

Many Christians believe that Hanukkah - the Feast of Dedication - is strictly a Jewish festival, and has no connection to Christianity. Some Torah observant Christians believe that Hanukkah should not be observed because it is not listed with the festivals of Leviticus 23. Still others believe it has ties to paganism and thus should definitely be avoided.

Is Hanukkah a legitimate festival? Can a Torah-observant Christian observe this Jewish festival and still be pleasing to God?

In this study, I want to answer that question by answering these questions:

- Is Hanukkah rooted in idolatry?
- Is Hanukkah a Biblical festival?
- Why might we want to observe Hanukkah?

Before we get started on the questions, I want to give a very brief overview of what Hanukkah is all about and how it came to be a Jewish tradition.

The 8-day festival of Hanukkah is called such because it celebrates the rededication of the altar at the Temple in Jerusalem after it was desecrated a little over three years earlier by the Seleucid (Greek/Hellenist) king Antiochus Epiphanies.

Approximately 165 years before Yeshua was born Antiochus set out to change the culture of the Jewish people from that of Torah observant Hebrews to being philosophical Greeks. He began by making certain Jewish practices illegal including the reading the Torah, the observance of New Moons and Sabbaths, and the practice of circumcision. Then to prevent the people from offering their sacrifices at the Temple, he “sacrificed” an unclean animal on the brazen altar, thus defiling it. This event happened in the early winter of 168 BCE, on the 25th day of the Hebrew month Kislev, and according the writer of the book, it was all done –

^{NRS} **1 Maccabees 1:49** ... so that they would forget the law and change all the ordinances.

After roughly three years of war, an army of rag-tag Jewish patriots led by a priest who became a general named Judah the Maccabees drove the Greek army out of Jerusalem and retook the Temple. On Kislev 25, three years to the day that the altar was desecrated, the priests rebuilt the altar and dedicated it.

Because of the significance of the events, the Jewish leaders of the day proclaimed that these days should be observed by the Jews in Judea from that day forward.

In reality, the story of Hanukkah is one of religious freedom and the preservation of the Hebrew culture in the midst of a pagan-Greek world. It is not the celebration of a political victory, but rather a commemoration of the victory God provided the Jewish people who were willing to stand up for their values and the way of God.

In our quest to determine if we can celebrate this story through its traditional observance, let's begin by looking at what some may call the 'negative points' of this traditional Jewish festival. We'll start with the common, though misguided belief that Hanukkah is rooted in the pagan worship of the Babylonian god "Chun Kah".

Pagan Origins of the word “Hanukkah”

That Hanukkah is the worship of a pagan god was a claim that was made to me back in 1997 when I co-hosted a three-day seminar¹ that just happened to coincide with Hanukkah. A gentleman named Chris

¹ “Footstep of the Messiah”, Waggoner, Oklahoma



came up to me and said that we should have not scheduled this event during Hanukkah because Hanukkah is pagan. To support his belief, he later sent me an article he wrote which included this statement –

“The word CHUN KAH comes from CHUIN who was a false god in Israel and in Babylon. I Chronicles 18:8 tells us that this City named CHUN was in Samaria and that it was a Brass-making center. The Root of this word is KUIN for the false god for whom that city was named which is Strong’s Number #3594. This idol symbol was also known as Baal-Peor.”

Chris was trying to make a connection between the word “Hanukkah” with the name “Chun”. He started by taking the Hebrew letters – HET, NUN, KAF, AND HEY – which spell the 3-syllable word ‘han-nu-kah’ and split it them into two words – ‘hun’ and ‘kah’. Hanukkah is sometimes pronounced “Chanukkah” (beginning with a hard ‘ch’ sound like in the title² ‘christ’) because the first Hebrew letter in the word is a ‘chet’ – which is a guttural letter that is sometimes pronounced as an “h”, and at other times as ‘ch’.

He then attached the name “Chun” to a pagan God, which is Strong’s number 3594 which is found in only one verse – Amos 5:26 – which says -

^{NKJ} **Amos 5:26** - You also carried Sikkuth your king And Chiun, your idols, The star of your gods, which you made for yourselves.

This passage is speaking about the idolatry of Samaria – the northern ten tribes of Israel. It mentions two idols – Sikkuth and Chiun. The Septuagint reads much the same, but renders the names differently –

^{LXE} **Amos 5:26** - Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Raephan, the images of them which ye made for yourselves.

