (from a second Torah scroll); moving from one level of God's wisdom to the next
- Thus, in this manner, the annual cycle of Torah readings continues unbroken

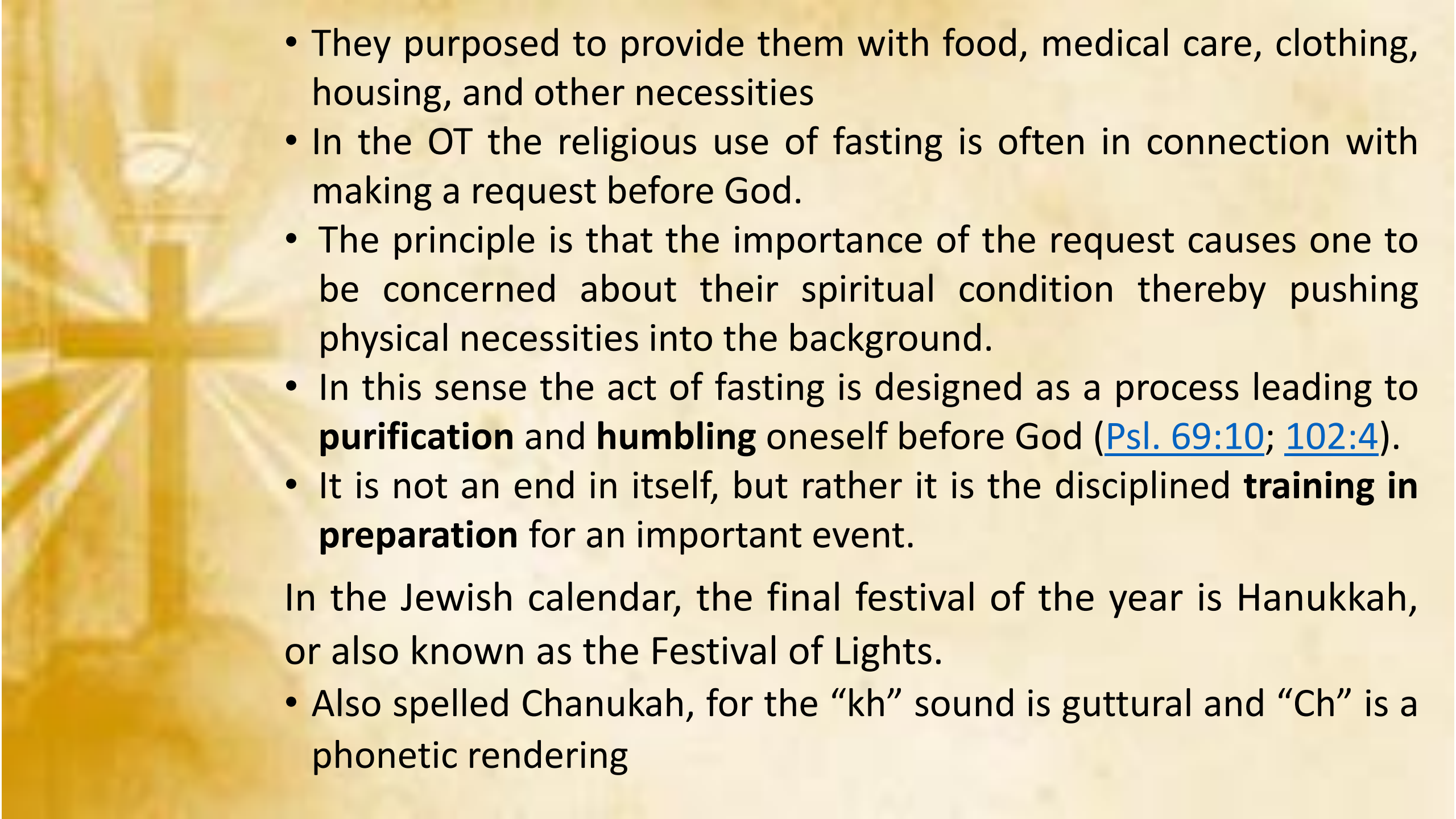
Before we move to the Final Jewish feast, I must mention an American holiday that finds its roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition – i.e., **Thanksgiving**.

