

December 2000

Kislev 25

Hanukkah



Holiday Blessings in the Holy One of Israel,

Hanukkah: Past and Present

"Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam,

she-asah nisim l'avoteinu bayamim ha-heim baz-man hazeh."

"Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe,

who performed miracles for our fathers in days of old at this season."

Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication, also known as the Festival of Lights, begins this year on the evening of Dec. 21, 2000. Hanukkah is a joyous celebration commemorating the victory of Judaism over paganism, the few over the many, and righteousness over lawlessness. The story of Hanukkah is not found in the Holy Scriptures, but rather in the Apocryphal Books of I and II Maccabees. In these books we find the historical account of Israel under the rule of the Syrian/Greeks in the 2nd century B.C. Greek influence pervaded Israeli society (in much the same way that Western culture is invading Israel today). Many Jews had begun to compromise their values in order to "fit in." But, as always, God had a righteous remnant. One family took a stand for Torah and for the God of the Bible, and refused to bow down to the Greek ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes. Mattathias Maccabee and his sons led the way to a miraculous, successful revolt against the Greek tyranny. This family took a stand for God, and God fought for them. The small band of Jewish guerilla fighters defeated the entire Syrian army in three years time, a real miracle of God!

The next miracle that is celebrated at Hanukkah is the miracle of oil. The Temple in Jerusalem had been defiled during the three year period, with pigs slaughtered on the altar, Torah scrolls destroyed, and idols set up in the House

of God. When the Maccabees defeated the Syrians, they went to cleanse the Temple and found enough holy oil to kindle the flame of the *ner tamid* (eternal light) for only one day. According to tradition, the oil lasted for eight days until new oil could be consecrated. This is why Jewish people all over the world light eight candles at Hanukkah, one each night. A ninth candle, the *shamash* (servant) is used to light the others.

What about Hanukkah 2000? Israel is in great need of another Hanukkah miracle! Her enemies are no longer only on the outside, surrounding her. They are on the inside as well. Suicide bombings are happening more often than we are aware. Israel's enemies today are not trying to destroy Judaism. Their goal is the annihilation of Israel as a nation. Satan is much more subtle today. For example, an Arab boy wearing a backpack and riding a bicycle through a crowded shopping area is not seen as the "enemy," but he very well could be, since the backpack might contain a bomb waiting to be detonated. The righteous remnant in Israel today is fasting and praying for God to intervene. He will! We need to pray fervently for the Lord to continue to fight for **His** covenant people and **His** promised land, even as we realize that another Antiochus will soon appear on the scene _ Anti-Messiah _ who like Antiochus of old will proclaim himself to be "God Manifest." Let us prepare our hearts even now to stand firm in the Truth.

Rejoicing, Yet Sober

In other years we have shared about Hanukkah customs such as the *dreidel* (spinning top), *latkes* (potato pancakes), and candlelighting. But this year we felt that the Lord was telling us to be "sober" and "vigilant." He led us to the following verses concerning our spiritual position this Hanukkah:

"...let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober... putting on the breast plate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation." I Thessalonians 5:6,8

"But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins." I Peter 4:7,8

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him...." I Peter 5:8,9

During our eight days of family celebration this year, something will be different. We will remember **Zion** each night. We will take our place on the walls of Jerusalem, watch and pray as never before, and rejoice because we know the end of the story. God wins. Jerusalem and all the land of Israel belong to **Him**. As long as there is a sun, moon and stars, there will be a nation of Israel. (See the wonderful promise in Jeremiah 31:35-36!!)

