

# CHANUKAH – THE FEAST OF DEDICATION

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## What's In a Name?

- The Feast of Dedication is also known as the Festival of Lights, because of the lighting of the Chanukah, the eight branched menorah.

- Hebrew: חֲנֻכָּה (Chet, Nun, Kaf, Hey) Ch-N-K-H (Hebrew: R to L)

- Don't forget you read Hebrew words right to left

- The Hebrew Word Means Dedication
- Why is it spelt so many different ways?
  - Hanukah - Hanukkah - Hannukah - Hannukkah - Chanukah - Chanukkah - Channukkah
  - The answer is 'transliteration' – i.e. how the Hebrew letters are changed for similar sounding English letters – this is not easy for this particular Hebrew word, hence the many different spellings
  - I will use 'Chanukah' – transliteration used by the website 'Hebrew for Christians'
- Chanukah is a Jewish Feast - Observed for eight nights and days, starting on the 25th day of Kislev and ending on the 3rd day of Tevet according to the Hebrew calendar
  - This may occur at any time from late November to late December in the Gregorian calendar; in 2022 the Feast begins on the night of Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> December
- Chanukah is not a 'Feast of the Lord' but it is a Feast of Israel
  - The Feasts of the Lord (like Pesach and Sukkot) are spoken of in the books of Leviticus and Numbers, and elsewhere
    - They are summarised in Leviticus chapter 23; there are eight of them: Shabbat (Sabbath); Pesach (Passover); Chag HaMatzot (Unleavened Bread); Reishit Katzir (Firstfruits); Shavuot (Weeks or Pentecost); Yom Teruah (Trumpets); Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement); Sukkot (Tabernacles)
  - Nevertheless, the Feast of Dedication is one of the highlights of the Jewish calendar and is a feast of celebration and great joy
  - It's a holiday that remembers the historical events that took place in 167 BC during the time when Israel was under Syrian-Greek rule and the Jewish people were suffering severe political and religious persecution

## Chanukah in History

- **The Seleucid Empire**
  - Daniel the Prophet served Nebuchadnezzar and other Emperors, under the Babylonian Empire until it was conquered by the Persians in 539 BC
  - He then served under Cyrus (539-530 BC) and Darius 1 (522-486 BC) in the Persian Empire
  - The Persian Empire was conquered by the Greeks under Alexander the Great in 334 BC – but at Alexander's death in 323 BC the Empire was divided between Alexander's four Generals
    - Macedonian & Greece                      Cassander
    - Asia Minor & Thrace                      Lysimachus
    - Egypt & Arabia                              Ptolemy
    - Syria, Babylon and the East              Seleucus
  
- **The 'so-called' Silent Years of the Bible**
  - Malachi (the last book of the Old Testament) was prophesying when the nation of Israel was back again in the land of Israel after the Babylonian captivity, but they were under the domination of the great world power of that day, Persia
  - In about 435 B.C, when the prophet Malachi ceased his writing, the centre of world power began to shift from the East to the West
  - By the time we reach the New Testament, the book of Matthew, we discover an entirely different atmosphere – almost a different world. where Rome is now the dominant power of the earth
  
- **The Bible is not in fact 'Silent' about these Years at all**
  - Just as the 2000 years of Church History are seen prophetically in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 – The Seven Churches
  - 
  - So these 'silent years' are spoken of prophetically in Daniel chapters 8 and 11 in some detail – and with end times implications
  
  - **Daniel 8 – The Ram and the Goat**
    - *Daniel 8: 1-8*      The Medes & Persians (the Ram) and Alexander The Great (the Goat) – interpreted in vs. 20-22
    - *Daniel 8: 9-14*    Antiochus Epiphanes (and prophetically the Antichrist)
    - *Daniel 8: 23-25*   The Antichrist foreshadowed
  
  - **Daniel 11 – The Kings of the North and the South**
    - *Daniel 11: 1-4*    The Persian and Greek Empires
    - *Daniel 11: 5-35*   The Seleucid and Ptolemaic Rivalry
    - *Daniel 11: 36-45* Antiochus Epiphanes (and prophetically the Antichrist)
  
