



Light in the
darkness...

Chanukkah meditations
by the Rev. Kevin Parviz

Cover: This famous photograph was taken by Rachel Posner, on Chanukkah in 1932, one month before Hitler came to power. The building across the road was decorated with Nazi flags.

On the back of the photograph Rachel wrote the following words (in German):

Chanukkah 5692 (1932)
"Death to Judah"
So the flag says
"Judah will live forever"
So the light answers.

I pray that these meditations will help you to know God's light that overcomes the darkness, the light of the world, Y'shua, our Messiah.

For more on this photograph, please visit www.yadvashem.org.

These devotions for Chanukkah are adapted from "Ponder the Path," available at www.chaiyshalom.com or www.lije.org.

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isn't always easy to understand. How can God be a man? How could He die? Truth does not require understanding, and neither does faith. Faith clings to what it knows is true, and clings to the One who claimed to be Truth: Jesus, True God and True Man.

Prayer: Dear Lord, I long to teach Your truth to one who does not know You. Teach me through Your Word, and send someone with questions that I might answer. In Y'shua's name, Amen.

Light in the Darkness: So many say that they are afraid to tell others about their walk with Jesus because they may not have the right words or answers to questions. Prepare well and pray. God will give you what you need, and it's OK to say, "I don't know, let's look into it."

CHANUKKAH

(Festival of Dedication)
(First Day of Chanukkah)

Date: Eight days beginning with the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev (November/December).



Name: Chanukkah (KHA-noo-kah) means Dedication. It commemorates the rededication of the temple after it was defiled by Syrians and made into a pagan shrine. It is also called the "Festival of Lights" because the sacred temple lamp is said to have burned eight days on one day's supply of sacred oil, all that was left.

Purpose: To celebrate the Jewish victory over the Syrians by Judah the Maccabee in 165 B.C. and to celebrate regaining political and religious freedom.

Old Testament: None. (The Jewish victory over the Syrians occurred after Old Testament history.) The story is recorded in 1 and 2 Maccabees, two historical books of the Apocrypha.

New Testament: *"Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade"* (John 10:22-23).

Observance: A special nine-branch candleholder, called *Hannukkiyyuh*, is used so that a candle can be lit on each of the eight days of Celebration. The *shammes*, the helper or servant candle, is lit first and it is used to light the other candles, one on the first day, two on the second, and so on

through the eight days of Chanukkah. This recalls the miraculous burning of the temple light for eight days on one day's supply of oil.

Tradition: Pancakes made with potatoes and oil, called latkes, are a traditional treat, the oil in the latkes recalling the oil in the sacred temple lamp. Other popular foods are doughnuts and cheese dishes.

Children play with dreidles (DRAY-dulls), square tops inscribed with the Hebrew letters N, G, H and S for the Hebrew phrase, "Nes Gadol Haya Sham," (ness gah-DOLE hah-YAH shahm) meaning "A great miracle happened there." Gifts are exchanged, especially between members of the family.

Fulfillment: Just as the lights of Chanukkah overcome darkness, so the darkness of this world is overcome by Jesus who said, "I am the light of the world; whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Prayer: Abba Father, thank You for preserving Your people, both in times past and forevermore. For from them, You have brought forth our salvation from darkness, Messiah, Y'shua. May Your people know His love and mercy.

Light in the Darkness: Spend some time this evening as you light your Chanukkah to reflect on God's everpresent protection and His plans for your future.

CHANUKKAH

(Festival of Dedication)
(Eighth Day of
Chanukkah)

"Jesus said, 'I and the Father are one.' Again the Jews picked up stones to stone Him, but Jesus said to them, 'I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone Me?' 'We are not stoning You for any of these.' replied the Jews, 'but for blasphemy, because You, a mere man, claim to be God'" (John 10:30-33).



Here is where "the rubber meets the road." Jesus takes the opportunity of the Feast of Dedication to make an extraordinary claim. "I and the Father are one." You see, to be the Messiah, He must be God. Judah, the one whom God used to deliver His people from the oppressive rule of the Syrians, was just a man. He did not claim to be God. In the same way, God used Moses to deliver His people from the oppressive rule of the Egyptians. But Moses never claimed to be God either.

Israel's prophet Isaiah prophesied that Messiah must be both God and man. A child born of a virgin, a son who is called Immanuel, "God with us." Jesus is Messiah, God with us. Blasphemy? No, not if it is the truth. But the truth

This tradition was not begun until the 4th century, recorded in the Babylonian Talmud, but I believe it is God's truth being deposited in the traditions of men. We have a servant King who brings us eternal life. Just as the shammes lights the candles of the menorah, our Shammes, Jesus, ignites the light of life in us. But unlike the candles at Chanukkah, which will eventually burn out, our lights will never perish.