There is a passage in the prophecy of Isaiah, which might not be the impetus for the celebration, but surely encapsulates proper feelings in the holiday

- **Isaiah 58:7** *Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh?*

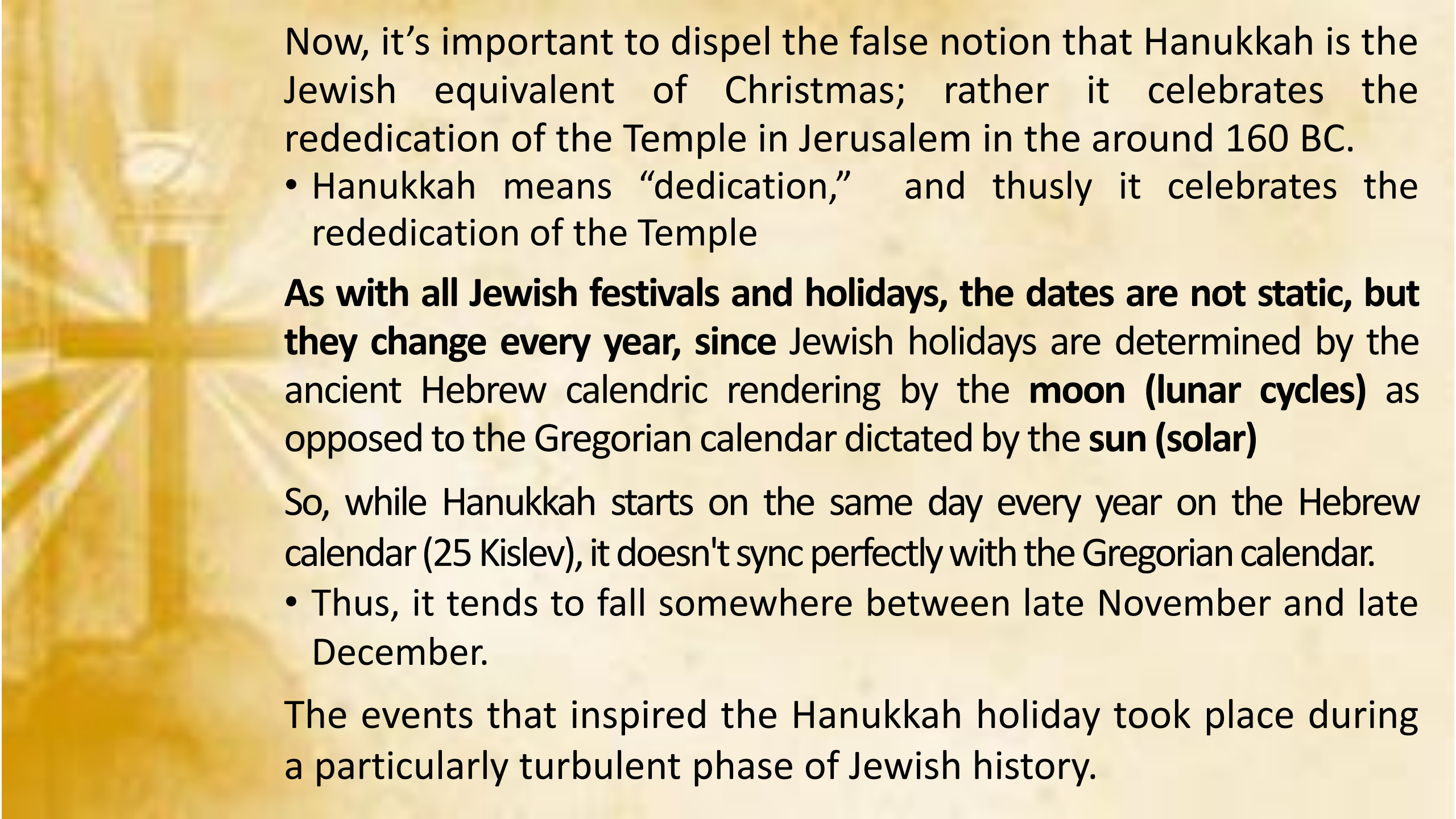
What's interesting about this verse is that it is set antithetically to what we do on Thanksgiving – it was about **fasting (Isa. 58:3-7)**

