Dedicate and Celebrate!

A Messianic Jewish Guide to Hanukkah

## Rabbi Barry Rubin and Family



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## Introduction

Barry (Baruch) Rubin



The only place in the Bible that Hanukkah is mentioned by name is John 10:22. Messiah was in the Temple for the "feast of dedication," as many translations render the Greek word *eng-kai-nia*. This Greek word translates the Hebrew *banukkah*. Both words convey the idea of "consecration" or "dedication." Because Messiah connected with Hanukkah, we believe that Christians, as well as Jews, can enjoy this celebration, all the more if its eternal importance is understood.

The focus of the holiday is the re-dedication of the Temple of the Lord about 160 years before Messiah's birth. God rescued his people, and preserved biblical Judaism. Without this, the prophetic fulfillment pertaining to the birth of Messiah could not have happened. Without Jews, Messiah could not have been born through the tribe of Judah, as a descendant of King David.

I've invited the Rubin family to participate with me in sharing this, one of our favorite holidays, with you. Steffi Rubin, a well-known graphic artist, has offered some wonderful illustrations to help convey Hanukkah to you; she has also written children' s materials that appear later in this book. She's also a wonderful cook and has included several recipes unique to Hanukkah. Caution: don't eat too much of this; these are *not* fat-free recipes.

My older daughter, Rebecca Rubin-Damari, has pulled together some of the traditional Hanukkah songs that help tell the story. You'll enjoy singing them. My younger daughter, Shira, an accomplished event planner, has written out the instructions for the *dreydel* game, a game developed to teach the story of God's miraculous redemption of the Jewish people.

I hope you will enjoy learning about this very special holiday, one which both Christians and Jews can celebrate.

#### Background

Solomon's Temple—the first Temple—was majestic and magnificent, but it was destroyed when the people of Israel were taken captive by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E.

The books of Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, and Nehemiah recount the building of the Second Temple, after the Jewish people returned from exile in Babylon. This Temple, built under Ezra's leadership, was dedicated approximately 450 years before Messiah. Within a few centuries, this Temple was profaned and desecrated by God' s enemies. The dedication after the desecration gave rise to the holiday we now call Hanukkah, which means "dedication."

First and Second Maccabees (apocryphal books), Josephus in his *Antiquites*, and The Talmud (tractate Shabbat 21b), tell the story of this holiday. Also, Daniel 8 records the prophet's vision of the future, a vision that precisely foretells the events of Hanukkah.

#### What is the history of Hanukkah?

History records that Alexander the Great conquered most of the known world several centuries before Messiah's birth. After Alexander died, his kingdom was divided between his four generals. The Syrian-Greeks (the Seleucids) and the Egyptian-Greeks (the Ptolomies), two of the four kingdoms, often battled each other over Israel. Ultimately, the Syrian-Greeks won. When their ruler died, a man named Antiochus took over his kingdom, which contained what Daniel calls "the Beautiful Land"— Israel.

In order to subjugate the Jews, Antiochus, who called himself *Epiphanes*, meaning "God manifest," began to outlaw Jewish customs and observances such as Sabbath, circumcision, and kosher laws. He reasoned that if he could get the Jews to give up their "strange" ways, he could homogenize his country and better control it. He didn't want any religious practices except the Greek (Hellenistic) ways.

He continued to Hellenize the Hebrews. He destroyed Torah scrolls, placed heathen altars everywhere, made Jews bow down before Greek gods, placed a statue of Jupiter in the Temple, and finally sacrificed a pig in the Holy of Holies. That was the last straw. First Maccabees states, "Now the fifteenth day of the month [Kislev—November/ December], in the hundred forty and fifth year, they [the Syrian-Greeks] set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side" (1:54). This was the pagan Saturnalia ceremony, in which a pig was sacrificed in the Holy of Holies, the place of God's Presence.

In the small town of Modin, a man went to sacrifice to the heathen gods according to the law of the land. Mattathias, a righteous priest of Israel, a descendent of Moses' brother Aaron, an observant man of God, could not take it any longer . Just as Pinchas (Phineas) had done a millennium before him, when unholiness was being foisted upon Israel (Num. 25:6–9), Mattathias rose up and killed the Jew who was sacrificing to the gods of Greece.

He knew that this would begin the revolt, and shouted, "Let all who are zealous for the Law [and the Lord] follow me!" Mattathias and his sons, led by Judah, mustered enough forces to eventually overthrow the Syrian-Greeks. All the sons of Mattathias joined together, as well as many other zealous Jews willing to wage guerrilla warfare until the Syrian-Greeks were overthrown. Judah and his brothers were called "Maccabees." In Hebrew , Maccabee means "hammer ," an apt description of their guerilla tactics. Thus began the Maccabean revolt.