Because the word ‘sikkuth’ is very similar to the word ‘sukkot’, the LXX translated the word from being a name to being ‘the tabernacle’, and interjected the common pagan god ‘Molech’. How they got Raephan out of Chiun is anyone’s guess, but as a testimony to the fact that the LXX was widely read in the NT, Stephen used the LXX rendering in Acts 7:43.

This Amos passage – BTW – is the verse that is used to claim that the Star of David is a pagan symbol. It is clear that Chris apparently tried to make a connection between Chiun and ‘chanuk’ – which is the Hebrew word for ‘dedicate’. His argument was not very convincing.

In reality - the word “hanukkah” (חֲנֻכָּהּ – Strong’s 2598) is not just the name of a Jewish festival; it’s a perfectly good Hebrew word! The first time we see it in the scriptures is in Moses’ discussion of the offerings that were given at the dedication of the Tabernacle in the wilderness.

^{ESV} **Numbers 7:10** And the chiefs offered offerings for the dedication (chanak) of the altar on the day it was anointed; and the chiefs offered their offering before the altar.

“Hanukkah” is the noun form of the Hebrew word “chanak” (חָנַךְ – Strong’s 2596) which means “to train, dedicate, inaugurate”. One notable use of “chanak” is in this very well-known proverb –

^{NKJ} **Proverbs 22:6** Train (chanuk) up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

The etymology of “chanak” is that of rubbing the palate of a newborn child with chewed up dates before it begins to suck the breast³. I would assume this was done in order to entice the baby to want more of that

² The Greek word “christos” means ‘the anointed’ and implies ‘the King’. The kings of Israel and Judah were anointed.

³ Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon; Hendrickson Publishers Peabody, MA; pg. 335



taste in its mouth. In regards to training our children, it would imply that we should give them reasons to want more of God's way, so they – like the prodigal son – will want to return to it.

Though “train up” is an interesting use of the word, the most common use is that of dedicating a facility that's used in the service of God such as the altar of burnt offerings at the Tabernacle⁴ as well as at the Temple⁵. Once we understand the purpose of the sacrifices, we can see why the altar was “chanak” - dedicated – so that the people would be drawn to it in the same way a child is drawn to its mother's breast.

It is clear that the words “chanukkah” or “hanukkah” are not derived from any pagan god, but are simply good Hebrew words that mean “dedication”. A further study of the word would show that the same word in Greek would be 'egkainia' (ἐγκαινία - 1456) is used throughout the Septuagint – the Greek translation of the Tanakh - as well as in the New Testament any time you see the word “dedication”.

Pagan Practices in Hanukkah

Back in 1995 I was at home - standing at our kitchen sink - discussing a certain scriptural passage with a fellow who had once taught that we should uphold the Torah, but was now turning away from it. I was trying to make the case that if the pagans do it, we should not do it and I used this scripture to support my case -

ESV Deuteronomy 12:29-31 ²⁹ "When the LORD your God cuts off before you the nations whom you go in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, ³⁰ take care that you be not ensnared to follow them, after they have been destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? - that I also may do the same.' ³¹ You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way, for every abominable thing that the LORD hates they have done for their gods, for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods.

His response was simply – “The pagans pray to their god, so you're saying that we shouldn't pray to ours?” I was taken back. I didn't have an answer. Sometime later I realized that everything has to be taken in context. As we discuss the various traditions of Hanukkah, we should do the same.

Let's take a look at some of the claims that Hanukkah is based on paganism.

Pagan Customs Added to Hanukkah

Over the years, many reform and (to some degree) conservative Jews have added additional customs to the traditional Hanukkah celebration in order to make it look more like Christmas. Those customs include the exchanging of gifts, the “Hanukkah bush”, and various colorful decorations. Do these additional customs by some in the Jewish community make Hanukkah “pagan” for the rest of us? I submit that it does not make Hanukkah pagan any more than does the stringing of lights in a sukkah or the giving of gifts during the Feast of Tabernacles⁶.

