

חנוכה

Chanukah

The Feast of Dedication:

A Messianic Perspective



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Chanukah¹ - חנוכה

Introduction:

Chanukah is a feast that did not begin with Moses. In fact, it is not found anywhere in the Old Testament because this is a feast that arose during the time between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament. Nevertheless, it is a biblical feast in two ways. First, the events that brought about the Feast of Chanukah were predicted in the Book of Daniel. Secondly, Yeshua (Jesus) Himself authenticated this particular feast in that He went to Jerusalem to observe it.



Names Chanukah - חנוכה

Chanukah has many different spellings, Hanukkah is a common American spelling and Chanukah is a common European spelling. Either way the name signifies dedication (from the Hebrew chanukat חנוכה²). Within this feast it signifies the re-dedication of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem under the Maccabees, because it had been desecrated by the Greeks.

Hag Ha-Orim - חג אורים

The second common name is Hag Ha-Orim³, which means “The Feast of Lights.” This name is found in the writings of Josephus, who was a first century A.D. Jewish historian. This second name is based upon a legend. Josephus Ant. 12:7:7

Summation of the story

In the fourth Century before Yeshua, Alexander the Great and his Greek armies conquered the Middle East including Israel, upon his death the empire he had created was split in four by his four generals. One of these generals gets Egypt and he wants to expand north (i.e. Israel) and one other gets Syria and he wants to expand southwards (i.e. Israel). After prolonged battles the northern kingdom comes to power. The reigning monarch is Antiochus IV, In the year 167B.C.E, this king decides to Hellenise all the peoples in his kingdom. And forbade certain Jewish practices like keeping Shabbat, Brit Milah (Circumcision) and Torah study, he also wanted the people to worship foreign gods, and bring appropriate sacrifices to them. This would be done on unfamiliar altars and with animals that the Torah clearly forbade.

Some Jews did become Hellenised and participate in the various activities by visiting the gymnasium and participating in sacrificing to foreign gods. Others resisted that call, and they formed a rebellion. One day the head of a small priestly family named Mattatias, who lived some 40 KM North⁴ from Jerusalem in a place called Modi'in. Saw a Jewish man ready to sacrifice in a local shrine, he got so enraged that he killed the man who was about to sacrifice. He and his five sons formed the start of the rebellion and fought a guerrilla warfare for the next twenty-five years. After his death his son Judah takes over. While the Syrian overlords send in troops Judah was able to successfully fight them off and liberated Jerusalem, when they enter the temple of God. They found it had been ransacked and needed to clean the temple. This they did by destroying the altar

¹ The Ch in Chanukah is a guttural sound, pronounced like the Scottish Loch and the German Bach. Not like the English Cheese.

² Chanukat / Dedication is used often in scriptures some examples are Numbers 7:10,11,84,88; 2 Chron 7:9; Neh 12:27; Psalm 30:1

³ Josephus Ant. 12:7:7

⁴ 40 Km equals about 30 Miles

and dedicating a new one and rekindling the light of the menorah. When they searched for oil to light the menorah, they found one small cruse of oil with the seal of the high priest. One cruse of oil was enough for all the seven lamps on the menorah to be lit, for one day. As there was no other sanctified oil they had to make a choice, either to light one lamp only and last the eight days which takes to make fresh oil, or light the whole menorah for one day⁵. They decided to light all the lamps and a miracle occurred, the oil in the menorah did not stop burning till new oil was made eight days later. And that is the whole megillah that is the whole story.

Lets look at the background who are the heroes: the Hasmoneans or the Maccabees?

B [mɔ̃ ih_ [hmtɔ̃_l_! remarkable priestly family of Modin, in Judea, also called the Maccabees. They belonged to that portion of the Jewish nation which under all trials and temptations remained loyal to Yahweh, even when the national life and religion seemed at their lowest ebb, and they succeeded, for a while at least, in restoring the name and fame of Israel. All in all they were an extremely warlike family. They stand in contrast to the priesthood in Jerusalem which was sold to the highest bidder at this time and was very corrupt, it is possibly that this family removed themselves from this corruption.

