

Chanukah - The Festival Of Lights



Introduction

Chanukah [sometimes spelled as “Hanukah”] is a Hebrew word that means "dedication".

This Feast is celebrated in memory of the re-dedication of the Temple to the LORD, after the miraculous victory of the small Maccabee army over the mighty forces of the Greek ruler Antiochus Epiphanes. Chanukah also celebrates the miracle of the Temple menorah that burned for eight days, with only enough oil for one.

According to many Biblical scholars, Chanukah is also the time that Y’shua [Jesus] the Messiah was conceived ... His Birth being nine months later during *Sukkot* [the Feast of Tabernacles].

When we celebrate Chanukah, we are declaring that we have turned from pagan, sun-god worship [Baal, Nimrod, Mithra, Tamuz, and so forth], to the worship of the One True God, YHWH. It is also a re-dedication of our own “temple” and lives back to Messiah!

Chanukah is not one of the Feasts of the Lord ... but it is a Biblical Feast. It is referred to in a number of places in both the TaNaKh [Old Testament] and the Apostolic Writings [New Testament]. In John Chapter 10, we read that Y'shua [Jesus] visited the Temple during this Feast [He was in Jerusalem during the winter Feast of Dedication, and visited the Temple]. Both Daniel and Zechariah describe prophetically the Chanukah story. But most important of all, we also have very significant End-Time and prophetic references to Chanukah in many places – such as in Matthew 24, Mark 13, 2 Thessalonians 2, and Revelation 13.

One of the main figures in the Chanukah story, Antiochus Epiphanes, is the clearest picture we have in the Bible of the coming anti-messiah [anti-christ]. Chanukah is the story of victory over apostasy and lawlessness. It is therefore very important for us today.

Y'shua [Jesus] honored this Feast ... and the Book of Hebrews includes the people involved in the Chanukah story in its list of the “Heroes of Faith”.

Hebrews 11:33-38 *“33 Who by [the help of] faith subdued kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promised blessings, closed the mouths of lions, 34 Extinguished the power of raging fire, escaped the devourings of the sword, out of frailty and weakness won strength and became stalwart, even mighty and resistless in battle, routing alien hosts. 35 [Some] women received again their dead by a resurrection. Others were tortured to death with clubs, refusing to accept release [offered on the terms of denying their faith], so that they might be resurrected to a better life. 36 Others had to suffer the trial of mocking and scourging and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned to death; they were lured with tempting offers [to renounce their faith]; they were sawn asunder; they were slaughtered by the sword; [while they were alive] they had to go about wrapped in the skins of sheep and goats, utterly destitute, oppressed, cruelly treated—38 [Men] of whom the world was not worthy—roaming over the desolate places and the mountains, and [living] in caves and caverns and holes of the earth.”*

The Chanukah Story

Let's rewind and tell the story to Chanukah from the beginning. In 332 B.C., the armies of Alexander the Great defeated the Persian ruler Darius III at Issus. Only three years later, Alexander's swift armies had conquered the entire then-known world from Europe to India. His mentor was Aristotle, and Alexander used Greek culture to unify his vast Empire.

After a very short career, Alexander died at only thirty-three years of age, and his empire was divided between his four generals into four different kingdoms. Two of the superpowers – the Syrian and the Egyptian kingdoms referred to in Daniel Chapter 11 as the king of the North and the king of the South – became bitter rivals with little Israel constantly caught in the middle.

In 171 B.C., Antiochus IV ascended the throne in Syria [Daniel 11:21]. He was a very evil ruler, full of pride, and he took the name Antiochus Theos Epiphanes, or Antiochus Epiphanes, meaning "God manifest". He worked hard to "Hellenize" his subjects by forcing them to adopt the Greek culture and religion.

As a result, two parties developed in Israel:

- The first wanted to adapt to the Greek influence *while*,
- The second was committed to stay pure and faithful to the Covenant.

The current High Priest's own brother was among the Hellenists ... he even changed his name from Yeshua to the Greek name, *Jason*. By offering Antiochus a bribe, he received the Greeks' help to become High Priest instead of his brother. This so-named Jason eventually killed his brother.

The apostasy described in the Book of Daniel [11:32] was in full swing.

Daniel 11:32 "32 And such as violate the covenant he shall pervert *and* seduce with flatteries, but the people who know their God shall prove themselves strong *and* shall stand firm and do exploits [for God]."

