



The Zion Letter

Newsletter of For Zion's Sake Ministries, Inc.
PO Box 1486 Bristol, TN 37620
www.forzionsake.org

Phone: 276-644-1678 * Email: contact_fzs@forzionsake.org * web: www.forzionsake.org



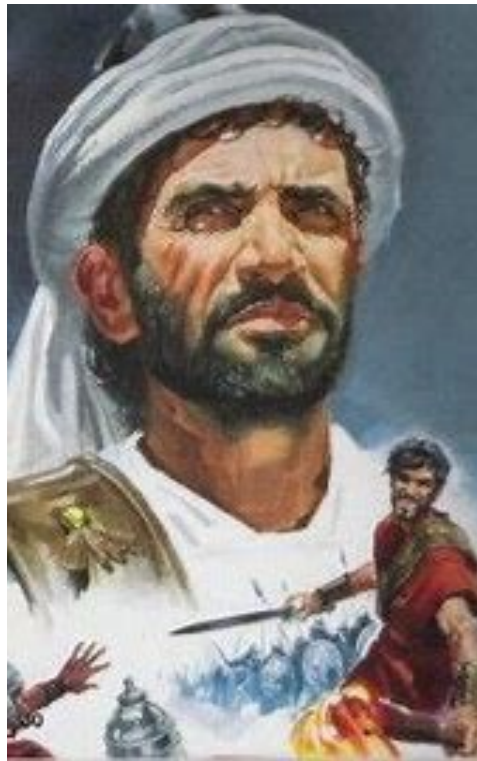
HANUKKAH: HOW THE MACCABEES SAVED ISRAEL

Dear Friends,

Winter is upon us once again. For Christians that means Christmas is coming and for Jews and Messianic Jewish believers, both Jew and Gentile, Hanukkah has arrived. Yeshua/Jesus celebrated Hanukkah. We read in John 10:22, *"now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the Temple in Solomon's Porch"*. The word for dedication in Hebrew is "Hanukkah". Whoever translated most English Bibles did not want you to know that Jesus celebrated Hanukkah, so they called it The Feast of Dedication. Throughout history Hanukkah has never been called The Feast of Dedication. So why did the Bible translators call it that? Perhaps they didn't want you to connect Jesus with Hanukkah, which would make Him Jewish. I am sad to say there was much anti-Semitism in the early Church and in Rome back then just as there is in the world today.

Hanukkah is the only new holiday mentioned in the New Testament! Actually, the rabbis have debated for centuries whether Hanukkah should be celebrated at all because it is not commanded to be celebrated in Leviticus 23. This is because the events of Hanukkah took place in 168 B.C., some 230 years after the last words of the Taanach (Old Testament) were written. Hanukkah was a populist holiday, some say largely created by the Jewish people. Others say Judah Maccabee proclaimed the feast, but not the rabbis. Josephus, the famous historian of the period before and after the birth of Yeshua, told us that it was Judah Maccabee himself who ordered the eight day annual celebration of the defeat of the Syrians and the rededi-

cation of the Temple at Jerusalem. Either way, the fact that Jesus Himself celebrated Hanukkah when He walked the earth, puts the royal seal of approval on the feast. In other words, the mention of Hanukkah in John 10:22 makes it very kosher!



The Maccabees did a wonderful thing by defeating the Syrians and retaking the Temple, but they became corrupted by power. The Maccabees began to call themselves kings starting with Simon in 143 B.C. until the displacement of the dynasty (known as the Hasmonean dynasty) of Herod the Great in 37 B.C. The Maccabees/Hasmoneans were neither Levites according to the order of Zadok nor were they true kings, heirs of the throne thru the line of David. In fact, even if the Maccabees were descended from David, God cursed the blood line of King David's descendants. According to Jeremiah 22:24-30, the judgement was declared during the reign of wicked King Jeconiah, who was the heir of David through Solomon. In verse 29 we read, *"Hear the Word of the Lord! Write this man (King Jeconiah) down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days; For none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling in Judah anymore."* Jeremiah 22:29

-30. Matthew's genealogy (see Matthew 1) recounts the royal line from Abraham to Jacob to King David, then to the last king of Judah who was Jeconiah. Then all who follow Jeconiah even to Joseph, husband of Mary, out of all these men, none was king because of the curse on Jeconiah, also known as Coniah. Therefore, all men who ruled in Judah after King Jeconiah were no longer true kings. Jeconiah's grandson Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel was governor of Judah during the return from exile in Babylon, but no legitimate king will ever sit on the throne of David until Yeshua/Jesus Himself returns to take up the throne of David in the Millennial temple (see Luke

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1:31, Ezekiel 43:7). So why did the Maccabees call themselves kings? If the kings and the priests of Yeshua/Jesus' time were illegitimate, why did Jesus celebrate Hanukkah and put His seal of approval on the holiday by doing so?

