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## **The Mo'edim Series - Hanukkah**

Hanukkah does not technically meet the criteria as a mo'edim, or an appointment time of YHWH. All of YHWH's mo'edim are detailed in Leviticus 23.

Similar to the Biblical day of Purim, Hanukkah is an invention of man. Because of this, and for other reasons as well, some have chosen to discard the observance of this day. On the other hand, some find nothing wrong with observing Hanukkah each year. We will discuss those differences in understanding later in the teaching.

The name "Hanukkah" derives from the Hebrew verb "חנך", meaning "to dedicate". In short, Hanukkah is the celebration of when the Jews overcame oppression and won back the temple. This concluded with the rededication of the temple.

Before we cover that event, it is important to cover the precluding history.

### **THE HISTORY OF HANUKKAH**

Judea was part of the Kingdom of Egypt until 200 BCE when King Antiochus III the Great of Syria defeated King Ptolemy V Epiphanes of Egypt at the Battle of Panium.

Judea then became part of the Empire of Syria.

King Antiochus III wanted to make peace with his new Jewish subjects guaranteeing their right to "live according to their ancestral customs" and to continue to practice their faith in the Temple of Jerusalem.

However, in 175 BCE, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the son of Antiochus III, invaded Judea, presumably at the request of the sons of Tobias.

The Tobiads, who led the Hellenizing Jewish faction in Jerusalem, were expelled to Syria around 170 BCE when the high priest Onias and his pro-Egyptian faction wrested control from them.

The exiled Tobiads lobbied Antiochus IV Epiphanes to recapture Jerusalem. As the ancient Jewish historian Flavius Josephus tells us:

## **The Jewish War**

*The king being thereto disposed beforehand, complied with them, and came upon the Jews with a great army, and took their city by force, and slew a great multitude of those that favored Ptolemy, and sent out his soldiers to plunder them without mercy. He also spoiled the temple, and put a stop to the constant practice of offering a daily sacrifice of expiation for three years and six months.*

There exists substantial evidence that the historical events of this period foreshadow a still future antichrist, and the mention of putting a stop the sacrifices, and an exact period of 3.5 years are just a couple of those correlations. If that subject interests you, we would encourage you to study the parallels of the events surrounding Hanukkah as compared with end times.

These correlations would seem to provide some evidence of the value of the memorial of Hanukkah, as we know that events seem to cycle and foreshadow, often down to the very same day. Meaning, these events appear likely to occur one final time.

It is quite interesting to study Antiochus as a type of antichrist. From his well-documented actions, we can learn the mind and character of the future antichrist still to come.

Some of the following historical accounts might not be suitable for younger viewers, so please use discretion.

In 167 BCE Antiochus ordered the altar to Zeus erected in the Temple.

Our Messiah stated that an event like this was to occur again:

### **Matthew 24:15-16**

[So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place \(let the reader understand\), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.](#)

So, what followed?

When the Second Temple in Jerusalem was looted and services stopped, practicing the Torah was immediately outlawed.

Antiochus put to death anyone who worshiped YHWH, or studied Torah.

As a foreshadowing type of antichrist, it should be noted that he specifically brutally punished circumcision, Sabbath-keeping, and eating kosher. Such things were his focus.

His goal was to end, Sabbath keeping, eating clean, keeping Yah's feast days, and circumcision.

Perhaps that antichrist mentality sounds familiar?

His methods to accomplish this were equally disturbing.

He hung freshly circumcised boys around their own mothers' necks, their mothers unable to remove them. Here, their little bodies rotted as a warning to others. In some cases, soldiers pushed mothers of

circumcised boys off city walls to their deaths below.

Antiochus tortured to death any Jew who would not sacrifice to Greek gods, or bow to Zeus in the Temple courtyard.

He sprinkled the blood of a sacrificed pig in the Holy of Holies and on sacred Torah scrolls. He killed anyone who would not eat pork.

Antiochus martyred at least 100,000 righteous Jews.

A Jew named Eleazar, a 90-year-old scribe, was the first documented to die.

Soldiers forced his mouth open and shoved pork inside. He spit it out and said that he would not disgrace his old age with meat forbidden in the Bible. He died willingly to set a good example.

As they beat him to death, he cried out, *“In my soul I am glad to suffer these things because I fear Him”* (2 Maccabees 6:30).

Antiochus killed a mother and her seven sons who all refused to eat pork. Soldiers scalped the first son, cut out his tongue, and cut off his hands and feet. While he was still breathing, they fried him in hot oil in a pan. They tortured all of the brothers by dismembering and boiling them, and finally killed the mother. Although she saw her seven sons perish in one day, her faith in God remained strong (2 Maccabees 7:20).

While these stories are certainly graphic, and disturbing, we felt it important to illustrate the level of faith we might require as such end times events promise to occur again in a similar capacity.

This is the value of Hanukkah, to remember the type of antichrist and to remember our deliverance from it.

These are the ways of the antichrist.

### **1 John 2:22**

[Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus \(Yeshua\) is the Christ \(Mashiac\)? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.](#)

Understandably, Antiochus's actions provoked a large-scale revolt by the Torah observant Jews.