Judah Maccabee Patterned Hanukkah after a Pagan Festival

There are some who claim that Judah Maccabee's intent in establishing this festival was to align it with ancient saturnalia worship, but unlike the case with Christmas, there is no evidence of that intent. Quite

⁴ Numbers 7:10

⁵ 2 Chron. 7:9

⁶ The giving of gifts during Christmas is an outgrowth of the fact that the 'wise men from the east' gave gifts to the 2-year old baby Jesus. A good case can be made that Jesus was born during Sukkot



the contrary, we can trace Hanukkah all the way back to its beginning, and when we do, we find that its timing was based on the actions of evil king Antiochus. Let's take a look at the text⁷ -

1 Maccabees 1:44-49 - For the king had sent letters by messengers unto Jerusalem and the cities of Juda that they should follow the strange laws of the land, ⁴⁵ And forbid burnt offerings, and sacrifice, and drink offerings, in the temple; and that they should profane the sabbaths and festival days, ⁴⁶ And pollute the sanctuary and holy people, ⁴⁷ Set up altars, and groves, and chapels of idols, and sacrifice swine's flesh, and unclean beasts.⁴⁸ That they should also leave their children uncircumcised, and make their souls abominable with all manner of uncleanness and profanation, ⁴⁹ To the end they might forget the law, and change all the ordinances.

Note that the edict of the king was that the people were to not only forsake the Torah of YHVH, but were to desecrate His law as well. His obvious intent was that they forget the Torah altogether.

Continuing on, we see the date when the frustrations of the observant Jews came to a head, which led to the revolt.

1 Maccabees 1:54; 57-59 - Now the fifteenth day of the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and fifth year, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side ... ⁵⁷ And whosoever was found with any the book of the testament, or if any committed to the law, the king's commandment was that they should put him to death. ⁵⁸ Thus did they by their authority unto the Israelites every month, to as many as were found in the cities. ⁵⁹ Now the five and twentieth day of the month they did sacrifice upon the idol altar, which was upon the altar of God.

The Hebrew month 'Casleu' is understood to be the month of Kislev, the 9th month of the Hebrew year which corresponds to the Gregorian months of November-December. The 15th of Kislev is when the Abomination of Desolation was set up in the Temple. Ten days later – on the 25th of Kislev, they began to sacrifice the blood of an unclean animal on the altar.

The next 3 ½ chapters describe the war that took place and the retaking of Jerusalem. Picking up the story after the Jews were again in control of the Temple, we see -

1 Maccabees 4:52-56 - Now on the five and twentieth day of the ninth month, which is called the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and eighth year, they rose up betimes in the morning, ⁵³ And offered sacrifice according to the law upon the new altar of burnt offerings, which they had made. ⁵⁴ Look, at what time and what day the heathen had profaned it, even in that was it dedicated with songs, and citherns, and harps, and cymbals. ⁵⁵ Then all the people fell upon their faces, worshipping and praising the God of heaven, who had given them good success. ⁵⁶ And so, they kept the dedication of the altar eight days and offered burnt offerings with gladness, and sacrificed the sacrifice of deliverance and praise.

After doing the work of cleansing the Temple, taking down the defiled stone of the old altar and rebuilding it with new stones, they were ready to reinstate the Biblical sacrifices exactly 3 years after it was desecrated. Note that they did it 'according to the law'. – that is 'the Torah'.

With that, Judah Maccabee declared a remembrance of that event -

1 Maccabees 4:58-59 - Thus was there very great gladness among the people, for that the reproach of the heathen was put away. ⁵⁹ Moreover Judas and his brethren with the whole congregation of Israel ordained, that the days of the dedication of the altar should be kept in their season from year to year by the space of eight days, from the five and twentieth day of the month Casleu, with mirth and gladness.

⁷ These passages are out of the apocryphal book of 1 Maccabees from the "Septuagint with Apocrypha, Brenton Edition"



So it was determined that the rededication of the alter be observed every year beginning on the 25th of Kislev and last for 8 days. Where did the 8 days come from? Probably from the dedication of the Tabernacle & Priesthood which took 8 days (Lev. 8:1-9:24).

From the account out of the Book of Maccabees, it does not appear that Judas was trying to tie this celebration to anything other than the actual events that took place. In fact - the context of the first 5 chapters of the Book of Maccabees shows a people who were willing to fight and die for the ways of YHVH as opposed to the idolatrous Greek religion, including avoiding any semblance of idolatry.

What about candle lighting? A Hanukkah tradition arose based on the idea that when the Menorah was lit, there was only enough oil for one day, yet the Menorah stayed lit for 8 days. Though an enlightening story, that myth cannot be substantiated. In fact, the 'oil' is nowhere mentioned in the Hannukah story. The text only mentions that the 'lamp' was lit.

