



Chanukkah

December 25, 2022

Sundown, tonight, begins the eighth day of *Chanukkah*. In a few minutes we will light the eighth candle. Some of you may have recently watched a video about the real meaning of *Chanukkah* by Kevin Geoffrey. What we have taught in the past about *Chanukkah* and will repeat today is very similar to his understanding. What this festival has become through the centuries bears little resemblance to its official history in 1Maccabees. The *Talmud* and Jewish tradition has added much that was never there. The Books of Maccabees are not Scripture, but they are history and we can learn from them. At the end of the service you will receive notes which include a document entitled “*Chanukkah* According To 1st Maccabees.” I hope that you will take time at home to read it. We need to be able to separate fact from fiction. *Chanukkah* is a time of remembering a miracle, not the miracle of eight days of oil, but the miracle of ADONAI’s preservation of His people Israel through the faithful Maccabees. It is also a time of looking forward to a future miracle, the return of our Messiah whose first and second comings were enabled by the Maccabees.

Remembering the Maccabees miraculous victory over the Syrians causes us to think of many of the ways that ADONAI has shown His love and commitment to the Children of Israel through the centuries. His choosing of Abraham and his descendants gives hope to every person who believes ADONAI and trusts in Him. We, who have faith, trust in His Word, and the faithfulness which it requires, are nearing the end of a journey of thousands of years. ADONAI’ plan, a plan which He made before the creation of the universe, includes some momentous events, including *Chanukkah*.

In about 2067 BCE, ADONAI made a covenant with Abraham. (Genesis 17:7-8). This covenant, the Covenant of Circumcision, was the sign of ADONAI’s promise to give Abraham’s descendants the Land of Canaan and to be their G-d. Abraham was chosen because of his faith, his trust in a G-d whom he could not see, but whose voice he heard in his spirit and obeyed. This is the beginning of the spiritual journey of the nation of Israel.

In about 1446 BCE, ADONAI delivered Israel from Egyptian captivity through the first Passover. (Exodus 13:3-4 TLV). After harsh slavery of hundreds of years, ADONAI rescued Abraham’s descendants from their captors. His judgment of Pharaoh and the Egyptians through the death of their firstborn was the climax of the plagues which He brought against Egypt. The blood of the Passover lamb on the doorposts of their homes protected the Children of Israel and their firstborn.

Fifty days later in the same year, 1446 BCE, Israel reached Mount Sinai. After rescuing them from Egypt, ADONAI brought them into His covenant at Mount Sinai, a covenant which we understand to be a *ketubah*, a marriage contract of *erusin*, betrothal. Betrothal has lasted thousands of years, but now, our *nissuin*, our actual marriage ceremony, with *HaBen*, the Son, Yeshua our Messiah, is very near. And, much has happened in between. Israel has sinned many times and has earned ADONAI’s righteous punishment as He promised. But, even though ADONAI has been angry with Israel, He has never completely rejected them.

In about 1000 BCE, ADONAI made a covenant with David. He promised him that he would always have a descendant on the throne of Israel, a promise of Yeshua’s future kingdom. (1Chronicles 17:10b-14 TLV). During David’s son Solomon’s reign, Israel was at its greatest in terms of national prestige and expanse of territory governed. Because of Solomon’s sin and the people’s sin, it has only gone down since then, including being ruled over by a number of other nations. ADONAI told Israel

that this would happen even before they entered in and captured the Land of Canaan. And, this continuation of their sin eventually caused the northern Kingdom of Israel to be defeated and taken into captivity by Assyria. The southern Kingdom of Judah continued to exist for about another 100 years, but declined in morality until ADONAI also judged them and they were defeated by Babylon and Zedekiah, the last Davidic king, was taken into captivity.

