



MBS122

A MESSIANIC BIBLE STUDY FROM ARIEL MINISTRIES



CHANNUKAH (THE FEAST OF DEDICATION)



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CHANNUKAH (THE FEAST OF DEDICATION)**By Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum****TABLE OF CONTENTS**

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*And it was the
feast of the dedication
at Jerusalem:
it was winter; and
Jesus was walking in
the temple in
Solomon's porch.
John 10:22-23*

NOTES

Channukah is a feast that did not begin with Moses. In fact, it is not found anywhere in the Old Testament because this is a feast that arose during the time between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament. Nevertheless, it is a biblical feast in two ways. First, the events that brought about the Feast of Channukah were predicted in the Book of Daniel. Secondly, Yeshua (Jesus) Himself authenticated this particular feast in that He went to Jerusalem to observe it.

We will study the Feast of Channukah in five major categories: the Hebrew names for the feast; the prophetic background in the Book of Daniel; the historical background; the Jewish practice; and the Messianic implications.

I. THE HEBREW NAMES FOR THE FEAST

The first main category is the two main Hebrew names for the feast.

A. Channukah

The first name is Channukah, which is the Hebrew word that means “dedication.” It is called “The Feast of Dedication” because it marks the occasion when the Jewish Temple was rededicated after it had been desecrated by the Greeks.

B. Hag Ha-Orim

The second common name is *Hag Ha-Orim*, which means “The Feast of Lights.” This name is found in the writings of Josephus, who was a first century A.D. Jewish historian. This second name is based upon a legend.

The legend states that when the Jews rededicated the Temple and

wished to rekindle the lampstand, they found enough oil for only one day. It would take eight days to make a new supply, but they decided to kindle and burn up the one-day supply of oil anyway. By a miracle, the legend states, the oil lasted for the eight days. So it became known as Hag Ha-Orim, the Feast of Lights.

The historical books that speak of the Maccabean Revolt, such as I and II Maccabees, make no mention of any such miracle. It is found only in later rabbinic tradition. Actually, no such miracle took place. But because of that legend, the most common English name for this feast today is “The Feast of Lights.” In Hebrew, the most common name is Channukah, but Channukah does not mean “The Feast of Lights,” it means “The Feast of Dedication.”

II. THE PROPHETIC BACKGROUND IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

The second major category of this study is the prophetic background. The Old Testament itself does not deal with this feast because it arose after the conclusion of the Old Testament. However, it is in the Old Testament in that Daniel prophesied the events from which this particular feast arose. The prophetic mention of these events is in two passages in Daniel's book.

A. The Little Horn – Antiochus Epiphanes: Daniel 8:9-14

The first passage describes the events of the little horn. This is not the same as the “little horn” of Daniel 7 that represents the Antichrist, but rather his type, Antiochus Epiphanes. This first passage can be divided into two units.

1. His Activities: Daniel 8:9-12

And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the glorious land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and some of the host and of the stars it cast down to the ground, and trampled upon them. Yea, it magnified itself, even to the prince of the host; and it took away from him the continual burnt-offering, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And the host was given over to it together with the continual burnt-offering through transgression; and it cast down truth to the ground, and it did its pleasure and prospered.

a. His Rise to Power: Daniel 8:9

Verse 9 deals with his rise to power: *And out of them came forth a little horn.* Out of the four horns that Daniel wrote about previously in this chapter, one little horn arises. The four horns represent the four divisions of the Greek Empire after the death of Alexander the Great. One of those divisions was Syria. This little horn rises out of Syria, and Antiochus Epiphanes was from Syria.

Verse 9 also states that he *waxed exceeding great*. He conquered in three

directions: To the south, he conquered Egypt; to the east, he conquered Mesopotamia and other regions to the east as far as Armenia; and he went against *the glorious land*. The glorious land is the Land of Israel (Jer. 3:19; Ezek. 20:6; Dan. 11:16, 41; Zech. 7:14). In fact, the glorious land became a battleground between two divisions of the Greek empire: Syria and Egypt. Antiochus Epiphanes, as this prophecy relates, first defeated Egypt and then invaded Israel.

b. His War Against the Jews: Daniel 8:10

Verse 10 describes Antiochus' war against the Jews. Daniel makes two statements. First: it *waxed great, even to the host of heaven*. The word *heaven* is a term that stands for God, and *the host of heaven* is the “army of God.” Sometimes the army of God refers to the angelic army, but it sometimes refers to Israel (Gen. 15:5; Ex. 12:41). Antiochus was going to persecute the Jews in defiance of the angelic host who are their protectors (Dan. 12:1). Secondly: *and some of the host and of the stars it cast down to the ground, and trampled upon them*. Here Daniel prophesies that Antiochus Epiphanes is destined to war against the Jews, and he will succeed in winning over them.

While the Books of I and II Maccabees are not inspired Scripture, they are historical books that contain fairly accurate history. I Maccabees records the fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel 8:10.

c. The Prophecy of the Abomination of Desolation: Daniel 8:11-12

Verses 11-12 prophesy how Antiochus Epiphanes will be guilty of committing the Abomination of Desolation. In these verses, Daniel makes ten statements about the little horn.

First: *it magnified itself*; Antiochus Epiphanes made claims of deity. In fact, the very name he took, “Epiphanes,” means “the manifest God.” He called himself “Antiochus Epiphanes” or “Antiochus, the manifest God.”

Secondly: *even to the prince of the host*. Again, *the host* is the host of Israel and *the prince* is the leader of Israel, which, at that time, was the high priest. Antiochus Epiphanes would replace the high priest at will. According to the Mosaic Law, the high priest could not be replaced except by death or by some infirmity of the flesh. However, Antiochus ignored all this.