- **Antiochus IV**
  - Antiochus IV was the Hellenistic king of the Seleucid Empire from 175 BC until his death in 164 BC
    - A successor of Seleucus, ruler of Syria, Babylon and the East – this included Israel - he was a son of King Antiochus III (Antiochus the Great)

- His original name was Mithradates, but he adopted the name 'Epiphanes', meaning 'God Manifest'
- Antiochus IV is a forerunner of the Coming World Leader (the Antichrist) in the end times
- Antiochus IV, the 'villain' of Chanukah, is prophetically described in *Daniel 8: 9-14* and *11: 36-45* – and the prophecy, like many in the Bible, has a double meaning – speaking both of Antiochus Epiphanes and of the Antichrist

*'He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down.'*

***Daniel 8: 11***

- Both Antiochus IV and the Coming World Leader persecute the Jewish people and their worship and desecrate the Holy Place with an abomination of desolation (see *Daniel 9: 27* and *Matthew 24: 15-22*)

*'And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation. Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.'*

***Daniel 11: 31-32***

- Antiochus IV, the 'villain' of Chanukah, is prophetically described in *Daniel 8: 9-14* and *11:36-45* – and the prophecy, like many in the Bible, has a double meaning – speaking both of Antiochus Epiphanes and of the Antichrist
- It is during the reign of Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) that the events of the first Chanukah occur in Israel
  - Hellenism – Greek culture, thinking and attitudes -- it is liberal, pluralistic, humanist, equalitarian, inclusive and censorious -- was introduced to Israel and seduced many leaders including the religious (some priests)
  - Antiochus outlawed Jewish religious rites and traditions - those which were kept by observant Jews as in the Torah
  - He ordered the worship of Zeus as the supreme god
    - This was anathema to the Jews and they refused, so Antiochus sent an army to enforce his decree
    - The city of Jerusalem was destroyed (168 BC) because of the resistance, many were slaughtered, and Antiochus established a military Greek citadel called the Acra
  - He prohibited the study of Torah
  - He appointed a Hellenistic 'High Priest' to the temple
  - He desecrated the temple by requiring pigs to be sacrificed on the altar
- The Maccabean Revolt
  - These outrages eventually incited rebellion, and in 165 BC the Hasmonean family of Matthias, the High Priest, and his youngest son Judah 'Maccabee' (meaning 'the Hammer') organised a revolt
  - Succeeded in driving out Antiochus and the Syrian Greeks from Israel – this was a great miracle (against the might of the Greek Empire)
  - God's word was proven *"The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits"* – the Maccabean revolt succeeded by God's grace and power

- Jerusalem was liberated, and the temple was re-consecrated and re-dedicated for Jewish worship
- This re-dedication is recorded in the apocryphal book of 1 Maccabees in chapter 4, and in other Jewish sources
- **The Sanctified Oil** – according to later tradition (the Talmud, the written recording of oral Rabbinic custom and teaching) **at the time of re-dedication there was only sufficient undefiled oil to light the temple menorah for one day – miraculously the sanctified oil burned for the whole eight days of the re-dedication of the temple – the time needed to prepare a fresh supply of consecrated oil**
- The apocryphal book of 1 Maccabees records, in chapter 4, verses 36 to 56, the story of the re-dedication of the temple which had been desecrated

*"On the **twenty-fifth of the ninth month, Chislev**, in the year 148 they rose at dawn and offered a lawful sacrifice on the new altar of burnt offering which they had made. **The altar was dedicated**, to the sound of hymns, zithers, lyres and cymbals, at the same time of year and on the same day on which the gentiles had originally profaned it. The whole people fell prostrate in adoration and then praised Heaven who had granted them success. **For eight days they celebrated the dedication of the altar**, joyfully offering burnt offerings, communion and thanksgiving sacrifices."*

