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The True Story of Hanukah; Israel's Four Holy Cities II: Tiberias,  
1987-1988.



THE TRUE STORY OF HANUKAH

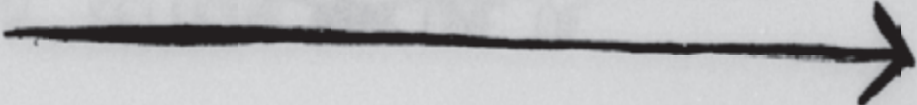
DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

DECEMBER 20, 1987

WE OWE THE PRESENT IMPORTANCE OF HANUKAH TO THE CHRISTIAN WORLD. AS LONG AS JEWS WERE TUCKED AWAY FROM THE CHRISTIAN WORLD, HANUKAH WAS A VERY MINOR CELEBRATION. BUT ONCE WE BECAME PART OF THE LARGER WORLD, ONCE OUR YOUTH SAW CHRISTMAS AND FELT LEFT OUT OF CHRISTMAS GIFTS, HANUKAH GREW IN IMPORTANCE.

IN THE MEDIEVAL WORLD, HANUKAH HAD VERY LITTLE PUBLIC SIGNIFICANCE. THERE WAS NO SYNAGOGUE LITURGY FOR HANUKAH IN THE SHTETL...NOR WAS ANY STUDENT DISMISSED FOR A MID-WINTER HANUKAH VACATION. THERE WAS NO HANUKAH CANTATA IN THE GHETTO. CHILDREN DID NOT RECEIVE PRESENTS. HANUKAH WAS SIMPLY A HOME HOLIDAY, DURING WHICH THE MENORAH WAS LIT ACCORDING TO ANCIENT PRESCRIPTIONS AND BLESSINGS WERE RECITED PRAISING GOD FOR THE MIRACLE WHICH HE HAD PERFORMED IN THOSE DAYS AND CONTINUES TO PERFORM. THAT WAS IT.

WHEN WE GO BACK FURTHER TO THE PERIOD IN WHICH THE TALMUD WAS WRITTEN, WE FIND THAT HANUKAH WAS EVEN LESS SIGNIFICANT AS A HOLY DAY. IN TALMUDIC TIMES IT WAS COMMON PRACTICE IN THE SCHOOLS ON THE DAY BEFORE EACH HOLIDAY FOR A MASTER & HIS STUDENTS TO DISCUSS THE LAWS PERTAINING TO THE OCCASION.





THE DISTILLATION OF THESE DISCUSSIONS BECAME THE BASIS OF VARIOUS TRACTATES OF THE TALMUD. THERE IS ONE CALLED PIPHANES, ROSH HASHANAH, THE NEW YEAR; ONE CALLED YOMA, THE TRACTATE WHICH DEALS WITH YOM KIPPUR; FOR THE HOLIDAY OF SUCCOTH, THERE IS ONE CALLED SUKKOT; AND SO ON. THERE IS NO TRACTATE FOR HANUKAH.

AT THE ANCIENT ACADEMIES, THE OBSERVANCES, CUSTOMS & RITUALS OF HANUKAH WERE SIMPLY NOT DISCUSSED. THERE ARE ONLY OCCASIONAL, ALMOST INCIDENTAL, REFERENCES TO HANUKAH IN THE TALMUD...

.....EXCEPT FOR ONE OCCASION, WHEN WE UNEXPECTEDLY COME UPON THE DESCRIPTION OF A SCENE WHICH IS DIFFICULT FOR US TO CREDIT BECAUSE IT SEEMS TOO SIMPLISTIC.

THERE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN A DISCUSSION IN A GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JUDAISM, WHICH HAS BEEN RECORDED IN THE TRACT WE CALL SHABBAT, THE LAWS CONCERNING THE SABBATH. ONE OF THE GRADUATE STUDENTS OF THE TIME ASKED A QUESTION WE MIGHT EXPECT OF A FIRST-GRADER HERE AT OUR TEMPLE: "ME' I HANUKAH?"

"WHAT IS HANUKAH?" HOW DO WE OBSERVE HANUKAH?

THE ANSWER THAT THE <sup>E</sup>NIOR PROFESSOR GIVES IS THE ONE WHICH YOU KNOW, THAT EVERYONE OF US KNOWS. IT BEGINS WITH THE FACT THAT IN THE SECOND ~~P~~RE-CHRISTIAN CENTURY, PALESTINE & WEST ASIA WERE GOVERNED BY AN EMPIRE CALLED THE SELUCID EMPIRE. IT WAS ONE OF THE EMPIRES CREATED BY THE GENERALS OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT AFTER HIS PREMATURE DEATH. SELUCUS ~~WAS~~ <sup>HAD BEEN</sup> ONE OF ALEXANDER'S MAJOR COMMANDERS.



THE FIFTH OF THE SELUCID LINE WAS ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES, WHO INHERITED AN EMPIRE WHICH INCLUDED WHAT IS TODAY LEBANON, SYRIA, ISRAEL & JORDAN. THIS KING ANTIOCHUS WAS AN AMBITIOUS MAN. AROUND THE YEARS 170-169 B.C.E. HE SET OUT TO ATTACK & CONQUER EGYPT.

HE BEAT THE LOCAL EGYPTIAN LORD---BUT HE WAS UNSUCCESSFUL BECAUSE A NEW POWER HAD INTRUDED INTO THE AREA: THE ROMANS. THE ROMAN LEGATE IN EGYPT INTERVENED & FORCED ANTIOCHUS TO RETREAT. FRUSTRATED & BITTER, MOST OF ALL FEARFUL THAT THE CITY-STATES & SMALL NATIONS WHICH MADE UP HIS EMPIRE WOULD SENSE HIS WEAKNESS & BEGIN TO REBEL, ANTIOCHUS ORDERED EACH OF THESE STATES & SMALL KINGDOMS TO TAKE LOYALTY OATHS. THE FORM OF THAT ANCIENT LOYALTY OATH WAS TO ERECT IN THEIR TEMPLES IDOLS OF ZEUS OLYMPIUS, THE PATRON GOD OF ANTIOCHUS, AND TO OFFER SACRIFICES TO THIS GOD. IN MOST OF THE CITY-STATES THIS WAS NOT A DIFFICULT TASK. THEIR PANTHEON INCLUDED MANY GODS. TO ADD ANOTHER WAS A SIMPLE ~~THING~~ **THING**.

FOR THE JEWS SUCH SACRIFICES WERE ANOTHER MATTER. OUR PEOPLE WERE BURDENED BY THE SECOND COMMANDMENT:

"THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE OR ANY MANNER OF LIKENESS OF ANYTHING THAT IS IN THE HEAVENS ABOVE OR THE EARTH BENEATH OR THE WATERS UNDER THE EARTH. THOU SHALT NOT BOW DOWN TO THEM NOR SERVE THEM."



-4-HANUKAH

FOR JEWS TO SACRIFICE TO AN IDOL WAS AN IMPOSSIBILITY.  
BUT---BY FORCE & THROUGH THE AGENCY OF SEVERAL QUISLINGS---  
~~AN~~ THE IDOL WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM.

THE JEWS BECAME RESTIVE & REBELLIOUS, SO MUCH SO THAT  
ANTIOCHUS FELT THAT HE HAD TO PROSCRIBE THEIR NATIONAL CULT  
--JUDAISM--AND HE DID SO. HE PROHIBITED THE OBSERVANCE  
OF THE SABBATH. HE PROHIBITED THE RITUAL ACT OF CIRCUMCISION.  
HE PROHIBITED THE ORDINATION OF JEWISH SAGES. HE PROHIBITED  
THE TEACHING OF THE TORAH. THEN THERE WAS OPEN REBELLION,  
LED BY A PROVINCIAL PRIEST BY THE NAME OF MATTATHIAS,  
WHO HAD FIVE SONS, INCLUDING JUDAH. THEY WERE THE FUTURE HEROES  
OF THE REVOLT, WHOM WE CALL THE MACCABEES.

