



## *Hanukkah - Dedication - The Festival of Lights*

Dear Family of יהודה, as we gathered together with family and friends about a week ago, we were blessed to present the following study regarding the Feast of Dedication, Hanukkah. Hanukkah is not listed in Leviticus 23 as one of the Sacred Festivals. However, the word means *dedication*, and therefore teaches a very important principle. Let us take a few moments of time to examine the wonderful lesson that the original Festival of Dedication, Hanukkah, has to offer.

In Daniel chapter eleven we read the story of the conflict between the king of the north and the king of the south. These were the final two kings of the division of Alexander's Grecian empire after his death. The king of the south (Egypt) was Ptolemy, and the king of the north (Syria) was Antiochus Epiphanes. This latter king invaded the land of Israel in 168 BC with the intent to destroy the religion of the Jews. Throughout the holy land he destroyed Torah Scrolls, synagogues and temples, and even desecrated the altar of sacrifice in the temple of Modin by sacrificing a pig thereupon. This enraged the priest of Modin, now called Modin Makabim Re'ut, located about half-way between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. The name of that priest was Mattathias Hasmonai, and he slew the Syrian officer in charge of the desecration of the sacred temple. This act set in motion the insurgency of the Jews against Antiochus Epiphanes. Here's the account.

1st Macabees 2:12-27 And, behold, our sanctuary, even our beauty and our glory, is laid waste, and the Gentiles have profaned it. To what end therefore shall we live any longer? Then Mattathias and his sons rent their clothes, and put on sackcloth, and mourned very sore. In the mean while the king's officers, such as compelled the people to revolt [against their Hebrew religion], came into the city Modin, to make them sacrifice. And when many of Israel came unto them, Mattathias also and his sons came together. Then answered the king's officers, and said to Mattathias on this wise, Thou art a ruler, and an honourable and great man in this city, and strengthened with sons and brethren: Now therefore come thou first, and fulfil the king's commandment, like as all the heathen have done, yea, and the men of Juda also, and such as remain at Jerusalem: so shalt thou and thy house be in the number of the king's friends, and thou and thy children shall be honoured with silver and gold, and many rewards. Then Mattathias answered and spake with a loud voice, Though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him, and fall away everyone from the religion of their fathers, and give consent to his commandments: Yet will I and my sons and my brethren walk in the covenant of our fathers. God forbid that we should forsake the law and the ordinances. We will not hearken to the king's words, to go from our religion, either on the right hand, or the left. Now when he had left speaking these words, there came one of the Jews in the sight of all to sacrifice on the altar which was at Modin, according to the

king's commandment. Which thing when Mattathias saw, he was inflamed with zeal, and his reins trembled, neither could he forbear to shew his anger according to judgment: wherefore he ran and slew him upon the altar. Also the king's commissioner, who compelled men to sacrifice, he killed at that time, and the altar he pulled down. Thus dealt he zealously for the law of God like as Phinees did unto Zambri the son of Salom. And Mattathias cried throughout the city with a loud voice, saying, Whosoever is zealous of the law, and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me.

Judah, the youngest of the five sons of Mattathia, was called the Maccabee, which in Hebrew (Strong's #4718, maqqebeth), as found in Judges 4:21, 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 6:7, and (4717 maqqebah) Jeremiah 10:4, means "hammer." It was because of the signal victory over their Syrian enemies that this descriptive name was given to the five brothers of the priest Mattathia, hence, the Maccabees. We can read of their amazing military conquests in the four books of the Maccabees in the Apocrypha, as from the passage above. Several versions of the Scripture still retain these apocryphal writings including Brenton's English Septuagint and the Douay-Rheims versions. These conquests are a fulfillment of Daniel's prophecies. After the fourth major conquest over their enemies the Maccabees went up to Mount Zion in Jerusalem to cleanse the temple there.

1Mac 4:42-3 So he chose priests of blameless conversation, such as had pleasure in the law: Who cleansed the sanctuary, and bare out the defiled stones into an unclean place.

