

BETWEEN THE LINES

A Deeper Look...

#851- HANUKKAH: A Celebration of Remembrance

To the observant Jew, Hanukkah celebrates and commemorates the victory of the Maccabee rebellion over the Syrian Greeks in 165 b.c. Let's consider four issues to enrich your Christianity from the themes of Hanukkah.

The Biblical Imperative of Memorials:

Throughout the Scripture the Lord commands many times that we are to "remember". There are more than a dozen very specific commands where we have been admonished that we are "not to forget". Jews find that the command *Zacher* (remember) has become predominant in the mentality of the observant. In order to assist in the fulfilling of these specific commands the Bible speaks of three specific types of memorials...

- The sites of memorial/Geographic markers- **Genesis 12, Exodus 17, Joshua 4.**
- Markers/monuments of time- **Leviticus 23, Exodus 3.**
- Ritual objects as memorials- **Exodus 13, 28, 39, Numbers 16.**

Search the Word... A slow, deliberate reading of passages like Deuteronomy 4 and Psalm 105, 106 should cause us to again consider what we might do to establish segments of our lives "to bring to remembrance" what the Lord has done for us.

Conclusion: Hanukkah is a celebration of remembrance. It commemorated the victory won through the time frame of the Feast of Tabernacles, 165 b.c... Ironically, also a feast of remembrance. It might enhance my spiritual walk to make sure I have monuments/memorials or remembrance "Lest we forget".

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#### **The Oil Used In The "Feast Of Lights":**

Part of the tradition of Hanukkah relates to the legend of the miraculous continued supply of sacred oil for the Temple *Menorah* (lamp/candlestick) during the festival as the warfare ended. Olive oil was a staple of life in Palestine. According to Deuteronomy 24 it was harvested by shaking the branches and capturing the fruit ripe enough to break loose. (Whatever didn't fall was left for the poor.)

#### **The olives were pressed by four methods...**

- Smashed in a hand mortar.
- Crushed under foot in a trough.
- Pressed in a sack between two huge, flat stones.
- Crushed by a wheel-shaped boulder in a stone trench.

One tree could produce 10-20 gallons of oil per year. The oil was filtered to remove dirt, debris, and remnants of the crushing process. (For oil used in Temple service it was filtered through seven progressively finer meshes of cloth to acceptably purify it for sacred use.) We know of nine specific uses for the oil...

- The baking/cooking process.
- Fuel for lamps.
- Ointment for cuts and scrapes. (Isaiah 1)
- An offering. (Exodus 22, 29, Deuteronomy 12)

- Skin emollient.
- Cleansing/bathing in time of water shortage.
- Spa staple for wealthy.
- Cosmetic item for wealthy women.
- Ritual anointing fluid...
  - for dead bodies. (I Samuel 14)
  - for priests. (Leviticus 8, Psalm 133)
  - for kings. (I Samuel 10, 16)
  - for sick people. (Mark 6, James 5)

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The Shamash (Servant Lamp): Each night of the Hanukkah observance the *Shamash* is lit first and it becomes the source/servant for lighting each other progressive candle. Christ made servant hood a predominant theme for His people. He spoke of Himself in that vein and commanded that we live in that mentality also.

Five of the New Testament writers open letters with the self-proclaimed title of servant/slave. (Paul-Romans 1, Titus 1; James, James 1; Peter, II Peter 1; Jude, Jude 1; and John, Revelation 1.)

Search the Word... A deliberate reading of John 13-17 (especially chapters 13 and 15) will yield rich treasures on Christ's attitude about the servant mentality.

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**Hanukkah and Tabernacles:** The reason for the original celebration in 165 b.c was the desire to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, which had been delayed for several months due to the warfare.

Tabernacles, in the Scripture, are also called the "Feast of Booths" and the "Feast of Ingathering". Jews today call it *Sukkot* (which is Hebrew for 'booths'). Let's consider again what the Word says Tabernacles was in Leviticus 23, Exodus, 23 & 34, Numbers 29, Deuteronomy 16, and Nehemiah 8...

- -A seven-day "camp meeting" to commemorate the wilderness experience.
- -A gathering of the people to remember God's provisions.
- -A harvest/Thanksgiving festival.
- -An autumn celebration in the month of Ethanim/Tishri.
- -Every seventh/Sabbatical year the Law of Moses was read publicly.  
(Remember, there would have been limited harvest that year.)
- -Eventually an eighth day was added... *Simchat Torah* (The joy of the Law).

**Conclusion:** Many historians have proposed that the founding fathers related to the Mayflower story in United States history used the Biblical Feast of Tabernacles as a model for the concept of the first Thanksgiving celebration. Once in a while it really is healthy to make sure we have adequate "markers" to commemorate what God has done for us. Do you have such things in your life?

**Search the Word...** From John 7 into John 10 the gospel shares stories of events that Jesus participated in at one specific Feast of Tabernacles. Included in these are some of the most noted miracles and statements found in the gospel accounts. We would do well to look at what happened to the Lord as he participated in one week camping by Jerusalem for this festival.

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