In about 588 BCE, ADONAI promised a New Covenant with Israel. Even during this time of judgment and punishment, ADONAI promised a coming New Covenant with Judah and Israel. (Jeremiah 31:30; 32). Although He was frequently angry with Israel because of her continued sins, ADONAI never abandoned His chosen people. (Isaiah 54:6-10).

In about 539 BCE, Daniel prophesied about *Chanukkah*. A captive in Babylon, Daniel prophesied about Antiochus Epiphanes saying: 29 *“At the appointed time he will invade the south again, only this time the outcome will not be as before. 30 The ships of Kittim will come against him, and he will lose heart. Then he will turn back and vent his rage against the holy covenant. When he returns, he will favor those who forsake the holy covenant. 31 His forces will rise up and profane the fortified Temple; they will stop the daily offering and set up the abomination of desolation”* (Daniel 11:29-31 TLV). This prophesied desecration of the Holy Temple by the Syrian army would not come to pass for another 372 years.

In about 473 BCE, the Festival of Purim was initiated. Some sixty or more years after The Kingdom of Judah returned from Babylonian captivity, there was another threat against the Jews. It happened in Persia and if it had been successful, it would have destroyed the whole nation of Israel. The threat came from the Amalekites, the ancient enemies of Israel. ADONAI sent Mordechai and his niece Esther as *meshichim*, anointed ones, to rescue the Jewish people. The evil Haman who planned to kill all the Jews was a descendant of the Amalekite King Agag whom King Saul of Israel failed to put to death according to ADONAI’s order more than 500 years earlier.

In about 167 BCE, the Maccabees cleansed the Temple of the defilement caused by the Syrians. Daniel’s prophecy about the “abomination of desolation” had come to pass. Antiochus Epiphanes, the descendant of one of Alexander the Great’s four generals was now in control of the Land of Israel. He and his forces sought to bring about Hellenistic or Greek culture and worship among the Jews. He banned circumcision and all that had to do with worshipping the G-d of Israel and instituted in its place the worship of Zeus. He desecrated the Temple by stopping Temple worship and offering pagan sacrifices on its altar. The evil spirit behind the pagan Syrians was the “abomination of desolation.” An abomination, *shiqquts* in Hebrew, is a detested thing which in this case makes desolate. This detestable spirit inhabited the Temple and made it desolate, uninhabitable, for the Jews. Just as He had done some 300 years earlier in Persia, ADONAI again raised up righteous ones to combat and overcome this evil. And, the Maccabees miraculously defeated the much greater Syrian forces and cleansed the Temple.

The events of *Purim* and the Amalekite threat and the events of *Chanukkah* and Antiochus’s threat would have done away with Israel as a people had not ADONAI intervened. His promise through Jeremiah 31 that Israel would never cease to be a nation before Him was upheld in both of these events. Recognizing that it was *HaSatan* who was the perpetrator and instigator of the actions of both Haman and Antiochus, we realize that it was not only the death of the Jewish people that he sought, but to also prevent the future birth of Messiah.

In about 4 BCE, the Messiah was born. About 160 years after the *Chanukkah* miracle, the prophecies of Isaiah (7:14; 9:6-7) and Micah (5:1) were fulfilled: *1 But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah—least among the clans of Judah—from you will come out to Me One to be ruler in Israel, One whose goings forth are from of old, from days of eternity* (Micah 5:1 TLV). And, the details were given to Yosef,

Messiah's adopted father: 20, *behold, an angel of Adonai appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Miriam as your wife, for the Child conceived in her is from the Ruach ha-Kodesh. 21 She will give birth to a son; and you shall call His name Yeshua, for He will save His people from their sins"* (Matthew 1:20b TLV).