**1 Maccabees 4: 52-56**

- This book is not part of the canon of scripture – but is a reliable Jewish history, even if not inspired.
  - There is no reference in the Bible to the origins of the Feast of Dedication
- **The Celebration of The Feast of Dedication**
    - First recorded in 1 Maccabees 4 (as we saw) – and it was then celebrated in the years thereafter, commencing annually on the 25th day of Kislev, hence it was celebrated in Yeshua's time
    - The story of the oil is not mentioned in the book of Maccabees – it is only first recorded in the Gemara (the latter part of the Talmud) which was completed around 500 AD: hence may scholars suggest that the initial eight day Feast was in fact a late celebration of the Feast of Sukkot (Tabernacles); itself an eight day feast
    - In 165 BC it was not possible for the Jews to celebrate Sukkot (which begins on the 15th day of Tishri) until the temple had been re-dedicated, which was not completed until the 25th day of Kislev
    - The focus of the Feast of Chanukah is 'Dedication', not Lights – Chanukah is often called the Festival of Lights because of the lighting of the Chanukiah (an eight branched menorah)
    - The only reference in scripture to the Feast of Dedication is in *John 10: 22-23*

## Chanukah and Yeshua

- The only record in scripture of the Feast of Dedication is of Yeshua at the Feast, and is found in John chapter 10:

*'Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch.'*

**John 10: 22-23**

- **Sukkot to Chanukah – the Context of John 10: 22-23**
  - The Context in which this is recorded is important to note

- The Context is the events in Jerusalem between Sukkot (The Feast of Tabernacles) and Chanukah (The Feast of Dedication) – a period of about 8 weeks
- It is a time of much conflict between Yeshua and the Pharisees – all this happens in the period between Sukkot and Chanukah – see John chapters 7 to 10
- It has been a story of the conflict between Light and Dark, and between Blindness and Sight
- It is in this context that John chapter 10 continues with Yeshua walking in the temple, in Solomon's porch during the Feast of Dedication

### See Chanukah and Yeshua – Study Notes

- Yeshua at the Feast of Dedication – the Culmination of the Conflict
  - Surrounded by the religious Jews, Yeshua is then asked directly to declare whether He is the Christ (the anointed one, that is the Messiah) or not
  - Yeshua's reply is damning:
    - Look at the Evidence – the Works of the Father
    - You are not My sheep (*John 10: 25-26*)
      - This is a direct reference back to the previous discussion about sheep and shepherds
    - My Sheep – Yeshua finishes by declaring who are His sheep

*“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.”*  
**John 10: 27-29**

- Finally Yeshua says plainly that He and the Father are one – at which the Jews again attempt to stone Him, but He escapes their grasp

*“I and My Father are one.”*  
**John 10: 30**

- Here, at the Feast of Dedication, the whole background to these conflicts with the religious Jews is Yeshua's Dedication to the Father
  - Yeshua was doing the works of the Father in obedience to the Father - yet they refused to believe
  - It is interesting that John chapter 10 concludes with Yeshua going to the other side of the Jordan, where many believed in Him

- What may we learn about Dedication from this time (Sukkot to Chanukah) of conflict between Yeshua and the religious Jews?
  - 1. Dedication to the Lord will bring conflict with the 'religious' – the difference between 'religion' and 'relationship'
  - 2. Dedication to the Lord will open blind eyes – giving us spiritual sight and insight, because Yeshua is the Light of the World
  - 3. Dedication to the Lord will enable us to hear the voice of the Shepherd, to Know Him as He Knows Us, and to Follow Him
  - 4. Dedication to the Lord means we are truly Abraham’s seed – we are heirs of God's promise to Abraham and sons of the living God, co-heirs with Yeshua – this is our spiritual ancestry - grafted in to the Olive Tree of Israel

*'And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.'*  
**Galatians 3: 29**

## Chanukah and Spiritual Warfare

- Chanukah reminds us of the Spiritual Battle

*"For I have bent Judah, My bow, fitted the bow with Ephraim, and raised up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and made you like the sword of a mighty man."*  
**Zechariah 9: 13**

- As in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes - there is a battle between the 'sons of Greece' and the 'sons of Zion'
  - This battle is raging in our society – and in the last few decades we have seen the erosion of our Judeo-Christian heritage, which influenced our laws, our leaders, our culture and our whole way of thinking
  - Our heritage is being lost to the Hellenistic (Greek) attitudes, thinking and values (Liberality, Pluralism and Humanism) – that are opposed to God's laws and character
  - As in the days of the Greek Empire; today there are many 'gods', all of them false gods – and every man does what is 'right in his own eyes'

*'In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.'*  
**Judges 17: 6; 21: 25**

*'Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but happy is he who keeps the law.'*  
**Proverbs 29: 18**

- Knowledge of...and dedication to... the one true God is being increasingly outlawed and attacked – just as in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes.

