

Chanukkah (Hanukkah)

A Primer for the Christian

by Kenneth Osterman



How much do you know about Chanukkah (Chanukah, Hannukah, Hanukkah)? Though difficult to spell and pronounce, it is known as the "Feast of Dedication" and the "Festival of Lights". It is a very joyous Jewish holiday tradition recalling significant miracles based upon documented historical events and an event requiring "Faith". Though Jewish, it also relates to Christianity in important ways. This wonderful Jewish celebration occurs in the late autumn to early winter occasionally overlapping the holidays of Thanksgiving (2013) and Christmas* (2019).

Chanukkah commemorates the "Rededication" of the Second Temple" in Jerusalem at the time of the Maccabean Revolt against the Grecian Seleucid Empire. It is not recorded in the Hebrew Bible but is based on amazing events recounted in the Jewish Books of Maccabees and the Talmud. It has become a deeply profound tradition and is noted in the Gospel of John as the "Feast of Dedication". John 10:22-23 indicates Jesus Christ (Yeshua HaMashiach, ישוע המשיח) was present in Jerusalem at the time of the Feast of Dedication.

This primer of 8 mini-lessons, one for each of the 8 days of Chanukkah, highlights the history and some of the traditions associated with this important Jewish holiday celebration and presents connections relevant to both the Jewish and Christian faiths.

*The actual date of Messiah's birth likely occurred in late September or early October, when the shepherds and their flocks would pasture in the fields, rather than the cold winter month of December.

Eight Days of Chanukkah and Eight Mini-Lessons

25 Kislev – 2 Tevet 5780 (December 22-30, 2019)

1.	Begins at Sundown on the 25th of the Month Kislev (December 22, 2019)	3
2.	A Distinct Candelabrum or Menorah – the Chanukkiah	5
3.	The Torah, TaNaKh, Talmud and Apocrypha	7
4.	The Importance of Chanukkah to Christians	9
5.	The Appointed Seasons/Feasts of the LORD	11
6.	An Introduction to the Jewish Calendar	13
7.	Foods, Gifts and Celebration	15
8.	The Miracle of the Hebrew Language	17
	Concluding Thoughts	20
	References	21



Chanukkah Day 1

Begins at Sundown on the 25th of the Month Kislev

Lighting with the Shamash



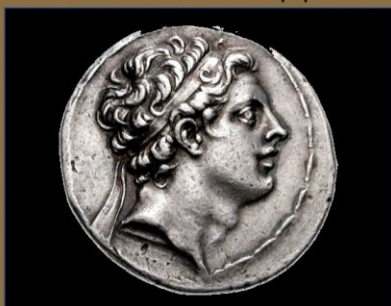
Alexander the Great



Seven Lamp Menorah



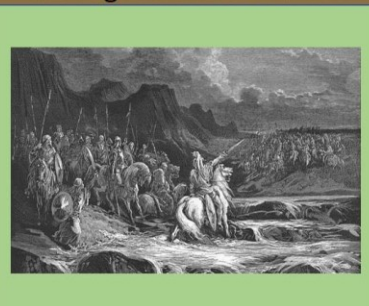
The Evil Antiochus IV Epiphanes



The Chanukiah (8 lights)



The Righteous Maccabees



Chanukkah (Hanukkah) Day 1 begins at sundown on 25th of the month Kislev in the Hebrew calendar. This may occur at any time from late November to late December in the Gregorian calendar. In 2019 it overlaps Christmas beginning the evening of Sunday December 22 and ending the evening of Monday December 30. How else might this festive Jewish tradition intersect with Christianity? How might we blend "Facts, Traditions, Reason and Faith" and make this Jewish tradition relevant in our hearts and minds? This primer aims to provide some answers and insights.

The story of Chanukkah begins in the reign of Alexander the Great.⁽¹⁾ In the 4th century BCE, Alexander conquered Syria, Egypt and Judea (Israel). He allowed the people under his control to continue observing their own religion and retain a certain degree of autonomy. Under his relatively benevolent rule, many Jews assimilated, adopting much of the Hellenistic (Grecian) culture, including the language, customs, dress, etc., in much the same way many Jews in America today blend into secular American society. At that time, the Jewish people survived, but their Jewish heritage was significantly compromised.

In 175-164 BCE, a successor of Alexander, an extremely evil Antiochus IV Epiphanes (god manifest)⁽²⁾ began his reign and control of the region. He oppressed the Jews severely, placing a Hellenistic priest in the Temple, massacring Jews, prohibiting the practice of the Jewish religion, and desecrating the Temple by sacrificing swine (non-kosher animals) on the altar. Both the Jewish culture and religion were now threatened with elimination in Jerusalem and Judea. If that should happen, their hopes of a Jewish Messiah of the lineage of David would be forever lost.

