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I don't want to shock our readers too much. However, you should know that we prefer the New Testament holidays. Before you cancel your subscription, please remember that **the New Testament holidays are the same holidays that were celebrated in the *Tanakh* (O.T.)** and the same holidays which will be celebrated when Yeshua sets up his Millennial Kingdom. Gentile nations which refuse to observe Sukkot ("Booths") will be plagued with drought.1[1]

There is at least one exception to what I just said. We do celebrate one holiday mentioned in the New Testament, but **not** mentioned in the *Tanakh*:

"And it was at Jerusalem, the Feast of Dedication (**Hanukah**), and it was winter. And Yeshua walked in the Temple in Solomon's porch. Then the Judeans gathered around him, and said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly?' Yeshua answered them, 'I told you, and you did not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me.'"2[2]

It is obvious from the context that Yeshua was visiting the Temple during Hanukah. He chose to affirm the importance of this festival. Yeshua ended up being verbally attacked and threatened with stoning. His opponents understood that Yeshua was promoting his divinity. They said, "For a good work we do not stone you, but for blasphemy. For You, being a man, make yourself out to be God."3[3]

Hanukah was a holiday that was instituted after the Israeli victory over the Greek-Syrians in the Maccabean Revolt, when the Jews gained a miraculous victory over their oppressors. **Nes gadol haya sham!** "A great miracle happened there!" This occurred in 165 BCE, in a period of time known as the "Inter-Testamental" period, that is, after the "Old" Testament was written, but prior to Yeshua. Therefore, it is not mentioned in the Tanakh. This story is told the Books of Maccabees in the Apocrypha, which is a set of **good Jewish books** not found in Jewish Bibles.

If you would like to read the story for yourself, you can find the Apocrypha in Catholic Bibles. For this reason, I would recommend that you purchase yourself a Catholic Bible. Curiously, the entire Apocrypha (which includes the Books of the Maccabees) were in the original 1611 version of the King James Bible. Most of the Bibles which today purport to be "original" 1611 King James Version are actually the 4<sup>th</sup> revision of the 1611 KJV. Today's "1611 KJV" is much more accurately the **1769** King James Version. A copy of the genuine 1611 King James Bible can be ordered directly through Thomas Nelson Publishers, or can be ordered at a Bible Book Store. However, the language and font are very archaic and difficult, much harder to understand than the so-called

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1[1] Zechariah 14:16-19.

2[2] Yochanan 10:22-25.

3[3] Yochanan (John) 10:33.

“1611 KJV” Bibles promoted by many Christians today. The Septuagint<sup>4[4]</sup> is a Jewish translation of the Tanakh into Greek done in about 200 BCE. It contained all the books that are called the “Old Testament” as well as the Apocrypha. (The Apocrypha was added to the Septuagint a century later.)

In about 333 BCE, Alexander the Great and his armies had conquered the Middle East, including Israel, and went on to conquer much additional land, even to the Indus River in India. Although Alexander promoted Greek religion, culture, and language, he didn’t force it on his subjects. Alexander died at the age of only 33 (just like Yeshua!), after which his huge empire was split into four parts to be ruled over by each of his four generals. Those who came after Alexander were much less tolerant of non-Greek cultures and religion.

Israel was on a “land bridge” highly prized by the **Ptolemy** dynasty that ruled Egypt, and by the **Seleucid** Dynasty that ruled the Syrian portion of the divided Greek Empire. Eventually, the Seleucids gained the upper hand, and conquered Israel. Antiochus IV eventually came to rule over Israel. He was an extremely cruel and intolerant king. He forbade circumcision, Sabbath observance, reading of Torah, or celebration of the Feasts. The penalty for observing the commandments of YHWH was torture and/or death. He encouraged Greek culture and religion, and found many Jews who willingly and even happily collaborated to turn Israel into a Greek society.

