

## Seeing the Light - Hanukkah 2023

### **Introduction:**

Tonight will be the third day of Hanukkah. A day that is more than dreidels, latkes and presents. For this is a time that commemorates the rededication of the Temple after its recovery from the hands of an oppressive empire, having taken it over due to an unwillingness of its people, the Jewish people succumbing to their mandates.

### **What is Hanukkah?:**

In the Talmud, tractate Shabbat 21b, the Rabbis answer this very question.

What is 'Hanukkah? The rabbis taught: "On the twenty-fifth day of Kislev 'Hanukkah commences and lasts eight days, on which lamenting (in commemoration of the dead) and fasting are prohibited. When the Hellenists entered the sanctuary, they defiled all the oil that was found there. When the government of the House of Asmoneans prevailed and conquered them, oil was sought (to feed the holy lamp in the sanctuary) and only one vial was found with the seal of the high priest intact. The vial contained sufficient oil for one day only, but a miracle occurred, and it fed the holy lamp eight days in succession. These eight days were the following year established as days of good cheer, on which psalms of praise and acknowledgment (of God's wonders) were to be recited.

At the heart of the Hanukkah story is Judea's relationship with their Greek rulers. At one time seemed congenial yet soon would deteriorate.

*According to the authors of the [Books of the Maccabees](#), while Antiochus was busy in Egypt, a rumor spread that he had been killed. In [Judea](#), the [deposed](#) High Priest [Jason](#) gathered a force of 1,000 soldiers and made a surprise attack on the city of [Jerusalem](#). [Menelaus](#), the High Priest appointed by Antiochus, was forced to flee Jerusalem during a riot. King Antiochus returned from Egypt in 168 BC, enraged by his defeat; he attacked Jerusalem and restored Menelaus, then executed many Jews.*

*When these happenings were reported to the king, he thought that Judea was in revolt. Raging like a wild animal, he set out from Egypt and took Jerusalem by storm. He ordered his soldiers to cut down without mercy those whom they met and to slay those who took refuge in their houses. There was a massacre of young and old, a killing of women and children, a slaughter of virgins and infants. In the space of three days, eighty thousand were lost, forty thousand meeting a violent death, and the same number being sold into slavery. — [2 Maccabees 5:11-14](#)*

*Antiochus decided to side with the Hellenized Jews (a form of Judaism in classical antiquity that combined Jewish religious tradition with elements of Greek culture.) in order to consolidate his empire and to strengthen his hold over the region.*

In other words the Hellenized Jews were a house divided, incorporating Greek culture into their lifestyle to the point where Adonai became subordinated leading to His minimization and ultimately His removal from the life of His people. The non-Hellenized Jews did not go down this path. Just as Sha'ul conveys in Romans 11:

There were two main battles during the Hanukkah story: One was against the Greeks, but the other, equally important fight was an internal one.

During the period of time between 469 – 323 BCE, three Greek philosophers laid the foundation for basic Greek thought.

The first was *Socrates* (469-399 BCE). He laid the foundations for primary Greek thought. He had a student named Plato (427-347BCE).

- *Plato* took the teachings of Socrates and expanded them. He had a student named Aristotle (384-322BCE).
- *Aristotle* expanded the Greek thought of both Socrates and Plato. He was the first to introduce “*Inductive Reasoning*” and became known as the “*Father of Western Greek Philosophy*.” He had a student named Alexander the Great (July 20, 356 – June 11, 323 BCE).
- *Alexander the Great* took this Western Greek Philosophy, known as “*Hellenism*,” and spread it throughout the known world. This created two world views - *Hellenism* and *Hebrew*.

On the Hebrew side, history tells us that the Hasmonean era is among the most glorious in Jewish history, yet contained seeds of self-destruction that almost destroyed everything.

The high priesthood was a very wealthy, upper class group that the Greeks had started to buy off before the rise of the Hasmoneans, the kingdom that came to form under the Maccabees. Just before the Hasmonean battles, a new high priest named Joshua was appointed. Joshua technically kept Jewish laws but welcomed Hellenization into everyday life, including opting for the Greek name of Jason and establishing a gymnasium. At one point, there weren't even enough priests to serve sacrifices in the Temple because they were—wait for it—at a discus match.