ACCORDING TO THIS CONVENTIONAL STORY, A STORY WHICH  
HAS BEEN RETOLD EVER SINCE, THE MACCABEES FOUGHT FIRST AS  
GUERILLAS IN THE HILLS AND THEN--AFTER A NUMBER OF VICTORIES  
& AFTER A LARGER NUMBER OF JUDEANS HAD FLOCKED TO THEIR SIDES,  
WHEN THEY FELT STRONG ENOUGH TO TAKE THE FIELD AGAINST  
ANTIOCHUS' SYRIAN TROOPS--THEY DEFEATED THEM IN A NUMBER  
OF BATTLES & ULTIMATELY CONQUERED JERUSALEM. THEY RECAPTURED  
THE TEMPLE MOUNT AND FORCED THE SYRIANS & THEIR QUISLINGS  
INTO JERUSALEM'S IMPREGNABLE FORTRESS, THE AKRA, & LAID  
SIEGE TO THEM.

~~THE JEWISH PEOPLE WERE NOT ALLOWED TO OPEN THE  
TEMPLE MOUNT TO THE SYRIANS & THEIR QUISLINGS.~~

~~IT COULD BE USED. THEIR ATTENTION FELL ON THE GREAT 7 BRANCHED  
MENORAH THE GREAT LIGHT OF THE TEMPLE, WHICH REQUIRED~~



~~JUDEANS~~

THE ~~JUDEANS~~ SET ABOUT IMMEDIATELY TO REOPEN THE SACRIFICIAL CULT IN THE TEMPLE & TO DEDICATE THE ALTAR SO IT COULD BE USED. THEIR ATTENTION FELL ON THE GREAT 7-BRANCHED MENORAH, THE GREAT LIGHT OF THE TEMPLE, WHICH REQUIRED SPECIALLY CLARIFIED OIL. APPARENTLY, THERE WAS AN INSUFFICIENT SUPPLY, ONLY ENOUGH OIL TO BURN ONE DAY, & IT TOOK 8 DAYS TO PREPARE THE OIL IN THE PROPER MANNER. YET, SOMEHOW, BY A MIRACLE, THE ONE-DAY SUPPLY LASTED FOR 8 DAYS. THEREFORE, OUR 8-BRANCHED MENORAH, THEREFORE THE 8 LIGHTS---THAT IS THE MIRACLE THAT WAS PERFORMED, THE MIRACLE WHICH SYMBOLIZES GOD'S REDEMPTIVE CONCERNS FOR HIS PEOPLE.

THAT'S THE STORY AS TOLD IN THE TALMUD. I AM AFRAID IT IS WHAT WE HAVE ALL BEEN TAUGHT. THERE IS ONLY ONE TROUBLE. IT DOESN'T QUITE FIT THE HISTORICAL FACTS.

HOW DID THE TALMUD COME TO MIX UP ITS FACTS? THE TALMUD WAS EDITED IN THE 5TH & 6TH CENTURIES--A LONG TIME AGO-- AND IT CONTAINS MUCH EARLIER MATERIAL. WHAT I READ TO YOU COMES FROM A PART OF THE TALMUD SET DOWN IN THE 3RD & 4TH CENTURIES BY THE TANNAIM, THE PALESTINEAN SAGES.

SO WE MUST ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT 4 TO 5 CENTURIES INTERVENED BETWEEN THE REVOLT OF THE MACCABEES & THE SETTING DOWN OF THEIR TRADITION IN THE TALMUD BY THE TANNAIM. THE VERY FACT THAT IT'S A GRADUATE STUDENT WHO ASKS THIS SIMPLISTIC QUESTION--WHAT IS HANUKAH?--SUGGESTS HOW NEW THE THEME IS AT THE TIME.



IF WE LOOK AT THE TRADITIONS ABOUT THE MACCABEAN VICTORIES, BETWEEN THE TIME OF THE GREAT RE-DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE IN 164 B.C.E. AND THE TALMUDIC TEXT WRITTEN 5 CENTURIES LATER, WE FIND THAT NOT A SINGLE TEXT IN OUR POSSESSION REFERS TO THIS MIRACLE OF THE CRUSE OF OIL.

WHAT WE FIND INSTEAD IS THAT THOSE WHO LIVE NEARER THE TIME OF THESE EVENTS WERE UNAWARE OF THE REASONS FOR CALLING HANUKAH A FEAST OF LIGHTS. THE GREAT JEWISH HISTORIAN OF THE 1ST CENTURY, JOSEPHUS, DESCRIBED THE MACCABEAN REVOLT & THE REDEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE---THESE WERE EPOCHAL EVENTS IN JEWISH HISTORY. HE SPEAKS OF A HANUKAH WHICH HE CALLS THE FEAST OF DEDICATION, THE FEAST OF LIGHTS, & CONFESSES THAT HE DOES NOT KNOW WHY IT IS CALLED THE FEAST OF LIGHTS.

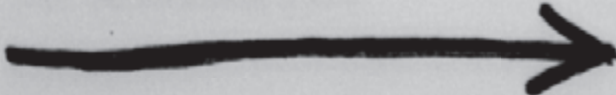
WHEN WE PRESS FURTHER BACK IN TIME, WE FIND, INTRESTINGLY, A DOCUMENT PROBABLY UNKNOWN TO THE RABBIS OF THE TALMUD, BECAUSE IT HAD ALREADY BEEN SUPPRESSED BY THEIR PREDECESSORS: A CHRONICLE WRITTEN BY THE COURT HISTORIANS OF THE HASMONEANS, THE DESCENDANTS OF THE MACCABEES, WHO CREATED A DYNASTY WHICH RULED OVER JERUSALEM FOR ABOUT 100 YEARS AFTER THE ORIGINAL VICTORY OVER ANTIOCHUS' TROOPS. THIS BOOK OF MACCABEES, THIS DYNASTIC CHRONICLE, NOW APPEARS IN THE APOCRYPHA ---BOOKS WHICH WERE DELIBERATELY HIDDEN AWAY BY JEWS & NOT INCLUDED IN THE BIBLE (THE WORD IS A GREEK WORD WHICH MEANS THE HIDDEN BOOKS) AND MAINTAINED FOR THAT VERY REASON BY MANY EARLY CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS.



IN THIS DOCUMENT, WHICH IS AN AUTHENTIC HISTORY OF THE TIME WRITTEN ABOUT A GENERATION AFTER THE EVENTS, WE FIND A VERY DIFFERENT EXPLANATION OF HANUKAH. ACCORDING TO THE BOOK OF THE MACCABEES, WHEN JUDAH & HIS TROOPS CONQUERED JERUSALEM IN THE LATE SUMMER & EARLY FALL OF 164 B.C.E., THEY ENTERED THE TEMPLE, FOUND IT DESECRATED, FILTHY & UNUSABLE. THEY WENT THROUGH WHAT CAN ONLY BE CALLED A FUNERAL SERVICE FOR THE SACRIFICIAL ALTAR. THEY FELT THAT THE ALTAR HAD BEEN DESECRATED, SO ONE BY ONE THEY TOOK THE STONES OF THE HOLY ALTAR AND BURIED THEM. THEY PUT ON SACKCLOTH & ASHES, THE GARMENTS OF MOURNING, AND SANG KINOT, LAMENTATIONS, EULOGIES, THE FUNERAL HYMNS OF THE DAY. THEY WENT THROUGH A FUNERAL SERVICE FOR THE SACREDNESS OF THE TEMPLE THAT HAD BEEN, & THEY BURIED THAT WHICH HAD BEEN DEFILED. AND THEY BEGAN TO PLAN HOW THEY WOULD RE-CONSECRATE THE SANCTUARY.

THERE WAS A PRIESTLY TRADITION THAT WHEN THE FIRST TEMPLE HAD BEEN CONSECRATED BY THE PROPHET SAMUEL, HE ORDERED THAT THERE BE A FESTIVAL OF DEDICATION, A HANUKAH, WHICH WOULD LAST FOR 8 DAYS. THE TIME WAS TO BE USED FOR THE LIGHTING OF THE GREAT MENORAH OF THE SANCTUARY, A TIME FOR THE SINGING OF SONGS AND OFFERING OF SACRIFICES.