20th Century Jews were motivated by this verse in their help and care for Jews in the former Soviet Union who are impoverished and suffering, including elderly Holocaust survivors, orphaned and abandoned children.

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- They purposed to provide them with food, medical care, clothing, housing, and other necessities
 - In the OT the religious use of fasting is often in connection with making a request before God.
 - The principle is that the importance of the request causes one to be concerned about their spiritual condition thereby pushing physical necessities into the background.
 - In this sense the act of fasting is designed as a process leading to **purification** and **humbling** oneself before God ([Psl. 69:10](#); [102:4](#)).
 - It is not an end in itself, but rather it is the disciplined **training in preparation** for an important event.

In the Jewish calendar, the final festival of the year is Hanukkah, or also known as the Festival of Lights.

- Also spelled Chanukah, for the “kh” sound is guttural and “Ch” is a phonetic rendering



Now, it's important to dispel the false notion that Hanukkah is the Jewish equivalent of Christmas; rather it celebrates the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in the around 160 BC.

- Hanukkah means “dedication,” and thusly it celebrates the rededication of the Temple

As with all Jewish festivals and holidays, the dates are not static, but they change every year, since Jewish holidays are determined by the ancient Hebrew calendric rendering by the **moon (lunar cycles)** as opposed to the Gregorian calendar dictated by the **sun (solar)**

So, while Hanukkah starts on the same day every year on the Hebrew calendar (25 Kislev), it doesn't sync perfectly with the Gregorian calendar.

- Thus, it tends to fall somewhere between late November and late December.

The events that inspired the Hanukkah holiday took place during a particularly turbulent phase of Jewish history.

The Seleucids, (312–64 BC), was an ancient empire that, at its greatest extent, stretched from Thrace in Europe to the border of India.

It was carved out of the remains of Alexander the Great's Macedonian empire by its founder, Seleucus I Nicator -- one of Alexander's leading generals who became satrap (governor) of Babylonia in 321 BC two years after the death of Alexander.

In the prolonged power struggle between the former generals of Alexander for control of the disintegrating empire, Seleucus sided with Ptolemy I of Egypt against Antigonus I, Alexander's successor, who had forced Seleucus out of Babylonia.

In 312 BC, Seleucus defeated Demetrius at Gaza using troops supplied by Egypt, and with a smaller force he seized Babylonia, thereby founding the Seleucid kingdom, or empire.

By 305 BC, having consolidated his power over the kingdom, he began gradually to extend his domain eastward to the Indus River and westward to Syria and Anatolia, where he defeated Antigonus in 301 BC.

In 281 BC he annexed the Thracian peninsula and that same year, he was assassinated by Ptolemy Ceraunus, the disgruntled son of Ptolemy I.

Seleucus was succeeded by his eldest son, Antiochus I Soter, who reigned until 261 BC and was followed by Antiochus II (261–246 BC)

Antiochus II was succeeded by Seleucus II (246–225), Seleucus III (225–223), and Antiochus III the Great (223–187), all whose reigns were marked by sweeping administrative reforms in the eliminating the dual power structure governance

By controlling Anatolia and its Greek cities, the Seleucids exerted enormous political, economic, and cultural power throughout the Middle East.

Their control over the Taurus Mountain passes between, as well as the Hellespont between Thrace and Anatolia, allowed them to dominate commerce and trade in the region.

Seleucid settlements in Syria (Aram; Hittites; Assyria) primarily Antioch, were regional centers by which the Seleucid empire projected its military, economic, and cultural influence.