Two groups opposed Antiochus:⁽¹⁾ a nationalistic group led by Mattathias the Hasmonean and his son Judah Maccabee and a religious traditionalist group known as the Chasidim who were the forerunners of the Pharisees (not connected to the modern movement known as Chasidism). They joined forces in a

revolt against both the assimilation of the Hellenistic Jews and oppression by the powerful Seleucid Greek government. The revolt miraculously succeeded and the Temple was rededicated (Chanukkah means dedication חנוכה). The miraculous victories in battle, though astounding, were surpassed by a greater miraculous event. In God's unfathomable ways, earthly battles are often the harbingers or shadows of greater spiritual battles and victories - spiritual battles of good overcoming evil.

According to tradition, as recorded in the Talmud⁽³⁾, at the time of the rededication, there was very little oil remaining that had not been defiled by the Greeks. "Pure Oil" was required for the "Seven Lamp Menorah" in the Temple. These lamps were expected to burn throughout the day and night. There was only enough oil to burn for one day, yet miraculously, the oil burned for eight days until new oil was suitably produced. To express their thankfulness for the LORD's provision, an eight-day festival was declared to commemorate this miracle. It became a yearly celebration primarily commemorating the miracle of the oil and secondarily the military victory.

Though many earthly forces have often fought against the Jewish people, there are the unseen wicked spiritual forces of darkness that have long sought to destroy the Jewish people again and again. The miracle of the Chanukkah light represents the light of good and truth prevailing over the darkness of evil and deception.

How might we blend "Facts, Traditions and Faith" and make this story active in our hearts and minds?

(1) <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/hannukah>

(2) <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/antiochus-the-madman/>

(3) <https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/21774?lang=en>

Day 2 – A Distinct Candelabrum or Menorah – the Chanukkiah

Chanukkah Day 2

A Distinct Candelabrum or Menorah – the Chanukkiah



Distinct Menorahs

1 or 10 Menorahs? What is a Chanukkiah?

The Talmud (Menahot 28b)⁽⁴⁾ states that it is prohibited to use a seven-lamp candelabrum (menorah) outside of the Temple. The Chanukkah menorah therefore has eight main branches, plus the raised ninth lamp set apart as the “Shamash” (servant) light which is used to kindle the other lights. The use of eight lights avoids the Talmud prohibition, but also recalls the eight-day miracle of the oil. This lampstand is called a “Chanukkiah”.

Questions – How many Menorahs did the Tabernacle have? How many Menorahs did Solomon’s Temple have? Answers: 1 in the Tabernacle, 10 in the Temple! How many were in the Temple at the time of the Maccabean revolt? Most likely – just 1! What happened? Chanukkah is all about the 8-days of oil for the Menorah. “What is the Truth”? Facts-Traditions-Faith? Let us search for the facts and consider traditions, then we can each begin to decide what may blend with our individual faith.

The evil Antiochus (like Nebuchadnezzar) had ransacked the Temple. To the victor go the spoils, but even before he ransacked it, there might have been only one Menorah rather than the ten of Solomon’s great temple.

Some may recall that Moses was instructed to build a dwelling place for the LORD’s presence or “His Shechinah” in the “Most Holy”. The “Most Holy” was part of a specially enclosed tent variously called the Tent of Meeting-“אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד”, the Miskhan-“מִשְׁכָּן”, the “Tabernacle” or the “Sanctuary”. In front of the “Most Holy” was the “Holy” containing a “Table of the Bread of Presence”, a “Golden Lampstand” and a “Golden Incense Altar”. The Golden Lampstand was the “7-Lamp Menorah” and the only continual light within the “Holy”. Day and evening, it was to be properly maintained by the Levitical High Priest. The lamps were to burn continually except when the Tabernacle moved from place to place.

This portable Tabernacle continued until Solomon built the first Temple “בֵּית־הַמִּקְדָּשׁ” in Jerusalem. Solomon’s great temple was now the dwelling place of the LORD’s presence on a much grander scale. One of the grander parts was the number Menorahs within the “Holy” Place of the Temple. There were 10 golden Menorahs, until the Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in the 6th century BCE under Nebuchadnezzar. A second modest Temple was built in the days of Nehemiah and Ezra. It is unclear whether this second Temple had one or ten menorahs. But the second Temple was not comparable to Solomon’s Temple. Ezra 3:10-13 describes people weeping aloud when the foundation was laid. This weeping likely included the fact that there was not enough gold to create 10 Menorahs. They made do with what they had. Note: This second Temple would eventually be significantly enhanced centuries later by “Herod the Great who was a master builder” throughout Israel.

In the interim came the Greeks and the eventual Maccabean revolt against evil Antiochus. This revolt lasted about seven years with many guerrilla battles against a much greater military. The Maccabees were victorious and recovered the temple and its services from the Hellenistic priest and restored the proper services (2 Maccabees 10:1-8) when the miracle of the oil lasting 8 days occurred (Lesson Day 3). Eight days provided time to properly produce the quality and quantity of oil for the lamps. Leviticus 24:1-4 tells of the requirement to keep the lamps burning continually - trimmed evening and morning.

