

1. An 11th century *Yotzer* poem of Chanukah, אודך כי אנפת בי ותשב, translated by Dr. Sara Reguer
<http://opensiddur.org/prayers/lunar-cycle/commemorative-days/hanukkah/odekha-ki-anapta-hymn-first-shabbat-of-hanukah-yosef-bar-shlomo-of-carcassone-circa-11th-c>

But during that night, Judith came to my defense.

Her secret project was blessed and her reasoning excellent.

She encouraged her people and was a torch of fire against Greece.

Content that the city and its citizens were on the right path,

She was very happy and went with her slave,

And putting all of her hope in G-d

She stopped at the entrance of the enemy encampment

In order to undo their happiness and make them suffer

And feel the punishment for the sins of their leader.

Question 1: The Story of Judith: Is it a Chanukah story?

2. Text of Judith: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/r/rsv/rsv-idx?type=DIV1&byte=3825845>

3. Prof. Deborah Levine Gera, *The Jewish Textual Traditions* (<https://books.openedition.org/obp/986?lang=en>)

The book opens with the successful campaign waged by Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians, against Arphaxad, king of the Medes. Nebuchadnezzar then sends his chief of staff, Holofernes, on an ambitious and punitive military campaign directed against those who did not join him in his earlier, successful war. All nations give way before Holofernes until he approaches the Jews, who decide to resist. The Jews of Bethulia must block the Assyrians' path to Jerusalem and its temple. Holofernes, who is unacquainted with the Jews, learns something of their history and religious beliefs from his ally, the Ammonite Achior. Despite Achior's warning that G-d may well defend His people, Holofernes places a siege on Bethulia. When water supplies run low, the people of the town press their leaders to surrender to the Assyrians and Uzziah, the chief leader, promises to capitulate if there is no relief within five days. It is at this point that the pious, beautiful widow, Judith, steps on stage. Judith, who leads an ascetic and solitary life, summons Uzziah and his fellow leaders to her home and reprimands them for their lack of faith in G-d. She then takes matters into her own hands. Judith prays, bathes, and removes her widow's weeds. "Dressed to kill," Judith leaves Bethulia for the enemy Assyrian camp, accompanied only by her faithful maid. The glamorous Judith charms and deceives Holofernes – as well as his trusty eunuch Bagoas – and promises to deliver the Jews to the Assyrians with G-d's help. In her dealings with Holofernes, Judith is not only beautiful, but sharp-witted. Her exchanges with the enemy commander are ironic and two-edged and her subtle, duplicitous words are one of the chief charms of the apocryphal book. Holofernes invites Judith to a party in order to seduce her, but he drinks a great deal of wine and collapses on his couch. Judith then seizes Holofernes's sword and cuts off the head of the sleeping general. She returns to Bethulia with Holofernes's head in a bag (and his canopy as well). Achior the Ammonite converts to Judaism when he learns of Judith's deed and sees the actual dead man's head. The Jews of Bethulia, following Judith's advice, subsequently take the offensive, attacking the Assyrian army and defeating them. Judith, praised by all, sings a victory song and then goes back to her quiet life at home. She lives until the ripe old age of 105 and is mourned by all of Israel when she dies.

4. Book of Judith, Chapter 12, Revised Standard Version

Then he commanded them to bring her in where his silver dishes were kept, and ordered them to set a table for her with some of his own food and to serve her with his own wine. But Judith said, "I cannot eat it, lest it be an offense; but I will be provided from the things I have brought with me." Holofernes said to her, "If your supply runs out, where can we get more like it for you? For none of your people is here with us." Judith replied, "As your soul lives, my lord, your servant will not use up the things I have with me before the Lord carries out by my hand what he has determined to do."

5. Daniel, Chapter 1 (JPS 1985)

The king allotted daily rations to them from the king's food and from the wine he drank. They were to be educated for three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's service... Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the king's food or the wine he drank, so he sought permission of the chief officer not to defile himself...

6. Book of Judith, Chapter 12, Revised Standard Version

And Holofernes was greatly pleased with her, and drank a great quantity of wine, much more than he had ever drunk in any one day since he was born.

7. Daniel 5:1-2

King Belshazzar made a great meal for his one thousand leaders, and he drank wine opposite one thousand. Because of the wine, Belshazzar said to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nevuchadnezzar had taken out of the sanctuary in Jerusalem, and they would drink with them...