The pagans had defiled the Temple, even sacrificing pigs on the altar. The Jews, under the Hasmonean leadership of Mattathias (“Matityahu”) and his sons, eventually won a miraculous victory. It was guerrilla warfare, where a small, make-shift army won against the mighty Syrian Greek army. According to legend, when they went to re-light the **Ner Tamid** (Eternal Light) of the Temple, they discovered a vial of oil which was only adequate to keep the light burning for one day. Nevertheless, they re-lit the Ner Tamid, and began a search for sanctified oil that could keep the Ner Tamid burning. The search took 8 days, during which time the Ner Tamid miraculously kept burning with the one-day supply of oil.

Curiously, the story of the Ner Tamid burning miraculously for 8 days is not told in the books of the Maccabees at all. It is perhaps a later invention that was added to the Hanukah story. Originally, Hanukah was made into an 8-day festival as an imitation of Sukkot,<sup>5[5]</sup> which is also an 8-day festival, but which the Jews were unable to observe at the proper time because of the ongoing war.

Hundreds of years later, the story of the one-day supply of oil lasting for 8 days was written into the Talmud.<sup>6[6]</sup> The military victory of the few against the many was downplayed. However, Zechariah 4:6 is still quoted during Hanukah: “**Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.**”

Jews in the **Galut** (Diaspora) have traditionally shunned wanting to celebrate military victories,

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4[4] This translation was done at the request of Ptolemy of Egypt by 72 learned Jews.

5[5] 2 Maccabees 10:6-8.

6[6] Massive Jewish commentary on Torah.

so as to not provoke anti-Semitism in various host nations. This might be one of the reasons for inventing the story of the Ner Tamid burning miraculously for 8 days on a one-day supply of oil. There is another reason for de-emphasizing the military victory: The Hasmonean Dynasty was originally anti-assimilationist. They preserved Jewish religion and fought off pagan religious influences. Jews were again free to celebrate their faith without pagan influences.

However, future generations of the Hasmonean Dynasty became pro-assimilationist. They promoted Greek culture, Greek language, and even Greek religion. As a result, the Talmud is very quiet about the Hasmoneans, sort of ignoring a family that started out extremely good, but went tragically bad, succumbing to the paganism in the world at that time.

Hanukah comes at a time of the year when Christians are celebrating Christmas. As a result, it is often identified as a sort of Jewish Christmas. Actually, Hanukah was celebrated for hundreds of years before Christmas was first celebrated, and therefore has no historical relationship with Christmas.<sup>7[7]</sup> The story of the vial of oil lasting for 8 days can't begin to compare with the appeal of the story of the virgin birth of a baby in a manger. Moreover, as we celebrate the re-dedication of the Temple, we do so with the knowledge that the Temple was completely destroyed in 70 CE.<sup>8[8]</sup> So we end up celebrating a Temple that no longer exists.

## RE-DEDICATING OUR TEMPLES

We are not completely without a Temple. Rav Shaul spoke of our bodies as being temples of the *Ruakh HaKodesh* (the Holy Spirit):

“Do you not know that you are the **temple of God**, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defiles the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for **the temple of God** is holy, which is what you are. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.”<sup>9[9]</sup> Also: “Do you not know that your bodies are the members of Messiah? Shall I then take the members of Messiah and make them members of a harlot? May it never be! What? Do you not know that he which is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For He says, ‘**The two shall become one flesh** (Genesis 2:24).’ But the one who joins himself to HaShem is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is without the body, but he that commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a **temple of the Holy Spirit** who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”<sup>10[10]</sup>

“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what partnership has Messiah with Beliel, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the **temple of God** with idols? For we are the temple of the living God. Just as God said, ‘I will dwell in them, and

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<sup>7[7]</sup> Yeshua (Jesus) wasn't even born in December. The December 25 date was originally a pagan holiday called Saturnalia or the solar feast of Natalis Solis Invicti—the Nativity of the Unconquered Sun.

<sup>8[8]</sup> “Common Era,” the equivalent of A.D.

