

Hanukah: Myths and Truths

The American Interest

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Hanukah may be the best-known Jewish holiday to non-Jews in America, though that doesn't mean non-Jews know much about it. That's natural. As it turns out, most American Jews know a lot less about the holiday than they suppose, having never gotten beyond the Sunday school "Cliff's Notes" version of events. That not so natural, so it seems to me that on this last day of Hanukah of the year 5775 I might offer a remedy to all the ecumenically curious, in more or less the same spirit with which I have previously discussed [New Year's Eve](#), [Thanksgiving](#), [Groundhog's Day](#), and a few other notably auspicious markers of the seasons.

First, after placing Hanukah in the contextual firmament of the Jewish liturgical calendar, I will relate the standard Jewish "Sunday school" version. This will be told in the Midrashic tense, so to speak, by which I mean an inside-the-tradition story in which there are no complications, no ambiguities, no difficult questions. That's how you teach religious traditions to kids, and that's how religions themselves compose tradition; they smooth out unruly chronologies and de-simplifying complications. Hence they must to a certain degree ignore actual history and real historical sources, because these make things inconvenient.

Then, second, I will tell you what really happened, and why. For Jews whose Jewish education ended before reaching the post-Midrashic stage, some of this reality-intrusion may cause some discomfort. It may make one feel a little like an adolescent Christian child upon some adult's first earnestly confiding that there really is, in fact, no Santa Claus. If that's you, sorry, but that's the way the *dreidel* spins.

Hanukah is a minor holiday in the Jewish calendar, more or less on a par with Purim in that both are post-Torah-based. In other words, Hanukah is of less significance than the weekly Sabbath, than the three pilgrim festivals, *Succot* (Tabernacles), *Pesach* (Passover), and *Shavuoth* (Weeks), and than the High Holy Days, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Unlike these other holidays, there are no

rabbinic prohibitions on going to work, using machines and electricity and such on Hanukah and Purim.

Hanukah is in some ways even more minor than Purim because Purim is based on a story that is part of the Hebrew Bible: the Scroll of Esther. The books that (sort of) tell the story of Hanukah, Maccabees I and II, are not part of the Hebrew Bible (for a reason I explain below). Moreover, in the Mishna, the oldest, first part of the Talmud, there is some discussion about Purim, but virtually nothing about Hanukah.

Okay, so here's the in-the-tradition story. The Selucid (sometimes called Syrian) Greek bad guys, led by the evil King Antiochus, ban Judaism in effect and defile the Temple with idolatrous statues, pigs, and other disgusting things. The Jews rise up in righteous revolt against a vastly superior military force, but by fighting a guerilla war, and of course with God's help, they win, drive the foreigners out of Jerusalem, and rededicate the Temple. Problem was, when they went to do that by lighting the Menorah, only one unadulterated cruse of olive oil could be found, reckoned to be enough to last for only one day. But it lasted for eight days, a miracle, hence the eight days of Hanukah, in which we celebrate religious freedom, political liberty from tyrannical foreign rule, and victory in a just war—the balance of merit among these celebratory themes depending on whether you live in the diaspora or in Israel, and if in the former how Zionist you tend to be.

Very nice story; it has almost nothing to do with what actually happened. The “Sunday school” story is short, simple, and takes place within a reasonably brief time period. What actually happened was anything but simple, and it took far longer to develop and play out. One can think metaphorically of the two versions as being a kind of mental poetry and prose. In the end, what we may have, if we like and try, is a mix of the two: *prosimy*, if I may invent a word for it.

What actually happened has to do with an argument *among Jews* that got completely out of hand when it collided with a series of imperial intrigues. It was basically an argument between two points of view that mixed abstractions and interests (as always), but (also as always) with variations and fluctuations, mind-changes and betrayals. To simplify somewhat, one side, those who later (in Hasmonean times, see below) became known as Saducees, were religious

conservatives but pro-Hellenist cultural liberals; the proto-Pharisees were religious innovators but anti-Hellenist cultural conservatives. Before the events that Hanukkah is all about happened, the tendency that later became identified as Pharisaic held the High Priesthood and the upper hand in the debate; but a revolt displaced them before they regained control. Amid that revolt, and largely because of it, Hanukkah happened. In other words, to foreshadow the key shift from the Sunday school version to the real one, both the good guys and the bad guys in the drama were Jews; the Selucid Greeks were mere props, bystanders, and mostly clueless participants in what was, for them, a matter of mere imperial maintenance.

