

The feast of Hanukkah is not included among the seven feasts of Yahweh. The reason it is not there is because it is not one of Yahweh's designated feast days.

The other seven feasts all Pointed to the coming of the messiah who would redeem the world from sin. However, the feast of Hanukkah has a totally different focus. It is a memorial of something that happened to the Jews themselves.

Even though Yahweh did not schedule this feast it does not mean that He disapproves of the celebration. Yah was there with the small group of people and worked with them in getting the temple back into condition for worship services to be held there. He was totally involved because without him, there would be no dedication of the temple.

Hanukkah does not appear in the Old Testament because the events surrounding it occurred in the year 165 B.C, after the closing of the Old Testament. It happened during the 200 years between the old and New Testament. However, it is mentioned once in the New Testament, in John 10:22-24.

### John 10:22 GNB

(22) It was winter, and the Festival of the Dedication of the Temple was being celebrated in Jerusalem.

### John 10:22-24 TLV [Tree of Life Version]

(22) Then came Hanukkah; it was winter in Jerusalem.

(23) Yeshua was walking in the Temple around Solomon's Colonnade.

(24) Then the Judean leaders surrounded Him, saying, "How long will You hold us in suspense? If You are the Messiah, tell us outright!"

Let us first examine the meaning and history of Hanukkah.

The word Hanukkah is a Hebrew word which means dedication. That is why in most bible translation John 10:22 says "*it was the feast of the dedication at Jerusalem*" Rather than the feast of Hanukkah. This feast is also called the "Feast of Lights".

Hanukkah is celebrated each year on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev and is celebrated for eight days. It corresponds this year to our December 10 through December 18.

On Hanukkah candles are lighted on each of the eight days. One candle a day. There are nine candles on the menorah. The candle in the middle of the

menorah is called the servant candle. It is used to light the other candle.

Since this festival is not included in the seven feasts that Yahweh commanded Israel to celebrate in Jerusalem, Christian believers pay no attention to it, because in their minds it is one of "those Jewish things" that has nothing to do with gentiles.

So why am I teaching about Hanukkah when it has nothing to do with gentile believers?

Because everything written in the bible are beneficial to all who believe in Yeshua. Moreover, most of the bible is about "those Jewish things".

As believers in Yeshua (Jesus), we tend to overlook those things which we think pertain only to the Jews. However, we must look at the spiritual principles of this feast which also applies to us believers in Yeshua. And if Yeshua thought it was important for him to attend the feast, it should be important for us to learn what this feast is about.

One thing that is different about this feast is, it can be celebrated wherever the people live. The people were not required to go to the temple in Jerusalem to celebrate it, as Yahweh instructed them to do in all the other feasts.

Another thing that is different about this feast is that the people of Israel scheduled its date not Yahweh.

Hanukkah is just another chapter in Jewish history that shows how El Elyon Yahweh performed miracles for the people he chose to bring the messiah into the world to save sinners.

Hanukkah is a celebration of two great miracles.

#### 1. IT IS A CELEBRATION OF A GREAT MILITARY VICTORY

The Jews suffered great persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes. He was a wicked and godless man and a descendant of one of the men Alexander appointed to rule after his death.

Yahweh informed Nebuchadnezzar through a dream (Daniel 7), which Daniel interpreted, that this man would rule as part of the Greek Empire.

This is another example which proves to us that Yahweh rules in the affairs of man. And as the angel said to Daniel Yahweh will destroy these kingdoms

and will establish his own eternal kingdom that will never be destroyed.

We can find information about the conditions that led up to the celebration of Hanukkah in 1, 2, 3, and 4 Maccabees. The apocryphal books written between testaments.

#### 1 Maccabees 1:10 NRSVA

(10) From them came forth a sinful root, Antiochus Epiphanes, son of King Antiochus; he had been a hostage in Rome. He began to reign in the one hundred thirty-seventh year of the kingdom of the Greeks.

When Antiochus led a victorious campaign against Egypt, and subdued it, he entered Jerusalem, destroyed a large part of it, and slaughtered men, women, and children. He entered the Temple of Yahweh and stripped it.

#### 1 Maccabees 1:20-24 NRSVA

(20) After subduing Egypt, Antiochus returned in the one hundred forty-third year. He went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force.

(21) He arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils.

(22) He took also the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off.

(23) He took the silver and the gold, and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasures that he found.

(24) Taking them all, he went into his own land. He shed much blood, and spoke with great arrogance.

This of course was only the beginning. The Jews were forbidden to practice the teaching of Moses. They were forbidden to circumcise their children; to keeping the Sabbath and the laws concerning clean and unclean meats. Those who did not obey were put to death.

#### 1 Maccabees 1:50 NRSVA

(50) He added, "And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die."

