



Hanukkah - The Festival of Lights, Celebrating God's Light

By Delain Rajczyk & Karen Nyquist



1. **The Persecution and Oppression** - Hanukkah, the joyous Festival of Lights, is a celebration of the Jewish triumph over oppressive Antiochus IV, the Greek Hellenistic King who ruled Judea as part of the Seleucid Empire. Antiochus hated the Jewish religion and traditions and tried to force them to accept Hellenism, the ancient Greek culture. When he had Hellenistic Jews appointed to the priesthood, many Jews rebelled. In response, Antiochus slaughtered 40,000 Jews in Jerusalem, desecrated the holy Temple by installing an idol of Zeus, sacrificed a pig on the altar, then instituted idol worship throughout Judea. Study of the Torah and holy day observances were forbidden under penalty of death. He is considered a prototype of the prophesied evil Antichrist, full of lawlessness, warring against God's people (Daniel 7-8, 11-12; 2 Thessalonians 2; 1 John 2:4; Revelation 13, 17).

2. **The Maccabean Victory** - A small band of warriors led by Mattathias, a high priest, and Judah Maccabee, fought the Greeks and won after 3 years. They rededicated the Temple to ADONAI, the Lord God. Because they were willing to speak up, stand up, and even die for truth and righteousness, they triumphed, regaining the freedom of worship! They offered incense and sacrifices and celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles. "Not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit," says ADONAI Tzva'ot/Lord of Hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

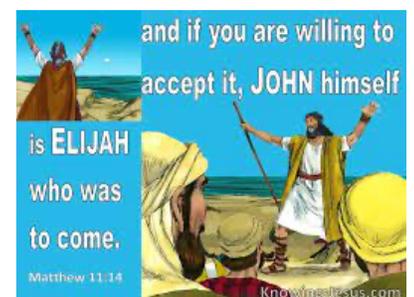
3. **The Miracle of Lights** - After their victory and during the rededication of the Temple, they only had enough oil to burn in the Temple menorah for one day, yet they needed it for eight days until their supply could be replenished. God performed a miracle, causing the oil to continually burn for the full eight days! "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?" (Jeremiah 32:27). Today, we celebrate our freedom of worship by lighting the Hanukkah candles for eight days.

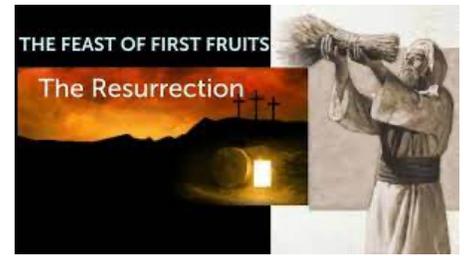
4. **Scriptures Foretelling the Coming of God's Light** - "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned ... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace *There will be no end*, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom" (Isaiah 9:2, 6-7). (See section 9.b) As John the Baptist was baptizing Jesus, "... suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son (Yeshua/Jesus), in whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:17). "In Him (Jesus) was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John 1:4-5).

5. **The Rejected Suffering Servant** - Isaiah prophesied about the Messiah/ HaMashiach. "He is despised and rejected by men. ... He was wounded because of our crimes, crushed because of our sins; the disciplining that makes us whole fell on Him, and by His bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we turned, each one, to his own way; yet ADONAI laid on Him the guilt of all of us" (Isaiah 53:3-4). Jesus said of Himself, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). "He will be as a sanctuary (*to those who believe*), but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel" (Isaiah 8:14). "The stone *which* the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone" (Psalm 118:22; Mark 12:10).

6. **God Promised A Prophet Like Elijah** - "Look, I will send to you Elijah the prophet ... He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers; otherwise I will come and strike the land (*Judea*) with complete destruction (*Romans in 70 AD*)" (Malachi 4:5-6). The angel told John the Baptist's father, Zacharias, his son would "... also go before Him (*the Messiah*) in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children" (Luke 1:13-17). Jesus also identified John the Baptist as Elijah, "And if you are willing to receive *it*, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:15).

7. **The Shamash, the Tallest Candle on the Hanukkah Menorah** - It offers its light to the other candles. Yeshua/Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness but will have the light which gives life" (John 8:12). But, like the Shamash, the Servant/Helper Candle, Jesus gives of His light to His true disciples (who do good works, not evil). Jesus said, "You are the light of the world ... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-15).





8. Hanukkah's Light in the New Testament - Y'hoshua / Yeshua / Jesus observed Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication. "Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. And

Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch. Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, 'How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ (*Messiah*), tell us plainly.' Jesus answered them, 'I told you, and you do not believe'" (John 10:22-25). **Jesus Revealed His Light** - "He (*Jesus*) was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light" (Matthew 17:2). **God's Light** - "*His (God's)* brightness was like the light; He had rays *flashing* from His hand" (Habakkuk 3:4).

9. What else is Yeshua/Jesus? - a) Jesus is Our Passover Lamb - John the Baptist declared that Jesus is the Lamb of God (John 1:29). "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter ..." (Isaiah 53:7) He was killed on Passover (John 19:14-16). Next, He rose from the dead on the Feast of First Fruits, which was the Sunday right after Passover (Leviticus 23:9-11; Luke 21:1-7). He was seen by more than 500 witnesses, then on the 40th day, He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:3, 9-11). On Pentecost, God the Father sent the Holy Spirit as Jesus had prophesied (Acts 2:1-4).

b) Jesus is The Son of Man and Prophesied of His Own Kingly Return - During one of Jesus' trials just before His death, "Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, 'Are You the Christ/HaMashiach, the Son of the Blessed?' Jesus said, 'I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven'" (Mark 14:61-62). Compare this with Daniel's prophecy, "And behold, *One* like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom *the one* Which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13-14). As king, Jesus will be given the throne of David when He returns (Isaiah 9:2).

c) Jesus is our Savior and Kinsman Redeemer - The kinsman redeemer's responsibility is to act on behalf of a relative who is in danger or need. Because we have all broken God's law, Jesus redeemed us by paying the penalty for our sins, which we couldn't pay for ourselves (Galatians 3:13-14; 1 Corinthians 1:30). As the glory of God shone around the shepherds, "... the angel said to them ... 'For there is born to you this day in the city of David (*Bethlehem*) a **Savior, who is Christ the Lord**" (Luke 2:10-11).

10. God's Invitation to You - Come to the Father through His Son, Yeshua/Jesus, "**the light of the world**" (John 8:12). Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ... I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father/Abba except through Me" (John 14:1, 6). "Come unto Me" (Matthew 11:28). Your Father loves you with an everlasting love and is drawing you to Himself (Jeremiah 31:3). He is not willing for any to perish, but that all repent and come to the knowledge of the truth to be saved (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:3-5). Are you willing to speak up and stand up for truth? Do you want Jesus Christ to be your Kinsman Redeemer, your Lord and Savior, and to accept His payment for your sins? If so, you can tell Him now.

Suggested Prayer: Dear Yeshua/Jesus, I believe You are God's Redeemer, Savior, and Messiah. I know I am a sinner, that You died to pay for my sins, then rose again. I know that You are calling me and I want to obey You and follow You. I repent of my sins and ask that I be forgiven. Please, come into My life and lead me in the way God wants me to live. I receive You as my Lord and Savior. Name _____ Date _____

Now that you've asked Jesus into your life, He'll start revealing Himself to you. To steadily improve your relationship with Jesus, spend time with Him. Start talking (praying) to Him. Read the Bible, where He reveals Himself even more clearly so you can get to know Him better. Go to a good church where you feel God's presence, they preach and teach the Bible, and you can fellowship with other believers. We learn much about God from each other.

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