Here, basically and in brief, is how some mightily complicated things proceeded. You will note as we go that philosophical and theological disagreements, human venality and heroism, culture, and garden-variety political intrigue are all mixed together. That's how life in the real world really is, so to describe the feel of events all these elements are necessary—even if they may seem to some readers a bit tedious.

When Alexander the Great died in 323 BCE, his empire fractionated. The Selucids, so-called in the history books, ruled Judea from their capital at Antioch (modern Antarkya, in Turkey's Hatay province) in a region even then called Syria (*Suriya*). But as was the custom of empire in those pre-centralized days of distributed imperial systems, they left the Jews more or less alone as long as they paid their taxes and didn't cause trouble. The Selucids, after all, had much bigger strategic fish to fry, and plenty of trouble from other quarters—Parthians (basically ancient Iranians) not least. In 187 BCE the Selucid King, Antiochus III died, and Seleucus IV succeeded him. He was a normal guy and a regular sort of Selucid King. He had fine relations with the Jewish High Priests of his day, first Simon II and then Onias III. These were traditionalist High Priests, cultural conservatives who were leery of Hellenistic ways, but who were shrewd enough not to poke the hive of their imperial overlords.

The basic ideological divide of the time, if I may simplify only a little, is that the Greeks thought that beauty was holy, and the Jews thought holiness was beautiful. Seems like a small difference, but it wasn't. In the Hellenistic culture of the day, along with its aesthetic and philosophic/proto-scientific accomplishments, its wealth and its power, there was at least *de facto* social sanction for infanticide and

patricide, slavery (as opposed to indentured servitude, which is actually what is discussed in the Torah), male homosexuality up to and including pederasty, concubinage outside of marriage, and, least of all I suppose, public sports nudity, among other things. Call them stuffy and old-fashioned, but Jewish traditionalists could not abide such behaviors, all of them prohibited by Jewish law and custom.

Bad stuff started happening in 176 BCE when one of Seleucus IV's viziers, Heliodorus, assassinated him. Among Heliodorus's other smarmy deeds, he plotted with Simon the Benjamite to raid the Temple treasury; Onias III foiled the plot. Then Antiochus Epiphanes, later and since known as Antiochus IV, the murdered Seleucus's younger brother, ousted Heliodorus with the help of Pergamum King Eumenes II, of the Attalid dynasty (don't ask; this is complicated enough as it is). The younger brother ruled as regent in the name of his own son, the infant Antiochus, while the true heir, the son of Seleucus IV (Demetrios I Soter), was held hostage in Rome (again, don't ask or we'll be here all day).

Meanwhile, back in Jerusalem, Onias's younger brother Joshua, a.k.a. Jason (the Hellenized form of Joshua, and he was indeed a Hellenist), managed in 175 BCE to persuade Antiochus IV to make him High Priest. How? He paid him, as well as fawned over him. Antiochus soon granted Jason permission to turn Jerusalem into a Hellenic city called Antiochia, an edict that put the character of Jerusalem and the second Temple within it in jeopardy to the cultural winds of the imperial power. Antiochus visited Jerusalem in 174 BCE to see the progress being made, which required a number of obligatory architectural projects, which just by the way did nothing to harm his thriving patronage network (some things never change).

Not long afterwards, Jason was driven from priesthood by a group of other priests who accused him of shirking and messing up his religious duties. In 171 BCE he was replaced by one of the dissenters, Meneleus. But Meneleus turned out to be even worse than Jason. He tried to rob the Temple treasury himself, partly to pay for his office and partly for other reasons. He also became an opportunistic Hellenizer. The displaced Onias III, ever the good guy, accused him of heinous plans; so Meneleus had him murdered.

Meanwhile, Antiochus IV readied plans to invade Ptolomaic Egypt, one of the other three divisions of Alexander's once unified empire. In 168 BCE Antiochus

led his army south. An old Roman ambassador, named Gaius Popillius Laenas, drew a since-become-famous line in the sand and dared Antiochus to cross it. Antiochus took a look around, saw that he was outmatched and his arrival rather too much anticipated, and turned out to be smart enough not to cross it.