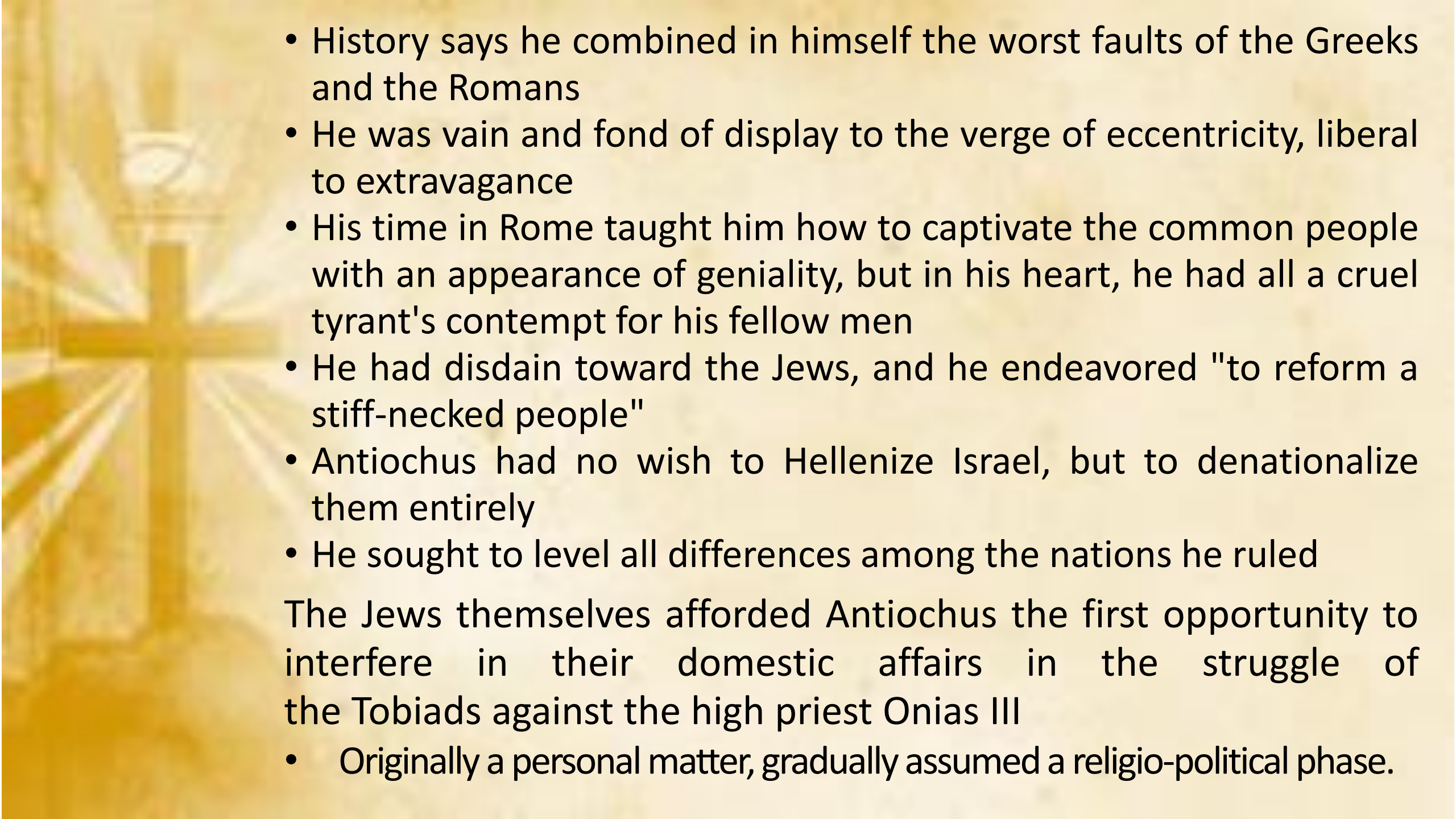
Nevertheless, the Seleucid empire began losing control over large territories in the 3rd century BCE and further decline followed their first defeat by the Romans in 190 BC.

