



Messiah House's Official Response

THE TRUE HISTORY OF HANUKAH

Towards the end of the fourth century B.C., Alexander the Great, king of Macedonia and Greece, had conquered most of the Middle East and Central Asia in only ten years, an empire that spread Greek philosophy, language, and religion from Greece and Egypt all the way to the borders of India. Greek culture became the epitome and ideal of civilization; anything outside was considered “barbarian” (from the Greek word “*barbaros*”, a Greek play-on-words, similar to the English phrase “blah blah blah,” someone who seemingly speaks gibberish). All local cultures and religions were abolished in favor of Greek education and paganism.

Since Alexander died without naming a successor, his generals each grabbed power and land. While Ptolemy controlled Egypt, Seleucus took control of the eastern half. A couple hundred years later, in 174 B.C., a Syrian man named Mithradates became king of this Seleucid Greek empire, changing his name to Antiochus. Greek paganism became state law and flourished under his rule.

When the people of Judah had returned to Israel from exile in Babylon a couple hundred years prior, the people had learned their lesson and returned to strict adherence of the commandments of God, rejecting any outside foreign influence, with the guidance of Ezra the scribe and later Nehemiah. However, Israel found itself in the middle of this pagan Greek empire. There were also those in Israel who were charmed by the ideals to be “Greek” and assimilated themselves into the pagan culture around them.

King Antiochus, once he conquered Egypt, decided to take action against the Jews, seeing how they had resisted all forms of Greek culture. He went so far as to call himself “*Epiphanes*” (“God Manifest”), forcing everyone in his empire to worship him as a god. Olympic games were held in Israeli cities; he plundered the Menorah and all the utensils from the Temple and ordered pigs to be slaughtered on the altar in honor of the Greek gods; a statue of Zeus was erected in the Holy Place; Torah scrolls were burned, and all biblical teaching was outlawed; observing Kosher laws was punishable by death. As a result, secret Bible studies were held in people’s homes. Since the Torah was outlawed, they studied other Biblical books, such as books of the Prophets, in case any soldiers decided to make random inspections.

One of the priests of the Temple, named Mattityahu, refused to partake in the rampant paganism, and decided to take action. He killed the soldier who ordered him to slaughter a pig on the altar and ran home to his five sons, with plans to overthrow the Syrian Greek overlords and restore Israel to God. Mattityahu ran throughout Jerusalem gathering followers, with his famous battle cry, “Whoever is zealous for the Torah and the covenant, follow me!” His nickname became The Hammer (“*Makaba* מַכַּבָּא” in Aramaic, and “*Makabi* מַכַּבִּי” in Hebrew). When the pagan Syrian armies surrounded Jerusalem, all Jerusalem fasted and prayed to God. This tiny army called the Maccabees miraculously grew larger and larger, gaining more and more followers, advancing against the foreign troops and expelling all sympathizers.

Once the armies were defeated, they cleansed the Temple and destroyed the statue of Zeus. They celebrated their victory and freedom with sacrifices and songs of praise to God because this tiny army of local Israelis resisted Greek paganism and triumphed. Mattityahu’s son Judah, who led the uprising, decreed an annual eight-day celebration to commemorate their great victory and rededication of the Temple. The Hebrew word for “dedication” is “*Hanukah* חֲנוּכָּה.”

As a result of the Greco-Syrian occupation of Israel, anything Greek was fiercely destroyed, expelled, and abolished. Hatred of all things Greek lasted well into the second century A.D., evidenced in the later writings of Josephus. Any Jews who had assimilated themselves into



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Greek culture and language were considered traitors and lived abroad (Acts 6:1). The martyrdom of Stephen also comes out of this context (Acts 7:54-60). However, in Yeshua we are new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17). In Yeshua, we know those walls of separation were destroyed when He died and rose again (Psalm 117, Hosea 2:23, John 10:16).

This entire history of the Macabee uprising is recorded in the Book of the Maccabees, a book not included into the canon of scripture. Yeshua is recorded to have visited the Temple during this Feast of Dedication (John 10:22-40).

Those who are familiar with the traditions of Hanukah will notice a certain element is missing. What is that element, and why is it missing? The element in truth is not missing from the story because it never happened.

The creators of the Talmud felt the story "lacked" a miracle. I guess a total regime change in Israel was not viewed as miraculous enough, so they decided to embellish the story by fabricating a miracle. The story they invented takes place during the cleansing of the Temple, concerning the oil needed to light the Menorah. The priests noticed there was only enough oil for one day's worth and it would take eight days to make more oil, and in the meantime, God amazingly allowed that tiny amount of oil to last the full eight days.

In so doing, the creators of the Talmud in fact hijacked the Feast of Dedication, teaching their fiction as truth and ignoring the historical accounts. Jewish people to this day equate Hanukah with the story of the oil, even serving fried foods to celebrate the miracle while lighting a nine-branched *Hanukiah*. They forget the military campaign that allowed them to survive as Jews (Ephesians 6:12).

As with everything they created, the Rabbis and Sages made their substitution a vital part of their new Jewish religion. Thanks to the infinite wisdom of God, the Bible mercifully warns us about the dangers of fabricating religious doctrines.

Isaiah 29:13

'Then the Lord said, "Because this people draws near with their mouth and honors me with their lips, but they have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men...'

Yeshua quoted this same scripture, in full hearing of the Pharisees who came one day to test Him.

Matthew 15:7-9

'You hypocrites! Isaiah spoke well of you when he said, "These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrine rules made by men."'

So, what was it exactly that Yeshua celebrated? He celebrated the memorial of the cleansing of the Temple and the land, of the rededication of the House of God, of the military victory against paganism. To be fair, the miracle of the oil is certainly plausible, God absolutely is capable of performing such a miracle; it simply never happened.

We at Messiah House do not seek to control how people acknowledge or celebrate the Feast of Dedication, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead and guide each individual. We recognize the holiday because Yeshua the Messiah celebrated it, remembering it as the day the Temple was cleansed and rededicated to God. We each individually as the Temple of the Holy Spirit seek to



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maintain purity in our lives and be set apart, dedicating our lives completely to the God of Israel, purchased by the blood of His Son Yeshua (Romans 2:28-29).