

The Good Shepherd and Chanukah

"11I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep...14I am the Good Shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me, 15just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father. And I lay down My life for the sheep. 16I have other sheep that are not from this fold; those also I must lead, and they will listen to My voice. So there shall be one flock, one Shepherd...22Then came Hanukkah (literally, rededication); it was winter in Jerusalem. 23Yeshua was walking in the Temple around Solomon's Colonnade. 24Then the Judean leaders surrounded Him, saying, 'How long will You hold us in suspense? If You are the Messiah, tell us outright!' 25Yeshua answered them, 'I told you, but you don't believe! The works I do in My Father's name testify concerning Me. 26But you don't believe, because you are not My sheep. 27My sheep hear My voice. I know them, and they follow Me. 28I give them eternal life! They will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 29My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. And no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30I and the Father are one.'" (John 10:11; 14-16; 22-30)."

When *Yeshua* affirmed his divinity He did so after first reminding the audience of the fact that *His sheep hear His Voice and follow Him*. The parable of the *Good Shepherd* was given during the time of *Chanukah*. Being sheep that hear (*shema*) {those that prove that they heard *Yeshua* by doing what *Yeshua* says and who follow *Yeshua*} are the kind of sheep He is looking for. There is no mention of Christmas in the Gospels but *Yeshua* affirms *His Divinity* during *Chanukah*, at the Temple, in Jerusalem.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, we find the root word *chanak* (חָנַךְ) in the Book of Wisdom: "*Train up (חָנַךְ) a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it*" (Prov. 22:6). Using the definition of this word, we are then to consecrate, dedicate and educate our children in the *way of Adonai* (*Haderech Adonai*) following the Good Shepherd *and even when they grow up, they will not depart from Him*. *Chanukah* is a festival that celebrates that commitment: *The Good Shepherd and Chanukah*.

Since *Yeshua* kept *Chanukah*, we as Believers ought to take a closer look. *Chanukah*, in the Bible, celebrated the *Dedication* (or *Rededication*) of the *cleansed Temple* in the time of the Maccabees about 146 BCE. In our day and times we are experiencing similar events. We have been in *Greco-Roman times* and also since that which *is first shall be last, and God requires that which is past* (See *Eccl. 3:14,15; Matt. 19:30; 20:16*) then as we advance in history, we also retreat in history. The time before the return of Messiah is foreshadowed by the events of the reign of *Antiochus IV Epiphanes*, at the time of *Chanukah*.

When *Judah Maccabee*, his family, and the loyal *Torah-keeping* Jews of around 160's BCE began to fight against *Antiochus*, they fought more than a land war. They fought for freedom to be the people *Yah* had chosen them to be, and for their *religious freedom*. On the *15th of Kislev* *Antiochus* erected an idol in the Temple. On the *25th of Kislev*, he defiled the altar with pagan sacrifices (pigs were sacrificed in the Alter in the Temple – pigs were to be cooked, the meat fed to the priests, and the blood poured on the altar). It is not hard to imagine the mess and the stench that must have been in *Yah's* altar where no unclean animals had ever been sacrificed. The sanctuary of *Yah* had been desecrated, desolated, and ruined.

When the *Maccabees* reclaimed the Temple, they *intentionally waited until the same date*, the *25th of Kislev*, to rededicate the Altar, reversing *Antiochus'* desecration. The *Book of Maccabees* (*1 Maccabees 4:47, 50, and 52-53*) describes their work in detail: "*They took uncut stones, according to the Torah, and built a new altar like the former one...They lighted the lamps on the menorah, and these illuminated the Temple... They rose early on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month... and offered sacrifice according to the law on the new altar.*" This began as an altar-centered festival. They also chose to do an *eight-day dedication*. In Jewish history, *eight-day* dedications were not new. Moses dedicated the *Mishkan* over eight days (*Leviticus 8:33, 35; 9:1*). Solomon dedicated the *First Temple* over eight days—timed with *Sukkot* (*2 Chronicles 5; 7:9-10*). *Sukkot* itself is an *eight-day festival*, originally tied to the autumn harvest and later

to Israel's wilderness journey (*Leviticus 23:36*). The *Maccabees* had not been able to celebrate *Sukkot* during the war. But once victorious, they *rededicated the Temple* and celebrated a *delayed Sukkot*: "*We shall be celebrating the purification of the Temple on the twenty-fifth of Kislev... that you too may celebrate the Feast of Booths and of the fire that appeared in the days of Nehemiah. (2 Maccabees 1:18)*"