Around 200 BC, Judea (the Land of Israel)—came under the control of Antiochus III, who allowed the Jews who lived there to continue practicing their religion.

His son, **Antiochus IV Epiphanes** (*the Visible God* -- 175-164 BC —called *epimanes by the Jews* – the mad one), proved less benevolent.

Ancient sources recount that he outlawed the Jewish religion and ordered the Jews to worship Greek gods.

In 168 B.C., his soldiers descended upon Jerusalem, massacring thousands of people and desecrating the city's holy Second Temple by erecting an altar to Zeus and sacrificing pigs within its sacred walls.

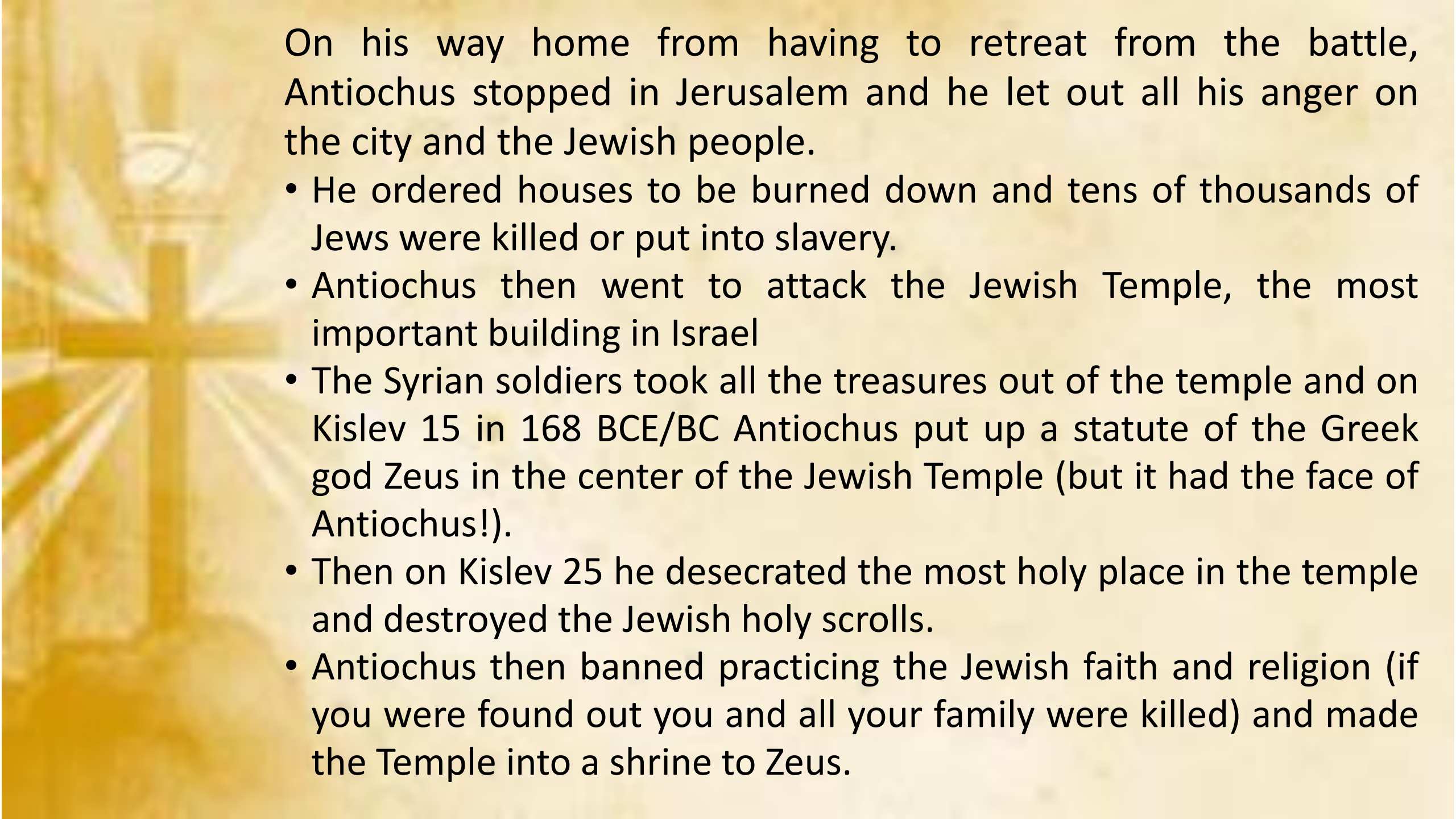
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- History says he combined in himself the worst faults of the Greeks and the Romans
 - He was vain and fond of display to the verge of eccentricity, liberal to extravagance
 - His time in Rome taught him how to captivate the common people with an appearance of geniality, but in his heart, he had all a cruel tyrant's contempt for his fellow men
 - He had disdain toward the Jews, and he endeavored "to reform a stiff-necked people"
 - Antiochus had no wish to Hellenize Israel, but to denationalize them entirely
 - He sought to level all differences among the nations he ruled