#### 1 Maccabees 1:56-57 NRSVA

(56) The books of the law that they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire.

(57) Anyone found possessing the book of the covenant, or anyone who adhered to the law, was condemned to death by decree of the king.

Antiochus set an idol statue of Jupiter in the most Holy place and commanded Jews to worship it.

He also sacrificed swine to the Greek god Jupiter, sprinkling its blood around the Temple.

Only swine were allowed to be offered on the altar and the Syrian officials were there to enforce Antiochus laws.

In B.C. 164 a godly faithful company of Jews led by a priestly family of Maccabees resisted these laws and revolted against the desecration of the Temple and drove the Syrians from Jerusalem.

In Maccabees chapter 4 we have an account of that victory.

#### 1 Maccabees 4:28-29 NRSVA

(28) The next year he (Lysias) mustered sixty thousand picked infantry and five thousand cavalry to subdue them.

(29) They came into Idumea and encamped at Beth-zur, and Judas met them with ten thousand men.

The Jews were tremendously outnumbered. Their weapons did not measure up the weapons of the Syrians.

#### 1 Maccabees 4:7-8 NRSVA

(7) And they saw the camp of the Gentiles, strong and fortified, with cavalry all around it; and these men were trained in war.

(8) But Judas said to those who were with him, "Do not fear their numbers or be afraid when they charge.

These Jews were outnumbered approximately 16 to one, however, they knew the power of Yahweh to save his people.

The Maccabees had no sophisticated weapons to fight the Syrians. The only weapon they had was prayer.

They used that weapon as a tool to defeat their enemies.

#### 1 Maccabees 4:9-11 NRSVA

(9) Remember how our ancestors were saved at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh with his forces pursued them.

(10) And now, let us cry to Heaven, to see whether he will favor us and remember his covenant with our ancestors and crush this army before us today.

(11) Then all the Gentiles will know that there is one who redeems and saves Israel."

Yahweh will always act to protect His reputation.

He said to Ezekiel:

[Ezekiel 20:14 TLV](#)

(14) But for the sake of My Name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out.

There comes a time when we must remind ourselves and God of his promises.

[1 Maccabees 4:30-33 NRSVA](#)

(30) When he saw that their army was strong, he prayed, saying, "Blessed are you, O Savior of Israel, who crushed the attack of the mighty warrior by the hand of your servant David, and gave the camp of the Philistines into the hands of Jonathan son of Saul, and of the man who carried his armor.

(31) Hem in this army by the hand of your people Israel and let them be ashamed of their troops and their cavalry.

(32) Fill them with cowardice; melt the boldness of their strength; let them tremble in their destruction.

(33) Strike them down with the sword of those who love you, and let all who know your name praise you with hymns."

No weapon can compare with the prayers of Yahweh people. His promise is *"When he calls on Me, I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble, rescue him, and honor him. Psalms 91:15 TLV*

Also, Yahweh said in Zechariah 4:6

[Zechariah 4:6 WEB](#)

... 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says Yahweh of Armies.

Yahweh's promised to Israel in Leviticus is:

[Leviticus 26:7-8 CJB](#)

(7) You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall before your sword.

(8) Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand — your enemies will fall before your sword.

The Jews were standing on the promises of God's word. And their enemies fell before them.

When we are faced with enormous obstacle that are too great for us to overcome, we too must stand on the promises of God's word.

And so, we read in 1 Maccabees 4:

**1 Maccabees 4:34-35 NRSVA**

(34) Then both sides attacked, and there fell of the army of Lysias five thousand men; they fell in action.

(35) When Lysias saw the rout of his troops and observed the boldness that inspired those of Judas, and how ready they were either to live or to die nobly, he withdrew to Antioch and enlisted mercenaries in order to invade Judea again with an even larger army.

Israel religious freedom was at stake. And they had to fight for it. However, their battle was God's battle. From the very moment they cried out to heaven, they were fighting not to get victory, but because they already had the victory.

Our religious freedom is also being challenged today. We are losing our freedom of religion not because of a vicious evil ruler. We are facing a different kind of evil. By those who blatantly disregard God's word and insist upon imposing their lifestyles on the family of God.

Our freedom to choose not to participate in the government-imposed rules results in some believers, losing their business, and their freedom.

We cannot pray in public places, or in public schools. And in some gathering we cannot pray in the name of Yeshua.

We must also cry out to the God of heaven, as Judas Maccabees did. We must stand strong in the Lord and the power of His might.

Yahweh gave the Jews a great victory that day. He crushed their enemies under their feet.

The SECOND great miracle celebrated on Hanukkah is:

- 1.** A miraculous supply of oil for the Temple cleansing.

With the enemies defeated the group turned their attention to the Temple which had been defiled by Antiochus.

Verses 36-49 describes the condition they found the temple in.