The apostate Jason went on to build both a Greek gymnasium in Jerusalem – where the men performed nude according to Greek fashion – as well as a temple to the Greek god *Phallus*. Jason also enrolled the people of Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch, the capitol of Syria. However ...

An even more fanatical Hellenist named Menelaus paid an even larger bribe to Antiochus to become High Priest instead of Jason.

Menelaus was not even of a priestly family, and in order to pay his promised bribe, he had to sell the golden vessels from the Temple.

At this time, the ambitions of Antiochus Epiphanes had grown, and he set out to conquer the world and revive the entire empire of Alexander. Eventually Rome stopped him in his tracks, and in anger he began to turn against the Jewish people, destroying Jerusalem and killing thousands. What the Prophet Daniel had prophetically foretold almost four hundred years earlier was happening:

Daniel 11:30-31 *“30 For the ships of Kittim [or Cyprus, in Roman hands] shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved and discouraged and turn back [to Palestine] and carry out his rage and indignation against the holy covenant and God’s people, and he shall do his own pleasure; he shall even turn back and make common cause with those [Jews] who abandon the holy covenant [with God]. 31 And armed forces of his shall appear [in the holy land] and they shall pollute the sanctuary, the [spiritual] stronghold, and shall take away the continual [daily burnt offering]; and they shall set up [in the sanctuary] the abomination that astonishes and makes desolate [probably an altar to a pagan god].”*

On Kislev 15, 168 B.C., Antiochus Epiphanes erected a statue of Zeus – but with his own face – on top of the holy altar in the Temple.

Ten days later – on Kislev 25, the birthday of Zeus¹ – he offered a pig on this altar. Antiochus sprinkled its blood in the Holy of Holies, and poured out its broth over the Torah scrolls before he cut them to pieces and burnt them. The Holy Temple was converted to a shrine to Zeus!

Antiochus then went on to issue a death sentence over anyone who observed the Sabbath, kept the Biblical dietary laws, was circumcised, or even studied the Torah ... whole families were put to death. Babies were hung around their mothers' necks, and they were thrown from the walls of the cities as thousands became martyrs for their faith.

One of them said before he died, "It is good, being put to death by men, to look for hope from God to be raised up again by him ..." [2 Macc. 7:14].

The Deliverance

Eventually the deliverance began with one righteous and godly father.

When Antiochus’s soldiers came to the little town of Modin, close to Jerusalem, they built another altar to Zeus. Then they assembled all the townspeople and ordered an old priest named Mattathias to sacrifice a pig on this altar. Mattathias refused. But an apostate priest stepped forward in his place in order to perform the abomination.

In rage, Mattathias grabbed the sword of the closest Syrian soldier and killed him. He then rushed forward and also killed the apostate priest upon the altar. In the commotion that followed, his five sons followed his example, and overpowered the other Syrian soldiers killing all of them. The people of the small town fled to the mountains to avoid Antiochus's revenge.

¹ Today, this date is December 25th – Christmas Day. If one researches the history of Christmas, you will find its roots deep in paganism and sun-god worship. Many legends and religions speak of their pagan gods – such as Tamuz – being born on this date. If you are interested in learning more, please contact the office.

The revolt, however, spread.

The old priest Mattathias died of exhaustion and sickness after one year ... but Y'hudah [Judah] – one his five sons, who was nicknamed “the Maccabee” or “the Hammer” because of his military might – succeeded him and carried on with the fight against the Empire.

After three years of hard guerrilla warfare, the small band under Y'hudah [Judah] the Maccabee and his brothers was able to throw out the Syrian forces after two stunning victories in open battle.

Zechariah 9:13-15 *“13 For I have bent Judah for Myself as My bow, filled the bow with Ephraim as My arrow, and will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and will make you [Israel] as the sword of a mighty man. 14 And the Lord shall be seen over them and His arrow shall go forth as the lightning, and the Lord God will blow the trumpet and will go forth in the windstorms of the south. 15 The Lord of hosts shall defend and protect them; and they shall devour and they shall tread on [their fallen enemies] as on slingstones [that have missed their aim], and they shall drink [of victory] and be noisy and turbulent as from wine and become full like bowls [used to catch the sacrificial blood], like the corners of the [sacrificial] altar.”*

"A Great Miracle Happened There!"

