

Should Believers Celebrate Hanukkah?

What is Hanukkah?

Oh, Hanukkah! Oh, Hanukkah! The magical time of the year we all come together around the menorah, eat chocolate coins, talk to Hanukkah Harry who is the Jewish Santa Claus, and get presents for 8 days because it's basically the Jewish Christmas! Is this the truth? Yep, for many! And Oh, NO, for others. Hanukkah is an eight-day wintertime celebration, also known as "The Festival of Lights," that commemorates the rededication of the holy temple of Jerusalem in the second century BC. The Hebrew word Hanukkah actually means "dedication." So what does Hanukkah commemorate? Well, it's an epic story of battle and victory, and good overcoming evil, this is the short version. So, we'll give you just a little bit more.

In the second century BC, the Syrian-Greeks (the bad guys) ruled the Holy Land under King Antiochus (the bad guys' leader) who outlawed Biblical commandments (like circumcision), tried to enforce Greek pagan culture, attempted to remove books of the Law (some of the Old Testament books of the Bible) and even sacrificed pigs on the Yahweh's altar! He would torture and kill anyone who didn't do what he said.

Now enters the Maccabees. A Jewish priest Mattityahu and his 5 sons (the good guys) led a revolt against the evil king. Judah, one of the 5 sons, led the Maccabean rebellion to victory over the bad guys, and became known as "Judah the Hammer." What an awesome nickname! In fact, the Hebrew word Maccabee means "hammer". This guy becomes a Jewish hero. Judah called the hammer had the temple cleansed and rededicated with a new altar and new temple vessels. This is an eight-day process that is patterned after the Feast of Tabernacles.

After Judah rededicated the temple he sent letters from the Jews of Judea and Jerusalem to those in Egypt directing them not to keep the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall as ordered by God in Leviticus 23:33-44, but to keep Hanukkah in the winter in its place (2 Maccabees 1:1-9).

You have probably been told that the reason that Hanukkah is 8 days because of a legend that says there was only enough sacred oil to burn for one day, but it burned for all eight days! This is just a legend. The story that is recited every year is not true. The real reason Hanukkah is celebrated for 8 days is because of the human mandate made by Mattityahu to cleanse the temple and to celebrate the cleansing annually.

The observance of Hanukkah begins in the Hebrew month of Kislev, on the 25th day. This is a little different from our Gregorian calendar. The Hebrew calendar is based on the sighting of the new moon, so the dates vary. But it typically falls in the month of December. So it's easy to see why Christmas sometimes gets thrown into the mix.

So, When Does Hanukkah Begin?

Hanukkah is the 25th of the twelfth month of the Hebrew calendar called Chislev. Chislev falls in the months of November and December. It is **not** the twelfth month of the Roman calendar

called December. The 25th of the twelfth month of the Hebrew calendar can fall in our month of December in the beginning, middle, and sometimes at the end. Hanukkah will begin this year at sundown on December 12th until Sundown, December 20th 2017.

How do we celebrate Hanukkah you might ask?

While other ministries will mention dreidels and 9 branch menorahs, we do not. We simply recommend spending time with family and read the books of Maccabees I and II as a remembrance of the 8-day miracle of a few brave men risking their lives to honor the Torah (Bible) and protect the Temple of Yahweh.

Should We Celebrate Hanukkah?

Are we as believers *commanded* to celebrate Hanukkah? No. So do we *have to* celebrate Hanukkah? No. Should we celebrate Hanukkah? Short answer, *It is your choice!*

It's true that Hanukkah is considered a minor holiday in Israel. It is true that many Jews and believers are using it to replace Christmas. It is also true that there are some things stated such as in **2 Maccabees 1:9** that are questionable, and can easily be seen as going against a command of Yahweh. For example, the Maccabees celebrated Hanukkah like the Feast of Tabernacles. **2 Maccabees 1:9** states: *And now see that ye keep the Feast of Tabernacles in the month Casleu.* Wrong month. To be fair there is another translation of the same verse that says: *This is why we urge you to celebrate in the month of Kislev a festival similar to the Feast of Shelters. Written in the year 188.* Still the wrong month. God commanded the Feast of Tabernacles to be kept in the 7th month of the Jewish calendar called Tishri (Leviticus 23:33-44). Does man have the right to change the command of God?

Or it can be said that they celebrated Hanukkah like we celebrate Thanksgiving Day. The early believers of this country saw Thanksgiving as a day to give thanks to God for His blessings of their crops. They saw it like the Feast of Tabernacles in celebration. There is no scriptural reason to celebrate Thanksgiving, but we do it in remembrance of a historic day here in America. We give thanks to the Creator for his many blessing on our lives. It is about giving thanks to Yahweh for His deliverance and feasting (eating). I want to make it clear; there is nothing in scripture that says we have to observe it. However, there is also nothing in scripture that says we can't or shouldn't.

Likewise, should we observe Hanukkah in remembrance to cleanse and rededicate ourselves wholly to Yahweh of Creator? Scripture does make mention of the Feast of Dedication in the gospel of **John 10:22** and we know Yahshua went to Jerusalem to observe it (**10:23**). Can it be that they were still following the Maccabees command and observing Feast of Tabernacles in the wrong month? If they were, can we now observe Hanukkah as a time of dedication and celebration? Can we thank the Father for victory over the evils of this world and the opportunity and responsibility the Creator gives us to shine a light to those in the darkness? If we make the day into another Christmas, we have defeated that purpose? Is this true? I really think so!