- 'Sons of Zion' are in complete Opposition to the 'Sons of Greece'
  - The ways of man are not the ways of God

*"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."*  
**Isaiah 55: 8-9**

- The love of the world is in complete opposition to the love of the Father

*'Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.'*

**1 John 2: 15-17**

- Only one road leads to eternal life

- The Battle is Spiritual

- We need to allow the Lord to stir us up and raise us up, and have Him equip us for the fight.
- Spiritual Battle requires Armour and Weapons which are spiritual in nature – see **Ephesians 6: 10-18**
  - Most important of all we must learn – it is a battle fought only in the Lord's strength, not our own – as Paul urges us...

*'Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.'*  
**Ephesians 6: 10-11**

- No need to fight every battle
  - Allow the Lord to guide you
  - The Battle is fought by Standing
  - Our Weapons – the Sword of the Spirit (Scripture), Prayer, Watchfulness and Perseverance
- Deception in the Church – the Spiritual Battle also rages within the Church
  - Sadly this spiritual battle between the 'sons of Greece' and the 'sons of Zion' is found within the church
    - Yeshua told us it would be so...
  - Because of false teachers and false teaching

*"Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold."* **Matthew 24: 11-12**

- The Church today is riddled with 'Doctrines of Demons' – and many have been led astray from the truth

*'Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron...'* **1 Timothy 4: 1-2**

- Greek Thinking (vs. Hebraic Thinking) is in the Church - and its roots are in the Hellenistic anti-Christ ways of the world (philosophy and empty deceit)
  - The church has adopted worldly ways and philosophies; such as homosexuality, gay marriage, transgenderism and gender identification, climate change, and social change agendas without a faith basis

*'Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.'* **Colossians 2: 8**

- The Church has Abandoned its Jewish Roots
  - Leading to 'Boasting against the broken off Branches'

*'Do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.'* **Romans 11: 18**

- Replacement Theology – the worst heresy of all is prevalent in the West – most Bible Colleges and Churches have a doctrine based on Replacement Theology
  - The greatest tragedy and the gravest heresy in the gentile church today
  - RT is offensive to God because it calls him a liar and covenant breaker
  - RT leads to Anti-Semitism in the church, and it can lead to apostasy

*'But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.'* **2 Peter 2: 1-2**

- The Word and The Spirit – our guards against deception
  - Check Everything with the Word of God

*'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.'* **2 Timothy 3: 16-17**



- Ask the Holy Spirit if He agrees – listen to His voice within (sensing Him)

*"However, when **He, the Spirit of truth**, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. **He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.**"* **John 16: 13-14**

- We can discern false teaching and false teachers, really quite simply:
  - Is what I'm hearing in agreement with the Word of God
  - Is this teaching based on words taken out of context (pretexts)
  - If you are still not sure – ask the Holy Spirit to show you

- **The Battle Against Deception**

- **We are in a Spiritual Battle** – whether we like it or not, and whether we are aware of it or not – **the moment we become dedicated to the Lord we enter into a spiritual battle**
  - Whilst we are unsaved, we are captives of Satan and sin; when we are redeemed by Yeshua's blood through faith – Satan becomes our deadly foe – so we must **'Be strong in the Lord'** to resist him and his wiles

*'Finally, my brethren, **be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.**'* **Ephesians 6: 1**

- **The Battle Against Lawlessness**

- **Lawlessness will increase in the end times** – and cause many to lose their love for the Lord and His word and His ways

*"Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And **because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.**"* **Matthew 24: 11-12**