1Mac 4:49, 50 They made also new holy vessels, and into the temple they brought the candlestick, and the altar of burnt offerings, and of incense, and the table. And upon the altar they burned incense, and the lamps that were upon the candlestick they lighted, that they might give light in the temple. Brenton Version

The legend of the miracle of the holy oil for the menorah lasting eight days did not come into existence until the fourth century CE, or AD. Neither First and Second Maccabees (Chapter 10:1-8), nor the writings of Josephus make any mention of it, see *Antiquities*, Book 12 Chapter 5 through Book 13 Chapter 7, along with *Wars*, Book 1 Chapters 37 through 47. Josephus refers to the celebration as the Festival of Lights but is apparently oblivious to the "miracle" of the oil that would not come into existence for another three centuries. Evidently he was equating the cleansing the sanctuary from the pagan defilement, and lighting the menorah in particular, to be the primary theme of the dedication process, and thus calls it the Festival of Lights rather than the Feast of Dedication. John correctly refers to this festival as the Feast of Dedication.

John 10:22, 23 And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Yahshua walked in the temple in Solomon's porch.

1Maccabees 4:59 Moreover Judas and his brethren with the whole congregation of Israel ordained, that the days of the dedication of the altar should be kept in their season from year to year by the space of eight days, from the five and twentieth day of the month Casleu, with mirth and gladness.

The 25<sup>th</sup> day of Casleu corresponds to our late December, and therefore in the season of winter. It is interesting that John makes mention that the feast was celebrated in the winter. The word here implies that it was cold and inclement weather, and it is given as a reason why Yahshua walked in Solomon's porch. It was most likely cold and rainy. John hereby affords us a vital jewel of information about the seasons of the year. The Hebrew year begins in the spring (Exo 12:1, 2 & 13:4), but how can we know when the spring begins? Can we rely on vegetation? The barley was ripe in Egypt before the month of spring, called Aviv (Exodus 9:31). The ten plagues lasted about a year, so this seventh plague of the hail that destroyed the barley could have come a full month before the month of Aviv, while still in the winter. The reason we can know this is because just prior to the *first* plague, the angry Pharaoh demanded that the Israelites go out into the fields to gather their own straw (Exodus 5:7-18) which would have been from the previous wheat harvest prior to the previous winter/spring a year earlier. This indicates that the ten plagues lasted about a full year, from one winter to the next, just prior to the springtime exodus.

Yahweh commands us to observe the heavenly bodies to begin our seasons, days and years (Genesis 1:14). Since John connects the Festival of Dedication to the season of winter, how can we know when winter begins? The calendar tells us that the winter solstice will be this year (2018) on December 22<sup>nd</sup>. As of today's date Dec. 18<sup>th</sup>, that is yet four days away. Millions of sincere Jews and Messianic believers around the world celebrated Hanukkah two weeks ago, while still in the season of fall. If we obeyed Yahweh's written command of Genesis 1:14, we would have recognized that the ninth Hebrew month did not begin until the 9<sup>th</sup> of December, some nine days ago at the appearance of the crescent new moon, and over a full week *after* everyone began their Hanukkah celebration in the *eighth* Hebrew month, rather than the Scriptural ninth month. That means, of course, that since we are only nine days into the month Casleu, the true Hanukkah is about two weeks away from today's date, on January 1<sup>st</sup>. Please consider, if we celebrated the festival of the ninth month a month early, is it possible that many celebrated the festival of the seventh month a month early? That is, the festival of Sukkoth, Tabernacles? The seventh Hebrew month begins in the fall, not the summer. And we don't need to rely on the calendar to let us know when the four seasons of the year begin and end. It is only a phenomenon of the last fifty years or so that the movement of the sun and stars is no longer common knowledge. For all who have lived agrarian lifestyles, it still is. The heavenly bodies determine the seasons of the year; not the weather, and not the vegetation.

Maimonides, a Jewish scholar, rabbi and physician (also called *Rambam* in most Jewish writings), who was born in Cordova, Spain in 1135 (and died in Egypt in 1205) supported the Talmudic Legend of the "miracle" of one vial of oil lasting for eight days. Notice what he says:

"When the Israelites prevailed over their enemies and destroyed them, it was on the twenty fifth of the month Chisleu; and they went into the temple and could not find any pure oil in the sanctuary, but one vial; and it was not enough to light but one day only, and they lighted lamps of it for eight days, until the olives were squeezed, and they brought forth pure oil: wherefore the wise men of that generation ordered, that those eight days beginning at the twenty fifth of Chisleu, should be days of rejoicing and praise, and they lighted lamps at the doors of their houses every night of these eight nights, to show and make known the miracle; and these days are called הנוכה (Hanukkah) "the dedication."

The nine-branch menorah is only a creation of the legend of Hanukkah. Yahweh told Moshe to make a seven-branched menorah. We cannot add to the Word of Yahweh any more than we can diminish aught from it. (Deuteronomy 4:2).

