



The Miracle of Chanukah

by Rev. Kevin Parviz



CONGREGATION CHAI V'SHALOM

Congregation Chai v'Shalom began in 1997 as a store-front office in Dogtown, St. Louis, MO. Rev. Kevin Parviz, a Jewish believer in Y'shua (Jesus), envisioned a congregation of Jewish and non-Jewish believers in Jesus, worshipping together in much the same fashion as the Church in the 1st century, the worship style patterned after a "second-temple model" of worship.

A congregation of the LCMS, we partner with Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism to bring the gospel to Jewish people in St. Louis, the United States and internationally.

We celebrate Divine Worship on Sunday mornings, also in the pattern of the 1st century Church, as we celebrate the resurrection of Messiah, Y'shua. Our services are at 10:00 a.m. with Bible study beginning at 9:00 a.m. Oneg Shabbat follows the service. We hope you will join us. Shalom!

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Once upon a time, in a land far, far away, there lived a people whom God loved very much. Actually, it was the Holy Land, Israel, and it was about 168 years before the birth of Jesus, over two thousand years ago!



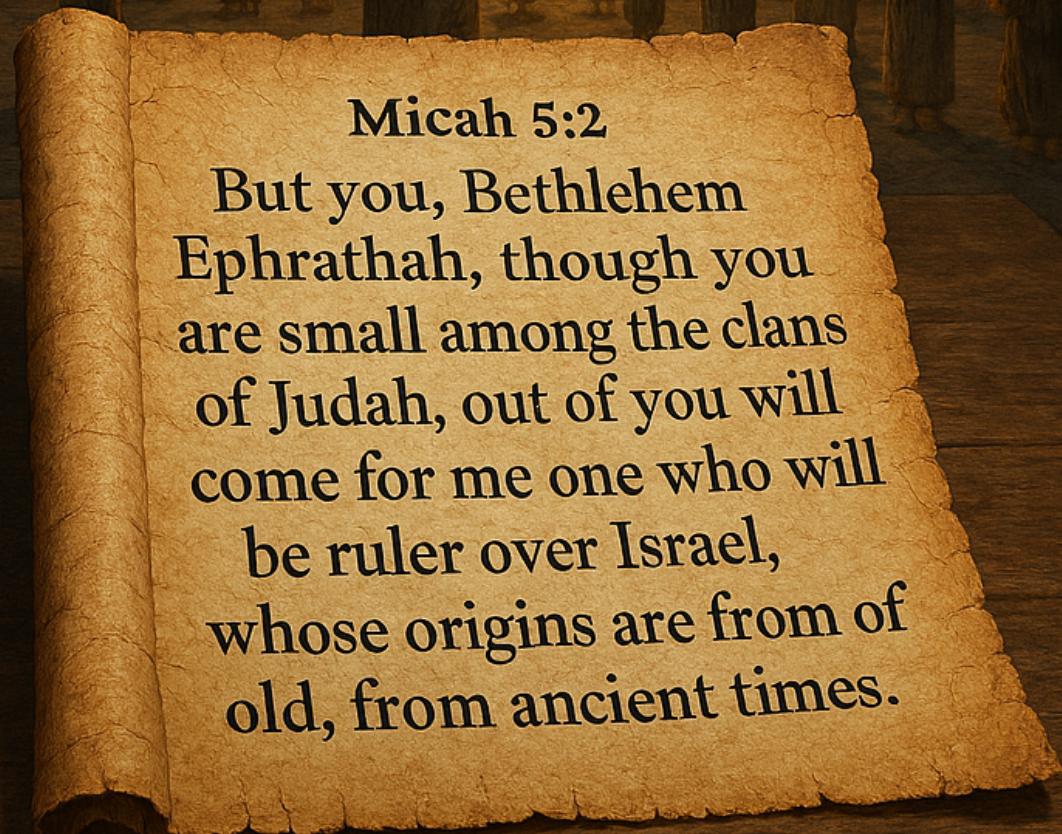
The people lived in the land that was promised to them by God, but they were not very happy. You see, there was a time when they were a powerful nation, but the kingdoms of David and Solomon were long gone. Israel had been conquered by a series of empires, one after another. First Babylon, then Persia, and finally Macedonia, led by Alexander the Great.



Alexander the Great was a Macedonian, from an area which today is called Greece. He conquered the whole known world at that time and unified the world under Greek rule.



