

Real happiness is knowing WHO to thank!

Warm Greetings in Yeshua!

History

The American holiday that is celebrated this month (Thanksgiving) and the Jewish holiday that is celebrated next month (Hanukkah) have interesting historical backgrounds. While the circumstances behind the holidays are very different, a solitary theme underscores both celebrations: thanksgiving to God for victory. Without the intervention of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Pilgrims would never have made it to the harvest of 1621. Nor would the tiny band of Jewish freedom fighters have defeated the Syrian army in 165 B.C. Time and again history confirms the biblical truth that:

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

There is another similarity between Thanksgiving and Hanukkah. Both are related to the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*). Our Pilgrim forefathers wanted to thank God for preserving their lives and bringing them through tremendous hardship in their new country. They decided to celebrate three days of thanksgiving, feasting during the month of October (after the harvest in New England), and using as their model the biblical feast of Sukkot mentioned in Leviticus 23. Thanksgiving officially became a national American holiday at the time of Abraham Lincoln, when Sarah Josepha Hale petitioned for the holiday "in imitation of the Jews who celebrate the harvest." A November date was decided upon.

The connection between Hanukkah and Sukkot is less obvious, and less familiar. The festival of Hanukkah is based on a military/moral victory over the Assyrians which occurred in 165 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes, the Assyrian ruler, sought to eradicate all traces of Jewish culture and religion from his subjects. The study of Torah was forbidden, the Temple in Jerusalem was desecrated, Sabbath observance bore the death penalty, and Jewish people were expected to bow down to idols. Some did, but a small group of pious Jews of the Maccabee family did not. Instead, they led a three year revolt that ended in a miraculous victory. Although the Assyrian army had the most sophisticated weaponry of the time and greatly outnumbered the Jews, they were defeated by Judah Maccabee's poorly armed volunteer soldiers who had God on their side. They fasted. They prayed. They blew their shofars. And they were victorious.

The Book of II Maccabees (an intertestamental book which was actually part of the original 1611 version of the King James Bible). (Petah Tikvah Oct-Dec 2000) explains how Judah and his men proclaimed an eight day holiday for celebrating the rededication of the Temple after the defeat of the Syrians. Most of us associate the 8 days with the miracle of the oil that lasted for 8 days, while new holy oil could be consecrated. While this may be true, there is another eight day connection that has a direct scriptural basis. Hanukkah is described in II Maccabees as a "second Sukkot" as well as a festival of rededication. The lulav (palm branch) was waved, and Hallel psalms were sung just as is done at Sukkot. The religious freedom fighters had not been able to celebrate Sukkot in the proper manner (although their dwellings during the three year

battle had indeed been temporary) so they wanted to observe the traditional 8 day celebration. Thus, Hanukkah actually began as a "second Sukkot."

Thanksgiving is the key. We thank God for the harvest and we thank God for spiritual victories. The Lord is greatly to be praised at **all** times!

His story

Yeshua, the Messiah, was dedicated to the Lord in the temple that the Maccabees rededicated. The infant Yeshua was brought to that Temple to be dedicated (*hanukkah*). Years later, at the beginning of His public ministry, Yeshua drove out the **corrupt** moneychangers from the temple and followed this act of righteous indignation by replying to His brethren who demanded a sign from Him. *"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."* His Jewish hearers responded that it had taken them 46 years to build the Temple. How would He possibly raise it up in three days? But Yeshua was speaking of the temple of His body. *"Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciple remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scriptures and the word which Yeshua had said" (John 2:22).*

Yeshua's body was His temple, albeit a temporary dwelling (*sukkah*). We can rejoice that, like Yeshua, our temples are fragile and temporary. One day they will be destroyed, but God will raise them up again. WE BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

"... when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written 'Death is swallowed up in victory'."
(1Corinthians 15:54)

His desire

Yeshua desires that no one perish, but that everyone come to repentance and find salvation in Him. We are seeing the Lord's desire fulfilled in many Jewish lives lately. It is truly a time of thanksgiving for the harvest. Souls are being saved. Lives are being changed for eternity. Jewish people are meeting their Messiah, some right before entering into eternity. Such was the case with Gary. Gary Brockman, a 63 year old Jewish man had a cousin who is one of the special jewels on our ministry staff. Arlene shared her faith with Gary and his wife Paulette, but they never were very interested. They were, however, impressed at Arlene's husband's funeral last year, as a large crowd of believers celebrated the life of a dearly loved, precious man of God. Months passed and Gary's physical condition (heart disease with multiple complications) began to deteriorate.