8. Judges 4 (JPS 1985)

Sisera, meanwhile, had fled on foot to the tent of Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was friendship between King Jabin of Hazor and the family of Heber the Kenite. Jael came out to greet Sisera and said to him, "Come in, my lord, come in here, do not be afraid." So he entered her tent, and she covered him with a blanket. He said to her, "Please let me have some water; I am thirsty." She opened a skin of milk and gave him some to drink; and she covered him again. He said to her, "Stand at the entrance of the tent. If anybody comes and asks you if there is anybody here, say 'No.'" Then Jael wife of Heber took a tent pin and grasped the mallet. When he was fast asleep from exhaustion, she approached him stealthily and drove the pin through his temple till it went down to the ground. Thus he died.

9. Book of Judith, Chapter 16, Revised Standard Version

And Judith said, Begin a song to my G-d with tambourines, sing to my Lord with cymbals. Raise to him a new psalm; exalt him, and call upon his name. For G-d is the Lord who crushes wars; for he has delivered me out of the hands of my pursuers, and brought me to his camp, in the midst of the people. The Assyrian came down from the mountains of the north; he came with myriads of his warriors; their multitude blocked up the valleys, their cavalry covered the hills. He boasted that he would burn up my territory, and kill my young men with the sword, and dash my infants to the ground and seize my children as prey, and take my virgins as booty. But the Lord Almighty has foiled them by the hand of a woman.

10. Judges, Chapter 4 (JPS 1985)

And I will draw Sisera, Jabin's army commander, with his chariots and his troops, toward you up to the Wadi Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hands." But Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, I will go; if not, I will not go." "Very well, I will go with you," she answered. "However, there will be no glory for you in the course you are taking, for then the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh.

11. Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein (19th-20th century Lithuania), Aruch haShulchan Orach Chaim 670:8

Also, later on a miracle happened via Judith, who fed the enemy milk. Based on this, there are those who are careful to eat cheese on Chanukah, even though this did not happen at the time of the miracle of Chanukah.

Question 2: What does Judith have to do with the Menorah?

12. Talmud, Shabbat 23a

A woman definitely lights, for Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Women are obligated in the lamp of Chanukah, for they were also in that miracle.

13. Rashi (11th century France), Comment to Megilah 4a

Even upon the women, Haman decreed "to destroy, kill and eliminate... from young to old, children and women..."

14. Rashi (11th century France), Comment to Shabbat 23a

Because the Greeks decreed that all women who were to be married for the first time would be taken by the general first, and because the miracle happened via a woman.

15. Tosafot (12th-13th century Western Europe), Comment to Pesachim 108ב ד"ו

"Were also in that miracle" - Rashbam explained that via them, they were redeemed. So, too, re: megilah via Esther, and Chanukah via Judith.

16. Talmud, Shabbat 21b

What is Chanukah? Our sages taught: On the 25th of Kislev, there are eight days of Chanukah, when we neither eulogize nor fast. For when the Greeks entered the Sanctuary, they contaminated all of the oil in the Sanctuary, and when the monarchy of the house of the Chashmonaim mustered strength and defeated them, they searched and could find only one jug of oil marked with the seal of the kohen gadol. There was only enough to kindle for one day, but a miracle occurred and they kindled from it for eight days. The next year, they established them and made them festivals, with Hallel and thanks.

17. The *Al haNisim* Prayer

In the days of Mattityahu, son of Yochanan, the Hasmonean High Priest, and his sons, when the evil Greek empire arose upon Your nation, Israel, to make them forget Your Torah and to divert them from the laws of Your will. And You, in Your great mercy, arose for them in their time of trouble. You fought their fight, You performed their judgment, You avenged them. You gave the mighty to the weak, and the many to the few, and the impure to the pure, and the wicked to the righteous, and the wicked to those involved in Your Torah, and You made a great and holy Name for Yourself in Your world, and You performed a great rescue for Your nation, Israel, and a redemption, as we see today.

18. Rambam (12th century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Laws of Megilah and Chanukah 3:1-2

In the second Temple, when the Greeks reigned, they issued decrees upon Israel and eliminated their religion and did not allow them to involve themselves in Torah and mitzvot, and they extended their hand against their property and their daughters, and they entered the Sanctuary and broke through its structure and contaminated that which was pure... Until the Gd of our ancestors had mercy upon them and rescued them from their hand and saved them, and the Hasmoneans, the high priests, triumphed and killed them and rescued Israel from their hand and set up a king from among the priests, and monarchy returned to Israel for more than 200 years, until the second destruction. And when Israel defeated their enemies and destroyed them, it was the 25th of Kislev, and they entered the Sanctuary and did not find pure oil in the Temple, only one jug. It contained enough to light for only one day, and they lit the ritual lamps with it for eight days, until they crushed olives and produced pure oil.