Thirdly: *it took away from him the continual burnt-offering*. This means that Antiochus Epiphanes would stop the sacrificial system, which he did. The fulfillment of this prophecy is recorded in I Maccabees 1:44-45.

The fourth statement is: *the place of his sanctuary was cast down*. *Cast down* means, “to be desecrated”; Antiochus desecrated the Jewish Temple. The fulfillment of this prophecy is recorded in I Maccabees 1:21-59

and II Maccabees 6:1-5.

The fifth statement is: *And the host was given over to it*. The point here is that Antiochus will have victory over the Jews, and many Jews will die in the course of the persecutions.

Sixth: *with the continual burnt-offering*. True worship was stopped, and pagan worship in the Temple Compound was instituted by Antiochus Epiphanes.

The seventh statement is that all this was accomplished *through transgression*. The transgression was on two sides. On one hand, it was on that of Antiochus Epiphanes who sinned in doing what he did. On the other hand, it was on the part of a segment of the Jewish population, known as the Hellenist Party who were in favor of installing Greek culture and religion in place of Judaism. This group is spoken of in I Maccabees 1:11-12, 43.

The eighth statement is: *it cast down truth to the ground*. It is not just truth, but the original text has a definite article; it is the truth, specifically, the Law of Moses. Antiochus Epiphanes forbade the reading and the practice of the Law of Moses (I Mac. 1:56-58).

The ninth statement is: *it did its pleasure*. Antiochus Epiphanes was a very willful king, carrying out his own will, unconcerned about the will of God.

The tenth statement is: *and prospered*. Antiochus Epiphanes succeeded in his aim to paganize Judaism and paganize the Jewish people.

2. The Extent of His Activities Against the Jews: Daniel 8:13-14

Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said unto that certain one who spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the continual burnt-offering, and the transgression that makes desolate, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

a. The Question: Daniel 8:13

The question is raised in verse 13. Two holy ones or two angelic beings appear, and one is asking a question of the other: *How long shall be the vision?* The question concerns the continual burnt-offering, and the transgression that desolated the Temple, and the entire duration that the persecutions against the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes would be allowed to last.

b. The Answer: Daniel 8:14

The answer is given in verse 14: *Unto two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings*. If he means two parts of a day, then this refers to 2,300 days. If he means 2,300 offerings, counting morning and

evening separately, then the total would be 1,150 days. The Aramaic does not have the word “and” between evenings and mornings. A more correct translation from the original is: *two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings*. Therefore, the duration is 2,300 days. Thus, persecutions by Antiochus Epiphanes would last a total of 2,300 days.

c. The Historical Fulfillment: II Maccabees 4:7-50

The historical fulfillment is recorded in II Maccabees 4:7-50. The persecutions began in the year 173 B.C. when the High Priest Onias III, also known as “Onias, the Righteous,” was replaced. Antiochus Epiphanes appointed a wicked brother of Onias, whose name was Jason, as the high priest. Jason was replaced by an even more wicked brother, named Menelaus, who also bribed Antiochus Epiphanes for the position. One year later, in 171 B.C., Onias III, the Righteous One, was murdered by Menelaus. Onias was the only biblically legitimate high priest on the basis of the Law of Moses. From then on, there were illegitimate priests until 164 B.C., when Antiochus died.

It is also known from history that the Abomination of Desolation, the erection of the statue of Jupiter, was done on the 25th day of the month of *Kislev* in 168 B.C. The sanctuary was cleansed on the 25th day of Kislev in 165 B.C. So the entire duration of 2,300 days began September 9, 171 B.C. with the death of Onias, until the rededication of the Temple on December 25, 165 B.C. As always, prophecy was literally fulfilled; it was fulfilled exactly 2,300 days later. Just as Daniel prophesied, between the murder of Onias and the rededication of the Temple there were 2,300 days (I Mac. 4:36-59; II Mac. 10:1-9).

B. Antiochus IV Epiphanes: Daniel 11:21-35

The second passage can be divided into four units.

1. His Rise to Power: Daniel 11:21-24

And in his place shall stand up a contemptible person, to whom they had not given the honor of the kingdom: but he shall come in time of security, and shall obtain the kingdom by flatteries. And the overwhelming forces shall be overwhelmed from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant. And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully; for he shall come up, and shall become strong, with a small people. In time of security shall he come even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them prey, and spoil, and substance: yea, he shall devise his devices against the strongholds, even for a time.

a. His Usurping of the Throne: Daniel 11:21

The first unit deals with his usurping of the throne, and this verse makes five statements. First: *in his place*, meaning in the place of the previous king who had just died. The previous king was known as Seleucus IV.

Second: *shall stand up a contemptible person*. This contemptible person

who follows Seleucus IV was Antiochus IV, known as Antiochus Epiphanes. The word for contemptible means “an illegitimate person,” an illegitimate king.

Third: *to whom they had not given the honor of the kingdom*; he was not the rightful heir. The rightful heir was another person known as Demetrius Soter, but Antiochus usurped the throne.

Fourth: *he shall come in time of security*; Antiochus was actually in Athens when he heard that his brother Seleucus had been murdered. The rightful heir was then a hostage in Rome. Antiochus Epiphanes came to Antioch posing as the guardian of the young heir.

And fifth: *and shall obtain the kingdom by flatteries*; he then obtained the throne by intrigue. Through this intrigue, he received the support of the king of Pergamum. He then plotted against the true heir and had him murdered. The usurper then murdered the killer of the heir to make sure that no one would be able to trace the crime back to him. By means of this intrigue, he gained the throne.

b. His Consolidation of Power: Daniel 11:22

The second unit speaks about his consolidation of power and mentions two things.

First: *And the overwhelming forces shall be overwhelmed from before him, and he shall be broken*. There was an army that tried to stop Antiochus Epiphanes, but he was able to conquer them and maintain the throne that he had usurped.