3RD OR THERE WAS ALSO ANOTHER, LATER, PRIESTLY TRADITION WHICH DESCRIBES HOW KING HEZEKIAH IN THE 8TH PRE-CHRISTIAN CENTURY WENT TO CLEANSE & PURIFY THE SANCTUARY OF VARIOUS CHAPELS THAT HAD BEEN BUILT THERE BY THE FOREIGN QUEENS OF JUDEAN KINGS, FOREIGNERS WHO HAD BROUGHT THEIR PRIESTS & IDOLS TO JERUSALEM.





FIRST HEZEKIAH HAD CONSULTED A PROPHET. THE PROPHET TOLD HIM THAT THE CEREMONY OF DEDICATION SHOULD LAST FOR 8 DAYS & HE CELEBRATED WITH SACRIFICES AND PSALMS A SERVICE OF REDEDICATION.

THE 8 LIGHTS OF HANUKAH MAY REPRESENT THE 8 DAYS WHICH THE ANCIENT PRIESTLY PRACTICE STIPULATED AS THE RITUAL REQUIREMENT FOR THE REDEDICATION OF THE SANCTUARY.

HAVING DETERMINED THAT THE FESTIVAL SHOULD LAST FOR 8 DAYS, THE JEWS OF MACCABEAN TIMES FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO DETERMINE THE DAY ON WHICH THE FESTIVAL SHOULD TAKE PLACE. THEY REMINDED THEMSELVES THAT 4 YEARS EARLIER, ON THE 25TH OF KISLEV, THE IDOL ZEUS OLYMPIUS, THE HATED IDOL OF THE ABOMINATION, HAD BEEN SET UP. THEY DECIDED TO CANCEL THAT ACT BY HOLDING A GREAT SERVICE OF REDEDICATION ON THE VERY DAY OF THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEFILEMENT 4 YEARS EARLIER.

SO THERE WAS A CONSIDERABLE TIME BETWEEN THE RECONQUEST OF THE TEMPLE AND THE SERVICE OF REDEDICATION. THERE WAS NO REASON THAT THE JUDEANS COULDN'T HAVE PREPARED WHATEVER OIL THEY REQUIRED. THE MYTH OF THE MIRACLE OF THE CRUSE OF OIL IS PATENTLY A PIOUS LEGEND CREATED MUCH LATER IN THE 3RD OR 4TH CENTURIES OF THE COMMON ERA, FOR REASONS THAT I WILL SUGGEST TO YOU IN A MOMENT.



THE ORIGINAL HANUKAH WAS A CEREMONY IN THE SANCTUARY.  
THE GREAT CEREMONY OF THANKSGIVING AND REDEDICATION WAS  
CELEBRATED ANNUALLY AND OVER THE YEARS BECAME A MEMORIAL  
TO THE FREEDOM OF THE JUDEANS FROM THE SYRIANS AND A GREAT DAY  
ON WHICH THE DYNASTY OF THE JEWS WHO BECAME THE KINGS OF JUDAH  
CELEBRATED THE ASCENDANCE OF THEIR KINGS. IT BECAME ISRAEL'S  
FOURTH OF JULY. THEY HAD THROWN OFF THE YOKE OF THE BRITISH  
--THAT IS, THE SYRIANS--AND HAD ESTABLISHED THEIR OWN SOVEREIGNTY.  
IT WAS A GREAT NATIONAL HOLIDAY, A FESTIVAL OF INDEPENDENCE,  
CELEBRATED ONLY IN THE SANCTUARY, NEVER IN THE HOME.  
AND SO IT WAS CELEBRATED FOR OVER A CENTURY OR MORE.

AND THEN JUDEA'S POLITICAL CONDITIONS CHANGED.  
THE ROMANS SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN.  
THEIRS WAS AN IRON-BOOTED RULE, CRUEL, STERN, DEMANDING.  
JUDEAN INDEPENDENCE WAS LOST. THERE WAS HEAVY TAXATION.  
THE YOUNG HOTHEADS OF THE COMMUNITY REMINDED THEMSELVES  
WHAT THESE LIGHTS SYMBOLIZED--HOW JUDEAN SOLDIERS HAD FOUGHT  
WITH COURAGE AND BRAVERY AGAINST OVERWHELMING ODDS AND HAD  
BEEN VICTORIOUS. GOD HAD HELPED THEM. WHY SHOULDN'T  
JUDEA & GOD DO IT AGAIN?

AND TO BE ENCOURAGED BY ANCIENT MEMORIES OF DERRING-DO.  
OBVIOUSLY, THE PRUDENT HEADS OF THE COMMUNITY WILL TRY  
TO CHANGE THE CHARACTER OF THE FOURTH OF JULY.



FROM THE SPIRIT OF HANUKAH EMERGED THE TERRIBLE REVOLT OF 66-70 IN WHICH THE JEWS FOUGHT AGAINST THE ROMANS FOR 4 BLOODY YEARS, AND THE BAR KOCHBA REVOLT, 132-135, IN WHICH ANOTHER GENERATION OF JEWS FOUGHT AGAINST THE ROMANS FOR 4 MORE YEARS. MASADA, WHICH MANY OF YOU HAVE VISITED, IS TESTIMONY TO THE DESTRUCTION THAT FINALLY CAME TO THEM. IT WAS BLOODY & BRUTAL. ONE IN 6 JEWS--OVER A MILLION JEWS--WERE KILLED IN THE 4 YEARS BETWEEN THE YEARS 66 AND 70. ANOTHER MILLION JEWS WERE KILLED IN THE 3½ YEARS BETWEEN THE YEARS 132 AND 135. DURING THOSE CENTURIES, JEWS WERE AT THEIR GREATEST PEAK EVER IN NUMERICAL PROPORTION TO THE REST OF THE WORLD. THEY REPRESENTED ABOUT 1 IN 20--5 PERCENT OF ALL THE CITIZENS OF THE EASTERN ROMAN EMPIRE. WE WERE STRONG. WE HAD BEEN INDEPENDENT. WE FELT POWERFUL. WHY NOT FIGHT? AND FIGHT THEY DID. AND THEY WERE BRUTALLY DEFEATED & SUPPRESSED. NOW WHAT HAPPENS TO THE FOURTH OF JULY IN A CONQUERED COUNTRY? THE FOURTH OF JULY MUST CHANGE. IT MUST NOT BE A HOLIDAY WHEN YOUNG HOTHEADS CONTINUE TO MEET AND TO PLAN AND TO BE ENCOURAGED BY ANCIENT MEMORIES OF DERRING-DO. OBVIOUSLY, THE PRUDENT HEADS OF THE COMMUNITY WILL TRY TO CHANGE THE CHARACTER OF THE FOURTH OF JULY.



(IN THE TALMUD)

THE INTEREST IN HANUKAH AS WE HAVE IT IS A TESTIMONY NOT TO THE VICTORY OF THE MACCABEES SO MUCH AS TO THE DEFEAT OF THE JUDEANS, TO THE DEFEAT OF THE JEWS DURING THESE TWO TERRIBLE REVOLTS AGAINST ROME.

AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE IN THE YEAR 70, PART OF THE PRICE JEWS HAD TO PAY FOR THEIR DEFEAT WAS THAT THE TEMPLE WAS PLOWED UNDER AND THE LAND OF THE TEMPLE MOUNT WAS SALTED BY THE ROMANS. NOTHING SHOULD EVER GROW THERE AGAIN. NOTHING SHOULD EVER BE BUILT THERE AGAIN.