As Jewish identity frayed on the edges, the ruling King Antiochus IV Epiphanes brought a new set of pressures. Unlike the previous rulers who had largely left Jewish culture and institutions alone, Antiochus directly targeted them. In one of his campaigns of persecution, Antiochus forced devout Jews to eat pork publicly as a display of cultural acceptance and submission. Famous acts of Jewish martyrdom come from this period, including when Antiochus commanded Rabbi Eleazar to participate in this public rebuke of Jewish observance. Instead, in a final act of defiance, Rabbi Eleazar dramatically spit out the food as an example to the young Jews who were watching. He was dragged away, tortured, and killed. Mattityahu, the father of the most famous Hanukkah character, Judah Maccabee, also refused to bend. He rejected a command to make a sacrifice to the

Greek gods, and then stabbed and killed the Hellenistic Jew who stepped forward instead.

Don't ignore the lesson here. It's an uncomfortable one for us today. It is much easier to apply laws and stories which are convenient and ignore the ones that directly challenge our modern choices. But it is to contend that we like to convince ourselves it's acceptable to give up on the very things that make us set apart Messianic Believers in order to survive. The entire history of the Jewish people, and especially the story of Hanukkah, reminds us that freedom and survival only come when we fight for it.

The story of the Maccabees is one of defiance and anti-assimilation. It's about hard-as-nails Jews who fight for survival. It's time we bring that back.

It's not the "miracle" of light that is the Hanukkah miracle. It's what the light itself means: The Jews fought, the Jews succeeded, the Jews were back in their Temple.

Hanukkah, means a dedication, like the rededication of the altar. The Roman Jewish historian Josephus, in his famous *Antiquities of the Jews*, actually seems completely unaware of the oil miracle. He never describes the lighting of any menorah. Yet the same man who makes no mention of the oil miracle gave us the term used throughout the English-speaking world for Hanukkah: the Festival of Lights. His explanation is not of the light of the oil, but of bringing the freedom to worship out of the darkness and into the light. To Josephus, the miracle was the freedom to be a Jew and worship as a Jew.

Yet we must remember with all these stories of Jewish miracles and victories that while the Maccabees won the battle, they lost the war. They earned a century of autonomy, but it collapsed along with Jewish identity only a few generations later.

In many ways, how the Hasmoneans came to be is also how they fell. Jews who either claimed to be Jewish but weren't, or were at least willing to do the bidding of the Romans out of their own thirst for power and status, took over once again, and this brief era of Jewish freedom was over.

This isn't too surprising; people love having short memories, doing what is convenient and easy, and convincing themselves that the slope isn't that slippery. The war was, and is, about sustaining the strength of the soul.

The victory of Hanukkah was rooted in the understanding that it takes standing up for the small things in order to protect the big ones. You can't win a war if you don't know who you are or give away pieces of yourself. We frequently take for granted what holds us together. This is the lesson of Hanukkah—and to drain this holiday of its real meaning is a tragedy.

There was also a faithful remnant who would not kneel to their oppressors.

*He outlawed [Jewish religious rites and traditions](#) kept by observant Jews and ordered the worship of [Zeus](#) as the supreme god (2 Maccabees 6:1–12). This was anathema to the*

*Jews and they refused, so Antiochus sent an army to enforce his decree. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed because of the resistance, many were slaughtered, and Antiochus established a military Greek [citadel](#) called the [Acra](#).*

True Tyranny had fallen upon the Jewish people in that their practices had been outlawed. Their very way of life had been taken away from them. Darkness fell upon the Jewish people at the hands of their overlord.

Is there a parallel to be drawn from this?

Darkness fell upon them as the light from the menorahs in the temple went dim. It had appeared that darkness had taken over the light.

Yet, it would be that faithful remnant, a number unknown yet greatly outnumbered by their oppressors who would stand up and take back what was denied them.

What greater miracle is there than to be delivered from those that persecute you, to be delivered in spite of being greatly outnumbered or simply because the God of Avraham, Yitz'chak and Ya'akov has placed His name upon you and calls you His.

### **Messiah and Hanukkah:**

We read in Yochanan 10:22 – 28, the only place where it is actually mentioned in scripture.

