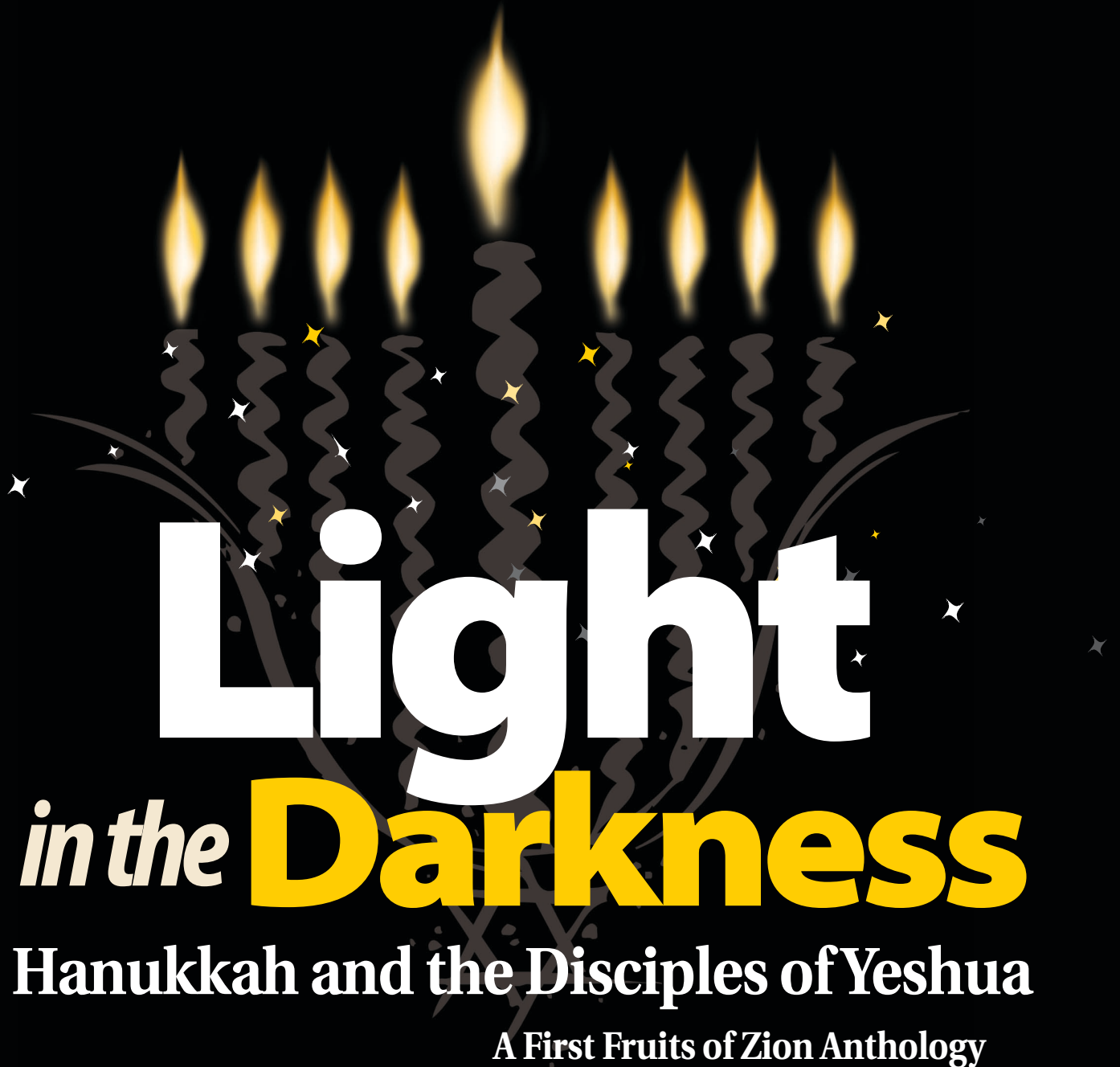


“Let everyone who is zealous for the Torah and who stands by the covenant follow after me!”

(1 Maccabees 2:27–28)



Light

in the **Darkness**

Hanukkah and the Disciples of Yeshua

A First Fruits of Zion Anthology

“But the people who know their God will display strength and take action.”

(Daniel 11:32)



Light
in the **Darkness**

Hanukkah and the Disciples of Yeshua

A First Fruits of Zion Anthology



Light *in the* **Darkness**

Hanukkah and the Disciples of Yeshua

A First Fruits of Zion Anthology



Light in the Darkness: Hanukkah and the Disciples of Yeshua. Copyright ©2003 First Fruits of Zion, Inc. (unless noted). Publication rights First Fruits of Zion, Inc. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without the written permission from the publisher, except for the use of short quotations, in reviews, in magazines or other publications. Permission will be granted upon written request of the publisher.

First Fruits of Zion is a 501(c)(3) registered nonprofit educational organization.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from New American Standard Bible Update (NASB) or the New International Version (NIV). The New American Standard Bible Update (NASB). Copyright ©1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. New International Version (NIV). Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society.

Electronic Publishing 2009

First Fruits of Zion

PO Box 649
Marshfield, Missouri 65706-0649 USA
Phone (417) 468-2741
www.ffoz.org

Comments and questions: www.ffoz.org/contact

Contributors (In Alphabetical Order by Last Name)

D. Thomas Lancaster
Boaz and Tikvah Michael
Joel Powell
Keren Golan Pryor
Avner Wolff

Additional FFOZ Study Resources

Torah Club: A subscription-based, messianic Torah Study Program. Torah Club is presented in five, separate, year-long volumes, keyed to the weekly Bible portions read in synagogues all over the world each Shabbat (Sabbath). The Torah Club is an in-depth study of the whole Bible.

HaYesod (The Foundation): A complete 10-week discipleship course that respectfully explores the Jewish foundation of Christianity. Comprehensive workbooks, lesson guides, and additional supplementary materials make this program one of the most well-rounded and comprehensive studies of this area of biblical studies. Lessons are carefully developed to build an understanding of the Bible and ignite one's relationship to the Land, the People, and the Scriptures of Israel.

Messiah Journal: The flagship publication for the ministry of First Fruits of Zion. Over the last 17 years, the face and contents of this publication have changed and matured in many ways. However, the mission has not changed: "To proclaim the Torah and its way of life, fully centered on Messiah, to today's People of God."

For additional information, please visit www.ffoz.org

We Wish a Very Happy Hanukkah to You and Yours!

Hanukkah is the Festival of Light. The Master told His disciples, “I am the light of the world.” On another occasion, He instructed them, “You are the light of the world... Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works (*mitzvot*), and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). In the same way, it is traditional to place the Hanukkah menorah (candelabrum) in a window so that its light radiates outward and illuminates the darkness of the outside world. So may it be with us.

The celebration of Hanukkah is relevant and important for all Torah-keeping believers. It is the story of tenacious zeal for Torah, devotion to God’s commandments, and the will to stand up for what is right and holy. It is the story of the rededication of God’s Temple and His people. As such, it is an important part of the history of who we are.

Therefore, we at First Fruits of Zion pray that this Hanukkah season will find the light of the Gospel burning ever brighter within you. May the *shamash* (servant candle) of Heaven ignite your heart for Torah, *mitzvot*, and devotion to Him. May the light of Yeshua pour forth from within each one of us as we set about to illuminate the darkness.

Happy Hanukkah!

From the Staff and Friends of First Fruits of Zion

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Hanukkah Revolution	9
Five Reasons to Keep Hanukkah	18
Chapter 2: Hanukkah and the Redeemed.....	21
Chapter 3: Celebrating and Honoring.....	35
Prayers and Blessings.....	38
Games.....	39
Arts and Crafts.....	43
Food	45
Chapter 4: Eight Days of Enlightenment.....	49



Chapter One

Hanukkah Revolution

Yesterday and Today!

D. Thomas Lancaster

The darkest nights of winter are lit by the warm, soft glow of a candelabrum shining from the front window of a Torah home. Unlike the boisterous, blinking holiday lights that decorate the other houses along the street, the simple, eight-branched candelabrum burns with a stately, subtle grace. A passerby on the street stops to enjoy the bright candles in the window. He sees children playing inside the house; he hears voices singing; the aroma of good things in the kitchen wafts about the home; there is a palpable sense of joy. The passerby remarks to himself as he goes on his way, “Tonight must be one of the nights of Hanukkah.”

The eight-day festival of Hanukkah is celebrated in Torah homes each year. The eight-branched candelabrum (called a *hanukkiah* or Hanukkah menorah) is lit. Friends and family gather for festive meals including delicious potato pancakes and pastries. There are entertaining games for children, storytelling, songs, and prayers. Most of all, there is gladness, joy, and light.

The Feast of Dedication

The eight-day festival of Hanukkah begins each year on the 25th day of the lunar month of *Kislev*. This usually corresponds to late November or December on the Gregorian calendar. *Hanukkah* (חנוכה) means “dedication.” The feast of Hanukkah is the Feast of Dedication. It is a thoroughly Jewish festival that commemorates an important Jewish victory over tyranny. Except for its mention in the book of John, it is not a biblical festival. Unlike the festivals of *Pesach*, *Shavuot*, *Yom Kippur*, *Rosh Hashanah*, and *Sukkot*, Hanukkah is not an “appointed time” (*moed*) from the Torah. Instead, the celebration of Hanukkah began after the last book of the Hebrew Scriptures had been composed. By the time of the Apostles, however, it had become a long-established tradition. The events that Hanukkah commemorates occurred some 160 years before the birth of the Master.