Nevertheless, a rumor spread back in Jerusalem that Antiochus had died in battle, which led Jason to try to seize power in Jerusalem from Meneleus—not just priestly power, but actual power. This catalyzed a small war among the Jews that was partly ideological (Hellenizers against anti-Hellenizers) but also partly family- and interest-based; many people were massacred outside of any actual combat. In the end, Jason failed, but more important, Antiochus was angered by the civil strife, which forced him to use troops to quell the disturbances when he had more important problems to solve. He could not possibly have given less of a damn about Jewish religious arguments one way or the other. He trusted Meneleus, however, to keep a grip on things once his troops had restored order, and some of those troops remained at Meneleus' disposal. In 176 BCE, Meneleus, seeming to rather enjoy the reflected glow of imperial power and the benefits it brought him, set about accelerating and deepening the Hellenization of Jerusalem. He even put a statue of Zeus before the Holy of Holies in the Temple, something no overlord Selucid official had ever asked him to do.

That's when the revolt started. A man named Mattathias (Matithyahu in Hebrew), together with his five sons Judah, Eleazar, Simon, Jochanan, and Jonathan, rebelled not so much against the Seleucid ruler but against Meneleus and his supporters, and they succeeded. After Mattathias's death in 166 BCE, Judah assumed leadership of the revolt in accordance with the deathbed disposition of his father.

Mindful of the superiority of Seleucid forces during the first two years of the revolt, Judah's strategy was to avoid involvement with their regular army; he resorted instead to guerrilla warfare in order to use local knowledge—*metis*—to advantage and thus give the enemy a sharp sense of insecurity on alien turf. (Some chauvinistic accounts of Hanukkah claim that Judah was the first ever to use a guerrilla war strategy; this is as ridiculous as the contention that Judah's cook invented potato pancakes.) In any event, the strategy enabled Judah to win a string of victories. At the battle of Nahal el-Haramiah (*wadi haramia*), he defeated a small Selucid force under the command of Apollonius, governor of Samaria, who

was killed in the combat. Judah took possession of Apollonius's sword and used it until his death as a symbol of vengeance. After Nahal el-Haramiah, recruits flocked to the Jewish cause, giving rise to the first and true "rebel alliance."

Shortly thereafter, Judah routed a bigger Seleucid army under the command of Seron near Beth-Horon, largely thanks to a good choice of battlefield. Then in the Battle of Emmaus, Judah defeated Seleucid forces led by generals Nicanor and Gorgias. This force was dispatched by Lysias, whom Antiochus left in Judea as viceroy after departing on a campaign against the Parthians. By a forced night march, Judah succeeded in eluding Gorgias, who had intended to destroy the Jewish forces in their camp with his cavalry. While Gorgias was searching for him in the mountains, Judah made a surprise attack upon the Seleucid rear at the Battle of Emmaus. The Seleucid commander had no alternative but to withdraw to the coast.

The defeat at Emmaus convinced Lysias that he needed to prepare for a prolonged war. He accordingly assembled a new and larger army and marched with it on Judea from the south via Idumea. He failed. After several years of conflict Judah and his army drove out their foes from Jerusalem, except for the garrison in the citadel of Acre. Hanukah—the rededication of the Temple, that's what the word means, "dedication"—then happened, in 164 BCE, on the 25th of the Jewish month of Kislev.

But that happy event marked neither the end of the external war nor the internal one. With an eye toward total the restoration of total Jewish political independence, Judah then laid siege to the Selucid citadel in Acre. The besieged, who included not only Selucid Greeks but also many Hellenistic Jews, appealed for help to Lysias, who by now had effectively become the regent of the young king Antiochus V Eupator after the death of Antiochus Epiphanes at the end of 164 BCE during the Parthian campaign. Lysias, together with Eupator, set out for a new campaign in Judea. Lysias skirted Judea as he had done in his first campaign, entering it from the south, and besieged Beth-Zur.

Judah raised the siege of the Acre and went to meet Lysias. In the Battle of Beth-Zechariah, south of Bethlehem, the Seleucids achieved their first major victory over the Maccabees; Judah was forced to withdraw to Jerusalem. Beth-Zur was

compelled to surrender and Lysias soon reached Jerusalem, laying siege to the city. The Jewish defenders found themselves in a precarious situation because their provisions were exhausted, it being a sabbatical year during which the fields had been left uncultivated.