During the years 27-30 BCE, the Messiah ministered in Israel. Yeshua lived on the earth as a man a short life of about 33 years. One year during *Chanukkah*, Yeshua was walking in the Temple when He was challenged by the Judean leaders. He responded to them saying : 27 *"My sheep hear My voice. I know them, and they follow Me. 28 I give them eternal life! They will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. And no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one"* (John 10:27-30 TLV). His remarks to them were words of hope, but they didn't receive them. Their eyes were blinded and they didn't realize that He was the "Son of Man" whom Daniel also saw in prophecy. (Daniel 7:9-10; 13-14 TLV). Yeshua also spoke about the abomination of desolation. Sitting on the Mount of Olives during His last week of His life on earth, He said: 15 *"So when you see 'the abomination of desolation,' which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the Holy Place (let the reader understand), 16 then those in Judea must flee to the mountains"* (Matthew 24:15-16 TLV). He was speaking of what would happen forty years later when the pagan Roman army would desecrate and destroy the Temple and make it desolate for the Jews. It was the same spirit from *HaSatan* as the abomination during the time of the Maccabees. Just a few days later, Yeshua died on the stake as the Passover lamb slain for our sins, lay in the grave for three days and three nights and then rose from the dead. His death redeemed us from our sinful life. *Shimon Kefa* explained it: 18 *"You know that you were redeemed from the futile way of life handed down from your ancestors—not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with precious blood like that of a lamb without defect or spot, the blood of Messiah. 20 He was chosen before the foundation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. 21 Through Him you are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your trust and hope are in God"* (1Peter 1:18-21 TLV).

From 1938 through 1945, the Jews experienced "the time of Jacob's trouble." 4 *Now these are the words that Adonai spoke to Israel and to Judah. 5 For thus says Adonai: "We heard a sound of trembling, of dread—there is no shalom. 6 Ask now, and see whether a man can give birth. Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, like a woman giving birth? Why have all faces turned pale? 7 Oy ! For that day is monumental. There will be none like it— a time of trouble for Jacob! Yet out of it he will be saved"* (Jeremiah 30:4-7 TLV). The time of trouble for Jacob was also instigated by *HaSatan* who manipulated Adolph Hitler and his followers as he had done Haman and Antiochus Epiphanes. Six million Jews plus un-numbered Gypsies and other innocent ones were murdered, but a remnant of Jacob, the Jews, were saved from this time of trouble. And this time of trouble set the stage for ADONAI's plan to continue to unfold.

1948 CE. Can a nation be born in a day? After almost two thousand years of being controlled by Gentile nations, Israel became a sovereign nation again. On May 14, 1948, *David BenGurion* said: "We hereby proclaim the establishment of the Jewish state in [Palestine](#), to be called Israel." 2,700 years earlier, Isaiah had prophesied of that day. (Isaiah 66:8-10). The nation was proclaimed, but *HaSatan* continued to incite, this time Muslims, and the Jews who had come to Israel from Jacob's trouble in Europe had a terrible fight before them. But, with ADONAI's help, they won a miraculous victory.

In 1967, after several years of relative peace, Israel was once again attacked by the Muslims. What looked as certain defeat was once again a miraculous victory on all fronts; and against a much superior force. On June 7, 1967, prophecy was fulfilled and the times of the Gentiles ended. Israel regained control of the City of Jerusalem for the first time in more than 2000 years. Yeshua Himself,

had prophesied that this would happen. Speaking of the events which would happen forty years in the future when the Romans would destroy the Temple and take control of Jerusalem (70 CE), He said: 24 “*They (the Jews) will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*” (Luke 21:24 TLV). During the ensuing 2000 years, Rome controlled Jerusalem, Muslims controlled Jerusalem, England controlled Jerusalem and Muslims once again controlled Jerusalem. But, in June 1967, Jerusalem was no longer under Gentile domination.

