

2025-12-13 Chanukkah and Anti-Semitism

Chanukah celebrates an inspiring struggle for religious freedom

Against oppression a victory in a lengthy war & a miracle, about 170 BCE

Story of Chanukkah not in Bible but in 1 Maccabees

Not scripture but historically accurate, a great read, available online

At this time Israel's culture had developed

In obedience to God's instruction in Tenakh

Although it wasn't perfect most people attempted to live

In line with Biblical instruction

Worshipping at the Temple, guided by Cohanim, keeping Shabbat

Circumcising their sons, keeping kosher, keeping the moadim

Antiochas Epiphanes a Syrian-Greek king

Descended from one of Alexander's generals ruled over Israel at this time

Wanted a homogenous, unified empire, so he enforced Hellenization

Greek culture and religion

Here's what he ordered his soldiers & the people of Israel to do

1 Maccabees 1:45 to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane sabbaths and feasts,

46 to defile the sanctuary and the priests,

47 to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and unclean animals,

48 and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane,

49 so that they should forget the law and change all the ordinances.

Not just a military takeover but a change in the entire way of life, culture

Forbade Bible study, Shabbat, circumcision, feast days, keeping kosher

Similar to other periods of history when religious freedom has been denied

Russia & China under Communists

Muslim oppression of Christians & Jews today in Middle East & Africa

Nigeria, Sudan, Taliban in Afghanistan

Antiochus did not attempt to exterminate the people of Israel like Haman

But tried to destroy Israel's Biblical culture

& replace it with Greek, Hellenistic culture

Replace worship of the God of Israel

With idolatrous worship of the many Greek gods

60 According to the decree, they put to death the women who had their children circumcised,

61 and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers' necks.

*62 **But** many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food.*

63 They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die.

64 Very great wrath came upon Israel.

Not submitting to Antiochus meant death, so many Jews obeyed his decrees

54 Now on the fifteenth day of Chislev, in the one hundred and forty-fifth year, they erected a desolating sacrilege upon the altar of burnt offering. Temple worship replaced by Zeus worship, statue in Temple courts

59 On the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar that was on top of the altar of burnt offering.

Slide

Pigs sacrificed on altar – pigs are unclean

Date of desolating sacrilege: 25th of Kislev on Jewish calendar

Kislev is the month that ends around the winter solstice

Many Jews resisted & many died

2:1 In those days Mattathias son of John, son of Simeon, a priest of the family of Joarib, moved from Jerusalem and settled in Modein

Moved to escape the persecution & because priests could no longer function

King's officers tried to make Mattathias offer a sacrifice & he refused

When another Jewish man came forward to offer pagan sacrifice

Mattathias killed him and the Syrian-Greek officer

He & his family fled into wilderness

& over time many others followed

They successfully resisted the Syrians

Mattathias died, his son Y'hudah took over, called the Hammer, Maccabee

Three years of warfare followed

A rag tag army of farmers who were willing to risk their lives

Fighting against the mighty Syrian army

Slide - Amazing victories for the army of Judas followed

Finally, the Maccabees recaptured Jerusalem & the Temple

4:38 They found the sanctuary desolate, the altar desecrated, the gates burnt, weeds growing in the courts as in a forest or on some mountain, and the priests' chambers demolished.

It had been defiled for 3 years, they cleaned the Temple out, rebuilt the altar

54 At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, it was dedicated with songs and harps and lutes and cymbals.

59 Then Judas and his brothers and all the assembly of Israel determined that every year at that season the days of dedication of the altar should be observed with joy and gladness for eight days, beginning with the twenty-fifth day of the month of Chislev.

Dedication of cleansed Temple happened exactly 3 years after defilement

People saw God's hand in the timing and gave Him the glory

Became known as the festival of Dedication - Chanukkah

How do we celebrate today?

Slide - Show Dreidel – played game to escape detection studying Bible

“A great miracle happened there” Nes gadol hayah shem

Lighting candles, one each day for the 8 days

Slide of Menorah

According to Torah - Menorah had to be lit for 8 days to consecrate Temple

Talmud Shabbat 12a: Syrians had defiled the stored up oil for menorah

Priests found one bottle of oil still sealed, enough for 1 day

The one bottle lasted 8 days

Because of this custom Chanukah is known as the Festival of Lights

We light one more candle each day & burn them in a Chanukkia

A 9 branched candle holder, the Temple Menorah had 7 branches

Eat potato latkes – cooked in oil, jelly donuts in Israel, & gifts are given

That's as much of the history that most people know

But, story doesn't end there, Maccabees goes on for another 10 chapters

& then there is the book of 2 Maccabees

Maccabees 5:[1] Now when the nations round about heard that the altar was built and the sanctuary renewed as before, it displeased them very much.