The name Hasmonean **השמונאים** possible comes from Hasmon wealthy, the other common name is Maccabee after Judah Maccabee, ‘which means Judah the Mallet or Hammer’ tradition states that Judah had inscribed on his shield the Hebrew letters “mem - kaf - beit - yod” [מ-כ-ב-י], which is a acronym for the verse *Mi Chamocha B'elim Yah - Who is compared to You among the mighty (gods), oh Lord (Exodus 15:11⁶)*. The letters form the word Maccabee, **מכבי** which is a word for hammer, perhaps he just hammered at his course all day long.



Lets look at the background who is the villain

Antiochus IV is described in the book of Daniel which gives us a prophetic background.

Daniel 8:8-14 (ASV) *“(8) And the he-goat magnified himself exceedingly: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and instead of it there came up four notable horns toward the four winds of heaven. (9) Out of one of them came a little horn which grew extremely big in the directions of the south and east, and in the direction of the Glorious land. (10) It grew so great that it reached the army of heaven; it hurled some of the army and the stars to the ground and trampled on them. (11) Yes, it even considered itself as great as the prince of the army; the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was thrown down. (12) Through sin, the army was put in its power, along with the regular burnt offering. It flung the truth on the ground as it acted and prospered. (13) Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to the speaker, “How long will the events of the vision last, this vision concerning the regular offering and the transgression which is so appalling, that allows the sanctuary and the army to be trampled underfoot?” (14) The first said to me, “Two*

⁵ Lev 23:4 He shall order the **lamps** upon the pure candlestick before the LORD [to burn] continually.

⁶ מי־כמכה באלים יהוה

thousand three hundred evenings and mornings, after which the sanctuary will be restored to its rightful state.”“

Verse 8 deals with Alexander the Great's death and the split of his empire (the great horn), Alexander the Great had conquered the Land of Israel and made it a part of his Greek Empire. When Alexander the Great died, his empire was divided into four separate kingdoms⁷. Two of these kingdoms affected the history of Israel: the Seleucid kingdom based in Syria and the Ptolemaic kingdom based in Egypt.

This New Greek or Hellenistic world presented two problems to the Jews. First, the Land of Israel became a “political football” between Egypt and Syria. In the beginning, it fell under Egyptian

control, but in 198 B.C. it fell under Syrian control. The second problem for the Jews was the enforcement of the Hellenistic or Greek culture since the initial conquest by Alexander the Great. Many Jews did fall for it. These Jews were called the Hellenists and they favoured the Greek culture. The Greeks built a stadium next to the Temple for the practice of Greek games, which were always played in the nude. In fact, Josephus stated that even priests fell for Hellenism. Whenever the trumpet blew in the stadium, some Levites would run to the stadium, strip themselves bare, throw the discus, and then return to sacrifice. This was a perversion, an abomination to the Lord. The key person in the political background was one of the Syrian kings, known as Antiochus IV who ruled from 175 to 164 B.C.



Tetradrachm (silver coin) of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–163 BC), Seleucid king of Syria who, by his imposition of Greek law and customs in Judea, caused the Maccabean Revolt (167 BC). Israel Museum (IDAM), Jerusalem, Israel. (Credit: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)

He is the little horn in Daniel 8:8, this is not the same as the “little horn” of Daniel 7 that represents the Antichrist, but this little horn in Chapter 8 is a type, Antiochus IV is a type of Antichrist.

Verse 9 deals with the rise to power from a little horn: in that he **waxed exceeding great**. He conquered in three directions: To the south, he conquered Egypt; to the east, he conquered Mesopotamia and other regions to the east as far as Armenia; and he went against the glorious land. The glorious land is the Land of Israel (Jer. 3:19; Ezek. 20:6; Dan. 11:16, 41; Zech. 7:14). In fact, the glorious land became a battleground between two divisions of the Greek empire: Syria and Egypt. Antiochus IV.

Verse 10 describes Antiochus' war against the Jews. **it grew great, even to the army of heaven**. The word heaven is a term that stands for God, and the army or host of heaven is the “army of God.” Sometimes the army of God refers to the angelic army, but it sometimes refers to Israel (Exodus 12:41). But fighting one means fighting the other, and when Antiochus persecuted the Jews he also came against the angelic host who are their protectors (Daniel 12:1).