After a three-year struggle, ending in 165B.C.E., the Temple was recaptured, restored, and rededicated. Hanukkah commemorates and celebrates the re-dedication of the Holy Temple, so despicably desecrated by Antiochus and his Syrian-Greek legions.

You can imagine, then, that this day has been observed with great joy by Jewish people. Not only does it recall the rescue of the Jews, it remembers the day when God was victorious over heathen Hellenism.

The dedication sacrifice, after the Temple was recaptured, repaired, and rededicated, occurred on the same day as the desecration:

Now upon the same day that the strangers profaned the temple, on the very same day it was cleansed again, even the five and twentieth day of the month which is Kislev. And they kept eight days with gladness, as in the Feast of Tabernacles (2 Maccabees 10:5–6).

Interestingly, 25 Kislev was also the day the "foundation of *ADONAI*'s temple was laid" (Hag. 2:18).

Tradition teaches that when the Temple was restored, only one vial of oil had the seal of the High Priest on it, indicating that it could be used in the Temple menorah, the candelabra. But the one day's worth of sacred oil miraculously lasted for eight days, long enough for more oil to be prepared, so that the Temple could be ritually purified.

#### Dedicate and Celebrate

Yeshua the Messiah caused two loaves of bread and a few fish to feed thousands. Miracles occur. If God, then, was trying to communicate his pleasure regarding the restoration of his house, he very well might have caused this miracle to happen.

#### Hanukkah in the book of Daniel???

The prophet Daniel was the first to describe Hanukkah, although not by name. He foresaw the events leading up to the military victory celebrated at this time of the year. This is recorded in Daniel 8.

He had a vision of animals—rams and goats. He saw horns—big ones and little ones. He saw stars. He saw armies. He saw the future. God wanted him to know what was coming in the Land of Israel. God wanted his people to have the confidence to stand up for him. The prophecy was given for a purpose—to encourage the people.

First, Daniel saw a ram with two horns (vv. 3–4). One of these horns was longer than the other, arising later; this horn would conquer the known world. History shows that the nation referred to, Media-Persia, did indeed conquer the world. Media came first; later Persia dominated and ruled the known world from Egypt to India. This is the interpretation offered by the angel Gabriel (v. 20).

Then Daniel saw a picture of a male goat from the west with a prominent horn between its eyes (vv. 5-7). This goat would roam the whole earth, not touching the ground. It would destroy the horns of the ram mentioned in vv. 3 and 4, and the ram itself. Horns represented power in ancient days.

Alexander the Great's quick conquest of the world is pictured in vy. 5–7. He would rapidly destroy Media and Persia, and rule enormous amounts of territory . Verse 21 mentions Gabriel's interpretation—this goat was the king of Greece—Alexander!

Next in Daniel's vision (v. 8) came four horns that replaced the horn of Alexander, just at the height of his power . These four horns would spread out toward the four winds of heaven, but would not be as powerful as Alexander.

As said previously, when Alexander the Great died, his territory was distributed among his four leading generals—Ptolemy in Egypt, Cassander in Macedonia and Greece, Lysimachus in Asia Minor, and Seleucus in Israel. None of the successors had the power of Alexander. This is precisely the interpretation given by Gabriel in v . 22, albeit without using their names.

Daniel's vision concludes. A small horn, then, would arise from one of the four horns and grow exceedingly great (w .9-12). Daniel observes that the small horn grew toward the south, the east, and the Beautiful Land. It grew toward the army of

heaven, causing some of the army and stars to fall. This "little horn" claimed equality with the commander of the army (God), and removed the sacrifice from the commander, throwing down the commander's sanctuary, stopping the regular sacrifice. The little horn even "flung truth on the ground" (v. 12).

Verse 23 describes how this "little horn" would act. Not only would he claim to be God, precisely what Antiochus did when he gave himself the title *Epiphanes*, but he would be "skilled in intrigue." In fact, he would be "amazingly destructive, and he will destroy the mighty and the holy ones [here referring to the Israelites]. He will succeed through craftiness and deceit, become swelled with pride, and destroy many people just when they feel the most secure. He will even challenge the prince of princes [Messiah]; but without human intervention, he will be broken" (vv. 24–25). This is what Antiochus did as he took over the kingdom containing the Beautiful Land.