After their victory, the band immediately set out for Jerusalem to restore the Temple. On Kislev 25, 165 B.C. – exactly three years after the Temple had been defiled – Israel rededicated the altar to the LORD. However, there was only enough holy oil for the menorah to last for one day ... but according to tradition, the oil miraculously lasted for eight days until new oil had been produced.

Whether this is true or not, the Most High had for sure done a great miracle ... the tiny Nation of Israel had overcome the superpower of the day, and gained an independence that lasted almost a hundred years. As the saying goes during Chanukah:

"Nes gadol hayah sham" ... a great miracle happened there [or “here” if you live in Israel].

The miraculous victory over the ungodly forces of apostasy – through the Maccabees – gained religious freedom for the Jewish people until the Messiah was born. When He was carried into the Temple by His God-fearing parents to be presented before the LORD, the prophecy of Haggai was fulfilled:

Haggai 2:9 *“9 The latter glory of this house [with its successor, to which Jesus came] shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace and prosperity, says the Lord of hosts.”*

Celebrate Chanukah Today

Why should Gentile believers celebrate this feast? Here are a few reasons:

- Chanukah is part of salvation history.

The miracles that happened during Chanukah made it possible for the Savior of the world to be born since Y'shua [Jesus] had to be born by God-fearing parents, living in obedience to the Torah. We certainly need to celebrate that.

Galatians 4:4 *"4 But when the proper time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born subject to [the regulations of] the Law,"*

When the time of their purification – according to the Law of Moses – had been completed, Yosef [Joseph] and Miriam [Mary] took Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the LORD.

- Israel and the patriarchs are "our forefathers".

Shaul [Paul] calls Israel "our forefathers" in 1 Corinthians 10:1. Israel's history is also our history. We [the wild olive] have been grafted into God's Covenant People [the natural olive].

Romans 11:17 *"17 But if some of the branches were broken off, while you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among them to share the richness [of the root and sap] of the olive tree,"*

- Gentile believers are called to rejoice with God's people Israel.

Romans 15:10 *"10 Again it is said, Rejoice (exult), O Gentiles, along with His [own] people;"*

- Chanukah is prophetic for the End-Times.

Chanukah has very important prophetic lessons for us living in the End-Times. It is the story of victory over apostasy and lawlessness that will be repeated again in the last days.

- Chanukah is a time for re-dedication.

Each of us are the temples of the LORD, and we need to dedicate our lives to be ready for the Second Coming of the Messiah.

Ephesians 2:19-22 *“19 Therefore you are no longer outsiders (exiles, migrants, and aliens, excluded from the rights of citizens), but you now share citizenship with the saints (God’s own people, consecrated and set apart for Himself); and you belong to God’s [own] household. 20 You are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself the chief Cornerstone. 21 In Him the whole structure is joined (bound, welded) together harmoniously, and it continues to rise (grow, increase) into a holy temple in the Lord [a sanctuary dedicated, consecrated, and sacred to the presence of the Lord]. 22 In Him [and in fellowship with one another] you yourselves also are being built up [into this structure] with the rest, to form a fixed abode (dwelling place) of God in (by, through) the Spirit.”*

- Pray for the Remnant.

We need to remember Chanukah, and pray for a faithful Remnant again today in Israel.

This is what the LORD says:

Jeremiah 31:7 *“7 For thus says the Lord: Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and shout for the head of the nations [on account of the chosen people, Israel]. Proclaim, praise, and say, The Lord has saved His people, the remnant of Israel!”*

- Pray the LORD will repeat the miracle of Chanukah again in Israel.

Zechariah 12:3, 6 *“3 And in that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all peoples; all who lift it or burden themselves with it shall be sorely wounded. And all the nations of the earth shall come and gather together against it. 6 In that day will I make the chiefs of Judah like a big, blazing pot among [sticks of] wood and like a flaming torch among sheaves [of grain], and they shall devour all the peoples round about, on the right hand and on the left; and they of Jerusalem shall yet again dwell and sit securely in their own place, in Jerusalem.”*

- Celebrate the coming of the Messiah.

We can celebrate that the Word became Flesh inside of Miriam [Mary] at this time of year ... the True Light that gives Light to every man was coming into the world. It is so important that we stay faithful to the Word [Torah] of God and are guided by its Light in these last days! As David writes ...

Psalms 119:105 *“105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”*

Take a stand for Truth and celebrate Chanukah this year.

Pray for faithfulness to the Word of God in these last days!