It’s almost 2023! Where are we now? It depends on whom you ask. From what I can determine, we are not waiting to be able to escape this earth to heaven before the Antichrist rises up. Dispensationalism, which teaches the rise of a man called the Antichrist, who rules the world and supposedly does many other evil things, is a false theology. The rolling forward of Daniel 9:27 is what Dispensationalism calls The Seventieth Week of Daniel: 27 “*Then he will make a firm covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of abominations will come one who destroys, until the decreed annihilation is poured out on the one who destroys*” (Daniel 9:27 TLV). Rather than “he” being the Antichrist, “he” is in fact, our Messiah, Yeshua Himself, Who cuts the Covenant, the New Covenant, and then in the middle of the last week of His earthly life, dies on the stake, thereby putting an end to atonement through animal sacrifice. Daniel 12:4 says: 4 “*But you, Daniel, close up the words and seal the book until the time of the end. Many will run back and forth and knowledge will increase*” (Daniel 12:4 TLV). The key to Daniels’s prophecies being unsealed is what happened in Jerusalem on June 7, 1967; the ending of “the time of the Gentiles.” And, this also lets us know that we are definitely in the time of the end.

We are living in the “Time of the Messiah.” No one knows when Yeshua will return and we are not setting any dates. We are now more than 2000 years past the time of the Maccabees, and *Chanukkah* continues to be a time of hope. It especially reminds us of all of ADONAI’s promises and His loving care for the Children of Abraham throughout the centuries. How they were chosen to be a nation of Priests (Exodus 19) through whom would come the Messiah and the promise of salvation for both Jew and Gentile. As Yeshua’s *kalah*, His bride chosen at Mount Sinai, we are today still in *erusin*, the betrothal phase of marriage. But, soon we will be joined to our *chatan*, our bridegroom Yeshua, in *nisuin*, the actual marriage ceremony and then celebrate with Him at His marriage supper as we are told in Revelation 19. Still, there are things which must happen. The current version of the “abomination of desolation,” the Muslim presence symbolized by the Dome of the Rock and the Mosque of Omar, is on the Temple Mount thus making it desolate for Jewish people, but ADONAI will deal with this in His time.

As you read our excerpts from the Book of 1Maccabees later, you will find there is no mention of eight days of miraculous oil. That is a fable inserted by the rabbis into the *Talmud* more than five hundred years after the Maccabees. What we are to remember is that ADONAI preserved Israel and the Temple so that His plan for His Son to be born in this nation more than 200 years later would occur. If Antiochus had his way, Israel would have been assimilated into Greek culture and would no longer exist.

That means that there are no *chanukkiyahs*, and eight candles, *latkes* or *suffganiyot*. Am I the Grinch who stole *Chanukkah*? Definitely not! These are traditions which we can receive and enjoy and we will in just a few minutes as we light our individual family *chanukkiyahs* together. The important thing is, as we light, as we eat, as we celebrate, that we remember the real meaning of *Chanukkah*, ADONAI’s plan to preserve Israel as a nation and His ultimate plan to send His Son to die for our sins. And, regardless of what happens around us today, we, Yeshua’s faithful *talmidim*,

will not be caught unaware! The miracle of *Chanukkah* is just one of the miraculous events which continues to strengthen our faith as we await Yeshua's return. *Chag Chanukkah Sameach!*

CHANUKKAH ACCORDING TO 1ST MACCABEES

December 25, 2022

*1 After Alexander the Macedonian, Philip's son, who came from the land of Kittim (**Alexander the Great**), had defeated Darius, king of the Persians and Medes, he became king in his place, having first ruled in Greece. 2 He fought many battles, captured fortresses, and put the kings of the earth to death. 3 He advanced to the ends of the earth, gathering plunder from many nations; the earth fell silent before him, and his heart became proud and arrogant. 4 He collected a very strong army and won dominion over provinces, nations, and rulers, and they paid him tribute. 5 But after all this he took to his bed, realizing that he was going to die. 6 So he summoned his noblest officers, who had been brought up with him from his youth, and divided his kingdom among them while he was still alive. 7 Alexander had reigned twelve years when he died (1Maccabees 1:1-7).*

His kingdom was divided between his four generals. One of the four had a very evil descendant.