Arlene received a phone call from Gary's hospital room this past Memorial Day. She was told that Gary had requested a bible a few weeks earlier and now wanted to speak with her immediately. Upon arrival Gary tearfully relayed that he had been told by the doctors there was nothing more they could do for him (he had already had two major heart surgeries). Therefore, he had chosen to enter a hospice program and live out the rest of his days at home. He asked Arlene to speak with Neil about officiating at his funeral service because he particularly liked what Neil had said at Jim's (Arlene's husband) funeral and the spirit with which he communicated. Arlene wanted to make sure that Gary understood Neil's orientation was "Messianic." He said he did and wanted to speak with Neil as soon as possible.

Gary specifically expressed that he wanted to share his heart with Neil so that Neil would know who he was. He did not want a stranger conducting his funeral, perhaps asking questions the

day before of his loved ones in order to have something to say. He wanted Neil to speak knowledgeably about his life, and express how he felt about living and dying. Neil took dictation as Jamie, Arlene and Paulette listened. When Gary finished, Neil said that he would be glad to conduct Gary's funeral, but he had a question for Gary: "Do you know where you're going after you die?" Gary admitted that he did not, but that he had been listening to us on **Jewish Jewels** for quite a while and wanted to hear what we had to say. Neil presented the Gospel in a clear, simple Jewish way to Gary, explaining that Yeshua conquered death and offers each one of us the gift of eternal life. Arlene also reminded Gary that she had prayed with both of his parents (her aunt and uncle) several years back, to receive Yeshua as their Messiah shortly before they died. "*And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt*" (Daniel 12:2). "*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Messiah Yeshua our Lord*" (Romans 6:23).

Gary and his wife Paulette prayed with us that June 3 afternoon to receive Yeshua as their Messiah. Gary began reading the Bible Paulette had bought him starting with the book Genesis. As his body grew weaker his spirit grew stronger. Gary had long phone conversations with his two married daughters in NY sharing his newfound faith with them. Gary went home to be with the Lord on September 23, 2003 right before Yom Teruah. When his daughters arrived for the funeral, the family met with Neil and Arlene and asked them to share what their father believed. They both received their Messiah that day. Four Jewish people in one Jewish family. All the angels in Heaven are rejoicing! Gary's death has resulted in much spiritual fruit – and life. Yeshua spoke words which help us understand death from this harvest perspective. "*...unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain*" (John 12:24).

You, our partners, were a very real part of this family's salvation, as well as the salvation of many other Jewish people whose eyes are being opened. **Now more than ever we need your financial support.** The Bible says: "*You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain*" (Deuteronomy 25:4). We feel as if the enemy is trying to muzzle us – keep us from sharing the Good News with our Jewish people – while the harvest is **so ripe**. It saddens us that due to decreased giving, we had to come off TV stations in New York and Denver when we know that God is removing the veil from the eyes of His chosen people! **Please seek the Lord concerning a special "Thanksgiving for the Harvest" gift** to Jewish Jewels. We are standing on God's promise for you:

"Save now, I pray, O Lord; O Lord, I pray, send now prosperity." (Psalm 118:25)

His Message

As we celebrate Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication this year (Dec. 19-27), let us remember that Yeshua celebrated this holiday (John 10:22). He walked in the temple and taught in the area called Solomon's porch. (This portion directly follows Yeshua's teaching about Sukkot in John 7-9.) Yeshua's Jewish brethren were probably wondering if He was the One who would deliver them from the Romans the way Judah Maccabee had delivered them from the Assyrians. Was He the Messiah, the deliverer?

Yeshua was indeed a deliverer, but not the type that His contemporaries expected. He embodied an alternate meaning of the word *hanukkah*: **consecration**. Yeshua was consecrated, "set apart," to deliver people from slavery to sin. He was the consecrated Son of God who made the following declarations at the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah):

"My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life; and they shall never perish. Neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and, no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one." (John 10:27-30)

Here, Yeshua is equating Himself with God. He is God in the flesh. Only God Himself could be the atonement for the sin of all mankind. Yeshua, the Good Shepherd, gave His life for the sheep. That is great cause for thanksgiving and rejoicing. Through Yeshua we have victory over sin and death. Our names are written in heaven and through our witness, we can be a part of God's end-time harvest leading others into the loving arms of the Messiah Yeshua.

Yours for the salvation of Israel,

Neil and Jamie

Thank you for your faithful giving in the name of Yeshua. Our joint effort is bearing precious fruit for the Kingdom of God. Together we are reaping a harvest!