Secondly: *yea, also the prince of the covenant*. This was the Jewish high priest who was the leader of the theocracy in Israel. Here Daniel predicts how Antiochus Epiphanes will overcome the prince of the covenant. This he did by deposing Onias III who was the rightful high priest.

c. The Growth of His Strength: Daniel 11:23

The third unit speaks about the growth of his strength and makes five statements. First: *And after the league made with him*; he made a league with the Egyptians and had his sister marry into the royal family in order to exercise control there.

Secondly: *he shall work deceitfully*. Antiochus Epiphanes constantly made plots against the throne of Egypt, while claiming to be their friend, but he was actually their enemy.

Thirdly: *he shall come up*; he would rise to even greater power.

Fourthly: *and shall become strong*, which he did through deceit.

And fifth: *with a small people*. His people are his nation, which had become small because they had been defeated by Rome. But now

Antiochus would again build up his army in order to overcome the Egyptians.

d. The Growth of His wealth: Daniel 11:24

And the fourth unit then describes the growth of his own wealth and makes six statements. First: *In time of security*; he looked out for people who thought that they were living securely and let their defenses grow lax. These are the ones he chose to attack.

Secondly: *shall he come even upon the fattest places of the province*. The fattest places refers to fertile country; he attacked these countries without warning, seizing their produce.

Thirdly: *he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers*. His fathers plundered other countries, but they used the money for luxurious living. This one uses the money to bribe others.

Fourthly: *he shall scatter among them prey, and spoil, and substance*; he uses the spoils of war to win the support of others by bribing them.

Fifth: *yea, he shall devise his devices against the strongholds*; he continued plotting against Egypt and against others.

And sixth: *even for a time*, meaning, “as long as God permits.” God permitted him to reign for a duration of twelve years.

From all this description, it is obvious why Antiochus Epiphanes in the Book of Daniel is also a type of the future Antichrist. Many of the things, which characterized Antiochus Epiphanes, will also characterize the future Antichrist.

2. The First Egyptian Campaign: Daniel 11:25-28

The second unit of this passage speaks of his Egyptian campaign. His war against Egypt succeeded for a time, but ultimately failed. When it failed, verse 28 states: *Then shall he return into his land with great substance; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do his pleasure, and return to his own land*.

When he returned to Syria, he returned with great spoil, but he failed in his original goal, which was to conquer Egypt. This verse states: *his heart shall be against the holy covenant*, the theocracy of Israel. The Jews heard a rumor that Antiochus Epiphanes had been killed, so they rebelled against Syria. As it turned out, Antiochus Epiphanes was not dead, and as he went through the Land, he put down the revolt. In this revolt, 80,000 Jews were killed, and 40,000 were taken into slavery. After this, the prophecy states: *he shall do his pleasure*, and this he did.

The fulfillment is recorded in I Maccabees 1:20-28 and II Maccabees 5:11-17. Then, he would return to his own land.

3. The Third Egyptian Campaign: Daniel 11:29-30a

The second Egyptian campaign was not prophesied by Daniel. However, in this third unit of the passage, he prophesied of the third Egyptian campaign. The third campaign almost succeeded, but was suddenly stopped by ships of Rome. It was the Romans who forced Antiochus Epiphanes to retreat.

4. The Persecution of the Jews: Daniel 11:30b-35

The fourth unit of this passage deals with the persecution of the Jews.

a. His Program of Vengeance Against the Jews: Daniel 11:30b-31

therefore he shall be grieved, and shall return, and have indignation against the holy covenant, and shall do his pleasure: he shall even return, and have regard unto them that forsake the holy covenant. And forces shall stand on his part, and they shall profane the sanctuary, even the fortress, and shall take away the continual burnt-offering, and they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.

(1) The Apostasy of the Hellenizers: Daniel 11:30b

The last part of verse 30 deals with the apostasy on the part of many Jewish people who favored the enforcement of Greek culture. There are six statements here that need to be examined.

First: *therefore he shall be grieved*. Because Antiochus Epiphanes had been repelled by Rome from taking over Egypt, he was grieved and wished to take his vengeance upon the Jews, even though the Jews were not guilty of any wrongdoing against him.

Secondly: *and shall return*; he returned to Syria by way of the Land of Israel because Israel is located between the countries of Egypt and Syria.

Thirdly: he will have *indignation against the holy covenant*. The holy covenant was the theocracy of Israel based upon the Mosaic Covenant, and his indignation was his wrath against the Jews.

Fourthly: *he shall do his pleasure*; he began to carry out his program against the Jewish people.

Fifth: *he shall even return*; he would come to Israel again.

And sixth: *and have regard unto them that forsake the holy covenant*.

The ones who did forsake the holy covenant were the Jewish apostates or the Hellenizers under the leadership of Menelaus.

The fulfillment of this verse is recorded in II Maccabees 4:7-50.

(2) The Abomination of Desolation: Daniel 11:31

Verse 31 then deals with the Abomination of Desolation. Here five

statements need to be broken down.

First: *And forces shall stand on his part*; this repeats the truth of the previous verse, that Antiochus would have the help of the Jewish apostates. The fulfillment is recorded in I Maccabees 1:43.

Secondly: *and they shall profane the sanctuary*; on the Sabbath day, they offered a pig on the altar (I Mac. 1:47), and in this way they profaned the Sanctuary.

Thirdly: *even the fortress*. The fortress is that which guarded the Temple Compound, which was taken over by the enemy (I Mac. 1:33- 37).

Fourthly: *they shall take away the continual burnt-offering*. The regular, daily burnt-offerings which were commanded by the Mosaic Law were forcefully stopped (I Mac. 1:45-47).

