



The Zion Letter

The Monthly Newsletter of For Zion's Sake Ministries, Inc.
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The Hanukkah Prophecy

Less than two hundred years before the birth of the Messiah Yeshua/Jesus Christ, there lived a Greek tyrant, who inherited the Seleucid Dynasty, named Antiochus Epiphanes (meaning: The Manifestation of god). Although he was based in Syria, his empire stretched from Turkey, to Babylon, and from parts of Persia (Iran) to Israel. Antiochus was a descendant of Seleucus, one of the four generals who divided Alexander the Great's kingdom into four parts. Throughout his reign, Antiochus was bent on controlling parts of Egypt and fighting Rome, but he failed and with his tail between his legs, Antiochus headed home to Syria, stopping first in Jerusalem. Although Antiochus had left the Jews alone for much of his reign, like a spurned and spoiled child, he now turned on the Jews in anger. Those events began what led to Hanukkah.

Having spent several years in Rome, Antiochus had taken a liking to Roman culture and religion. In a nutshell, Antiochus captured the Temple of the God of Israel in Jerusalem, built an idol to Zeus, and sacrificed a pig on the Holy Altar of the Lord to provoke the Jews and their God. To accentuate this abomination, the Scripture says, **"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth, wisdom and might, honor and glory and blessing!" Rev 5:12** (Not the pig who was slain). Furthermore, Antiochus banned the study of Torah (The Bible), the practice of Sabbath worship, circumcision, and all other Jewish religious ceremonies. Antiochus forced Jews to bow to his idols, accept His pagan religion, and assimilate into his Greco/Roman culture. He sent soldiers from town to town to force the priests to sacrifice pigs, make the



people eat the Biblically unclean meat (Deut. 14:8), and force the people to bow down to his idols. One day his soldiers came to a town not far from Jerusalem called Modin. The soldiers found a priest willing to sacrifice a pig, but a local man named Mattathias, who had seven sons, rose up and killed the traitor as well as the soldiers. A rebellion had begun! The seven brothers were led by Judah, known as Judah Maccabee (meaning: The Hammer). The Maccabees formed a militia and in three years drove out Antiochus, who had set himself up in the Temple as God, and his mighty Syrian army from Israel. The Jews took back the Temple, repaired it, cleansed it, and consecrated the Holy Altar.

Sadly, the lampstand (Menorah) of the Temple had gone out and they found only enough consecrated oil to last one day. According to the Torah it took seven days to consecrate fresh olive oil. But a miracle happened, and the small amount of oil kept the menorah burning for eight days until fresh oil could be used. Thus, began the traditional miracle of Hanukkah and why we call it "The Festival of

Lights". Interestingly, Hanukkah is not found in the Old Testament (the traditional Jewish Bible), but it is mentioned in the Apocrypha and in the New Testament Scriptures in John 10:22.

Did you know the only place in the Bible where Hanukkah is mentioned is John 10:22? That passage reads, **"And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter and Jesus walked in the Temple in Solomon's porch."** The Feast of the Dedication is **Hanukkah!** The funny thing is that most Jews don't read the New Testament, but we celebrate Hanukkah. At the same time, it's a holiday Jesus celebrated in the New Tes-

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tament and most Christians don't even know about it; why is that?

It can get into the low thirties and forties with rain that will chill you to the bone this time of year between the Galilee and Jerusalem, yet our Savior walked about eighty miles to Jerusalem to celebrate **Hanukkah!** Yeshua celebrating Hanukkah is like a king dipping his signet ring in hot wax and stamping his seal on the holiday -- a New Testament Holiday. The problem with reading a 2000 – 3500 year old Middle Eastern book that's been translated to English is you're not going to pick up the nuances and deeper meanings without either a Biblically literate scholar or a Jewish rabbi, who grew up celebrating the Feasts of the Lord.

The bottom line is Yeshua/Jesus celebrated Hanukkah, and gave it his seal of approval; it was our Lord's only winter holiday, except for the weekly Sabbath. Think about it, you never see a tree decorated or Mary Magdalene, Mother Mary or Mary and Martha, bake him a cake or throw Him a birthday party on December 25th or any other day. We are never told when he was born, but we do know that He celebrates Hanukkah.