1 Maccabees 4:49-50 They made also new holy vessels, and into the temple they brought the candlestick, and the altar of burnt offerings, and of incense, and the table. And upon the altar they burned incense, and the lamps that were upon the candlestick they lighted, that they might give light in the temple.

Unfortunately, much Hanukkah tradition is based on this myth, including the focus on oil (latkes, donuts, etc.) and the Hanukkiah. This is especially concerning since so many pagan and occult practices do focus on candles and lights.

Nevertheless – a Hanukkiah is not in itself 'pagan', no more so that lighting candles on your child's birthday cake – that is, unless you believe the celebration of birthdays is pagan as well.

So is Hanukkah rooted in paganism? Not as it was originally intended. Though some have added "Christmas-looking" customs to it, that doesn't make Hanukkah pagan. We simply need to discard those customs and observe it in its intended meaning – which is the rededication of the altar of YHVH.

Let's face it; HaSatan has tried to introduce his idolatrous culture into practically everything. But does that mean we have to avoid everything? Does our fear of paganism keep us from doing good things? Let me give you an example of what I mean.

Yeshua and the Gates of Hell

In Yeshua's day, the northern part of Samaria – where He lived – was greatly influenced by the Greek culture. Yeshua himself claimed that He was born into a "wicked and idolatrous⁸ generation", nevertheless, He made his home in Capernaum – in the very midst of it⁹. Not only had Hellenism permeated the culture, but the Romans had also brought in their own form of idolatry in the form of temples to the 'gods'. It appears that Yeshua didn't avoid these places; in fact one of his most well known statements was made at the foot of a specific pagan temple –

^{NKJ} **Matthew 16:18** "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

The text preceding this quote shows that they were at a part of Samaria called Caesarea Philippi, a place named after the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus and after Herod the Great's son Philip. It lies at the foot of Mount Herman and was previously known as Paneas after the Greek god Pan. Today it is called 'Baneas'. Just outside of Paneas, there was a large cave out of which a large volume of water would flow. This water, along with two other streams, filled the Sea of Galilee, out of which flowed the Jordan River – the river in which Yeshua was baptized.

⁸ Ezekiel 23:35

⁹ Matt. 11:21-24, 12:39; 16:4



The pagans believed that this cave - from which the water flowed - led to the underworld and thus the cave was called “the gates of hell” They would thus build statues and temples there to honor the Greek and Roman gods. Paneas was also a place for idol worship, including child sacrifice.

This place – steeped in idolatry, was where Yeshua chose to give Peter the ‘keys to the kingdom’ – the understanding that if they were going to reach their idolatrous brothers – the ‘lost sheep of the house of Israel – they were going to have to go to where they were, the highly pagan-Greek areas of Asia Minor. Thus, we see people like Paul teaching about YHVH on ‘Mars Hill’¹⁰. As we can see, He did not avoid the place even though it had been used for pagan purposes. He simply recognized the paganism and did not participate in it. In fact, he (as did Yeshua) use it as a tool to get his point across.

Since we now know that Hanukkah is not the worship of a pagan god, nor is it founded in paganism, let's go on to see why a non-Jew might want to observe it.

Being Part of a Restoration

In many ways, Hanukkah is the celebration of a 'restoration'. The 2nd century BCE¹¹ Jewish people had seen their culture slip into Hellenism. Being a Jew in Judea - was not popular. Many of the Jewish people had given up the Torah and some had even tried to have their circumcision reversed. With the desecration of the Temple, the people began to see how far their Hebrew culture had slid, and they took steps to restore it.

Those of us who are being drawn back to the Torah and the Hebrew walk of Messiah Yeshua believe that we – though not trying to preserve a culture, are attempting to restore the Hebrew culture of the God of Israel. We want to separate ourselves from the "Greek" understanding of the scriptures and gain a more "Hebrew" understanding of them. We are leaving behind the mindset of the pagan Greek philosophers – Philo, Aristotle, and Plato - and are becoming more literal based. We believe that if God said to do it, then we must make every effort to do so.

We can glean encouragement from the Hanukkah story because “there is no new thing under the sun”¹²; what happened before will happen again – and just as God enabled a small band of Jewish zealots to drive the Syrian army out of Jerusalem, He will fight our battles for us as well.

With that thought, another reason for observing Hanukkah is -

Preservation of the Hebrew Culture

Though it ties in with the above topic, the Maccabees helped preserve the Jewish culture into which Yeshua was born. If they had not stood up to the onslaught of Hellenism, then it would have likely ceased to exist. Because they did stand up, a system was developed by which Judaism would be sustained.