And fifth: they set up the abomination of that makes desolate. An abomination refers to an idol; in this case, it was one set up in the Temple Precincts. Antiochus Epiphanes erected an image of Jupiter, Zeus Olympus, and sacrifices of pigs were offered to him. The observance of the Sabbath was forbidden, and Greek soldiers performed sexual rites in the Temple Precincts. In this way they indeed desecrated, desolated, and abominated the Temple (I Mac. 1:54-59; II Mac. 6:2-5).

b. The Revolt: Daniel 11:32-35

These verses prophesy of the revolt that brought about the Feast of Channukah, the revolt of the Maccabees. The Maccabees were five brothers who led the revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes. *And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he pervert by flatteries; but the people that know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. And they that are wise among the people shall instruct many; yet they shall fall by the sword and by flame, by captivity and by spoil, many days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help; but many shall join themselves unto them with flatteries. And some of them that are wise shall fall, to refine them, and to purify, and to make them white, even to the time of the end; because it is yet for the time appointed.*

Verse 32a speaks of the policy of Antiochus Epiphanes: *And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he pervert by flatteries*. Those who did wickedly against the covenant were the Hellenizers. He perverted them with flatteries by pitting one against the other. He deliberately favored, elevated, and promoted those who were apostates.

Verse 32b states: *the people that know their God shall be strong, and do exploits*. The people that know their God were the Maccabees. These shall be strong, and they were strong in the Lord. They shall do exploits, and indeed, they eventually defeated every army that Antiochus Epiphanes sent against them (I Mac. 2:1-13:53; 16:1-2; II Mac. 8:1- 15:36).

Verse 33 speaks of the righteous ones among the Jews: *And they that are wise among the people shall instruct many*. In spite of Antiochus' decree that forbade the teaching of Scripture, the righteous ones continued to teach the Scriptures and to teach the way of the Lord. Yet they shall fall. Because of these activities, many died through the persecutions in the four ways which Daniel prophesied: *by the sword and by flame, by captivity and by spoil* (II Mac. 6:18-31; 7:1-42).

Verse 34 prophesied the fall of the Maccabees: *Now when they, the righteous ones, shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help*. The righteous ones were helped by the Maccabees who succeeded in freeing Israel from the Syrians; yet they too fell, because not one of them died of natural causes. Of the five brothers, three died in battle and two died by treachery. *But many shall join themselves unto them with flatteries*. Many Jews who actually preferred Hellenism joined the Maccabees because they were successful against the Syrians. Later, however, they perverted the descendants of the Maccabees who became active Hellenizers.

In verse 35a, the divine purpose in persecution is revealed; God allows persecution in order that the righteous ones can be refined, can be purified, and can be made white.

In verse 35b, he concludes this unit, emphasizing that Antiochus Epiphanes would be allowed to rule only up to a certain point; then God would put a stop to his reign. This He indeed did.

III. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The third major category will review and discuss the historical background, which fulfilled Daniel's prophecies.

A. The Political Background

Alexander the Great had conquered the Land of Israel and made it a part of his Greek Empire. When Alexander the Great died, his empire was divided into four separate kingdoms. Two of these kingdoms affected the history of Israel: Syria and Egypt.

This new Hellenistic world presented two problems to the Jews. First, the Land of Israel became a "political football" between Egypt and Syria. In the beginning, it fell under Egyptian control, but in 198 B.C. it fell under Syrian control. The second problem for the Jews was the enforcement of the Hellenistic or Greek culture. Many Jews fell for it. Among the Jewish people were the Hellenists who favored the enforcement of Greek culture. The Greeks built a stadium next to the Temple for the practice of Greek games, which were always played in the nude. In fact, Josephus stated that even priests fell for Hellenism. Whenever the trumpet blew in the stadium, some Levites would run to the stadium, strip themselves bare, throw the discus, and then

return to sacrifice. This was a perversion, an abomination to the Lord. The key person in the political background was one of the Syrian kings, known as Antiochus Epiphanes who ruled from 175 to 164 B.C. His name was actually Antiochus IV, but he added the name “Epiphanes,” which means “the manifest God,” because he believed himself to be just that. The Jews, using the Jewish sense of humor, changed one consonant; instead of calling him Antiochus Epiphanes, they called him Antiochus Epimanes, which means “Antiochus, the mad man.”

He made two major campaigns against Egypt. In the first major campaign, he gained a great deal of spoil, but he could not take Egypt. In the second major campaign, he was about to successfully take Egypt, but the Romans came and forced him to retreat. For some reason, he took his vengeance out on the Jews, and that led to the events, which brought about the Maccabean revolt and, with it, the Feast of Chanukah.

B. The Maccabean Revolt

The Maccabean revolt will be discussed in four points.

1. The Causes of the Revolt: I Maccabees 1:10-64

This passage spells out five causes for the revolt of the Maccabees. First, after the second major campaign against Egypt failed, Antiochus rendered vengeance against the Jews.

Secondly, his vengeance led him to slaughter Jews *en masse* on his way back to Syria.

Thirdly, Antiochus issued a decree forbidding four things: the practice of Judaism; the practice of the dietary laws; circumcision; and the reading of the Law. He ordered all of the scrolls of the Law to be confiscated and burned.

Fourthly, he instituted a policy of persecution for those who disobeyed his decree. For example, if a child was circumcised, the child was killed and the body was tied around the neck of the mother; and the mother would have to carry her dead child around her neck. Eventually, she was killed also. They forced rabbis to eat pork. Many rabbis chose death rather than eating pork. One of these was Rabbi Eleazar, who chose death at the age of 90 rather than to disobey the Mosaic Law by eating pork. There is a story about Hannah and her seven sons. All seven sons died a slow, torturous death, and eventually the mother killed herself by jumping off a building in order to avoid the worship of a pagan idol.

The fifth cause of the Maccabean revolt was the Abomination of Desolation. A statue was erected to Jupiter in the Temple Precincts, and a pig was offered on the altar.

