

The Menorah, Hanukkah and Archaeology



George Blumenthal holding **Sigmund Freud's 800 year-old brass Hanukkah** for celebrating Hanukkah, Freud Museum, London

Ha·nuk·kah

The Hebrew word *Hanukkah* means “**dedication,**” and this holiday commemorates the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

Hanukkah in the Maccabees

100 BCE

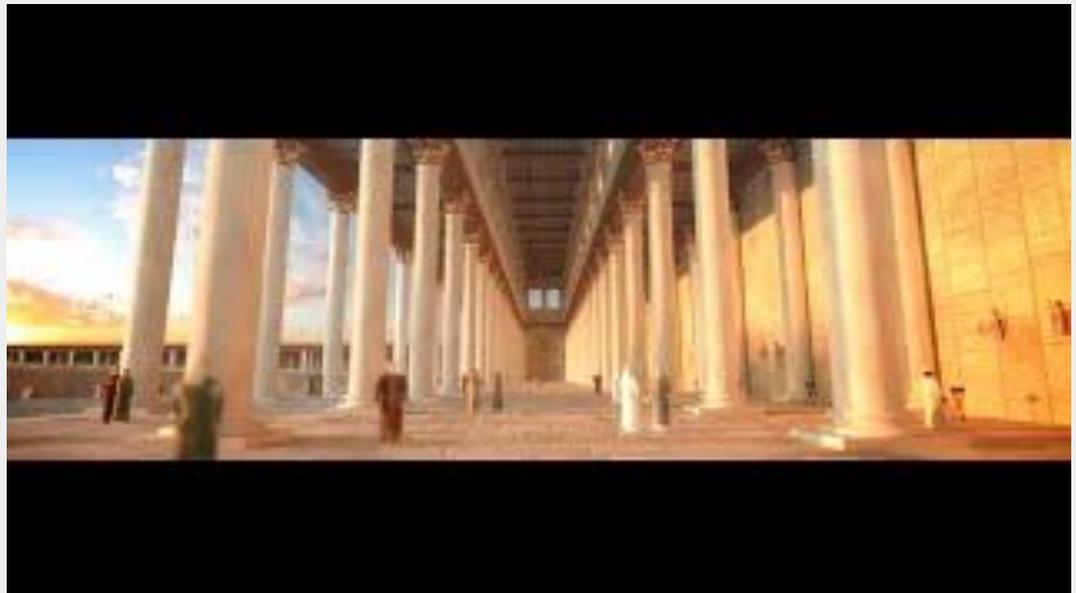
2 Maccabees 10:5-6

*“On the anniversary of the day on which the Temple had been profaned by the foreigners, that is, the twenty-fifth of the same month Kislev (December), the purification of the Temple took place. **The Jews celebrate joyfully for eight days...**”*

Josephus Saw the Temple Before the Roman Destruction in 70 CE

**Josephus, *Antiquities*,
15.11.5**

“...and the wall of the front (of the Temple) was adorned with beams, resting upon pillars, that were interwoven into it: and that front was all of polished stone. Insomuch that its fineness, to such as had not seen it was incredible: and to such as had seen it was greatly amazing.”



City of David Megalim Institute
(click to play video)