The events behind the festival of Hanukkah are found in the apocryphal book of 1 Maccabees. Therein the story is told of how Judah Maccabee and his heroic band of freedom fighters overthrew the tyrannical Seleucid forces that had subdued Judea and defiled the Jerusalem Temple. After recapturing Jerusalem, Judah Maccabee and his followers purified and rededicated the Temple. The altar that had been defiled with pagan sacrifices was dismantled and a new one was built. The menorah, the altar for incense, the table of the bread of the presence, and the curtain before the Holy of Holies were all replaced. When their work was complete, they established the 25th day of *Kislev* as the date for the rededication of the Temple because that date was the anniversary of the day on which the Temple had been defiled three years before.

To celebrate the restoration of God’s Holy Temple, all Jerusalem rejoiced for eight days. Judah Maccabee declared that future generations should rejoice annually during those eight days to remember the miracles of the Temple’s dedication. Again, Hanukkah means “dedication.”

The Hanukkah Story

And in his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue. (Daniel 11:21)

The events behind Hanukkah happened during the turbulent years of the disintegration of Alexander the Great’s Grecian Empire and the rise of the iron-clawed Roman Empire. In those days, the land of Israel found itself buffeted between world powers that sought to use her as a natural land bridge between Africa and Europe/Asia. The people of Israel were the victims of great political upheavals. War was never far from their land.



In the meantime, another war was being waged among the people of Israel. Alexander's conquests had introduced the world to Greek language, thought, custom, and philosophy. Greek education had become a universal standard. Western art, science, athletics, literature, and religion had infiltrated the East, and the land of Israel was no exception. Many Jews fell under the sway of Hellenism and embraced the Greek worldview with open arms. Instead of Torah, philosophy. Instead of *mitzvot*, virtues and aesthetics. Instead of revelation, reason. Instead of LORD, the gods of Olympus.

Around 200 BCE, the land of Israel was conquered by the Seleucid dynasty as part of their ongoing campaign against the Egyptian-based Ptolemies. In the year 175 BCE, Antiochus IV inherited the Seleucid throne and declared himself *Epiphanes*. He asserted that he was divine. Behind his back, however, people called him Antiochus *Epimanes* which means, Antiochus the "Madman."

Antiochus ordered all of his subjects to erect and worship statues of himself in their temples. In addition, he sought to unify his territorial holdings by imposing a strict Hellenism. The Greek language became mandatory. Greek culture and religion were also required. Hellenist Jews brought a gymnasium to Jerusalem and a godless Hellenist Jew (named Jason) was even appointed as High Priest.

Antiochus also issued orders forbidding circumcision, Sabbath observance, kosher diets, and the study of Torah.

Sack of Jerusalem

At the appointed time he will return and come into the South, but this last time it will not turn out the way it did before. For ships of Kittim will come against him; therefore he will be disheartened, and will return and become enraged at the holy covenant and take action; so he will come back and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant. (Daniel 11:29–30)

In 169 BCE, Antiochus's army suffered a humiliating defeat in their Egyptian campaign when Roman intervention (ships from Kittim) put a halt to their advance. Shamed and angry, Antiochus turned his army back north to return through the land of Israel. When news reached him of civil unrest in Jerusalem, however, he sacked the city

indiscriminately and slaughtered thousands of citizens. During this siege, he entered the Holy Temple and stole the gold and silver, including the incense altar, the table, and the menorah.

After Antiochus had defeated Egypt in the year one hundred and forty-three [circa 170 BCE], he returned and went up to Israel and to Jerusalem with a strong force. He insolently invaded the sanctuary and took away the golden altar, the lampstand for the light with all its fixtures, the offering table, the cups and the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the golden ornament on the façade of the temple. He stripped off everything, and took away the gold and silver and the precious vessels; he also took all the hidden treasures he could find. Taking all this, he went back to his own country, after he had spoken with great arrogance and shed much blood. And there was great mourning for Israel, in every place where they dwelt. (1 Maccabees 1:20–25)

This was just the beginning.

Abomination of Desolation

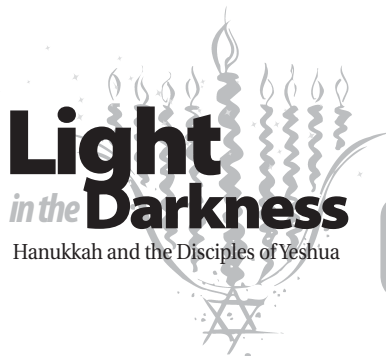
And forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation. (Daniel 11:31)

Not long after that, Antiochus issued orders that all nations under his power were to immediately relinquish their various religions and cultures and embrace Greek culture and faith. This was especially problematic for the Torah-based culture and religion of Judea. In fact, the edicts were specifically aimed at the Jews.

The daily sacrifices were discontinued. The Jerusalem Temple was converted into a Temple to Zeus. On the 15th day of *Kislev* an image of Zeus was erected in the Temple (the Abomination of Desolation). Ten days later, they began to sacrifice swine to the idol upon the altar of LORD.

Antiochus also issued orders forbidding circumcision, Sabbath observance, kosher diets, and the study of Torah. The text of Maccabees records that those who attempted to live out the Torah paid with their lives.

On the fifteenth day of the month Kislev, in the year one hundred and forty-five [168 BCE], the king erected the horrible abomination upon the altar of holocausts, and



in the surrounding cities of Judah they built pagan altars. They also burnt incense at the doors of houses and in the streets.

Any Torah scrolls which they found they tore up and burnt. Whoever was found with a scroll of the covenant, and whoever observed the Torah was condemned to death by royal decree. So they used their power against Israel, against those who were caught, each month, in the cities. On the twenty-fifth day of each month they sacrificed on the altar erected over the altar of holocausts. Women who had their children circumcised were put to death, in keeping with the decree, with the babies hung from their necks; their families also and those who had circumcised them were killed.

But many in Israel were determined and resolved in their hearts not to eat anything unclean; they preferred to die rather than to be defiled with unclean food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die. Terrible affliction was upon Israel. (1 Maccabees 1:54–64)

...they preferred to die rather than to be defiled with unclean food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die.

Those Zealous for the Torah

But the people who know their God will display strength and take action. (Daniel 11:32)

Many Jews chose to comply with the new laws. They forsook Torah to save their lives. Others stood fast to the covenant, and paid for their convictions dearly. There are several famous stories in Jewish lore about brave men and women who resisted tyranny during the Hanukkah persecutions. There is the story of old Eliezer who chose to die rather than eat pork—or even pretend to eat pork (2 Maccabees 6:18-31). There is the story of Hannah and her seven sons, each of whom was martyred before her eyes for their refusal to forsake the commandments of Torah (2 Maccabees 7). There is the story of brave Judith who pretended to seduce an enemy general and then slew him to liberate her entire town. But

the best known of all these stories is the story of old Mattityahu the priest and his sons.

Mattityahu (*Mattathias* in the Greek) and his sons were *cohenim* (priests) who abandoned Jerusalem when the Temple was defiled. They could not, however, escape the arm of Antiochus. The king's officers eventually came to Mattityahu's hometown in Modin to force them to sacrifice to an idol.

In those days Mattathias, son of John, son of Simeon, a priest of the family of Joarib, left Jerusalem and settled in Modin. He had five sons: John, who was called Gaddi; Simon, who was called Thassi; Judah, who was called Maccabeus; Eleazar, who was called Avaran; and Jonathan, who was called Apphus. When he saw the sacrileges that were being committed in Judah and in Jerusalem, he said: "Woe is me! Why was I born to see the ruin of my people and the ruin of the holy city, and to sit idle while it is given into the hands of enemies, and the sanctuary into the hands of strangers?"

The officers of the king in charge of enforcing the apostasy came to the city of Modin to organize the sacrifices. (1 Maccabees 2:1–7, 15)

In the city of Modin, Mattityahu and his sons refused to comply. Instead, they revolted and took up arms against the king's officers and slew them. They knew this act of insurrection would bring wrath down upon them. So old Mattityahu called out to all the people of Modin, shouting, "Let everyone who is zealous for the Torah and who stands by the covenant follow after me!" (1 Maccabees 2:27). Then he and his sons fled into the mountains.

The Hammers

And those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder, for many days. (Daniel 11:33)

Hidden away in the mountains, Mattityahu and his sons were not long alone. Very quickly, all those who were zealous for the Torah gathered around them. They soon formed a small army. Mattityahu himself was very old, and he died in the hills. His oldest son Yehudah (Judah) took charge of the small rebel group. Engaging in guerilla warfare against the Syrian occupation force, Yehudah and his freedom fighters came to be called *Maccabees* which means "Hammers." Judah would forever after be known as Yehudah the Maccabee: Judah the Hammer.



Early successes attracted attention, and the little army was harassed constantly. Soon enough, the Seleucids sent thousands of mercenary soldiers to root out the rebels in the hills. They must have thought it would bring a quick and easy end to the Hanukkah revolution. But a great miracle happened there.