2. The Leaders of the Revolt: The Maccabees

Here five points will be made. The first point concerns the name “Maccabee.” The name Maccabee is a Hebrew name, which means “the hammer.” It was applied to Judah, the leader of the five brothers who kept “hammering away” against the Syrians until he finally defeated them.

Secondly, the revolt began in a little town northwest of Jerusalem known as Modiin, where an elderly priest named Mattathias lived. He had five sons: Judah, Eleazar, Yohanan, Jonathan, and Simeon. One day, Syrian soldiers came into Modiin in order to force a Jewish person to sacrifice a pig. One Jewish man, who was a Hellenizer, was willing to do so. As the Hellenizer began to do the sacrifice, Mattathias killed the apostate Jew, and his five sons killed the Syrians. This act sparked the Maccabean revolt.

Thirdly, Mattathias and his five sons came from a family known as the House of Hasmon. That is why they are sometimes known as the Hasmonians.

Fourthly, Antiochus Epiphanes sent two armies against the Jews, and both of these armies were defeated.

And fifth, the Jews eventually took over the Land of Israel from the Syrians.

3. The Rededication of the Temple: II Maccabees 10:1-8

II Maccabees 10:1-8 speaks of the rededication of the Temple. When the Maccabees re-took the Temple, the Temple was cleansed. The old Altar, which had been desecrated by the offering of a pig, was demolished, and a new one was built. They also made new holy vessels: lampstand, altar of incense, table of showbread, and curtains.

The rededication took place on the same date that it had been desecrated. It was desecrated on the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev in 167 B.C., and it was rededicated on that same day in the year 164 B.C.

4. The Inauguration of the New Feast

The new feast was inaugurated at this point. It was deemed to last for eight days to copy the Feast of Tabernacles, one of the Mosaic festivals. When King Solomon dedicated the First Temple, the dedication was observed for eight days, copying the eight days of the Feast of Tabernacles. So when they rededicated the Temple, they followed Solomon's example, and they also observed the rededication for eight days.

The Feast of Tabernacles is a time of rejoicing with the kindling of

lampstands. Therefore, lampstands were kindled on this occasion, too. That is why lights became associated with Channukah. Later, the Jewish rabbis invented the legend of the miracle of the eight days, but actually, there is no historical record of any such miracle taking place. It is purely legendary.

IV. THE JEWISH PRACTICES

The fourth major category of our study concerns Jewish practices of the Feast of Channukah. This will be discussed in four divisions.

A. The Laws of Channukah

The rabbis developed twenty-four laws concerning the proper observance of the Feast of Channukah.

First, the proper motivation is to proclaim the miracle of the oil that lasted for eight days.

Secondly, no eulogy may be said during the eight days of the feast, except in the presence of a scribe or a scholar of the Torah, the Law.

Thirdly, no fasting was permitted during these eight days, because the obligation is to feast on these days.

Fourthly, the light is to be kindled soon after sunset upon the emergence of the stars. If it is impossible to kindle it at the designated time, then one may kindle it up to one hour earlier. If one comes home later than sunset, he must still kindle the lights.

Fifth, the lamp should be placed outside the entrance of the house on the left side of the doorway in order to publicize the miracle to those passing by. It should be about one to three feet off the floor so it can be easily seen by someone passing by. But it should be no higher than thirty-six feet because, if it is beyond that height, people will not notice it, and one will not fulfill the motivation.

Sixth, if one is living in the upper story of an apartment, then the light should be set on a window nearest to the street.

Seventh, if it is dangerous for a Jew to place these lights in the open because he may be living in an area where Gentiles hate the Jews, then it may be placed on a table near the inner entrance of the house. Although this will not be the proclamation of the miracle, it would fulfill another purpose, which is that of giving hope to the Jewish person. Light is kindled to give inspiration, for the light of the Messiah must burn brightly in one's heart, even if others cannot see it.

Eighth, if a man has to make a choice between buying oil for kindling the light or wine for the Sabbath, he is to choose the oil. If a man must

sell all of his belongings to purchase the lights, then he must do so. This illustrates how important the feast was in rabbinic law.

Ninth, the lampstand must be properly placed before the kindling. It must remain in the very place where it was lit and cannot be moved after it has been lit.

Tenth, the light should be kindled only when everyone is present.

Eleventh, the kindling of the lights on this occasion is obligatory upon all males.

Twelfth, women are also obligated to kindle the lights or at least be present when a man kindles the lights, for they were included in the miracle. According to Jewish tradition, the Greek law mandated that on the day of the wedding every Jewish bride first had to submit to sexual intercourse with a Greek prince. Therefore, when women were rescued from this oppression, they were included in the miracle.

Thirteenth, if a husband is traveling, he is obligated to kindle the lights where he is, and the wife must kindle the lights where she is. If a person is staying in another person's home, the guest should give the host a coin in order to purchase a portion of the candle; in that way, he can also participate in the observance. If a person does not own candles, he should watch his host light the candles, and in that way he can also participate.

Fourteenth, the woman should not work during the time when the candles are burning.

Fifteenth, any kind of oil will do, but olive oil is to be preferred. In this modern day, electricity does not fulfill the commandment; therefore, electric lights cannot be used for this occasion.

Sixteenth, as far as the quantity of oil is concerned, there should be enough oil, or a tall enough candle, to burn for at least half an hour.

Seventeenth, concerning the order of the kindling of the lights, the rabbis were divided on this issue. One school of rabbis felt that one should start with lighting eight candles and decrease by one candle each evening. Another school of rabbis taught the opposite: that one should begin by kindling one candle and increase by one candle each evening. Eventually, the second school won.

Eighteenth, Channukah candles must not serve any practical purpose. The light of this candle must not be used for reading or working. The purpose is to kindle the lights in order to fulfill the law, not to derive benefit from it.