Today, the Chanukiah is the special Menorah having eight lamps or candles and a ninth called the “Shamash” or servant candle. The Shamash candle is offset from the other eight. It is offset higher or lower or to the front or to the back. Why? Tradition - and tradition is flexible. There are traditions of how to light the candles and to offer prayers. You can view a 3-minute video⁽⁵⁾ showing a traditional lighting of the Chanukiah over the eight days. There are variations of the Chanukiah, the lighting, the prayers and this tradition continues in many Jewish and non-Jewish homes worldwide.

There is an interesting connection between the oil and the eight days. Most Hebrew words are formed from roots of three letters. The Hebrew root for “oil - שֶׁמֶן ” and “eight - שְׁמֹנֶה” share the same three letter root of “nun/nun sofit (נ/ן), Mem (מ), Shin (ש).

(4) <https://www.sefaria.org/Menachot.28b?lang=bi>

(5) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAj3lPdnLbA> - Lighting the Chanukiah video

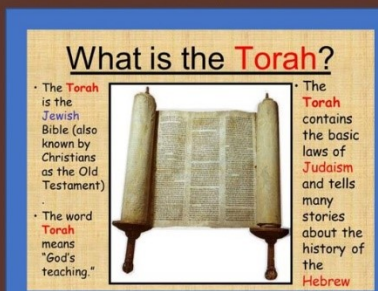
Are you beginning to Blend “Facts -Traditions-Faith”?

Day 3 – Torah, TaNaKh, Talmud and Apocrypha

Chanukkah Day 3

The Torah, TaNaKh, Talmud and Apocrypha

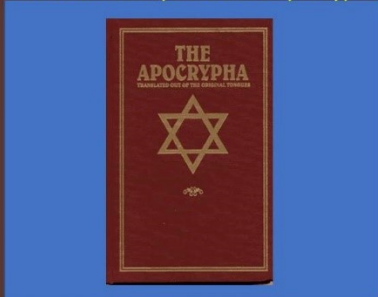
The Written Torah given to Moses



The Jewish Bible is the TaNaKh



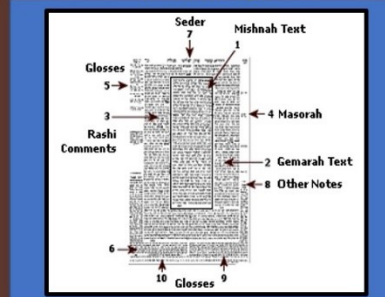
Maccabees are part of the Apocrypha



The Talmud is part of the large oral Torah



Talmud Page



The Torah, TaNaKh, Talmud, Apocrypha Blending “Fact -Tradition-Faith-Reason”

The Torah is the core of the Jewish faith. It contains 5 books – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. It tells of “Creation”, “The Deluge”, “The Abrahamic Covenant”, “The Exodus of Israel”, “the Covenant at Sinai”, “the Priesthood”, “Atonement Sacrifices”, the “Appointed Seasons/Feasts of the LORD”, “40 years of Wilderness Journey”, “Entry to the Promised Land” and so much more.

The TaNaKh is the entire Jewish Scriptures given by inspiration of the LORD to Moses, Prophets, Kings and also through special women such as Ruth and Esther. **TaNaKh** is an acronym for the three main portions of the Hebrew Bible - Torah(תּוֹרָה), Prophets(נְבִיאִים), Writings(כְּתוּבִים).

The TaNaKh describes much about the Menorah, the Temple and the Priestly services, etc..., but nothing about Chanukkah. The book of Daniel has prophecies about Alexander the Great and those who would rule after him, but it does not detail the Maccabean revolt though he may allude to it. Daniel makes multiple references to a very evil ruler in Alexander’s divided kingdom and sadly relates the Temple being made desolate and the sacrifices and offerings made to cease alongside a great abomination, but nothing specific about Chanukkah or a Festival of Lights.

This Jewish TaNaKh (writings, scrolls, megillahs), Christians recognize and name it the Old Testament. Christianity has compiled this into 39 books while the Rabbis categorize the same into 24 books. For example, the 2 books of Samuel are considered 1 book. Note - The Greek Septuagint and the Catholic Old Testament include additional writings called Apocrypha.

Among the Apocrypha, the books of the Maccabees contain the most information about the Maccabean revolt. It speaks of the battles and victory and rededication of the Temple services, however, there is no specific reference to the miracle of the oil. It is the Talmud⁽⁶⁾ (Oral Torah/Oral Law) that informs us of the miracle of Chanukkah.

“The Gemara (Talmud), in tractate Shabbat, page 21b⁽⁷⁾, focuses on Shabbat candles and Chanukkah candles and says that after the forces of Antiochus IV had been driven from the Temple, the Maccabees discovered that almost all of the ritual olive oil had been profaned. They found only a single container that was still sealed by the past legitimate High Priest. It contained enough oil to keep the Menorah in the Temple lit for a single day. As they used it, it miraculously burned for eight days allowing enough time to have olives pressed and suitable oil made ready.