This is the story of Hanukkah, recorded in the Book of Daniel.

#### How is Hanukkah celebrated?

Now we'll tell you some ways our family celebrates this holiday. It's one of our favorites, as it is for most Jews. You'll see why.

*The Hanukkiyah* (Hah-noo-**kee**-ah)



The central symbol of Hanukkah is the *banukkiyab*, a nine-branched *version of the menorab*. The menorah was the seven-branch candelabra that shed light in the otherwise dark Tabernacle and later the Temple. The Hanukkah menorah, the *banukkiyab*, is nine-branched, in order to remember the 8-day miracle. (An additional candle is used to light the other eight.)

#### Dedicate and Celebrate

Initially, people celebrated Hanukkah by bringing palm branches to Jerusalem, as they did on Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles. This was an ancient custom, the same used by the masses when Yeshua made his "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem. Some say that the reason for using palm branches was to recapture the Sukkot celebrations lost during the three-year battle with Antiochus. Whatever the initial purpose, the traditional practice gave way to the lighting of candles. Hanukkah, then, also became known as the Feast of Lights.

There's no biblically "correct" way to light the candles. However, certain customs have developed. As with much in Judaism, there are variations.

Rabbi Hillel, one of two leading rabbis around Yeshua's time on earth, would begin the first night of Hanukkah lighting just one candle and adding a candle each night until there were nine candles blazing. Rabbi Shammai, the other leading rabbi, began with the *banukkiyab* filled and lit. He then removed a candle every night for the eight nights of Hanukkah.

Since Shammai was more strict concerning other things of Jewish law, the Rubin family, and most Jews today, follow the school of Hillel. You might find it interesting that Hillel's teachings were quite similar to Messiah's teaching.

#### The shammash

Earlier, I mentioned that the *banukkiyab*, unlike a traditional, seven-branch menorah, has nine candles. The ninth candle is set apart from the rest of the candles, usually higher. It's used to light the other candles, which is why it's called *shammash*, a Hebrew word meaning "servant."

The Rubin family sees in this a picture of Yeshua the Messiah. He was "set apart" from the rest of humanity. He was holy, separate, above us all. Yet, he stooped down to give light to humankind, and as the servant, he continually desires to give us light if we will only hold out our wicks to be lit. Yeshua is the light of the world.

Hanukkah is a time to say to Messiah the servant, "Light my light." The Torah, the written word of God, is a light to our paths; Yeshua, the living Torah, is the same. But we need to "dedicate" ourselves to following his ways. That will make our celebration of Hanukkah all the more meaningful, whether Jewish or Christian.

#### We light the candles

Just after sundown, the evening before the first full day of Hanukkah, we face the menorah and light the candle on the far right first. I add candles each night, from right to left, and, lighting the *shammash* first, light the rest of the candles from left to right.

We are careful not to use the light from the *hanukkiyah* for utilitarian purposes. The light is only to remind us of God's victory over paganism.

The great Jewish scholar (also a follower of Yeshua) Dr. Alfred Edersheim wrote that the Talmud says the light should be placed at the entrance of the home or room or maybe near a window. The *hanukkiyah* then testifies to God's faithfulness.

Even though on all other holidays the women light the candles, on Hanukkah the man or head of the house is to light the candles. The following prayers are recited as the candles are lit:

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בַּרוּך אַתַּה, יְיָ אֶלהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הַעוֹלַם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְשַנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתַיו
וְצִוַּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק וֵר שֶׁל חֲנָבַּה.
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Barukb atab Addram, Elobeynu melekb ba'olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik neyr shel Chanukkab.

Blessed are you, LORD our God, king of the universe, who sets us apart by his commandments and commanded us to light the lights of Hanukkah.

בּרוּך אַתָּה, יָיָ אֶלהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הַעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לַאַבוֹתֵינוּ בּיָמִים הַהֵם בַּזְמֵן הַזֶּה.

Barukh atah Adoxa, Eloheynu melekh haʻolam, sheʻasah nisim l'avoteynu bayamim hahem bazman hazeh.

Blessed are you, LORD our God, king of the universe, who has performed miracles for our fathers in those days, at this time.

On the first night the following prayer is added:

Barukh atah Adona, Eloheynu melekh haʻolam, shehecheyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higi'anu lazman hazeh.

Blessed are you, LORD our God, king of the universe, who has kept us alive and sustained us and enabled us to reach this season.

Once the candles are lit, it's time to eat, sing, and play-in a word, celebrate!