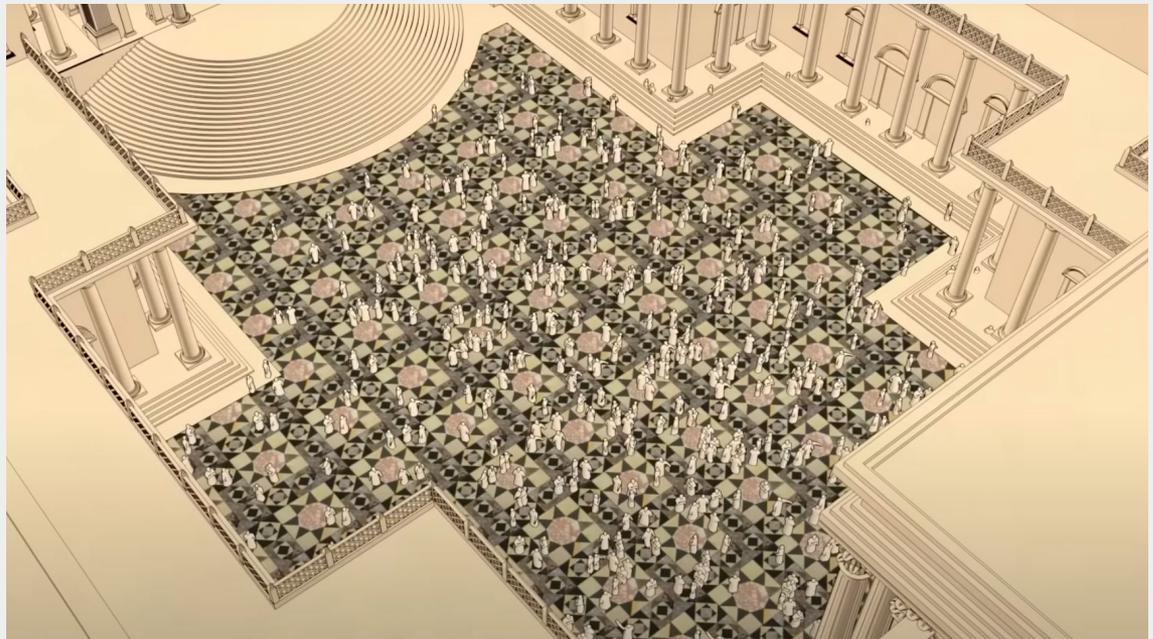
The Floor of the Temple

In the 1990s, the Jerusalem Islamic Waqf constructed a new mosque on Temple Mount, bulldozing and dumping earth without any archaeological supervision, in violation of the Antiquities Law of the State of Israel. **The Temple Mount Sifting Project** began in 2004 to recover archaeological artifacts from the 9,000 tons dumped debris.

To date, the Temple Mount Sifting Project has discovered approximately **600 geometrically cut and polished stone paving tiles** from the time of the Herodian Temple, leading experts to be able to reconstruct what the floor of the Temple looked like.



Temple Mount Sifting Project



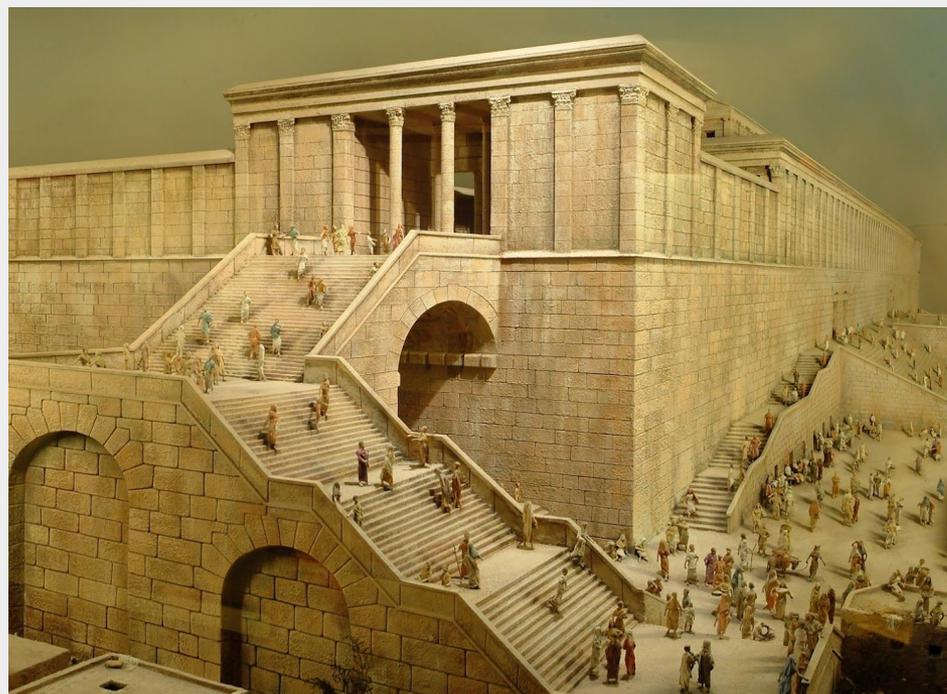
City of David Megalim Institute

Josephus Writes about Hanukkah

94 CE

Josephus, Antiquities 12.7.7

“And so Judah and his fellow citizens celebrated the festival of the restoration of the sacrifices of the Temple for eight days, ...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.”