Top 3 reasons why Yeshua/Jesus still celebrates Hanukkah:

1. Antiochus was big into idolatry and bowing to statues among other things. By celebrating Hanukkah Jesus was affirming the message of the First and Second Commandments: ***"You shall have no other gods before Me" Ex 20:3 and "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath... You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God," (No idols) Exodus 20:4,5.*** As I said earlier, Antiochus made many idols of Zeus and forced Jews to bow down and worship them, thus breaking God's commandment. Jesus celebrates Hanukkah to accentuate God's disdain for idolatry, then and now (Deut 6:13-15, Deut 7:5). Jesus hates idolatry and anything to do with false gods.

2. **The Hanukkah story is Satan's final attempt** to destroy the Jews before the birth of the Jewish Messiah. Herod tried to kill Yeshua/Jesus after He was already born, but

he failed. Had Antiochus succeeded in destroying Judaism, the Jewish culture and the Jewish nation, there would never have been a Joseph and Mary, a little town of Bethlehem, a temple to dedicate the baby Savior, Anna the prophetess, or Simeon, who was destined to see the Messiah before he died. There would have been no twelve Jewish Apostles, no Bible (Old or New Testament), no Church, no hope for the world. Without Hanukkah there would never have been a "Christmas".

3. **The final reason Yeshua celebrates Hanukkah is prophetic.** Where do most Christian couples get married? Where do most Jewish couples get married? Answer: At the altar in a church or a synagogue. Antiochus captured the Temple and ruled from there for three years until the Maccabees led the Jews in retaking their Temple, cleansing it, repairing it, and restoring the Holy Altar. This is the same altar where Jesus of Nazareth will step up to when the officiant (perhaps the Father or perhaps Aaron, the High Priest, or Perhaps Melchizedek, or even King David might perform the ceremony) of marrying Yeshua to His bride. In the Jewish wedding the officiant cries out, *"Baruch Haba Bashem Adonai!" (Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!).* Then the Bridegroom steps up to the altar where he awaits his bride. Standing there with the officiant (Rabbi/ordained minister) music begins and the Bride processes in her fine linen garments (*Revelation 19:7*) and meets her bridegroom at the altar.

Yeshua/Jesus celebrates Hanukkah because just as Judah Maccabee and his men retook the Temple after three years of Syrian oppression, Yeshua is coming back after the anti-Messiah has set himself up to be God in the Temple for three and a half years, **2 Thess. 2:3-4** ***"Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come (coming of our Lord and our gathering together to Him, v1) unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the Temple of God, displaying himself as being God,"*** For this reason, Yeshua returns to save Israel from this tyrant (Zechariah 14:3-4), to save His people Israel and cleanse, repair and possibly totally rebuild the Temple (Ezekiel 40-47). At the very least, He will purify the altar where He will marry His bride, and that is why I believe Yeshua's winter holiday is Hanukkah (mentioned in John

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10:22). Hanukkah is all about His zeal for His bride, His people, His hatred of Idolatry, and remembering that without Hanukkah, there would be no birth of the Messiah.

Should you celebrate Hanukkah? I think it's the right order for Christians to celebrate Hanukkah together with their Messianic Jewish friends, but I say let God speak to you about how and what you celebrate. Christmas is heavily associated with pagan gods and holidays such as Zeus, Odin, Tammuz, Horace, Saturn, Yule, Saturnalia and Mithraism. You can google them if you want to learn, but that is between you and God! Thank goodness for His abundant Grace! So Happy Hanukkah and Merry Christmas to all my friends whatever you celebrate during this season. May God bless you and thank you to those who support this multi-faceted teaching ministry and voice in the wilderness standing with Israel! We are grateful for your prayers and to those of you who contribute.