To comprehend this miracle, we must blend many sources with “Reason, Faith and Divine Guidance”. The Bible is a large daunting volume of scripture, but the Talmud dwarfs the Bible beyond measure. The Apocrypha is another historical resource. To digest all these sources is beyond our human ability.

The Bible is one of the oldest documents and contains the principles of Judeo-Christian “values and ethics”. Some claim that the Bible is inerrant. But with hundreds and perhaps thousands of translations with differences (supposed conflicts) and often based upon differing manuscript copies (no originals extant), one must balance “Facts-Traditions-Faith” and add the element of “Reason” while yielding to the LORD’s guiding “Spirit”.

To skeptics, doubt will always remain. To others it is a hard and fast tradition based upon unseen fact. Others simply accept without any proof. However, at the root of almost every tradition is the seed of some seemingly unbelievable incident. Miracles are those seeds. “Proper Faith” in miracles requires a blending (reasoning) of Facts and Traditions along with a sense of wonderment at the power of the DIVINE. Such “Faith” becomes the harbinger of eternal "Hope".

The Miracle of the Feast of Lights continues today inspiring “Hope” in the darkest of times. To our Jewish friends, Chanukkah is not just a tradition – it is real “Rooted Hope” that shines into the darkness of night through their windows from within their warm home and warm hearts!

⁽⁶⁾ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talmud>

⁽⁷⁾ <https://www.sefaria.org/Shabbat.21b?lang=bi>

Day 4 - The importance of Chanukkah to Christians.

Chanukkah Day 4

The importance of Chanukkah to Christians

Jesus observed the winter Feast of Dedication



The importance of Chanukkah to Christians. Jesus of Nazareth observed the winter Feast of Dedication.

Jesus *Christ (Anointed, Messiah)* was born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth. His Hebrew name might be transliterated as Yeshua HaMashiach (The Anointed Savior). He was an orthodox Jew observing and fulfilling the Torah (Written Law). Matthew 7:17-19 "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled".

Jesus did more than fulfill the letter of the law, he fulfilled the spirit of the law. Each year, he observed the three required pilgrimages to Jerusalem as part of the "Appointed Seasons(3)/Feasts(7) of the LORD". The 3 pilgrimages occurred in the spring, summer and fall. He also observed Chanukkah which was not part of these appointed feasts. (cf. Leviticus 23; John 10:22-23). In the Day 5 lesson, we will consider these seasons and feasts along with Chanukkah and two other traditional celebrations called Purim and Rosh Hashanah.

Early in His ministry, Jesus was highly respected in the Synagogue. From his youth, he was likely granted the weekly privilege of reading the scriptures at the "Bema". (Luke 2:41-52; 4:14-20) Later, during his 3-½ year ministry, synagogue leaders would seek him both openly and privately for insight, healing and answers to their questions. (Mark 5:21-24; John 3:1-2)

As mentioned, Jesus observed the "Spirit of the Law" and not the strict letter of the law. When his disciples were accused by the Pharisees for plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath (Shabbat), Jesus admonished the Pharisees. He referred to David eating the "Bread of the Tabernacle" and stated "The

Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath;”. Jesus also healed on the Sabbath. (Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-6) Jesus also wore garments with “Tzitzits-תְּצִיטִים” for remembrance as recorded in the Book of Numbers. It is this fringe of “Tzitzits” that the woman with a flow of blood reached out to touch in simple faith. (Mark 5:25-34), (Numbers 15:38-40).

Since Chanukkah is not in the TaNaKh, it is not part of the law. However, the Gospel of John shows that Jesus recognized the importance of this feast. *“It was the Feast of the Dedication at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon.”* Jesus’ presence in Jerusalem at this unusual time and John’s record of it gives a double witness of the importance of the “Miracles of the Dedication and the Oil”. It is more than a simple tradition. This double witness is a confirmation of the “Miracle of the Feast of Lights” to those having “Faith” in the power of the LORD. Additionally, it is no coincidence that Jesus is the “Light of the World” and Christians are called to show forth “Light” and the Jewish people (Israel) are also a light unto the nations in a great unfolding Salvation. (Isaiah 49)

Imagine if the Maccabean revolt had failed. Consider if the Jewish presence has been extinguished from the Judean landscape. There would not have been shepherds in the fields observing and hearing angels singing about a child born in Bethlehem. (Luke 2:1-20) The Miracles associated with the Maccabean revolt kept prophecy alive. The Miracle of the Oil signifies the preservation of Jewish culture for another 200 years. Just in time to pave the way for fulfilling the Messianic prophecies wherein the root of the Christian faith was planted when Messiah was born into the world. From that time, both Judaism and Christianity would experience waxing and waning side by side in the coming centuries unto the present.