When he reached the ascent of Beth-horon, Judah went out to meet him with a few men. But when they saw the army coming against them, they said to Judah: "How can we, few as we are, fight such a mighty host as this? Besides, we are weak today from fasting." But Judah said: "It is easy for many to be overcome by a few; in the sight of Heaven there is no difference between deliverance by many or by few; for victory in war does not depend upon the size of the army, but on strength that comes from Heaven. With great presumption and lawlessness they come against us to destroy us and our wives and children and to despoil us; but we are fighting for our lives and our Torah laws. He Himself will crush them before us; so do not be afraid of them." (1 Maccabees 3:16–22)

In a stunning victory, LORD overthrew the massive army before the small band of rebels. It was clearly a miracle from heaven. Yehudah and his brave Maccabees fought many battles for many years. They suffered defeats but also achieved many miraculous victories. In battle after battle, the few overpowered the many, the weak overturned the strong. They pushed forward despite overwhelming odds. Miraculous intervention shifted the battles until at last they were able to take back Jerusalem.

Rededicating the Temple

Upon entering Jerusalem, Yehudah and his brother priests were dismayed to see the Temple desolate, the altar profaned, the gates burned, and the holy courtyard overgrown with weeds. They tore their garments, cried out to heaven, and sounded the *shofar*. Before the last enemy had even been rooted out of the strongholds of Jerusalem, Yehudah set about restoring the Temple. They tore down the defiled altar and built a new one. They

“...but we are fighting for our lives and our Torah laws. [God] will crush them before us; so do not be afraid of them.”

made new implements and furnishings from what was available. One scrap of legend has it that they made a menorah of iron bars they found in the Temple.¹

Another famous legend has it that when they searched the Temple, they were only able to find one cruse of olive oil with the priestly stamp upon it. It was enough to fuel the lamps of the menorah for only one day. It would take eight days before they could procure more olive oil fitting for use in the menorah. Uncertain of what to do, they decided to keep the *mitzvah* of lighting the menorah as best they could. They lit it, fully expecting it to go out that day. Miraculously, the oil lasted for eight days, until new oil could be obtained. Some say this is the reason Hanukkah is celebrated for eight days.

It was on the 25th day of *Kislev*, exactly three years after the first swine had been sacrificed on the altar, that Yehudah and his men reinstated the daily burnt offerings to the LORD. They celebrated the rededication of the Temple for eight days. The days of dedication came to be remembered and celebrated as the festival of Hanukkah.

Early in the morning on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, that is, the month of Kislev, in the year one hundred and forty-eight [165 BCE], they arose and offered sacrifice according to the Torah on the new altar of holocausts that they had made.

On the anniversary of the day on which the Gentiles had defiled it, on that very day it was reconsecrated with songs, harps, flutes, and cymbals. All the people prostrated themselves and adored and praised Heaven, who had given them success.

For eight days they celebrated the dedication of the altar and joyfully offered holocausts and sacrifices of deliverance and praise. They ornamented the façade of the temple with gold crowns and shields; they repaired the gates and the priests' chambers and furnished them with doors. There was great joy among the people now that the disgrace of the Gentiles was removed. Then Judah and his brothers and the entire congregation of Israel decreed that the days of the dedication of the altar should be observed with joy and gladness on the anniversary every year for eight days, from the twenty-fifth day of the month Kislev. (1 Maccabees 4:52–59)

The Second book of Maccabees (1:9; 10:1–5) records that the eight-day dedication ceremony of the first Hanukkah was meant to correspond to the eight days of *Sukkot* at which Solomon consecrated the First Temple.² It says that the eight days were celebrated “with gladness

like the Feast of Tabernacles remembering how, not long before, during the Feast of Tabernacles, they had been wandering like wild beasts in the mountains and the caves. So, bearing wands wreathed with leaves and fair boughs and palms, they offered hymns of praise” (10:6–8).³ Another ancient name for Hanukkah is “Sukkot of Fire” (1:18). Just as the altar fire had been ignited from heaven at the dedication of the altar in the days of Moses

and at the sanctification of the Temple of Solomon, so too the heavenly fire was said to have returned in the days of Yehudah Maccabee (1:18–36; 2:8–12; 14; 10:3).

Whether or not the legends of miraculous fire and miraculous oil are historically reliable is not important here. What is important is to acknowledge that a great miracle happened there—a verifiable, historical fact. The Torah-honoring Maccabees won a great victory against overwhelming odds. Light shone in the darkness.

**The Torah-honoring
Maccabees won a
great victory against
overwhelming odds.
Light shone in the
darkness.**

Endnotes

¹ A baraita, Scholium to Megillat Ta’anit, cited in Encyclopedia Judaica’s article on Hanukkah.

² 1 Kings 8.

³ Quoted in Encyclopedia Judaica’s article on Hanukkah.



Five Reasons

To Keep **Hanukkah**

1

Did you know that Hanukkah is in the Gospels?

Hanukkah is not mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures because the story of Hanukkah happened after the last book of the Tanakh had been written. However, Hanukkah is mentioned in the Apostolic Scriptures. Yeshua went to the Temple for the Feast of Hanukkah. If Hanukkah matters to Yeshua, shouldn't it matter to us?

2

Did you know that Hanukkah is a story of religious persecution?

Hanukkah is a story of religious persecution and standing up for faith in God. Yeshua tells us we can expect persecution, but He also tells us that we must stand firm in our faith. If that's what the story of Hanukkah is about, shouldn't it matter to us?

3

Did you know that Hanukkah is the Festival of the Light of the World?

Hanukkah is the Festival of Light. It celebrates the relighting of the menorah lamp that burned in God's Holy Temple. In rabbinic terminology, the menorah was called the "light of the world." Yeshua said, "I am the Light of the world," and another time He told His disciples, "You are the light of the world." If Hanukkah is the Festival of the Light of the World, shouldn't it matter to us?

4

Did you know that Yeshua talked about Hanukkah?

Yeshua talked about Hanukkah. He warned His disciples that the things that happened in the story of Hanukkah would happen again (Mark 13:13-16, Matthew 24:15-18). To understand what He was saying, His disciples had to know the story of Hanukkah. If Yeshua talked about the story of Hanukkah, and His disciples knew the story, shouldn't it matter to us?

5

Did you know that Hanukkah commemorates the dedication of God's Temple?

Hanukkah means "dedication." It is a remembrance of when the Jews rededicated God's Holy Temple to serve only LORD. The Apostolic Scriptures tell us that we are God's Temple. If Hanukkah is a festival about the dedication of God's Temple, and we are God's Temple, shouldn't it matter to us?



Chapter Two

Hanukkah *and the* Redeemed

Why Should Hanukkah Matter to Me?

D. Thomas Lancaster

Given that Hanukkah is a historically Jewish festival and that its celebration is not a *mitzvah* (commandment) of the Torah, why would believers in Yeshua celebrate it? Obviously Jewish believers may have a cultural affinity for the festival, but is there any real biblical significance? Is there any reason non-Jews might want to incorporate the celebration of Hanukkah into their homes? There is a reason, and it's not just cultural. Yeshua kept Hanukkah.

This chapter will show the biblical basis for Hanukkah as prophesied in the book of Daniel, and it will explore the reason why Yeshua found the festival important enough to merit a special trip to the Temple.

The Master keeps the Feast of Hanukkah

*At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Yeshua was walking in the Temple in the portico of Solomon.
(John 10:22-23)*

In the tenth chapter of the book of John, we find Yeshua at the Temple in Jerusalem during the festival of Hanukkah. This requires some investigation. We would not expect to find Him in Jerusalem at that time of year. Usually He is stumping around the Galilee with His disciples. Ordinarily He is only in Jerusalem for the three pilgrimage festivals of *Pesach*, *Shavuot*, and *Sukkot*. It is a surprise to see Him in Jerusalem at Hanukkah.

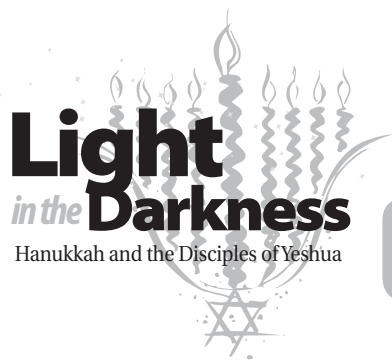
Hanukkah (חנוכה) means “dedication.” The festival of Hanukkah is a commemoration of the great Maccabee revolution, which overthrew the forces of Hellenism and resulted in the rededication of the Temple. We know very little about how Hanukkah was celebrated in the days of the Master, but there is every reason to believe it was a Temple-centered celebration. After all, the “Feast of Dedication” was the anniversary of the rededication of the Temple.

John tells us that it was Hanukkah, and Yeshua was walking through Solomon’s Colonnade, a portico along the Eastern wall of the Temple courts. Edersheim describes that colonnade as follows:

It was the eastern colonnade, which abutted against the Mount of Olives and faced “the Beautiful Gate,” that formed the principal entrance in the Sanctuary. For, all along the inside of the great wall which formed the Temple-enclosure ran a double colonnade—each column a monolith of white marble 25 cubits high, covered with cedar-beams... We infer that the eastern was “Solomon’s Porch,” from the circumstance that it was the only relic left of Solomon’s Temple.¹

It was into this colonnade that the Eastern Gate of the Temple opened. According to long standing legend, Messiah would one day enter the Temple, and Jerusalem, through the Eastern Gate. Zechariah 14:4 and Ezekiel 43 figure prominently in this imagery. Therein the Messiah and the Glory of LORD respectively are portrayed as coming from the Mount of Olives. They come to restore Jerusalem and rededicate (*hanukkah*) the Temple. It was probably through this Eastern Gate that Yeshua entered on the day of His triumphal entry. No doubt the Messianic association with the Eastern Gate is why the early believers congregated in Solomon’s colonnade.² They wanted to be ready to greet Him at His return. Thus, the portico was the birthplace of the Assembly of Messiah.