THE JEWS HAD TO TAKE THE ENTIRE TEMPLE-CENTERED CULT & DIVERSIFY IT. THEY COULD MOVE IT INTO THE HOME OR INTO THE SYNAGOGUE. THEY DID NOT ERADICATE HANUKAH, BUT WHAT THEY DID WAS NOT TO PLACE IT IN THE SYNAGOGUE WHERE IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN CELEBRATED IN VERY MUCH THE SAME WAY AS BEFORE THE LOSS OF THE TEMPLE---BUT TO TAKE IT OUT OF THE LITURGY ENTIRELY AND TO PLACE IT IN THE HOME, WHERE A LIGHT WOULD BE A REMINDER OF THE GREAT MENORAH OF THE TEMPLE BUT NOT BE THE SAME THING: A HANUKAH MENORAH HAD 8 BRANCHES INSTEAD OF 7. IT FIT THE 8 DAYS OF THE FESTIVAL OF REDEDICATION & ASSOCIATED HANUKAH NOT WITH THE MARTIAL GLORY OF THE MACCABEES BUT WITH GOD'S MIRACLE, THE MIRACLE OF A CRUSE OF OIL WHICH LASTED FOR 8 DAYS. IT IS GOD WHO SAVES.



WE DO NOT READ ON HANUKAH, AS WE READ ON PURIM OR AT OTHER TIMES, FROM A SCROLL OF VICTORY. WHAT WE DO IS TO SPEAK OF GOD'S WILL TO SAVE HIS PEOPLE, TO SAVE MANKIND. WE LIGHT THESE LIGHTS IN MEMORY & IN ANTICIPATION OF GOD'S REDEMPTION.

~~THESE LIGHTS ARE LIT TO CELEBRATE THE SPIRIT OF THE WARSAW GHETTO AND OF THE PIONEERS & YOUNG SOLDIERS WHO FOUGHT FOR ISRAEL, IN 1948 & IN 1956 & 1967 & 1973.~~

HANUKAH TODAY REPRESENTS AGAIN OUR DESIRE TO PUT BEHIND US THE PATIENCE & INACTION OF A GENERATION OF JEWS UNWILLING TO RISE UP & FIGHT FOR THEIR LIVES BUT WILLING TO WAIT FOR GOD TO SAVE THEM. THESE LIGHTS ARE LIT TO CELEBRATE THE SPIRIT OF THE WARSAW GHETTO AND OF THE PIONEERS & YOUNG SOLDIERS WHO FOUGHT FOR ISRAEL, IN 1948 & IN 1956 & 1967 & 1973.

IF WE LOOK AT HANUKAH AS IT WAS HISTORICALLY OBSERVED, WE RECOGNIZE THAT HANUKAH IS A PARADOXICAL HOLIDAY. WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THESE LIGHTS SUGGEST TO US THAT THERE IS A TIME TO BE ACTIVE AND A TIME TO BE PATIENT. JUST AS WILL & COURAGE & SACRIFICE HAVE THEIR PLACE, ALSO PATIENCE & STEADFASTNESS & PERSEVERANCE HAVE THEIR PLACE IN A TIME WHEN ANY VIRTUE, WHETHER IT BE ACTIVE OR PASSIVE, MUST BE CARRIED OUT WITH UNDERSTANDING & MODERATION.

AND, AS AT ALL TIMES, THERE IS A TIME FOR THE JEW TO TAKE UP ARMS AND A TIME FOR THE JEW TO TRY TO ACHIEVE THROUGH DIPLOMACY AND STATESMANSHIP. THESE ARE THE REASONS WE LIGHT THESE LIGHTS THIS DAY.



2

TIBERIAS --2

CITIES OF THE HOLY LAND: TIBERIAS

~~JERUSALEM~~  
~~HEBRON~~

IF A POLLSTER HAD VISITED THE COMMUNITIES OF THE HOLY LAND DURING THE MIDDLE AGES--HEBRON OR TIBERIAS OR JERUSALEM OR SAFED---AND ASKED THE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS TO LIST THEIR OCCUPATIONS, BY FAR THE LARGEST NUMBER WOULD HAVE ANSWERED: "PIETY." NOW, PIETY DOESN'T PAY WELL. THESE MEN, FOR THE MOST PART, SPENT THEIR DAYS IN PRAYER & STUDY---THE HOLY OCCUPATIONS OF JEWISH LIFE. THEY DID SO BECAUSE THEY FELT THAT THROUGH THEIR PRAYERS & STUDY ~~IN THE HOLY LAND~~ THEY WERE ~~HAYENING~~<sup>S</sup> THE END OF THE EXILE & THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH. THEY FELT THAT BEING IN THE HOLY LAND, THE PLACE ON EARTH CLOSEST TO GOD, WAS A KEY ELEMENT IN A LIFE ENCOURAGING GOD TO BRING REDEMPTION.

BUT EVEN HOLY MEN HAVE TO PUT SOME FOOD IN THEIR STOMACHS. AND SINCE JEWISH HOLY MEN MARRY & TEND TO HAVE CHILDREN, THEIR WIVES AND THEIR CHILDREN ALSO NEED TO BE FED.

HOW DID PIETY RESOLVE THIS PRACTICAL PROBLEM?  
BY ORGANIZING WHAT IS CALLED A KOLEL.

KOLEL MEANS A CENTRALIZED FUND RAISING AGENCY. THE VARIOUS KOLELIM IN THE COMMUNITIES OF THE HOLY LAND SENT MISSIONARIES TO JEWS AROUND THE WORLD. THEY WERE CALLED SCHELIHIM, AND EACH SCHELIAH WAS GIVEN A TERRITORY. ESSENTIALLY, THEY WERE SALESMEN IN PIETY, WORKING ON COMMISSION.



## TIBERIAS --2

ONE WAS GIVEN LODZ, ANOTHER WAS GIVEN MARRAKESH, ANOTHER BOMBAY. ~~THESE~~ THESE MEN LEFT THE HOLY LAND WITH A CERTIFICATE THAT THEY WERE COLLECTING MONEY FOR A HOLY KOLEL, AND THEY WOULD TRAVEL THROUGH THEIR ASSIGNED TERRITORY & COLLECT. THE USUAL ARRANGEMENT WAS FOR THEM TO POCKET 50 PERCENT OF THE MONEY THEY RAISED, PLUS THEIR EXPENSES. THE REST WENT TO THE KOLEL FOR DISRIBUTION TO THE PROFESSIONAL PIOUS--THE POOR.

THESE SCHELIHIM LITERALLY CROSSED THE SEVEN SEAS & THE HIGHEST MOUNTAINS IN ORDER TO RAISE MONEY. MY FAVORITE STORY ABOUT THEM IS OF ONE BRAVE SOUL WHO FOUND HIMSELF IN ENGLAND IN THE EARLY 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY. HE HEARD THERE WAS A NEW, UNHARVESTED FIELD OF FAIRLY RICH JEWS IN NEWPORT IN RHODE ISLAND. SO HE BOUGHT A PASSAGE TO THE NEW WORLD. HE LANDED IN NEW YORK & MADE HIS WAY TO NEWPORT. ~~HE~~ HE HARVESTED SUCH GOLD AS HE COULD FROM THE JEWS OF THE TOWN. BUT AFTER HE PAID HIS EXPENSES HE DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH FOR A RETURN TICKET TO EUROPE. THERE HE WAS, HIGH & DRY IN PURITAN NEW ENGLAND.

A RESOURCEFUL FELLOW. HE PUTS HIS EAR TO THE GROUND & DISCOVERS A CONNECTICUT DIVINE NAMED EZRA STILES WHO ~~WAS~~ <sup>WAS</sup> ABOUT TO FOUND A NEW THEOLOGICAL CALLEGE HE ~~WOULD~~ <sup>WOULD</sup> CALL YALE. HE FINDS STILES, ~~AND~~ <sup>AND</sup> TELLS HIM HE'S A BIBLICAL SCHOLAR. SINCE HE ACTUALLY KNEW HEBREW, AND EZRA STILES HADN'T THE FAINTEST IDEA WHAT HEBREW EVEN LOOKED LIKE, STILES APPOINTED HIM--AND HE BECAME THE FIRST JEW TO HOLD AN ACADEMIC CHAIR IN JEWISH THOUGHT IN AN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY.



