

Celebrating Hanukkah:



Most of the world considers Hanukkah (*HA-noo-ka*) to be a “Jewish” holiday, however it is properly a Holy “Event”, celebrated in commemorative manner by people of the Hebrew faith, which coincidentally includes “Jews” (Jews are NOT descendants of the tribe of Judah). Hanukkah is not specifically set forth in the Bible by name or as a Yahweh-appointed Holy Day, but the events that are celebrated at Hanukkah are indeed “Holy”, inasmuch as they are directly related to Bible prophecy.

It is celebrated in late November or early December. The exact date is determined according to the Hebrew calendar. Hanukkah falls on the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev. Hanukkah celebrates the victory of the Hebrew people over King Antiochus Epiphanes, a pagan tyrant from Greece, who tried to destroy the Hebrew faith in 165 BC. It also celebrates the rededication of the Hebrew Temple in Jerusalem. To understand Hanukkah, you must be familiar with the history behind it.

Prior to the reign of Antiochus, the Hebrews lived in relative peace under various rulers and kings. Though their rulers changed, their lives were generally unaffected. One tradition that was particularly significant to their culture involved going to their Temple in Jerusalem. They called their Temple "The

House of Yahweh" and it was considered a very sacred place. It was decorated with many precious objects. Among those precious items was a lamp that burned continuously, symbolizing the enduring Hebrew faith.

However, when Antiochus came to power, he placed many burdens upon the Hebrews. They had to pay high taxes and he tried to force them to replace their Biblical laws and traditions with Greek ones. He even forced the Hebrews to take a new high priest, Menelaus. The new high priest began to steal from the Temple and send precious gold and silver to Antiochus. This made the Hebrews angry. While Antiochus was fighting a war in Egypt, a small army of Hebrew soldiers surrounded the temple to force Menelaus out.

Fearing that the Hebrews were rising up against him, when Antiochus returned, he caused his army to storm the Temple. They tore down the city walls and stripped the Temple of anything they could carry. The soldiers placed a Greek idol upon the golden altar and allowed pigs to run within the sacred grounds. Hebrews were threatened with death if they refused to worship the new idols. The soldiers drank the holy water and set fire to books containing holy writings. Amongst all the chaos, the oil in the lamp was spilled and the light in the Temple went out.

Because Antiochus had his army storm the Temple on the Sabbath, the Hebrews wouldn't fight back. Thousands were either killed or carried off and sold as slaves. However, later, a man named Matthias refused to obey the king's men. He took his five sons and others who would follow him into the mountains where they planned how they might regain their right to worship as they pleased. King Antiochus sent an army after them, but they were unsuccessful in defeating Matthias and his men. Under the direction of Matthias and then later his son, Judah, ordinary farmers

and shepherds learned to fight like brave soldiers. Judah was nicknamed Maccabee, meaning "the hammer" because of the way he fought King Antiochus' men.

Finally, after many battles, the king's army was beaten by Judah's men. Hebrew people, including modern Jews consider this to be the first miracle of Hanukkah.

The Maccabees, another name for Judah's army, returned to Jerusalem where they found their Temple abandoned and defiled. The sight made them very sad, but they immediately set forth to cleanse and rebuild the Temple. When it came time for its rededication, Judah and his men looked for oil to re-light the lamp, but they could only find enough for the lamp to burn for one day. However, the lamp continued to burn for eight days and nights until more oil was made. They considered this to be the second miracle of Hanukkah. The Hebrew people as well as those that call themselves Jews have continued to celebrate Hanukkah ever since.



Symbols that are associated with the celebration of Hanukkah include the menorah (*meh NOAR-uh*), dreidels (*DRAY-dels*), potato latkes, and gelt. The menorah is a special

candelabrum that holds nine candles. The middle candle is called the shamash (*SHAHM-mahs*) or server candle because it is used to light the other candles. It usually stands a little bit higher than the others. Candles are lit after sundown on each of the eight nights of Hanukkah. On the first night the server candle is lit as well as the first candle on the far right. On the seven succeeding nights another candle is added from right to left until all eight candles are lit. The family member who lights the Hanukkah candles recites traditional blessings. The menorah represents the miracle of the lamp burning for eight days on barely enough oil for one.

A dreidel is a small top with four sides. Each side is marked with a Hebrew letter (*nun, gimel, hey, and shin*). The letters stand for "A Great Miracle Happened There," referring to the two miracles of Hanukkah. There are many variations of this game that children enjoy playing as they celebrate Hanukkah.

Potato latkes, similar to pancakes, are a traditional food eaten around Hanukkah time. They are generally made by combining grated potatoes, eggs, onions, flour, and salt. Then they are deep-fried in oil to symbolize the lamp that burned for eight days when it only had enough oil for one.

Gelt is Hanukkah money. In many homes, children are given gifts and Hanukkah gelt, which may be used in dreidel games.