Can you picture it? Try to imagine Yeshua walking the very stones on which the believers throughout the book of Acts would assemble, worship, and pray. He was walking in the Temple, in the very place where they, the living Temple, would soon be proclaiming His name and demonstrating His power. And it was the festival of Hanukkah.



David's Descendents and Hanukkah

In some ways, it is surprising that Yeshua kept the festival of Hanukkah at all. Descendents of the House of David tended to be particularly ill disposed toward the festival of Hanukkah. For example, consider Rabbi Yehudah the Prince, a distant cousin of Yeshua, who compiled the *Mishnah* in the 2nd century. He was no fan of the Maccabees or their Hanukkah revolution. In that whole, vast body of Jewish law and tradition, he never mentions the celebration of the festival of Hanukkah! Why? Because, like Yeshua, he is a descendent of David, and if there is one thing the descendents of David could not stand it was those Hasmonean kings! The Hasmoneans were the priestly line of Maccabees (and therefore in the line of Levi). It was they and their descendents who proclaimed themselves Kings of Israel, contrary to the covenant God made with Judah and with David. When the Maccabees revolted and toppled the Seleucid sovereignty over Israel, they put themselves upon the throne in Jerusalem. In so doing, they removed themselves from the affection of the House of David. Their kingship was regarded as invalid, and it eventually became the despicable Herodian line. Thus, Yehudah the Prince, a son born of David's royal line, edits all reference to them out of the *Mishnah*.

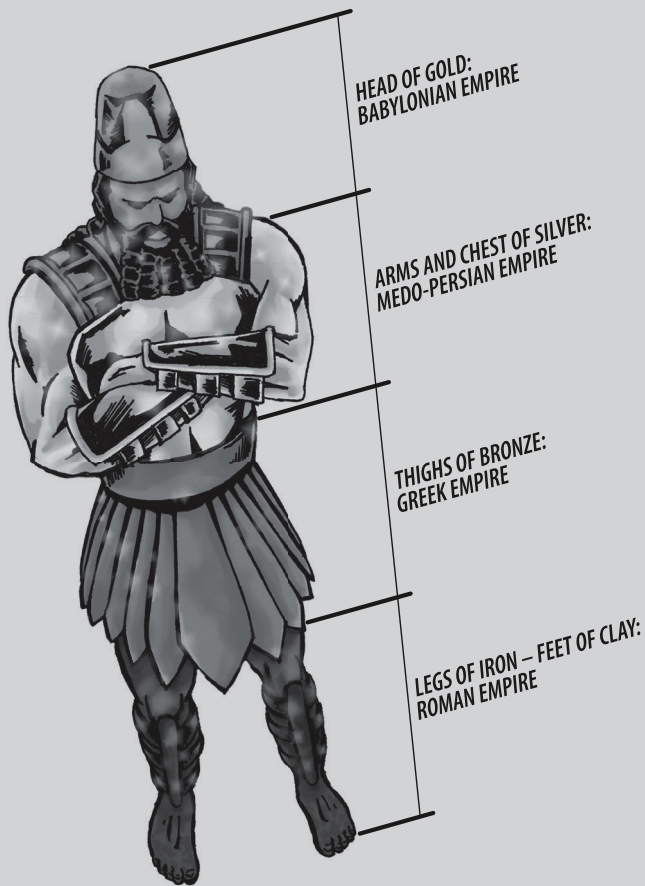
But here is Yeshua, a son of David, making special pilgrimage to Jerusalem, to the Temple, to celebrate the festival of Hanukkah. Obviously, it was important to Him. Therefore, it should be important to us as well.

Even though this festival is not biblical, the events that it celebrates certainly are. As far back as the book of Daniel, we discover startling prophecies that lay the groundwork for the celebration of Hanukkah and help us to understand why this festival was so important to Yeshua.

Daniel and the Four Empires

In the year 604 BCE, King Nebuchadnezzar took Daniel into captivity in Babylon. His captivity began 18 years before Nebuchadnezzar returned to Jerusalem and leveled it, ending the Davidic monarchy, destroying the Temple, and taking Judah into exile. In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, still 17 years before the destruction of Judah,

Obviously, it was important to Him [Yeshua]. Therefore, it should be important to us as well.



King Nebuchadnezzar's Vision of Empires

Nebuchadnezzar are that head of gold,” Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:38). The arms and chest of silver represent the Medo-Persian Empire. As Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar, “another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours.” The thighs of bronze stand for the Greek Empire, established by Alexander the Great. Daniel says, “a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth.” The legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay are the fourth kingdom, the Roman Empire. As Daniel says, it is “strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces” (Daniel 2:40).

the King had a dream. He saw an idolatrous image with a head of gold, arms and chest of silver, thighs of bronze, and feet of clay and legs of iron. He told his astrologers and wise men, “Tell me my dream and give me the interpretation or I will cut you to pieces” (Daniel 2:5). None could except for one—a Judean named Daniel.

The king said to Daniel, whose Babylonian name was *Belteshazzar*, “Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?” Daniel answered before the king:

As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians nor diviners are able to declare it to the king. However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed.” (Daniel 2:26–28)

Then Daniel described the great image of empires. Read it yourself when you have time. The head of gold is Babylon. “You O

Ne-

The Ten Kings

The last kingdom, the one of iron and clay, is seen with ten toes, representing (we are explicitly told) ten kings. In chapter 7, Daniel sees a vision of this fourth and terrifying empire: “After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns” (Daniel 7:7). The ten horns of the iron beast correspond to the ten toes of the image. They are kings, just as in the book of Revelation.

Therefore, the idolatrous image of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream represents four human empires spanning a period from the end of the Judean monarchy, 600 BCE up to the tenth Emperor of Rome. Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC, is the head of gold. He is the Babylonian that begins the imagery. The ten emperors of Rome are the ten toes that complete the image. If we start counting with the first Roman Emperor and count them off, we have an amazing result, (See box at right.)

It is no coincidence that Titus, the tenth, was the general who destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in the year 70 CE. The image that began with a destroyer of Jerusalem spans nearly 700 years and ended with a destroyer of Jerusalem. That is the power of biblical prophecy.

However, in the vision, the idolatrous image itself was not the victor. Rather it was the victim. In his dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw a rock strike the image and shatter it. Then the rock grew to fill the whole earth. The rock is generally understood to be the Kingdom of Heaven. It strikes the feet of Rome, and shatters them. The declaration of the Kingdom of Heaven began with the message of Yochanon the Immerser. Yochanon was prophesying during the days of the second Emperor of Rome, Tiberius. Since then, the Kingdom has continued to grow and grow and one day will fill the whole earth.

The Ten Emperors of Rome

Emperor One

Augustus

Emperor Two

Tiberius

Emperor Three

Gaius Caligula

Emperor Four

Claudius

Emperor Five

Nero

Emperor Six

Galba

Emperor Seven

Otho

Emperor Eight

Vitellius

Emperor Nine

Vespasian

Emperor Ten

Titus

The Little Horn

It is the nature of prophecy to be vague, ambiguous, and slippery. The prophecies of Daniel are no exception. However, there are certain elements in Daniel that are astounding in their level of detail and accuracy, such as the four empires of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Another example of this amazing level of detail and prophetic clarity is in the description of the days of the Maccabees and the days of the Hanukkah revolution.

Daniel chapter 8 begins with the words, "In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king, a vision appeared to me..." (Belshazzar was the King who would see the handwriting on the wall that only Daniel could interpret.) He was the last King of Babylon before that empire was toppled by the Medes and Persians. His third year was in the fifth decade of the fifth century BCE. It was some 36 years or so after the destruction of Jerusalem, more than half a century after Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue. In that year, Daniel had a vision.

The image that began with a destroyer of Jerusalem spans nearly 700 years and ended with a destroyer of Jerusalem. That is the power of biblical prophecy.

In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king, a vision appeared to me, Daniel, subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously. I looked in the vision, and while I was looking I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam; and I looked in the vision and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal. Then I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a ram which had two horns was standing in front of the canal. Now the two horns were long, but one was longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last. (Daniel 8:1-3)

Later in the chapter, the angel Gabriel explains the meaning. The ram represents the joint Medo-Persian Empire. Its capital, as we know from the story of Esther, is Susa, i.e. Shushan. One horn of the ram is longer than the other, suggesting that the Persian power was greater than the Medes. But as Daniel continues to describe the vision, a goat with a single horn comes

charging from the West and gores and tramples the Medo-Persian ram. We learn the interpretation from the historical record. The goat is the Greeks. The single horn is Alexander the Great. In the year 336 BCE, Alexander the Great swept across the Mediterranean world and the Middle East. The Persian Empire toppled before him. In verse eight, we read about Alexander the Great.

Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken; and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven. (Daniel 8:8)

When Alexander was at the height of his power, he became deathly ill. Knowing he was about to die and had no heir, he summoned his four greatest generals and divided his kingdom among them. Macedonia and Greece went to Antigonus. Thrace and Asia Minor went to Lysimachus. Babylonia and Syria went to Seleuces. Ptolemy inherited Egypt and the land of Israel. In the vision, the four generals are represented by the four prominent horns “toward the four winds of heaven.”

