

חנוכה: חג ה"אורים" או חג ה"אורות"?

Josephus: Antiquities XII Ch. 7

7. Now Judas celebrated the festival of the restoration of the sacrifices of the temple for eight days, and omitted no sort of pleasures thereon; but he feasted them upon very rich and splendid sacrifices; and he honored God, and delighted them by hymns and psalms. Nay, they were so very glad at the revival of their customs, when, after a long time of intermission, they unexpectedly had regained the freedom of their worship, that they made it a law for their posterity, that they should keep a festival, on account of the restoration of their temple worship, for eight days.

And from that time to this we celebrate this festival, and call it Lights. (Φωτα)

I suppose the reason was, because this liberty beyond our hopes appeared to us; and that thence was the name given to that festival. Judas also rebuilt the walls round about the city, and reared towers of great height against the incursions of enemies, and set guards therein. He also fortified the city Bethsura, that it might serve as a citadel against any distresses that might come from our enemies.

Timeline:

597: Exile of Yehoyachin (Bavel)

586: Exile of Tzidkiyah, destruction of the Mikdash (Bavel)

539: Conquest of Bavel by Cyrus, leader of Persians and Medes

537-6: Beginning of restoration of Mikdash

536-518: Suspension of rebuilding

518: Rebuilding commences, completed in 515 BCE

c. 460: End of Prophetic Era (Malakhi)

c. 450: Ezra

332: Conquest of Persian Empire by Alexander the Great

164: Defilement of the Mikdash

161: Ouster of Greeks, rededication

מגילת תענית (ליכטנשטיין) המגילה ד"ה אלן יומיא דילא
בעשרין ותלתא למרחשון אסתתר סוריגא מן עזרתא.
בתלתא בכסלו אתנטילו סימואתא מן דרתא.

On the 23rd day of Marheshvan the Soreg was torn down from the courtyard (of the Temple compound)
On the 3rd day of Kislev the idols were removed from the (court?)

עזרא ה

(א) והתנביו חגי נביאה [נביא] וזכריה בר-עדוא נביאיא על-יהודיא די ביהוד ובירושלים בשם אלה ישאל עליהון:
(ב) באדין קמו זרובבל בר-שאלתיאל וישוע בר-יוצדק ושריו למבנא בית אלהא די בירושלים ועמהון
נביאיא די-אלהא מסעדין להון

1. Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even to them. 2. Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and with them were the prophets of God helping them.

חגי ב

י בעשרים וארבעה לתשיעי בשנת שתים לדרינוש היה דבר-ה' ביד-חגי הנביא לאמר:
טו ועתה שימו-נא לבבכם מן-היום הזה ומעלה מטרם שום-אבן אל-אבן בהיכל ה':
יח שימו-נא לבבכם מן-היום הזה ומעלה מיום עשרים וארבעה לתשיעי למן-היום אשר-יסד היכל-ה' שימו לבבכם:
כ ויהי דבר-ה' שנית אל-חגי בעשרים וארבעה לחדש לאמר: כא אמר אל-זרובבל פחת-יהודה לאמר
אני מרעיש את-השמים ואת-הארץ: כב והפכתי כסא ממלכות והשמדתי חזק ממלכות הגוים והפכתי
מרובה ורכביה וירדו סוסים ורכביהם איש בחרב אחיו: כג ביום ההוא נאם-ה' צבאות אקחן זרובבל
בן-שאלתיאל עבדי נאם-ה' ושמתינן כחותם כי-בן בחרתי נאם ה' צבאות

10. On the twenty fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying:
15. And now, I pray you, consider from this day onward. Before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord; 18. Consider now from this day onward, from the twenty fourth day of the ninth month, from the day when the foundation of the temple of the Lord was laid, consider it. 20. And again the word of the Lord came to Haggai on the twenty fourth day of the month, saying: 21. Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; 22. And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those who ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, everyone by the sword of his brother. 23. On that day, says the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, says the Lord, and will make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you, says the Lord of hosts.

עבודה זרה ח.

מתני'. ואלו אידיהן של עובדי כוכבים: קלנדא, וסטרוורא...

