

The celebration of **Hanukkah** focuses on the lighting of the menorah. It is a special time for families and friends to spend together singing, playing, giving gifts, telling stories, and **meditating on the meaning of Hanukkah**.

Eight Days of Hanukkah (day 1 of 8)

The Feast of Dedication and The Feast of Light

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The True Meaning of Hanukkah The “Conception” of the Light of the World

“Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus (Yashua – I am Salvation, I am the Light of the World).” **Luke 1:31**

Introduction:

By doing a study of Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication and the feast of Light, many hidden truths concerning our Lord Jesus Christ can be discovered. The feast brings the Old and New Testaments of our Bible together in unique ways that glorify God’s son. It helps teaches us about His conception, His live birth, and His body, the church. Although the feast of Hanukkah originated many years ago, it continually points those who understand its truths to future prophetic events.

The fourfold purpose of this teaching is:

1. To describe what the Feast of Dedication is.
2. To tell the story behind its origination.
3. To connect it to our Christmas story about Jesus’ birth, and
4. To present observations about the Temple’s seven-branched golden lampstand and its light.

Let’s begin our study by remembering that Jesus attended Hanukkah (John 9-10:22-39) in Jerusalem just a few months prior to His death. And while He was at the feast Jesus actually declared Himself to be the Son of God ... the Light of the world:

I and the Father Are One

⁵ As long as I am in the world, **I am the light of the world** . . . ²² At that time the **Feast of Dedication** took place at Jerusalem. It was winter,²³ and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. ²⁴ So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” ²⁵ Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. ²⁷ **My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.** ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. ³⁰ **I and the Father are one.**”

³¹ The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. ³² Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?” ³³ The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.” ³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? ³⁵ If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— ³⁶ do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘**I am the Son of God?**’ ³⁷ If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; ³⁸ but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.” ³⁹ Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands. **John 9:5, 10:22-39**

On the first night:

The earth was unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep . . . God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night . . .

*God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; they shall serve as signs for the set times – the days and the years; and they shall serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth.” And it was so. God made the two great lights, the greater light to dominate the day and the lesser light to dominate the night, and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth, to dominate the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that this was good. **Genesis 1:2-5; 14-18***

Prayer on the first night:

Daily Exercise - Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a Latin term that means “divine reading.” It is a way or method of reading the Scriptures in such a manner that facilitates the reader in receiving a “specific word” from God. The practice was developed early in the church’s history with Origen first expressing its principles around 220 AD. The system consists of four parts: reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation. It may be practiced privately or in a small group setting. There are four elements to be considered in preparing for this exercise:

1. Set aside enough time to complete the exercise so that you don’t have to rush through it. Usually thirty minutes is adequate.
2. Find a quiet place free of distractions.
3. Read the Selected Passage Above of Scripture.
4. Transition from what you have been doing by calming you mind and body. This can be done by taking a few slow, deep breaths and inviting the Lord to speak to you through His word.

Reading

1. Read the passage aloud slowly a couple of times.
2. Be silent for one-to-two minutes.
3. Is there a word or phrase that is meaningful to you?
4. Repeat the word or phrase several times silently as if to memorize it.

* If in a group share it in turn. Do not elaborate simply state what it is.

Meditation

1. Read the passage again.
2. Be silent for two to three minutes.
3. Think about how the reading applies or touches your life today.

* If in a group share it in turn. Briefly state “I hear, I see, I feel . . .”

Prayer

1. Talk with God about what he is showing you.

* If in a group pray quietly.

Contemplation

1. Read the passage again.
2. Be silent for two to three minutes.
3. Reflect on “I believe God wants me to _____ today/this week/etc.”

* If in a group share in turn. At this point you can elaborate somewhat on what you believe God is telling you to do.

Study on the first night:

Jewish Name and Meaning:

The Jewish name Hanukkah means **dedication**. The word in its various forms appears many times in the Old Testament portion of our Bible. It was used to describe the first use, the initiation, inauguration or dedication of a house, an altar or a priest. The word Hanukkah was used for the dedication of the Tabernacle in the wilderness by Moses, the dedication

of the altar in Solomon's Temple, and the dedication of the Second Temple and wall around Jerusalem in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. It is closely associated with consecration and anointing with oil. The verb form (Chanak) of the word also means to instruct or to **train up**. In Proverbs 22:6 it says, "**Train up** a child in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it."

The Feast:

The feast itself commemorates the re-dedication of the Temple and its altar to God in the year 164 BCE (BCE means "Before Common Era" and is used by Jewish people like we use BC or "Before Christ"). Hanukkah is not described in the Old Testament portion of our Bibles because that portion ended with the prophet Malachi in 398 BCE. However, there are an additional fourteen books called the Old Testament Apocrypha. These books were written during the "400" silent years between Malachi and the birth of Jesus Christ. Although the Apocrypha is not included in the canon of Scripture it can be found in the "Catholic Bible". The historical account of Hanukkah is found in the book, 1 Maccabees 4:36-61.

Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication starts on the 25th of Kislev and lasts for **eight** days. That date varies according to our calendar from November 27th to December 27th. Hanukkah is also known as the **Feast of Light**, as God miraculously provided enough oil to keep the lamps on the seven-branched golden lampstand burning for the entire eight days of the feast.

