

THE CALL TO PRAYER

PRAYER CHANGES THINGS!



Hanukkah history, traditions, & applications to Believers

By Les'a Cole

During the reign of Alexander the Great (336-323 BC), Syria, Egypt, & Palestine experienced much freedom & were allowed to practice their own religions. Under Alexander the Great's relative benevolent rule, many Jews became assimilated & adopted much of the Hellenistic culture, language, customs, & dress of the Greeks. However, under the rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a century later, Jews were severely oppressed. In 168 BC, the Temple was desecrated. There was not only worship of Zeus in the Temple, but also a statue of Zeus was erected in the Temple & pigs were sacrificed on the Altar. And Jews were ordered to bow down to Greek gods.

A remnant of the Jews resisted & refused to worship the false gods. A rebellion broke out against Antiochus & the Seleucid/Greek monarchy. Mattathias & his five sons led the Jewish resistance. Following Mattathias' death, his son Judah took over. These individuals called themselves the *Maccabees* (מַכַּבֵּיִם) The Hebrew word for Maccabee (מַכַּבֵּי) is an acronym of the Hebrew *Mi Kamocha B'Elim Adonai* (which translated into English means: "Who among the mighty [other gods] is like You, Lord?", Ex 15:11. This is from the song Moses & the people sang to the LORD when they crossed the Red/Reed Sea, Ex 15.)

Thru guerilla-type warfare tactics, the Maccabees were successful & regained control of the Temple. Judah then called for the Temple to be cleansed, to rebuild the Altar, & to light its menorah, which was to be kept burning every night.

According to tradition, the Jews discovered there was only one vial of undefiled oil. The menorah was lit ... & it continued burning for eight days, until more oil could be made.

Though this event occurred after the close of the *Tenach* (Old Testament), it is referenced in the *Apostolic Scriptures* (New Testament) when Yeshua (Jesus) was in Jerusalem during the Feast of Dedication ("It was now winter, & Jesus was in Jerusalem at the time of Hanukkah, the Festival of Dedication," John 10:22 NLT).

As Rabbi Shimon Apisdorf stated, the Jewish people are a "tiny & ill-equipped people [who] was prepared to take on the superpower of its day."

[Are we, as believers, willing to follow God even when we are facing formidable enemies?]



Does Hanukkah have relevance to the 21st-century Believer?

<i>Four things Hanukkah celebrates</i>	<i>Applications to a Believer</i>
<p>1. God enabled a small rag-tag army of farmers, who believed God, to overcome one of the strongest armies in the world at that time.</p>	<p>1. He enabled the weaker & less significant (the Jews) to overcome the most powerful (the Seleucid/Greek) army. How much more does He want to enable us to overcome seemingly insurmountable circumstances!</p>
<p>2. Victory over assimilation. Jews' resistance to becoming totally Greek in action, thought, language, & culture. It is interesting to note Jews do not glorify military victory, only the resulting events. For example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The reclaiming of the Temple in 164 BC (the celebration is over the Temple's again being in Jewish hands & not over the Maccabees' victory) 2. The Western Wall again coming into Israeli hands in 1967 (Israel's celebration is over the Reunification of Jerusalem, not over the victory in 1967). <p>Above are just two examples of <i>how & what</i> military victories are commemorated & celebrated in Israel today.</p>	<p>2. He enabled Jews to overcome the pressure to assimilate & become a part of the society of that day. How much more does He want us to resist conforming to the world, our friends, society! He wants us to walk as He walked. Yeshua said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life," John 8:12b NIV.</p>
<p>3. The Rededication of the Second Temple. (Another name for Hanukkah is the Feast of Dedication.)</p>	<p>3. He allowed the Jews to rededicate the Temple to Him. By the same token, He allows us to constantly rededicate our lives to Him (our lives our earthly temples). Daily, His mercies are new & daily we should sanctify ourselves afresh to Him.</p>
<p>4. The much-loved story/folklore of the miracle of the Temple's one vial of oil lasting for eight days, not one.</p>	<p>4. He intervenes in our daily lives. He continuously brings into our lives many miracles of expanding natural objects (eg, our finances when we tithe), protection (eg, unknown accidents), etc. Many times, we are not even aware of His intervention!</p>

KEY POINTS FOR BELIEVERS TO REMEMBER ABOUT HANUKKAH:

1. It is imperative that we, as Believers, do not allow ourselves to become assimilated and conformed to the world. (Rom 12:2)
2. As we align ourselves with God's Word, we can overcome any enemy ... *regardless of the size of enemy!*

Prayer:

"YHVH, we bless You!!! Help us to reflect You in all our actions! Be with those in government – guide them. We pray You halt any & all directions that would attempt to thwart Your plans for Israel & the US. Silence the nay-sayers. Be with Israel & those who earnestly seek Your ways in both our lives & in the lives of our fellow countrymen. In the Name of our soon-coming Messiah, Yeshua, we ask these things. B'Shem Yeshua, amen."