



Chanukah

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The eight days of Chanukah commemorate a significant victory for the Jewish people which should not only be thought of as having an historical message; but this deliverance also and perhaps primarily, points to a glorious future fulfillment. When one looks back to the year 330 BC he sees Alexander the Great invading the Middle East. Life for the Jewish people began to drastically change and the ability to serve G-d according to the Biblical commandments eventually became an impossibility when the wicked Greek leader Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) began to rule over Israel. His policies were most oppressive and the Jewish people had to make a decision; either turn away from worshipping G-d completely or go to war against Antiochus Epiphanes.

I see great prophetic significance in these events of over 2,000 years ago. The Prophet Daniel reveals to the reader that the Empire of the anti-christ, known as the Goat (see Daniel 8:5-27), will also be connected to the Biblical term יוון or Greece. In actuality, this Hebrew term יוון more actually relates to Europe in a general sense than to the modern nation of Greece. In a very similar manner, how the Jewish people suffered under the cruel actions of Antiochus Epiphanes will repeat itself in an even more barbaric manner during the period of time called *עַתְּ צָרָה הִיא לִיעֻקֵּב* Jacob's Trouble (see Jeremiah 30:1-11).

Most of the people reading this brief article are believers. It is important for each of us to realize that the same wicked spirit that Antiochus Epiphanes demonstrated as will the anti-christ, is already at work in this world. Slowly there is a change in what is viewed as acceptable in society. Those who disagree will soon begin to be persecuted. Sadly, many within Christianity and Judaism have already begun to adapt to conform to these unscriptural positions, instead of suffering persecution. This brings us to our primary Biblical text.

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר. צוּ אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וַיִּקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ שֶׁמֶן זַיִת זָךְ כְּתִית לְמָאוֹר: לְהַעֲלֹת נֵר, תָּמִיד.

“And the L-rd spoke to Moses saying, ‘Command the Children of Israel they shall take unto you pure olive oil beaten for illumination to bring up (kindle) a candle continually.’”

Leviticus 24:1-2

This passage refers to the Golden Menorah and emphasizes the unique oil that was used so that each seven נרות “candles” could be lit for the purpose of illumination לְמָאוֹר. It is not surprising that the oil had had to be pure זָךְ, but what is of interest is the fact that the oil had to be beaten כְּתִית. It is most significant that it is this word that is adjacent to the phrase, “for illumination” לְמָאוֹר. The practical application is not hard to discern: it is the beating כְּתִית which is central in bringing out the illumination. Suffering for faith should not be thought of as some strange or unusual happening for believers, but the norm. Consider what the Shiliach Shimon (Simon Peter) writes,

“Beloved, do not think it strange among you, the fire of a trial, to you is happening, as a foreign thing to you is taking place.”

1 Peter 4:12

This verse makes it most clear that experiencing persecution for our faith is a normal occurrence for those who are disciples of Yeshua. This suffering is likened to the oil which causes the light to be manifested through the Menorah. In fact, in chapters two and three in the book of Revelation, when the Word of G-d speaks about the Seven Congregations in exile, the term Menorah *λυχνία* (Lampstand) is used. Another interesting part of the text from Leviticus chapter 24 is that the Menorah is called by a unique expression. When examining the text carefully, the phrase *נר תמיד* “A Continuing Candle” appears. This relates to the Biblical commandment that the Menorah must always be lit from the beginning of the evening until the morning light. In other words, the Menorah is commanded to always shine in the midst of darkness.

The implications of this are clear. As the followers of Messiah, we are called to demonstrate obedience to His word in the midst of all types of adversity and attacks of the enemy. It does not matter what the opposition does, as believers we have the pure oil by means of the Holy Spirit which will shine regardless of any other factors. When studying the light that is manifested from the Menorah, one learns that it relates to the Glory of G-d. Hence, we as believers suffer for the faith. It is precisely this testimony which reveals the Glory of G-d in this one’s life to those who witness his or her faithful suffering.

In returning to the account of the eight days of Chanukah, it is traditional that we proclaim each day during Chanukah that it was in fact HaShem (The L-rd) Who provided the victory over the mighty Greek Empire to the Jewish people. It is essential that one remembers that only a small minority of the Jewish people actually trusted in G-d and went to war against the Greeks. The question which our sages ask is what was the primary reason why this Jewish minority went to war? The answer is to be able to freely worship the L-rd G-d of Israel. If worshiping G-d is not one’s utmost desire and doing so according to the Scriptural instructions, then it is very unlikely that a person will experience G-d’s delivering power.

The final part of this article will deal with the special relationship between Messiah Yeshua and the Festival of Chanukah. Most people are familiar with the passage from John (see John chapter 10 beginning in verse 22). What may not be as familiar is the relationship between the book of Haggai and Chanukah. Both Jewish and Christian scholars understand the one called Zerubbabel is a typology for the Messiah. In other words, the more one learns about this man Zerubbabel, the more in fact this person learns about the Messiah.

In Haggai chapter two, there is a clear emphasis on the 24th day of the ninth month (Kislev). The reader is told that this was the day that the foundation for the Second Temple was completed. This date is also related to the victory over the Greek Empire and that same evening is when Chanukah begins to be observed. When studying Haggai, the reader learns that in the last days G-d will shake the nations and the Temple will be filled with Glory. There are two fulfillments of this prophecy. The first is that a remnant of nations will turn to Israel’s Messiah by faith and bring offerings of gold and silver to the Temple. The second view is that Messiah Himself will enter into the Temple and His presence will fill the Temple. This is the implication of the verse that states,

“Great will be the glory of this latter Temple more than the first (Temple), said the L-rd of Hosts, and in this place I will give peace, declares the L-rd of Hosts.”

Haggai 2:9

This verse also speaks about the Temple which will be in the Millennial Kingdom, from which Messiah Yeshua will rule. It will be from this final Temple and because of Yeshua's rule, that during the Millennial one reads,

"...from this day will I bless you."

Haggai 2:19

The word חנוכה (Chanukah) means "*dedication*". There is Scriptural evidence that it will be after Yeshua's return when He will actually dedicate the Millennial Kingdom on the Festival of Chanukah and Kingdom worship will begin.

"And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots, and its riders; and the horses and their riders will go down, every man by the sword of his brother. In that day, declares the L-rd of Hosts, will I take you, Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, My Servant, declares the L-rd, and will set you as a signature: for I have chosen you, declares the L-rd of Hosts."

Haggai 2:22-23

Once again, this passage reveals that in the same way that Zerubbabel was chosen to be the leader after the Second Temple was established, so too will Messiah Yeshua, Whom Zerubbabel is likened to, rule over the Millennial Temple after having destroyed the kingdoms of this world.

The Festival of Chanukah has much spiritual significance and reveals truth about what will happen in the End Times. One must not simply think of it as merely an historical event, but a pattern for understanding future things.

May you have a meaningful Chanukah!