The *Chanukah* that *Yeshua* celebrated was a memorial to the Altar in the Temple being cleansed, rebuilt, rededicated and restored to daily life in Israel. The *Book of Maccabees* does not refer to nine branch *menorot* (also called *Hanukiahs*), miracles of oil, menorahs in windows, songs around the candles, gifts, *latkes*, and *sufganiyot* (doughnuts) fried in bubbling oil. The only *menorot* that were lit in Jerusalem were *seven-branch menorahs*. Jerusalem, the city on the Temple Mount, would be lit up with menorahs visible from windows. This was quite a sight at night. As you would go-up (*make Aliyah*) to the Temple, there would be light coming out of every house making the city bright with light. This is the setting of *Yeshua's* statement "*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*) shortly before *Chanukah* in *John 10*. The emphasis was to be *Yeshua is the Light of the World* who was *restored to Jewish life* in the same way the Altar in the Temple had been restored and rededicated. *Yeshua* makes *Chanukah* a *Messianic Festival*!

The Temple that is to be rededicated now is us: "*16Don't you know that you are God's temple and that the Ruach Elohim dwells among you? (1 Cor. 3:16)*" Just as the enemy defiled the Temple then, the enemy now tries to defile *your temple* through: compromise, worldliness, sin, pagan customs disguised as worship to *Yah*, and self-centeredness. The battlefield has shifted from *Jerusalem to our human heart*. So *we need to cleanse our Temples*. If the *Maccabees* had allowed pagan altars to remain, there would be no *Chanukah*. If we allow defilement to remain, there can be no true dedication. *Chanukah* is calling us to: Remove what is unclean, Destroy idols, Reject pagan mixture, Cast out compromise, Tear down false altars of the heart, Restore the commandments of *Yah Our Elohim*, and Rebuild what the enemy has tried to destroy. This is *true spiritual cleansing*. Let your light in your heart burn again. When the *menorah* was restored and lit: true light returned, true worship returned, real dedication returned. Let the *Ruach HaKodesh* rekindle our flame as we return to: obedience, purity, and covenant faithfulness. You are also a living *menorah*, a walking sanctuary, and a vessel of light. So let your temple also *emit His Light*!

Chanukah is a call to be a *modern Maccabee*. Just as *Judah Maccabee* fought to cleanse the Temple, we must fight to cleanse our heart. Just as *Mattathias* refused to forsake the *Torah* we must refuse to Forsake the *Torah*. Just as a remnant stood faithful against an evil empire we stand faithful against the world. What they dedicated in stone, we rededicate in our soul. Why does this matter? Because this is *Real Messianic Truth* most Believers *never hear*. *Antiochus* didn't merely attack *Jewish culture*. He attacked the *Torah*, because: *If Torah falls then the covenant people fall*. And if the covenant people fall, *Messiah Yeshua's lineage disappears*.

Scripture is explicit: *Messiah* must come through Israel, His covenant people. If Israel is erased through forced assimilation, paganism, and *Torah* abolition then there is no lineage, no covenant line, no promised Seed and no *Messiah*. This is why the *Maccabean Revolt* wasn't political. It was the preservation of the people *Messiah* would come through. *Chanukah* is the reason the covenant people survived. And because they survived, *Messiah* came. This is the real *Chanukah*: not candles, not chocolate coins, not modern cultural tradition. Instead let it be dedication, holiness, courage, purity, light and covenant. May our lives become a continual *Chanukah* with a temple fully cleansed, a full lit *menorah* burning, and *a heart fully dedicated to Yah Adonai Our Elohim. Shabbat Shalom!*