Mattathias (Mattityahu), a Jewish priest, and his five sons led a rebellion against Antiochus starting with Mattathias killing in his unbridled zeal first a Jew who wants to comply with Antiochus's order to sacrifice to Zeus and then the Greek official who was to enforce the government's commands (1 Maccabees 2, 24-25).

By 166 BCE Mattathias had died, and Judah took his place as leader. By 165 BCE the Jewish revolt against the monarchy was successful. The Temple was liberated and rededicated. The festival of Hanukkah was instituted to celebrate this event.

Judah ordered the Temple to be cleansed, a new altar to be built in place of the polluted one and new holy vessels to be made. According to the Talmud, unadulterated and undefiled pure olive oil with the

seal of the high priest was needed for the menorah in the Temple, which was required to burn throughout the night every night.

The story goes that one flask was found with only enough oil to burn for one day, yet it burned for eight days, the time needed to prepare a fresh supply of kosher oil for the menorah. An eight-day festival was declared to commemorate this miracle.

It should be noted that there exists no extremely credible documentation of the miracle. It is difficult to state with scholarly confidence that this did or did not actually happen.

The miracle of the oil is widely regarded as a legend and its authenticity has been questioned since the Middle Ages.

The debate is largely fruitless, as it is difficult to prove either way. It could be mentioned that if the miracle did indeed occur, that it would have shown up in detail in one of the books of Maccabees.

The version of the story in 1 Maccabees states that an eight-day celebration of songs and sacrifices was proclaimed upon the re-dedication of the altar, and makes no specific mention of the miracle of the oil

The Jewish historian Titus Flavius Josephus narrates in his book, in Jewish Antiquities XII, how the victorious Judas Maccabeus ordered lavish yearly eight-day festivities after rededicating the Temple in Jerusalem that had been profaned by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Josephus does not say the festival was called Hanukkah but rather the "Festival of Lights":

### **The Jewish War**

*"Now Judas celebrated the festival of the restoration of the sacrifices of the temple for eight days, and omitted no sort of pleasures thereon; but he feasted them upon very rich and splendid sacrifices; and he honored God, and delighted them by hymns and psalms. Nay, they were so very glad at the revival of their customs, when, after a long time of intermission, they unexpectedly had regained the freedom of their worship, that they made it a law for their posterity, that they should keep a festival, on account of the restoration of their temple worship, for eight days. And from that time to this we celebrate this festival, and call it Lights. I suppose the reason was, because this liberty beyond our hopes appeared to us; and that thence was the name given to that festival. Judas also rebuilt the walls round about the city, and reared towers of great height against the incursions of enemies, and set guards therein. He also fortified the city Bethsura, that it might serve as a citadel against any distresses that might come from our enemies."*

In the Brit Hadasha, or New Testament it is stated that Yeshua was at the Jerusalem Temple during "*the Feast of Dedication and it was winter*", in John 10:22–23.

At minimum, we do not see any instruction from Yeshua criticizing this day as a historical memorial, and most afford Hanukkah more support for traditional observance because it is cited as such in the Scriptures.

Other sources for the events leading up to and including Hanukkah are usually considered to be written much later, and not as often cited.

### **The Scroll of Antiochus concludes with the following words:**

*...After this, the sons of Israel went up to the Temple and rebuilt its gates and purified the Temple from*

*the dead bodies and from the defilement. And they sought after pure olive oil to light the lamps therewith, but could not find any, except one bowl that was sealed with the signet ring of the High Priest from the days of Samuel the prophet and they knew that it was pure. There was in it [enough oil] to light [the lamps therewith] for one day, but the God of heaven whose name dwells there put therein his blessing and they were able to light from it eight days. Therefore, the sons of Hashmonai made this covenant and took upon themselves a solemn vow, they and the sons of Israel, all of them, to publish amongst the sons of Israel, [to the end] that they might observe these eight days of joy and honour, as the days of the feasts written in [the book of] the Law; [even] to light in them so as to make known to those who come after them that their God wrought for them salvation from heaven. In them, it is not permitted to mourn, neither to decree a fast [on those days], and anyone who has a vow to perform, let him perform it.*

Because Hanukkah is not one of the mo'edim, and because the miracle of the eight days of oil cannot be proven, some suggest the idea of Hanukkah should be discarded.

We do not agree with such a hard stance against Hanukkah.

However, we do believe that those who are uncomfortable with memorializing this day should not feel compelled to observe it. Likewise, those that are uncomfortable with the day should not divide the Body of the Messiah because of their discomfort.

There is nothing against the Torah for memorializing certain events as a reminder of what occurred.

That is important to understand, because we base what is permitted or not permitted from the instructions from our Creator.

As already mentioned, Purim was also established by man to memorialize the events of what is detailed in the book of Esther. This would be no different than a nation memorializing its independence day. Such is not wrong, it is simply a means to remember an important event.

Some might then ask how is this different than Christmas or Easter?

Christmas and Easter took sun god days and practices and repackaged them, rededicating such false god ways back to our Creator.