Nineteenth, the eight Channukah lights should be set in one row, with the “servant light” above them. Actually, lampstands made for this occasion have places for nine candles, but the ninth light is set apart from the others. The ninth one is merely a servant candle. One should light the servant candle first, and then use it to kindle all the others.

Twentieth, concerning the order of kindling, the kindling should start at the right, and each light is added to the left. The lights are added from right to left. However, the new light is always kindled first, so the kindling is from left to right.

Twenty-first, on Friday night, one must be certain that the Channukah candle is lit before the Sabbath candle.

Twenty-second, on Saturday night, the Channukah candle must be lit after the end of the Sabbath observance.

Twenty-third, if a person is too sick to go to a window to kindle the lights, then he should do it at his bedside; ultimately, the important thing is the kindling of the lights.

And twenty-fourth, concerning the observance of Channukah in the synagogue, the Channukah lights must be kindled between the afternoon service and the evening service.

B. The Liturgy

1. The Lampstand: The Menorah

The specific lampstand used on this occasion is known as the Channukiyyah. This is a special type of lampstand, which has eight places for eight candles in a row, with a ninth candle either above it or over to the side, as the servant candle.

2. The Service of the Kindling of the Lights

a. The Blessing Before the Ceremony

With the actual service of the kindling of the lights, specific prayers must be recited. Before actually kindling the candles, the Jewish male must say: “Blessed are You, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us by Your commandments and commanded us to kindle the light of Channukah. Blessed are You, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who did miracles for our fathers in those days and that time.”

On the first night only, an additional blessing, known as the *Shehecheyanu*, is recited: “Blessed are You, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has kept us alive and has caused us and enabled us to reach this season.”

b. The Blessing After the Kindling Ceremony

Then after the candles are kindled, on all eight nights, the blessing, known as *Haneiroth Halalu* is said: “These lights we kindle on account of the deliverance, miracles, and wonders, which You did for our fathers in those days and that time by means of Your holy priests. During all the eight nights of Channukah, these lights are sacred, and it is not permitted for us to make any use of them, but only to look at them in order that we may give thanks and praise for Your wonders and Your deliverance.”

c. The Singing of a Special Song

These blessings are followed with a special song known as *Maoz Tzur*, which means “Rock of Ages.” It was written in the 13th century by a Jew named Mordecai. There are six stanzas to this song, which are sung every Channukah. The first stanza is an expression of the Messianic hope in the re establishment of the ancient Temple worship. The second stanza is a praise for the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. The third stanza praises God for delivering Israel from Babylon. The fourth stanza praises God for delivering Israel from the hands of Haman. The fifth stanza is a summary of the miracles of Channukah. The sixth stanza is a reference to the German emperor Frederick Barbarosa and to the Jewish deliverance from that wicked emperor.

3. Prayers

There are three specific prayers that are recited on this occasion. The first prayer is known as *Al Ha nisim*, which means “Concerning the Miracles.” It is a special prayer recited on each of the eight days. The content is a thanksgiving to God for His miracles and describes that heroism is not to be found in the many, but the few who are mighty. The emphasis is on the battles and not on the lights.

The second prayer is the *Hallel*, which comprises Psalms 113-118. This is also recited on each day.

The third prayer is *Ana Bechoach*, a mystical, cabalistic prayer which means “In Strength.”

4. Scripture Readings

Scriptures are read from the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

From the Law, Exodus 40 is read, which concerns the dedication of the Tabernacle. Channukah is not a feast found in the Mosaic Law, but this is a passage that carries the concept of dedication of the altar of God.

From the Prophets, the Book of Zechariah is read on the first Sabbath of Channukah, along with I Kings.

From the Writings, Psalms 33, 67, 90, 91, and 133 are read.

5. Other Readings

Other readings include II Maccabees 7, the story of Hannah and her seven sons, and the Book of Judith from the Apocrypha.

C. Various Jewish Customs

Of the various Jewish customs for this occasion, four things will be mentioned.

1. The Giving of Gifts

The first custom is the giving of gifts, especially to teachers. Often in Jewish history when there were poor Jewish communities, this provided the major source of income for the Hebrew teacher. In the United States, this has become the basis to off-set Christmas; thus, Jews give gifts during Channukah because the holiday falls around the same time as Christmas.

2. Channukah Gelt

A second custom is known as *Channukah Gelt*. Gelt is the Yiddish word for “money.” This custom is to give small sums of money to children.

3. Special Foods

A third custom concerns the special foods that are eaten on this occasion. The foods involve primarily pastries and potatoes fried in oil as a reminder of the miracle of the oil. There are other special foods that are eaten on this occasion, but the emphasis is on that which is cooked with oil.

4. Special Games

A fourth custom has to do with the special games that are played during this holiday. The most popular game is known as the *dreidel*, which is a Yiddish term. The Hebrew term is *sevivon*. The dreidel is a spinning top that has four sides. On each side is a Hebrew letter, and each letter stands for a Hebrew word, making the sentence, “A great miracle happened there.” Again, it is a reference to the miracle of the oil.

D. Other Practices and Rabbinic Lore

1. Classical Jewish Sources

In classical Jewish sources, Channukah is never called a feast. It is only referred to as “the days of Channukah,” primarily because this was not a feast that originated with the Law of Moses, but originated in the intertestamental period.

2. Maoz Tzur

Another practice concerns that popular song known as *Maoz Tzur*, which literally means, “O Fortress, Rock of my Salvation.” This song is sung every night after the candles are lit. There are six specific stanzas. The first stanza is: “O fortress, rock of my salvation, to praise you is a delight. Restore my house of prayer, and there we will bring a thanksgiving offering. When you will have prepared the slaughter for

the blaspheming foe, then shall I complete a song of him, the dedication of the altar.” This is a pleading for the Messianic Age and for the rebuilding of the Temple. These are quotations from Scripture Psalm 31:3; Isaiah 56:7; Leviticus 7:11; Isaiah 14:21; 56:10; Psalm 30:1; and II Chronicles 7:9.