גמ'. אמר רב חנן בר רבא: קלנדא ח' ימים אחר תקופה, סטרורא ח' ימים לפני תקופה, וסימנך: אחור וקדם צרתני וגו'. ת"ר: לפי שראה אדם הראשון יום שמתמעט והולך, אמר: אוי לי, שמא בשביל שסרחתי עולם חשוך בעדי וחוזר לתוהו ובוהו, וזו היא מיתה שנקסה עלי מן השמים, עמד וישב ח' ימים בתענית [ובתפלה], כיון שראה תקופת טבת וראה יום שמאריך והולך, אמר: מנהגו של עולם הוא, הלך ועשה שמונה ימים טובים, לשנה האחרת עשאן לאלו ולאלו ימים טובים, הוא קבעם לשם שמים, והם קבעום לשם עבודת כוכבים

MISHNAH. THESE ARE THE FESTIVITIES OF THE IDOLATERS: KALENDA, SATURNALIA...**GEMARA.** Said R. Hanan b. Raba: KALENDA is kept on the eight days following the [winter] solstice.

SATURNALIA on the eight days preceding the solstice. Our Rabbis taught: When primitive Adam saw the day getting gradually shorter, he said, 'Woe is me, perhaps because I have sinned, the world around me is being darkened and returning to its state of chaos and confusion; this then is the kind of death to which I have been sentenced from Heaven!' So he began keeping an eight days' fast. But as he observed the winter solstice and noted the day getting increasingly longer, he said, 'This is the world's course', and he set forth to keep an eight days' festivity. In the following year he appointed both as festivals. Now, he fixed them for the sake of Heaven, but the [heathens] appointed them for the sake of idolatry.

פסיקתא רבתי פרק ב סימן ב,ה

וכמה חנוכות הם, שבע חנוכות הם ואילו הן חנוכת שמים וארץ שנאמר ויכולו השמים והארץ ומה חנוכה היה שם ויתן אותם אלהים ברקיע השמים להאיר
... שבע חנוכות הם חנוכת ברייתו של עולם ... וזו של עכשיו של בית חשמונאי וחנוכת העולם הבא שאף היא יש בה נרות כדכתיב והיה אור הלבנה כאור החמה ואור החמה יהיה שבעתים וגו'

במדבר רבה יג:

לפי שמלאכת המשכן נגמרה בכ"ה בכסלו ועמד המשכן מקופל עד ר"ח ניסן והיו ישראל אומרים הרי עשינו המשכן מתי תבוא השכינה ותשרה בתוך מעשה ידינו

I Maccabees 4:41-55

Then Judas appointed certain men to fight against those that were in the fortress, until he had cleansed the sanctuary. So he chose priests of blameless conversation, such as had pleasure in the law: Who cleansed the sanctuary, and bare out the defiled stones into an unclean place. And when as they consulted what to do with the altar of burnt offerings, which was profaned; They thought it best to pull it down, lest it should be a reproach to them, because the heathen had defiled it: wherefore they pulled it down, And laid up the stones in the mountain of the temple in a convenient place, until there should come a prophet to shew what should be done with them. Then they took whole stones according to the law, and built a new altar according to the former; And made up the sanctuary, and the things that were within the temple, and hallowed the courts. They made also new holy vessels, and into the temple they brought the candlestick, and the altar of burnt offerings, and of incense, and the table. And upon the altar they burned incense, and the lamps that were upon the candlestick they lighted, that they might give light in the temple. Furthermore they set the loaves upon the table, and spread out the veils, and finished all the works which they had begun to make. Now on the five and twentieth day of the ninth month, which is called the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and eighth year, they rose up betimes in the morning, And offered sacrifice according to the law upon the new altar of burnt offerings, which they had made. Look, at what time and what day the heathen had profaned it, even in that was it dedicated with songs, and citherns, and harps, and cymbals. Then all the people fell upon their faces, worshipping and praising the God of heaven, who had given them good success. And so they kept the dedication of the altar eight days and offered burnt offerings with gladness, and sacrificed the sacrifice of deliverance and praise.

II Maccabee 10:4-7s

When that was done, they fell flat down, and besought the Lord that they might come no more into such troubles; but if they sinned any more against him, that he himself would chasten them with mercy, and that they might not be delivered unto the blasphemous and barbarous nations. Now upon the same day that the strangers profaned the temple, on the very same day it was cleansed again, even the five and twentieth day of the same month, which is Casleu. And they kept the eight days with gladness, as in the feast of the tabernacles, remembering that not long afore they had held the feast of the tabernacles, when as they wandered in the mountains and dens like given beasts. Therefore they bare branches, and fair boughs, and palms also, and sang psalms unto him that had given them good success in cleansing his place. They ordained also by a common statute and decree, That every year those days should be kept of the whole nation of the Jews.