Yeshua needed to be born into a visible Jewish culture. He had to have an audience that believed in the God of Israel, who respected His Torah, and who were educated in the Biblical prophecies pertaining to the Messiah. He also needed the Jewish infrastructure of synagogues that were spread throughout Asia Minor that would serve as platforms for His gospel message of Restoration. He even needed the sect of the Pharisees and their rabbi / disciple / apostle system which played a huge role in getting Yeshua's message of the Kingdom of God out to His audience. History shows that this system came about as a result of the influence of the Hasmonean's – Judas Maccabee and his brothers – who in many ways influenced the Jewish people for many years, and which lead to the rise of the ‘separatists’ – better known as the Pharisees.

¹⁰ Acts 17:22

¹¹ The era of the Greek occupation of Judea

¹² Ecclesiastes 1:9



Insight Into Prophecy

The Hanukkah story is widely understood to be a fulfillment of the Daniel 11-12 prophecy of the “abomination that makes desolate”. A similar end-time prophecy was given by Messiah Yeshua in Matthew 24 and again in Mark 13 (two witnesses to the same account). This happened while Yeshua was in Jerusalem just days before He was crucified. A partial fulfillment of Yeshua’s prophecy took place when the Romans destroyed the second Temple. Because the Jewish believers heeded Yeshua’s warning to ‘flee to the mountains’ just as the Maccabees had 180-some year prior, they escaped death.

Though the Hanukkah story and the destruction of the Temple were partial fulfillments, the greater fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy will be at the end time, thus it’s important to know the Hanukkah story so we’ll recognize what’s happening.

Make Judah Jealous

While explaining to the congregation in Rome why so many “Gentiles” (non-Jews) were being called into the congregation, Paul made this statement –

^{NKJ} **Romans 11:11** I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation *has come* to the Gentiles.

In essence he was saying that one of the roles of the non-Jews is to provoke the Jews to a better Hebrew walk. In other words, we should become “better Jews than the Jews”. For 2000 years, the small percentage of religious Jews have kept pretty much to themselves, while at the same time, those who are more secular have adopted many of the Greek – Hellenist ways and have mixed with society at large. With the coming of “Torah-based Christians”, both groups have begun to take notice. No longer can they say that all Christians are anti-Torah. No longer can they claim that our Messiah taught against the Torah. The Jewish people now have to consider our arguments because we are now quoting out of the same book they are – the Tnakh.

We Torah-based believers should exhibit a walk that portrays our Messiah in a more Hebraic light than the current Greek image that’s been portrayed for better than 1700 years. In so doing, we can help tear down the barriers created by 1700 years of “Christianity” that keep Judah from accepting Yeshua as the Jewish Messiah. And what better way to do that than to honor the faithfulness of the Jewish people in the Hanukkah story. Instead of condemning their yearly celebration, we can join with them in celebrating their stand against the forces of evil, and thus open up avenues of dialog by which they can come to see Yeshua from a different point of view.

We’ve seen four compelling reasons why we should observe Hanukkah, but there is still one more question we need to answer.

Is Hanukkah in the Scriptures?

We know that the 1st and 2nd Book of Maccabees are not included in most English Bibles, so technically – the books that teach us about Hanukkah are not in the Bible, and therefore the characters in those books are also not “biblical” characters. Did you know that the books of Daniel and Esther were nearly excluded from the Bible as well?

Why do our modern Bibles exclude them? There are a number of theories about this, but the most plausible is that when the Tnakh was confirmed at Yavneh, the rabbis (mostly Pharisees) opposed the books of Maccabees because the story supported the Hasmonean dynasty, from which came Herod the Great.

To me, it doesn’t make much sense that you would exclude the story from the scriptures, but celebrate the festival that grew out of the story. On the other hand, if indeed they had decided to include the book of Maccabees, all those characters would have been “biblical” characters – biblical warriors like Joshua and David.



Even though the rabbis excluded the story from the canon – there are references to it in prophecy and by Yeshua and his disciple – John.

Let's start with Daniel' vision –

NKJ Dan. 8:9-11 - And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land. ¹⁰ And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down *some* of the host and *some* of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. ¹¹ 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.