The second stanza concerns the Egyptian bondage: “My soul has been sated with troubles, my strength has been consumed with grief. They had embittered my life with hardship, with the calf-like kingdom's bondage. But with His great power, He brought forth the treasured ones, Pharaoh's army and all his offspring went down like a stone into the deep.” The Scriptures quoted here are Psalm 88:4; Exodus 1:14; Jeremiah 46:20; Exodus 9:31; 19:5; 14:6; and 15:4-5.

The third stanza specifically concerns the Babylonian exile, “To the holy abode of His Word, He brought me. But there, too, I had no rest, and an oppressor came and exiled me. For I had served aliens, and had drunk benumbing wine. Scarcely had I departed at Babylon's end Zerubbabel came. At the end of seventy years, I was saved.” This stanza quotes: I Kings 6:11; Isaiah 14:4; Psalm 60:5; Song of Solomon 3:4; I Chronicles 3:19; and Jeremiah 25:12.

The fourth stanza concerns the Feast of Purim and the deliverance of the Jews from the hands of Haman: “To sever the towering cypress sought the Aggagite, son of Hammedatha, but it became (a snare and) a stumbling block to him, and his arrogance was stilled. The head of the Benjaminite You lifted, and the enemy, his name You obliterated. His numerous progeny—his possessions—on the gallows You hanged.” This stanza quotes: Esther 3:1; 6:1-7:10; 7:6-7; 2:5; Exodus 17:14-16; Esther 5:11; and 9:7-10.

The fifth stanza is the one that actually speaks of Channukah, and this was originally the last stanza of the song: “The Greeks gathered against me in the Hasmonean days. They breached the walls of my towers, and they defiled all the oils; and from the one remnant of the flasks, a miracle was wrought for the roses. Men of insight—eight days established for song and jubilation.” This fifth stanza quotes: Genesis 10:2; Psalm 68:32; and Song of Solomon 4:4.

The sixth stanza was a much later addition, and it was written by a different author. For that reason, it is often omitted. The reference is to Barbarosa “The Red Beard,” and that is why the term “the Red One” is used in the song. The sixth stanza is a plea for the final redemption: “Bare Your holy arm and hasten the end for salvation—avenge the vengeance of Your servants' blood from the wicked nation. For the triumph is too long delayed for us, and there is no end to days of evil, repel the Red One in the nethermost shadow and establish for us the seven shepherds.” This stanza is seldom sung today. This quotes: Isaiah 52:10; Deuteronomy 32:43; 28:66-67;

Genesis 25:25; and Micah 5:4.

NOTES

V. THE MESSIANIC IMPLICATION

The fifth major category of the study of the Feast of Channukah is the Messianic implication. Since the events that brought about this feast occurred between the time of the Old Testament and the New Testament, it is not mentioned in the Old Testament; nevertheless, it is a valid feast because Jesus observed it. The reason that Yeshua could observe this feast, even though it was not part of the Mosaic Law, was because the Old Testament did prophesy concerning the events that would bring it about.

A. John 10:22-39

John 10:22 states: And it was the feast of the dedication at Jerusalem.

The feast of the dedication is the Feast of Channukah. This verse is preceded by John 7:1-10:21, a passage which deals with events in the life of the Messiah during the Feast of Tabernacles. The eight days of Channukah arose from the eight days of the Feast of Tabernacles. They had not been able to observe the eight days of the Feast of Tabernacles because the Syrians were still in control of Jerusalem at that time. But once the Temple was rededicated, they proceeded to observe the eight days of the Feast of Tabernacles, three months later than it normally should have been. Out of that arose the concept of the eight days of Channukah, but it was a copy of the eight days of the Feast of Tabernacles. It is no accident that after discussing the Feast of Tabernacles in John 7:1-10:21, John then discussed the life of the Messiah in relationship to the next feast, the Feast of Channukah in John 10:22-39.

Just as the concept of lights and the eight days originated from the Feast of Tabernacles, so in the Gospel of John, the events of Channukah in the time of the Messiah also originated out of the Feast of Tabernacles. During the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus declared Himself to be the light of the world (Jn. 8:12; 9:5). This is picked up three months later, when Yeshua made more claims concerning Himself at the Feast of Channukah.

1. The Occasion: John 10:22-23

And it was the feast of the dedication at Jerusalem: it was winter; and Jesus was walking in the temple in Solomon's porch.

The occasion is clearly the feast of the dedication or the Feast of Channukah. Yeshua went to Jerusalem for the purpose of observing this feast. The season was winter; the Feast of Channukah falls in Kislev, or December, a winter month. On this occasion, Jesus was in the Temple Compound in the area of Solomon's Porch. And on this occasion, the people remembered some statements that He had made of Himself three months earlier during the Feast of Tabernacles when He claimed to be the light of the world (Jn. 8:12; 9:5).

2. The Charge Against the Messiah: John 10:24

The Jews therefore came round about him, and said unto him, How long do you hold us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.

The charge is that of obscurity; they claimed that so far, Jesus had not really been clear. They were accusing Him of being obscure or unclear concerning His claims to be the Messiah. They wanted to know plainly if He is or is not the Messiah.

3. The Messiah's Answer: John 10:25-30

Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believe not: the works that I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.

Here Yeshua answers the charge of obscurity and makes four statements. The first statement is that Jesus had already told them clearly in two ways: by His words and by His works (v. 25). So what is the problem?

