

Hanukkah

Introduction

After the Greek empire was divided after the death of Alexander the Great, Israel fell under the rule of the Selucids, currently the area around Syria. In 167 BC Antiochus Epiphanes was in power. He decided to consolidate his kingdom by forcing everyone to adopt the Greek way of life: language, art, and religion. While many Jews decided to go along with this plan many did not. During the ensuing unrest Antiochus had a pig sacrificed in the temple and erected a statue of himself in the Holy of Holies. Needless to say this did not go over very well. Ultimately a revolt broke out led by Judas "the Maccabee" (the hammer). The Jews were able to win back their homeland and the temple. They cleansed the temple and rededicated it to God. The feast of dedication, Hanukkah, celebrates this rededication.

Hanukkah, "The Feast of Dedication", is not one of the feasts given through Moses in Leviticus 23. However, Hanukkah is mentioned in scripture:

Then came Hanukkah in Yerushalayim. It was winter, and Yeshua was walking around inside the Temple area, in Shlomo's Colonnade (John 10:22-23). And it was at Jerusalem, the feast of dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. (John 10:22-23).

The Importance of Remembering

So many of the traditions from Jewish culture are about remembering who God is and what He has done. Everything we do tonight will be about remembering from the blessings to the lighting of the candles. In the busyness of our lives it is good and necessary to slow down and remember.

The Blessings

Shema Israel, Adonai Elohaynu, Adonai echad.
Hear oh Israel, the Lord is God, the Lord is one.

Baruch Ata Adonai Elohaynu Melech ha-olam, ah-sheer nah-tan lah-nu cha-gim, min-ha-gim, oo-mo-ah-dim l'sim-cha, l'hag-deel et da-at Adonai, v'liv-not oh-tah-nu b'emunah ki-do-shah v'na-ah-lah.

Blessed are You O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has given us holidays, customs, and times of happiness, to increase the knowledge of God and to build us up in our most holy faith.

Baruch Ata Adonai Elohaynu Melech ha-olam, she-ah-sah ni-seem la-ah-vo-tay-nu ba-ya-meem ha-hem baz-man ha-zeh.

Blessed are You O Lord our God, King of the universe, who performed miracles for our fathers in those days at this season.

Meanings of the candles (Messianic)

Shamash (Servant) Candle

Messiah Yeshua stated in **Mark 10:44-45**:

Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be the servant of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

First Candle

Genesis 1:3-4 describes the creation of the first light:

God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

Second Candle

Exodus 13:21-22 reveals that God is the source of Israel's light:

And the Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

Third Candle

King David reminds us in **Psalms 27:1** and **Psalms 18:28** that God Himself is the source of our own individual light:

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread? For You light my lamp; the Lord my God illumines my darkness.

Fourth Candle

Psalms 119:105 and **Psalms 119:130** describe the light that comes from God's Word:

Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path. The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

Fifth Candle

Messiah Yeshua is the greatest light of all:

In Him 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**). As Messiah Yeshua was in the Temple in Jerusalem watching the illuminating lights, He declared: "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life" (**John 8:12**). Aged Simeon was promised by the Lord that he would not die until he saw Israel's Messiah. When he saw Yeshua as an infant in the Temple, he knew that this One was the light of Israel and the Nations. Simeon declared: "My eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of revelation to the gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel" (**Luke 2:30-32**). For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Messiah (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Sixth Candle

After we come to know Messiah, we are to be a source of light for the world. King Messiah tells us in **Matthew 5:14-16**:

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Seventh Candle

The prophet Isaiah speaks of the future glory of a restored Israel in Isaiah **60:1-3**:

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you... And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

Eighth Candle

Revelation 21:22-27 gives us a description of our glorious eternal dwelling place in the New Jerusalem:

And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it. And in the daytime (for there shall be no night there) its gates shall never be closed; and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.