



Hoshana Rabbah

Messianic Discipleship Resources & Congregation Elim

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Shalom Friends in Yeshua's Love,

Please accept our deepest gratitude for those who were able to give financially in support of this ministry. May our Abba in heaven bless you for your generosity. Also, thank you for those who have offered up a prayer on our behalf. Please know that I spend long hours in prayer for you—even praying for many of you by name, and for all of you with deep and heartfelt groanings that only the Spirit of Elohim can understand.

Our family is well. We are healthy and blessed in all areas both physically and spiritually.

We continue to make slow but steady progress in translating Torah Explorers into Spanish and uploading it to the Hoshana Rabbah web site. You will find it at: http://www.hoshanarabbah.org/parsh-iot.html#parasha_breisheet. I am also finishing a landmark written work which discusses the timing of Ephraim's return to the land of Israel. Basically, it is a discussion of what happens to redeemed believers in the end times just prior to the second coming of Yeshua. When finished, it will be reviewed by the spiritual leaders of Messianic Israel, and then it will be published on our web site and other web sites. I have been working on this for more than a year. Please pray that only the truth of YHVH's Word comes forth and that the body of Yeshua will be edified.

Now let's briefly discuss Hanukkah which is just around the corner. Hanukkah is a traditional Jewish holiday that falls in December and commemorates the rededication of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem after the Greek heathens had desecrated it through idolatry and forbidden biblical practices. Though Hanukkah is a minor holiday, and is not a commanded biblical festival, there is record in the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) that Yeshua (Jesus) was at the temple in Jerusalem during Hanukkah, also known as the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22).

Hanukkah should not be viewed as a replacement for Christmas and in fact pre-dates the Christian Christmas by hundreds of years. It is a stand-alone holiday that has nothing to do with Christmas. In reality, Christmas is the melding together of some Biblical beliefs (i.e., the birth of Jesus/Yeshua, although he wasn't born in December!) with many traditions that are undeniably pagan in origin (see any encyclopedia on the subject of the origins of Christmas), including the biblically forbidden and idolatrous heathen practice of cutting, setting up and decorating a tree (Jer 10:1–8), which Scripture refers to as a vanity tree and regards as a foolish heathen activity (Jer 10:8). On the other hand, Hanukkah commemorates the Jewish people *coming out* of paganism and rededicating their temple and themselves to follow the pure truth of the Word of God/Elohim, which is unpolluted by pagan practices and unbiblical traditions of man.

What is the spiritual lesson that we can take from the story of Hanukkah? It is clear that the YHVH (the LORD) doesn't want his holy/set-apart people to dip into the sewage of pagan belief systems and practices. Rather, they are to remain pure and undefiled from the pollution of the heathen world around them. John the apostle under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Ruach HaKadosh) declares that the saints are to come out of religious Babylon (that worldwide spiritual system that mixes a little Bible truth with a lot of paganism, Rev 18:4). Paul echoes this warning when he calls on the people of God/Elohim to separate themselves from the heathens and their sinful practices (2 Cor 6:16). He goes on to teach that since the saints are the spiritual temple of the Spirit of the living Elohim, how can he walk with them and they be his people if they are walking in the darkness of heathen customs and following idolatrous practices (2 Cor

6:14–16)? This is a question we all need to ask ourselves.

The Maccabean Jews who refused to follow pagan Greek practices fought hard to be true to the Word of Elohim. Some even lost their lives in the battle against the heathens who had desecrated the temple of Elohim in Jerusalem. They were willing to die for their beliefs because it was more important for these faithful people to be pleasing to Elohim than to curry the favor of the heathen by having a go-along-to-get-along attitude and offend a righteous Elohim who commands his people again and again to walk in holiness (Lev 20:7; 1 Pet 1:16; Heb 12:14).

So say good-bye to Christmas and other non-biblical Christian holidays. Say hello to Hanukkah, but don't stop there! Go to the higher spiritual ground and begin celebrating the seven biblically commanded holidays (or Holy Days) starting with Passover in the spring followed by Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles, and the Eighth Day. Begin to learn about these "feasts" and then celebrate them (go to <http://www.hoshanarabbah.org/teaching.html#feast>). They all point to Yeshua in some major way. They all teach the basic gospel message in seven easy-to-understand steps. They are literally a treasure chest of rich and deep biblical truths relating to the past history of Elohim's people, the current walk of the redeemed (born-again) believer in Yeshua the Messiah, and they help us to understand what lies ahead prophetically for the end times saints as well.

Some people begin celebrating Hanukkah as if it were somehow the Jewish replacement for Christmas. It is not. If you feel the need to celebrate the birth of Yeshua the Messiah, the time to do that is during the early fall biblically-commanded festival of Tabernacles or *Sukkot*, which is when Yeshua was actually born. During this glorious eight-day long celebration, we live in temporary dwellings (e.g., manger-like affair called a *sukkah*, or a tent, an RV, or a hotel). At Sukkot (plural for *sukkah*), we rejoice in the fact that YHVH Elohim came to dwell with his people in the tabernacle or *sukkah* of human flesh through his Son, Yeshua, who now dwells or tabernacles in us through his precious Set-Apart or Holy Spirit, who guides us as we journey through life en route to the Promised Land of our eternal life and spiritual inheritance.

So as we celebrate Hanukkah, let us think of Yeshua, the Word of Elohim who came to this earth during the fall biblical festival of Sukkot to be our spiritual light in this dark world, and to lead us to his Father in heaven, whose kingdom will be our eventual eternal home.

So as you celebrate the ancient Jewish Hanukkah tradition of lighting the Hanukkah menorah symbolizing the rededicating of the temple in Jerusalem, may you and your family be blessed as you rededicate yourselves as the temples of the Holy Spirit, to Yeshua who is the light of the world.

In Yeshua's Service,

Natan Lawrence