



Hag Sameach in Yeshua (Happy Holiday in Yeshua),

## Dedication Today

The Hebrew word for dedication is *Hanukkah* (pronounced CHA-nu-ka). The holiday by the same name begins early this year, on November 29, (the day after Thanksgiving) and lasts for eight days, ending on December 7. Even though Hanukkah is considered a Jewish holiday, the only mention of the holiday in the Holy Scriptures is found in the New Covenant, in John 10:22-23: *"Now it was the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) in Jerusalem, and it was winter. And Yeshua walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch."* It was at this time of dedication that many Jewish men questioned Yeshua concerning His messiahship. *"If you are the Christ (Messiah), tell us plainly."* (John 10:24) *"Yeshua answered them, 'I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But you do not believe, because you are not of my sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.' "* (John 10:25-27)

Following Yeshua is all about DEDICATION. Hanukkah for believers should be a celebration of dedicating our temples to the service of the living God. Hanukkah takes us past initial salvation to CONSECRATION. The temples we dedicate (our bodies) really don't belong to us. We are God's possession: *"Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."* (I Corinthians 6:19-20)

This is the month to dedicate or rededicate ourselves to Yeshua's lordship. Our confession should also embrace our households. We can agree with Joshua of old who proclaimed: *"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."* (Joshua 24:15) If you are dedicated to living for God, we are sure you will love the 11 x 15 print which we purchased in Jerusalem in May. This colorful depiction of the embraced truth of Joshua 24:15 will be outstanding when framed, adorning the walls of your home or the home of a loved one. Order your copy while our supply lasts!

## Dedication in 165 B.C.

The story of Hanukkah is the age-old story of Jewish struggle for survival in a hostile gentile world. The bottom line is always the same: Dedicated people are different. The Jews in Egypt stood out in the midst of the Egyptians. The Jews in Persia were scorned because their laws and customs were "different" (see Esther 3:8). The Jews in the land of Israel during the 2nd century B.C. were also different



because they were dedicated to one God. Israel at the time was ruled by a Seleucid (Greek) king named Antiochus. The Greeks worshipped many gods and goddesses. They were very different culturally from the Hebrews. For example, the Greeks had gymnasiums, or sports stadiums, where physical contests and games were held. The participants were naked. The sports contests were preceded by sacrificial offerings to the Greek gods by the participants.

The people of Judea were divided into two groups, the Hellenists, who adopted the Greek way of life, and the Hasidim, who adhered to the laws of the Torah. It was this latter group that refused to pay homage to the Greek gods. Scores of these courageous Jews were either tortured or put to death.

Antiochus was intolerant of Jewish ways. He converted the Holy Temple in Jerusalem into a temple of Zeus, and drunken orgies took place in its holy rooms. He even placed a statue of himself in the temple, declaring himself a god. A family of righteous Jews in the nearby village of Modin refused to perform sacrifices to Zeus. An officer of the king was killed, and a revolt began which lasted almost three years. The rallying cry of Mattathias, the father of the family, is reminiscent of the early Jewish believers in Yeshua, *"Let all who are zealous for the Torah follow me."* (See Acts 21:20.)

The Jews' dedication to the one true God ultimately brought them victory, despite overwhelming odds. The Jewish guerilla fighters, poorly armed and inexperienced, fought against the powerful Greek, Seleucid army which had the most sophisticated weaponry of the time. But, as the Scriptures say, *"If God be for us, who can be against us?"* (Romans 8:31) It is known that Judah and his men fasted and prayed as part of their preparation for battle. They also sounded the shofar as their attack call. A statue of Judah Maccabee, son of Mattathias and leader of God's troops, can be found among the great generals of the world at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Why? Because Judah's tactics of guerrilla warfare were extremely successful and are studied as classics by military tacticians all over the world. (p. 44 **Hannukah Who? Where? Why? When? by Sol Scharfstein**)

Following three years of fighting, the Maccabees finally reclaimed Jerusalem, and went immediately to the Temple. They found the Temple in ruins, its courts overgrown with weeds, its walls broken down. Judah and his men quickly began to restore the Temple to the service of the Lord. On the 25th day of Kislev, 165 B.C., the Temple was rededicated. The one cruse of pure oil that was found, enough to keep the Temple menorah burning for one day, miraculously lasted for eight days. This is the origin of the eight day celebration of Hanukkah, and the eight branch menorah that is lit on each of the eight nights. (A ninth candle, the shammash or servant, lights the others.)

