



The Zion Letter

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

The major dilemma for many Jewish people, including Messianic Jews is what to do about Christmas? Most traditional Jews don't celebrate Christmas because they don't believe in Jesus as their Messiah. Some Jewish folks go along with their non-Jewish friends to Christmas dinners and other celebrations, but they're just being social. Jewish Christians who've assimilated into denominational or non-denominational churches often celebrate Christmas, however, most Messianic Jews do not celebrate December 25th as Jesus' birthday. In fact Messianic Jews have no official holiday to celebrate the Savior's birth. At first that might seem strange to some of you. You might ask, if Messianic Jews believe that Yeshua (Jesus) is the Savior of the world, then why don't they celebrate Christmas? Stay with me and I'll try to answer that one.

Most Messianic Jews celebrate Hanukkah because Jesus celebrated Hanukkah: In John 10:22, we read: **"At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem: It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon."** The Feast of Dedication is Hanukkah. Jesus lived in Galilee, and He would have had to walk about eighty miles in the cold of winter to get to Jerusalem for this feast. Why didn't He just celebrate Hanukkah in his home in Galilee? I believe he made the difficult journey to Jerusalem for Hanukkah to make a point to you and me. The point is that Hanukkah is God's appointed holiday for this season. Hanukkah is not just a cultural celebration for the Jewish people.. It is important to God. If Yeshua had wanted us to celebrate Christmas, why didn't He teach His disciples to do that? Matthew 28:19 says, **"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations (Gentiles), baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you..."** He clearly taught them to observe Passover (see MT 26, Mk 14, Lk 22, and Jn 2:23, etc...). The Last Supper was a Passover Seder meal. It was concerning Passover that Yeshua said, **"Do this in remem-**



brance of Me." Yeshua was very direct and specific in His instruction to keep the Passover, and the Apostle Paul confirmed those instructions in 1Corinthians 5:7-8 when he said, **"For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast."** In John 7, Yeshua celebrated Sukkot (The Feast of Tabernacles). Jesus kept the Biblical/Jewish Sabbath: In Luke 4:16 it says **"As was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read."** The Jewish/Biblical Sabbath starts Friday night at sundown and goes all day on Saturday, so we know that keeping the Shabbat (Sabbath) was His custom. These quotes are right from the Bible, and these are the things Yeshua taught and commanded His disciples to observe and to teach the Goyim (Nations, Gentiles).

So where do we get holidays like Christmas and Easter?

There is a beautiful account of the conception and birth of Yeshua in Luke chapters one and two. Nevertheless, there is no record of any kind of "Christmas" observance in the entire New Testament. Furthermore, there is no commandment to observe His birth or celebrate the birth of the Messiah in any kind of way. We have no Biblical account of Peter, Paul, Mary, Mark, Matthew, or Martha celebrating His birthday.

Nowhere are we instructed to celebrate the Savior's birth. Perhaps that's because the Gospel focuses primarily on His death, burial and resurrection. No one ever gets saved believing Jesus was born. Rather, salvation comes when one believes He died for our sins, was buried and rose again on the third day. The Gospel according to the Apostle Paul says, **"Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached... by which you are saved... that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,"** 1Cor15:1-4.

Yes, Yeshua was born in a manger in the little town of Bethlehem to a Jewish mother and father. He is both the Son of God and the Son of man. But all through His earthly

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Your local connection to Israel!

life there is no evidence of birthday or Christmas celebrations mentioned beyond the Scriptural account of His birth. The fact is that, the first Christmas celebration in Bethlehem was imported by Helena, the mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine, who visited Israel in the fourth century and built the Church of the Nativity along with many other Churches. That's some three hundred years after the resurrection of the Messiah that Christmas finally arrived in the Holy Land! If God wanted it to be celebrated, why doesn't the New Testament teach us to, and why did it take 300 years to be imported to Israel?

Did you know that the Puritans didn't celebrate Christmas? In fact in 1659 a law was passed in Massachusetts forbidding the observance of Christmas. The first state to officially celebrate Christmas was Alabama in 1836, and then Louisiana in 1838. It wasn't until the middle of the 19th century that Americans embraced Christmas. (1) Why did it take two hundred years from the founding of Boston and some 229 years from the time the settlers arrived at Jamestown for Christmas to be officially celebrated, and then by only two states?

Thomas Jefferson may not have celebrated Christmas. In fact when I visited Monticello (Jefferson's home) during the Christmas season, the guide told us how he kept perfect and meticulous records of everything, including the books in his library. That's how they were able to restore his home. When I asked the guide about the lovely Christmas decorations that were on display, he told me there was no record of Mr. Jefferson decorating for the holiday... they just guessed what type of decorations he might have used and made it up. Jefferson kept records about everything else so why not Christmas? It is even public record that at times Congress was in session on Christmas day.

What about December 25th?

Very few people believe in Santa Clause, elves and flying reindeer, but did you know that Jesus wasn't born on December 25th? Some people who do know it choose to ignore that inconvenient little fact because: **1.Tradition 2.Tradition 3.Christmas is fun 4.Oh those lights are so festive and pretty 5.Everybody else is doing it and you don't want to be left out.** But if Jesus wasn't born on December 25th then who was? And how did it come to be considered Jesus' birthday? The answer is the pagans believed that the sun deity was born on December 25th long before the birth of Jesus. According to C.J. Koster, "The fact of the pagan origin of the festival of Christmas on the 25th December, namely, as birthday of the Sun-deity, is admitted by all scholars.