However, just as capitulation seemed imminent, Lysias and Eupator were forced to withdraw when Antiochus Epiphanes' commander-in-chief, Philip, whom the late ruler had appointed regent before his death, rebelled against Lysias and was about to enter Antioch to seize power. Lysias decided to propose a peaceful settlement, which was concluded at the end of 163 BCE. He also decided to execute Meneleus, the corrupt and utterly venal Jewish High Priest whose excesses and hopelessly poor judgment had essentially caused the war.

The terms of peace were based on the restoration of religious freedom, permission for Jews to live in accordance with their own laws, and the official return of the Temple to the Jews—in other words, more or less the *status quo ante*, which represented a significant brake on the power of Hellenism among the Jews. Alas, the settlement didn't last. Lysias defeated Philip, but only to be overthrown by Demetrius, the true heir to the throne. Demetrius then appointed Alcimus (Yakim), another Hellenist Jew, as High Priest, a choice the Hasidim ("pietists" of that day, not the current followers of the Baal Shem Tov) might have accepted since he was of priestly descent. But no, they didn't accept him.

Thus, when war against the Jewish external enemy came to a (temporary) end, a new internal struggle broke out, yet again, between the party led by Judah and the Hellenist party. The influence of the Jewish Hellenizers had all but collapsed in the wake of the Seleucid defeat, but after a short, benign interlude, Alcimus proved to be nearly as bad as Meneleus. When Alcimus executed sixty priests who were opposed to him—not even the sordid religious politics of today's Israeli Orthodox rabbinate has fallen *that* far—he found himself in open conflict with the Maccabees. Alcimus then fled from Jerusalem to the Seleucid king, asking for help.

Meanwhile, Demetrius I Soter, son of Seleucus IV Philopator and nephew of the late Antiochus IV Epiphanes, fled from Rome in defiance of the Roman Senate, arrived in Syria, captured and killed Lysias and Antiochus Eupator, and usurped (or depending on your point of view, claimed) the throne. It was thus Demetrius to

whom the delegation led by Alcimus complained of the persecution of the Hellenist party in Judea. Demetrius granted Alcimus' request to be appointed High Priest under the protection of the king's army, which he dispatched to Judea under the command of a general named Bacchides. The weaker Jewish army couldn't stand against this much larger force and so withdrew from Jerusalem in order to return to guerrilla warfare.

Alas, there was no one to fight. As it happened, Bacchides' army had return to Antioch because of the continued turbulent political situation in the capital. Judah's forces returned to Jerusalem and the Selucids then dispatched yet another army, again led by Nicanor. In a battle near Adasa, on the 13th of Adar in 161 BCE, the Selucid army was annihilated and Nicanor was killed. Judah and his army commenced to chase the Selucids halfway to Damascus. The annual "Day of Nicanor" was instituted, back in the day, to commemorate this whomping victory.

Meanwhile, the Jews made a deal — with Rome. The Roman-Jewish Treaty, an agreement made between Judah Maccabee and the Roman Republic in 161 BCE, was the first recorded formal contact between the Jewish people and the Romans — so says Maccabees I and the famous historian Josephus. It was designed to deter the Selucids, in return for which the Romans gained an ally on a competitor's flank.

From the Jewish point of view, it was a really bad idea. The agreement with Rome failed to have any effect on Demetrius's policy. On receipt of the news of Nicanor's defeat, he dispatched a new army, again commanded by Bacchides. This time his force of 20,000 men was numerically so superior that most of Judah's men left the field of battle and advised their leader to do likewise. However, Judah decided to stand his ground. In the Battle of Elasa, Judah and those who remained faithful to him were killed. His body was taken by his brothers from the battlefield and buried in the family sepulcher at Modi'in.

The death of Judah, in 160 BCE, stirred the Jews to renewed resistance. After several additional years of war under the leadership of two of Mattathias' other sons (Jonathan and Simon), the Jews finally regained political independence under what became known as the Hasmonean dynasty and, with it, secured the liberty to worship freely.

Aside from knowing that Syria was a huge mess a long time ago, as it is again today, what has all this to do with the candles and the *hanukiyah* (the 8+1 branched Menorah) and what Jews do today to celebrate Hanukah? Nothing, pretty much.

First of all, during Hasmonean times no one called the celebrations Hanukah. They called it *Urim* (“Lights”), after the way Judah pulled off the rededication ceremony. Josephus, writing in the 1st century, refers to this term (as does Maccabees I); in his day he had never heard the term Hanukah, for it had not yet been invented.

