

## 1: Lexicon excerpt, Isaac Rivkind's "Yidishe Gelt," 1959, translation from Yiddish.

**Chanukah gelt:** The money given to children or to those who serve the community like a rabbi, *khazn* (prayer leader), or *shames* (synagogue caretaker), or given to poor people for Chanukah... [Although today Chanukah gelt is associated with children,] children were probably the last to receive this monetary gift. The first people to receive money were the prominent people in the community, clergy in particular. [He cites several sources to demonstrate that gifts were given to clergy and to religious teachers]... Over the years the custom spread. Chanukah gelt became a source of income not only for rabbis but also for other important synagogue officiants... the itinerant preacher, the *khazn*, and the *shames* would go to their constituents during the holiday to ask for Chanukah gelt. And they would receive, in addition to money, some whiskey, grain, honey, and similar goods... Unlike Purim [another Jewish holiday associated with giving to the poor], Chanukah had no official connection, no commandment to give gifts to poor people, but folk stories and songs about Chanukah reference money almost as much as Purim songs do. The eight days of Chanukah were a time of generosity... The custom of giving Chanukah gelt to children was not widespread until recently. One must not forget that at one time coins were rare and important, nor discount the enormous poverty that most Jews lived in...