The Messiah could not have been born in mid-winter on the 25th December. According to Luke, the shepherds were out in the fields, "watching over their flock by night" (Luke 2:8). In Israel no one would permit their flock out on a winter night." (2) The Catholic Encyclopedia says, "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church. Irenaeus and Tertullian omit it from their lists of feasts. What is the origin of this Christmas on 25 December? Sir James Frazer says, The largest pagan religious cult which fostered the celebration of December 25 as a holiday... was the pagan sun-worship, Mithraism... This winter festival was called... the Nativity of the SUN."(3). "The Mithraists also observed SUN-DAY and kept sacred the 25th of December as the birthday of the Sun." (4) In the Roman empire of the fourth century, there were many sun worshiping cults competing with Christianity. The Roman Emperor Constantine mixed the Biblical teachings of God with the practices of the sun worshiping pagans. This mixing of Truth and paganism is called "Syncretism."

"Practically all the known Sun-deities were born on the 25th December. In S.E. Titcomb, Aryan Sun-Myths, the origin of Religions, we find it cited... that the following sun deities

were all born on 25 December, according to their legends: Krishna (Vishnu), Mithra (Mithras), Osiris, Horus, Hercules, Dionysus (Bacchus), Tammuz, Indra, Buddha. Therein we also read of the Scandinavian goddess Frigga in whose honor a "Mother-night" festival was held at the winter solstice (December 25), as well as a similar great feast of Yule, where a boar was offered at the winter solstice in honor of Frey. Thus we find the three great days of Christianity, namely Sun-day, Easter and Christmas, all three having had its origin in the Sun-worship of the pagan nations.(5) I don't have time or room to talk about the origins of Santa Claus, wreaths, elves, Christmas trees, mistletoe, tree ornaments, decorating with greenery from fir trees, etc. But I strongly recommend a video on YouTube made by a Christian, Jim Staley called "**Truth or Tradition.**" You can check it out by clicking or pasting the following link on your web browser: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNUz63zBjM> or just search for Jim Staley/Truth or Tradition on YouTube. This video will rock your world.

Does truth matter to you?

In the utterly corrupt world in which Yeshua (Jesus) lived and died, He told the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, "**For this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice,**" *John 18:37.* To this Pilate responded, "**What is Truth?**"

We just came through a bitter presidential election. It didn't seem that many people cared about the truth as long their agenda was met. I don't see much truth coming out of

For Zion's Sake Ministries
Presents

2012
Hanukkah Celebration



7:00 pm

The Tri-Cities Messianic Center

1128 New Hampshire Ave
Bristol VA 24201

Friday, December 14th

Coffee and dessert will be served after the celebration.

For Zion's Sake

**Our television show is
currently off the air.**

We feel the Lord is taking us in a different
direction at this time.

Ways to Connect to Us

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to Rabbi Joe's Sermons

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Washington D.C. The world we live in is much like the world of Pontius Pilate and King Herod. Christians are supposed to be people of "The Truth." But if the truth doesn't matter to Christians, then how can we expect it to matter to Democrats and Republicans?

Jim Staley says many people will say, "Well that's not what it (Christmas) means to me..." But God's word makes it clear that His people are to have nothing to do with other gods. *Leviticus 19:30* says, "Thus you are to keep My charge, that you do not practice any of the abominable customs which have been practiced before you, so as not to defile yourselves with them; I am the Lord your God." *Mark 7:7-8* says, "But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men. Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men." *Dt 12:2-3*, "You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree... you shall obliterate their name from that place. *Dt 4:2*, "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." *DT 12:30*, "Beware that you... do not inquire after their gods, saying, how do these nations serve their gods that I also may do likewise? *V. 32* says, "What I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it."

Conclusion:

Dear friend, I am no man's judge. I am just a messenger. This is not a popular subject, but I prayed and asked God what to write about this month. What I heard was, "Tell them I celebrate Hanukkah." In *2Samuel 6*, David attempted to move the Ark of the Covenant, to Jerusalem. David and his men were worshiping and celebrating before the Lord, when the Ark began to fall off the cart. A man named Uzzah reached out to stabilize it. The Bible recounts how "*God struck him down there for his irreverence; and he died there by the Ark of God,*" *2Sam 6:7*. King David was attempting to do a good thing, but he didn't do it God's way. You see, God made it plain in the Torah that only the Levites were to handle the Ark (*Num 3*). Uzzah

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wasn't a Levite. After a while King David came back with Levites and moved the Ark successfully accomplishing it God's way. The only worship that is pleasing to God is that which is done His way. We live under grace and as far as I know God hasn't struck anybody down for decorating a Christmas tree, but even the unbelievers have wreaths and Christmas trees. Why? Check out Jim Staley's video.

I have shared a little truth in this article. There is much more available for those who want to know the truth. Yeshua said, ***"Know the truth, and the truth will make you free," John 8:32.*** If you would like to learn about the winter holiday that Jesus and His disciples celebrated, we invite you to our Hanukkah service on Friday, December 14th. See the ad, call us or go to our web site for more information. May God richly bless you as you grow in the knowledge of Yeshua!

*Happy Hanukkah,
Rabbi Joe ✨*

Footnotes:

- Jim Staley, *Truth of Tradition, YouTube, 2012*
- C.J. Koster, *Come out of Her MY People, pp.27*
- Ibid.*, p.27
- Ibid.*, p.28
- Ibid.*, p. 28