Model of the Temple, Tower of David Museum
Photo by Ardon Bar-Hama

Hanukkah as Told by Moses Maimonides 1180 CE

The Mishneh Torah, Scroll of Esther and Hanukkah 3:2-4

*When, on the twenty-fifth of Kislev, the Jews had emerged victorious over their foes and destroyed them, they re-entered the Temple where **they found only one jar of pure oil, enough to be lit for only a single day**; yet they used it for lighting the required set of lamps for eight days, until they managed to press olives and produce pure oil.*

*Because of this, the sages of that generation ruled that the eight days beginning with the twenty-fifth of Kislev should be observed as days of rejoicing and praising the Lord. **Lamps are lit in the evening over the doors of the homes, on each of the eight nights, so as to display the miracle. These days are called Hanukkah, when it is forbidden to lament or to fast, just as it is on the days of Purim. Lighting the lamps during the eight days of Hanukkah is a religious duty imposed by the sages.***

The Miracle of One Jar of Oil

Talmud, Shabbat 21b:

*When the Greeks entered the Sanctuary they defiled all the oils that were in the Sanctuary by touching them. And when the Hasmonean monarchy overcame them and emerged victorious over them, they searched and found only one cruse of oil that was placed with the seal of the High Priest, undisturbed by the Greeks. **And there was sufficient oil there to light the candelabrum for only one day.** A miracle occurred and they lit the candelabrum from it eight days. The next year the Sages instituted those days and made them holidays with recitation of hallel and special thanksgiving in prayer and blessings.*



Pottery and weapon uncovered at the remains of a Hellenistic fortress in Lachish Forest.

Israel Antiquities Authority

From 240 BCE and beyond, Jewish Synagogues were built in Ptolemaic Egypt



Proseuche inscriptions have been found in Crocodilopolis (240 BCE), Schedia (240 BCE), Athribis (194 BCE), Xenophrys (120 BCE), Nitriai (120 BCE) and Alexandria (120 and 40 BCE)

The Jews of Egypt built many synagogues there, the construction of which was documented by inscriptions. Archaeologists have discovered several **“proseuche”** dedication inscriptions from Ancient Egypt. **From the Greek word meaning “prayer,”** a proseuche is a synagogue or a place for Jews to pray.

Inscription from Synagogue at Crocodilopolis, Egypt, 240 BCE

“On behalf of King Ptolemy (III Euergetes), son of Ptolemy and Queen Bernice his wife and sister and their children, **the Jews in Crocodilopolis (dedicated) the proseuche.”**

Inscription from Synagogue at Athribis, Egypt (Tell Atrib), 194 BCE

“On behalf of King Ptolemy (V) and Queen Cleopatra (I), Ptolemaios son of Epikydes, chief of police, and the Jews in Athribis [dedicated] the proseuche to God the Most High.”

In 175 BCE, Antiochus IV Epiphanes Defiled the Temple

In 175 BCE, Antiochus IV, the brother of Seleucus IV, imposed a series of harsh **bans on traditional Jewish observance**.



Coin of Antiochus IV Epiphanes
Collection of George Blumenthal

1 Maccabees 1:45-50

“He ordered them **not to offer burnt offerings**, grain offerings, or wine offerings in the Temple, and commanded them **to treat Sabbaths and festivals as ordinary work days**. They were even **ordered to defile the Temple** and the holy things in it. They were commanded to **build pagan altars, temples, and shrines**, and to **sacrifice pigs** and other unclean animals there. They were **forbidden to circumcise their sons...**”

1 Maccabees 1:60-61

“**Mothers who had allowed their babies to be circumcised were put to death in accordance with the king's decree. Their babies were hung around their necks...**”

In 175 BCE, Antiochus IV, Desperate for Money, Began to Sell the High Priesthood

2 Maccabees 4:7-10

*“...**Jason (Joshua)** the brother of Onias (III) became High Priest by corrupt means. **He went to see the king (Antiochus IV) and offered him 27,000 pounds of silver** with 6,000 more pounds to be paid later... as soon as Jason took over the office of High Priest, **he made the people of Jerusalem change to the Greek way of life.**”*

In 172 BCE, Menelaus Bought the High Priesthood

2 Maccabees 4:23-25

*“Three years later, Jason sent Menelaus to take some money to the king and to get his decision on several important matters. But when he stood before the king, **Menelaus impressed him with his show of authority and offered 22,500 pounds of silver more than Jason had offered for his appointment to the office of High Priest.** As a result Menelaus returned to Jerusalem with papers from the king, confirming him as High Priest.”*

