

Day Three - Family

Read: Deuteronomy 6:4-7, 20-25 / Ephesians 6:1-4

Meditation: Thank God for the family you were born into and for those who have joined your family since. Pray that you will be a more loving servant to your family and lift up any family members who do not yet know their Savior.

Day Four - Obedience

Read: Deuteronomy 6:4-9 / Joshua 1:8 / James 1:22-25

Meditation: Thank God for His commandments, for the protection they provide you, and for the light they produce through you. Commit yourself to a greater level of obedience to God and His ways.

Day Five - Sacrifice

Read: Romans 12:1-2 / Galatians 2:20

Meditation: Ask God to help you relinquish any fear you have of serving Him completely.

Day Six - Repentance

Read: Luke 24:44-47 / Acts 17:29-31 / Revelation 2:4-5

Meditation: Ask God to reveal those things that you need to be put aside. Ask Him to give you a greater love and appreciation for living a holy life. Thank Him for accepting you into His family.

Day Seven - Dedication

Read: Psalm 30 / Matthew 22:16-21

Meditation: Pray using expressions of joy, praise, adoration, and thanksgiving to the Lord for the joy of knowing Messiah Yeshua. Pray for those ministering in Israel that they can be lights for the Messiah in their communities. Pray that all believers will dedicate themselves more fully to God's service.

Day Eight - Light

Read: Genesis 1:3-5 / John 1:1-14 / Matthew 5:14-16

Meditation: Turn out all household light. Have everyone look at the Hanukkah lights while someone reads Isaiah 60:1-5. Pray that the Lord will help you to embrace the truth that you are a shining light for Yeshua.

MESSIANIC HANUKKAH CELEBRATION

A Brief History of Hanukkah

The 11th chapter of Daniel records a prophecy concerning a tyrant who would someday rule over the people of Judah. Daniel prophesied that this man would profane the holy temple by entering the Holy of Holies demanding to be worshipped as God. This prophecy was fulfilled in 168 BCE by the Syrian king Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The history of this evil ruler is recorded in the book of Maccabees.

In the year 168 BCE, Antiochus issued his "Evil Decrees". Maccabees 1:41 states, "Throughout his empire, his subjects were all to become one people and abandon their own laws and religion." Antiochus began at this time to believe that he himself was the earthly manifestation of the supreme god of the Greek pantheon, Zeus Olympios. Antiochus' claim to be God coincided with his persecution of the Jewish people. His Evil Decrees are listed in 1 Maccabees 2:1-7. Antiochus...

1. ...ordered the destruction of the Torah scrolls.
2. ...enforced eating of swine's flesh.
3. ...made it illegal to circumcise sons.
4. ...forbade observance of the Sabbath and holy days.
5. ...discontinued morning and evening sacrifices.
6. ...desecrated the temple and dedicated it to the worship of Zeus.
7. ...set up the abomination of desolation.

No one knows exactly what the abomination was, but it was probably some sort of image which represented both Zeus and Antiochus that was set up in the Holy of Holies.

Daniel's prophecy refers to three types of people at this time:

- A) "*Such as do wickedly against the covenant...*" (11:32) These were the Hellenizers.
- B) "*...many [who] shall join themselves unto them by flatteries...*" (11:34) These were the ones who were willing to go either way with their allegiance.
- C) "*...that are wise among the people [who] shall instruct many. And some of them that are wise shall fall.*" (11:33, 35) These were the Hasidim.

In 165 BC, the Jews under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus overthrew the much larger Syrian army. After cleansing the temple, the temple was rededicated on the 25th of Kislev. The priests found only enough uncontaminated oil for one night's lighting of the menorah. But, miraculously, the oil burned for eight days.

It is tradition that the eight-day celebration of Hanukkah represents the important first eight days in the conception of a child. This is why birth is related to giving light. It is also a tradition that the lighting of the candles will announce the conception of Messiah because the acronym of "We light eight days of Hanukkah" in the Talmud spells out "Messiah": מְדַלִּיקֵין שְׁמוֹנֵה יָמֵי הַנּוֹכַח: (*madlikin shemonah yomei Chanukah*).

Hanukkah Observance

There are many significant reasons why believers should observe the Hanukkah season. Here are a few:

- It is a time to celebrate God's victory over our spiritual enemy.
- We are "temples" that have been cleansed and made holy by God's victory.
- As temples of the holy spirit, we too should dedicate ourselves to God.
- The eight days of Hanukkah illustrate that dedication to God is a process which takes place over an extended period of time.
- Hanukkah illustrates that as our dedication grows, so too does our light.
- The *shamash* (servant) candle reminds us that Yeshua is the *shamash* light of the world and we derive our light from Him.
- The lighting of the menorah impresses upon the minds of our children the importance of dedicating themselves to God and being lights in the world.
- If there had been no Hanukkah, there would be no Christmas.

Candle Lighting Ceremony

The candles are placed in the menorah from right to left. On the first night one candle is lit; the second night, two are lit; and so on. However, the candles are lit starting left to right. The idea is that you are lighting each day's new candle first. The menorah is lit only at night. The first candle to be lit is called the *shamash* or "servant" candle. This is the ninth candle on your menorah. It is usually raised higher or separated from the other candles so that it can be recognized and distinguished from them. With this candle all of the other regular candles are lit.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו, וצונו להדליק נר של חנכה.

Baruch atah Adonai Elohenu Melech ha-olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzi-vanu l'hadlik ner shel Chanukah.

"Blessed are You Lord our God, King of the universe, Who sanctified us by His commandments and commands us to kindle the Hanukkah lights."

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם שעשה נסים לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

Baruch atah Adonai Elohenu Melech ha-olam she'asah ni-sim la-avotenu bayamim haheim baz'man hazeh.

"Blessed are You Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has wrought miracles for our forefathers, in those days at this season."

(And on the first evening only, add the following blessing.)

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם שהחינו וקימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

Baruch atah Adonai Elohenu Melech ha-olam shehechyanu, ve-higianu, lazman hazeh.

"Blessed are You Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season."

After lighting all of the candles for that night, place the *shamash* back into its position, still lit.

Day One – The Word of God

Read: Psalm 19:7-11 / 119:1-16

Meditation: Thank God for providing the light of His Word. Commit to becoming a more dedicated student of God's Word and to living it out in our current culture.

Day Two - Holiness

Read: Leviticus 11:44-47 / 1Peter 1:13-19

Meditation: Thank God for providing for us a better way to live. Dedicate yourself to following His ways more faithfully, instead of the ways of the world.