It was real, and significant to Yeshua to be in Jerusalem for it. He was there for Hanukkah. Yeshua ultimately recognized the time that commemorates the rededication of the House of Adonai. It would be a time, like many others, that He is confronted about who He is...

**Joh 10:22** Then came Hanukkah in Yerushalayim. It was winter,

**Joh 10:23** and Yeshua was walking around inside the Temple area, in Shlomo's Colonnade.

**Joh 10:24** 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!"

**Joh 10:25** 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,

**Joh 10:26** but the reason you don't trust is that you are not included among my sheep.

**Joh 10:27** My sheep listen to my voice, I recognize them, they follow me,

**Joh 10:28** and I give them eternal life. They will absolutely never be destroyed, and no one will snatch them from my hands.

What is happening at this time?

The back drop is Hanukkah, a time of celebration from foreign oppression for which the children of Israel had experienced time and time again.

The expectations of the leaders was that Messiah would come as King and deliver them from Roman oppression, never again to fall victim to gentile dominion again. Messiah would usher in a new messianic age, making it possible for Adonai's Sh'kinah glory to return to the Temple.

Yeshua affirms His Echud (oneness) with Adonai...

**Joh 14:6** Yeshua said, "I AM the Way—and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through me.

**Joh 14:11** Trust me, that I am united with the Father, and the Father united with me. But if you can't, then trust because of the works themselves.

Expectations of a deliverer from oppression are apropos during this season of Hanukkah, in that it is a memorial of liberation from a physical oppression. That of Rome. A similar liberation accomplished years earlier under the leadership of the Maccabees – a liberation that Messiah was expected to accomplish, once and for all.

There was constant inquiry regarding Yeshua because of what He was doing within the borders of Judea...

Crowds were gathering around Him as Yochanan recounts...

**Joh 6:1** Some time later, Yeshua went over to the far side of Lake Kinneret (that is, Lake Tiberias),

**Joh 6:2** and a large crowd followed him, because they had seen the miracles he had performed on the sick.

This is where the 5,000 men plus women and children were fed from a small amount of food...

**Joh 6:11** Then Yeshua took the loaves of bread, and, after making a b'rakhah, gave to all who were sitting there, and likewise with the fish, as much as they wanted.

**Joh 6:12** After they had eaten their fill, he told his talmidim, "Gather the leftover pieces, so that nothing gets wasted."

**Joh 6:13** They gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten.

**Joh 6:14** When the people saw the miracle he had performed, they said, "This has to be 'the prophet' who is supposed to come into the world."

They were familiar with Isaiah 61...

**Isa 61:1** The Spirit of Adonai Elohim is upon me, because Adonai has anointed me to announce good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted; to proclaim

freedom to the captives, to let out into light those bound in the dark;

**Isa 61:2** to proclaim the year of the favor of Adonai and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn,

**Isa 61:3** yes, provide for those in Tziyon who mourn, giving them garlands instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, a cloak of praise instead of a heavy spirit, so that they will be called oaks of righteousness planted by Adonai, in which he takes pride.

Throughout the accounts of Messiah in the gospels, time and time again, He showed them many times over that He is the Messiah, promised in scripture. He was the Prophet spoken of by Moshe...

**Deu 18:15** "Adonai will raise up for you a prophet like me from among yourselves, from your own kinsmen. You are to pay attention to him,

**Deu 18:16** just as when you were assembled at Horev and requested Adonai your God, 'Don't let me hear the voice of Adonai my God any more, or let me see this great fire ever again; if I do, I will die!'

**Deu 18:17** On that occasion Adonai said to me, 'They are right in what they are saying.

**Deu 18:18** I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kinsmen. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I order him.

**Deu 18:19** Whoever doesn't listen to my words, which he will speak in my name, will have to account for himself to me.

He performed many miracles that only the one sent from Adonai could do. Yet the majority of leadership rejected Him because He didn't meet their expectations of what / whom Messiah would be.

Yet long before this there was a man.

**Luk 2:25** There was in Yerushalayim a man named Shim'on. This man was a tzaddik, he was devout, he waited eagerly for God to comfort Isra'el, and the Ruach HaKodesh was upon him.