רמב"ן במדבר ח:ב

בהעלתך. למה נסמכה פרשת מנורה לחנכת הנשיאים, לפי שכשראה אהרן חנוכת הנשיאים חלשה דעתו שלא היה עמהם בחנוכה לא הוא ולא שבטו, אמר לו הקב"ה חייך שלך גדולה משלהם, שאתה מדליק ומטיב את הנרות בקר וערב, לשון רש"י ממדרש אגדה:

ולא נתברר לי למה נחמו בהדלקת הנרות, ולא נחמו בקטורת בקר וערב שבחחו בו הכתוב ישימו קטורה באפק, ובכל הקרבנות, ובמנחת חביתין, ובעבודת יום הכפורים שאינה כשרה אלא בו, ונכנס לפני ולפנים, ושהוא קדוש ה' עומד בהיכלו לשרתו ולברך בשמו, ושבטו כלו משרתי אלהינו. ועוד מה טעם לחלישות הדעת הזו, והלא קרבנו גדול משל נשיאים, שהקריב בימים ההם קרבנות הרבה כל ימי המלואים. ואם תאמר שהיו חובה ונצטוה בהם, וחלשה דעתו על שלא הקריב נדבה כמוהם לחנכת המזבח, גם הדלקת הנרות שנחמו בה חובה ונצטוה עליה.

אבל ענין ההגדה הזו לדרוש רמז מן הפרשה על חנכה של נרות שהיתה בבית שני עני :

ידי אהרן ובניו, רצוני לומר חשמונאי כהן גדול ובניו :

ובלשון הזה מצאתיה במגלת סתרים לרבינו נסים שהזכיר האגדה הזו ואמר, ראיתי במדרש כיון שהקריבו שנים עשר שבטים ולא הקריב שבט לוי וכו', אמר לו הקב"ה למשה דבר אל אהרן ואמרת אליו,

יש חנכה אחרת שיש בה הדלקת הנרות ואני עושה בה לישראל על ידי בניך

נסים ותשועה וחנוכה שקרויה על שםם, והיא חנכת בני חשמונאי,

ולפיכך הסמיך פרשה זו לפרשת חנכת המזבח עכ"ל:

וראיתי עוד בילמדנו (תנחומא בעלותך ה) וכן במדרש רבה (טו ו), אמר לו הקב"ה למשה, לך אמור לאהרן אל תתירא, לגדולה מזאת אתה מוכן,

הקרבנות כל זמן שבית המקדש קיים הן נוהגין,

אבל הנרות לעולם אל מול פני המנורה יאירו,

וכל הברכות שנתתי לך לברך את בני אינן בטלין לעולם.

והנה דבר ידוע שכשאין בית המקדש קיים והקרבנות בטלין מפני חורבנו אף הנרות בטלות,

אבל לא רמזו אלא לנרות חנכת חשמונאי שהיא נוהגת אף לאחר חורבן בגלותנו.

וכן ברכת כהנים הסמוכה לחנכת הנשיאים נוהגת לעולם,

דרשו סמוכין לחנכת הנשיאים מלפניה ומלאחריה בכבודו של אהרן שלא נמנה עמהם :

The actual birthday of Jesus was forgotten by the early Christian movement. In those days, various groups celebrated his birth on JAN-6, APR-21 and MAY-1. By the 4th century, the church selected the approximate time of the winter solstice as the date to recognize Jesus' birth. They picked up this date from Pagan sources. As luck would have it, the autumn equinox might have been a more accurate choice.