Today, in Modin, the site of the beginning of the stand against the Jewish oppressors, there is a Messianic synagogue. The rabbi and his wife are former members of Temple Aron HaKodesh here in Ft. Lauderdale. Pray for Fred and Eva Schweig and their two children, who like the Maccabees of old, are taking a stand for the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the midst of gentile hostility (Palestinians) and Jewish "hellenists" (secular Israelis). \$1,000 of the money that you gave in May for our mercy trip went directly to the Schweig's ministry in Modin.

### **Dedication in 10-15th Century Spain**

Our trip to Spain from Sept. 17-October 3 was wonderful, and a great blessing from our Heavenly Father. The history of our Jewish people impacted us as we traveled from Madrid to the south of Spain, staying in cities that once were major centers of Jewish life. All that is left today in Spain

of the glorious Jewish past is one functioning synagogue in Madrid, another in Malaga, two synagogues preserved as museums in Toledo, and one in Cordoba. Many cities in Spain, nevertheless, still have a section that is called the "juderia," or Jewish neighborhood, a reminder of the Jewish life that once flourished there.

The Hebrew word for Spain is Sepharad. Jewish people native to Spain are called the Sephardim or Sephardic Jews. At one time there were over one hundred thousand of them in Spain. During the Golden Age of Spain, which lasted from 900-1300 A.D., Jewish intellectuals, scientists, writers, doctors, artists, etc. flourished in the Iberian peninsula. Spanish Jews, dedicated to their God and their culture, suffered persecution at the hands of both Muslims and "Christians." In 1066, more than 5,000 Jews were murdered in Arab riots in Granada. In 1355, 12,000 Jews were massacred by a "Christian" mob in Toledo. The Church (Catholic, the only one) became increasingly intolerant of the existence of Jews in a "Christian state." So in 1391, intense persecution began. Complete Jewish communities accepted baptism. In many cases, the Jewish people secretly continued to practice Judaism. Jews who had been forced to convert to Christianity were called "marranos" (literally, pigs). One of the tests of their "true" conversion was if they would eat pork.

In 1478, an investigative court called the Inquisition was set up by the Catholic Church to try heretical Christians. The "Church" wanted to find out which "conversos" were really sincere believers. If a neighbor happened to notice that a Jew bathed or lit candles on Friday, and reported him, he was tortured by the Inquisition until he confessed. Then the Jewish person was sentenced to burning at the stake. If he repented before the fire was started, he was treated mercifully, and choked to death before his body was burned. This was done as part of an "Auto de Fe" ceremony, usually held in a main plaza of a town, and attended by hundreds of spectators. We stood and wept silently in many of these plazas during our trip. What a misrepresentation of our loving Lord.



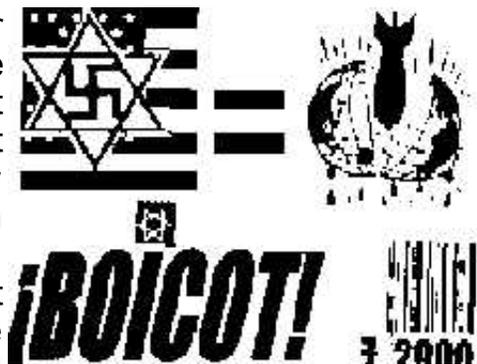
What must it have been like to be a Jewish person dedicated to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob during this horrible period of history (actually, the Inquisition continued into the 19th century in Spain!). What could a truly dedicated, real Jewish believer in Yeshua do in the face of constant suspicion, lies, anger and violence? How did Jewish people whose families had lived in Spain for hundreds of years feel when they were all expelled from their native land in 1492 by Queen Isabella?



Against this historical backdrop, we traveled for fourteen days by car within Spain. Jamie served as guide and translator, a real joy for her. We wandered through narrow little streets and alleys and saw street signs such as "Calle de los judios" (Street of the Jews), "Calle Samuel Levi" (Samuel Levi Street). Throughout Southern Spain we saw stars of David still adorning the outside of buildings after hundreds of years. In Cordoba, we had an incredible encounter with a dear little man who watches over the only remaining synagogue (now a museum). His grandfather had been responsible for helping to reclaim the synagogue and turn it into a museum to preserve it. (It was found underneath a hospital which had also been a mosque layered on top of the original synagogue.) This precious Jewish jewel pulled Jamie into his office to talk with her. Jamie told Antonio that it was Succot, the

Feast of Tabernacles, and asked if he knew about the holiday. He went in a back room and pulled out a little book on the Jewish holidays. Jamie got very excited and started explaining the holiday to him, and gave him a succot pin for his wife, and a seashell with a star of David and message from God. Antonio then confessed that his ancestors were "marranos." We asked if we could pray for him. Neil laid hands on him and prayed. It was very moving.