Why? We'll answer that question later

[2] *Wherefore they thought to destroy the generation of Jacob that was **among them**, and thereupon they began to slay and destroy the people.*

“Generation among them” was Jewish people living in these nations

Slay & destroy the people - genocide

Similar to later times of persecution of the dispersed Jewish people

These Jewish people were being attacked by the surrounding nations

So Jewish people from Galilee, Tyre, Sidon, Gilead sent to Judah for help

Judah & his fighters went out to protect Jewish people in Idumea, Ammon

He & his brother Simon with thousands of followers

Defeated an army to rescue them

They brought Jewish people in danger back to safety in Israel

When Antiochus died, he appointed Philip to rule after him

Philip sent an army to attack Jerusalem with elephants

But, they had to leave to fight against a distant enemy

So Israel had peace for a short time

In 1 Maccabees 7 another Greek king, Demetrius arose

He sent Nicanor a man who hated Israel to attack

Again Judah raised an army of valiant men, fought them off with favor of God

Nicanor was killed & Israel had another short time of peace

Maccabees 9 Demetrius attacked again

& Judah Maccabee was killed through treachery

Then Jonathan, Judah's brother led Israel & there was a period of peace

Jonathan was also killed in battle & their brother Simon led Israel

So, Mattathias, Judah, Jonathan, Simon all died leading Israel

This is why we always speak of the Maccabees rather than the Maccabee

I kept reading hoping to come to the end of the wars & period of peace

Found 2 times of peace but they were short

Our people, Israel had to fight for the freedom to obey our God

Over & over again & the story doesn't end there either

After Maccabees & their followers wonderful victories for religious freedom

There was hope for Israel to become a God fearing, righteous nation

But, satan tempted Maccabees with love of power & they made critical mistake

They were of the priestly line, descendants of Aharon

But they set themselves up as kings, history calls them the Hasmonean dynasty
 This was against the teaching of the scriptures which said the king
 Was to be from the tribe of Y'hudah
 This was a critical godless flaw in their government
 It caused much strife, political infighting, assassinations in Israel
 Around 40 BCE Israel was forced to ask Rome for help keeping the peace
 At the time of this request Rome was a republic, a righteous empire
 Then Rome became as corrupt as Greece, especially economically
 Rome imposed a heavy tax burden enforced by their army
 In Yeshua's time Israel was struggling under the Roman yoke & taxation
 Especially because they had asked Rome for help
 Having been unable to govern themselves in a Godly way
 But, our God used this humbling situation to create a very positive result
 It humbled Israel & caused them to have great longing for a national savior
 An anointed one, Mashiach to defeat their enemies & rule in godliness
 Israel was not looking for a savior like this in other periods of history
 So Israel's living in expectation of the coming of Messiah
 So clear in Gospels, is rooted in Chanukkah & the history that followed
 This "post-Chanukkah" history also reveals how long & hard the struggle
 Has been for the establishment & survival of Israel & the Jewish people
 Mighty empires sought to destroy this nation that was established by God
 Starting 500 years earlier with Assyrian invasion of Northern tribes
 Then Babylonians, Persian, Medes, Greeks, Romans
 These empires are what Daniel's vision of the man with a head of
 Gold was about, one empire conquering after another,
 It culminated in the destruction of Israel by Rome in 135 CE
 & the dispersion of the Jewish people to all nations called the Diaspora
 The history of attacks continued in Diaspora which we'll cover later
 Looking back at this history prior to Messiah's first coming
 Obvious satan was working hard to destroy Israel
 In order to prevent Yeshua's coming
 But, the Maccabee's victory enabled Jewish people to survive
 And continue as a distinct people living in a Biblical culture
 Thus enabling God's plan for bringing the Messiah to be fulfilled

In 2 important ways

1st is based on an understanding of

(TLV) Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of time came, God sent out His Son, born of a woman and born under law—

