



**WINTER 2012**

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**Hanukkah: A Festival of Dedication**

**...by Rabbi Joshua Brumbach**

Tuesday night, December 20<sup>th</sup> begins the festival of Hanukkah.

The word Hanukkah means “dedication,” in Hebrew, and recalls the triumphant events of the Maccabees, and the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem following its desecration by the forces of Antiochus and the Syrian-Greeks in the 2nd century BCE.

Hanukkah is first mentioned in the apocryphal books of Maccabees. According to 1 Maccabees:

*"For eight days they celebrated the rededication of the altar. Then Judah and his brothers and the entire congregation of Israel decreed that the days of the rededication ... should be observed ... every year ... for eight days (1 Mac. 4:56-59)."*

The festival of Hanukkah recalls two primary miracles:

*That a small untrained and ill-equipped army of Jews were able to defeat the mighty forces of the Syrian-Greeks, and; The miracle of the oil burning for eight days.*

According to the oldest traditions of Hanukkah, the heroic acts of the Maccabees and the rededication of the Temple are the primary points to the story. Interestingly, the miracle of the oil does not actually appear in the apocryphal books of Maccabees. The first place the miracle of oil appears is in the Talmud (*b. Shabbat 21b*).

The Talmud states that the forces of Antiochus were driven from the Temple, and that only a single container of ritual olive oil used to light the menorah was found which still contained the official unbroken seal of the *Cohen Gadol* (the High Priest). There was only enough oil for one day.

However, the menorah miraculously burned in the Temple for eight days (the exact amount of time needed to create more oil).

The Gospels record that Yeshua himself observed the festival of Hanukkah:

*"At the time the festival of Hanukkah took place in Jerusalem; it was winter, and Yeshua went up to the Temple and was walking in the portico of Solomon. Then a number of Jews gathered around him, and were saying to him, 'How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.'*

*Yeshua answered, 'I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of me ... I and the Father are One' (John 10:22-30)."*

***Hanukkah...Festival of Lights!...***

Since the days of the Maccabees, the Jewish community has observed the eight days of Hanukkah. Hanukkah is indeed a Festival of Light. It recalls not just our redemption from tyranny and oppression, but is also a story of hope and covenant faithfulness. As we observe the eight nights of Hanukkah, may we keep in mind our role to also be bearers of light. For just as our ancestors, the Maccabees, overcame the forces of an enemy power, so too are we able to overcome the forces in life that

work against us. For as Romans 8:37 states, “We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

Tyrants and enemies cannot quench the *pintele yid* (the Jewish spark), nor the light of Mashiach within each one of us. As we commemorate the rededication of the Holy Temple during the time of the Maccabees, may we also use this time to rededicate ourselves to living a life of Torah, *avodah* (service unto HaShem), and *ma'asim tovim* (acts

of loving kindness toward all).

We have an opportunity to shine even brighter than the menorah which once stood (and will stand again) in the Temple through partnering with G-d in bringing redemption into the world, and preparing the world for the coming of Mashiach.

Happy Hanukkah!

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## Hanukkah and Christmas?

By: Rabbi John Fischer

Chanukah is related to the events surrounding the desecration and subsequent dedication of the Second Temple in the years 164-161 BCE. It celebrates the miraculous victory God enabled the Maccabees and their followers to achieve against overwhelming odds. Their victory insured the purity of the worship of God, and it preserved the God-mandated distinctiveness of Israel and of unique Jewish identity. In fact, some have pointed out that had there not been a Chanukah there never would have been a Christmas. Without the defeat of the Syrians by the Maccabees, there would have been little likelihood of having a Jewish Mary, Joseph, Jesus and Bethlehem.

The story in brief goes like this. Under the directives of the Syrian ruler Antiochus, the Temple was defiled and turned it into a heathen shrine. Before it could be properly used again, it had to be cleansed. God granted the Maccabees a tremendous victory over the vastly larger Syrian forces, and as a result they recaptured Jerusalem. And so the Jewish people were able to cleanse and rededicate the Temple. Therefore, Chanukah (which comes from the Hebrew word for dedication) originated as the festival of the dedication or cleansing of the Temple.