The Jews themselves afforded Antiochus the first opportunity to interfere in their domestic affairs in the struggle of the Tobiads against the high priest Onias III

- Originally a personal matter, gradually assumed a religio-political phase.

- “The conservatives Jews siding with Onias III, approached the king of Egypt; for they relied more on that monarch than on Antiochus
- The Tobiads understood Antiochus' favor was to be purchased with gold; and thus they caused the deposition of Onias (173 BC), and the appointment of their own partisan, Jason.
- In order to ingratiate himself with the king, this new high priest established an arena for public games close by the Temple.
- The brother of the Jewish high priest wanted to be more Greek, so he bribed Antiochus so he would be the new High Priest instead of his brother!
- But the king cared very much more for gold than the Hellenizing of Palestine, and a certain Menelaus, shrewdly purchased the high-priesthood in place of Jason (171 BC)
- To pay his bribe he stole some of the objects made of gold that were used in the Jewish Temple.

While all of this was going on, false tidings came to Jerusalem that Antiochus had died on a campaign in Egypt



On his way home from having to retreat from the battle, Antiochus stopped in Jerusalem and he let out all his anger on the city and the Jewish people.

- He ordered houses to be burned down and tens of thousands of Jews were killed or put into slavery.
- Antiochus then went to attack the Jewish Temple, the most important building in Israel
- The Syrian soldiers took all the treasures out of the temple and on Kislev 15 in 168 BCE/BC Antiochus put up a statute of the Greek god Zeus in the center of the Jewish Temple (but it had the face of Antiochus!).
- Then on Kislev 25 he desecrated the most holy place in the temple and destroyed the Jewish holy scrolls.
- Antiochus then banned practicing the Jewish faith and religion (if you were found out you and all your family were killed) and made the Temple into a shrine to Zeus.

□“Many Jews killed for their faith and soon afterwards a Jewish rebellion started.

