

Hanukkah - Triumph Over Darkness!

By William Schnoebelen ©2012

This is a challenging time of year to be a follower of Yahushua (Jesus). Our world has begun to grow darker and colder (at least where we live) and everywhere we go, our senses are assaulted with the commercial “frivolity” of Christmas. Carols blare through stores as merchants strive to make their cash registers ring in time to Jingle Bells.

On top of this, some family and friends think you are bizarre or Scrooge-like because you do not want to partake in all the fun. The “world” always wants us to go along with its pleasures, whatever they might be. But we, as followers of Yahushua, need to stay Set-



Apart from the world (**2 Cor. 6:14-18**). In fact, the root of the words we commonly use, like “holy” or “saint” are rooted in the Biblical idea of being Set-Apart. We are Set-Apart FROM the world - and also Set-Apart FOR the Kingdom of Yahuwah and His dear Son!

Some people say, “Well preacher – isn’t that a bit extreme? That’s like what those strange Jehovah’s Witnesses teach – no Christmas and such.” Well yes, unfortunately they do. As I am fond of saying, even a broken clock gets it right twice a day. Such groups are like spiritual rat poison. JW’s also teach morality in marriage - does that mean we should abandon that? Heavens no!

You see, beloved, it’s all about how seriously you take the Bible. Jeremiah warns us in **Jer. 10:2**: “**Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.**” We are not to imitate the unbelievers around us. We are to live

lives of such quiet shalom and exemplary morality that *they want to imitate us!*

As many of you doubtless know, the irony of the Christmas holiday is that Yahushua was certainly NOT born on December 25. He was born in autumn, probably near the feast of Tabernacles. This can clearly be determined by carefully studying the facts set forth in **Luke 1:5** about Zachariah (father of John the Baptist) being a priest in the “**course of Abia.**” This was during the period of July. That means that according to the Bible, John was conceived in the middle of summer. Six months later, the angel Gabriayl visited Mary of Nazareth and – because of her humble obedience – she **conceived** Yahushua that night. That would have been sometime in December. Trust me, He was NOT born in December.

In fact, quite a few pagan elohim (gods) like Tammuz and Zeus had December 25 as their birthday. Why? Because it is right near the winter solstice, and pagans worship the sun god. **I know, I was a card-carrying pagan for sixteen years!** Pagans called it *Festiva Sol Invictus* – the Feast of the Unconquered Sun. This was because right after the winter solstice (in the northern hemisphere) the sun starts appearing to rise higher in the sky every day. What happened is that the early church (4th century or so) compromised with the world system and decided to take that feast day and make it the birthday of Yahushua – just to make *everyone* happy, you know! Thus, *syncretism* reared its ugly head.

Once Constantine made the faith of Yahushua legal in the Roman Empire, more folks streamed into the church. But they did not want to give up their pagan practices, so Constantine and his ilk folded in Easter and rabbits and Christmas. Like Paul warns us, “...a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6). Once you let a little leaven (false doctrine – **Matt. 16:12**), before you know it the whole ecclesiastical institution is full of pagan idolatry.

This whole *Feast of the Unconquered Sun* business is totally Greco-Roman! Zeus is the father of the Greek elohim. He is the BIG guy in their pantheon. Please bear this in mind as we look at the Biblical alternative to Christmas.

Most everyone has heard of Hanukkah and many even know the story, but its pertinence to this discussion is amazing. Many believe Hanukkah is just something that Jews came up with because their children could not celebrate Christmas and they felt left out. No, Hanukkah is much older than Christmas. Its story begins around 165 BC when the Seleucid (Syrio-**Greek**) tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes conquered Jerusalem. He was a pagan king who worshipped Zeus.

In brief, this king was a monster. He took over the Temple in Jerusalem, set up a statue to Zeus in the sanctuary and sacrificed a PIG on the altar on December 25. He also tried to force the Jews to leave Torah behind and become more Greek! He forbade them from keeping the Sabbath and many other commands of Yahuwah, especially circumcision.