After Alexander’s kingdom was divided, the Ptolemies and the Seleucids fell to war with each other. The Land of Israel was between the two kingdoms and became strategically important in their battles. Generations later, a Seleucid king named Antiochus Epiphanes arose. Daniel foresaw him as a little horn arising out of one of the goat’s four horns.

Out of one of [the four horns] came forth a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land. It grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down. It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down.

And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper. Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, “How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?”

He said to me, “For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored.” (Daniel 8:9–14)

2,300 Evenings and Mornings

The little horn that took away the daily sacrifice and flung truth to the ground was Antiochus Epiphanes. There were to be 2,300 evenings and mornings until the sanctuary would be rededicated. Some interpreters who have not had a proper understanding of the Temple service assumed that this meant 2,300 days, which they further interpreted to mean 2,300 years. By this reckoning, they anticipated the second coming of Messiah in the mid 19th century. He didn't come.

The 2,300 evenings and mornings most probably refer to 2,300 *korban tamid* sacrifices, i.e. the morning lamb and the evening lamb of the daily Temple service. In that case, it is the morning and evening sacrifices being counted, not the days. Thus, it would actually have equaled 1,150 days, or three years and two months.

Can these numbers give us an exact date for the fulfillment of the prophecy? Not for certain, because we do not have an exact date for when Antiochus actually stopped the daily sacrifices. However, we are provided with the date that he set up his idol, the abomination of desolation, in God's Temple. According to Maccabees, it was set up on the 15th day of the month of *Kislev*, and the first hog was sacrificed to it on the 25th day of the same month in the year 168 BCE. Three years later, on the 25th day of *Kislev*, in the year 165 BCE, the Maccabees cleansed and rededicated the Temple.

This is nothing short of amazing. The Maccabees cleansed and rededicated the Temple exactly 1,105 days after the idol was erected. We cannot know for certain, but there is nothing to suggest that it was not exactly 1,150 days after the daily sacrifices ceased. 2,300 would then be the number of daily sacrifices that had been omitted during the period of the Temple's desecration.

The Stern-Faced King

In the book of Daniel, the Angel Gabriel further describes the little horn as the stern-faced king. In chapter 11, he speaks of the long years of warfare between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids. He describes in remarkable detail the rise of the various kings, the story of Cleopatra the First, and the machinations of one he calls "a despicable person," Antiochus Epiphanes (11:21). The following passage is a prophetic description of the days of Antiochus.

Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation. By smooth words he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action. Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many;

yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder for many days. Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy. Some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge and make them pure until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time. (Daniel 11:31–35)

Herein, we find a little of that prophetic ambiguity. The events of the Hanukkah revolution are explicitly described in these prophecies. The amazing level of detail was probably meant to comfort the people who would live through those dark days. This prophecy is not primarily intended for our benefit, but for the benefit of those who experienced the travails of persecution in that time. It was meant that they could see and understand. As Yehudah Maccabee read the book of Daniel, he must have asked, “Could this wicked Antiochus be the little horn? Could we be living out these days?”

A Second Abomination

Yeshua spoke of a second “abomination that causes desolation.” He told His disciples, “Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)” (Matthew 24:15).

Notice that Yeshua spoke about these things from Daniel as if they had not happened yet, but in fact, they had—and had not. Though these prophecies had all certainly been fulfilled in the days of the Maccabees, there was yet another vision in the book of Daniel that saw another “little horn.” This one is found in Daniel chapter 7.

Remember that Antiochus, the little horn of Daniel chapters 8 and 11, arose from the four horns of Greece. He was part of the Grecian Empire. In chapter 7 of Daniel, a different little horn arises. The little horn of chapter 7 arises from among the ten horns of the terrifying beast of Rome. He is an eleventh horn, and he follows in the pattern of Antiochus. He is often identified with Anti-Christ and the Beast. Regarding this beast, this eleventh horn, the Angel Gabriel says, “He will speak against the Most High and oppress His righteous ones and try to change the set times and the laws. The righteous will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time” (Daniel 7:25 NIV). The new little horn, the new abomination, sets about to change the appointed times, (i.e. the biblical festivals) and the laws (i.e. the commandments of Torah). Let the reader understand.

...there was yet another vision in the book of Daniel that saw another “little horn.”

The Modern Hanukkah Revolution

The significance for believers is profound. When we celebrate Hanukkah, we are not just celebrating a victory that happened in the past, but one that happens in the future, and one that is also happening right now. The story of Hanukkah is the story of light growing in the darkness. Wherever there are people of

Torah, there is also darkness trying to snuff them out. History proves it over and over. But the miracle of Hanukkah is that the light is not diminished. Instead, the light grows. The story of Hanukkah is the story of a war between two worldviews, that of Hellenism and that of Torah. Hellenism is the language of humanism, philosophical theology, and relativism. Torah is the language of theism, *mitzvot*, deeds, and revelation.

There is a battle going on today. As far as the Body of Messiah goes, the Hanukkah revolution has just begun. The return to Torah is not a fad.

Hellenism is the language of humanism, philosophical theology, and relativism. Torah is the language of theism, mitzvot, deeds, and revelation.

It is not an American or Israeli phenomenon. It is international. It is spreading everywhere, to every people, and it is unstoppable because it is biblical. It is a sweeping Hanukkah (rededication) of the Body of Messiah. And that is what we need.

Temple of Believers

He will speak against the Most High and oppress His righteous ones and try to change the set times and the laws. (Daniel 7:25 NIV)

The Body of Messiah is likened unto a Temple. Individually and corporately, we are the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Like the Holy Temple of Jerusalem in the days of the Maccabees, we have been defiled as well. Even in the days of Paul, the “Mystery of Torah-lessness”³ was at work among the believers. Paul himself said so, and he referred to Anti-Christ as “the Man of Torah-lessness.”⁴ If the “Man of No-Torah” was at work among the believers even in the first century, how much more so now!

Consider the statutes Antiochus decreed for Israel. Look at his laws!

- You *shall* profane the Sabbath.
- You *shall* profane the festivals and holy days.
- You *shall* set up idols.
- You *shall* eat unclean animals.
- You *shall not* circumcise your sons.
- You *shall* forget the Torah.

For many centuries, Christianity has been following these laws of Antiochus—the laws of the abomination of desolation—instead of the Torah of God by requiring Jewish believers to forsake Torah when they become believers. Only in recent years have Torah-oriented communities of believers been allowed to exist. Two hundred and fifty to three hundred years ago in Europe, a community of Torah-keeping believers would not have survived long because of pressure from the church. Nor would it have fared well in America two-hundred years ago. The Hanukkah revolution has only just begun.

As one studies the history of religion and the world, a disturbing pattern emerges. In every generation, there is a systematic assault on the Torah, and on the people who choose to live by it. Thus it says in the Passover Haggadah, “In every generation they rise up against us to destroy us!” It is true, and never has it been more true than in our own generations which have seen the events of the Holocaust. Our days are certainly no exception to the rule.

Hill Country of Judea

Hear the words of the Master, “Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Matthew 24:15). Yeshua’s words allude to the Maccabee revolution in which Mattityahu and his sons left everything and fled to the hill country of Judea.

**For many centuries,
Christianity has been
following these laws of
Antiochus—these laws
of the Abomination of
Desolation—instead of
the Torah of God.**

Mattityahu, the father of Judah Maccabee said, “Whosoever is zealous for the Torah, and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me.” So, too, the saints in the book of Revelation are described as “Those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the covenant of Yeshua.”⁵ Perhaps the writer of Revelation is also alluding to this passage of Maccabees.

Therefore, when we sanctify the Sabbath day, we are standing against the abomination of desolation. We are in defiance of the abomination. When we choose to eat biblically, we are defying the edicts of desolation. When we choose to learn and live the Word—God’s Torah—we are part of the revolution. How does it feel to be a Maccabee? Welcome to the hill country of Judea.

Yeshua and Hanukkah

Perhaps now that we have reviewed the significance of the Hanukkah story, we are better prepared to understand why Yeshua walked in Solomon’s Colonnade during the Feast of Hanukkah and why the celebration of Hanukkah matters to us. Yeshua was anticipating the rededication of the Temple. He was anticipating the Living Temple of believers that would one day congregate there. In addition, Yeshua foresaw that many of His followers would turn from the Torah.⁶ He knew full well that His *Ecclesia* would one day be in need of Hanukkah.

- Hanukkah is a festival commemorating the fight against Hellenization and assimilation.
- Hanukkah is a festival reminding us to purify our own bodies (Temples of the Holy Spirit) and rededicate ourselves to God. We present our bodies as “living sacrifices holy and pleasing unto God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (Romans 12:1–2)
- Hanukkah reminds us that we are locked in a struggle with the powers of darkness that seek to snuff out the light of Torah. Yet each night of the festival, our light grows brighter and brighter.

The Master said,

Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works (mitzvot), and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

The celebration of Hanukkah is relevant and important for all believers. It is the story of who we are.

Even so, come quickly Lord.



Endnotes

- ¹ Edersheim, Alfred. *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), p 578.
- ² Acts 3:11; 5:12.
- ³ 2 Thessalonians 2:7.
- ⁴ 2 Thessalonians 2:8.
- ⁵ Revelation 12:17; 14:12.
- ⁶ Matthew 24:11.