This passage is part of a prophecy of the 'kingdom' of Alexander the Great, which after his death, was split up into four kingdoms. It is a reference to Antiochus IV Epiphanes who stopped the daily sacrifices and set up an image in the Temple. After this, we see a reference in the prophecy of Zechariah -

NKJ Zech. 9:13-15 - 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."
¹⁴ Then the LORD will be seen over them, And His arrow will go forth like lightning. The Lord GOD will blow the trumpet, and go with whirlwinds from the south. ¹⁵ The LORD of hosts will defend them ...

This is an interesting prophecy in that it specifically names Greece (the Grecian culture) as the target of God's attack. The story of the Maccabees is the only place in all scripture that mentions an attack by Israel on Greece. Notice that YHVH has bent his bow (Judah) with the arrows of Ephraim which will go forth like 'lightning'. Does this indicate the peoples from Ephraim (the northern tribes of Israel) took part in driving the Greek culture out of Judea?

Then there is a passage in the Matthew¹³ that references an event that took place in the Hanukkah story. As mentioned earlier, this was a part of Yeshua's 'Olivet Prophecy'.

NKJ Matt. 24:15-16; 20 - "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place " (whoever reads, let him understand), ¹⁶ "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains ... ²⁰ "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

This is a direct reference to 1 Maccabees 1 where Antiochus Epiphanes erected a statue in the Temple. Verse 20 makes reference to the flight of the followers of Mattathias (1 Macc. 2:27-32), which took place in the winter, and resulted in them being attacked by the Greeks on the Sabbath.

Since these are clear references to the Hanukkah story, you would think that story would be included in the canon of scripture as a testimony to the prophecies in Daniel and Zechariah – especially since the disciple John made this statement -

NKJ John 10:22-24 Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. ²³ And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch. ²⁴ Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the christ, tell us plainly."

We don't know if Yeshua made the roughly 110-mile trip from His home in Capernaum to Jerusalem just to observe Hanukkah, or if He had simply stayed in Jerusalem after Sukkot. In either case, He was there and the Jewish leaders caught up with Him on the Temple Mount. In the Hanukkah theme, they asked Him if He was the 'Christ', the promised Messiah.

I say "in the Hanukkah theme" for a reason. One of the themes of Hanukah is freedom from oppression. The Jewish people had been under the oppressive hand of the Romans for about 100 years and were looking for a champion, a hero, a Judah Maccabee to free them from the Romans. The

¹³ Repeated in Mark 13:14-18



prophecies in the Tnakh¹⁴ indicate that the 'christ' (Greek for 'messiah') would rule on the Throne of David. As we all know, David was a mighty warrior who cleared oppressive kingdoms from around Judea and Samaria. So in essence, they said to Yeshua, "If you are that warrior, would not Hanukkah be a great time to show it and free us from the Romans?"

We, of course, know that starting a war with the Romans was not Yeshua's intent at the time. So instead of freeing Judea and Samaria, He headed back home and continued to provide different signs of His Messiahship.

Why Observe Hanukkah?

So why observe Hanukkah? There are a number of compelling reasons. Let's look at them again -

- It helps to reinforce our walk, especially as more people are drawn back to this way of life
- It commemorates a people who were willing to stand up against great odds to preserve the Hebrew way of life
- It provides insight into prophecy
- It provides an avenue whereby we can fulfill our role to making Judah jealous for YHVH
- It's not based in a previous pagan practice, that is – as long as we don't bring paganism into it
- Yeshua apparently observed it.

Though I believe these are compelling reasons why one might want to observe Hanukkah, there is one more reason which sort of tops it all off -

A very good case can be made that Messiah Yeshua was born during the fall festival season, and possibly on the first day of Sukkot¹⁵. If that's the case, and we count back 40 weeks from Sukkot, it's quite possible that the Yeshua was conceived during Hanukkah – The season when the Menorah was re-light after being snuffed out due to the idolatrous king – Antiochus Epiphanes.

So in conclusion ... Hanukkah is a good Jewish festival that - just like the 4th of July - celebrates God's hand in bringing freedom to a small group of people against much greater odds. I believe God looks down on us and is pleased when we celebrate these days, and as we do, I hope we can all appreciate the sacrifices our forefathers made to preserve our freedom and our Hebrew way of life.

Shalom Aleichem

¹⁴ A Jewish acronym for the Old Testament – the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings

¹⁵ https://www.amiyisrael.org/articles/BirthOfMessiah/birth_messiah.html