Haftorah for Hanukkah

Each year on the Sabbath of Hanukkah, Zechariah chapters two through four are read to conclude the service in synagogues all around the world. We sense that the Lord desires to speak to us from this portion of His Word:

*"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst, says the Lord. Many nations (goyim, non-Jews) shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and they shall become My people (Ami). And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you. And the Lord will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and **will again choose Jerusalem. Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord, for He is aroused, from His holy habitation.**" (2:10-13)*

"And the Lord said to Satan, `The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!" (3:2)

"...For, behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the Branch." (3:9)

"And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, says the Lord of hosts, everyone will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his fig-tree." (3:-10)

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts." (4:6)

God has chosen Jerusalem as His inheritance forever. Yeshua wept over Jerusalem, and is still weeping over her. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! Thank God for His promise to be *a wall of fire all around her, and the glory in her midst* (Zechariah 2:5). Pray that Yeshua reveals Himself to thousands of Israelis at this time of great need. May they see Yeshua as the Divine Servant, the *Shamash* and the Light of the World, as they kindle their Hanukkah menorahs. Let us praise the Lord for His delivering power and His promise to rebuke the adversary.

Let us also praise Him for supernatural victory over every power of the enemy, in Israel and in our own Jerusalems. May we all experience the reality of Zechariah 4:6 this Hanukkah! AMEN.

Hanukkah and you!

Although Hanukkah is not one of the "Feasts of the Lord" mentioned in Leviticus Chapter 23, it is a feast that Yeshua Himself observed. We know this from the mention of it 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"* (where the teachers went to teach their students).

If Yeshua observed Hanukkah, so can His children! If you'd like more information about Hanukkah as a holiday we have a special book for your growing Messianic library. It's a great little Jewish reference book called **"Hanukkah Who? Where? Why? When? 85 Questions and Answers."**

The book includes historical information, blessings, prayers, *dreidel* instructions, and Hanukkah customs. It is a "Jewish Book of Why" on Hanukkah. (We have a supply on hand and will ship yours as quickly as possible, but we can not guarantee delivery before Hanukkah.)

Hanukkah and Rededication

At this Feast of Dedication, we as Messianic Jews choose to rededicate our temples to the service of the One true God. We remember that *chanak* in Hebrew means to narrow, initiate, discipline, and train up. God is looking for disciples who choose the "narrow way." God's children are called to forsake humanism, paganism, godlessness, immorality, and everything that opposes Him and take a stand for righteousness, purity, godliness, morality, goodness and God! Our Lord is looking for dedicated followers. He expressed this desire of His heart **at Hanukkah** as recorded in John 10:27:

*"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and **they follow Me.**"*

We are attempting to follow our Messiah in every aspect of our lives. We know that **you** are as well. So many of you have sent cards, information on prostate cancer, emails, letters and have called to pray for Neil. Thank you, thank you, **THANK YOU!** Your love has touched our lives. Neil is feeling better than he has during his entire adult life. He is eating better, exercising more and reciting daily healing verses from the Bible that Jamie writes on a large white board which we attached to a door in the kitchen/dining area. We continue to seek the Lord, desiring to follow the path for total healing that He has chosen for Neil. Your prayers in faith are still much needed and valued. God bless you for standing with us in the battle. The victory is ours in Yeshua's name!

May each of you hear the voice of Yeshua, the Good Shepherd, **this month**. And hearing, may you follow Him **wherever** He leads! Please ask Him what He would have you invest in the ministry of *Jewish Jewels* at this Season of Dedication. We need some extra help especially since we've had to stop the traveling and speaking aspect of our ministry for awhile. May each of you also have your very own Hanukkah miracle in Yeshua's Name.

Thank you for your love and dedication to our precious Yeshua,

P.S. About Israel

The situation in Israel is so volatile that it might explode between the time we write this letter and the time you read it. We continue to be updated daily both by email and telephone. It seems to us that a violent spirit of HATRED has been loosed in the land which is being restrained by the prayers of the believing community. Please pray that God will confuse and confound the enemies of His covenant people.

We highly recommend another reference book this month: "**365 FASCINATING FACTS about the HOLY LAND,**" by our good friend and Jerusalem resident, Clarence Wagner, who heads the ministry of Bridges for Peace. Great information on Israel and the Bible!

