Megilat Taanit and Jewish Victories

Brief Overview of the Festivities Celebrated During the Second Temple Era, Primarily Reflecting the Victories of the Hasmoneans

The following text is drawn from *Peninei Halakha* by Rabbi Eliezer Melamed.

During the Second Temple era, the Sages established numerous holidays to thank God and rejoice over the salvations He brought to Israel. These festive days—around 35 in total—are mentioned in the *Megillat Ta'anit*, a document listing the days on which fasting is prohibited due to their semi-festive nature.

Some of these holidays include:

- **13th of Adar**: Known as "Nicanor Day," commemorating the defeat of a large Greek army by the Hasmoneans and the killing of its commander, Nicanor.
- **14th of Sivan**: Celebrating the conquest of Caesarea.
- **22nd of Elul**: Marking the execution of apostates by the Hasmoneans, as they refused to repent.
- **23rd of Marheshvan**: Commemorating the destruction of a brothel that the Greeks had built near the Holy Temple.
- **25th of Marheshvan**: Signifying the conquest of Samaria and its resettlement by the Hasmoneans.
- **22nd of Shevat**: Remembering a pivotal moment during the Hasmonean revolt when the wicked Antiochus journeyed to Jerusalem intending to destroy the city and annihilate its Jewish population. However, upon receiving alarming reports of uprisings in the eastern regions of his kingdom, he abandoned the siege of Jerusalem on that date (167 BCE) and ultimately perished during these

revolts.

- **3rd of Kislev**: Commemorating the removal of idols placed by Greek troops in the Holy Temple.
- **24th of Av**: Celebrating the reinstatement of Torah law as the official legal system, replacing Greek law.
- **23rd of Iyar**: Honoring the conquest of the Akra fortress by Shimon ben Matityahu, where a Greek garrison had remained even after the city's liberation.
- **27th of Iyar**: Reflecting the prohibition, seemingly under the reign of Yonatan ben Matityahu, of idolatrous images hanging at the entrances of homes and shops.
- **15th and 16th of Sivan**: Marking the conquest of Beit She'an by the Hasmoneans and the expulsion of the gentiles who had oppressed the Jews.

These days serve as a testament to the enduring victories and faith of the Hasmoneans, safeguarding Jewish identity and sanctity during a time of adversity.