TIBERIAS --3

TIBERIAS --4

THE MOST INGENIOUS OF ALL THESE COMMISSIONED SALESMEN IN PIETY WAS THE UNKNOWN MAN WHO--WHILE TRAVELING IN EASTERN EUROPE--RECOGNIZED THAT PEOPLE WERE WILLING TO GIVE HIM WHATEVER EXTRA MONEY THEY HAD WHEN HE HAPPENED TO SHOW UP IN TOWN, BUT THAT THEY DIDN'T SAVE FOR HIS COMING. HIS PROBLEM WAS THAT HE COULDN'T BE EVERYWHERE AT THE SAME TIME, BUT HE COULD LEAVE BEHIND A CASH BOX, A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE COULD PUT MONEY TO WAIT FOR HIS NEXT TRIP. SO HE HAD SOMEBODY MAKE HIM SOME NEAT BOXES WITH SLITS IN THE TOP WHERE YOU COULD DROP IN COINS.

ACROSS THE FACE OF THE BOXES HE PUT "MEIR BAAL HANES"--- "MEIR, MASTER OF MIRACLES." SURE ENOUGH, WHEREVER HE LEFT THE BOXES, HOUSEWIVES, HUSBANDS, EVEN CHILDREN WOULD DROP COINS IN, ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY WANTED SOMETHING DESPERATELY. PROBABLY THEY THUGHT THAT PRAYER GIVEN WITH A LITTLE MONEY WOULD BE MORE LIKELY TO BE HEARD BY GOD.

THESE LITTLE BOXES, WHICH WERE INTRODUCED IN POLAND <sup>IN THE</sup> 16TH CENTURY, PICKED UP THE POLISH NAME PUSHKA. IN THE 19TH CENTURY THE ZIONISTS REVIVED THE OLD PIETY. YOU MAY REMEMBER IN YOUR PARENTS' HOME A SIMPLE METAL BOX, BLUE WITH A WHITE MAP OF THE HOLY LAND ON IT. ALMOST EVERY JEWISH HOME HAD ONE. THOSE BOXES NO LONGER HAD "MEIR BAAL HANES" BUT "JEWISH NATIONAL FUND OF ISRAEL," KEREIN KAYEMET L'ISRAEL, & THE MONEY COLLECTED IN THESE BOXES BOUGHT MUCH OF THE LAND IN PALESTINE BETWEEN THE 1880s & 1930s. THIS FORM OF GIVING WENT OUT OF BUSINESS ONLY IN OUR LIFETIMES, AS FEDERATIONS & UJAs & OTHER MORE EFFICIENT FORMS TOOK THEIR PLACE.



## TIBERIAS --4

WHY SHOULD PEOPLE ASSOCIATE PRAYER WITH THE GIVING OF MONEY? THE ASSOCIATION SEEMS UNIVERSAL. IN ANY BUDDHIST OR HINDU TEMPLE IN ASIA YOU'LL FIND A BIG WOODEN BOX, A COLLECTION BOX, NEXT TO THE SHRINE WHERE THE IMAGE SITS. THE WORSHIPPER MAKES HIS PRAYERS, CLAPS HIS HANDS, AND TOSSES A PENNY OR WHATEVER LITTLE ELSE HE HAS INTO THE BOX.

IN PART THIS HAD TO DO WITH WORLDLY CUSTOM. WHEN YOU NEEDED SOMETHING YOU ~~WENT~~ TO THE RULER AND OFFER HIM SOMETHING IN RETURN FOR HIS ATTENTION. OR, MORE LIKELY, YOU ~~WENT~~ IT INDIRECTLY, GOING TO THE COURT, FINDING A COURTIER & PAYING HIM TO INTERCEDE FOR YOU WITH THE LORD & RULER. THE HEAVENLY COURT WAS ASSUMED TO OPERATE JUST AS AN EARTHLY COURT DID.

I SUSPECT IT ALSO HAD TO DO WITH PROVING THE URGENCY OF YOUR OWN NEED. YOU SACRIFICED SOMETHING TO THE GOD, AND YOUR VERY STATEMENT OF NEED MIGHT SUGGEST TO THE GOD THAT HE BE MERCIFUL TO YOU.

**NO ONE REALLY KNOWS.**  
~~WHO WAS MEIR BAAL HANES? HE WAS ONE OF THE MOST ENLIGHTENED OF THE HOLY SAGES OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE.~~ IF YOU GO TO TIBERIAS TODAY, A GUIDE WILL SHOW YOU ON THE HILLSIDE JUST OUTSIDE TOWN A ~~ROW~~ OF SMALL BUILDINGS---THE SCHOOL ASSOCIATED WITH MEIR BAAL HANES AND HIS GRAVE. PEOPLE BELIEVE A HOLY MAN IS BURIED HERE & THEY COME TO OFFER THEIR PRAYERS & ASK FOR MIRACLES--SOMETHING TRIVIAL LIKE HELP IN FINDING SOMETHING THEY'VE LOST, OR SOMETHING IMPORTANT, LIKE AN EXPECTANT MOTHER PRAYING FOR SUCCESSFUL CHILDBIRTH.



## TIBERIAS --5

THE GRAVE <sup>15</sup> ~~WAS NOT KNOWN~~ ASSOCIATED WITH <sup>A</sup> THE 2ND CENTURY SCHOLAR MEIR ~~BAAL HANES~~, WHO IS OFTEN QUOTED IN THE MISHNAH. **BUT** IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES IT WAS ASSOCIATED WITH A MAN NAMED MEIR KATZIM, A 10TH CENTURY PILGRIM, PROBABLY FROM PARIS, WHO WENT OUT TO THE HOLY LAND AND MUST HAVE DIED THERE <sup>AS</sup> A MARTYR. SOMEHOW HIS NAME, MEIR, GOT ASSOCIATED WITH THE GRAVE.

THE TRUTH IS, WE HAVEN'T THE FAINTEST IDEA WHO IS BURIED THERE. THE ONLY THING WE KNOW IS THAT IN THE 12TH CENTURY <sup>it is believed</sup> IT WAS A CENTER LIKE LOURDES OR ST. ANN DE BEAUPRE, A CENTER FOR JEWISH PIETY & HEALING, WHERE CURES & MIRACLES TOOK PLACE.

THE PECULIAR LEGEND OF THE SHRINE IS THAT THE GREAT RABBI MEIR BAAL HANES, THE MASTER OF THE MIRACLES, WAS BURIED HERE. AND IT'S THE ASSOCIATION WITH MIRACLES THAT MAKES TIBERIAS ONE OF ISRAEL'S FOUR HOLY CITIES.

THERE ARE OTHER HOLY GRAVES IN THE AREA: ~~OF~~ RABBI AKIBA, THE GREATEST OF THE TANNAITIC SAAGES: RABBI YOHAN <sup>BY</sup> BEN ZAKKAI, RABBI ELIEZER, EVEN MAIMONIDES. THESE ARE NOT THE ACTUAL GRAVES--- WE KNOW THAT MAIMONIDES DIED IN EGYPT & WAS BURIED THERE---BUT THEY WERE BELIEVED TO BE. IT WAS THE POWER OF THESE HOLY SITES, AS WELL AS THE ATTRACTION OF NEARBY HOT SPRINGS, THAT GUARANTEED TIBERIAS ATTENTION AND SETTLEMENT THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES.

EACH YEAR AFTER PESACH THERE IS A <sup>GREAT</sup> ~~CELEBRATION~~ PROCESSION OF PIOUS FOLK, FROM MAIMONIDES' GRAVE TO THE GRAVE OF MEIR BAAL HANES, WHEN MIRACLES REGULARLY OCCUR & PRAYERS ARE ANSWERED.



## TIBERIAS --6--7

ALL THIS IS A STRANGE FATE FOR A CITY DEDICATED TO A ROMAN EMPEROR. THE EMPEROR, TIBERIUS, WAS ONE OF THE DOUREST OF MEN, WITH NO PARTICULAR INTEREST IN JEWISH LIFE OR JEWISH HISTORY. IN THE FIRST CENTURY OF THIS ERA, THE ROMANS GAVE TO THE FAMILY OF HEROD AUTHORITY IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN. HEROD'S SON ANTIPAS WAS MADE GOVERNOR OF A TERRITORY INCLUDING SOUTHERN LEBANON, THE GALILEE, THE BEKKA VALLEY--WHICH WE KNOW AS THE PLACE OF SYRIAN MISSILES--AND THE GOLAN HEIGHTS. ANTIPAS DECIDED HE OUGHT TO HAVE SEVERAL ADMINISTRATIVE CENTERS & THAT ONE OF THEM SHOULD BE ON THE LOVELY SITE <sup>where he</sup> HALFWAY UP THE WESTERN SHORE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE. GOOD CLIMATE, HOT SPRINGS & A SPA. HE BEGAN IT IN THE YEAR 17, COMPLETED IT IN THE YEAR 29, IN TIME FOR THE EMPEROR TIBERIUS' 60TH BIRTHDAY.

ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THIS NEW CITY IS THAT AT FIRST GOOD JEWS REFUSED TO ENTER IT <sup>why?</sup> AS THEY WERE PUTTING IN FOUNDATIONS, THEY DISCOVERED THAT TIBERIAS WAS BEING BUILT OVER WHAT HAD ONCE BEEN A GRAVEYARD. ~~THE~~ BIBLICAL RULES DECLARE A PRIEST WHO ENTERS A GRAVEYARD IS RENDERED RITUALLY UNCLEAN. THE PHARISEES, WHO ESTABLISHED RABBINIC JUDAISM, ENLARGED MOST ~~THE~~ PRIESTLY RULES TO INCLUDE ALL JEWS. SO RABBINIC RULES SAID ANYONE LIVING IN A GRAVEYARD OR TOUCHING A CORPSE WAS DEFILED, AND ONLY AFTER ALL THE BONES HAD BEEN REMOVED & PROPERLY BURIED COULD YOU LIVE IN AN AREA WHICH HAD ONCE BEEN A GRAVEYARD.

WOULD COME ALONG, TAKE DOWN ALL THE STATUES OF THE ROMAN GODS, AND MAKE TIBERIAS INTO THE JERUSALEM OF THEIR DAY.



## TIBERIAS --7

ANTIPAS WASN'T BOTHERED BY THIS. NOR WERE THE ORDINARY JEWS OF THE COUNTRY, WHO HAD NO CONCERN, YET, WITH THE SUBTLETIES OF RABBINIC LAW. BUT SCHOLARS AND RABBIS REFUSED TO ENTER TIBERIAS.

~~THE~~ THE PARADOX IS THAT WITHIN 150 YEARS OF ITS FOUNDING, TIBERIAS HAD BECOME THE CENTER OF THE RABBINIC WORLD. ~~IT~~ REMAINED SO FOR 2 TO 3 HUNDRED YEARS. IT WAS IN TIBERIAS THAT THE MISHNAH WAS PUBLISHED. IT WAS IN TIBERIAS THAT THE GREAT SANHEDRIN MET, OVER A 3-CENTURY PERIOD. IT WAS IN TIBERIAS THAT THE PATRIARCH, THE CENTRAL AUTHORITY OF RABBINIC LIFE OF THOSE TIMES, LIVED.

**WHY**

~~WHY~~ DID THE REVERSAL TAKE PLACE?

OUT OF NECESSITY. THERE WAS NO OTHER PLACE IN THE HOLY LAND WHERE JEWISH LIFE COULD THRIVE.

I'M SURE THAT IF ANTIPAS HAD A LONG-RANGE PLAN FOR THE CITY, HE HOPED IT WOULD BECOME ONE OF THE GREAT TOURIST CENTERS OF THE ROMAN WORLD. HE ESTABLISHED GREAT ROMAN BATHS--WHERE STATUES OF TYCHE & ZEUS WERE PROMINENTLY DISPLAYED--AND THEATERS AND MONUMENTAL BUILDINGS. AS AN ENTREPRENEUR, ANTIPAS ~~WAS~~ **MUST** HAVE DREAMED OF THE SPA & BATHS OF TIBERIAS ADDING VALUE TO HIS KINGDOM.

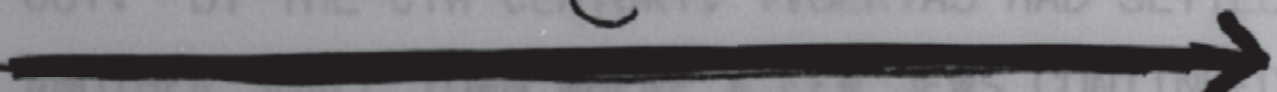
THE LAST THING HE HAD IN MIND, I'M SURE, WAS THAT SOME JEWS WOULD COME ALONG, TAKE DOWN ALL THE STATUES OF THE ROMAN GODS, AND MAKE TIBERIAS INTO THE JERUSALEM OF THEIR DAY.



THREE THINGS CONSPIRED TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN. FIRST, JEWS HAVE ALWAYS ENJOYED WARMTH IN THE WINTER. SECOND JEWS HAVE ALWAYS ENJOYED SPAS. AND THIRD--THE MOST POLITICAL OF ALL REASONS--TIBERIAS ESCAPED MOST OF THE DAMAGE WHICH THE TWO GREAT REVOLTS AGAINST ROME HAD INFLICTED ON MOST OF THE CITIES IN JUDEA AND IN THE GALILEE. IN THE DIFFICULT YEARS FOLLOWING THE BAR KOCHBA DEFEATS--BETWEEN THE YEARS 132 & 135, WHICH ENDED AT MASADA--ROME CLOSED JERUSALEM TO JEWISH SETTLEMENT & CONTROLLED THE MEDITERRANEAN COAST. TIBERIAS, OF NECESSITY, BECAME THE CENTER OF JEWISH INTELLECTUAL LIFE.

A STORY TRIED TO EXPLAIN THIS CHANGE IN SIMPLE, PIOUS TERMS. ITS CENTRAL FIGURE IS A SCHOLAR, SIMEON BAR YOHAI, A CONTEMPORARY OF RABBI MEIR AND RABBI AKIBA. SIMEON WAS TO BECOME ONE OF THE BEST KNOWN MYSTICS OF JEWISH LIFE, ASSUMED TO HAVE BEEN A KABBALIST, BELIEVED TO BE THE AUTHOR OF THE GREAT BOOK OF JEWISH MYSTICISM, THE ZOHAR.

IN FACT, WE KNOW ONLY THIS OF SIMEON BAR YOHAI: THAT DURING THE ~~FINAL~~ BAR KOCHBA REVOLT, HE WAS AN ARDENT REBEL. THE ROMANS PUT A PRICE ON HIS HEAD. UNLIKE RABBI AKIBA, WHO WAS CAPTURED & EXECUTED, SIMEON BAR YOHAI MANAGED TO ELUDE THE ROMANS. HE & HIS SON LIVED FOR YEARS IN CAVES IN THE WILDERNESS, TRYING DESPERATELY TO SURVIVE.

FINALLY, WHEN THE ~~RABELS~~ AGAINST ROME WERE PARDONED, <sup>AND</sup> IT WAS SAFE FOR THEM TO COME OUT OF HIDING, THIS SCHOLAR, WHO HAD LIVED 14 YEARS IN THE DARK & COLD OF THE CAVES, CAME OUT CRIPPLED WITH ARTHRITIS. 



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TIBERIAS IS KNOWN FOR ITS HOT SPRINGS. SO, ~~THE~~ SIMEON ~~WAS TAKEN~~ BAR YOHAI ~~WAS~~ THERE. HE SAT THERE WITH THE HEAT, AND SLOWLY THE ARTHRITIS BEGAN TO LEAVE HIS ACHING BONES, AND HE WAS VERY GRATEFUL TO TIBERIAS. BUT AT THE SAME TIME HE RECOGNIZED THE VALUE OF TIBERIAS & ITS HOT SPRINGS, HE UNDERSTOOD THE RABBINIC PROBLEM. HE PUT HIS MIND TO SOLVING IT. HE SAW THAT TIBERIAS'S TOP SOIL WAS VERY SHALLOW, AND BELOW IT, ONLY AN INCH OR SO, ~~WAS~~ GRAVEL & BASALT STONE. SO HE HAD BUSHES PLANTED WHICH HAD VERY DEEP ROOTS. WHEREVER THEY ~~DO~~ NOT GROW & FLOURISH, THE LAND HAD NOT BEEN TOUCHED. WHEREVER THEY ~~DO~~ GROW, IT MEANT THEIR ROOTS ~~HAD~~ REACHED DOWN INTO SOFT SOIL, A CLEAR SIGN THAT SOMEBODY ~~HAD~~ ALREADY CUT INTO THAT AREA. TO DIG IN THOSE SOFT AREAS ~~WAS~~ TO FIND ~~THE~~ WHATEVER BONES ~~HAD~~ BEEN BURIED THERE. AND WHEN THOSE BONES HAD BEEN REMOVED, SIMEON BAR YOHAI DECLARED THE CITY OF TIBERIAS CLEAN. UNTIL THE 14TH & 15TH CENTURIES.