Although the Jewish culture in Israel would “nearly come to an end” by the Romans - The Miracle of the Oil still signifies the preservation of the Jewish light and though a great void was in the land for nearly two thousand years, TODAY the sounds of Jewish children playing in the streets of Jerusalem resonate and echo with great hope and joy.

Zechariah 8:1-8 “And the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, “Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath. Thus says the LORD: I will return to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain. Thus says the LORD of hosts: old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets. Thus says the LORD of hosts: If it is marvelous in the sight of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvelous in my sight, says the LORD of hosts? Thus says the LORD of hosts: Behold, I will save my people from the east country and from the west country; and I will bring them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be my people and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.”

Jesus recognized the good aspects of tradition, but he warned men when they replaced God’s precepts with false traditions of men. “You leave the commandment of God and hold fast the tradition of men.” (Mark 7:8) The true spirit of Chanukkah reflects the spirit of God’s Divine purpose for the Jewish people and all mankind through the Light of Messiah.

As Jesus did, can we properly blend “Facts -Traditions-Faith”?

Day 5 – The Appointed Seasons/Feasts of the LORD

Chanukkah Day 5

The Appointed Seasons/Feasts of the LORD



The Appointed Seasons(3) & Feasts(7) of the LORD – Plus 3

The “Appointed Seasons(3)/Feasts(7) of the LORD” are primarily recorded in Leviticus chapter 23. Alongside these convocations, the importance of the Shabbat (Sabbath) is most evident and closely associated with these seasons and feasts in a significant manner, but there is no mention of Chanukkah. The “Miracle of Chanukkah” came over a thousand years after the law ordinances were given to Moses.

The holiday of Chanukkah is a “Traditional Feast or Festival” celebrating the miracles of victory and the oil that did not fail. The Miracles were the power of the LORD and the tradition is man’s desire to celebrate the LORD’s providences. As indicated earlier, Jesus did not disapprove of this tradition, but recognized it for what it was meant to be – a feast and a celebration of remembrance unto the LORD.

In ancient Israel, the Seasons/Feasts were not tradition – these were specific laws or ordinances to be observed each year and involved sacrifices with Shabbat rests and 3 yearly pilgrimages to Jerusalem. These were called “Holy Convocations” (assemblies) in the spring, summer and fall. When Israel prospered or had enough freedom from adversity, the men were expected to make the 3 pilgrimages to Jerusalem at the appointed season.

Three feasts are in the spring of the year. “Passover” (Pesach Nisan 14th)”, “Unleavened Bread (15th)” and “First Fruits of Barley” are contiguous or overlapped. Besides the importance of Shabbat days, there were ordinances about sacrifices and unleavened bread. The religious Jews observe these today, but because the temple no longer exists, the sacrifices are no longer practiced. Secular Jews may or may not observe the feasts or may consider them only tradition rather than ordinances of Torah. Many Christians associate these three early feasts with the 1st advent of Yeshua the Messiah.

Fifty days later is the summer feast of “First Fruits of Wheat”. It is called “Shavuot”, “Feast of Weeks” or “Pentecost” (from Greek fifty). Jewish belief associates this with the giving of the Law at Sinai. Christian belief associates it with the out pouring of God’s spirit upon the early church. This feast is unusual as it involves “2 leavened loaves” to be presented to the LORD as First Fruits. Leaven or yeast (a symbol of sin) is normally avoided during the “Appointed Feasts” except for Shavuot. (Leviticus 23:17)

Two feasts and a sacred assembly are in the fall of the year – “Feast of Trumpets” (Yom Teruah, Rosh Hashanah*), “Day of Atonement” (Yom Kippur), “Feast of Tabernacles” (Sukkot). “Trumpets” is a Shabbat and initiates 10 days of affliction unto the “Day of Atonement”. Five days later, the most joyous “Feast of Sukkot” is celebrated. A sukkot is a booth or small tabernacle and recalls Israel’s wilderness journey and is very similar to Pesach (Passover) which also recalls their deliverance from Egyptian Bondage. Many Christians associate these three assemblies with the 2nd advent of Messiah. Zechariah 14:16 prophesies the “end of days” survivors of the nations will yearly worship the King, the LORD of hosts in booths, aka tabernacles.

In the Jewish calendar, a month or so later comes the tradition of Chanukkah. But this traditional holiday is not alone. There is another traditional holiday. The 1-day holiday called Purim or “Festival of Lots” and this is described in the Book of Esther. It falls in late winter or early spring preceding Passover. The Book of Esther is a “hidden prophecy” describing another of the great deliverances of the Jewish people and is the basis of the Purim celebration.

Facts-Traditions-Faith? Tradition has also been woven into the “Appointed Seasons/Feasts” over the centuries, especially after the destruction of the 2nd temple and the end of animal sacrifices. Each must decide for oneself. *Rosh Hashanah is one of those traditions and is explained next.