And such is the difference, and this is what causes Christmas and Easter, the days as well as the traditions, to violate the Torah.

We are not to worship YHWH in the same way that other nations worshipped their gods.

### **Deuteronomy 12:30-31 (ESV)**

*...take care that you be not ensnared to follow them, after they have been destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods?—that I also may do the same.' You shall not worship (YHWH) the LORD your God in that way... (See our teaching "[Sunburned](#)" for more information.)*

Since Purim and Hanukkah do not originate from the ways or days that the nations worshipped their gods, then the concept of Hanukkah and Purim do not violate His Torah.

A difference between Purim and Hanukkah that is worthy of consideration is that Purim is found in the Bible (Esther 9), whereas Hanukkah memorializes an event that occurred AFTER the TANAKH was written, but BEFORE the Brit Hadasha was written.

Though some debate it, again, the only place in Scripture that likely refers to Hanukkah is in the book of John.

### **John 10:22**

*At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter...*

The word feast in this verse is not actually in the Greek text and was inserted by the translators.

“Feast of Dedication” is the result of this Greek Word:

### **STRONGS:**

*enkainia - initiation, consecration; in NT the feast of rededication, an annual festival of eight days in the 10<sup>th</sup> Month of the Hebrew Calendar*

The verb form of this word means to dedicate or consecrate something:

### **STRONGS:**

*Enkainizo - to initiate, consecrate, dedicate, renovate; to institute.*

As we covered in the beginning of this teaching, Hanukkah is a historical remembrance of the rededication of the temple and all of the events that led up to it.

## **TRADITIONS OF HANUKKAH**

During Hanukkah, on each of the eight nights, a candle is lit in a special menorah (candelabra) called a 'hanukkiyah'.

There is a special ninth candle called the 'shammash' or servant candle which is used to light the other candles.

The shammash is often in the center of the other candles and has a higher position. It is often referred to as emulating Yeshua.

On the first night one candle is lit, on the second night, two are lit until all are lit on the eighth and final night of the festival. Traditionally they are lit from left to right.

A special blessing, thanking YHWH, is said before or after lighting the candles and a special Jewish hymn is often sung. The menorah is put in the front window of houses so people passing can see the lights and remember the story of Hanukkah.

Lots of games are played during the time of Hanukkah.

The most popular is 'dreidel' (Yiddish) or 'sivivon' (Hebrew). It's a four sided top with a Hebrew letter on each side. The four letters correspond to this Hebrew phrase, 'Nes Gadol Hayah Sham', which corresponds to the phrase in English, 'A great miracle happened (here)there'

The player places a coin, nut or chocolate coin in a pot and the top is spun.

If the letter 'nun' (נ) come up nothing happens, if it's 'gimel' (ג) the player wins the pot, if it's 'hay' (ה) you win half the pot and if it's 'shin' (for 'there' ש) or 'pe' (for 'here' פ) you have to put another item into the pot and the next person has to spin.

Food fried in oil is traditionally eaten during Hanukkah. Favorites are 'latkes' – which are potato pancakes and also 'sufganiyot' - deep friend doughnuts that are then filled with jam/jelly and sprinkled with sugar.

In some circles, Hanukkah has also seemed to become a time for giving and receiving presents and are often given on each night. Many are uncomfortable with this tradition, as it was intentionally developed as competition against Christmas. Thus, most who hold to the testimony of our Messiah Yeshua also understandably make every attempt to avoid assimilating Christmas-like traditions into their Hanukkah memorial or celebration. For whatever it is worth, 119 Ministries also gravitates to such an approach.

### **WHY A HANUKKIYAH?**

Some express concerns on the usage of a Hanukkiyah during Hanukkah, it is viewed as an attempt to replace or pollute the Biblical 7 candle menorah reserved for Yah's temple.

What might need to be considered is that it is simply a candlestick that by no means replaces the menorah. Though the idea of it was certainly inspired by the Biblical menorah. Those that have concerns with using a Hanukkiyah should certainly avoid using it, however, there does not seem to be any Torah instruction forbidding it to warrant any expression of concern.

One valid concern we would like to point out though, is that some of the traditional prayers states that "Yah commanded us to light the lights of Hanukkah." This of course is not true, and would be considered adding to the Torah. (Deuteronomy 4:2) We would encourage others to consider not saying such prayers which violate the Torah.

If you are watching this teaching near the time of Hanukkah, we wish you a blessed memorial of the day. During this time, consider remembering the ways of the antichrist, and the celebration of Yah delivering us away from those ways...back to the Torah taught by our Messiah, and all the joy and freedom that follows.

We hope that this teaching blessed you, and remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom

*For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at [www.testeverything.net](http://www.testeverything.net)*

**Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.**

**EMAIL:** [Info@119ministries.com](mailto:Info@119ministries.com)

**FACEBOOK:** [www.facebook.com/119Ministries](http://www.facebook.com/119Ministries)

**WEBSITE:** [www.TestEverything.net](http://www.TestEverything.net) & [www.ExaminatoTodo.net](http://www.ExaminatoTodo.net)

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