This "comforting" is the main subject of the latter portion of the book of Isaiah (chapters 40-66

**Luk 2:26** It had been revealed to him by the Ruach HaKodesh that he would not die before he had seen the Messiah of Adonai.

**Luk 2:27** Prompted by the Spirit, he went into the Temple courts; and when the parents brought in the child Yeshua to do for him what the Torah required,

We read of what Yoseph and Miryam were doing...

**Luk 2:21** On the eighth day, when it was time for his b'rit-milah, he was given the name Yeshua, which is what the angel had called him before his conception.

**Luk 2:22** When the time came for their purification according to the Torah of Moshe, they took him up to Yerushalayim to present him to Adonai

This is now the time of their purification for Miryam and it was the time that Yeshua would be dedicated to Adonai, having already been circumcised.

The ceremony of redeeming the **firstborn male** son reminds the Jewish people of their redemption from slavery in Egypt ([Exo 13:2-16](#)) and of avoiding the last of the Ten Plagues to afflict the Egyptians, the slaughter of their firstborn sons ([Exo 11:4-5](#), [Exo 12:29-30](#)), by slaughtering a lamb in accordance with God's command and placing its blood on the doorposts; on seeing it the angel of death passed over the Israelite families ([Exo 12:3-14](#), [Exo 12:21-28](#)).

Each family therefore dedicates its firstborn son to God's service but then redeems the boy for a payment of five sanctuary-*shekels* ([Num 18:16](#)). In consequence God accepts instead the Levites, the descendants of Ya'akov's son L'vi, for service in the Tabernacle or Temple ([Num 3:12-13](#), [Num 3:45](#); [Num 8:14-19](#)).

*Pidyon-haben* takes place after the son is thirty days old ([Num 3:14](#)). Today it is normally done on the thirty-first day, but that is not a biblical requirement. The narrative in [Luk 2:22](#) suggests either that Miryam and Yosef went up to Jerusalem at the time of *pidyon-haben* and remained there ten days until it was time for Miryam's purification, or that they delayed the *pidyon-haben* until the purification.

So it is time for Miryam purification and that of Yeshua's dedication to Adonai and His redemption as first born.

[Luk 2:27](#) Prompted by the Spirit, he went into the Temple courts; and when the parents brought in the child Yeshua to do for him what the Torah required,

[Luk 2:28](#) Shim`on took him in his arms, made a b'rakhah to God, and said,

He had been waiting many years to where Adonai had fulfilled a promise.

[Luk 2:28](#) Shim`on took him in his arms, made a b'rakhah to God, and said,

**Luk 2:29** "Now, Adonai, according to your word, your servant is at peace as you let him go;

[Luk 2:30](#) for I have seen with my own eyes your yeshu`ah,

My eyes have seen your salvation...

**Isa 52:10** Adonai has bared his holy arm in the sight of every nation, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

[Psa 69:13](#) As for me, Adonai, let my prayer to you come at an acceptable time; In your great grace, God, answer me with the truth of your salvation.

[Luk 2:31](#) which you prepared in the presence of all peoples—

[Luk 2:32](#) a light that will bring revelation to the Goyim and glory to your people Isra'el."

It is on this Hanukkah I believe Yeshua was conceived of the Ruach Ha Kodesh. The backdrop being Hanukkah, his conception and Sukkot being His birth. For as I have shared there is a connection between the two. Hanukkah was inspired by that of Sukkot and the brilliant light display that would be present. So to Hanukkah where the rededication of the Temple after Antiochus had occurred enabling the nation to once again embrace the majesty of Sukkot in all its fullness.

For on Sukkot there are two holy convocations, the first day and the eighth day. He would be born on the first day of Sukkot and circumcised on the eighth day. Here Shimon has been blessed by Adonai and seen the fulfillment of His promise both to the nation of Israel and the nations of the world as conveyed by Isaiah...

Shimon saw that light when he saw Yeshua for the Ruach opened his eyes to it.