The Hellenized Jews (the ones who liked the relaxed pagan lifestyle) didn't mind, but the devout Jews were literally up in arms and staged a large-scale revolt. A family of Jewish priests, led by the father, Matthew, led the rebellion. He had five sons. In 166 BC, Matthew was killed. His son Judah took over. He became known as *Yahudah Ha Makabi* (Judah the **Hammer**) because of his boldness, zeal and courage in battle. This is how the term “Maccabee” came into being.

Judah defeated Antiochus the Seleucid monarchy (in itself a miracle). The holy temple was liberated and rededicated. This process involved the more famous miracle of Hanukkah. Remember, the word Hanukkah simply means “dedication.”

The priests had to cleanse and purify everything in the temple, which had been defiled by the offering of swine flesh to a pagan elohim. Oil was needed to light the Menorah in the Holy Place, but most of the oil had been defiled. New oil would take eight days to prepare and consecrate. But by a miracle, the **day's** supply of remaining oil in the Menorah burned for eight days, until the new oil was ready. Since that time, Jews have celebrated Hanukkah as a feast of victory and the miracle of the oil.

Some folks say we should not keep the feast of Hanukkah because it is not in the Torah like the feasts of Yahuwah. That is true, but there is *unmistakable* evidence that our Master Yahushua kept it. He thought enough of the feast to travel *all the way* to Jerusalem to keep it:

And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. ²³And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. – John 10:22-23

All of the Feasts in the Bible have important spiritual lessons that we can absorb lessons both about prophecy and about spiritual warfare! They are shadow pictures of good things to come (See **Col. 2:16-17** and **Hebr. 10:1**). Consider this:

- **Pesach** (Passover) is about liberation from Egypt – Mitzraim in Hebrew is the word for “bondage.” For us, it is a type of being set free from our personal bondages by the Blood of the Lamb. Just as the Jews keep Passover annually, so we should always be prayerfully engaged in liberating ourselves from the sins that so easily beset us.
- **Shavuot** (Pentecost) is about hearing and receiving the Word of YAH and being empowered to keep it. This is because at the first Shavuot at Mt. Sinai, the Law was given. At the feast recounted in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit was given to give the disciples *POWER* to walk in holiness.
- **Yom Teruah** (Feast of Trumpets) is the birthday of Yah'shua and may well be the day of His Second Coming as well. It is the day that “no man knows...” This just references the fact that the time of this feast is set by the sighting of the first sliver of the moon over Jerusalem, and no one can know that for sure – just as no one can know for certain the time of Yahushua's coming.
- **Yom Kippur** (Day of Atonement) calls us into the vital mystery of *Teshuva* – repentance – a key element in spiritual warfare. It also teaches us about the mystery of **fasting** and afflicting our souls. This is a lesson that can only be learned by doing.
- **Sukkot** (Tabernacles) – teaches us about the mystery of Yah'shua's incarnation and also teaches us to have the faith to rely on Him for all our needs. Just as the Israelites lived in tents (SUKKOT) for 40 years and Yahuwah gave them all that they needed, so we too must depend on Him for our needs.

In the same way, Hanukkah teaches us lessons about both the past and the future. Historically, it was about a miraculous victory in a war. But more importantly, it is about a **cosmic war between two worlds**. Remember, this event was prophesied in Daniel:

³⁰For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant. ³¹And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily *sacrifice*, and they shall place the **abomination that maketh desolate**. ³²And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do *exploits*. – Daniel 11:30-32

¹⁰Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. ¹¹And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* shall be taken away, and the **abomination that maketh desolate** set up, *there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days*. – Daniel 12:10-11.

Like so many things in the Bible, this prophecy has a dual application. It refers to Antiochus in 165 BC, but it also refers to the events preceding the Second Advent of our Messiah, Yahushua. Note that the last name of this evil king was **Epiphanes**. This means “god manifest” in Greek. Many pagan kings of the day liked folks to think they were incarnate elohim. Epiphanes also adds up to 666 in the Greek numbering system (remember, that in Greek, like Hebrew, numbers are also letters). This is a clear indication that Antiochus is a type of the anti-Christ, just as King David is a type of Yahushua. But the sword of prophecy cuts both ways. With Judah Maccabee, we see a partial fulfillment of Gen. 49:

¹⁰The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*.