Prayer: Lord God, Heavenly Father, thank You for the light You have shined into my heart. Thank You for Your Son, who died so that I might live. Help me to understand how You desire to use me to serve You. In Y'shua's name, Amen.

Light in the Darkness: To walk in darkness is never a pleasant experience. Even if the path is well worn and easy to follow, without light you will inevitably trip and fall. The Holy Spirit is the flame that lights your way and leads you to serve. Which gift of the Spirit have you received to use in service to the Body of Christ? (Read 1 Corinthians 12.)

CHANUKKAH

(Festival of Dedication)
(Second Day of Chanukkah)

"Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade" (John 10:22-23).

It's a rather strange irony, isn't it, that Jesus never celebrated Christmas? His "winter holiday" was Chanukkah. The long, hot roads of summer are past, and it is winter in Judea. The rainy season has begun, and the path ahead is muddy and striped with rivulets of running water. We see Jesus walking in the temple. He is there for the Chanukkah-The Feast of Dedication.

Though not a festival commanded by God in the Scripture, it is still a feast which Jesus attends. It is a time to remember God's grace and protection of His people. A traditional holiday celebrated by Jewish people, it is interesting that the only mention of Chanukkah in Scripture is here in John 10. The events which Chanukkah remembers are recorded in 1 and 2 Maccabees, books of the apocrypha written during the 400 years between the ministry of the prophet Malachi and the birth of the Messiah.



Traditions are good opportunities to remember how God has shown His grace to us in the past. They are not objects of our worship, just carts we pull along on the path-carts

which carry treasured memories that remind us that God forgives sins and gives us eternal life through our faith in the death and resurrection of His Son, our Messiah, Jesus.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank You for traditions and the value they have in remembering Your mercy for us. Help us to rededicate ourselves to You, especially today and during this season. In Y'shua's name, Amen.

Light in the Darkness: What traditions do you take with you on your path? Chanukkah, Christmas, Easter and other celebrations are not commanded by Scripture, but have become useful traditions by which we remember the grace that God has shown us. In your worship this year, praise Him who has shown you every mercy through Messiah, Y'shua.

CHANUKKAH

(Festival of Dedication)
(Seventh Day of
Chanukkah)

"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:28).

Chanukkah teaches us something about service. Tradition says that when the temple was rededicated, the lamp stand was filled with oil and lit. But following the war, there was only enough oil to last for one day, and it would take seven more days to press enough olives for oil to keep the lamp stand burning. Miraculously, the flame lasted for eight days, and so the festival lasts eight days to commemorate this miracle.



Each day of the festival a new light is added to the Chanukkah menorah until the eighth day, when the entire lamp stand is lit and the room is bright with light. Usually, beeswax candles are used today, and they are not extinguished, but are allowed to burn as long as they will. Although the festival lasts only eight days, the menorah has nine branches. What is this ninth candle? Called the shammas (SHAH-mesh), meaning "servant," this candle lights the rest of the candles. Day after day, the shammas lights one more flame, until the entire room is lit.

and continues to call us. Listen to His voice as He leads us in the path of Life.

Prayer: Avinu Malkenu, Our Father, our King, thank You for sending Your Son to serve us as our Shepherd. Tune our hearts to His voice, and help us to listen always. In Y'shua's name, Amen.

Light in the Darkness: False shepherds call us from the radio, television, movies, books, and friends. Are you listening to the True Shepherd who calls to you from God's Word, and leads you through the Holy Spirit? He will never lead you astray.

Shepherd Me, O God by Marty Haugen

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6g_hROZbQV8

CHANUKKAH

(Festival of Dedication)
(Third Day of Chanukkah)

"The Jews gathered around Him saying, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly'" (John 10:24).

As Jesus walked in the temple, a crowd gathered around Him. Some were walking the path with Him, many had witnessed His miracles, and all were longing for a Messiah. Now they asked Him to be clear: "Are you the Messiah or not?"



God's people have waited a long time for the promised Messiah. This festival reminds them of the wait. Chanukkah commemorates the rededication of the temple in 167 B.C. The land of Israel had been conquered by Syria, and its king, Antiochus, declared himself to be god. He refused to allow the Jewish people to worship the true God, and he desecrated the temple. A man arose during this time who would help lead the Jews in a victory over the Syrians. His name was Judah (the name alone would evoke hope, because Jacob promised the Messiah would come through his son, Judah) and following a miraculous victory, many hailed him as the messiah.

But as Jesus walked in the temple, Judah had been dead for many generations, and another foreign power controlled Israel. Jesus, from the tribe of Judah, is being asked, "Are you the Messiah?" Some hope for deliverance from the

Romans. Others hope for deliverance from persecution. Few hope for the deliverance that Jesus would effect. He would deliver them from death, and a new temple would be dedicated in the hearts of those who follow Him on His path to the cross.