Day 6 – An introduction to the Jewish Calendar and why Israel has multiple new year celebrations and explains how these seasonal feast dates and Chanukkah & Purim move year to year to maintain an alignment with the seasons.

Chanukkah Day 6

An Introduction to the Jewish Calendar

Chanukkah and all the Feast dates are seasonal

Israel has multiple new year celebrations – let's celebrate!



- 1) A look at the Jewish Calendar - Chanukkah and all the feast dates are seasonal.
- 2) Israel has two new year celebrations. However, some rabbis say there are four new years to observe.

"When is Chanukkah next year?". For the Jew - same as always: the 25th of Kislev! But for most of us, it is some number of days later or maybe several days earlier, it all depends on what calendar you are using! What calendar?

These confusing questions make an important point: the dates of Jewish holidays do not change from year to year. Jewish holidays are celebrated on the same day of the "Jewish Calendar" every year, but the Jewish lunar year is not the same length as the solar year of the Gregorian calendar. The Gregorian calendar is used by most of the western world. So the Chanukkah date drifts only on the Gregorian calendar. Chanukkah is always on the 25th of Kislev of the Jewish calendar. ⁽⁸⁾

In brief – the Jewish calendar is based upon the moon. 12 lunar months have approximately 360 days whereas the Gregorian solar calendar has approximately 365 days per year. Over the years, these two calendars significantly drift apart. The Jewish calendar occasionally adds a 13th month to realign the calendar to keep the seasons and the feasts corresponding. Neither of these calendars are perfect, but the Jewish calendar maintains the seasonal alignment of the "LORD's Appointed Feasts". These "Appointed Feasts" are the core of salvation, not only to the Jew, but to Christians and ultimately to all mankind. As we previously noted, these feasts are associated with Messiah's 1st and 2nd advents.

Note: Christian holidays are mostly fixed and follow the Gregorian Calendar, the major exceptions are the “Good Friday-Easter” observances, both of which are closely based upon the Jewish Passover & Feast of First Fruits when Jesus was crucified and subsequently raised from the dead three days later.

When is the Jewish New Year? Once a year, every 6 months or every 3 months?

The "first month" of the Jewish calendar is the month of Nisan (Aviv, Abib), in the spring, when Passover occurs. (Exodus 12:2; Esther 3:7) This is the “ecclesiastical” new year. However, the Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashanah) begins with Tishri, the seventh month and is the “civil” new year. The Jewish year is increased at Tishri 1. (note our year 2019 overlaps parts of Jewish years 5779-5780). Rosh Hashanah is not stated in the Bible. Tradition associates it with the “Feast of Trumpets” and other traditions such as the “Creation of Adam and Eve”.⁽⁹⁾ Additionally, the Mishnah (a portion of the Talmud) teaches there are four Rosh Hashanahs, let’s celebrate!!!!⁽¹⁰⁾

⁽⁸⁾ <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-jewish-calendar>

⁽⁹⁾ <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/how-rosh-hashanah-became-new-years-day/>

⁽¹⁰⁾ https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3582884/jewish/The-Four-Jewish-New-Years.htm

Like Judaism, Christianity has developed traditions over the centuries. As Jesus did, can we properly blend “Facts -Traditions - Faith”? We need to understand the roots of the tradition to see how it might have begun and how it might have maintained or diverged from truth.

Day 7 – Foods, Gifts, Celebration

Chanukkah Day 7

Foods, Gifts and Celebration



Five common Traditions ⁽¹¹⁾

1. The lighting of the Chanukiah, giving thanks to the LORD and celebrating life.
2. The Dreidel Game "A Great Miracle Happened There", " נ ג ה ש "
3. Purchase some chocolate coins, aka gelt.
4. Cook some tasty potato latkes for appetizers. Follow with mouth-watering rugelach pastry for dessert.
5. Gift giving and the fun part of receiving.

Lots of games are played during the time of Chanukkah. The most popular is 'dreidel' (Yiddish) or 'sivivon' (Hebrew). It's a four-sided top with a Hebrew letter on each side. In the next section, we will explain the Hebrew Aleph-bet (alphabet) and introduce some Hebrew words. Caution! To read Hebrew, you must read right to left.

But the most important aspect of the Chanukkah holiday is the reflection upon the "Miracles of the LORD". The miracle of the deliverance from Antiochus IV and the miracle of the Oil. The history of the Jewish people has seen many dark times, but the "*light has never gone out*"! God has never forsaken his people. There is an important set of Christian verses describing the eternal hope of the Jewish people.

Romans 11:25-32 Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brethren: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in, and so all Israel will be saved; as it is written,

"The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob";
 "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

As regards the gospel they (the Jews) are enemies of God, for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. Just as you were once disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may receive mercy.

For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all.

Sadly, many Christians have misconstrued the term “*enemies of God*” to teach that God has replaced the Jews with the Christian Church. Such who hold this view, should read the entire chapter of Romans 11 and carefully consider verses 17-24.

