



The Feasts of Israel

12. Hanukkah-The Feast of Dedication



Introduction to Hanukkah

The last book of the Old Testament is the book of Malachi, written about 425 BC, during the *Second Temple* period. Its during this time in Israel's history after the Jews were restored to the land after the Babylonian captivity and destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon (Jeremiah 25:1-3). Cyrus the Great defeated the Babylonians and allowed the Jews to return

to the land of Israel and rebuild the Temple, the 2nd Temple.

During the 2nd Temple, God sent other prophets, including Zechariah, Haggai and Malachi, but after Malachi there was a period of silence, between the Old and New Testaments. This period is known as the *Intertestamental Period*, between the Old and New Testaments, at least for the Protestants. For the Catholics and Orthodox other books are considered sacred¹ known as the Apocrypha. It during this period the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah occurred.

The meaning of Hanukkah comes from the Hebrew word for "Dedication", because it celebrates the rededication of the 2nd Temple after the Abomination of Antiochus Epiphanes in 165 BC. Antiochus was the leader of the Seleucid Empire, and in his desire to unify his kingdom under one religion, the Greek gods, he intentionally polluted the Jewish Temple setting up an image of Zeus. The Jews rebelled, and the Jewish Temple was rededicated after the victory.



The Time of Hanukkah

Hanukkah takes place in the winter for eight-days on the month of Kislev, corresponding to December on our calendar, this is the ninth Hebrew month. This is about 2 months after the Feast of Tabernacles which takes place on the Seventh Month.

The Record of Hanukkah

The story of Hanukkah is not part of scripture but in the Apocrypha, mostly in I and II Maccabees, they are part of the 14 books written between 200 BC and 100 AD. These are considered as non-inspired writings by both Jews and Christian

¹ Apocrypha" refers to biblical-style books from the Second Temple period that were not included in the canonization of Tanakh, including historical works, didactic wisdom literature, and apocalyptic texts, among others. Traditional Jewish approaches to these works have varied throughout the ages, but they are generally viewed as helpful sources of information and literature without much religious significance. The books include I,II,III & IV Maccabees, Judith and others.

protestants; Catholics and Orthodox Christians include portions as inspired. All groups consider these writings as historically important for the record of events.

Alexander the Great and Hanukkah



After Cyrus the Great allowed the Jews to return and rebuild their Temple, the 2nd Temple, the Persian Empire continued to expand its territory to both the East and West. A couple of famous stories come out of this period; one is the battle of Marathon where we get the 26.2 marathon race, in 490 BC, the Greeks defeated the Persians and Pheidippides ran 26.2 miles from the plain of Marathon to Athens to announce the victory, he then passed. Another famous battle is the battle of the 300, also known as the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC, where 300 Spartans led by

King Leonidas of Sparta resisted the Persian advance, giving time for the Greeks to escape from Athens. Athens was burned by the Persians, causing a burning hatred for the Greeks by the Persians.

This eventually led to the rise of Alexander the Great, who wanted to revenge the Persian destruction of the Greek cities. At the age of 20, he succeeded his father Philip II of Macedon in 336 BC, Phillip had already unified the Greek states and developed the Greek fighting system. In 332 BC, Alexander defeated the Persians led by Darius III at the battle of Issus at the age of 23.

By the time he was thirty, his kingdom expanded to India, but his men had enough and wanted to return home. Alexander settled in Babylon, planning his next phase of world conquest when he died of fever at the age of 33. His empire was divided up between his generals after his children were eliminated. There were four parts to the kingdom, Seleucus reigning over Syria and Eastern Asia, Ptolemy ruling Egypt, Lysimachus over Thrace and Western Asia Minor and Cassander ruling Macedonia and Greece.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes



Seleucid was Alexander's general who succeeded him to rule of the land of Israel. Ptolemy was the general that took control of Egypt. Israel came into the crosshairs of their succeeding families as each tried to take control of the land. This struggle lasted for over 150-years between the Seleucid and Ptolemy kingdoms, eventually ending with the Roman Empire taking control of both areas.