Love,
Rabbi Joe and Dawn

Ministry Update

Dear Friends,

Those of you who know us, know that we host many events and banquets where Rabbi teaches on important issues like prophecy and the Feasts of the Lord, and where we have raised significant funds for the needy in Israel. For twenty years *For Zion's Sake Ministries* has been a constant, if not lone voice, crying out on behalf of Israel both locally, nationally, and beyond! I would *like* to report that it has been an uneventful year, free from trials and challenges, but I would be *li*bbing. We experienced massive *ooding* in August and September that wiped out our fellowship hall and we have seen a decline in giving that has reached a critical point. Our e-mail account and web-site were severely hacked this year and we only began to get these things sorted out shortly before Sukkot (September).

A couple years ago we went from color newsletters to black and white to cut costs. We have always been good stewards of God's resources and operated under the authority of our board of directors, our accountant, and spiritual covering at IAMCS.org. For those of you who

are blessed by the teachings, newsletters, the Paul Wilbur concerts, the Passover banquets, our weekly live streaming, and our constant voice of support for Israel, we must remind you that it all costs a considerable amount as does running the region's only Messianic synagogue in at least a hundred mile radius.

Speaking of authority, Luke 7 mentions a Roman Centurion who loved the Jewish people (*Luke 7:5, Ethnos – people, tribe, nation*). This soldier, who was stationed in Northern Galilee, (aka the "boonies" in American vernacular), loved the Jewish people; he believed in the Jewish Messiah, and he saw a need for a synagogue in the little community by the lake. So the Centurion met the need. Unlike most other non-Jews in the Gospels, when Yeshua found out about the centurion's ill servant, Yeshua immediately started out for the soldier's house! Knowing such a thing was frowned upon in Jewish society of that time, the centurion stopped the Lord and said, "*I am not worthy for You to come under my roof... just say the word and my servant will be healed,*" Luke 7:6-7. Sure enough, the servant was healed at that very moment.

Three things come to my mind here: 1) the great faith of a Gentile, 2) the fact that he was a military officer and 3) his love for the Jewish people.

Folks, I have always been a "tent maker" by working three and four jobs to support my family and our ministry; unfortunately, two bouts of Leukemia and severe osteoarthritis have limited me to just being the Rabbi. This is part of the reason why, as many of you know, my wife has resumed *ying*: to help pay the bills and then also as a step towards the vision of *ying* Jews home to Israel in the Second Exodus (Jer 16:14:17, Rev 12:14).

Our synagogue is small, but I believe it is a critical part of the fabric of this community and our message is critical to every community we reach. I still have my gifts and callings (Romans 11:29) and I know God is not done with me yet.

Just as the little *shing* village of Kafar Nahum (*Capernaum*) needed the assistance of a Roman Centurion to keep it's Jewish culture thriving, we are in

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need an army of monthly donors to keep this little Messianic synagogue on the other side of the tracks here in Bristol going. As I said, we are the only believing synagogue in a hundred miles or more.

Friends we don't advertise on T.V. or blast social media asking for money. My newsletters are filled with the Word of God, teachings, not appeals, but we are in a critical time and I'm asking you to consider being a monthly partner. Whether you commit to \$15 a month, \$150 or any other amount God lays on your heart, we need your help; I wouldn't ask if it were not so, and the Word says, "You have not because you ask not," James 4:2. Supporting Israel isn't just sending money to "the man on TV". It's about being the Roman Centurion of your area too.

Will you be like the Roman Centurion? You can donate securely on-line at our web-site, www.forzionsake.org or by mail. To those who already partner with us, you have our deepest gratitude and prayers. If God has blessed you some way through your connection to FZSM, please share your story with us. We believe that God will continue to make For Zion's Sake Ministries a great blessing until the day He is finished with us!

In His love,
Rabbi Joe and Dawn

<p>www.forzionsake.org</p> <p>Stand With Israel!! Like us on Facebook </p>	<p><i>Come Worship With us!</i></p>  <p>Saturdays 10:45 AM 1128 New Hampshire Ave. Bristol, VA 24201</p> <p>Lion of Judah Messianic Congregation</p>
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