<sup>9[9]</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:16-19a

<sup>10[10]</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:15-20

walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, **come out from among them, and be separate,**’ saith Adonai, ‘and **touch not the unclean** (unclean food, pagan holidays, idols, sin, etc.), and I will receive you, and will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters,’ saith the Almighty.” **11[11]**

Let us today rededicate our temples, our bodies, which are the temples of the Ruakh HaKodesh. And, just as with the Temple in Jerusalem, we are required to make sacrifices: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you **present your bodies as living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” **12[12]**

**APPLICATION:** Just as the Maccabees sought to cleanse the Jewish religion and the Temple of unclean pagan influences, so we today need to cleanse our faith from the pagan influences so prevalent in our society and in the churches. In the event that the churches don’t want to change, it would be best to do as the Puritans of old did, and as Rav Shaul said, “Therefore, **come out from among them** and be separate.” Our Heavenly Father does not like mixture religion, in which the pagan elements are mixed with the true faith.

Occasionally, people still think of Messianic Judaism as being a “mixture” religion, in which Judaism and Christianity are “mixed together.” The truth is that Messianic Judaism was the faith of the First Century believers. It wasn’t a new religion; it was merely a bunch of Jews who had come to know their Messiah. The so-called “church” of the First Century was following that “old-time religion,” which happened to be Judaism. Yeshua did **not** come to establish a new religion; He came to be the Messiah for the “old” religion - **Judaism!** He remained a loyal Jew who worshipped the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and obeyed Torah.

There weren’t any people called Christians until large numbers of Gentiles came to believe in the Jewish Messiah as we discover in Acts 11:20-26. The Christian faith of the First Century Gentiles was quite pure. It wasn’t until later centuries that Christianity became polluted with idolatry and pagan holidays, which were “Christianized” in order to make Christianity more appealing to the pagans.

We are called to be a “light to the world.” We can’t do that if we are still holding onto our cherished pagan traditions. Our disobedience is actually delaying Messiah’s return. Yeshua said to Israel: “**You shall not see Me again until you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord.’**” **13[13]** Or, in the Hebrew, “**Baruch haba b’shem Adonai.**” Currently, the biggest stumbling block to Jews coming to know their Messiah are those who call themselves Christians, as well as the history of Christianity vs. the Jewish people. Romans 11:11 tells us to “provoke the Jews to jealousy.” Thus far most Jews have only been provoked. The Jews will say to Yeshua, “Baruch haba b’shem Adonai” when the Church repents of its paganism and **returns to the faith of the First Century.** The Church must present Yeshua as He really is: a Torah-observant Jewish **rabbi** who taught his disciples to honor and obey Torah (Matthew 5:17-19) and then told them to teach the nations (Gentiles) to obey the Law (Matthew 28:18-20). The Church must stop presenting a Jesus who abolished the Law. Rav Shaul said, “For if one comes and preaches **another Jesus**

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11[11] 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

12[12] Romans 12:1.

13[13] Matthew 23:39.

whom we have not preached, or you receive a **different** Gospel, which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.” 14[14] The only problem is that **another Jesus** cannot save us. We need to return to the Yeshua of the Bible, not to the Greek god that He has often been turned into.

**ADDENDUM:** If you don’t already know it, we want you to know that Yeshua was **not** born in December. In all likelihood, he was born on the first day of Feast of Sukkot (“Tabernacles”). But if you go back about 280 days before Sukkot, you will find yourself in Chanukah. Therefore, Chanukah is the time during which Yeshua was conceived of a virgin, a great miracle! Yeshua celebrated Hanukah. You can also! Purchase or build a Hanukiah, which is a candelabrum with 8 branches for each of the 8 nights of Hanukah, plus a holder for the Shammash (servant candle) which is used to light the other candles. It is also a tradition to eat latkes. These are “pancakes” made of grated potatoes, onions, eggs, and flour, fried in oil, and often eaten with sour cream or applesauce. Yummy!

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14[14] 2 Corinthians 11:4, NAS.