During the **eight**-day feast period of Hanukkah, Jewish people read the book of Numbers chapters seven through eight in their synagogues. Chapter seven tells of Moses and the leaders of Israel anointing and consecrating the Tabernacle, its altars, and furnishings. Chapter eight deals with setting up the seven-branched golden lampstand and setting the Levites apart for sacred service.

The Story Behind The Feast:

During the reign of Alexander, the Great (356 – 323 BCE) the Greeks conquered the known Biblical world (The "known Biblical world" is the area around the Mediterranean Sea. It stretched from India to France.). The Grecian period of influence lasted until 44 BCE when it was replaced by the Roman Empire. During their period of rule the Greeks forced their society, which was called Hellenism, upon the conquered people. It included their language, philosophy, religion, culture and governmental structure. The **goal** of Hellenism was a one-world order.

After Alexander the Great died, the Grecian empire was divided between his four generals: Cassander ruled in Macedon and Greece, Lysimachus in Asia Minor and Thrace, Ptolemy in Egypt and Seleucus in Mesopotamia and Persia. These four generals are referred to in the book of Daniel 8:8 and 11:4 (The Kingdom of Greece as a world power is described in Daniel chapters eight and eleven.).

One on Seleucus' descendents, Antiochus IV, ruled the Seleucid Empire (The territory included the northern and eastern portions of the Grecian Empire.) from 175 – 163 BCE. As king, he was very high on himself and even took the title "Epiphanes" which means "God Manifest." Antiochus, the villain in the story of the feast of Hanukkah, is the "little horn" or "despicable person" spoken of in Daniel 8:9 and 11:21. He is a "type" of the Antichrist who is to come and his story and character become intermingled with the Antichrist's in Daniel 8:9-12, 23-25, and 11:21-45. Similar events will occur at the time of Antichrist and the Great Tribulation.

Antiochus IV was the "supreme" Hellenizer and forced his one-world societal views on all of his subjects. The Hellenization of the Jews began in 173 BCE when Antiochus conspired with the Jewish High Priest at the time whose name was Jesus. This Jesus changed his name to Jason, a Greek name. Then in 169 BCE, Antiochus despoiled the Temple by taking its golden altar, lampstand, table of showbread, and the gold in the treasury to finance his campaigns.

Serious Hellenistic reform took place 167 BCE when a decree was issued for everyone in the empire to become one people by abandoning their own laws and religion. The Jews were forbidden from attending services in the Temple, participating in Sabbath and feast days, reading or possessing the Scriptures and circumcising their children. The penalty for failure to obey these laws was death!

On the 15th of Kislev in 167 BCE, Antiochus set up the "**abomination of desolation**" in the temple and built an altar on top of the existing altar of burnt offerings. No one knows for sure what this abomination was but many scholars have concluded that it was probably a statue of Zeus with Antiochus' face on it. Antiochus' desecration of the Temple was only a "type" of the "Abomination of Desolation" that is to come spoken of by Jesus Christ in His Olivet Discourse.

On the 25th of Kislev Antiochus sacrificed a pig on the altar and dedicated the temple to Zeus.

During this time a woman named Hannah and her seven sons were martyred for their faith. Each of the seven sons was asked in turn to bow to an idol or eat pork. Each son refused the request, professed his faith in God, and then was murdered. Upon refusal of the seventh son, both he and his mother were murdered.

A short time later, one of Antiochus' representatives entered the town of Modin to enforce the decree upon its people. He commanded one of the Jews to make a sacrifice to a foreign God. Then a priest named Mattathias Maccabees stepped forward and killed both of them thereby initiating a revolt. He led the revolt until his death later that year. Then, Judas Maccabees (The family name, Maccabees means "hammerer"), one of Matthias' five sons, took command of the resistance.

In a two-year span Judas won four major battles against superior Syrian forces and took control of Jerusalem in 164 BCE. He refurnished the temple with its furniture and utensils. Then he tore down the stones that covered the Lord's altar and had them buried. On the 25th of Kislev in 164 BCE, Judas rededicated the temple to God, exactly three years after Antiochus dedicated it to Zeus. He ordered a feast for the occasion, which lasted eight days and became known as Hanukkah.

When the temple was rededicated on the 25th of Kislev, the lamps on the seven-branched golden lampstand were lit providing the only light in the temple. However, when the lamps were lit only one jar of sacred olive oil could be found that was not polluted because the seal of the high priest on it had not been broken. A jar of oil was only enough to keep the lamps burning for one day. Yet the lamps miraculously stayed burning for the entire eight days of the feast until more oil could be prepared and dedicated. That is why Hanukkah is also called the Feast of Light.

An interesting sidebar to this story is that Judas Maccabees was killed in a battle in 160 BCE and his brother assumed the leadership of Israel until 142 BCE. From the Maccabees came the Hasmonean line of rulers in Israel, who eventually became Hellenized themselves and oppressed their own people. King Herod the Great defeated them in 37 BCE and established his own line of rulers.

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"The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world." John 1:9