10 There sprang from these a sinful offshoot, Antiochus Epiphanes, son of King Antiochus, once a hostage at Rome. He became king in the one hundred and thirty-seventh year of the kingdom of the Greeks (1Maccabees 1:10).

At that time there were Jews in Jerusalem who wanted to follow the Hellenistic way and they sought to make a covenant with Antiochus. He authorized them to introduce the ordinances of the Gentiles. They built a gymnasium in Jerusalem according to the Gentile custom of competing in the nude, disguised their circumcision and abandoned the holy covenant. (Found in 1Maccabees 1:11-15).

*20 After Antiochus had defeated Egypt in the one hundred and forty-third year (**of the Greek kingdom**), he returned and went up against Israel and against Jerusalem with a strong force. 21 He insolently entered the sanctuary and took away the golden altar, the lampstand for the light with all its utensils, 22 the offering table, the cups and bowls, the golden censers, and the curtain. The cornices and the golden ornament on the facade of the temple—he stripped it all off. 23 And he took away the silver and gold and the precious vessels; he also took all the hidden treasures he could find. 24 Taking all this, he went back to his own country. He shed much blood and spoke with great arrogance. 25 And there was great mourning throughout all Israel. (1Maccabees 1:20-25).*

Two years later, the king sent a force to the cities of Judah. He spoke to Jerusalem deceitfully in peaceful terms, and they believed him. Then he attacked the city suddenly and killed many of the people in Israel. He plundered the city and set fire to it, demolished its houses and broke down its walls. The Syrians built up the City of David with a high, strong wall and strong towers, and it became their citadel. (Found in 1Maccabees 1:29-34).

41 Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, 42 and abandon their particular customs. All the Gentiles conformed to the command of the king, 43 and many Israelites delighted in his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the Sabbath. 44 The king sent letters by messenger to Jerusalem and to the cities of Judah, ordering them to follow customs foreign to

their land; 45 to prohibit burnt offerings, sacrifices, and libations in the sanctuary, to profane the Sabbaths and feast days, 46 to desecrate the sanctuary and the sacred ministers, 47 to build pagan altars and temples and shrines, to sacrifice swine and unclean animals, 48 to leave their sons uncircumcised, and to defile themselves with every kind of impurity and abomination; 49 so that they might forget the law and change all its ordinances. 50 Whoever refused to act according to the command of the king was to be put to death. (1Maccabees 1:41-50).

Some 400 years earlier, the Prophet Daniel prophesied about Antiochus.

31 “His (**Antiochus’s**) forces will rise up and profane the fortified Temple; they will stop the daily offering and set up the abomination of desolation” (Daniel 11:31 TLV).

And, it happened!

54 On the fifteenth day of the month Kislev, in the year one hundred and forty-five (**of the Greek kingdom**) the king erected the desolating abomination upon the altar of burnt offerings, and in the surrounding cities of Judah they built pagan altars. 55 They also burned incense at the doors of houses and in the streets. 56 Any scrolls of the law that they found they tore up and burned. 57 Whoever was found with a scroll of the covenant, and whoever observed the law, was condemned to death by royal decree. 58 So they used their power against Israel, against those who were caught, each month, in the cities. 59 On the twenty-fifth day of each month they sacrificed on the pagan altar that was over the altar of burnt offerings. 60 In keeping with the decree, they put to death women who had their children circumcised, 61 and they hung their babies from their necks; their families also and those who had circumcised them were killed. (1Maccabees 1:54-61).

But, ADONAI already had a plan underway!

1 In those days Mattathias, son of John, son of Simeon, a priest of the family of Joarib, left Jerusalem and settled in Modein. 2 He had five sons: John, who was called Gaddi; 3 Simon, who was called Thassi; 4 Judah, who was called Maccabeus; 5 Eleazar, who was called Avaran; and Jonathan, who was called Apphus. 6 When he saw the sacrileges that were being committed in Judah and in Jerusalem, 7 he said: “Woe is me! Why was I born to see the ruin of my people, the ruin of the holy city— To dwell there as it was given into the hands of enemies, the sanctuary into the hands of strangers (1Maccabees 2:1-7)?