Unity

19. Rambam (12th century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Laws of Megilah and Chanukah 3:3

Because of this, the sages of that generation enacted that these eight days, from the night of the 25th of Kislev, should be days of joy and Hallel, and they light lamps in the evening at the entrances of houses on each night of the eight nights, to demonstrate and reveal the miracle. And these days are called "Chanukah", and one may neither eulogize nor fast on them, like the days of Purim. And lighting lamps on them is a rabbinic mitzvah, like reading the megilah.

20. Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (20th c. USA), cited by Rabbi Shlomo Pick, *Moadei haRav* (Eng.) pg. 126
The Rav explained that there is a difference between "to demonstrate" (*le-har'ot*) and "to reveal" (*le-galot*). "To demonstrate" means "to show," but "to reveal" means to proclaim that which is unknown... Thus, there are two aspects to the *pirsumei nissa* of the Chanukah candle: to show and demonstrate, and also to reveal. (1) To show and demonstrate, in order to cause others to focus their attention upon the miracle. This is achieved by lighting candles in a place that is open to the public eye. (2) To reveal – one must explain to the people the meaning of Chanukah, what the holiday represents, and why we fought the Hellenists. It is our duty to analyze the meaning of the miracle, that is, to reveal it...

Publicizing the miracle of Chanukah attests that our connection and relationship to the Chanukah candle is similar to our connection and relationship to the *Shekhinah*. The Divine Presence turns to the Jewish people by way of the Chanukah candle, and the Chanukah candle attests that the *Shekhinah* rests among us.

21. Book of Judith, Chapter 13, Revised Standard Version

Now Judith had told her maid to stand outside the bedchamber and to wait for her to come out, as she did on the other days; for she said she would be going out for her prayers. She had said the same thing to Bagoas. So everyone went out, and no one, either small or great, was left in the bedchamber. Then Judith, standing beside his bed, said in her heart, "O Lord Gd of all might, look in this hour on the work of my hands for the exaltation of Jerusalem. Now indeed is the time to help Your heritage and to carry out my design to destroy the enemies who have risen up against us." She went up to the bedpost near Holofernes' head, and took down his sword that hung there. She came close to his bed, took hold of the hair of his head, and said, "Give me strength today, O Lord Gd of Israel!" Then she struck his neck twice with all her might, and cut off his head. Next she rolled his body off the bed and pulled down the canopy from the posts. Soon afterward she went out and gave Holofernes' head to her maid, who placed it in her food bag.

Then the two of them went out together, as they were accustomed to do for prayer. They passed through the camp, circled around the valley, and went up the mountain to Bethulia, and came to its gates. From a distance Judith called out to the sentries at the gates, "Open, open the gate! Gd, our Gd, is with us, still showing His power in Israel and his strength against our enemies, as He has done today!"

When the people of her town heard her voice, they hurried down to the town gate and summoned the elders of the town. They all ran together, both small and great, for it seemed unbelievable that she had returned. They opened the gate and welcomed them. Then they lit a fire to give light, and gathered around them. Then she said to them with a loud voice, "Praise Gd, O praise Him! Praise Gd, who has not withdrawn His mercy from the house of Israel, but has destroyed our enemies by my hand this very night!"

Then she pulled the head out of the bag and showed it to them, and said, "See here, the head of Holofernes, the commander of the Assyrian army, and here is the canopy beneath which he lay in his drunken stupor. The Lord has struck him down by the hand of a woman. As the Lord lives, who has protected me in the way I went, I swear that it was my face that seduced him to his destruction, and that he committed no sin with me, to defile and shame me."

All the people were greatly astonished. They bowed down and worshiped Gd, and said with one accord, "Blessed are You our Gd, who have this day humiliated the enemies of Your people."

22. Rabbi Yosef Rosen (19th century Poland), *Tzofnat Paneiach* to Laws of Megilah and Chanukah 3:3

There are two miracles [commemorated] here: One is the lamps, and also their rescue from the idolaters...