Menelaus Had Onias III Murdered; Onias IV, the legitimate descendent of Zadok the High Priest, Fled to Egypt

2 Maccabees 4:31-34

*“So the king left Andronicus, one of his high officials, in command, while he hurried off to Cilicia to restore order. Menelaus took advantage of this opportunity and presented Andronicus with some of the gold objects he had removed from the Temple in Jerusalem... Then **Menelaus secretly persuaded Andronicus to kill Onias (III)**... Andronicus finally lured him away from the safety of the temple and immediately murdered him in cold blood.”*

In 168 BCE, the Seleucids Built a Fortress, the Akra, Overlooking the Temple Mount in the City of David



Photo by Asaf Peretz, Israel Antiquities Authority

Josephus, Antiquities 12.5.4

*“... the King (Antiochus IV) came up to Jerusalem... And he burnt the finest parts of the city and, pulling down the walls, **built the Akra in the Lower City; for it was high enough to overlook the Temple, and it was for this reason that he fortified it with high walls and towers, and stationed a Macedonian garrison therein.**”*

In 167 BCE, Mattathias ben Johanan Began the Maccabean Revolt

In 167 BCE, the soldiers of Antiochus IV entered the city of Modin (13 miles northwest of Jerusalem) and ordered Mattathias, a priest, to slay a pig on a pagan altar. Mattathias refused, overturning the altar and slaying the king's general.

This began the 35 year long Maccabean revolt of Mattathias and his five sons, Judas Maccabeus (Judah Maccabee), Eleazar Avaran, Simon Thassi, John Gaddi and Jonathan Apphus.

Josephus, Antiquities 12.6.2

“But when those that were appointed by the King (Antiochus IV) were come to Modin, that they might compel the Jews to do what they were commanded...

Mattathias (father of Judah Maccabee) said... not he nor his sons would leave the religious worship of their country.”

1 Maccabees 2:28

“And Mattathias cried throughout the city with a loud voice, saying, Whosoever is zealous of the law, and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me.”

Tomb of the Maccabees, Modi'in, Israel



Israel Antiquities Authority

In 164 BCE, on the 25th Day of Kislev, Judah Maccabee Purified the Temple



The Menorah on the Coin of the Hasmonean Mattathias Antigonus, 37 BCE

Photo by Ardon Bar-Hama

In 166 BCE, Mattathias died in battle. His eldest son, **Judah, “The Hammer,”** (Judah Maccabee) purified and rededicated the Temple, establishing the Festival of Hanukkah around 164 BCE. The word **“Hanukkah”** derives from the Hebrew word meaning **“to dedicate.”**

In 164 BCE, on the 25th Day of Kislev, Judah Maccabee Purified the Temple



Hasmonean Oil Lamp from the Time of the Maccabees

Photo by Ardon Bar-Hama

Josephus, Antiquities 12.7.6-7
“...Judah Maccabee assembled the people and told them that after the many victories (3 years of battles) which God had given them they ought to go up to Jerusalem and purify the Temple and offer the appointed sacrifices... Now Judah celebrated the festival of the restoration of the sacrifices of the Temple for eight days...””

In 144 BCE, Jonathan Fortified Jerusalem

Josephus, Antiquities 13.5.11

“Jonathan gathered all the people together in the Temple and advised them to repair the walls of Jerusalem, ... and, in addition, to build still another wall in the midst of the city to keep the garrison in the citadel (Akra) from reaching the city, and in this way cut off [the garrison’s] large supply of provisions.”



Hasmonean Sling Stones
Tower of David Museum,
Jerusalem, Photo by Ardon
Bar-Hama

Seleucid arrowhead and sling bullet with the word "victory" is inscribed



Israel Antiquities Authority

From 137-132 BCE, the Seleucids Withdrew



Shalom Kweller, the City of David

1 Maccabees 14:36

*“And in his (Simon’s) time everything prospered in his hands, **so that the heathen were expelled from their country**, as well as those in the city of David, in Jerusalem, who had made a citadel for themselves...”*

The Temple Menorah, 1st Century CE



Inscribed on the wall of the “Mansion House” overlooking the Temple Mount is an accurate representation of the Temple Menorah as described in the Torah.