⁽¹¹⁾ <https://www.punchbowl.com/p/5-hanukkah-traditions>

How to blend “Facts -Traditions - Faith”? We need to divest ourselves of those parts of tradition that have diverged from the root fact/truth! But, let us not do away with the excitement and rejoicing – let it be God honoring.

Day 8 – The Miracle of the Hebrew Language

Chanukkah Day 8

The Miracle of the Hebrew Language

[illegible]

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (Shema Yisrael)

ד שְׁמַע, יִשְׂרָאֵל: יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְהוָה אֶחָד.
ה וְאַחֲבַתְּ, אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ, בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ, וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ.
ו וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם--עַל-לִבְבְּךָ.
ז וְשָׁנַנְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ, וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָם, בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִכְתְּךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ, וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ.
ח וּקְשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת, עַל-יָדְךָ; וְהָיוּ לְטַטְפֹּת, בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ.
ט וּכְתַבְתָּם עַל-מְזוֹזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ, וּבִשְׁעָרֶיךָ.

Day 8 – in the evening, the last day of Chanukkah begins.

- 1) Let's learn a bit of Hebrew starting with the Dreidel.
- 2) Hebrew is written and read "right to left".
- 3) There is an audio link to 100 common Hebrew phrases at the end of this section.

On the Dreidel are 4 letters - "נ ג ה ש". Nun "נ", Gimel "ג", Heh "ה", Shin "ש". These letters tell the message "A Great Miracle Happened There". Now you know 4 Hebrew letters and an acronym.

We learn language from childhood and begin speaking years before we learn to read or write. Similarly, the ancient Hebrews spoke the language, but most did not read or write it. Language is one of the mysteries of the Hebrew Bible. What language did Adam and Eve speak? Did the first language really become confused at the “Tower of Babel?” What is Paleo-Hebrew, what is Phoenician? Which came first? Besides carving symbols and letters on stone, wood and metal, when did writing and reading become practical? These are valid questions which we could ponder and investigate, but to fully understand the origin of language requires at least a PhD thesis. Let’s get basic.

What is the situation today? There are 22 Hebrew consonants (table 1 below), but several of these have a second form and some letter charts show 32 letters. Additionally, there are several vowels (table 2 below). Ancient Hebrew did not have written vowels. Also, most modern Hebrew writings do not use vowels. Written vowels are primarily used for those who are learning the language. Once the language is mastered, written vowels are superfluous. However, Biblical Hebrew (The Sacred Language) used in Prayer and in the Synagogue has vowels fashioned by the Masoretic scribes (6th - 10th centuries CE) to preserve the truest pronunciation of the sacred language.

Teit (T)	Cheit (Ch)	Zayin (Z)	Vav (V/O/U)	Hei (H)	Dalet (D)	Gimel (G)	Beit (B/V)	Alef (Silent)
Samekh (S)	Nun (N)	Nun (N)	Mem (M)	Mem (M)	Lamed (L)	Khaf (Kh)	Kaf (K/Kh)	Yod (Y)
Tav (T/S)	Shin (Sh/S)	Reish (R)	Qof (Q)	Tzadei (Tz)	Tzadei (Tz)	Fe (F)	Pei (P/F)	Ayin (Silent)

Table 1 above – letters / Table 2 below - vowels

Cholam	Shva	Segol	Tsere	Patach	Kamatz
Shuruk	Kubbutz	Chataf Segol	Chirik	Chataf Patach	Chataf Kamatz

Though Biblical Hebrew and Modern Hebrew are similar, Modern Hebrew is more mature and robust and was revived from ancient writings and modernized by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (video)⁽¹²⁾ in the late 19th and early 20th centuries assisted by his 1st wife Devora and compiled by his 2nd wife Hemdah.⁽¹³⁾ This revival of the ancient Hebrew language is a modern-day miracle by three individuals providentially directed by God.

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda died December 16, 1922 on the 2nd day of Chanukkah.

Here is the Hebrew word for Chanukkah with vowels "חֲנוּכָּה" and without vowels "חנוכה". The various English spellings and pronunciation of this Hebrew word is any of the following: Hanukah, Hannukah, Chanukah, Chanukkah, etc... Part of the issue is the pronunciation of some Hebrew letters. Particularly the letters "ח", "כ" have guttural sounds which most English speakers have difficulty making.

Here are 100 common Hebrew greetings and sayings in English with transliteration and Hebrew audio. Note, when you see two lines for a phrase, the first is for speaking to a male, the second is when speaking to a female. <https://www.teachmehebrew.com/100-basic-hebrew-phrases.html> ⁽¹⁴⁾

Fact - the modern nation of Israel is an ongoing miracle fulfilling prophecy after prophecy. The restored Hebrew language being a dynamic "natural" power uniting the Jewish people as they return from the many nations of their exile. More so, we anticipate the ultimate "Divine" sanctifying power when the LORD will dwell with Israel and the "Nations" will know that the LORD makes Israel "Holy" and makes a "Covenant of Peace". Ezekiel 37:14,26-28

Happy Chanukkah!