Here is what probably happened, not with respect to the politico-military aspect of events, but with the religious one. A few months before 25 Kislev came time for the major festival of *Succot* (Tabernacles), an eight-day autumn holiday. This could not be celebrated in Jerusalem as usual because of the war not having yet been won; there were no parades of people with *lulavim* (palm branches) and *ethrogim* (citrons), and the water festival with its fountains and torches, the spectacle of the year up on the Temple Mount as it had been for centuries, could not be performed either. Now, the guerilla soldiers were able to build huts and live in them as one is supposed to do on *Succot*; the rest had to be set aside, temporarily. But the first thing they did once in control of the Temple was to celebrate *Succot*, a little late. This was permissible because the Torah states, in chapter 9 of the book of Numbers, that if you could not celebrate Passover when you were supposed to, you could make it up later. So they applied the same idea to *Succot*. That’s why eight days and that’s why the torches, the lights. The custom of waving a *lulav* on Hanukah persisted for many years; even 200 years later some sources mention it.

Moreover, people had been celebrating a lights festival at that time of year anyway for centuries. It was the Feast of Dionysus, one of many solstice-related holidays looking to the rebirth of the sun. Over time, away from Jerusalem, this custom had caught on among the common folk, and individuals lit their own candelabrum. There is archeological evidence for this. So between 164 BCE and the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 CE—merely 230 years and change, a trice by Jewish historical standards—what later became Hanukah was a syncretic *mélange* of observances, and probably not a consistent one from place to place either.

The real story doesn’t even have a happy ending. Alas, the Hasmonean dynasty was a disaster. Rule was generally bad and cruel. Few of the monarchs were worth

a damn, and there was plenty of murderous infighting. The Hasmoneans also pushed the kingship and the priesthood together, a deviation from tradition and a serious error according to both retrospective common sense and the later rabbinical verdict. The people were not generally interested in celebrating this dynasty, and for good reason: These fools, following up on the Jewish Roman treaty of 161 BCE, eventually tried to leverage looming Roman power against each other, essentially inviting the carnivore into the petting zoo, leading ultimately to the Roman destruction of Jewish independence in 63 BCE.

So how, then, did the Hanukkah we recognize today, with the name we use, get cooked up? Answer: The rabbis did it, or at least began to do it, during the 2nd century CE, some 300 or so years after the events themselves, after the Romans' destruction of the Temple in 70 CE and after the disastrous failure of the Bar-Kochba revolt in 135 CE. The Pharisaic sages (the early ones being the *tana'im*, or teachers in Aramaic) in a place called Yavne, led by a man named Yohanan ben-Zakai, saved Judaism. Specifically in this case, in the aftermath of the Bar-Kochba disaster and amid the subsequent Hadrianic persecutions, the rabbis were well aware of the dangers of celebrating victorious wars, and especially of thinking that war could bring spiritual and other kinds of salvation. So they and their successors—the *amoraim*, *gaonim*, and others—over the next several centuries worked to transform Hanukkah from a diffuse national celebration of a military victory, associated with a particular now-ended dynasty, into a spiritual event for all time.

They came up with the name, which in Aramaic they called *Hanukta*, and which eventually became Hanukkah. They banished other martial-related feast days, like the Day of Nicanor, added to the calendar the Fast of Gedalya on the 3rd of Tishrei (look it up and you will see why they did this), and consolidated all the ambient, diverse solstice-season observances into Hanukkah. They also excluded Maccabees I and II from the canon of the Hebrew Bible, which the *ta'naim* constructed at the time. In the same spirit they chose Zachariah as the special reading from the Prophets for Sabbath Hanukkah, wherein is written the famous phrase: "Not by power and not by might, but by My spirit, sayeth the Lord of hosts."

Much later, their successors came up with the miracle of the oil; there is nothing about that miracle in the Babylonian Talmud, the only version of the Talmud where Hanukkah is mentioned at all. They came up with a liturgy that emphasized the

opposite of the national and the military, including *Hallel*, the special collection of Psalms said on the pilgrim festivals and the marking of the new moon. They came up with prayers that credited God, not force of arms, for the victory; the longest and most detailed of these, the “*al hanisim*” interpolation into the daily silent devotion (*shmonah esrae*), dates from the Geonic period (late 7th to early 11th centuries). And they came up with stories linking Hanukah to other stories, like the story of Judith, and with rules about who had to light the *hanukiyah* (everyone) and how (start with one and work up to eight, as opposed to the other way around), and where (outside, to the left of the door), and so on. This is what rabbis do.