The Legitimacy of the Maccabees:

“Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.” Matthew 23:23.

As King David neared death, his son Adonijah attempted a coup, and many of King David's formerly loyal servants including Joab, the leader of David's military, Abiathar a formerly loyal priest and others attempted to anoint Adonijah as King in David's place. David was warned of the plot by a priest named Zadok and those loyal to him, so they quickly took Solomon, paraded him from the pool of Siloam up to the Royal Palace where he was anointed the true king of Israel. When the traitors found out that Solomon had been anointed, they abandoned Adonijah and one by one were put to death for their treachery. However, because Zadok remained loyal to King David, the priesthood remained in his family until 171 B.C. at which time Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian tyrant in the Hanukkah story replaced Zadok's line with a false priesthood.

So what of the Maccabees? The Maccabees rose up against Antiochus whose mission was to destroy Judaism and all things Jewish, forbidding such things as Sabbath observance, circumcision, Torah (Bible) reading/study and all practices of the Jews. In all the cities of Israel, he forced the Jewish people to bow down to his idols, to sacrifice swine on the altars, then forced them to eat the sacrificed pig, which according to the bible is detestable and an abominable act. Just eating pork was strictly forbidden under Moses, but sacrificing on the Lord's altars throughout Israel including the temple caused an uncleanness and a defiling of the whole land of Israel. Antiochus was a clear type and shadow of the future and soon coming Anti-Christ, who will persecute Christians and all believers in much the same way, not only forcing godless practices, but further enslaving and establishing evil by the mark of the Beast and other abominations. When Antiochus' soldiers arrived in a town called Modin in 168 B.C. they forced a priest to lead the people in bowing down to their idol, sacrific-

ing a pig and making them eat it. That is when another priest from Modin named Mattathias became outraged at the act, and with his five sons who were strong young men, he rose up and killed the priest and the Syrian soldiers. A rebellion began led by one of the middle sons named Judah nicknamed “Maccabee”. Known as the Maccabees, they raised up a militia to fight against the Syrian tyrant, Antiochus, who ruled from Persia and Babylon up to Syria and down to Israel, a vast territory with a vast army. Yet in three years the tiny band of Maccabees and their men defeated the Syrians and retook the temple at Jerusalem which Antiochus has desecrated with his idols and unclean sacrifices, allowing it to fall into disrepair. He even sacrificed pigs on God's Holy altar and allowed the lampstand to go out in the temple. Hanukkah is the celebration of not only the defeat of the great Syrian army, but of the retaking, cleansing, and rededication of God's holy temple three years to the day from when they began their uprising on 25 Kislev in the Jewish calendar.



Nevertheless I ask the question, “were the Maccabees themselves kosher?”, and I am not talking about food. As I said before, the priesthood was in the hands of the sons of Zadok from the death of David sometime between 1000 – 900 B.C. until 171 A.D. In fact, God says, *“But the Levitical Priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept the charge of my sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from Me, shall come near to Me to minister to Me. And they shall stand before Me to offer Me the fat and the blood, declares the Lord God.” Ezekiel 44:15.* Folks, this will be during the Millennium after Yeshua returns. But the Maccabees did not restore the priesthood of the sons of Zadok

when they began to rule Israel in 165 B.C. The Maccabees chose their own priests for the Temple. As I said before, God made it pretty clear in Jeremiah 22:24-30 and Matthew's genealogy in chapter one that there would be no legitimate king to sit on David's throne until Yeshua/Jesus returns (Luke 1:31, Ezekiel 43:7). The Maccabees began to call themselves kings of Israel from 143 B.C. until 37 B.C. when Herod the Great took over having been appointed king by the Romans. So the Maccabees did some great things and some not so great things for Israel. Think about it. Had they not defeated the Syrian tyrant Antiochus, there would never have been a Joseph and Mary or a little town of Bethlehem; no three wise men or shepherds in the fields and there would have been no Jewish Messiah. There would be no babe in a manger and no hope for Jews or Gentiles. We would all be without God and without hope were it not for the tiny little band of warriors called the Macca-



bees who saved Israel! I think Jesus was willing to overlook their mistakes because they saved Israel and restored the temple. Hanukkah is the holiday that commemorates the miracle of their victory. You

can celebrate it too and join us on Friday December 15th at 6:30pm for our community Hanukkah celebration. Jesus will be there with us at 580 Norfolk Avenue, Bristol, VA. All friends are welcome and invited to come.

Why is Hanukkah so important to Jesus?