The story continues to tell of the lack of sufficient oil to rekindle the Temple menorah. Only enough oil was found to keep it lit for one day. However, it took seven days to properly prepare



appropriate oil to light the menorah. Another miracle occurred

in that the one day's worth of oil kept the menorah lit for eight days until the new oil was ready. As a result, the festival was celebrated thereafter for eight days. Light, and the kindling of the lights—one for each of the eight days the oil miraculously lasted—became the central feature of this celebration.

Although Chanukah was not specifically mentioned in the Older Testament, Yeshua (Jesus the Messiah) used the backdrop of the Feast of Dedication to proclaim himself as the Good Shepherd and to talk about the significance of the miracles he performed (John 10). In the Jewish literature of his day, shepherds frequently represented the leaders of Israel, and so the Maccabees were considered to be among some of the best of the good shepherds of Jewish history. Against this background, Yeshua presented himself as the Good Shepherd *par excellence*. Interestingly, the passage from Ezekiel 34, which describes God as the good shepherd, was read in the synagogue at this very time of year. Miracles are another keynote of this celebration. As we kindle the lights, we remember the miraculous victory of the Maccabees and the miracle of the lights, thus providing a fitting setting for Yeshua's discussion of his own miracles.

But there is more to this story. As the Second Temple was being built after Israel returned from captivity in Babylon, the people were discouraged. When they compared the new structure with the First Temple Solomon had built, the new one seemed most insignificant. To encourage the people, God sent a striking message to Israel through Haggai and Malachi. Haggai told the people (Hag. 2:6-9): "...I will shake all nations and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house (Temple) with glory,' says the LORD Almighty...' And the glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the

former house (Temple)'." The phrase "the desired of all nations" has clear Messianic overtones. Malachi adds (3:1): "...Then suddenly the Lord whom you seek will come to his Temple; the messenger of the covenant whom you desire will come,' says the LORD Almighty." In light of these passages, it is striking that when the baby Yeshua first comes to the Temple for the time of his circumcision, Simon takes him and says (Luke 2:30-31): "My eyes have seen your salvation (Hebrew = yeshua)... a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory for your people Israel." God's promises to Israel through Haggai and Malachi had been fulfilled; the glory that came into the Second Temple exceeded that of the First.

But there's still more. According to Haggai (2:18-21) the events of his prophecy are connected to a specific time: "...from the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the ninth month, from this day on..." These events are therefore connected with the 25<sup>th</sup> and following days of the ninth month. Now, the ninth month of the Jewish calendar Haggai referred to is Kislev. So the events he predicts are set against the backdrop of Kislev 25 and the days following. Chanukah begins on Kislev 25.

Strikingly, woven throughout the birth stories of Yeshua in three of the gospels (Matthew, Luke and John) are themes and images of light: the "star" the Magi followed,

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## *Hanukkah and Christmas?*

the glory of the Lord surrounding the angels' appearance to the shepherds, and the Word as the true light that gives light to everyone. The imagery of light forms a most appropriate setting for the birth of the Messiah at Chanukah, the Festival of Lights. And it was fitting, then, that Yeshua would be brought to the Temple for his circumcision on the eighth day, just as the Chanukah lights would be at their brightest, with all eight (actually nine) lights of the Chanukah menorah being lit. No wonder Simon could say, on seeing the baby Yeshua, "My eyes have seen... a *light* for revelation to the Gentiles and the *glory* of your people Israel."

A little more than a century later Hippolytus, a leader of the early church, would say: "The accepted date of Christ's birth is December

25." Given the use in the Roman Empire of a different calendar than the Jewish one, the adaptation of Kislev 25 into December 25 would have been quite natural.

There is a remarkable passage found in a Jewish work called *The Chanukah Haggadah*. It reads: "Chanukah is the holiday that welcomes the Messiah. Peace is the Messiah."

*"Peace on earth; good will toward all." May yours be filled with peace, blessing, and miracles!*



HAPPY  
HANUKKAH!  
  
MAY YOUR  
HANUKKAH BE A  
  
REMINDER OF  
THE MIRACLES  
OF HASHEM!!

## *UMJC National Conference: Summer 2012*

This year's theme is **Shomer Yisrael**: *Advocacy for the Jewish people, the Jewish state, and the Jewish Messiah. This conference focuses on equipping advocates to stand with the land and people of Israel during this critical time, and to stand for Yeshua as Messiah through it all.* (umjc.org)

All ages are welcome, so pack up your family and head to Ellicott City, Maryland this summer for a great time of encouragement, celebration, and learning!