If there were no Chanukkah, i.e. if Maccabees struggle for religious freedom

And against assimilation had been lost

Israel would not have had a Biblical culture

At time of Yeshua's coming 170 years later

Priesthood, Temple worship, keeping Shabbat & Moadim, kosher

All would not have existed

So Yeshua would not have been able **to obey** the laws of God

He would not have been circumcised on the 8th day

Eaten kosher food all through childhood and adulthood

Come to Jerusalem every year for the 3 pilgrimage feasts

Studied the scriptures

Thus, Yeshua would not have been able to come as the spotless

Sinless Lamb of God, under the law

Because He would not have been able to keep all of God's laws

So, His sacrifice would not have been legally sufficient to redeem us

Make us God's adopted children

2nd – if there were no victory by the Maccabees

Study of the Bible would have been forbidden in Israel for 170 years

So people of Israel would not have been Biblically literate

& when Yeshua came they would not have been prepared

By the prophecies in the Tenakh to receive Messiah

But, in spite of Satan's attempts to destroy Israel

Through those mentioned in Maccabees &

Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Haman, Herod

Messiah did come and fulfill God's plan

To offer His sinless life as a sacrifice to pay the penalty for all sin

For all time, for all people who will put their trust in Him

Therefore, Chanukkah is part of the heritage of all believers in Yeshua

Whether you are Jewish or not

Because without the Chanukkah victory there would be no Christmas

Chanukah is one of the reasons you are saved

So, I encourage those of you who are not ethnically Jewish to get a Menorah

And participate starting tomorrow at sundown

Now let's look at a further mystery

History records that **since** the first coming of Messiah

Satan has repeatedly **continued** to try to destroy the Jewish people

Why? again 2 reasons

1st Bible predicts Satan will be totally defeated when Yeshua returns

& God's plan for Jewish people is fulfilled

He will be thrown into the lake of fire

Yeshua said to people of Jerusalem just before His crucifixion

Matthew 23:39 For I tell you, from now on, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of ADONAI.'

Yeshua will not return until Jewish people living in Jerusalem welcome Him

Our survival & revival is an integral part of God's plan for His Kingdom

So, Satan has continued to try to wipe out the Jewish people all through history

To prevent Yeshua's prediction from coming true

Prevent Messiah's return, His 2nd coming

2nd if Satan can prevent God's promises to Israel from being fulfilled

Promises made to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac & Jacob

He will prove God is a liar, unfaithful, weak & the Bible is not true

Antiochus, Romans, Holocaust, Arabs, Palestinians & other opposition

To Israel as a nation all have same spiritual root cause

& that is Satan's opposition to the establishment & survival of the only nation

That was founded by God Himself

This is not ancient history, threats against Israel's survival continue today

The greatest threat in our history, ended just 80 years ago

Some hearing this were alive during those awful times

And know they were much more perilous than today's times

We've endured unbelievable hardships

God inspired the Bible & gave it to Israel

& when the Jewish people try to live by it

They are furiously opposed by Satan

Satan is clearly the cause of these threats to the existence of Israel

& the people of Israel, the Jewish people
 Ruach Ha Kodesh wants you & I to understand that we're called to continue to fight

The battle for Israel's existence **today** because the war is still raging
 Why are conflicts always about Jews?

Here's the Biblical worldview that covers all we're seeing around us
 The war is between satan & God, good & evil, God's people & satan's people
 Satan works through powerful principality, spirit of anti-Semitism/Amalek

An anti-God, anti-Messiah spirit

This war has been going on for a long time & other fierce battles have raged
 Passover, Purim & Chanukah were all attempts to destroy Israel

The war didn't end on Chanukkah or with the Holocaust

What Maccabees reveals is from the time of Maccabees' victory

To Yeshua there were **many other attempts** to destroy Israel

There were also many attacks on the Jewish people

Where they returned to live in Israel after Rome expelled them

Marmadukes, Muslims, Crusaders, Turks, British

All had their turn at conquering Israel until 1948

From more recent history we know there were also many more attempts

Between 600 and 1500 there were about

85 expulsions of entire Jewish communities from European cities

The Spanish Inquisition lasted 100s of years

Pogroms in Eastern Europe, holocaust

Right up to the 1948 Arab refusal to accept UN partition plan

& the recent wars Israel has been forced to fight

Why? Because Israel is only nation founded by God

To obey God's laws as given in Tenakh

Satan furiously opposes such a nation because it will bring God glory

Validate His existence & the Bible's supernatural inspiration

Ruach Ha Kodesh is calling you & I to have the courage of the Maccabees to stand against

This anti-Semitic, anti-God spirit

Not everyone has eyes to see this

You are among the Jews and righteous gentiles who see it

You are here or watching because that truth has been revealed to you
 But we also must remember that God delivered our ancestors then
 & He will also deliver us today because His plan will come to pass
 Where is the battle raging today? Certainly in Israel
 Where the Palestinians are being used as pawns
 In the Arab & Iranian attempts to destroy Israel
 Many Israelis are being deceived into believing that giving
 Palestinians more land will cause them to live at peace with Israel
 But also in Europe where Muslim immigration has brought
 Hatred of Jewish people & greatly increased anti-Semitism
 So that many European Jewish people are moving to Israel
 European leaders fail to see that promoting tolerance of the intolerant
 Is very dangerous
 Also in the United Nations where the Muslim Bloc attacks Israel at every
 opportunity
 Also in the International Criminal Court, the ICC
 Which decided to prosecute Israel for war crimes for defending its citizens
 From the 10/7 attacks from the Gaza strip
 While, ironically, the judges in the court are from nations
 That are committing horrendous war crimes, which the court ignores
 And in the most amazing display of the power of the anti-Semitic spirit
 After Israel became the victim of the horrendous, genocidal attack on 10/7
 Most of the world has turned on Israel, the victim
 & supports the attacker, Hamas
 Not just in Arab & Muslim countries but right here in the US
 People are denying the Holocaust ever happened
 Genocidal doctrines are taught in mosques & Islamic community centers
 We have a few Muslim congress people who were raised to hate Jews
 & are unashamedly vocal in their anti-Semitism
 Which they disguise as anti-Zionism
 “We’re not against the Jewish people just against Israel”
 American Jewish people & Israelis are facing threats from liberals
 Who for decades have been supportive of Jewish people & Israel
 But now liberal groups are attacking us