1 Maccabees 4:36-59 NRSVA

(36) Then Judas and his brothers said, "See, our enemies are crushed; let us go up to cleanse the sanctuary and dedicate it."

(37) So all the army assembled and went up to Mount Zion.

(38) There they saw the sanctuary desolate, the altar profaned, and the gates burned. In the courts they saw bushes sprung up as in a thicket, or as on one of the mountains. They saw also the chambers of the priests in ruins.

(39) Then they tore their clothes and mourned with great lamentation; they sprinkled themselves with ashes.

(40) and fell face down on the ground. And when the signal was given with the trumpets, they cried out to Heaven.

These people humbled themselves before their God in sorrow and resentment. So much so, that they prostrated themselves on the ground, in an act of worship.

(42) Judas chose blameless priests devoted to the law,

(43) and they cleansed the sanctuary and removed the defiled stones to an unclean place.

Verses 44 thru 51 give the details of the cleansing and restoration of the temple, which we will not read today. I recommend that you purchase, if you do not have one already, the book of the apocrypha and read this important history. These books are included in some bible translations such as the New revised standard version; world English bible; and the Brenton English Septuagint.

Judas Maccabees cleaned the Temple. He removed the old, polluted altar, and restored the worship of the Lord.

This "cleansing of the Sanctuary" took place on the 25th day of Kislev, and the joyous celebration lasted for eight days.

1 Maccabees 4:52-59

(52) Early in the morning on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, which is the month of Chislev, in the one hundred forty-eighth year,

(53) they rose and offered sacrifice, as the law directs, on the new altar of burnt offering that they had built.

(54) At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, it was dedicated with songs and harps and lutes and cymbals.

(55) All the people fell on their faces and worshiped and blessed Heaven, who had prospered them.

(59) Then Judas and his brothers and all the assembly of Israel determined that every year at that season the days of dedication of the altar should be observed with joy and gladness for eight days, beginning with the twenty-fifth day of the month of Chislew

The feast of Hanukkah was instituted by Judas Maccabeus, and the people of Israel, to commemorate the purification and dedication of the temple which had been profaned by Antiochus Epiphanes 165 bc

#### 1 Maccabees 4:58 NRSVA

There was very great joy among the people, and the disgrace brought by the Gentiles was removed.

Tradition says that the Jews found a jar of consecrated oil, enough to last for one day. But it miraculously continued to burn for eight days, giving the people time to consecrate more oil.

Yahweh, the God of heaven, was indeed there working with the people of Israel and giving them great success.

We may call those years the silence years, they were anything but silence. Israel were going through a hard time and Yahweh was there to deliver them.

His promise is

#### Psalms 50:15 CJB

Call on me when you are in trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me."

The temple was the central point where the Jews came together. It was the place where the presence of Yahweh dwelt among his people. Hanukkah is also called "The Feast of Lights."

How fitting it was that Yeshua, the light of the world, would show up on this celebration of the feast of lights. [John 10:37-38]

The true light that aluminate the temple was there on this great day of celebration. The one who kept the oil burring for eight day for the temple to be cleansed, was standing before them, but they did not recognize him.

John said of Yeshua--

#### John 1:4-5 CJB



- (4) In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind.
- (5) The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not suppressed it.

Again, John said in--

#### 1 John 1:5-7 CJB

- (5) And this is the message which we have heard from him and proclaim to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him — none!
- (6) If we claim to have fellowship with him while we are walking in the darkness, we are lying and not living out the truth.
- (7) But if we are walking in the light, as he is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of his Son Yeshua purifies us from all sin.

We are the temple of the living God. And as His temple, the congregation as a whole should be dedicated to Him. We can only enjoy the feast when we are truly cleansed and are united with Yeshua, the light of the world.

The Jews' rededication of the Temple after it was defiled should remind us that each of us is a small temple, with God's presence in our hearts. And we need to rededicate ourselves to Elohim; to purify our hearts, and to change.

#### 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 CJB

- (16) Don't you know that you people are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?
- (17) So if anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you yourselves are that temple.

Hanukkah is all about cleansing and rededication of the temple of Israel. But it found its way in the inspired written word of God; and on that day Yeshua, Immanuel [God with us], shows up to teach all of us [Jew and gentiles] a vital lesson on who he really is.

It took great faith for the Maccabees to revolt against this great Hellenist society. And it also took great courage and great trust to light that first candle, knowing that it would go out in 24 hours.

We need to light a candle in the darkness of our society when we have the opportunity to do so. And trust in Elohim for the outcome.

Just as that small amount of oil continued to burn miraculous for the faithful Jews, the miraculous light of the savior will continue to shine through us when we move out in faith.

## THE FEAST OF HANUKKAH/ DEDICATION

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Will you allow the light of the messiah to shine through you this Christmas