**July 19, 2012 - July 22, 2012**

For more information, visit the UMJC website at: [www.umjc.org](http://www.umjc.org) today!



In mid-September, a delegation from the Union of Messianic Believers (UMB) traveled to Berlin, Germany for the business meetings of the International Messianic Jewish Alliance (IMJA). It was wonderful to connect with old friends and make many new ones. It was also inspiring to listen to various reports from delegates representing Messianic Jewish alliances from around the world.

Founded in 1925 in Great Britain, the IMJA was formed to bring Jewish believers in Yeshua, and the several already existing Alliances, together under one body for the purposes of furthering the message of Yeshua and the cause of Jewish believers around the world. The early history of the IMJA is quite fascinating.

Before World War II, Jewish believers in Yeshua had tremendous influence within the world. Although we often speak about the rebirth of the modern congregational movement, the golden age of modern Jewish believers was actually in the 1800's and early 1900's. There are estimates that by the late 1800's there were between 300,000 - 500,000 Jewish believers in Yeshua - or more!

Their influence was so great that the original meetings of the IMJA often drew dignitaries and other officials. When Sir Leon Levison, one of the founders of the IMJA and an influential Jewish believer, once visited Budapest, Hungary, he was met by 3,000 people at the train station and by numerous members of the media. We are not often aware of, or appreciate, how much clout Jewish believers actually used to carry in Europe.

***Through the UMB, you are united to this great history and to other Messianic Jewish alliances around the world.*** This trip was an inspiration to continue and expand the work we are doing in the UMB. As we celebrate Hanukkah this year, there is a transformation happening behind the scenes! Many great things are afoot as we are building up steam. So stay tuned for upcoming news about future UMB classes, programs and resources in the coming year!

**Resolutions, Anyone?**

*By: J. David, UMB*



***Happy New Year!***  
*While we've already celebrated our new year, this one comes with many ideas about "resolutions!" What's your New Year's Resolution? Perhaps it's spending more time with your family, taking time out of your busy day to pray and meditate on the Word, or to finally start doing that one thing you've been putting off all year.*

*New years come with new beginnings—new reasons to be productive or a means to set new goals in your life. Sometimes, it can be overwhelming, but change can be manageable and*

*lead to the positive results you're hoping to achieve! Rather than thinking about the usual resolutions: "lose ten pounds," "start exercising," "finish that book," try thinking about just **one** major change you'd like to make and bring it to Hashem. Ask the Ruach to guide you towards that **one** aspect of your life that has been a burden or that **one** habit you'd like to change for the better. Ask for grace and patience to learn to achieve it and before you know it, you will, one day at a time.*

*Happy 2012!*



**Hanukkah Latke Recipe!!**  
(from [chabad.org](http://chabad.org))

- 1 pound Idaho or russet potatoes, scrubbed but not peeled
- 1/4 cup chopped onion
- 3 large egg whites
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- Nonstick vegetable oil cooking spray
- 3 to 4 tablespoons olive oil (not extra-virgin) or vegetable oil

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Grate the potatoes using a box grater or the grating disk of a food processor. Transfer the potatoes to a colander over a bowl and let rest for 30 minutes, until the potatoes have darkened. Rinse well in cold water to remove the starch and the potatoes turn white again. Drain very well. Place the potatoes, onion, egg whites, seasonings and flour in a medium bowl and stir well to combine. Cover with plastic wrap and let sit for 15 minutes before cooking.

Spray a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray; set aside.

Heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a large, nonstick skillet over medium heat until very hot. Stir the potato mixture and, working in batches if necessary, drop the potato mixture by spoonfuls onto the hot skillet and shape them into circles. Let the latkes brown on one side, then turn them over to brown on other side.

Place the browned pancakes on a cookie sheet that has been sprayed with nonstick cooking spray. When the tray is full, bake the latkes, uncovered, for another 10 to 15 minutes until the potatoes are cooked through. Place on paper towels to absorb any fat and eat them while they're hot, with regular, low-fat or nonfat sour cream and regular or sugar-free applesauce, if desired.

Makes about 16 to 18 latkes.