### Conclusion

#### The meaning of the word is a lesson in commitment

When, as individuals, we began our relationship with God, we learned that we must focus on God. Yeshua said, "Go in through the narrow gate; for the gate that leads to destruction is wide and the road broad, and many travel it; but it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matt. 7:13–14). So from the start we knew we needed to narrow, focus, dedicate ourselves to God.

The Israelites had to struggle and sacrifice to be dedicated to God. They had to fight and stand for his Word. To follow the Lord means to fight the good fight, as Rav Sha'ul (Rabbi Saul, the Apostle Paul) said. To be dedicated to God means to destroy that which would take us away from him and embrace that which draws us close to him.

So then the meaning of the word Hanukkah reminds us that we must be dedicated to, focused on, and narrowed toward our father in heaven.

#### *My little d'rash (commentary)*

Hanukkah is closely connected with the Temple of God. Yeshua's followers are called the Temple of the spirit of God. Rav Sha'ul compared believers to the Temple of God in several places.

With regard to the preciousness of his people, he wrote,

Don't you know that you people are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? So if anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you yourselves are that temple (1 Cor. 3:16, 17).

With regard to sexual immorality, Sha'ul said,

Don't you know that your body is a temple for the *Ruach HaKodesh* who lives inside you, whom you received from God? The fact is, you don't belong to yourselves; for you were bought at a price. So use your bodies to glorify God (1 Cor. 6:19).

With regard to being yoked together with unbelievers, Paul preached,

What agreement can there be between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God (2 Cor. 6:16).

With regard to Gentiles becoming fellow-citizens with God's chosen people, the great emissary to the Gentiles wrote,

You have built on the foundation of the emissaries and prophets, with the cornerstone being Yeshua the Messiah himself. In union with him the whole building is held together, and it is growing into a holy temple in union with the Lord. Yes, in union with him, you yourselves are being built together into a spiritual dwelling-place for God! (Eph. 2:21)

Paul's message in all these statements was that believers are as holy as the Temple. And since the Temple was to be cleansed and dedicated unto the Lord, so, too, God's people, Jewish and non-Jewish, need to be dedicated to cleansing our precious temples, both physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

As we observe Hanukkah, let us dedicate our temples to God . . . and celebrate God's protection from his and our enemies. And let us wish each other a VERY happy Hanukkah! Now for others to share with you about Hanukkah.

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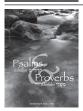
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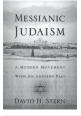


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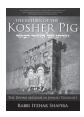


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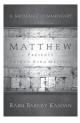
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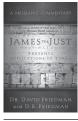
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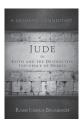
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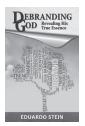


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Paul (Shaul) was on the "fast track" to becoming a sage and Sanhedrin judge, describing himself as passionate for the Torah and the traditions of the fathers, typical for an aspiring Pharisee: "...trained at the feet of Gamaliel in every detail of the Torah of our forefathers. I was a zealot for God, as all of you are today" (Acts 22.3, CJB). Did Shaul's teachings reflect Rabbi Gamaliel's instructions? Did Paul continue to value the Torah and Pharisaic tradition? Did Paul create a 'New' Theology? The results of the research within these pages and its conclusion may surprise you. Softcover, 100 pages.

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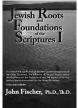


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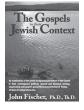
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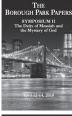
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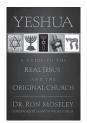


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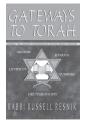


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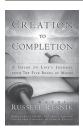


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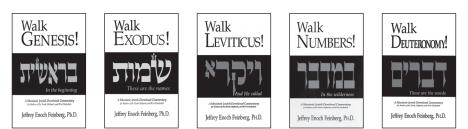


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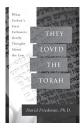
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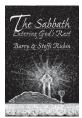
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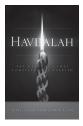
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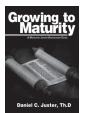
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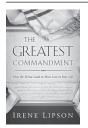


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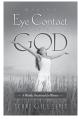
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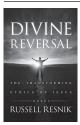
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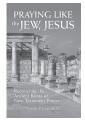
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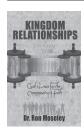
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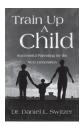
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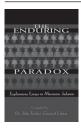
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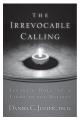


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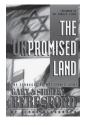
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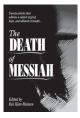


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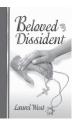
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