Verses 11-12 prophesy how Antiochus IV will be guilty of committing the Abomination of Desolation.

⁷ Alexander did not divide the empire among his four generals himself. His four leading generals divided it among themselves by force after his death. 1) Cassander, ruling over Greece and its region 2) Lysimachus, ruling over Asia Minor 3) Seleucus, ruling over Syria and its region 4) Ptolemy, ruling over Egypt. Josephus Ant. 12:2

He magnified himself; Antiochus IV took the name “*Epiphanes*” means “*the manifest*” god He came against the prince of the host. In that Antiochus IV replaced the high priest at will, with corruption and bribery.

Antiochus IV stopped the sacrificial system which is recorded in I Maccabees 1:44-45. The fourth statement is: the place of his sanctuary was cast down. Cast down means, “to be desecrated”; Antiochus desecrated the Jewish Temple. The fulfilment of this prophecy is recorded in I Maccabees 1:21-59 and II Maccabees 6:1-5.

And the host was given over to it. The point here is that Antiochus will have victory over the Jews, and many Jews will die in the course of the persecutions.

And also **with the continual burnt-offering.** True worship was stopped, and pagan worship in the Temple Compound was instituted by Antiochus IV and a segment of the Jewish population, known as the Hellenist Party who were in favour of installing Greek culture and religion in place of Judaism.



And it cast down THE truth to the ground. The truth, is the Law of Moses. Antiochus IV forbade the reading and the practice of the Law of Moses (I Mac. 1:56-58).

it did its pleasure. Antiochus IV was a very willful king, carrying out his own will, unconcerned about the will of God. **and prospered.** Antiochus IV succeeded in his aim to paganise Judaism and paganise the Jewish people.

How long persecutions by Antiochus IV would last? A total of 2,300 days.

The persecutions began in the year 173 B.C. when the High Priest (Honiyya) Onias III, also known as “Onias, Hatzaddik, the Righteous,” was replaced. Antiochus IV appointed a wicked brother of Onias, whose name was Jason, as the high priest and intern Jason was replaced by an even more wicked brother, named Menelaus, who also bribed Antiochus IV for the position. In 171 B.C., Onias III, the Righteous One, was murdered

We know from history that the Abomination of Desolation, the erection of the statue of Jupiter, was done on the 25th day of the month of Kislev in 168 B.C. The sanctuary was cleansed on the 25th day of Kislev in 165 B.C. So the entire duration of 2,300 days began September 9, 171 B.C. with the death of Onias, until the rededication of the Temple on December 25, 165 B.C. As always, prophecy was literally fulfilled; it was fulfilled exactly 2,300 days later. Just as Daniel prophesied, between the murder of Onias and the rededication of the Temple there were 2,300 days (I Mac. 4:36-59; II Mac. 10:1-9).

What about Chanukah in the New Covenant:

By the time of Yeshua, Chanukah had become a recognised Jewish holiday; it is mentioned in the Gospel of John:

John 10:22-39 (Complete Jewish Bible)

(22) Then came Chanukah in Jerusalem. It was winter, (23) and Yeshua was walking around inside the Temple area, in Solomon's Colonnade. (24) So the Judeans surrounded him and said to him, "How much longer are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us publicly!" (25) Yeshua answered them, "I have already told you, and you don't trust me. The works I do in my Father's name testify on my behalf, (26) but the reason you don't trust is that you are not included among my sheep. (27) My sheep listen to my voice, I recognize them, they follow me, (28) and I give them eternal life. They will absolutely never be destroyed, and no one will snatch them from my hands. (29) My Father, who gave them to me, is greater than all; and no one can snatch them from the Father's hands. (30) I and the Father are one." (31) Once again the Judeans picked up stones in order to stone him. (32) Yeshua answered them, "You have seen me do many good deeds that reflect the Father's power; for which one of these deeds are you stoning me?" (33) The Judeans replied, "We are not stoning you for any good deed, but for blasphemy -- because you, who are only a man, are making yourself out to be God [Hebrew: Elohim]." (34) Yeshua answered them, "Isn't it written in your Torah, 'I have said, "You people are Elohim"'"? (35) If he called 'elohim' the people to whom the word of Elohim was addressed (and the scripture cannot be broken), (36) then are you telling the one whom the Father set apart as holy and sent into the world, 'You are committing blasphemy,' just because I said, 'I am a son of Elohim'?" (37) "If I am not doing deeds that reflect my Father's power, don't trust me. (38) But if I am, then, even if you don't trust me, trust the deeds; so that you may understand once and for all that the Father is united with me, and I am united with the Father." (39) One more time they tried to arrest him, but he slipped out of their hands.