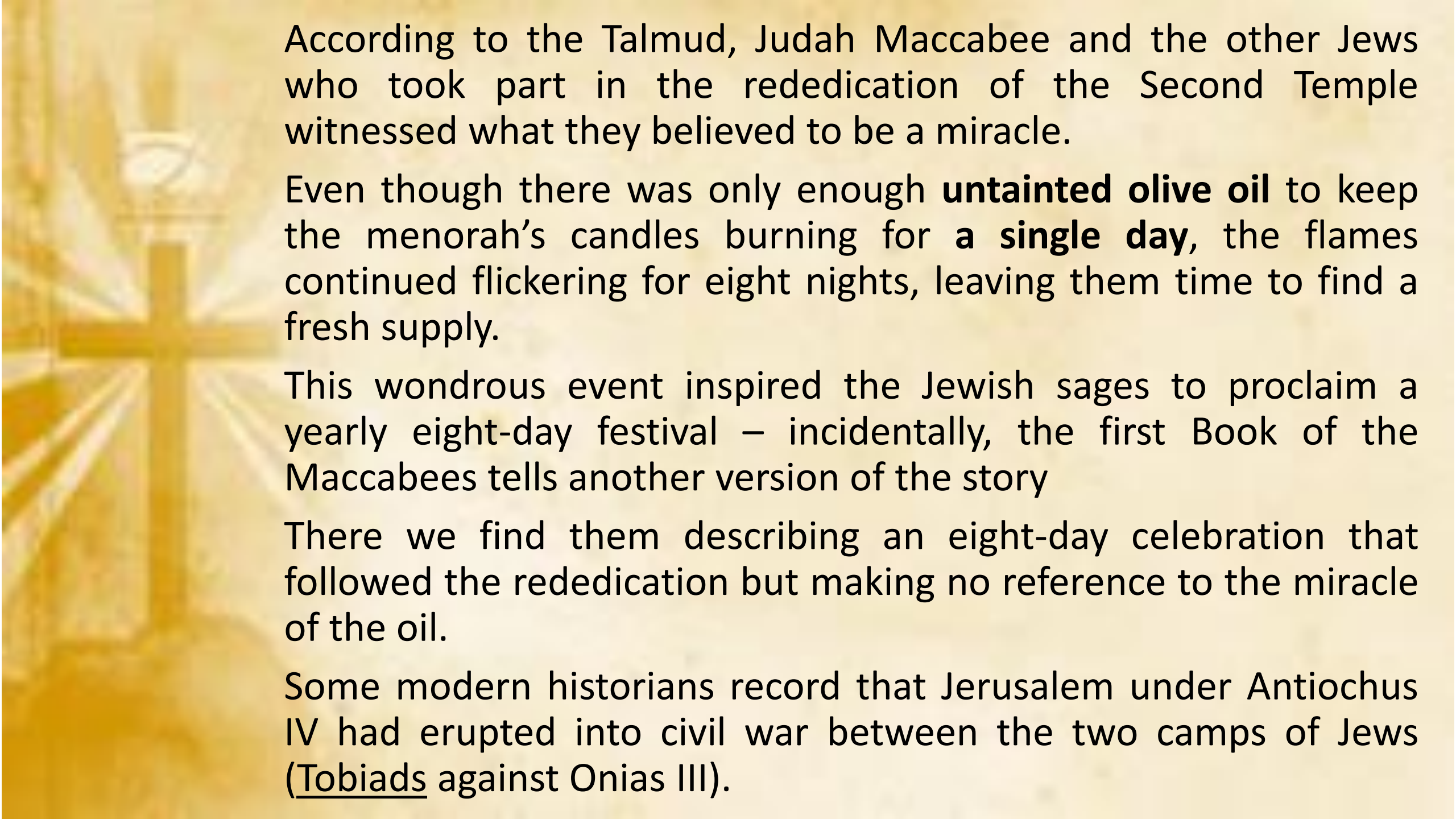
- He entered the Temple precincts to plunder the treasury, and carried away valuable utensils, such as the golden candlestick upon the altar and the showbread table made of gold.

[<http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1589-antiochus-iv-epiphanes>]

The Jewish priest Mattathias and his five sons led a large-scale rebellion against Antiochus and the Seleucid monarchy.

When Mattathias died in 166 B.C., his son Judah, known as Judah Maccabee (“the Hammer”), took the helm; and within two years, relying largely on guerilla warfare tactics, the Jews successfully drove the Syrians out of Jerusalem.

Judah called on his followers to cleanse the Second Temple, rebuild its altar and light its menorah—the gold candelabrum whose seven branches represented **knowledge and creation** and were meant to be kept burning every night.



According to the Talmud, Judah Maccabee and the other Jews who took part in the rededication of the Second Temple witnessed what they believed to be a miracle.

Even though there was only enough **untainted olive oil** to keep the menorah's candles burning for **a single day**, the flames continued flickering for eight nights, leaving them time to find a fresh supply.