"My Father's House"

When Solomon completed the building of the original Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem, he made a simple statement that clearly summed up what that Temple was, and what that Temple was not, and exactly where Yahweh was in relation to it: "Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee; how much less this house which I have built ... hearken Thou to the supplications of Thy servant and of Thy people Israel, when they

pray toward this place; yea, hear Thou from heaven Thy dwelling place." (2 Chronicles 6:18,21 RSV)

A Place of Worship, "Consecrated For My Name":

The original Temple was consecrated for Yahweh's Name, and called a Temple of Yahweh, or House of Yahweh, even though Yahweh remained in heaven e.g. "Yahweh is in His Holy Temple, Yahweh's throne is in heaven." (*Psalms 11:4*). It could perhaps be compared to the principle of a country opening (*or closing, temporarily or permanently, whenever a decision is made to do so*) an embassy in a foreign land, that is to be treated with the utmost respect and never to be violated, where official diplomatic business is conducted. The Temple of Yahweh was meant in a possessive sense, even though the "Head of State" remained at home.

Regarding the original Temple:

"I have heard your prayer and your supplication, which you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built, and put My Name there for ever; My eyes and My heart will be there for all time." (*1 Kings 9:3 RSV*) "But if you turn aside from following Me, you or your children, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and the house which I have consecrated for My Name I will cast out of My sight." (*1 Kings 9:6-7 RSV*)

The original Temple of Yahweh was destroyed, that is, Yahweh had it destroyed, not because He turned His back on the Israelites, but because they turned their back on Him. Later however, at the appointed time, the Hebrews returned from the Babylonian captivity because Yahweh had a Persian king release them and allow them to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple of Yahweh as

a sacred place of worship. It was Yahweh's command to rebuild that Temple (*or sacred "embassy," if you wish*), not something that the Hebrews took it upon themselves to do: "In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia that The Word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: Yahweh, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all His people, may Yahweh be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of Yahweh, the God of Israel - He is the God Who is in Jerusalem." (*Ezra 1:2 RSV*)

"My Father's House":

From an Israelite point of view the term Temple takes on a much greater meaning: "for through Him we both have access in one Spirit to The Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of Yahweh, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Yah'shua the Messiah Himself being the cornerstone, in Whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy Temple in Yahweh; in Whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of Yahweh in His Holy Spirit." (*Ephesians 2:18-22 RSV*) "Do you not know that you are Yahweh's Temple and that Yahweh's Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys Yahweh's Temple, Yahweh will destroy him. For Yahweh's Temple is holy, and that Temple you are." (*1 Corinthians 3:16-17 RSV*)

Nevertheless, Yah'shua the Messiah, Who we may be absolutely certain knew what He was talking about, had no problem calling

that re-built physical Temple in Jerusalem "My Father's House," or Yahweh's House, a sacred place, not because Yahweh lived there, since Yah'shua the Messiah plainly always prayed to The Father in heaven, but because Yahweh was worshiped there. He used the term Temple in a possessive sense. "Did you not know that I must be in My Father's House?" (*Luke 2:49 RSV*) "You shall not make My Father's House a house of trade." (*John 2:16 RSV*)

An End-Time Israelite Temple:

There are a number of groups working toward the construction of an end-time Temple - a physical, Hebrew Temple in Jerusalem. Their preparations are genuine, professional, and well financed. They would begin building today if the political situation permitted it. But will it happen?

Many Christian-professing people reject the thought of any such possibility, or deny Yah'shua the Messiah's own words and say that such a Temple could not be called a Temple of Yahweh, because their own perspective of Temple is now purely spiritual. But unconverted Jews aren't Israelites, who nevertheless worship and are subject to the true and only God. Jews have a religious perspective of their own, and since 1948, the Jewish state of the former (proper) Israel has been a reality.

Israelites and Jews worship the same God; Yahweh the true God, but differently, at different stages of understanding and fulfillment. Is the Hebrew religion now to be considered irrelevant? Most certainly not, according to the Israelite apostle Paul: "Then what advantage has the Hebrew? ... Much in every way. To begin with, the Hebrews are entrusted with the oracles [*words*] of Yahweh." (*Romans 3:1-2*)

A great many other Israelites, including this writer, believe that the Hebrew people will indeed construct another Temple of Yahweh

(the exact form that it will take is yet to be seen) that will be a focal point of many Israelite prophecies. These Scriptures of Bible Prophecy, among others, can only mean an actual physical Temple, in Jerusalem, just prior to The Return Of Yah'shua the Messiah.

A Physical Measurement Of A Physical Temple:

"Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told: "Rise and measure the Temple of Yahweh and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the Temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample over the holy city for forty-two months. And I will grant My two witnesses power to prophesy for one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." (*Revelation 11:1-3 RSV*)

Abomination Of A Physical Temple:

"Forces from him shall appear and profane the Temple and fortress, and shall take away the continual burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate." (*Daniel 11:31 RSV*)

No Physical Human Can Enter Yahweh's Spiritual Temple:

"Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the Temple of Yahweh, proclaiming himself to be Yahweh." (*2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 RSV*)

Yah'shua' Specific Warning About A Physical Temple In Judea:

"So when you see the desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the Holy Place, let the reader understand, then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." (*Matthew 24:15-16 RSV*)