- **Lawlessness** – the Greek word is *anomia*, meaning *illegality*; that is, *violation of law, or (generally) wickedness*
  - This is referring to the overt breaking of God's laws
  - In the time of Antiochus IV, the door that "lawless men in Israel" opened to liberalism and open-mindedness, to new cultures and more modern practices, led not just to more modern and "culturally relevant" expressions of faith, but it opened the floodgates to the destruction of the spiritual life of Israel
  - It is no surprise that Paul saw a similar sequence of events occurring in the last days – "The day of the Lord," Paul writes, will not come "unless the rebellion comes first" followed by the "arrival of the man of lawlessness", that is the Coming World Leader (2 *Thessalonians 2: 3-4*) – he sees a falling away (Greek: *apostasia*), which precedes the coming of the antichrist
  - **Lawlessness is restrained by the presence of a faithful church and its influence on society** – but as apostasy in the church grows,...so lawlessness increases
- **While this Jewish festival is generally not celebrated by Christians, Chanukah still carries much significance for the church, as it teaches us about the prophetic**
  - It presents the Syrian-Greek king Antiochus Epiphanes as a prototype of the future Antichrist



- Daniel 11 begins by accurately describing the flow of history, which led to the events around Chanukah and then moves seamlessly into a more distant prophecy about a future villain – the Antichrist
  - While today not much is preached about the Antichrist, the Bible refers to him frequently (see *Daniel 7 and 8, 11 and 12; 2 Thessalonians 2; 1 John 2 and 4; Revelation 13 and 17*).
- **The Bible describes the Coming World Leader (the Antichrist as he is often called) as the main earthly opponent to the people of God (Israel and the church) in the immediate years before the rapture of the church and the return of Yeshua**
    - It needs to be underlined, however, that the Antichrist is neither a challenge nor a threat to God
    - Yeshua, upon His return, will effortlessly deal with him by the mere “breath of his mouth” (*2 Thessalonians 2: 8*)
    - But he will represent a significant challenge to the people of God (Israel and the church) by “making war with the saints” (*Daniel 7: 21*)
- **The Bible refers to the antichrist several ways**
    - Paul calls him “the man of lawlessness,” the “son of destruction,” and “the lawless one” (*2 Thessalonians 2: 1ff*)
    - Yeshua refers to him as “another one who will come,”
    - John calls him the “Antichrist” (*1 John 2: 18ff*) and “the Beast” (*Revelation 13*)
    - Daniel refers to him as a king (*Daniel 11*) and cryptically as “a horn with eyes of a man and a mouth to speak great things” (*Daniel 7: 8, 11, 20–21*)
- **The coming of the Antichrist, this embodiment of evil, is not a mere possibility but an absolute certainty**
    - Paul saw it as a prerequisite to the return of Yeshua (*2 Thessalonians 2: 3*) and therefore, preached and wrote about it (*2 Thessalonians 2: 5*)
    - According to both Paul and John, the antichrist’s appearance is not just a singular event somewhere in the distant future; they saw the principles and spiritual force of the Antichrist operating in their day
- **Lawlessness is very much in operation in our day**
    - John calls this dark force the “spirit of the Antichrist,” which is “already in the world” (*1 John 4: 3*)
    - Paul refers to it as the “mystery of lawlessness” that is “already at work” (*2 Thessalonians 2: 7*)
- **The Antidote to Lawlessness is found in the Feast of Dedication – it is the need to rededicate our lives to the Lord...both those who know Him already and those who do not yet know Him**
    - The Chanukah Menorah reminds us to let our light shine in these dark days
    - The oil for the menorah speaks to us of our need for the light and empowerment of the Holy Spirit in our lives
    - The rededicated altar tells us that we need to be worshipping at the Lord’s feet in holiness and regular sacrifice

- Finally
  - Remember the Maccabees – *‘the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits’*
  - Remember – in the Spiritual Battle – *‘be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might’*
  - Remember – You are ‘Sons and Daughters of Zion’ and it is the Lord who has – *“Raised up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and made you like the sword of a mighty man.”*