The officers of the king came to the city of Modein to make them sacrifice. Many Israelites joined them, but Mattathias and his sons did not, saying that “ my sons and I will keep the covenant of our ancestors.” (Found in 1Maccabees 2:15-22). Because of this the enemy attacked them and killed many (Found in 1Maccabees 2:35-38).

39 When Mattathias and his friends heard of it, they mourned deeply for them. 40 They said to one another, “If we all do as our kindred have done, and do not fight against the Gentiles for our lives and our laws, they will soon destroy us from the earth.” 41 So on that day they came to this decision: “Let us fight against anyone who attacks us on the Sabbath, so that we may not all die as our kindred died in their secret refuges.” 42 Then they were joined by a group of Hasideans, mighty warriors of Israel, all of them devoted to the law. 43 And all those who were fleeing from the persecutions joined them and supported them. 44 They gathered an army and struck down sinners in their wrath and the lawless in their anger, and the survivors fled to the Gentiles for safety. 45 Mattathias and his friends went about and tore down the pagan altars; (1Maccabees 2:39-45).

After this time, Mattathias, the father, died and Judah assumed the leadership.

25 Then Judah and his brothers began to be feared, and dread fell upon the Gentiles about them. 26 His fame reached the king, and the Gentiles talked about the battles of Judah. 27 When King Antiochus heard these reports, he was filled with rage; so he ordered that all the forces of his kingdom be gathered, a very strong army. 28 He opened his treasury, gave his soldiers a year's pay, and commanded them to be prepared for anything (1Maccabees 3:25-28).

Much fighting occurred after this and the battles took several years. But, in the end Judah and his forces defeated the Syrian army.

36 Then Judah and his brothers said, "Now that our enemies have been crushed, let us go up to purify the sanctuary and rededicate it." 37 So the whole army assembled, and went up to Mount Zion. 38 They found the sanctuary desolate, the altar desecrated, the gates burnt, weeds growing in the courts as in a thicket or on some mountain, and the priests' chambers demolished. 39 Then they tore their garments and made great lamentation; they sprinkled their heads with ashes 40 and prostrated themselves. And when the signal was given with trumpets, they cried out to Heaven. 41 Judah appointed men to attack those in the citadel, while he purified the sanctuary. 42 He chose blameless priests, devoted to the law; 43 these purified the sanctuary and carried away the stones of the defilement to an unclean place. 44 They deliberated what ought to be done with the altar for burnt offerings that had been desecrated. 45 They decided it best to tear it down, lest it be a lasting shame to them that the Gentiles had defiled it; so they tore down the altar. 46 They stored the stones in a suitable place on the temple mount, until the coming of a prophet who could determine what to do with them. 47 Then they took uncut stones, according to the law, and built a new altar like the former one. 48 They also repaired the sanctuary and the interior of the temple and consecrated the courts. 49 They made new sacred vessels and brought the lampstand, the altar of incense, and the table into the temple. 50 Then they burned incense on the altar and lighted the lamps on the lampstand, and these illuminated the temple. 51 They also put loaves on the table and hung up the curtains. Thus they finished all the work they had undertaken. 52 They rose early on the morning of the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, that is, the month of Kislev, in the year one hundred and forty-eight (**of the Greek kingdom**), 53 and offered sacrifice according to the law on the new altar for burnt offerings that they had made. 54 On the anniversary of the day on which the Gentiles had desecrated it, on that very day it was rededicated with songs, harps, lyres, and cymbals. 55 All the people prostrated themselves and adored and praised Heaven, who had given them success. 56 For eight days they celebrated the dedication of the altar and joyfully offered burnt offerings and sacrifices of deliverance and praise. 57 They ornamented the facade of the temple with gold crowns and shields; they repaired the gates and the priests' chambers and furnished them with doors. 58 There was great joy among the people now that the disgrace brought by the Gentiles was removed. 59 Then Judah and his brothers and the entire assembly of Israel decreed that every year for eight days, from the twenty-fifth day of the month Kislev, the days of the dedication of the altar should be observed with joy and gladness on the anniversary (1Maccabees 4:36-59).