IT WAS FIT TO BECOME THE CENTER OF JEWISH LIFE. THERE, AS I'VE SAID, THE MISHNAH WAS PUBLISHED. THERE IN AND IN SEVERAL SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES, THE GREAT YESHIVAHs OF PALESTINE MET, FOR THE DISCUSSIONS THAT NOW CONSTITUTE THE BULK OF THE MATERIAL IN THE PALESTINEAN TALMUD. MANY WAYS A PROTOTYPE OF MODERN ZIONISM.

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN SPAIN ~~WAS~~ UNTIL THE BUT BY THE 5TH CENTURY, THE HANDWRITING WAS ON THE WALL. THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE BECAME MORE & MORE POWERFUL AND OPPOSED ANY KIND OF RABBINIC PRESENCE. THE CHURCH ~~PUT THE SCREWS ON TIBERIAS~~, CUT OFF THE JEWS' MEANS OF SUPPORT AND FORCED THEM OUT. BY THE 6TH CENTURY, TIBERIAS HAD SETTLED INTO BEING JUST ANOTHER SMALL TOWN WHERE A FEW JEWS CONTINUED TO LIVE.



## TIBERIAS --10

YET THROUGHOUT THE SUBSEQUENT CENTURIES, TIBERIAS WAS PERIODICALLY A CREATIVE CENTER.

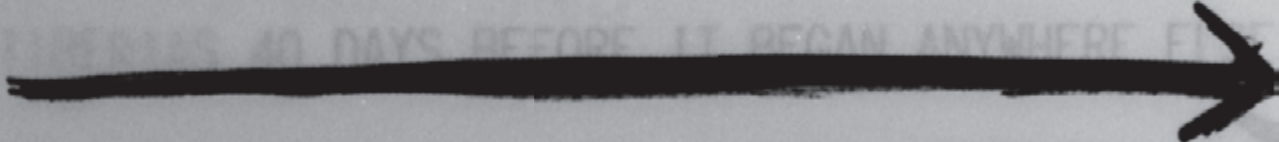
--ONE OF THE GREAT POETS AND HYMNISTS OF OUR TRADITION, ELIEZER KALIR, WHO LIVED IN THE 7TH CENTURY, WAS BORN & SPENT HIS LIFE IN TIBERIAS.

--IN THE 8TH & 9TH CENTURIES TIBERIAS WAS THE CENTER OF A CIRCLE OF GRAMMARIANS, KNOWN AS THE MASORETES, WHO PRODUCED THE CRITICAL EDITION OF THE BIBLE WHICH IS STILL, TODAY, THE ACCEPTED EDITION. THE MASORETES DETERMINED THE SPELLING OF WORDS, THE DIVISION OF SENTENCES, THE PUNCTUATION & THE STRESSES OF THE BIBLE. THEIR WORK CULMINATED IN THE BEN ASHER CODEX, A HANDWRITTEN SCRIPT STILL THE ACCREDITED AND ACCEPTED TEXT OF THE BIBLE.

BUT FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE CRUSADES, AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 2ND MILLENNIUM <sup>FROM</sup> THE 11TH CENTURY, UNTIL THE 14TH & 15TH CENTURIES, TIBERIAS WAS A RELATIVELY RUINED SUITE, EMPTY OF ~~PEOPLE~~ PEOPLE. ONLY THE GREAT RABBINIC GRAVES CONTINUED TO ATTRACT PILGRIMS.

THEN IN THE 16TH CENTURY TIBERIAS ENJOYED A REVIVAL, A VERY BRIEF ONE, WHICH WAS IN MANY WAYS A PROTOTYPE OF MODERN ZIONISM.

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN SPAIN ~~UNTIL~~ UNTIL THE END OF THE 15TH CENTURY, WAS POWERFUL & WEALTHY, AND HAD DEVELOPED ~~INTO~~ THE CENTER OF JEWISH LIFE. UNFORTUNATELY, IN 1492, ALL JEWS IN SPAIN WERE ORDERED TO CONVERT OR TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY WITHIN 6 MONTHS.





THE POOR, FOR THE MOST PART, LEFT. THE RICH, FOR THE MOST PART, CONVERTED. <sup>whereas</sup> SOME BECAME THE MARRANOS WE KNOW IN OUR HISTORY--BUT IT'S NOT AS WELL KNOWN THAT SOME MARRANO <sup>or</sup> FAMILIES RECONVERTED.

AMONG THEM WAS THE NASI FAMILY, THE ROTHSCHILDS OF THEIR TIME. THEY LIVED IN PORTUGAL <sup>G</sup> FOR A TIME, WENT TO ANTWERP WHICH WAS THEN THE CENTER OF BANKING, THEN TO VENICE, & FINALLY FLED VENICE FOR CONSTANTINOPLE, WHERE THEY RECONVERTED TO JUDAISM.

IN THE SAME PERIOD OF TIME, THE <sup>EARLY</sup> 16TH CENTURY, THE TURKS TOOK CONTROL OF THE MIDDLE EAST. THEY WERE SHREWD BUSINESS FOLK WHO RECOGNIZED THAT THE SPANISH EXILES WERE WEALTHY & TALENTED. THEY ENCOURAGED THE JEWS TO MOVE INTO TURKEY BECAUSE THEY SAW THE JEWS AS AGENTS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE TURKISH EMPIRE. OF COURSE, THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THESE FAMILIES, THE NASI FAMILY, WAS WELCOME IN CONSTANTINOPLE.

~~AN INTERESTING PSYCHOLOGICAL THING HAPPENED AMONG MARRANOS. THEY DEVELOPED THE PIETY THAT THEY HAD TO BE BURIED IN THE HOLY LAND. POSSIBLY IT WAS BECAUSE THEY SUFFERED A SENSE OF GUILT, HAVING ONCE BEEN CHRISTIANS, AND THE IDEA OF BURIAL IN THE HOLY LAND HELPED TO RELIEVE THEIR GUILT.~~

THE HEAD OF THE NASI FAMILY WAS A STRONG-WILLED WOMAN, DONNA GARCIA NASI. SHE DECLARED THAT SHE WAS TO BE BURIED IN TIBERIAS, IN PART BECAUSE OF THE PIOUS TRADITION THAT RESURRECTION WOULD BEGIN IN TIBERIAS 40 DAYS BEFORE IT BEGAN ANYWHERE ELSE.





## TIBERIAS --12

BUT SHE WAS NOT ABOUT TO GO TO TIBERIAS WITHOUT HAVING A LOVELY HOUSE THERE TO LIVE IN. SHE COMMANDED HER SON-IN-LAW, JOSEPH NASI, TO BUILD A PALACE FOR HER IN TIBERIAS WHERE SHE WOULD LIVE OUT HER OLD AGE. BESIDES THAT, SHE WANTED HIM TO BRING TO TIBERIAS A NUMBER OF HOLY MEN FROM SAFED, SO THEY COULD STUDY & PRAY & GUARANTEE THAT SHE WOULD GET WHAT SHE WANTED IN THE NEXT WORLD.