Exodus 25:31-39

*You shall make a **lampstand of pure gold**...its base and its shaft, its cups, calyxes, and petals shall be of one piece.*

***Six branches shall issue from its sides**; three branches from one side of the lampstand and three branches from the other side of the lampstand.*

*On one branch there shall be three **cups shaped like almond-blossoms, each with calyx and petals**...so for all six branches issuing from the lampstand.*

*Make its **seven lamps**—the lamps shall be so mounted as to give the light on its front side...*

In 71 CE, Emperor Vespasian Paraded the Temple Menorah Through the Streets of Rome

Josephus, Wars, 7.5.5,

*“Now it is impossible to describe the multitude of the [spoils] as they deserve... After which **Vespasian** marched in the first place: and **Titus** followed him.*

*And for the other spoils they were carried in great plenty. **But for those that were taken in the Temple of Jerusalem, they made the greatest figure of them all. That is the golden table, of the weight of many talents.***

*The **candlestick also, that was made of gold; though its construction were now changed from that which we made use of.** For its middle shaft was fixed upon a basis, and the small branches were produced out of it to a great length: having the likeness of a trident in their position, and had every one a socket made of brass for a lamp at the tops of them. These lamps were in number seven; and represented the dignity of the number seven among the Jews. **And the last of all the spoils was carried the law of the Jews....”***



The Arch of Titus, Rome
Photo by Ardon Bar-Hama

In 81 CE, the Arch of Titus Was Constructed to Commemorate the Roman Victory



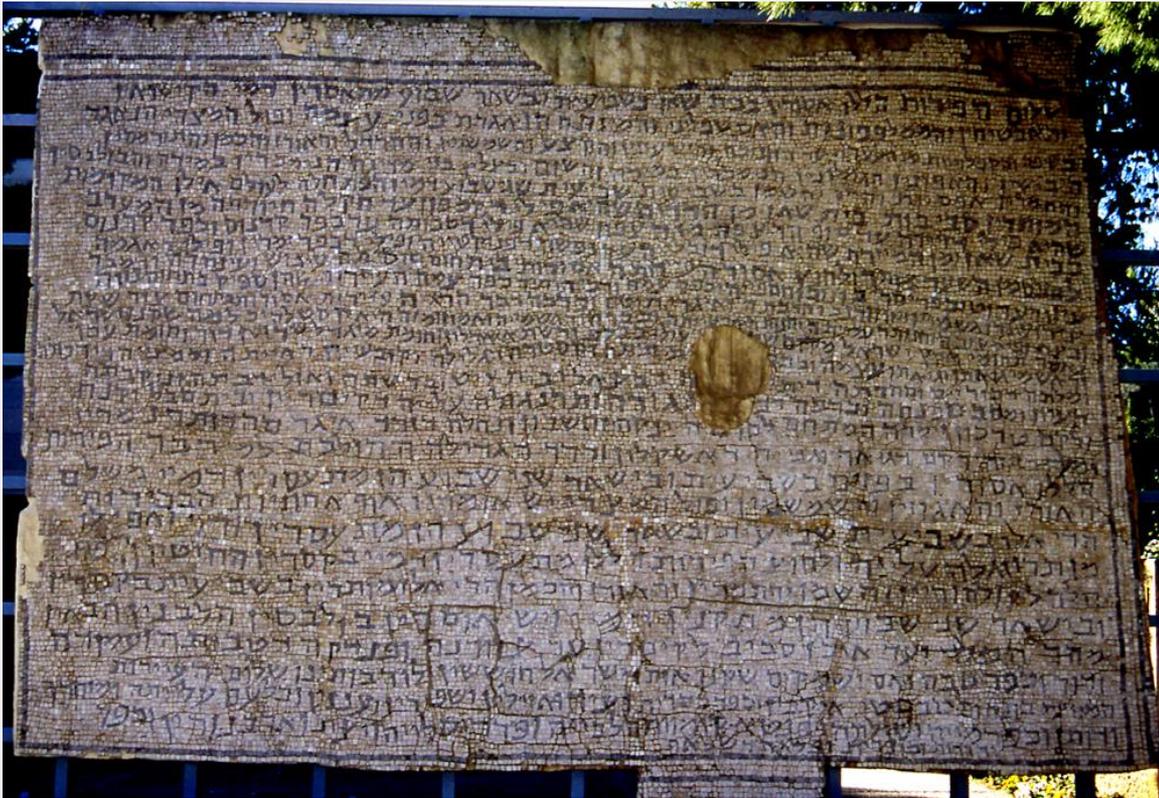
The Arch of Titus, Rome
Photo by Ardon Bar-Hama

Color Reconstruction of the Arch of Titus



VIZIN The Institute for the Visualization of History and Professor Steve Fine, the Yeshiva University Center for Israel Studies, New York

Hanukkah Inscribed on the Rehov Synagogue Mosaic Floor, 500 - 600 CE



Israel Museum

The Earliest Talmudic Inscription:

“Shalom. These fruits are forbidden in Beit She'an during the Seventh Year (Shmita)... the leeks from the Festival (Sukkot) until Hanukkah ...”