Numbers 8:1-4 And יהוה spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and say unto him, When thou lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick. And Aaron did so; he lighted the lamps thereof over against the candlestick, as יהוה commanded Moses. And this work of the candlestick was of beaten gold, unto the shaft thereof, unto the flowers thereof, was beaten work: according unto the pattern which יהוה had shewed Moses, so he made the candlestick.

In the same way that many sincere people today are convinced that the seventh day of the week is Sunday, others sincerely believe that Yahshua was born on December 25<sup>th</sup> near the winter solstice. Even though it can be shown from the Scriptures that He was born in the fall of the year rather than the winter, still their mind is made up and they cannot see otherwise. Many do not even take into consideration the season of the year; they just repeat the little jingle, "*Tis the season to be jolly.*" Perhaps this also serves to demonstrate the confusion surrounding the timing of the sacred festivals. This is why we are admonished to be grounded in the Scriptures.

2nd Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto יהוה, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

We are called to rightly divide the Word of Truth from man's mistaken views. But even through human traditions and legends we can yet glean some wonderful lessons as we said in the opening thoughts of this little study. The truth is that Judah Maccabee, the military hammer, did cleanse the temple of the defilement thrust upon it from the pagan world, and that cleansing process and dedication took eight days, hence, an 8-day

festival. The lighting of the menorah, the crowning act of the cleansing was done in a solemn ceremony depicting a greater work still. So what are the spiritual lessons we are to glean from the Feast of Hanukkah, Dedication?

1Corinthians 3:16, 17 You should know that you yourselves are יהוה's temple. יהוה's Spirit lives in you. If you destroy יהוה's temple, יהוה will destroy you, because יהוה's temple is holy. You yourselves are יהוה's temple. ERV

It is the intent of the fallen world to destroy pure religion, and to defile our soul temple. If we were drowning, it is our natural instinct to fight for our lives. However, when it comes to our eternal life, we somehow fail to fight against the enemies of our soul: the fallen world, our own fallen nature, and fallen angels who lost their first estate. Reading from the GNB

Jude 1:6 Remember the angels who did not stay within the limits of their proper authority, but abandoned their own dwelling place: they are bound with eternal chains in the darkness below, where יהוה is keeping them for that great Day on which they will be condemned.

We were born into a war zone whether we like it or not. From the very outset this three-fold enemy of our soul temple is bent on destroying our hope of eternal life and a righteous character. Let us be sure of whose side we are on. Let us learn how to use the weapons of our warfare. Let us learn how to counter-attack this three-fold enemy like the Maccabees, and how, like them, to know that the battle belongs to Yahweh. Like them, let us fight for one another, not against one another, and at the end of the battle we'll cleanse our soul temple of all defilement, and the crowning act of our victories will be to relight the menorah in the holy place of our soul, and let our light so shine in this dark world so as to inspire others to join us in the warfare.

Let us learn to recognize our enemies. Let us remember that Antiochus Epiphanes knew that swine's flesh was a blasphemous insult to the Almighty Elohim of the Hebrews. Many today are consuming swine's flesh in their soul temple along with other unclean foods. Many are defiling their livers with alcohol, their lungs with tobacco, their minds with pornography. It says in Revelation 21:27 that nothing that in any wise defileth shall enter the kingdom of יהוה. Let us rekindle the lampstand of our own soul, and we will surely inspire others in the right direction. Let us not stand passively by and watch the three-fold enemy contaminate our own soul and the souls of our loved ones. Let us dedicate (Hanukkah) our soul temple back to יהוה. The battle belongs to יהוה! He will fight for us, and we will overcome. As the priest Mattathia and his family stood so valiantly to defend the sacred honor of יהוה, Yahshua our Redeemer defeated the kingdom of darkness granting our soul temple the opportunity for purification by empowering us through His Holy Spirit to present to Himself a pure bride. Let us march onward with hearts courageous lifting up high our torches burning brightly in this darkened world. This is our prayer.

Colossians 1:13, 14 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins:

Titus 2:14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purifying unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

John 8:12 Yahshua spoke to the Pharisees again. He said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will have a life filled with light and will never live in the dark." (GW).

Matthew 5:14-16 You are like light for the whole world. A city built on top of a hill cannot be hidden, and no one would light a lamp and put it under a clay pot. A lamp is placed on a lampstand, where it can give light to everyone in the house. Make your light shine, so that others will see the good that you do and will praise your Father in heaven. (CEV)

Ephesians 5:27 That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

שלום