There is only one prophecy of the Virgin Birth in the Taanach which is Isaiah 7:14, *"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."* Congruently, there is only one mention of Hanukkah in the New Testament. The fact that there was only one prophecy of the Virgin Birth does not negate its miraculous significance and neither does the singular mention of Hanukkah in John 10:22. Why is Hanukkah so important? Well as I said, without Hanukkah there would be no Christmas. The reason is because the Syrian king Antiochus whom the Jews were fighting from 168 B.C. to 165 B.C was attempting to destroy Judaism, God's established religion and the Jewish people, God's chosen people. This very same issue is front and center in the world today and the news is full of an explosion of world-wide anti-Semitism. The genocide of the Jewish people "from the river to the sea" is no new idea because it is a demonic strategy employed from ancient times to combat God's plan of salvation for the world. Destroying the Jews before Yeshua's birth would have prevented Him from coming. Destroying the Jews now would make God's word about His coming back and Israel to never be destroyed to be untrue according to Jeremiah 30:10-11, 31:33. It was only 80 years ago that we witnessed Nazi Germany, a supposed enlightened society, attempt to completely eliminate the Jewish people. My how history has a way of repeating itself.

Here lies the bottom line. Antiochus was a wicked idolater. The God of Israel, Jesus hates idolatry. The First commandment is *"thou shall have no other gods besides Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image - any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water that is under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I the Lord your God am a jealous God," Exodus 20:3-5. (See also DT 6:14-15. DT 7:3-5).* Hanukkah not only commemorates how the Maccabees saved Isra-

el, but how they defeated idolatry on a grand scale! Of course we know it was God who gave them the power to gain this victory; Yeshua was there all along.

"And He said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" Luke 2:49 Yeshua loved to be at the temple in Jerusalem, He went there for every Biblical feast and gave His parents fits when their caravan left one Passover. Three days into the journey they discovered that He wasn't among them. Hanukkah is all about saving His Father's house, the very house in which He would be dedicated as a baby some 165 years after the Maccabees retook it from the Syrians. The very house where He was likely bar-mitzvahed as a young man; the very house where He celebrated His Father's Feasts (see Leviticus 23, Luke 22, John 7). In John 7, Yeshua was at the Feast of Sukkot/Tabernacles, *"On the last day, that great day of the feast, Yeshua stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.""* John 7:37. The Maccabees may not have restored the proper priesthood and may have become corrupted by power, but they saved Israel, they saved Judaism and the Jewish people. They saved the Davidic kingdom and the Father's House and they made it possible for the Messiah Himself to be born a Jew (according to the flesh, *John 1:14, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."* For these good deeds Yeshua was willing to overlook their transgressions and cele-

brate Hanukkah Himself. Additionally, I have done extensive teaching on why I believe the Marriage and the



Marriage Supper of the Lamb will take place in the Temple (www.forzionsake.org). I have explained that the Levitical priesthood will be reestablished as Ezekiel 44 and Isaiah 66 tell us in order to lead worship at the wedding and worship in general before the King. I have taught that the priests will reinstate the sacrificial system because just as Yeshua walked through locked doors in John 20:19-20 in His glorified body and asked for something to eat. In the same way, there will be millions and millions of hungry saints at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and it will be the priests who serve them food.

Hanukkah is packed with reasons for Yeshua to have

recognized it and celebrated it in the New Testament; its really all about Him. Again I invite you to come to our community service and learn more.

Conclusion:

There are many lessons that we learn from the Hanukkah story; a few of which I will end with: First there will NEVER be a complete genocide of the Jewish people. Many have tried and failed. Jeremiah 30:10-11 tells us that God is going to bring the Jewish people back to Israel from all the nations one day (I believe it will be soon), and that though He will destroy all the nations where he has scattered the Jewish people, God will not destroy tiny Israel, nor will He allow her to be destroyed. The current rise in world anti-Semitism and hatred of the Jewish people is potent; it has gone viral with the spirit of anti-Messiah and there are those who would like nothing better than to destroy us all. Little do they know that they are being goaded by the Lord Messiah Himself to where ultimately all the nations will attack Israel. (Zechariah 12/14) This will trigger Jesus to return in a awesome powerful display to save Israel (see Zachariah chapter 14). Jesus comes back to save Israel in her moment of most distress. Remember Yeshua/Jesus is going to set foot on the Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem to take up that residence when He comes back. Yeshua/Jesus is going to live in Jerusalem forever (Zechariah 8). So which side of His story will you be found standing on? Who will love and tangibly support the Jewish people, especially the Messianic Jews? Will you be among the many Christians who falsely believe Israel to be committing genocide against the "so-called" Palestinians? Or will you stand with us this Hanukkah and always against the spirit of anti-Messiah and idolatry of our generation. Remember that we all stand before Him and give account for our actions. In the end God is a victorious and sovereign King, who will rule and reign over all creation. I so look forward to worshiping in the beautiful Temple of the God of Israel.

Happy Hanukkah to Yeshua/Jesus and Happy Hanukkah to you our friends.

In Yeshua,

Rabbi Joe and Dawn

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580 Norfolk Ave.
Bristol VA, 24201