Prayer: My God, and my salvation, thank You for my faith. Renew and strengthen me today to answer with boldness, "Yes, Jesus is my Messiah." In Y'shua's name, Amen.

Light in the Darkness: When you're on a journey, it is OK to stop now and then and ask directions. "Are you the Messiah?" is an appropriate question to ask Jesus on this journey through Chanukkah. What answer do you hear? Listen as Jesus tells you, "Yes, it is as you say" (Matthew 26:64).

CHANUKKAH

(Festival of Dedication)
(Sixth Day of
Chanukkah)

"My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27).



Jesus makes clear what it takes to walk the path of Life. He uses a shepherd/sheep analogy to describe the relationship we have with Him. A shepherd teaches his sheep to distinguish his voice from anyone else's, so as to protect them from following a false shepherd. His concern is for their safety. A shepherd will protect his sheep even at the risk of his own life.

To be called sheep is not necessarily a compliment. Sheep are fairly dumb animals who cannot accomplish anything for themselves. If a sheep falls, it cannot even stand up without the help of the shepherd. That is our situation exactly. There is nothing we can do to help ourselves. We must listen to our Shepherd's voice and follow Him. His role as leader is not commander, but servant. He leads us through serving us, and because of His service, we are dedicated to Him.

The Feast of Dedication is a time to remember the dedication of the temple, but also gives us an opportunity to examine our own dedication to God. If we listen to His voice and follow Him, we are sure to be led safely on the path of Life. But if we stray, we risk our lives. False shepherds will call us. But the Shepherd who served us with His life and death now serves us in His resurrected life.

Yes, the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are dying, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

Prayer: Dear God, if it is foolish to believe in You, then thank You for making me a fool. In Y'shua's name, Amen.

Light in the Darkness: April Fools' Day falls in the Spring, but every day is an opportunity to show our foolishness. Michael Card wrote a song called "God's Own Fool." The refrain is "And so we follow God's own Fool; For only the foolish can tell. Believe the unbelievable; Come be a fool as well." Share this message today with someone who might believe you a fool.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sklJ2vCgVtU>

CHANUKKAH

(Festival of Dedication)
(Fourth Day of Chanukkah)

"Jesus answered, 'I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in My Father's name speak for Me . . .'" (John 10:25).

God is in the miracle business. We have been given the miracle of life, the miracle of breath, and the faith we find in answer to yesterday's question is the greatest miracle of all.



Chanukkah is a time to remember miracles. It was certainly a miracle that the small army of Jewish soldiers was able to overcome the vast resources of the Syrian war machine, and it is a great miracle that Jewish people today are still seeking the Messiah in the miracle of Chanukkah.

For centuries, conquerors, kings and popes have sought to destroy the Jewish people. But God has always sustained them. During the dark time of the Church, Spanish inquisitors tried hard to destroy the Jews in the name of God, forcing conversions at the point of a sword. But God's miracles were remembered through a simple child's game called Dreidle. The dreidle is a top inscribed with four Hebrew letters which are an acronym for "Nes Gadol Haya Sham."* "A great miracle happened there." Disallowed by the Church of that day to celebrate their festivals, Jewish people remembered the miracle of God's deliverance in this game.

Today, the Church remembers God's grace and love, and prays that the Jewish people would again be delivered, not by the point of a sword, but by the work of the true Messiah-Jesus.

Prayer: Dear God, remove from the Church those who would persecute Your people. Give us Your truth that Jesus is the Way for all people, including Your Jewish people. In Y'shua's name, Amen.

Light in the Darkness: Has God placed any Jewish people along your path? Share this study with them and tell them about the Messiah.

*In Israel, the dreidle has the acronym for "Nes Gadol Haya Po." "A great miracle happened here." After all, the events of Chanukkah happened in Israel, as did the greatest miracle of all, the birth of Messiah, Y'shua!



CHANUKKAH

(Festival of Dedication)
(Fifth Day of
Chanukkah)

"... you do not believe because you are not My sheep" (John 10:26).



"Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles" (1 Corinthians 1:22-23).

Sometimes the path we are on is lonely. We see many on other paths. They call out to us, urge us to turn from the foolishness we are following and join them. They tell us to stop, don't go on, that we are chasing a fool. The closer we get to the cross, the more foolish this journey seems.

Jesus speaks to those who see the miracles of God and still do not believe. They say that Jesus is a fool, and that those who follow Him are even bigger fools. And they are right, because, "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise" (1 Corinthians 1:27).

How often do we see miracles and not believe? There are many who witness daily the miracle of creation, and yet still believe in evolution. They say that we are fools to believe that this world could be created in six days. They would say that we are fools to believe that the little Jewish army could defeat the might of Syria. They would say we are fools to believe that God would sacrifice His Son for us and raise Him again so that we can be forgiven and have eternal life.