חנוכה שמח!

Shalom!

שלום!

⁽¹²⁾ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQvB-djqMag> Eliezer Ben-Yehuda 11-minute video

⁽¹³⁾ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hemda_Ben-Yehuda

⁽¹⁴⁾ <https://www.teachmehebrew.com/100-basic-hebrew-phrases.html>

Concluding Thoughts

Facts-Traditions-Reason-Faith

For the Christian, the Bible (The Jewish TaNaKh and the Christian Gospels and Epistles) is the foundation of our Faith in a Jewish Messiah, Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus (The Anointed) Christ.

In the early years of Christianity, there were no Christian Scriptures. The first disciples learned, verified and taught salvation from the Hebrew scriptures. (Acts 17:10-11; 2 Timothy 3:16-17) The writers of the Christian scriptures quoted generously from the Hebrew Scriptures as they began to more clearly comprehend and to witness their faith in their Messiah. (Acts 3:17-26)

Jesus' miracles verified that he was Messiah and he made frequent reference to those Hebrew Scriptures during his ministry and after his resurrection showed by those same scriptures that they spoke of his birth, his life, his ministry, his suffering, his death, his resurrection and his glory. One day, on the way to Emmaus he shared comfort and explanation to two close disciples who were deeply grieved.

"And he said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the [Messiah] should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. Luke 24:25-27

Faith is difficult or impossible to define to a skeptic. Skeptics view faith as credulity and require precise information. Traditions add confusion as traditions can change over time. Is it possible to meld all of this into a coherent personal faith? Each must filter out the chaff and assemble the kernel truths from which faith can sprout, grow, mature and flourish with God's enlightenment.

Chanukkah transcends tradition. It is based upon more than the fact of a miraculous deliverance from a great evil. Both Jesus and the gospel writer recognized the tradition. Viewing this miraculous deliverance of the Jews and Chanukkah more broadly, we repeatedly see time and time again (Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, Pogroms, Holocaust, modern day anti-Semitism) that the oil of the Jewish light continues to burn through the darkest and deepest of troubles.

We know not the troubles that may yet occur against the Jewish people, but we know that the scriptures which pointed to Messiah as Savior at the Cross, also point to Messiah as Deliverer of the Jewish people.

As regards the gospel they are enemies of God, for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. Just as you were once disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may receive mercy. For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! (Excerpt from Romans 11)



References

Day 1

- (1) <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/hannukah>
- (2) <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/antiochus-the-madman/>
- (3) <https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/21774?lang=en>

Day 2

- (4) <https://www.sefaria.org/Menachot.28b?lang=bi> (see excerpt #1 below)
- (5) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAj3lPdnLbA> - Lighting the Chanukiah 3-minute video

Day 3

- (6) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talmud>
- (7) <https://www.sefaria.org/Shabbat.21b?lang=bi> (see excerpt #2 below)

Day 6

- (8) <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-jewish-calendar>
- (9) <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/how-rosh-hashanah-became-new-years-day/>
- (10) https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3582884/jewish/The-Four-Jewish-New-Years.htm

Day 7

- (11) <https://www.punchbowl.com/p/5-hanukkah-traditions>

Day 8

- (12) [YouTube - Eliezer Ben-Yehuda](#) 16-minute video
- (13) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hemda_Ben-Yehuda
- (14) <https://www.teachmehebrew.com/100-basic-hebrew-phrases.html>

Excerpts from the Talmud

Excerpt #1

....A person may not construct a house in the exact form of the Sanctuary, nor a portico corresponding to the Entrance Hall of the Sanctuary, nor a courtyard corresponding to the Temple courtyard, nor a table corresponding to the Table in the Temple, *nor a candelabrum corresponding to the Candelabrum in the Temple. But one may fashion a candelabrum of five or of six or of eight branches. And one may not fashion a candelabrum of seven branches.*

...In the time of the Hasmoneans the Candelabrum was not fashioned from wood but from spits of iron, and they covered them with tin. Later, when they grew richer and could afford to fashion a Candelabrum of higher-quality material, they fashioned the Candelabrum from silver. *When they again grew richer, they fashioned the Candelabrum from gold.*

Excerpt #2

When the Greeks entered the Sanctuary, they defiled all the oils that were in the Sanctuary by touching them. And when the Hasmonean monarchy overcame them and emerged victorious over them, *they searched and found only one cruse of oil that was placed with the seal of the High Priest, undisturbed by the Greeks. And there was sufficient oil there to light the candelabrum for only one day. A miracle occurred and they lit the candelabrum from it eight days.* The next year the Sages instituted those days and made them holidays with recitation of hallel and special thanksgiving in prayer and blessings.