Through the miracle of Hanukkah, we see that **Judah** Maccabee was given the sceptre of royal authority to defeat the Seleucid Empire and create a new feast to celebrate the victory of faithfulness to the Bible *over* the pagans! Of course, the ultimate holder of that scepter will be the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Yahushua!

In a deeper sense, Hanukkah celebrates the victory of Yahuwah’s LIGHT and TRUTH against the forces of paganism, darkness and syncretism. The Hellenized Jews of Maccabees’ day were syncretists! They tried to combine the best elements of Biblical faith with Greek paganism.

The problem is that today one could readily say that **syncretism has become the leading religion in America**. Political correctness and hate crime legislation make it difficult to point out evil behavior and call people to repentance. Movements like the New Age and other liberal faiths try to blend Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity into a vague, unidentifiable mush.

On top of that, most media outlets promote the idea that there is good in all religion. Anyone who DARES say that there is only one way to heaven is branded a “**fundamentalist**” – a word which has recently been seriously tarnished by being frequently associated with Muslims that cut people’s heads off and blow things up. I personally have been compared to the Taliban and other such unsavory groups.

Please remember, the original fountainhead of this syncretistic philosophy is FREEMASONRY! This is one of the key dangers of the Lodge, which has been in America since the beginning of our nation. It denies the words of Yahushua in **John 14:6** that no one can come to the Father but through Him! Masons believe that anyone can go to heaven (the Grand Celestial Lodge) as long as they believe in an elohim of *any* sort. This is what the cosmic battle of Hanukkah was and is all about! Scripture clearly proves Yahuwah forbids syncretism:

Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed *difference* between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. – Ezek. 22:26

And they shall teach my people *the difference* between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. – Ezek. 44:23

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. – John 15:19

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*. – Eph. 5:11

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ¹⁵And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? ¹⁶And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, ¹⁸And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. – 2 Cor. 6:14-18

Hanukkah mirrors the cosmic battle between our own culture and the Body of Messiah! Whether most Christians know it or not, **Christmas is a celebration of the birthday of Zeus**, the monarch of the Greek gods (a deity who incidentally raped women!). Of course, Believers put up their trees (violating **Jeremiah 10:2-4**) and their nativity scenes in innocent bliss, thinking they are honoring Yahushua. But as Jeremiah put it elsewhere:

O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, **Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.** – Jer.16:19

We need to gently and lovingly tell others that these are charming lies and pray that they have ears to hear! Remember, we are just messengers. If they choose not to hear, then they can freely choose to stay in their Greco-Roman world. They just need to know that *Christ was never IN Christmas!*

When we prayerfully light the candles of Hanukkah and remember that Yahushua is the Light of the world (**John 8:12**), we are striking a real blow against the forces of darkness and syncretism! Symbols have meaning and they have power. That is why the Scriptures are so rich in visual symbols (Ark, brazen serpent, tabernacle and its furnishing, Yahushua being the vine and we the branches and many more)! Yahuwah could have saved us without using symbols, but because He made us and knows how our minds work, He gave us symbols AND words!

The seven-branched Menorah (just the Hebrew word for candlestick) that was relit by the Maccabees was emblematic of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahuwah (Is. 11:2). But the **NINE**-branched Menorah, used exclusively for Hanukkah, is equally rich in symbolism:

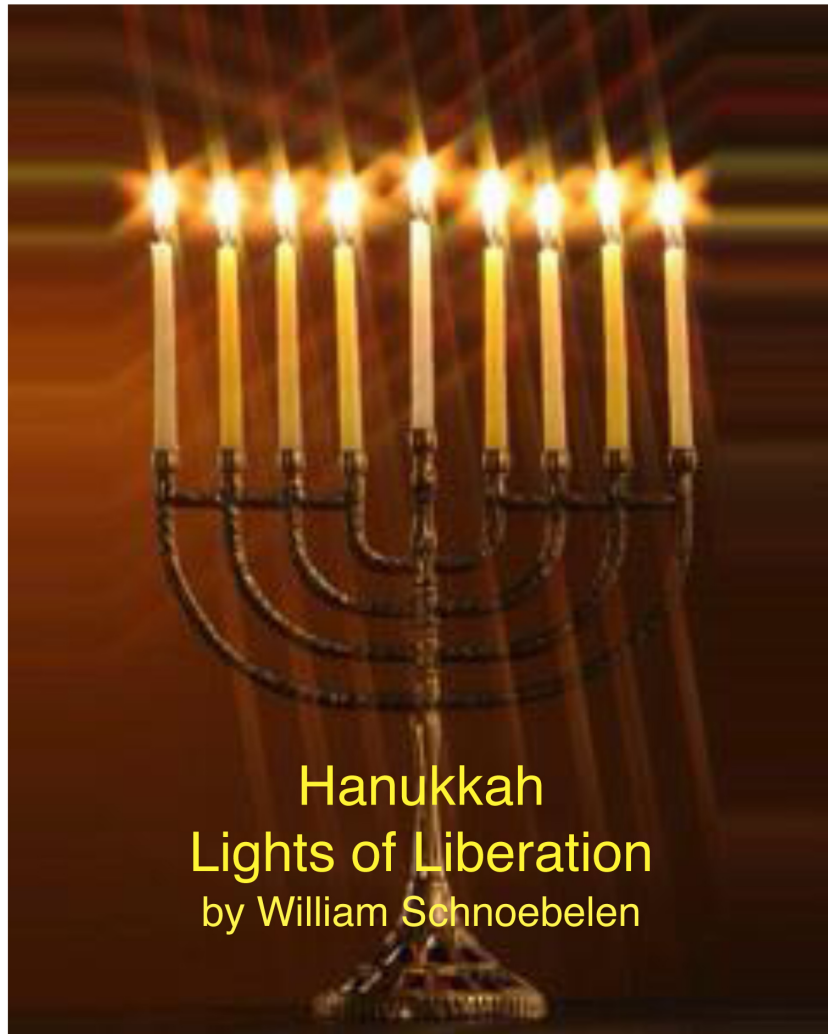
- It stands for the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit (**Gal. 5:22-23**).
- It also stands for nine gifts of the Holy Spirit (**1 Cor. 12:8-10**).
- Additionally, the nine flames are emblematic of the tongues like fire that descended on the disciples on **Shavuot** (Pentecost).
- In the traditions surrounding Hanukkah, the middle candle of the Menorah is usually taller than the others. It is called the SERVANT candle and it is used to light the others. This again symbolizes Yah'shua as the Light of the world AND as the suffering servant of **Isaiah 42:1-4** and elsewhere.
- The other eight candles symbolize new beginnings, the meaning of the number 8 since Yah'shua rose from the dead on the 8th day.
- Finally, if you look at the tips of the nine candles, you can see that they form a pictograph of the three men crucified on Golgotha with heads and arms raised to be nailed to the crosses. Yah'shua, of course, is in the center.

Last winter we lived on a street where almost everyone had Christmas lights up. Santa and reindeer, stars and lights and even lit up palm trees (?). Then you would come to our house and see the candles of the Menorah burning brightly. It is a strong reminder that even in the cold darkness of winter and our increasingly syncretistic pagan world, the Light of the Bible and of Messiah still blazes forth, TRIUMPHANT.

Of course, there is nothing mystical about the candles – just what they symbolize. The **prayers and faith** of the families that light the Menorah are what is MOST important! Whether they await the Second Coming of their Messiah, as we do – or His first coming, as

the Jews do – they stand athwart the darkness and say *Maranatha!* Even so, Come Master Yahushua – the Light of the World!

With One Accord Ministries Presents



Hanukkah
Lights of Liberation
by William Schnoebelen

NEW! For a deeper teaching on this topic, check out our NEW DVD, “Hanukkah: The Lights of Liberation.” It goes into more of the history and the symbolism of this festival of Yahuwah’s people! In addition, it also addresses the spiritual warfare and deliverance component of Hanukkah, as it relates to Freemasonry, Baal worship and the mysterious spirit of Legion. Believers need to discover if they have any “pigs on the altars” of their temples (their bodies and souls) and then cleanse the temple to prepare for the coming of the Messiah! This DVD contains vital information for anyone wishing a closer walk with Yahushua (item #306) – suggested donation of \$21.95!