JOSEPH BEGAN HIS PROJECT IN 1558. DONNA GARCIA WAS STILL AN OLD-FASHIONED LADY WHOSE DECISION TO GO TO THE HOLY LAND WAS BASED ON PIETY. JOSEPH NASI WAS THE FIRST MODERN ZIONIST. HE SAW A TREMENDOUS NUMBER OF JEWISH REFUGEES COMING OUT OF THE LOWLANDS AND ITALY, WHERE THE COUNTER-REFORMATION HAD PUT THE CHURCH ON ITS MUSCLE AND ENDANGERED JEWISH COMMUNITIES. WHAT COULD BE DONE WITH THESE JEWS COMING TO THE EAST? MOST WANTED TO LIVE IN CONSTANTINOPLE & SALONICA, BUT THERE WEREN'T ENOUGH JOBS & THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO SUPPORT THE NEWCOMERS.

WHY NOT FIND A PIECE OF LAND WHERE THEY CAN DEVELOP THEIR OWN ECONOMY AND BE RELATIVE MASTERS OF THEIR OWN FATE? JOSEPH NASI SAW THAT TIBERIAS LAY IN RUINS & THAT THE LAND AROUND THE SEA OF GALILEE WAS NOT BEING USED FOR ANYTHING. AND HE RECOGNIZED THAT THE TURKS MIGHT WELCOME A FRIENDLY GROUP OF PEOPLE IN THAT AREA, AS A BUFFER AGAINST THE BEDOUIN WHO, FROM TIME TO TIME, RAIDED THE UNDERBELLY OF TURKEY ITSELF.

AND FOR ABOUT 30 YEARS HIS PLANS WENT AHEAD.



## TIBERIAS --13

SO JOSEPH NASI WENT TO THE EMPEROR SULEIYMAN AND AGREED TO PAY A SUM OF MONEY FOR THE EMPEROR'S PERMISSION TO REESTABLISH THE CITY WALLS OF TIBERIAS AND TO SETTLE JEWS THERE. HE KNEW THAT SILK--A PRECIOUS COMMODITY--HAD BEEN GROWN IN THE AREA IN THE 3RD OR 4TH CENTURIES AND THAT THE REGION WAS CONDUCTIVE TO SILK CULTIVATION. SO THE JEWS WOULD HAVE A HOME & AN OCCUPATION.

THE MARRANOS OF JOSEPH'S DAY DIDN'T WANT TO GO TO THE PROVINCES. <sup>HE SENT</sup> JOSEPH BEGAN HIS PROJECT IN 1558, ~~BY SENDING HIS~~ HIS MOST TRUSTED LIEUTENANTS TO TIBERIAS, SO HE COULD STAY AT THE COURT AND DEFEND HIS INTERESTS--<sup>OTHER</sup> WITH POWERFUL COURTIER'S AROUND, YOU DON'T GO FAR FROM YOUR EMPEROR. IN A MATTER OF A YEAR, THE JEWS WHO HAD GONE TO TIBERIAS HAD COMPLETED A CITY WALL 2 MILES LONG AND HAD ESTABLISHED THE FIRST SYNAGOGUE. DONNA GARCIA'S PALACE WAS UNDERWAY, & THE SILK WORM WAS AGAIN BEING CULTIVATED.

AND, OF COURSE, YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPEN<sup>E</sup>ED. AN AREA THAT NOBODY HAD WANTED, SUDDENLY EVERYBODY WANTED. LOCAL SHEIKHS COMPLAINED TO THE EMPEROR THAT THE JEWS HAD DESTROYED AN OLD CHURCH---IN FACT, IT HAD BEEN DESTROYED 500 YEARS EARLIER--AND THAT THEY COULDN'T BE TRUSTED. ONE LOCAL SHEIKH SAID HE'D DISCOVERED AN ANCIENT BOOK IN WHICH A MUSLIM SAINT HAD WRITTEN THAT IF THE JEWS REESTABLISHED TIBERIAS, ISLAM WOULD FAIL.

IT COST JOSEPH A LOT OF MONEY TO HANDLE THESE AFFAIRS. BUT HE WAS, TO USE MODERN VERNACULAR, TIGHT WITH SULEIYMAN, AND FOR ABOUT 30 YEARS HIS PLANS WENT AHEAD.



## TIBERIAS --L4

BUT HE FAILED IN THE END, IN THE SAME WAY THE EARLY ZIONISTS FALTERED. WHY? LOOK AT ZIONISM. FOR EVERY JEW WHO LEFT GROUPS CZARIST RUSSIA & ITS POGROMS TO GO TO THE HOLY LAND, A THOUSAND CAME TO THE UNITED STATES. NEARLY EVERY JEW VOTED AGAINST ZIONISM WITH HIS FEET--HE WENT ELSEWHERE.

THE MARRANOS OF JOSEPH'S DAY DIDN'T WANT TO GO TO THE PROVINCES, TO INLAND CITIES LIKE TIBERIAS WHERE ~~WAS~~ <sup>THERE</sup> WAS LITTLE CULTURE AND NO THEATER OR MUSIC, ONLY FIELDS TO CULTIVATE AND HARD WORK. THEY WANTED TO STAY IN CONSTANTINOPLE & SALONICA & ISMIR.

THIS PATTERN SAYS SOMETHING WHICH IS TRUE ABOUT THE HUMAN SPIRIT GENERALLY. WE ARE CREATURES OF HABIT. WE ARE REALLY AFRAID TO TRY DIFFERENT KINDS OF LIVING. WE ARE AFRAID TO BE PART OF A NEW EXPERIMENT. WHAT SAVED MODERN ISRAEL WAS THAT THE PERSECUTIONS ~~WERE~~ WERE SO UNIVERSAL, SO CONSISTENT, ~~AND~~ THAT MANY WHO WENT THERE HAD NO ALTERNATIVE. SO MANY DOORS WERE SHUT AGAINST THE REFUGEES

AFTER 30 YEARS OF JOSEPH'S EXPERIMENT THERE WERE NOT YET A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF JEWS IN TIBERIAS TO ENABLE THE ECONOMY TO FLOURISH. LOCAL ARABS DID EXACTLY WHAT LOCAL ARABS OF THE 20TH CENTURY ~~DID~~ --THEY ATTACKED FIRST THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE SETTLEMENT, THEN THE SETTLEMENT ITSELF. WHEN JOSEPH DIED, NO ONE ELSE WAS QUITE AS INTERESTED IN THIS ZIONIST EXPERIMENT, AND ~~AND~~ AROUND 1600 OR 1610 HIS NOBLE EXPERIMENT WAS OVER.



## TIBERIAS --15

TIBERIAS SETTLED BACK TO BEING A HOLY CITY, A CITY OF GRAVES & PILGRIMS & MIRACLES. IN THE 18TH CENTURY <sup>SOME</sup> HASIDIC GROUPS CAME THERE. IN THE 19TH CENTURY MORE OF THE PIOUS OF EASTERN EUROPE ARRIVED. THEN IN THE 20TH CENTURY TIBERIAS BEGAN TO HAVE ITS MODERN DEVELOPMENT, BECAUSE IT WAS THE ONLY VIABLE CITY ~~IN THE AREA OF THE GALILEE.~~ IN THE AREA OF THE GALILEE.

IT BECAME THE HUB & TRANSPORT CENTER FOR THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES. YOUNG FARMERS OF THE LOCAL KIBBUTZIM SWAM & RELAXED THERE--IT BECAME AN EARLY EILAT, A RESORT FOR THE FARMERS & YOUNG PIONEERS, AND HAS RETAINED THAT TRADITION TO THIS DAY.

IF YOU VISIT TIBERIAS TODAY, YOU'LL FIND A CITY THAT IS ARCHITECTURALLY LOVELY, ON THE SHORE OF THE LAKE. THE RUINS ABOVE THE CITY ARE OF CRUSADER TIMES & LATER. YOU WILL NOT FIND THE ULTRA PIOUS MUCH <sup>IN EVIDENCE</sup> ONLY ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE HOLY GRAVES. THEY CONTINUE TO HOLD TO THE PIETY THAT THE RESURRECTION WILL BEGIN IN TIBERIAS 40 DAYS BEFORE IT BEGINS FOR THE REST OF US. SO ARRANGE TO BE BURIED IN TIBERIAS RATHER THAN IN MAYFIELD IF YOU ARE EAGER FOR THE AFTERWORLD.