Commentary the Complete Jewish Bible bring out the Jewish background by it used of the Hebrew terms.

22. This is during feast of Dedication or Chanukah, and the place of victory both physically and spiritually was obtained in Jerusalem, and it was a wintery a dark and cold day for Chanukah is always in winter so the word for winter here implies a wintery day.

23. John pinpoints the location in the Temple where the Sanhedrin had a meeting place (Judgement hall) in Solomon's Colonnade.

24. Most Bibles use the phrase Jews here but in context that would make it the Judean Jewish Leadership. Keep in mind that this happened after the National rejection mentioned in Matthew 12. And so the Leadership of Israel does not want to acknowledge whether he is the messiah, but how they can do away with Yeshua.

31. Where did these stone come from and why were they on the Temple compound?? A possible explanation is 1 Macc4:44-46 "And when they consulted what to do with the altar of burnt offerings, which was profaned; they thought it best to pull it down, lest it should be a reproach to them, because the heathen had defiled it; wherefore they pulled it down, and laid the stones in the mountain of the Temple in a convenient place, until there should come a prophet to show what should be done with them."

33. "but for blasphemy" an interesting parallel these stone were defiled by unclean and strange sacrifice and now Messiah comes and is accused of proclaiming a strange new doctrine.

33. "Elohim" or "gods" based on Psalm 82:6. Yeshua's answer is typical of the first century, I'll give you the truth in parable, but you rejected that, very well lets do it this way. (John 7:15-24, Mark 12:35-37), Psalm 82 refers to the Judges, who were to dispense divine justice [Justice on God's behave].

Although Israel is God's corporate son, it was considered blasphemy to claim individual sonship.

Here is an incredible irony, the light of the world who can and will bring the right sacrifice is almost snuffed out by the defiled stones from the defiled altar.

A Miracle?

The miracle of Chanukah may never have happened, as it was not recorded in the Maccabees, in Josephus nor in the Mishnah. In the Gemara the later part of the Talmud it starts off with the question, **מאי חנוכה** “what is Chanukah”⁸ as if the answer is not well known. While the books that do mention the cleansing and rededicating of the temple, including the lighting of the lamps in the temple, they are silent on the miracle. Chanukah is instituted specifically for *eight* days not because of the miracle of the menorah but because it is modelled after the holiday of Sukkot the feast of Tabernacles, which the Maccabees could not observe while they were still fugitives in the mountains of Judea.

Chanukah lights:

The most important observance associated with Chanukah is the kindling of the Chanukah lights on the special Menorah or Chanukiyah, as the nine branch candelabrum for this festival is called. On each night one more light is kindled, beginning with one candle on the first night of Chanukah and ending with eight on the final evening. This is based on the discussion between various Rabbis. The lighting is accompanied by the chanting of appropriate blessings and the singing of songs. The ninth branch is reserved for the Shamash, the servant light, which is lit first and used to kindle the other lights of the Menorah.

Dedicating our Temples

Chanukah is a time of dedication and renewal. The old altars, which have become impure, by our sins need to be torn down and a new one built. It is a time of rededication to the service of God. The light of Yeshua who is our menorah replaces the one of the temple. We are to be God's priests, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (NIV) Don't you know that **you yourselves are** God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and **you are** that temple.



A Messianic Chanukah Blessing:

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us in Yeshua, in whose name we light the Chanukah lights.

In transliterated Hebrew

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam,
asher kidushanu b'Yeshua, asher bismo madlikim
anachnu ner shell chanukah.

On the first night we also recite the “*she-he-heyanu*”:

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, for giving us life, for sustaining us, and for helping us to reach this season.

⁸ The earliest reference is in the Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 21a-b, which was compiled around 450 C.E.