Victory! Give the Maccabees a hand. Cheer for them as you did for Mordechai at Purim. The Maccabees preserved the Temple so that Messiah Yeshua would have a Temple to come to. Daniel also prophesied the coming of the Messiah and from his words, it can be calculated almost to the very year (Daniel 9:24-27).

Maoz Tzur
Traditional

Maoz Tzur yeshuati, lekha naeh leshabeach, Tikon bet tefilati, vesham todah nezabeach. Le'et takhin matbeach, mitzar hamnabeach. Az egmor beshir mismor hanukat hamizbeach. Az egmor beshir mismor hanukat hamizbeach

Rock of Ages let our song, praise Thy saving power; Thou amidst the raging foes, wast our sheltering tower. Furious they assailed us, but Thine arm availed us. And Thy Word broke their sword, when our own strength failed us. And Thy Word broke their sword, when our own strength failed us.

While Yeshua didn't speak specifically about Chanukkah, He was at the Temple one year during its celebration.

22 Then came Hanukkah; it was winter in Jerusalem. 23 Yeshua was walking in the Temple around Solomon's Colonnade. 24 Then the Judean leaders surrounded Him, saying, "How long will You hold us in suspense? If You are the Messiah, tell us outright!" 25 Yeshua answered them, "I told you, but you don't believe! The works I do in My Father's name testify concerning Me. 26 But you don't believe, because you are not My sheep. 27 My sheep hear My voice. I know them, and they follow Me. 28 I give them eternal life! They will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. And no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one" (John 10:22-30 TLV).

We are His sheep and we hear His voice. The miracle of Chanukkah and also of Purim is that the Jews were preserved as a people, a miracle of G-d. The Levitical priesthood was also preserved so that Yeshua could come to a priest and sacrifice system and then become the permanent sacrifice for sin. He became the Kohen Gadol after the order of Malchizedek, the High Priest of an everlasting priesthood. The modern establishment of Israel as a nation and the return of Jewish rule to Jerusalem show that the return of Messiah Yeshua cannot be far away. In the meantime, we are commanded to be faithful to the covenant we have made with Him. In it, we walk on earth as citizens of heaven, holding to His commandments. He told us the two greatest commandments. Yeshua said:

29....."The first is, 'Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai echad. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. 30 And you shall love Adonai your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:29-31 TLV).

This is the story of Chanukkah. Let it be a part of our motivation to carry on as Yeshua's talmidim until He returns.

Note: In 1Maccabees, there is nothing said about the *chanukkah*, the eight candles, the *shamash* candle or the oil of one day burning for eight days. All these things are from the *Talmud* (Babylonian *Talmud*, Tractate *Shabbat* 21b), a compilation of writings from the 3rd to the 6th centuries CE, which we can learn from, but do not consider equivalent to Scripture. We do recite the blessings and light the candles, but consider these things to be traditions of our faith. We also must look at the Books of the Maccabees in the same way. They are historical, but are not canonized Scripture. The command to observe *Chanukkah* every year comes from 1Maccabees 4s: *59 Then Judah and his brothers and the entire assembly of Israel decreed that every year for eight days, from the twenty-fifth day of the month Kislev, the days of the dedication of the altar should be observed with joy and gladness on the anniversary (1Maccabees 4:59).* We agree that it is a tradition worthy of being kept as it reminds us each year that ADONAI's plan for Yeshua to cut the New Covenant with His body and blood in the 1st century was possible because of the Maccabees.