The second statement He makes is that the real problem is that they are not His sheep (v. 26). They have not believed on Him, so they are not His sheep. Because they are not His sheep, they do not understand the statements He is making.

In the third statement, He points out that His sheep, the believers, do recognize Him and do understand what He is saying and do know exactly who He claims to be (vv. 27-29). His sheep recognize His voice and they do follow Him (v. 27). Because they have accepted Him, they have eternal life (v. 28). Because they have eternal life, His sheep cannot lose their salvation (vv. 28-29). His sheep cannot lose their salvation for two reasons: first, they cannot be snatched out of the Messiah's hand; secondly, they cannot be snatched out of the Father's hand.

In the fourth statement, having pointed out that the real problem is not that He has been obscure, but their lack of faith. He then made it very clear and declared: *I and the Father are one* (v. 30).

4. The Response of the Jews: John 10:31

Because of the way the Jews responded, it was obviously very clear to them according to verse 31: *The Jews took up stones again to stone him.*

This shows that they clearly understood who He claimed to be; He claimed to be an equal with God, and therefore He claimed to be God.

5. The Messiah's Challenge: John 10:32

As they took up stones to stone Him for what they considered to be a blasphemous statement, Yeshua issued a challenge in verse 32: *Jesus*

answered them, Many good works have I showed you from the Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?

The challenge that Jesus issued to the mob is: “Before you start throwing stones, I have a question. I have done many, many good works among you. For which one of these works are you now planning to stone Me?” He is needling them to make sure that they understand what and who He claimed to be, so they would never again accuse Him of obscurity.

6. The Answer of the Jews: John 10:33

The Jews answered him, For a good work we stone you not, but for blasphemy; and because that you, being a man, make yourself God.

Their answer is that they are not stoning Him because of any good work that He did, but they are stoning Him for blasphemy. The blasphemy they say that He committed was: *that you, being a man, makes yourself God*. So much for charges of obscurity! Now they knew exactly who He claimed to be, and their response showed that they understood Him plainly.

7. The Messiah's Defense: John 10:34-38

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken), say ye of him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, You blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do them, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.

As the Messiah defended His statement in verse 34, He began by quoting Psalm 82:6, which in that context was applied to the judges of Israel.

Then in verses 35-36, He gave the application of the quotation to His particular situation. He pointed out that the judges of Israel were the representatives of God, having received His delegated authority. So by a personal, direct mission, they did the very works of God. Since they did the very works of God, they were referred to in the Hebrew text as *elohim* or “gods,” because they were the very representatives of God. If it were possible to apply the general term *elohim* to those who were merely God's representatives—those who had received merely delegated authority—how could it then be blasphemy if Yeshua claimed to be the unique Son of God, since He received, not transmitted authority, but a direct, personal command to do the Father's work.

The evidence that this is what He was doing is in verses 37-38. He pointed out that if He were not doing the works of the Father, He was not to be believed; but if He was doing the works of the Father, then He should be believed. Having said this much, He then states that the Father is in Him and He is in the Father, again claiming a unique oneness with the Father.

8. The Jewish Response to His Defense: John 10:39

They sought again to take him: and he went forth out of their hand.

Once again, it is obvious that the Jewish audience understood who He was claiming to be the Messiah, the Son of God, and God Himself. They no longer charged Him with obscurity.

9. The Greater Miracle

Channukah is observed in remembrance of a miracle: the miracle of the oil. The oil that was enough for only one day miraculously lasted eight days, which was long enough for the new batch to be ready. The kindling of lights emphasizes the showing of the miracle believed by the rabbis to have occurred on this occasion. It should be remembered that none of the historical books, such as I and II Maccabees, mentions this miracle. The miracle originates with the *Talmud*, not with the books written in the intertestamental period. That is why the technical name is not the Feast of Lights but the Feast of Dedication, which emphasizes what was performed on this occasion: the rededication of the Temple.

But this passage records a much greater miracle than that which legend says occurred during the first dedication. In this passage, Jesus made three surprising declarations. First, there is a declaration of His oneness with the Father. Secondly, there is a declaration of His Sonship with the Father. Thirdly, there is a declaration of His deity. These three declarations show what the greater miracle is. The miracle that should really be observed on this occasion is that God became a man to die for mankind so that those who believe can receive salvation. This salvation is so eternal that it cannot be lost. Because believers have an eternal salvation, they can walk in the light, the Light of the World, because He who is the Light of the World is indwelling them.

B. I John 1:5-9

And this is the message which we have heard from him and announce unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Building on John 8-9 where the Messiah declared Himself to be the light of the world, this passage also emphasizes the concept of light. As a result of His coming as the light, those who walk in the darkness, those who do not walk in accordance with the Word of God, do not have fellowship with God. Those who do walk in the light do have fellowship with God, and they have fellowship with others who are also walking in that light.

Once one becomes a believer, he becomes a child of light. Believers will always be children of light, although they may not always be walking in the light. The believer's obligation is to walk in the light. This is especially in reference to the light of the Word of God, because it is the Word that provides the necessary illumination to the believer to let him know how he needs to walk. If the believer walks in the light, then he has fellowship with God. Not only does the believer have fellowship with God by walking in the light; he also has fellowship with others who are walking in the light. One can always tell that a believer is living in sin when there is a sudden break of fellowship between him and other believers.

If a believer steps out of the light and walks in darkness, he has done so because of sin. He does not lose his salvation but has lost his fellowship with God and his fellowship with other believers. The means of rectifying that misstep into darkness is in verse 9: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

So by means of confessing one's sins, which means agreeing with God that it is sin and admitting participation in that sin, the promise is that God is faithful and just to forgive the sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. In this way, one puts away the deeds of darkness and again walks in the light of the Lord, and in the light of the Word.

This is a subsequent miracle: That by walking in the light, the believer has fellowship with God and fellowship with other believers.✠

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