The winter solstice occurs about DEC-21 each year. It is the day of the year when the night is longest and the daytime shortest. Using the crude instruments available, ancient astronomers were able to detect by DEC-25 of each year that the daytime had become noticeably longer. This date was chosen, and remains, the traditional date for followers of many different Pagan religions to celebrate the rebirth of the sun. Following the solstice, each succeeding day has slightly more sunlight than the previous day. It was seen as a promise that warmth would return once more to the earth. Numerous pre-Christian Pagan religions honored their gods' birth or rebirth on or about that day. Their deities were typically called: *Son of Man, Light of the World, Sun of Righteousness, Bridegroom, and Savior*. Some examples are:

Roman Pagan Religion: *Attis* was a son of the virgin *Nana*. His birth was celebrated on DEC-25. He was sacrificed as an adult in order to bring salvation to mankind. He died about MAR-25, after being crucified on tree, and descended for three days into the underworld. On Sunday, he arose, as the solar deity for the new season. His followers tied an image of *Attis* to a tree on "*Black Friday*," and carried him in a procession to the temple. His body was symbolically eaten by his followers in the form of bread. Worship of *Attis* began in Ro circa 200 BCE.

Greek Pagan Religion: *Dionysus* is another savior-god whose birth was observed on DEC-25. He was worshipped throughout much of the Middle East as well. He had a center of worship in Jerusalem in the 1st century BCE. Some ancient coins have been found in Gaza with *Dionysus* on one side and *JHWH* (*Jehovah*) on the other. In later years, his flesh and blood were symbolically eaten in the form of bread and wine. He was viewed as the son of *Zeus*, the Father God.

Egyptian Pagan Religion: *Osiris* is a savior-god who had been worshipped as far back as Neolithic times. "*He was called Lord of Lords, King of Kings, God of Gods...the Resurrection and the Life, the Good shepherd...the god who men and women be born again*" 5 Three wise men announced his birth. His followers ate cakes of wheat which symbolized his body. Many sayings associated with *Osiris* were taken over into the Bible. This included:

23rd Psalm: an appeal to *Osiris* as the good Shepherd to lead believers through the valley of the shadow of death and to green pastures and still waters

Lord's Prayer: "*O amen, who art in heaven...*"

Many parables attributed to Jesus.

Worship of Osiris, and celebration of his DEC-25 birth, were established throughout the Roman Empire by the end of the 1st century BCE.

Persian Pagan Religion: *Mithra* was a Persian savior. Worship of *Mithra* became common throughout the Roman Empire, particularly among the Roman civil service and military. Mithraism was a competitor of Christianity until the 4th century. Their god was believed to have been born on DEC-25, circa 500 BCE. His birth was witnessed by shepherds and by gift-carrying Magi. This was celebrated as the "*Dies Natalis Solis Invite*," "*Birthday of the Unconquered Sun*." Some followers believed that he was born of a virgin. During his life, he performed many miracles, cured many illnesses, and cast out devils. He celebrated a Last Supper with his 12 disciples. He ascended to heaven at the time of the spring equinox, about March 21.

The Babylonians celebrated their "*Victory of the Sun-God*" Festival on DEC-25. Saturnalia (the Festival of Saturn) was celebrated from DEC-17 to 23 in the Roman Empire. The Roman Emperor Aurelian blended Saturnalia with a number of birth celebrations of savior Gods from other religions, into a single holy day: DEC-25. After much argument, the developing Christian church adopted this date as the birthday of their savior, Jesus. The people of the Roman Empire were accustomed to celebrating the birth of a God on that day. So, it was easy for the church to divert people's attention to Jesus' birth.

References: B.G. Walker, "The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets," Harper & Row, (1983)