This wondrous event inspired the Jewish sages to proclaim a yearly eight-day festival – incidentally, the first Book of the Maccabees tells another version of the story

There we find them describing an eight-day celebration that followed the rededication but making no reference to the miracle of the oil.

Some modern historians record that Jerusalem under Antiochus IV had erupted into civil war between the two camps of Jews (Tobiads against Onias III).



They also report that many Jews had assimilated into the dominant culture that surrounded them, adopting Greek and Syrian customs.


- Perhaps this was the real battle between [Tobiads](#) and the high priest Onias III.
- The priest had determined to impose Jewish laws and traditions, even if by force.

Jewish scholars have also suggested that the first Hanukkah may have been a belated celebration of Sukkot, which the Jews had not had the chance to observe during the Maccabean Revolt.

- Remember, Sukkot consisted of seven days of feasting, prayer and festivities.

The Hanukkah celebration revolves around the kindling of a nine-branched **menorah**, known in Hebrew as the *hanukkiyah* – ergo **“Festival of Lights.”**


- The **shamash (helper)** always sits a bit higher or lower than the rest of the candles so as to not get confused with the others.

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- The candles are **placed** on the menorah from **right to left**, the same direction in which one reads Hebrew.
 - However, **when lighting** the menorah you move from **left to right**, using the shamash to light the other candles.
 - On each of the holiday's eight nights, another candle is added to the menorah after sundown
 - Jews typically recite blessings during this ritual and display the menorah prominently in a window as a reminder to others of the miracle that inspired the holiday.
 - In other allusion to the Hanukkah miracle, traditional Hanukkah foods are fried in oil.
 - **Potato pancakes (latkes)** and **jam-filled donuts (sufganiyot)** are very popular
 - ❑ There is an ongoing and spirited debate about whether latkes are best served with applesauce (sweetness) or sour cream (bitterness). The correct answer is both!

- Other Hanukkah customs include playing with four-sided spinning tops called **dreidels** and **exchanging gifts**
 - ❑ This is where the notion of Hanakkuh's attachment to Christmas derives
 - ❑ The dreidel is a four-sided spinning top with Hebrew letters (Hay, Gimel, Nun and Shin) on each surface signifying the rules of the game.
 - ❑ Remember, Antiochus IV outlawed all Jewish practices, including reading and studying the Torah.
 - ❑ When soldiers would come through Jewish communities, those studying the Torah in secret would pretend to play the dreidel game so as not to be caught and arrested.

Ask any Rabbi and they will not declare Hanakkuh to be a major holiday in Israel, even though it is celebrating a miracle.

The time we have spent studying the Holy fall festivals of **Rosh Hashanah (Repentance)** and **Yom Kippur (Redemption)** and Succoth (Rejoicing) are justifiably closed out by Hanakkuh (Rededication)



Since Christmas is generally accepted as an important and universal experience in American childhood, kids of other faiths often feel left out of the celebrations.

The traditionalists won out in the end, with the Hasmonean dynasty—led by Judah Maccabee's brother and his descendants—wresting control of the Land of Israel from the Seleucids and maintaining an independent Jewish kingdom.

The dates of Hanukkah and Christmas might well be associated, because Kislev 25 was when the Temple was rededicated and the early Church chose December 25, because they took over the birthday of Greek god Zeus/Roman god Jupiter.

The early Christian date was also the Roman feast of Saturnalia, an ancient Roman festival in honor of the god Saturn held from December 17 to December 23.

The holiday was celebrated with a sacrifice at the Temple of Saturn, in the Forum, with a public banquet, followed by private gift-giving, continual partying, and a carnival atmosphere that overturned Roman social norms:

- Gambling was permitted, and masters provided table service for their slaves as it was seen as a time of liberty for both slaves and freedmen alike.
- A common custom was the election of a "King of the Saturnalia", who would give orders to people, which were to be followed and preside over the merrymaking.
- The gifts exchanged were usually gag gifts or small figurines made of wax or pottery known as sigillaria.

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