Pray that many will forsake pagan traditions this year and return to the Hebraic Roots of our Faith!

Pray for a re-dedication of the spiritual Temple that the Messiah will return to!

So ... when was Messiah born?

Most scholars agree that Y'shua [Jesus] was born somewhere around the time of the Fall Feasts of the Lord [*Sukkot*]. One way to reach this conclusion is through the account in Luke Chapter 1 concerning the birth of John the Baptist. From 1 Chronicles Chapter 24, it is possible to know when John the Baptist's father Zechariah – who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah – was serving in the Temple.

We also know that six months later the angel Gabriel visited Miriam [Mary], and she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. This information brings us to the seventh month on the LORD's Biblical Calendar, as the time of the Birth of Y'shua [Jesus].

Further, we have some amazing information from the constellation of the stars.

- First of all the magi, the wise men, had seen the star of the King of the Jews in the East, and they came to Jerusalem to look for Him.
- Secondly, the Book of Revelation, chapter 12, also speaks about a sign in the heavens connected with the birth of Messiah.

God created the stars, which include the planets, to serve as signs.

Genesis 1:14 *"14 And God said, Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be signs and tokens [of God's provident care], and [to mark] seasons, days, and years,"*

Psalms 19:1-4 *"THE HEAVENS declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows and proclaims His handiwork. 2 Day after day pours forth speech, and night after night shows forth knowledge. 3 There is no speech nor spoken word [from the stars]; their voice is not heard. 4 Yet their voice [in evidence] goes out through all the earth, their sayings to the end of the world. Of the heavens has God made a tent for the sun,"*

Before the Bible was written, God had already written the Gospel story in the stars.

Well-known radio Bible teacher – Dr. James Kennedy – writes in his book *The Real Meaning Of The Zodiac* that scientists are amazed to find that every civilization in history, no matter how far back in time they go, has always referred to the same constellation of the stars.

The only reasonable explanation for this is that God taught Adam the meaning behind the stars, which was then handed down to succeeding generations.

The Book of Job – considered by many to be the oldest Book in the Bible – as well as the Book of Amos mentions several star constellations by name. The Gospel message is clearly seen in the Zodiac, beginning with the constellation of Virgo [the virgin] and ending with Leo [the King].

This message was later on perverted in Babylon into the reading of horoscopes to predict future events, which God strictly condemns as demonic, occult practice. The Prophet Daniel was however at one time the chief of the magi in Babylon. Most certainly, he taught these magi the truths about the stars. This would explain why some of them came to Jerusalem to search for the Messiah when He was born.

Matthew 2:1-2 *“NOW WHEN Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men [astrologers] from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, 2 Where is He Who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east at its rising and have come to worship Him. [Num. 24:17; Jer. 23:5; Zech. 9:9.]”*

Three Bible passages with Messianic prophecies give us the explanation about the star of "the One" King of the Jews, the Messiah that the magi had seen.

The first passage is:

Numbers 24:17-19 *“17 I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but He is not near. A star (Star) shall come forth out of Jacob, and a scepter (Scepter) shall rise out of Israel and shall crush all the corners of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth [Moab’s sons of tumult]. [Matt. 2:2; Rom. 15:12.] 18 And Edom shall be [taken as] a possession, [Mount] Seir also shall be dispossessed, who were Israel’s enemies, while Israel does valiantly. 19 Out of Jacob shall one (One) come having dominion and shall destroy the remnant from the city.”*

The second Messianic passage is:

Genesis 49:8-10 *“8 Judah, you are the one whom your brothers shall praise; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons shall bow down to you. 9 Judah, a lion’s cub! With the prey, my son, you have gone high up [the mountain]. He stooped down, he crouched like a lion, and like a lioness—who dares provoke and rouse him? [Rev. 5:5.] 10 The scepter or leadership shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh [the Messiah, the Peaceful One] comes to Whom it belongs, and to Him shall be the obedience of the people. [Num. 24:17; Ps. 60:7.]”*

The third is:

Psalm 110:1-4 *“THE LORD (God) says to my Lord (the Messiah), Sit at My right hand, until I make Your adversaries Your footstool. [Matt. 26:64; Acts 2:34; I Cor. 15:25; Col. 3:1; Heb. 12:2.] 2 The Lord will send forth from Zion the scepter of Your strength; rule, then, in the midst of Your foes. [Rom. 11:26, 27.] 3 Your people will offer themselves willingly in the day of Your power, in the beauty of holiness and in holy array out of the womb of the morning; to You [will spring forth] Your young men, who are as the dew. 4 The Lord has sworn and will not revoke or change it: You are a priest forever, after the manner and order of Melchizedek. [Heb. 5:10; 7:11, 15, 21.]”*

We see in Numbers 24, that a star, also called a scepter, will come out from Ya’akov [Jacob].

