



The Real Story of Chanukah – Dedication to the Death

I. Introduction

- a. Need to understand certain aspect of Chanukah that affects us all as believers, and Messianic Jews as Israel
- b. Pour out my heart with regard to the historical documents
- c. Typical Chanukah
 - i. Chanukiah (9 branches)—not a menorah (7 branches)
 - ii. Dreidels (spinning top)
 - iii. Potato latkes (potato pancakes)
 - iv. Sufganiyot (jelly donuts)
 - v. presents/gift giving
- vi. Often corresponds with Christmas
 - i. “Christmas Spirit” makes the modern, non-religious observance of Christmas an accessible holiday for Jews
 - ii. The same “Christmas Spirit” makes Chanukah into the Jewish version of Christmas

II. Origins of Modern Chanukah Observance

- a. Talmudic legend—Shabbat 21b
- b. The “miracle” of one day’s worth of oil lasting for eight days in the Temple menorah
- c. No historical record of this event
- d. Most likely a myth or legend

III. Origins of The Real Chanukah Story

- a. Apocrypha
 - i. Contained in the Septuagint (LXX, Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures); the Latin Vulgate, the original King James Bible, modern Catholic bibles
 - ii. Not accepted as inspired Scripture by Protestants, or as part of the Hebrew canon of Scripture
 - iii. It’s value is solely as historical documents
- b. 1 & 2 Maccabees
 - i. Two accounts of the same events
 1. 1Maccabees—factual
 2. 2Maccabees—theological perspective
 - ii. Written by two different unknown Jewish authors
- c. Chanukah—a story of turmoil, upheaval, sin, corruption, oppression, persecution, liberty, victory, attempted assimilation, anti-Semitism
- d. Torah—Jewish perspective
 - i. represents Israel’s fidelity to God; connection & relationship to God
 - ii. If Torah is defiled, God is defiled
 - iii. Think of it this way: Torah in this context is as precious to the Jew as Messiah is to the Messianic believer

IV. The Real Story of Chanukah

- a. 1Maccabees 1:10-15
 - i. Antiochus Ephiphanes—one in a succession of Greek conquering leaders
 - ii. Approximately 150 years before Yeshua
 - iii. Jewish men who were breakers of Torah who seduced other Jews to go the way of the Greeks/Gentiles and forsake Torah/God—self-assimilation
 1. Building of a gymnasium
 2. Covered over mark of circumcision
- b. 2Maccabees 4:7ff
 - i. Jason the psuedo-high priest bribed his way into the position
 - ii. Jason influenced the Jews to forsake Torah and follow the Greek ways
 - iii. Craze for Hellenism (the Greek way)
 1. The history of our people; to turn away from God and go the way of the nations
 2. Self-assimilation possibly for the sake of avoiding persecution
 3. No excuse, though—they did it willingly
 - iv. The enemy draws us away from God, and that which we desire becomes our destroyer
- c. 2Maccabees 6:12ff
 - i. According to the author, chastisements meant for the correction of Israel
 - ii. The author feels that God is still showing mercy
- d. 1Maccabees 4:41ff
 - i. Israel's self-assimilation opened the door for oppression
 - ii. The King ordered the following of "his religion"
 - iii. Forbidding and abrogation of anything that defined and distinguished Israel from among the nations
 - iv. Many Jews willingly followed the new religion; other Jews refused it
 - v. Death sentence for non-compliance
- e. 1Maccabees 2—Mattathias
 - i. Dedicates himself, his sons and his kinsmen to not depart from the ways of God
 - ii. "Just fury"—righteous zeal; culminates in death of Jew and Gentile alike
 - iii. Decision to permit self-defense on Shabbat not for themselves, but for the sake of the nation
 - iv. Formation of an army not just to fight their oppressors, but to put to death the Jews ("sinners") who were following the new religion and the ways of the Gentiles
- f. 2Maccabees 7
 - i. A mother and seven brothers—torture for not eating pork (which is a violation of Torah)
 - ii. First son
 1. Cut out his tongue
 2. Scalped
 3. Cut off hands and feet
 4. Fried to death

- iii. Second son
 - 1. Tore off skin and hair of his head
 - 2. Offered pork, and refused
 - 3. Professed belief in resurrection
- iv. Third son
 - 1. Cut out his own tongue
 - 2. Held out his hands to be cut off
 - 3. Regarding his sufferings as nothing; they marveled at his courage
- v. Fourth son
 - 1. Tortured
 - 2. Professed the resurrection
- vi. Fifth son
 - 1. Torture
 - 2. Professes faith in God's retribution against the King
- vii. Sixth son
 - 1. Professes that their punishment is due to Israel's sin
 - 2. Professes faith in God's retribution against the King
- viii. Mother
 - 1. Exhorted all her sons to die bravely
 - 2. Professes faith in God's mercy because her sons disregarded themselves for the sake of the Torah
- ix. Seventh son
 - 1. Refuses to obey the King
 - 2. Affirms obedience to Torah
 - 3. Confesses suffering due to Israel's sins
 - 4. Professes faith that Israel will be reconciled to God
- g. 2Maccabees 10
 - i. After Mattathias' death, his son Judah the Hammer carried the torch
 - ii. Reclaimed, purified, and dedicated the Temple
 - iii. 25th of Chislev began an eight-day celebration, like the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles)
 - iv. Decreed that those days be celebrated every year

V. Dedication to the Death

- a. חָנַק, *chanak*—"to dedicate," as in Proverbs 22:6
- b. Chanukah is about the people of Israel being dedicated to God so that we will not depart from His ways
- c. What is it going to take for us to turn around and follow our God? Another Antiochus Epihanes? Another Hitler?
- d. Our people as a whole are away from God. We are either caught up in our traditions, or worse, we are caught up in the ways of the world.
- e. We can participate in modern, traditional Chanukah observance, but not at the expense of the true message of Chanukah
 - i. The Maccabees
 - ii. The martyrs
 - iii. It's a time to remember why God put us here—not to assimilate, but to remain dedicated and covenanted to God, so that we can be a light to all the nations
- f. Self-denial; self sacrifice—Luke 9:23-25: the same spirit of Chanukah
- g. By life, or by death—Phil.1:20