Before Rome, there was Antiochus IV, in 171 BC who came to the Seleucid kingdom. Antiochus was also known as the madman or *Epimanes*, he proclaimed himself "god in the flesh", calling himself Antiochus Theos Epiphanes (Antiochus god appearing).

Aware of the growing threat of Rome to the west, Antiochus IV, who learned about Rome as a hostage that was later released, felt he needed to unify his kingdom. His plan was to

unify it under the Greek culture, religion and language; to be better able to oppose Rome, he wanted to Hellenize the land of Israel.



Some in Israel agreed with him, they saw this as a step forward, this would make Israel more like the nations surrounding them, this was known as the “progressive” Hellenist party. This included the elite and wealthy who had little faith, but it was to their economic and social benefit to advance Hellenism. They wanted to be like the other nations, so their trade and commerce could not be hindered by Jewish laws and customs. They are mentioned in I Maccabees.

1Ma 1:11-15 KJVA

(11) In those days went there out of Israel wicked men, who persuaded many, saying, Let us go and make a covenant with the heathen that are round about us: for since we departed from them we have had much sorrow.

(12) So this device pleased them well.

(13) Then certain of the people were so forward herein, that they went to the king, who gave them licence to do after the ordinances of the heathen:

(14) Whereupon they built a place of exercise at Jerusalem according to the customs of the heathen:

(15) And made themselves uncircumcised, and forsook the holy covenant, and joined themselves to the heathen, and were sold to do mischief.

The Orthodox party chose to ally themselves with Egypt or Ptolemies, since they did not want to force the Greek culture on Israel.

The Greek culture was more than just philosophy, it deified nature much like the Babylonians and pagans in Israel’s past, such as Neptune being the god of the waters.

This drama unfolded in Jerusalem with two brothers, Yohanan (Onaias III) who was an ally of Egypt and high priest, opposed the Hellenization of Israel and his brother Joshua who allied himself with Antiochus. Joshua changed his name to Jason and he had popular support. Jason made an agreement with the Greeks, so bribed Antiochus IV to be made High Priest, he promised to build a stadium in Jerusalem and a temple to the Greek god Phallus. Jason also had his brother killed by assassins.

Later Menelaus, a Jew not from the priestly line, bribed Antiochus with an even greater bribe to become high priest. When he became priest, he plundered the Temple looking for ways to pay his bribe, he ransacked the temple treasures to pay Antiochus IV.

Antiochus IV had big plans, he wanted to expand his empire like Alexander the Great, so in 168 B.C., he attacked Egypt, but the Roman Republic intervened. They sent Popillus Laenas, he humiliated Antiochus, by drawing a circle around him and asking him to decide before he left the circle whether he wanted war or peace with Rome. Antiochus chose peace and was humiliated and left Egypt, but he was now enraged.

Returning to Syria, Antiochus learned that Jason, brother of Yohanan, had tried to take back the office of high priest from Menelaus after hearing that Antiochus had died. Antiochus let his rage against Rome be manifested in Jerusalem, he ordered his general and armies to destroy Jerusalem. He burned homes and thousands were sold into slavery.

Antiochus then focused on the 2nd Temple, On Kislev 15, 168 BC, a statue of Zeus was constructed in the Holy of Holies, that looked very similar to Antiochus. Then on the 25th of Kislev (December), the birthday of Zeus, Antiochus offered a pig on the altar. This was an intentional abomination of the Jewish Holy place, that later became known as the Abomination of Desolation. Pigs blood was sprinkled on the Holies of Holies by Antiochus, the broth was



From The Triumph of Judas Maccabeus by Peter Paul Rubens, 1635.

poured on the scrolls of the scriptures and the Temple was converted into a Temple for Zeus, only pigs were allowed to be sacrificed. A fortress complex was built, called Acra next to the Temple to keep the people in line.