But even the greatest warrior kings die, and when Alexander died, his empire was split up and Israel was ruled by one of his generals named Ptolemy and his descendants. The Greek language became the language of the land, the Scriptures were translated into Greek, and some of the Jewish people in Israel started worshipping the Greek gods.



Micah 5:2

**But you, Bethlehem
Ephrathah, though you
are small among the clans
of Judah, out of you will
come for me one who will
be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of
old, from ancient times.**

But the kings over Israel let the Jewish people worship the one true God too. The temple and the priesthood of Israel were still there for Jewish people who wanted to worship, and they waited patiently for the promise of God to be fulfilled as the prophet Micah had foretold, that out of Bethlehem in Israel would come a ruler who would give them peace. The Messiah was coming!



But soon an evil king came instead. Antiochus Epiphanes, from Syria became king over Israel. He was not content to levy taxes and demand the loyalty of the Jews. He decided that he was the one that the Jews should worship, and he forced the Jewish people to worship him and the rest of the greek gods. He outlawed the worship of the one true God, he got rid of the priesthood of Israel, and he desecrated the Temple, setting up idols for worship and slaughtering a pig on the holy altar.



One man had enough! His name was Matthew and he was a priest and head of the Hasmonean family. He called his people to rebel against the king.



At first, only a few people would follow him. Everyone was so scared of Antiochus the Madman, which is what they called the king. Those who followed Matthew ran up into the hills around Jerusalem and started to attack the soldiers of the king.



Matthew was old, and soon died, but his sons carried on the battle, and his second son, Judah became the leader. Judah was a strong and mighty warrior and his followers called him Judah Maccabee, which means Judah the Hammer. Jews started to follow Judah, and knew that he was the Hammer that would crush the Syrian armies.



But still, there were too few Jews to fight. The armies of Antiochus the Madman outnumbered them 100 to 1, and Judah and his army was armed with only what they could make or steal, while the Madman's army was trained and armed in the most fierce ways.



Alexander the Great had conquered the world with soldiers, weapons and elephants, and the Madman's army could easily conquer this tiny army with the same kinds of soldiers, weapons and elephants. (They actually used to get the elephants drunk and then stampede them into Judah's army!)



But God was with Judah! Miraculously, Judah's army began to grow, and though they were small and poorly armed, they started to win battles against the mighty Syrian army.



One day, Judah climbed the mountain that overlooked Jerusalem and saw that there were no more Syrians to fight. In a few years, Judah and his army defeated Syria, and threw them out of Israel.



It was the twenty-fifth day of Kislev, and Judah and his army marched into Jerusalem and went straight to the Temple. There they saw a horrible sight.

The Temple was filthy, with idols everywhere.



So on that day, the people cleaned up the Temple, purified it, and rededicated it to the worship of the one true God. And so Chanukah was born. Chanukah means dedication, and Chanukah is the Feast of Dedication to remember this miraculous victory over Syria, the dedication of the temple, and the worship again of God.



There is also a legend that is told. It is said that when Judah came to the temple that day, one of the things that Judah did was put together a menorah so the light of the Temple could burn again. They looked all over for purified oil to burn in the menorah, but could not find any. They looked and looked. Finally, they found one little flask that still had the seal of the High Priest on it.



It was only a little bit of oil, but they put it in the menorah and burned it, and though it was only enough to last one day, it lasted eight days!



That was enough time for them to make more oil, so today we celebrate Chanukkah for eight days, and some call this holiday the Festival of Lights.



But the real miracle of Chanukkah is not in the oil. That is a good story, and maybe it happened, we don't really know. But what we do know is that God gave the Jewish people a great victory over Syria, preserving them in the face of overwhelming odds, to keep His promise to them. Because if Syria had destroyed the Jews as they wanted to, then God's promise of a ruler in Israel from Bethlehem could not have happened. But God always keeps His promise.



200 years after Judah rededicated the temple, Israel is ruled by Rome, another conqueror. The people of Israel have grown impatient, but have heard of the Messiah and King that the prophet Micah had foretold. Could it be now?



Standing at that same Temple, celebrating Chanukah, Jesus was asked by the Jews there with him, “If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.” And he did.



Jesus is the one, born in Bethlehem, promised by God to bring peace. Peace that cannot be easily overcome by the actions of all the madmen in the world, but a peace with God that lasts forever...that is the real miracle of Chanukah!

The End...but not just yet! The only place Chanukah is mentioned in the Scriptures is in the Gospel of John, chapter 10. To learn more about the Prince of Peace, Y'shua (Jesus' Hebrew name), read the rest of John's Gospel.