The inscription continues on to define the borders of the Land of Israel as settled by returning Jews who had been exiled in Babylon.

The inscription also lists laws of tithing and sabbatical years and names 18 Israelite towns in Samaria.

Byzantine Period

Menorah Pendants Worn by Women in the Land of Israel , 330 – 630 CE



Collection of George Blumenthal
Photos by Ardon Bar-Hama

Byzantine Period Bread Stamp from Israel



Collection of George Blumenthal
Photo by Ardon Bar-Hama



Byzantine Period Oil Lamp from Israel, 330 – 630 CE

Collection of George Blumenthal
Photo by Ardon Bar-Hama

Byzantine Period Glass Jars with Menorahs from Israel



Shlomo Moussaieff Collection, Israel Antiquities Authority

Photos by Ardon Bar-Hama

Link to Shlomo Moussaieff Menorah Collection Photos:

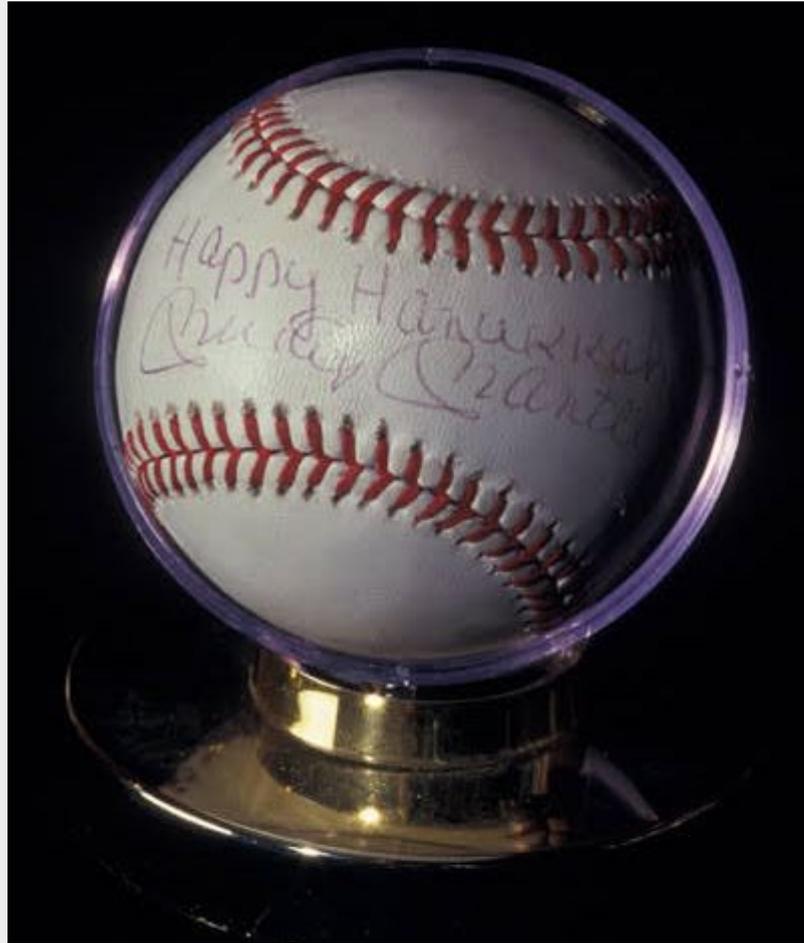
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/fEpL7PEN8pMGPFwB9>

Byzantine Period Synagogue Capital from the Galilee



Collection of George Blumenthal
Photo by Ardon Bar-Hama

Happy Hanukkah Signed, Mickey Mantle



Collection of George Blumenthal
Photo by Ardon Bar-Hama

HAPPY HANUKKAH



© PNTS