To further eradicate Judaism, Antiochus made it illegal to practice Judaism upon death. Houses were searched to enforce his rules. Whole families were put to death, if it was observed that they kept the Sabbath, dietary laws, circumcision or had Jewish scrolls of the Law. Circumcised Babies were

hung around mothers' necks and woman were thrown from the walls who disobeyed the Greeks. The goal was forced assimilation through terror.

The Martyrs

Maccabees records the horrific tortures faced by the Jews who refused Antiochus' orders. A mother named Hannah (See below) endured watching her son's being tortured rather than violate the Law. She pointed them toward the resurrection, to encourage them to endure.

Matthias

He was the father of five sons, from the city of Modin about 17 miles northwest of Jerusalem. When the Syrians built an altar of Zeus, he refused to offer a sacrifice of a pig. He killed the Greek with the sword, followed by his five sons, John, Simon, Judah, Eleazar and Jonathan. They tore down the altar and headed to the Judean hills, the rebellion had begun.

The Maccabees

The rebellion grew, more Jews joined the group as they waged guerilla warfare against the better equipped Syrians/Greeks. Pagan altars were destroyed, and apostate Jews were killed. Matthias became sick and died, the leadership passed to his son Judah, who became known as the "Hammer" or Maccabee.

After three years of revolt, they met in open battle at Beth-horon and Emmaus, with miraculous victories against better trained and equipped enemies. The way to Jerusalem had been opened.

The Mending of the Altar

Judah the Maccabee led his forces to Jerusalem, to restore the Temple, the saw the desolation that occurred over the last 3-years. The gates of the Temple were burned, weeds as high as your waist covered the courtyard, in the same courtyard stood the idol of Zeus with the face of Antiochus.

The Jews began to restore the Temple, removing the Greek idols and rebuilt the altar on Kislev 25, 165 BC, 3-years from the time of the Abomination.



Dan 11:26-35 ESV

(26) Even those who eat his food shall break him. His army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain.

(27) And as for the two kings, their hearts shall be bent on doing evil. They shall speak lies at the same table, but to no avail, for the end is yet to be at the time appointed.

(28) And he shall return to his land with great wealth, but his heart shall be set against the holy covenant.

And he shall work his will and return to his own land.

(29) “At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south, but it shall not be this time as it was before.

(30) For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back

and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant.

(31) Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.

(32) He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.

(33) And the wise among the people shall make many understand, though for some days they shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder.

(34) When they stumble, they shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery,

(35) and some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time.

2Ma 7:1-42 KJVA

(1) It came to pass also, that seven brethren with their mother were taken, and compelled by the king against the law to taste swine's flesh, and were tormented with scourges and whips.

(2) But one of them that spake first said thus, What wouldest thou ask or learn of us? we are ready to die, rather than to transgress the laws of our fathers.

(3) Then the king, being in a rage, commanded pans and caldrons to be made hot:

(4) Which forthwith being heated, he commanded to cut out the tongue of him that spake first, and to cut off the utmost parts of his body, the rest of his brethren and his mother looking on.

(5) Now when he was thus maimed in all his members, he commanded him being yet alive to be brought to the fire, and to be fried in the pan: and as the vapour of the pan was for a good space dispersed, they exhorted one another with the mother to die manfully, saying thus,

(6) The Lord God looketh upon us, and in truth hath comfort in us, as Moses in his song, which witnessed to their faces, declared, saying, And he shall be comforted in his servants.

(7) So when the first was dead after this number, they brought the second to make him a mocking stock: and when they had pulled off the skin of his head with the hair, they asked him, Wilt thou eat, before thou be punished throughout every member of thy body?

(8) But he answered in his own language, and said, No. Wherefore he also received the next torment in order, as the former did.

(9) And when he was at the last gasp, he said, Thou like a fury takest us out of this present life, but the King of the world shall raise us up, who have died for his laws, unto everlasting life.

(10) After him was the third made a mocking stock: and when he was required, he put out his tongue, and that right soon, holding forth his hands manfully.

(11) And said courageously, These I had from heaven; and for his laws I despise them; and from him I hope to receive them again.