In Genesis Chapter 49, we see that this scepter is narrowed down to come out from the tribe of Y’hudah [Judah], who is called a “lion” ... and in Psalm 110, we see that the Messiah will come after the order of Melchizedek, meaning "King of Righteousness."

The planet Jupiter, called Zedek in Hebrew and meaning “righteous”, has always been connected with the Messiah, the "Righteous One”.

The brightest star in Leo, the Lion, which is a symbol for Y’hudah [Judah], is *Regiel*, which means “king” or *melech* in Hebrew.

The magi said ... *“We saw His star in the east”*.

With the help of modern computers, today it is very easy to calculate the exact positions of the stars thousands of years back in time. What used to take years to calculate is today available with the click of a mouse if you have access to the right program.

On September 12 – on *Yom Teruah* [Feast of Trumpets] – in the year 3 B.C., *Regiel* [Melech] and Jupiter [Zedek], began to make a helical rising together as one star, forming *Melchizedek* appearing between the feet of Leo [Y’hudah], on the eastern² horizon just before sunrise.

This helical rising of *Regiel* and Jupiter happens once in about every eighty years. However, within one year it happened two more times, in connection with Feasts of Purim [the Feast of Esther] and Shavuot [Pentecost].

But something else also happened in the heavens that night of *Yom Teruah* [Feast of Trumpets], 3 B.C.

² Brad Scott has an interesting study of the use of “east” in the Scriptures ... east is always used in association with YHWH’s Ways, His People, and Righteousness.

Between 6:18 PM and 7:39 PM local Jerusalem time, in the evening of September 12, just as the Feast began, the Virgin [Virgo] was "clothed in the sun" with the new moon under her feet, exactly as described in the Book of Revelation.

Revelation 12:1-5 *“AND A great sign (wonder)—[warning of future events of ominous significance] appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and with a crownlike garland (tiara) of twelve stars on her head. 2 She was pregnant and she cried out in her birth pangs, in the anguish of her delivery. 3 Then another ominous sign (wonder) was seen in heaven: Behold, a huge, fiery-red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven kingly crowns (diadems) upon his heads. [Dan. 7:7.] 4 His tail swept [across the sky] and dragged down a third of the stars and flung them to the earth. And the dragon stationed himself in front of the woman who was about to be delivered, so that he might devour her child as soon as she brought it forth. [Dan. 8:10.] 5 And she brought forth a male Child, One Who is destined to shepherd (rule) all the nations with an iron staff (scepter), and her Child was caught up to God and to His throne. [Ps. 2:8, 9; 110:1, 2.]”*

That year, the sun was in the sign of the Virgin [Virgo] for twenty days, between August 27 and September 15 ... but only for about one and a half hours during that time was the moon under the feet of her feet. This alignment began exactly when *Yom Teruah* [Feast of Trumpets] began.

This was most likely the exact time that Miriam [Mary] was in labour according to Revelation 12, giving birth to the Messiah while the watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem announced the new moon and the shofars were blowing!

Little did they know what had just taken place a couple of miles away.

Later on that night – on September 12 – Regiel and Jupiter began their helical rising before dawn announcing that the King of the Jews was born.

According to Jewish tradition Adam, who is also called the son of God in Scripture [Luke 3:38], was created by God on *Yom Teruah* [Feast of Trumpets]. How fitting that the Last Adam was also born on the same day! And just as Y’shua [Jesus] one day will return as King with the trumpet call of God, He also came the first time at the sound of the trumpet. The arrival of a king is usually announced with trumpets. It is amazing how exactly in detail God fulfils His Word!

What an awesome God we serve!

Truly ...

Psalm 19:1-2 *"THE HEAVENS declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows and proclaims His handiwork. 2 Day after day pours forth speech, and night after night shows forth knowledge."*

We pray you and your family have a joyous and Light-filled Chanukah ... may YHWH's Light continue to shine upon you ... may you be blessed and rejoice in His Abounding Faithfulness and Love!

Shalom!