Antonio is a Jew, but his Jewish ancestry has been buried under layers and layers of fear and persecution, just as the synagogue was buried. We had the sense that many of the people we met were probably Jewish, but either didn't know it or weren't about to admit it. We can't blame them. Swastikas were seen in a few public places. Although there was a repentance ceremony in 1992, sponsored by the ICEJ of Jerusalem, only a small percentage of the Spanish population was involved. It is still not popular to be a Jew in Spain. The leaflet distributed on the crowded streets of Madrid shows the current anti-Jewish and anti-US sentiments.



In Jaen, we visited a 13th century castle which has recently been opened to the public as a tourist site. The guide, Miguel, shared with us that a professor at a local university is just now publishing a doctoral thesis in which she has discovered that at one time 90% of the population of Jaen were Jews. Miguel explained to us that when Jewish people became "conversos," in order to identify themselves with "old Christians," and thereby be more accepted in the community, they took an old Christian names, like "de Jesus," or "de la Cruz." His last name was de Jesus. Miguel admitted to us that his relatives were most probably Jewish. If Miguel's father was Jewish, isn't he Jewish?? Of course he is. Imagine how difficult, given past history, it is for a Spanish Jew to understand that he can believe in Jesus and **still be Jewish!!!** The message of the inquisition was: Choose one or the other. Choose "Christian" and you live. Choose "Jewish" and you die.

## Dedication To Sharing The Good News

It was an absolute joy to share the Good News of Yeshua with people throughout Spain. Jamie did most of the sharing, since very few people spoke English. At least a dozen taxi drivers heard the message, **all** of them for the first time. We found Spain to be a spiritual desert. Although 94% of the citizens are declared Catholics, less than one in a thousand have a biblical faith in Messiah.



The Gospel is just now beginning to make an impact in Spain. Pepe, who drove us around Sevilla in a horse drawn carriage, was classic. He knew about the Virgin and various saints, but nothing about Jesus. It was a nice long ride, so Jamie got to explain a lot to Pepe. By the end of the trip, Jamie was in tears and Pepe had tears in his eyes as well. He was trying to understand that God could really be his father. Jamie laid hands on Pepe and prayed for God to reveal Himself to him.

We also had the opportunity to share our faith in many restaurants. As we were leaving a restaurant in Cordoba,

Jamie gave the maitre d' and two waiters seashells with messages about God's love (in Spanish, of course) which prompted them to ask questions. Jamie shared with them about her time in Spain as a single college student and explained that she is no longer that same person, but a new creation in Messiah. They were fascinated. Pray for someone to come along and water the seeds that were sown.

### **Dedication To The Lord**

Perhaps the most exciting part of our trip was our attendance at a Gypsy worship service. The Gypsies are the one group that has been evangelized to a great degree in Spain (about 95% have heard about Yeshua). Many have received the Messiah. They meet **every night** (that's DEDICATION) to praise and worship Him. A Messianic Jew in Toledo, (Samuel del Coso needs your prayers!), connected us with the Gypsy leader who arranged for us to visit their service (not a usual event). Our cab left us off in a very dark, narrow street. We didn't know what to expect. We found the church and the "Hallelujah Gitanos" as they call themselves. These gypsies are Halleluyah gypsies. Neil, Barry and Nancy only needed to know one word to be completely accepted in their midst. HALLELUYAH! What a service! Two and half hours. Worship occurred with the lights dimmed to better focus on the Lord. Passion. Praise. Prayer. Preaching. WOW. The Lord's Supper to close. We were then directed to a nearby restaurant for dinner (10:00 P.M. is usual dinner time!), and ate one of our best meals in Spain. God is Good!

### **Dedication To Good Stewardship**

Our new catalog was delayed, but you will receive it this month. Its name is **1-800-4-YESHUA**, and it is a combined effort by three messianic ministries. The decision to combine reflects the desire of each ministry to be a better steward of the resources entrusted to us. We think you will be blessed by a bigger selection of Messianic materials than Jewish Jewels could have offered you. We also expect a significant reduction in the time it takes to ship your order after we receive it. Best of all, the combined ministry effort will enable us to focus our energies on the television ministry to which Yeshua has called us.

*P.S. Thanksgiving Blessings! We praise the Lord for each one of you! Love, Neil & Jamie*