(12) Insomuch that the king, and they that were with him, marvelled at the young man's courage, for that he nothing regarded the pains.

(13) Now when this man was dead also, they tormented and mangled the fourth in like manner.

(14) So when he was ready to die he said thus, It is good, being put to death by men, to look for hope from God to be raised up again by him: as for thee, thou shalt have no resurrection to life.

(15) Afterward they brought the fifth also, and mangled him.

(16) Then looked he unto the king, and said, Thou hast power over men, thou art corruptible, thou doest what thou wilt; yet think not that our nation is forsaken of God;

(17) But abide a while, and behold his great power, how he will torment thee and thy seed.

(18) After him also they brought the sixth, who being ready to die said, Be not deceived without cause: for we suffer these things for ourselves, having sinned against our God: therefore marvellous things are done unto us.

(19) But think not thou, that takest in hand to strive against God, that thou shalt escape unpunished.

(20) But the mother was marvellous above all, and worthy of honourable memory: for when she saw her seven sons slain within the space of one day, she bare it with a good courage, because of the hope that she had in the Lord.

(21) Yea, she exhorted every one of them in her own language, filled with courageous spirits; and stirring up her womanish thoughts with a manly stomach, she said unto them,

(22) I cannot tell how ye came into my womb: for I neither gave you breath nor life, neither was it I that formed the members of every one of you;

(23) But doubtless the Creator of the world, who formed the generation of man, and found out the beginning of all things, will also of his own mercy give you breath and life again, as ye now regard not your own selves for his laws' sake.

(24) Now Antiochus, thinking himself despised, and suspecting it to be a reproachful speech, whilst the youngest was yet alive, did not only exhort him by words, but also assured him with oaths, that he would make him both a rich and a happy man, if he would turn from the laws of his fathers; and that also he would take him for his friend, and trust him with affairs.

(25) But when the young man would in no case hearken unto him, the king called his mother, and exhorted her that she would counsel the young man to save his life.

(26) And when he had exhorted her with many words, she promised him that she would counsel her son.

(27) But she bowing herself toward him, laughing the cruel tyrant to scorn, spake in her country language on this manner; O my son, have pity upon me that bare thee nine months in my womb, and gave thee such three years, and nourished thee, and brought thee up unto this age, and endured the troubles of education.

(28) I beseech thee, my son, look upon the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, and consider that God made them of things that were not; and so was mankind made likewise.

(29) Fear not this tormentor, but, being worthy of thy brethren, take thy death that I may receive thee again in mercy with thy brethren.

(30) Whiles she was yet speaking these words, the young man said, Whom wait ye for? I will not obey the king's commandment: but I will obey the commandment of the law that was given unto our fathers by Moses.

(31) And thou, that hast been the author of all mischief against the Hebrews, shalt not escape the hands of God.

(32) For we suffer because of our sins.

(33) And though the living Lord be angry with us a little while for our chastening and correction, yet shall he be at one again with his servants.

(34) But thou, O godless man, and of all other most wicked, be not lifted up without a cause, nor puffed up with uncertain hopes, lifting up thy hand against the servants of God:

(35) For thou hast not yet escaped the judgment of Almighty God, who seeth all things.

(36) For our brethren, who now have suffered a short pain, are dead under God's covenant of everlasting life: but thou, through the judgment of God, shalt receive just punishment for thy pride.

(37) But I, as my brethren, offer up my body and life for the laws of our fathers, beseeching God that he would speedily be merciful unto our nation; and that thou by torments and plagues mayest confess, that he alone is God;

(38) And that in me and my brethren the wrath of the Almighty, which is justly brought upon our nation, may cease.

(39) Than the king' being in a rage, handed him worse than all the rest, and took it grievously that he was mocked.

(40) So this man died undefiled, and put his whole trust in the Lord.

(41) Last of all after the sons the mother died.

(42) Let this be enough now to have spoken concerning the idolatrous feasts, and the extreme tortures.