Chapter Three

Celebrating *and* Honoring

Keeping Hanukkah in Your Home

Like most Torah festivals and rituals, Hanukkah is celebrated primarily within one's home. The festival of Hanukkah lasts for eight days. On each night, a light is kindled to remember the miracle of the oil that lasted for eight days. In this section, we will provide you with a compilation of suggestions on how to celebrate Hanukkah according to traditional Jewish methods. In addition, we will offer you a few ideas on food, music, games with the kids, and lighting your Hanukkah menorah. These guidelines, however, are just barebones tips for your celebration of Hanukkah. It is up to you to be as creative with the festival activities as you like. Moreover, chapter four of this booklet contains additional devotional readings for deeper spiritual to add to the delight of Hanukkah.

The Miracle of the Oil

According to the popular legend, when the Maccabees recaptured the Temple, they went to relight the menorah lamp that was supposed to burn continually in the presence of God. However, there was only enough sanctified oil to burn the menorah for one day. It would take eight days before more oil could be supplied. Miraculously, the oil in the menorah did not burn out; it lasted for the full eight days. Only after more oil was finally available did

the first day's oil run out. We burn the Hanukkah menorah throughout the eight days of Hanukkah to remember this miracle.

What Will I Need?

To keep Hanukkah in your house, you may want to begin with a traditional nine-branched Hanukkah menorah. It is a candelabrum with nine places for candles; the ninth place being set apart from the others. This special candle is called the *shamash* (servant) candle—it is used to light the other candles. Such a menorah is called a *hanukkiah*. One additional light is usually lit on each of the eight nights of Hanukkah. Because you will be lighting an additional candle (or lamp) each night, you will need a total of 45 candles for the entire festival. (A hanukkiah can be purchased at any Jewish book or gift shop.)



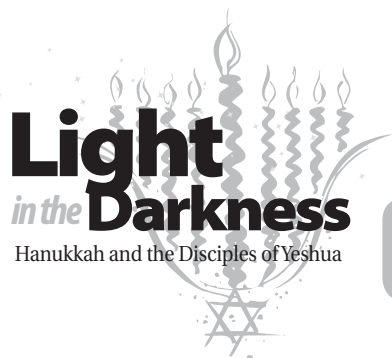
Blessings before Lighting

According to common teachings in Judaism, the candles on the hanukkiah are lit just after sunset on each night of Hanukkah, except for Friday night. On Friday night, the candles are lit just before sunset because the Torah forbids kindling a fire on the Sabbath.¹ Once lit, the hanukkiah is usually placed in a window facing the street so that it can radiate its light out to the world.

On the first night of Hanukkah, all three of the provided blessings (page 38) are recited before lighting the hanukkiah. On all subsequent nights, only the first two of the blessings are recited.

Lighting the Hanukkiah

On the first night, place a candle in the space for the shamash and a candle in the space on the far right hand side of the hanukkiah. Light the shamash, then use its flame to light the first candle before returning it to its slot. On each subsequent night, a new candle is added just to the left of the previous night's lights. On each night, begin by lighting the shamash, and then use it to light the candles on the hanukkiah. The candles are



always lit from left to right. Here is an easy way to remember which ones to light first. Just remember, “The first will be last and the last will be first” (Matthew 19:30). That is, the first (candle) will be (lit) last and the last (candle) will be (lit) first.

When lighting the hanukkah, you can read the following traditional meditation.

Meditation for the Lighting of the Hanukkah

We are lighting these lights because of the miracles, the wonders, the salvations and the battles which You performed for our forefathers in those days at this season through Your holy priests. During all the eight days of Hanukkah, these lights are holy. We are not using them for ordinary light. Instead they are for looking at in order to give thanks and praise to Your Great Name for Your miracles, Your wonders and Your salvations.

Watching the Hanukkah

There is a special joy in the quiet sanctity of the Hanukkah light. We encourage you to stay near the hanukkah and use the time to tell stories, sing hymns or traditional songs, and celebrate the festival. Use the time to retell the story of Hanukkah. Hanukkah means “dedication.” It is a good time to meditate on how we might rededicate our lives to the service and worship of our King. It is a good time to meditate on the Word. Scripture passages relating to the Messiah, the Light of the world are very appropriate. (Some believe that we should not read by the light of the hanukkah, because its light is intended exclusively for the purpose of memorializing God’s miracles.)

Hanukkah Fun

Although these guidelines may seem very specific, remember that there really is no right or wrong way to “do” Hanukkah. Hanukkah is a family-oriented festival. It is a time for eating potato pancakes, playing spin the dreidel, singing songs, and enjoying one another’s company. Some families exchange gifts on Hanukkah as a sort of “kosher-Christmas.” (That’s not a custom we personally recommend. The gifts are not necessary, though they might make a nice fit for your particular family.) The important thing is to use the occasion to remember the miracles of salvation and deliverance.

First Blessing

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם אשר
קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של חנוכה

*Baruch atah ADONAI Eloheinu Melech ha-olam asher kid-shanu
be-mitzvotav vetzivanu lehadlich ner shel Hanukkah. (Amen.)*

Blessed are You, LORD, our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to kindle the Hanukkah light. (Amen.)²

Second Blessing

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם שעשה
נסים לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה

*Baruch atah ADONAI Eloheinu Melech ha-olam sh'asah nisim
l'avoteinu bayamim hahem bazman hazeh. (Amen.)*

Blessed are You, LORD, our God, King of the Universe, Who did miracles for our forefathers in those days and at this season. (Amen.)

Third Blessing

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
שהחינו וקימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה

*Baruch atah ADONAI Eloheinu Melech ha-olam shehecheyanu,
v'kiyemanu, v'higianu, lazman hazeh. (Amen.)*

Blessed are You, LORD, our God, King of the Universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season. (Amen.)



Hanukkah Games

Hanukkah evenings are a time for spending with the children. This next section suggests several Hanukkah games. One of them is a unique Hanukkah game called *Dreidel*. It has been popular with the Jewish community at least since the Middle Ages. A *dreidel* is a four-sided top with a Hebrew letter on each of the four sides. The following is a good way to use the *dreidel* to teach children the timeless truths of Hanukkah.

Using the Dreidel to Teach about Hanukkah

Hey Torah kids, have any of you ever seen a miracle? I'll bet you have. It's hard to be a believer very long and not see miracles. In Hebrew, one word for miracle is *Nes* (נס). Try saying that. "Nes."

God does them all the time. Sometimes they are normal sorts of things, like, "It's a miracle we didn't run out of toothpaste!" Sometimes they are extraordinary kinds of things, like this:

Once it happened that a poor widow and her only son were all out of food and money and were starving and going to die. All they had left was a wee-little bit of olive oil in a jar. Can you guess what happened? You cannot! *Eliyahu* (Elijah) the prophet came and said, "Go get all the jars you can from your neighbors, borrow as many empty jars as you can find." She did. He said, "Now pour that wee-little tiny bit of oil in the bottom of your jar into all these other jars." The widow said, "But it's just a wee-little tiny bit! It won't even fill one jar." He said, "Do it." She did it, and it didn't run out. It filled all the jars.

That was a miracle. A *Nes*. A big *Nes*. Do you know how you say "big miracle"? *Nes Gadol* (נס גדול)! Here's another miracle:

One time the Master was teaching a big crowd of people. It was time to eat. No one had brought any lunch. The Master told His disciples, "Feed the people." They said, "We don't have any food, just five little loaves and two wee-little fish that a wee-little lad gave us." He said, "Give them to me." He broke the loaves and fish, and divided them up for everyone. What happened? *Nes Gadol*! The food did not run out. Everyone had enough to eat, and the leftovers filled 12 baskets. More than they even started with. A big miracle happened. Do you know how you say, "A big miracle happened?" *Nes Gadol Hayah* (נס גדול היה).



Playing dreidel is a fun Hanukkah game. Everybody puts a piece of Hanukkah gelt (chocolate coins) in the dreidel pot. If you don't have gelt, you can use peanuts, pennies or just about anything. Take turns spinning the dreidel. The letters on the dreidel are:

נ – *Nun*

ג – *Gimel*

ה – *Heh*

ש – *Shin*

If the dreidel lands on the letter *Nun*, you get *None*. If it lands on the letter *Gimel*, you *Get* all the coins in the pot. If it lands on *Heh*, you get *Half* the coins. If it lands on *Shin*, you need to *Share* by putting one more piece in the dreidel pot.

Together all those letters spell, “*Nag-hash*” (נגהש), which isn't a word at all. What do those letters really mean? They stand for a Hebrew phrase I'm going to teach you.

Nes Gadol Hayah Sham (נס גדול היה שם). Say it... It means, “**A big miracle happened there.**”

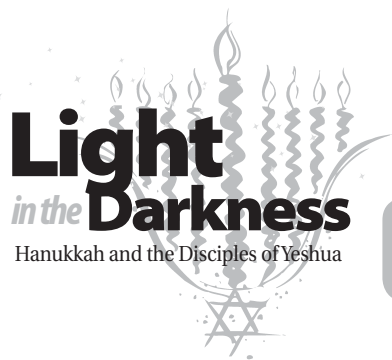
The Secret of the Dreidel

You have already heard of the evil king Antiochus Epiphanes. He had no love for the Jewish people or for the God of the Universe.

Antiochus made new laws saying that everyone in his kingdom would have to observe and worship the same way he did. They would have to bow down and pray to statues and idols. The Jews were told that they could no longer keep the Sabbath, or study Torah, or eat kosher, or circumcise their sons.