Readings in the Synagogue

Scriptures are read from the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

From the Law, Exodus 40 is read, which concerns the dedication of the Tabernacle. Channukah is not a feast found in the Mosaic Law, but this is a passage that carries the concept of dedication of the altar of God. From the Prophets, Zechariah 2:14-4:4 is read on the first Sabbath of Channukah, along with I Kings 7:40-50. From the Writings, Psalms 33, 67, 90, 91, and 133 are read.

Closing Thoughts:

The Rabbi's asked "What is Chanukah, well Chanukah is a time for miraculous illumination, even as the oil for the Temple menorah miraculously gave light for eight days. Yeshua the Messiah came as the Shamash (servant). He came to serve the world and to Light all people. He proclaimed, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life". (John 8:12) And so it is my prayer that we who have been illuminated by the Spirit, may help Israel to be a light to the nations through Yeshua who is the glory of our people. He is our light who helps us to light others.

Chag Sameach Happy Chanukah!



Paul & Sue

He went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force. He arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils. He took also the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off. He took the silver and the gold, and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasure that he found. (1 Macc 1:20-23)

Maoz Tzur

A popular song known as Maoz Tzur, is sung, literally it means, "O Fortress, Rock of my Salvation." This song is sung every night after the candles are lit.

There are six stanza's the first stanza is below:

"O fortress, rock of my salvation, to praise you is a delight. Restore my house of prayer, and there we will bring a thanksgiving offering. When you will have prepared the slaughter for the blaspheming foe, then shall I complete a song of him, the dedication of the altar."

This is a pleading for the Messianic Age and for the rebuilding of the Temple. These are quotations from Scripture Psalm 31:3; Isaiah 56:7; Leviticus 7:11; Isaiah 14:21; 56:10; Psalm 30:1; and II Chronicles 7:9.

מַעֲזַז צוּר יְשׁוּעָתִי לְךָ נִאְחָה לְשִׁבְחָה.
תְּפוֹן בַּיִת תְּפִלָּתִי וְשֵׁם תּוֹדָה נְזַבְּחָה.
לְעֵת תִּכְיֶין מִטְבַּח מִצֶּרֶת הַמְּגִנְבָה.
אֲז אֶגְמֹר בְּשִׁיר מִזְמוֹר חֲנֻכַּת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ:

**Ma-oz Tzur Y'shu-a-ti Le-cha Na-eh L'sha-bei-ach
Ti-kon Beit T'fi-la-ti V'sham To-da N'za-bei-ach
L'eit Ta-chin Mat-bei-ach Mi-tzar Ha-mi-ga-bei-ach
Az Eg-mor B'shir Miz-mor Cha-nu-kat Ha-miz-bei-ach**

Messianic thoughts on lighting the Chanukiyah

Shamash (Servant) Candle

Messiah Yeshua stated in Mark 10:44-45 “Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be the servant of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many”

First Candle

Genesis 1:3-4- describes the creation of the first light: God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness

Second Candle

Exodus 13:21-22 reveals that the Lord God is the source of Israel's light: And God was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

Third Candle

King David reminds us in Psalm 27:1 The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid? And Psalm 18:28 For you wilt light my lamp: The Lord my God will lighten my darkness.

Fourth Candle

The Psalmist declare Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp unto my feet, And light unto my path and in Psalm 119:130 The opening of your words give light; it gives understanding unto the simple.

Fifth Candle

Messiah Yeshua is the greatest light of all: In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it (John 4-5). As Messiah Yeshua was in the Temple in Jerusalem watching the illuminating lights, He declared: “I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). Aged Simeon was promised by the LORD that he would not die until he saw Israel's Messiah. When he saw Yeshua as an infant in the Temple, Simeon declared: “My eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of revelation to the gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel” (Luke 2:30-32).

Sixth Candle

After we come to know Messiah, we are to be a source of light for the world. King Messiah tells us in Matthew 5:14-16: You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Seventh Candle

Isaiah 60:1-3 Arise, shine, for your light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. (2) For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but upon you the LORD will arise, and His glory shall be seen upon your. (3) And nations shall walk at your light, and kings at the brightness of your rising.

Eighth Candle

Revelation 21:22-25 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof. (23) And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. (24) And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it. (25) And the gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day (for there shall be no night there).