Anti-Semitism is now coming from “liberal” mainline Protestant churches;
 Anti-Semitism is being promoted by liberals in our schools, media & politics
 A very hostile environment has developed in our entire nation

But it is especially hostile for Jewish students on liberal college campuses
 Harvard, Columbia, Cornell & many others

ADL - 200% increase in antisemitic incidents from October 7, 2023, to
 September 24, 2024, vis-à-vis 2022–23.

*3.5 million Jews in America have experienced antisemitism since the 7 October
 Hamas-led attack on Israel. Combat Anti-Semitism Movement*

Romans 5:20...But where sin increased, grace overflowed even more—

I am so grateful that simultaneously Christian Evangelical leaders

Have become strong supporters of Israel & Jewish people

That our government is a strong supporter of Israel

That President Trump has taken amazing stands for Israel

Moving the Embassy & thereby sanctioning Israel’s right to Jerusalem

For the first time in 1883 years

Approving Israel’s annexation of Golan Heights which happened in 1972

Approving Israel’s right to settlements

Meaning new towns Judea & Samaria

Stopping of funding to the Palestinian Authority who were using

Our dollars to pay salaries to convicted terrorists

Requiring that colleges who allow anti-Semitic events & support

BDS movement events be disqualified from receiving federal grants

Negotiating the return of Israeli hostages

Supporting Israel against Iran’s efforts to develop nuclear weapons

By bombing Iran’s nuclear development sites

We must continue to stand against the evils of anti-Semitism

In prayer, in demonstrations, in petitions, voting

Supporting elected government officials who take a stand against it

Polls show 89% of Orthodox Jewish people now support President Trump

Orthodox Jews are very conservative in their values & supportive of Israel

& even secular Jewish support of President Trump has increased

How do we continue the battle for Israel’s existence today?

Speak out, demonstrate, vote, support financially

Stand with the Jewish Community through this year's March of Remembrance

It's a spiritual battle, so certainly spiritual warfare, intercessory prayer

When the bowls are filled they will be poured out

But also increase our security, be aware of what's going on around us

Not in fear but in wisdom

Be willing to fight like the thousands who followed the Maccabees

Especially here where we are very visible

For Messianic Jews & Gentiles who are part of us, we must win this battle for US

Because if anti-Semitism dominates US it will dominate the world

We cannot hide because the Lord calls us to be lights to

The Jewish community and to the non-Jewish people around us

Jewish people who believe in Yeshua are a sign the end is near

Because that hasn't happened for 1700 years

That makes Messianic Jews a primary target for satan

Who doesn't want to see this revival happen

We need courage to put our Menorahs in our windows

To show solidarity with the Jewish people

We need to stand against fear remembering that God delivered our ancestors

& He will also deliver us today because His plan will come to pass

Let the Chanukkah story be an inspiration that God will prevail & evil will not

Remember Yeshua told us what to do when we see these things happening

Luke 21:28 When these things start to happen, stand up and hold your heads high; because you are about to be liberated!"

Prayer

Thank you for the Maccabees & their followers who gave their lives

For freedom to obey Your Word

Thank you for their contribution to your plan to bring Messiah into this world

Thanks for revealing Your plan for the future to us in Your Word

Strengthen our faith that Your plan will be accomplished no matter what the enemy tries to do

Yeshua will return to rule in righteousness

& all Israel & all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved

We repent of falling into fear because we doubt Your promises
Renounce spirit of fear & doubt & command them to leave us alone
We stand together against the spirits of anti-Semitism, hatred, prejudice
Break their power over us, our congregation, our neighborhoods, city, state,
Nation, Israel, other nations where Jewish people live
Thank you for the Jewish people and non-Jewish people who are standing
Courageously against this spirit of anti-Semitism
Thank you for Jewish community leaders who are standing against anti-
Semitism
Thank you for the IDF
Thank you for Evangelicals & their leaders who are standing with Israel
Thank you for President Trump, his Jewish family & his advisors
Who are standing and acting against anti-Semitism
Give us courage to stand with them
Give us wisdom on how to be lights in this present darkness
& yet not foolishly ignore the dangers of hostility around us
Thank you that where this sin increases grace overflows even more
We lift up our heads because we are about to be liberated from the evil of this
world, our redemption is drawing near