Many Jews decided that they would not disobey Torah. They chose to break the new laws of Antiochus and keep the ways of God. (When an evil leader such as Antiochus says the ways of God are against the law, it becomes a *mitzvah* to break those evil laws.)

According to some Hanukkah legends, the dreidel game was really a secret way to study Torah! Because the evil king Antiochus made a law against studying Torah, the men would gather around a Torah scroll and study while one of the children watched for soldiers and spies. If soldiers were coming, the child would warn the men. They would quickly take out dreidels and begin to spin them on the scroll from which they were studying. The soldiers would think the Jews were only playing a silly game and never knew they were secretly studying Torah! That's the secret of the dreidel. Dreidels remind us of the privilege of learning Torah.



A Great Miracle Happened There

Antiochus and his soldiers destroyed the beautiful things in God's Temple. He took away the menorah, the table, and the altar. He took away all the treasure of the Temple and then put his idols in the Temple. He sacrificed pigs to his idols on the altar of God!

So when the Jews weren't secretly studying Torah or playing dreidel, many of them were fighting alongside Yehudah the Maccabee and his brothers. Yehudah the Maccabee and his five brothers led the Jewish people to fight the King's soldiers. They were outnumbered. They did not have many weapons. They were not trained soldiers. They would surely lose! But what happened? You say it: "*Nes Gadol Hayah Sham.*"

Yehudah prayed to LORD. Then he told the people, "Don't be afraid. God is able to deliver the strong into the hands of the weak." They fought many hard battles. Antiochus sent armies with powerful weapons and war elephants to fight the little group of Jews. Some of Yehudah's brothers were killed in the fighting. But God was with them and gave them many victories. You say it: "*Nes Gadol Hayah Sham.*"

At last, they drove the enemy soldiers out of Jerusalem. They went up to worship LORD in His Temple. What a mess! The curtains were torn, weeds were growing, the stones were cracked, rooms were burned, and idols were everywhere. They smashed the idols and cleaned the Temple.

They wanted to give the Temple back to LORD. They wanted to rededicate it to Him. Hanukkah means "dedication." It is a remembrance of the days when Yehudah Maccabee and the Jews rededicated the Temple of LORD.

They wanted to keep the *mitzvah* of lighting the menorah lamp, but they could find only enough olive oil to keep it lit for one day. It would be several days until they could make new oil for the Holy Temple.

What did they do? They decided to use the little bit of olive oil they found anyway. Better to keep the *mitzvah* for just one day than not at all. What happened? You say it: "*Nes Gadol Hayah Sham.*"

That's right, a miracle happened. The next day the menorah was still burning. The oil had not run out. It burned all day and all night and was still burning the next day too! It was still burning the next, and the next, and the next. One day's supply of oil burned for eight days until the priests could make new oil. To remember the miracle of Yehudah Maccabee and his heroic fighters, we burn the hanukkah for the eight nights of Hanukkah and play a little bit of dreidel to remember: "*Nes Gadol Hayah Sham.*"

By the way, did you know that dreidels in Israel say something different? Can you guess what an Israeli dreidel says? The letters on an Israeli dreidel are "*Nun, Gimel, Shin, Peh*," which stands for "*Nes Gadol Hayah Poh!*" (נס גדול היה פה). That means, "A great miracle happened here."

Additional Hanukkah Games and Activities

Mattityahu and Antiochus Issue Orders

Much like the game *Simon Says*, the leader issues orders to the participants standing in a row. He commands them “Kneel before me,” “Follow me,” “At ease” etc. Each order is prefaced with either “Mattityahu says” or “Antiochus says.” If the order is given by Mattityahu it is to be obeyed. If given by Antiochus it is to be ignored. Whoever fails to respond correctly is eliminated from the game.

Put the Shamash on the Hanukkiah

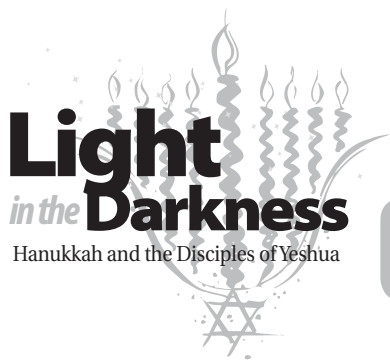
Prepare a huge hanukkiah drawn on cardboard and hang it on the wall. Each player is given a candle made from construction paper and a straight pin. One at a time, blindfold the players, spin them around, and allow them to try to pin the candle on the shamash-holder. The candle closest to the shamash-holder is the winner.

Hidden Dreidel

Have one player leave the room. While he is gone hide the dreidel. Then the player re-enters the room and searches for the hidden dreidel. The other players sing a Hanukkah song, singing louder as the searcher comes close to the hidden dreidel and softer as he moves away.

Jumbled Words

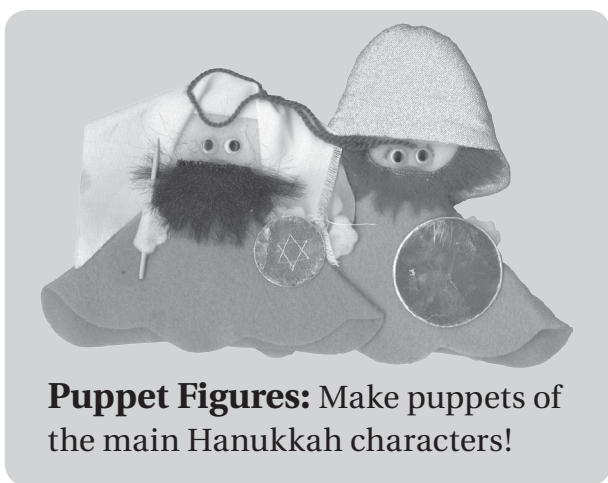
Each contestant is given a list of jumbled Hanukkah words. Allow a given number of minutes for the players to untangle the words and write the correct spelling. Words that can be used are: ranhoem (menorah), Hatcousin (Antiochus), Hadju (Judah), phelanet (elephant), Becamaces (Maccabees), Shemanna (Hasmonean), Tamiatasht (Mattityahu), Donim (Modin), stalek (latkes), claned (candle), Esheltlin (Hellenist), Lempet (Temple), krege (Greek), riddele (dreidel), remham (hammer).



Arts and Crafts

Clay Hanukkiah

Roll soft clay into a rope approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch thick. Punch holes evenly spaced across the base of the hanukkiah with a pencil or other round instrument such as a candle. Allow the clay to harden a bit and then scratch letters or a design with a nail or toothpick. After the hanukkiah is completely dry it may be painted with poster paints or enamel. If poster paints are used, cover it with a coat of shellac after the paint is dry.



Puppet Figures: Make puppets of the main Hanukkah characters!

Potato Hanukkiah

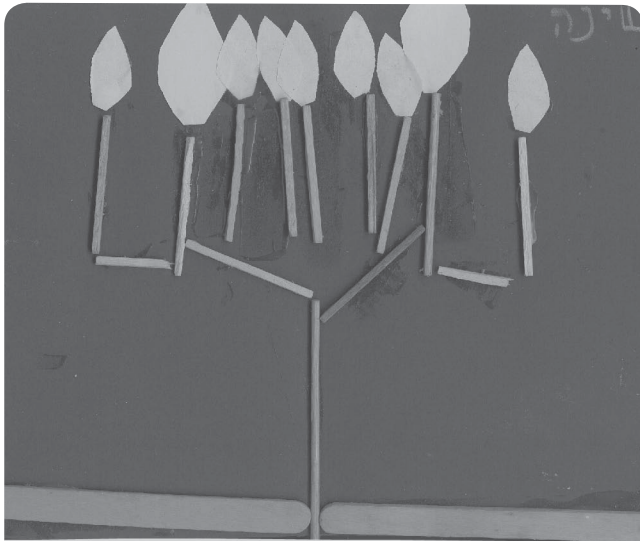
Cut four potatoes in half. Place the flat sides down and bore a hole in the top of each half to hold the candles. For the shamash, use a whole potato, cutting off about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch giving it a flat surface; bore a hole in the top for the candle. Line the holes with aluminum foil. The potato hanukkiah can be arranged on a board or tray. Apples may be used instead of potatoes.

Oil Hanukkiah

Fill nine wine cups (eight for daily candles and one for the shamash—if possible use a larger cup for the shamash) with olive oil. Place a floating wick in each cup. Line the cups in a straight line on a shelf, table, board, etc. Refill the cups with olive oil as it is used.

Hanukkah Mobiles

Cut shapes from cardboard of hanukkiot, candles, dreidels, hammers, shields, latkes or other items related to Hanukkah. Decorate the shapes by wrapping in aluminum foil, painting, gluing on sparkles or other scraps of paper or material. Punch holes near the top center of each object and attach them with a string to a clothes hanger. Be sure that objects are hung at varying lengths and the mobile is balanced.



Toothpick Hanukkah: Colored paper and toothpicks make a great craft!

Shield of Judah

On a 9 inch by 12 inch piece of cardboard, outline a shield and color it yellow, gold or silver (paint is the easiest and fastest way to cover the cardboard). After the paint dries, cut out the shield. On blue or dark green construction paper print JUDAH in English or Hebrew and draw a picture of a hammer. Cut out the letters and hammer and paste them on the shield. Cut a 2 inch by 7 inch strip of cardboard for the handle. Bend the strip about 1 inch from each end. Paste or staple the ends of the strip to the back of the shield (allow enough room to grasp the handle).