Now what about that spinning *dreidel*? Today the four Hebrew letters on the *dreidel*—nun, gimel, hei, and shin—are understood to form an acronym for a sentence that means “a great miracle happened there” (in Israel the shin gives way to a pey, so as to stand for “a great miracle happened here”). Who thought this up and when is anyone’s guess. What is not a guess is that the letters were originally a Yiddish mnemonic, probably dating from the 13th century, standing for *nisht* (“nothing”), *halb* (“half”), *gantz* (“all”), and *schtel ein* “put one.” It was how you gambled for coins or candy or whatever (*gelt*) was in the pot. The game was known widely in Europe for centuries before the Jews found it, the spinning device also going by the name “teetotum” and variations thereof.

How about the song *Maoz Tzur*, universally sung (by Jews who can sing, and some who can’t and shouldn’t try) after candle lighting? Also, it seems, a 13th century add-on, written by a poet named Mordecai. We know that because the first letters of each verse (most families just sing the first verse) combine to form an acrostic spelling out “Mordecai.”

In Israel today, the actual historical account meshes much better with the Zionist narrative than it does with the Rabbinic one. Zionism is in some respects a continuation of Jewish civilizational experience and in other ways it is discontinuous with it, and how Hanukah is seen in Israel today by religious and secular Israelis illustrates the divide. Those who are not religious are not the slightest bit put off by the martial, nationalist themes that come out of the history; in the secular Zionist interpretation of Jewish history, the Maccabees are *national* heroes. Those who are religious still hew to the revisionism of the *ta’naim* and their successors, who turned historical prose into spiritualized poetry for what they

believed was a higher purpose. Religious Zionists try to have it both ways. Personally, I have no problem holding both the prose and the poetry in my mind simultaneously to produce “prosimy”, but it took practice.

Alas, the old divide from some 2,200 years ago is still with us. It is with us in Israel, and certainly, but in a slightly different way, it is with Jews in diaspora in the United States and elsewhere. The historical record, however, is clear: Jewish traditionalists and cultural conservatives revolted not just or even mainly against the Selucid Greeks, but against *Jewish* Hellenists who were hell bent on abandoning tradition and assimilating into what was then contemporary high civilization, which they believed was culturally authoritative. They thought so because of the obvious superiority of power and wealth of Hellenistic civilization, its very wide geographical sway, its apparent intellectual-“universalist” sophistication, and, from Alexander onward, its relative lack of imperial cruelty and despotism compared to much of what had come before. At a time when Hellenism had expanded and integrated the civilized “known world”, Jewish ways seemed to many stodgy, parochial, antiquated, and onerous. In contemporary terms, those ways were illiberal; modern, enlightened, supposedly world-wise people, then and now, want their religion to be “liberal” too. In those days that amounted to “modern Jews” leaving the priests to their Temple hocus-pocus so that they could be left alone from pestering, hectoring rabbis who chided them for wanting to join in the highbrow para-celebrity culture of the day. (Does any of this sound familiar?)

Jews in America today who readily fall into the feel-good ecumenisms of the “holiday season” prefer to interpret Hanukkah as being about religious freedom, since that very modern idea echoes with purely American and Western values. (In medieval times Jews interpreted Hanukkah largely in the context of a developing martyrology narrative, because that is what those times called forth.) But they are behaving 180 degrees out from what the original events of Hanukkah were about. Back then the public-opinion split between Jewish Hellenizers and traditionalists true to the faith was probably about 75/25 when Jason tried to turn Jerusalem into Antiochia. Not that Judaism was not itself significantly influenced by Hellenistic ideas—it most certainly was; but if the Maccabees had not won that war, there would be no Jews or Judaism today, a turn of events that, incidentally, the late [Christopher Hitchens wished had come to pass](#). And therefore, just by the way of

logic, there would be no Christianity or Islam either, at least not in anything remotely like the form they exist today. Not too shabby for a minor holiday. So the next time you hear or speak the phrase "Happy Hanukah", remember the complications and celebrate the simplicities together, for they all have a place in the prosity of the day.