### **Conclusion:**

He gave instruction through Isaiah for Israel to be a light to the nations:

**Isa 49:5** So now Adonai says — he formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Ya`akov back to him, to have Isra'el gathered to him, so that I will be honored in the sight of Adonai, my God having become my strength —

**Isa 49:6** he has said, "It is not enough that you are merely my servant to raise up the tribes of Ya`akov and restore the offspring of Isra'el. I will also make you a light to the nations, so my salvation can spread to the ends of the earth."

The very nations that for centuries have persecuted Israel, are the very nations that Israel is to be a shining example.

Each major kingdom at one time persecuted and enslaved Israel:

- Egypt
- Babylon
- Assyria / Greece
- Rome

Reminds me of Yonah, instructed by Adonai to go to the Assyrians in Ninevah and be a light to their dark ways.

How can we relate today? In the past I have talked about a nation, which still exists in its seemingly myopic infatuation with its desire to destroy the Jewish people and eradicate their / our presence from the face of the earth. That being Iran. As I had already shared with you, every world empire has come against the Jewish people for one reason or another. The primary reason is that the ruler of this world despises Adonai's Name being placed upon them and as a result of such divine relation, has established through them the true Light of the world, who will not only redeem the Jewish people but



will also redeem the world.

Today, this is not the only challenge, but just one of many.

We are in the midst of a war where that very nation is sponsoring it against it. It has been in the planning stages for two years and Iran was at the center of its origin.

We are in the midst of a cultural and societal battle for supremacy where anarchy as a means of gaining control is not only accepted by some in our government but even encouraged. Where truth is not embraced but ignored. Narratives being created that are flat out lies and it is obvious, yet they continue to spout them without remorse. The influence seen at the university level is fueling these lies, these protests, this support of terrorism.

Are these seeds being planted for something more devastating,,,that being the demise of this nation as we know it today?

That instruction in Isaiah flows through Messiah to us today...

### **Light of the world:**

**Joh 8:12** Yeshua spoke to them again: "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light which gives life."

Though darkness is consuming the world today, following Yeshua means we don't have to walk in that darkness so long as we walk with Him. Darkness is like a fog that lingers and hovers as it slowly and without bold action consumes the light. Yet, only a little light is needed to overcome the total destruction of darkness. Yeshua is more than just a little light...He is THE LIGHT.

So, when the darkness rolls into your life like a fog, slowly overtaking you, know that you have a beacon that emanates light, warning you of the rocks that lie ahead. This is not any ordinary beacon that you may see along the rocky shoreline of Maine.

This is a beacon that does not merely inform you of the rocks, but also directs your path.

### **To give light to everyone:**

**Joh 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

**Joh 1:2** He was with God in the beginning.

**Joh 1:3** All things came to be through him, and without him nothing made had being.

**Joh 1:4** In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind.

**Joh 1:5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not suppressed it.

## **Teaching us that we are to exemplify the light of Messiah:**

**Mat 5:14** "You are light for the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.

**Mat 5:15** Likewise, when people light a lamp, they don't cover it with a bowl but put it on a lampstand, so that it shines for everyone in the house.

**Mat 5:16** In the same way, let your light shine before people, so that they may see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven.

Though there may be a darkness that this world possesses and we are living in a time where the light of many has been muted or even snuffed out, we must continue to direct our focus to the true light. The light where darkness cannot endure. As often as darkness has attempted to overcome us, Yeshua conveys that we are to be His light. We are to be a light that cannot be hidden nor suppressed. That its power cannot suppress its illumination.

Let your light shine brighter than the menorahs in the Temple at the time of Yeshua which could be seen for miles.

Let the power of your light radiate where both the brightness and the heat can be felt by others.

Remember Moshe when he had come down from Sinai...

**Exo 34:29** When Moshe came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, he didn't realize that the skin of his face was sending out rays of light as a result of his talking with [*Adonai*].

**Exo 34:30** When Aharon and the people of Isra'el saw Moshe, the skin of his face was shining; and they were afraid to approach him.

**Exo 34:31** But Moshe called to them; then Aharon and all the community leaders came back to him, and Moshe spoke to them.

**Exo 34:32** Afterwards, all the people of Isra'el came near; and he passed on to them all the orders that Adonai had told him on Mount Sinai.

**Exo 34:33** Once Moshe had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.

Don't put the veil on for the world needs to see your light shine. Darkness cannot stand light.