Hanukkah Music

Hanukkah has inspired several great hymns and songs, but the most famous of all is *Maoz Tzur* (commonly called “Rock of Ages”). Like many a good Lutheran hymn, it is set to the very singable melody of a Renaissance-era, German drinking song. The following is an English translation of the first verse that can be sung to the traditional melody.

*Mighty Rock of my Yeshua (Salvation)
 Praising You is my Delight.
 Restore to me my House of Prayer
 And there we will give thanks to Thee.
 When You will make a slaughter
 Of the blasphemous and wicked foe
 Then I'll sing, sing a song,
 The Hanukkah of Thy altar!
 Then I'll sing, sing a song,
 The Hanukkah of Thy altar!*



Hanukkah Food

In the Jewish/Torah world, there is always lots of eating. Hanukkah is no exception. On Hanukkah, foods cooked with olive oil are eaten to remember the miracle of the olive oil in the Temple. Among Sephardic Jews, jelly-filled, oil-fried doughnuts (called *Sufganiyot*) are the Hanukkah delicacy of choice. Among Ashkenazi Jews, the incomparable and heart-stopping potato *latke* is institutional.

Grandpa Zipko's Potato Latkes

- 6 peeled cooking potatoes
- 1 medium sized yellow onion
- 1 clove of garlic, minced.
- Olive oil (or user's choice of vegetable oil) for frying
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 egg

The ingredients can be adjusted depending on the number of people to be served.

Preparing the Batter: Grate the potatoes in a bowl. When finished, squeeze and drain out as much of the liquid as possible with your hands or with a cheesecloth. Grate in the onion. Add garlic, egg, salt, and pepper and mix thoroughly.

Dropping Latkes: In the meantime, have a high-sided skillet on the stove with about one inch of oil heating in it. Heat oil over high heat. (If the oil begins to smoke it is too hot!) Using a large tablespoon, spoon the potato batter into the hot oil, patting it down to a two or three inch diameter circle with the back of the spoon. Cook on one side until golden, then turn with a spatula. When golden on the other side, remove and drain on a cookie sheet lined with paper towels.

If preparing a large batch, keep latkes on a cookie sheet in an oven heated to 200 degrees Fahrenheit. Before serving, sprinkle with coarse salt. Serve with sour cream, applesauce, and horseradish.

(Thank you to Leroy Zipko for this tasty family recipe!)

Sufganiyot

- 1 package yeast dissolved in 1/4 cup lukewarm water
- 3/4 cup scalded milk
- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons melted shortening
- 3 cups flour
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 egg, beaten
- 4 tablespoons shortening
- Jam
- Confectioner's sugar

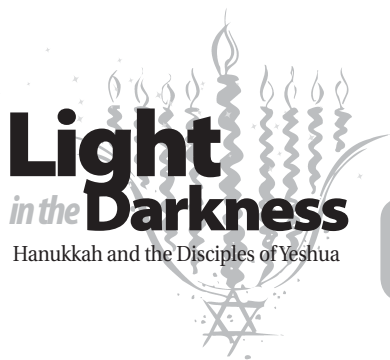
Add dissolved yeast to scalded milk and stir until combined. Sift together flour, sugar and salt. Add to yeast/milk mixture to make a sponge. Cover with a towel and let it set at room temperature until it falls when touched with your finger (about 30 minutes).

Gently stir the sugar into the sponge. Add the beaten egg and melted shortening. Gradually add the flour to make the dough a little softer than bread dough. Cover and let rise 2 to 3 hours.

Knead lightly on a floured board, add flour if necessary to make a dough firm enough to roll out 3/4 of an inch thick. Cut the rolled-out dough with a 2-inch cookie-cutter (a drinking glass may be used instead).

Fry in deep hot melted shortening (365° F) without crowding. Fry 3 to 5 minutes, turning to brown both sides. Drain on paper towels.

When cool enough to handle, insert jam with a pastry bag. (A slit may be made in the side of the doughnut and jam inserted as well.) Dust with confectioner's sugar. Enjoy!



Endnotes

¹ Exodus 35:3.

² Note that there is no actual commandment to light the Hanukkah lights. Some may prefer an alternative wording.



Chapter Four

Eight *Days of* **Enlightenment**

Creating a Passion for God and Torah

Boaz Michael

We tell stories. They are an important part of our faith. They are a way of teaching—they are essential in the way we learn. Like Passover, Hanukkah is a time to recall the historical miracles of our faith. It is a time that we set aside to recall the past and relate it to our future. Each night affords us the time to delve into our rich history and discuss the historical, prophetic, practical, and inspiring nature of this celebration of our people and our Faithful God.

One of the slogans that we share often at First Fruits of Zion is that we have a relationship with the Land, the People, and the Scriptures of Israel. In Yeshua, Gentile Christians have a new identity and have been made a part of His people—Israel. Our history goes back to our Father Abraham¹ and through adoption we have now been made a part of his family's history. FFOZ has published many materials on the misunderstood relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish believers in the Messiah. At times this relationship has been construed as one of separation and distinction. We see it quite the opposite—we see it as defined by unity and oneness. We will leave the theological detail of this subject to the resources intended to tackle it.² For now, let us encourage you to embrace this holiday as your holiday. Relate to it; fully participate in the songs, foods, and stories of Hanukkah.

Do not hold back as if you're an invited guest at a cultural celebration of another people. In Yeshua, the Hanukkah story is your story.

Hanukkah is Not Christmas

I started celebrating Hanukkah when I was 16. I remember bragging that I would get gifts for eight days rather than just one. I used this to either one-up my friends or make a poke at their holiday. Yet, looking back, I do not recall any gifts that I received (and I received a lot of them). However, I do remember playing dreidels with my brothers, eating my mother's latkes, and the hanukkiah quietly burning in our family's home. Those are the memories that I cherish. Conversely, I also have fond memories of Christmas. I remember family times, hot cider, and my older brother's contagious excitement to open the gifts in the morning. With all this said we have worked to create an environment in our home of warm family memories, good foods, and dedicated times of laughter and sharing.

Focus your family on the spiritual nature of this time. Do not allow this time to be considered a convenient substitute for Christmas or the commercialism that it represents. Even though many secular Jews have done exactly this—keep this week spiritual. Stand with the intrinsic nature of this season and fight against assimilation.

Approach to Hanukkah

The following list includes a suggested traditional reading for Hanukkah that I came across several years ago, and our own suggested readings for each day of the celebration. This guide not only represents the time-honored commemoration of Hanukkah but also gives you a tool to present and discuss the spiritual nature of this season with additional materials. While such a devotional guide is never used in the traditional celebration of Hanukkah, it does help create an environment of learning. More than anything we suggest that you tailor this holiday to relate to your family. There is no set structure for observing this historical event—flexibility should be your guide.

- **First Night**—Genesis 1:5, 14–18
- **Second Night**—Isaiah 5:20–24
- **Third Night**—Psalm 115:5–6; Job 24:13,17; Job 18: 5–6; Jeremiah 25:10; Ezekiel 32:8; and Isaiah 42:18
- **Fourth Night**—Isaiah 42:5–7, 45:7, 42:16



- **Fifth Night**—Daniel 9:17; Psalm 43:3, 36:10; 18:29; Proverbs 20:27; Psalm 56:14; Job 33:29–30
- **Sixth Night**—Psalm 27:1; 104:1–2; 119:105; 19:9; Proverbs 6:23
- **Seventh Night**—Proverbs 4:18; Psalm 97:11–12; Isaiah 9:1; Exodus 10:23; Isaiah 60:1; 2:5
- **Eighth Night**—Isaiah 30:26; Zechariah 14:6–7; Isaiah 60:19–20

Endnotes

¹ Romans 4:16, “Your father is Abraham.”

² Please see *Grafted In* by D. Thomas Lancaster, available through FFOZ.

“When you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, let the reader understand.” (Matthew 24:15)

The Hanukkah Revolution

Prepare to enter the mind-blowing world of real biblical prophecy. First Fruits of Zion's completely new Hanukkah anthology, *Light in the Darkness, Hanukkah and the Disciples of Yeshua*, takes readers into the prophecies of Daniel to understand the amazing story of the Hanukkah revolution.

Light in the Darkness provides in-depth, biblical understanding while demonstrating why the celebration of Hanukkah is relevant and important for all believers. Discover how the events of the Hanukkah revolution are spelled out in the prophecies of Daniel. *Light in the Darkness* takes believers, step-by-step, through the traditional celebration of Hanukkah while revealing new Messianic meanings in the ancient festival.

- ❖ The Hanukkah Story with excerpts from the book of Maccabees
- ❖ A prophetic Bible study on Daniel and the Abomination of Desolation
- ❖ Step-by-step instructions for the traditional celebration of Hanukkah
- ❖ Children's materials, games, recipes, craft ideas and Hanukkah fun

Light in the Darkness reminds us that we are locked in an age-old struggle with world powers of darkness that seek to snuff out the light of Torah. Yet each night of Hanukkah, our light grows brighter and brighter.

Hanukkah is Not Just Dreidels and Latkes!

- ❖ Discover the identity of the Abomination of Desolation
- ❖ Learn to defy the Anti-Christ
- ❖ Unlock secrets from Daniel's prophecies
- ❖ Find out why Yeshua kept Hanukkah
- ❖ Join the Maccabee warriors in a heroic fight for the Torah



First Fruits of Zion
PO Box 649, Marshfield, MO 65706-0649
800-775-4807 www.foz.org