http://www.religioustolerance.org/xmas_sel.htm

~~~~~ Christmas, Date of

Source: A. H. Newman, "Christmas," *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol. 3, p. 47. Copyright 1909 by Funk & Wagnalls Company, New York. Used by permission of Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., present publishers.

Christmas: The supposed anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ, occurring on Dec. 25. No sufficient data ... exist, for the determination of the month or the day of the event... There is no historical evidence that our Lord's birthday was celebrated during the apostolic or early post-apostolic times. The uncertainty that existed at the beginning of the third century in the minds of Hippolytus and others—Hippolytus earlier favoured Jan. 2, Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.*, i. 21) "the 25th day of Pachon" (= May 20), while others, according to Clement, fixed upon Apr. 18 or 19 and Mar. 28—proves that no Christmas festival had been established much before the middle of the century. Jan. 6 was earlier fixed upon as the date of the baptism or spiritual birth of Christ, and the feast of Epiphany ... was celebrated by the Basilidian Gnostics in the second century ... and by catholic Christians by about the beginning of the fourth century.

The earliest record of the recognition of Dec. 25 as a church festival is in the Philocalian Calendar (copied 354 but representing Roman practise in 336).

Christmas, Date and Origin of

Source: Francis X. Weiser, *Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1958), pp. 60–62. Copyright 1952 by Francis X. Weiser. Used by permission of the publishers.

[p. 60] The early Christians, who attributed to Christ not only the title (*Kyrios*) but also many other honours that the pagans paid to their "divine" emperors, naturally felt inclined to honour the birth of the Saviour. In most places the commemoration of Christ's birth was included in the Feast of the Epiphany (Manifestations) on January 6, one of the oldest annual feasts.

Soon after the end of the last great persecution, about the year 330, the Church in Rome definitely assigned December 25 for the celebration of the birth of Christ. For a while, many Eastern Churches continued to keep other dates, but toward the end of the fourth century the Roman custom became universal.

No official reason has been handed down in ecclesiastical documents for the choice of this date.

Consequently, various explanations have been given to justify the celebration of the Lord's nativity on this particular day. Some early Fathers and writers claimed that December 25 was the actual date of Christ's birth...

[p. 61] It was expressly stated in Rome that the actual date of the Saviour's birth was unknown and that different traditions prevailed in different parts of the world.

A second explanation was of theological-symbolic character. Since the Bible calls the Messiah the "Sun of Justice" (Malachi 4, 2), it was argued that His birth had to coincide with the beginning of a new solar cycle,

that is, He had to be born at the time of the winter solstice... This explanation, though attractive in itself, depends on too many assumptions that cannot be proved and lacks any basis of historical certitude. There remains then this explanation, which is the most probable one, and held by most scholars in our time: the choice of December 25 was influenced by the fact that the Romans, from the time of Emperor Aurelian (275), had celebrated the feast of the sun god (*Sol Invictus*: the Unconquered Sun) on that day. December 25 was called the "Birthday of the Sun," and great pagan religious celebrations of the Mithras cult were held all through the empire. What was more natural than that the Christians celebrate the birth of Him Who was the "Light of the World" and the true "Sun of Justice" on this very day? The popes seem to have chosen December 25 precisely for the purpose of inspiring the people to turn from the worship of a material sun to the adoration of Christ the Lord. This thought is indicated in various writings of contemporary authors.

It has sometimes been said that the Nativity is only a "Christianised pagan festival." However, the Christians of those early centuries were keenly aware of the difference between the two festivals—one pagan and one Christian—on the same day. The coincidence in the date, even if intended, does not make the two [p. 62] celebrations identical. Some newly converted Christians who thoughtlessly retained external symbols of the sun worship on Christmas Day were immediately and sternly reprovved.

Christmas—Uncertainty About Date of Christ's Birth

Source: Walter Woodburn Hyde, *Paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire*, pp. 249, 250. Copyright 1946 by the University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia. Used by permission.

[p. 249] Uncertainty about Jesus' birthday in the early third century is reflected in a disputed passage of the presbyter Hippolytus, who was banished to Sardinia by Maximin in 235, and in an authentic statement of Clement of Alexandria. While the former favoured January second, the learned Clem- [p. 250] ent of Alexandria enumerates several dates given by the Alexandrian chronographers, notably the twenty-fifth of the Egyptian month *Pachon* (May twentieth) in the twenty-eighth year of Augustus and the twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth of *Pharmuthi* (April eighteenth or nineteenth) of the year A.D. 1, although he favoured May twentieth. This shows that no Church festival in honour of the day was established before the middle of the third century. Origen at that time in a sermon denounced the idea of keeping Jesus' birthday like that of Pharaoh and said that only sinners such as Herod were so honoured. Arnobius later similarly ridiculed giving birthdays to "gods." A Latin treatise, *De pascha computus* (of ca. 243), placed Jesus' birth on March twenty-first since that was the supposed day on which God created the Sun (Gen. 1:14–19), thus typifying the "Sun of righteousness" as Malachi (4:2) called the expected Messiah. A century before Polycarp, martyred in Smyrna in 155, gave the same date for the birth and baptism placing it on a Wednesday because of the creation of the Sun on that day.

http://www.nisbett.com/holidays/christmas_date_and_origin_of.htm