



Parasha Vayeshev

December 9, 2023

Torah: Genesis 37:1-40:23

Haftarah: Zechariah 2:14-4:7

Ketuvim Shlichim: John 10:22-30

Talmidim Shel Yeshua Session 18

Shabbat shalom mishpacha! Our *parasha* today is *Vayeshev*. It begins: <1 Now Jacob dwelled in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan. (Genesis 37:1 TLV). *Vayeshev* means “and dwelled.” This is the very familiar story about Jacob settling in the land of Canaan and the time that his son Joseph brought him negative reports about his brothers, those who were the sons of his father’s concubines. Jacob loved Joseph, the son of his old age, more than the others and had a long-sleeved tunic made for him. His brothers were jealous and after he related two dreams suggesting that he would rule over them, their jealousy and hatred of him grew stronger. They sold him to a caravan on its way to Egypt and he eventually wound up as a slave in Potiphar’s house. There, he rejected Potiphar’s wife’s advances and she accused him of rape. Joseph was arrested and put in prison. While he was there, he interpreted the dreams of two of Pharaoh’s officials, his butler and his baker. The meaning of the butler’s dream was that he would soon be released and he was. He promised to speak to Pharaoh about Joseph, but forgot all about it.

Today, we are continuing our study, *Talmidim Shel Yeshua* with Session 18. In *Parasha Vayeshev*, we see in Joseph, a type of Messiah, a foreshadowing of Yeshua. In fact, the ancient rabbis saw *Yosef* in this way and wrote about a coming individual called *Mashiach Ben Yosef*, Messiah, the son of Joseph. Yeshua, in His first coming, fulfilled that vision of the suffering servant Messiah. We are waiting today for His return as the conquering King Messiah, *Mashiach Ben David*. Since we are in the midst of *Chanukkah*, we will examine Yeshua’s relationship with this festival.

Our *Ketuvim Shlichim* reading today begins: 22 Then came Hanukkah; it was winter in Jerusalem. 23 Yeshua was walking in the Temple around Solomon’s Colonnade. (John 10:22-23 TLV). It is often asserted that this shows that Yeshua celebrated *Chanukkah*. We agree that because He was there that He observed it, but nothing further is said about *Chanukkah* in this Scripture passage. But, we will find in a few minutes that at another time, He did say something about what happened during the time which later became known as *Chanukkah*.

What do we know about this festival? We know that it is not a *moed*, an appointed time commanded by ADONAI. It is not a festival which ADONAI commanded Israel to celebrate, but by Yeshua’s day, Israel had been celebrating it as a festival day for almost two hundred years. *Chanukkah*, the Festival of Lights, was and is, a commemoration of the victory of the Israelite Maccabees over the Hellenistic, that is, the Greek culture oriented, Syrian army of Antiochus Epiphanes. Antiochus IV was son of one of four generals who divided Alexander the Great’s territories after his death. According to 1Maccabees: 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). The apocryphal books of 1st and 2nd Maccabees are not Scripture, but are considered by Jews and most Christians to be historical.

All of the *Chanukkah* story is in 1Maccabees. We find that there were Jews in Jerusalem at this time who wanted to follow the Hellenistic way and they sought to make a covenant with Antiochus. He authorized them to introduce the laws of the Gentiles in Israel and they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem. They competed there in the Greek events in the nude according to the Gentile custom, having surgically reversed their circumcision and having abandoned the holy covenant. (Found in 1Maccabees 1:11-15).

Antiochus IV defeated Egypt and then attacked Israel and Jerusalem. 1Maccabees continues: *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 1:21-25). This all happened at the Syrians first incursion into Israel. He defiled the Temple, but did nothing to the altar of burnt offering.

Two years later, 1Maccabees tells us that Antiochus sent his army to the cities of Judah. He spoke to the people in Jerusalem of peace, but then deceived them and attacked the city, killing many. He plundered Jerusalem and set fire to it, demolished its houses and broke down its walls. The Syrians then built up the City of David with a high, strong wall and strong towers, and it became their fortress. (Found in 1Maccabees 1:29-34).

The story continues. Antiochus, who also ruled Egypt, sought to make his whole kingdom to be one people and wanted them to abandon their own beliefs and customs. Many Jews changed to his religion and sacrificed to idols and profaned the Sabbath. Antiochus sent letters ordering the Jews to follow his customs and prohibited burnt offerings and sacrifices in the Temple. It was at this time that he began his second desecration of the sanctuary. He built pagan altars and sacrificed swine there. He commanded that Israelite sons not be circumcised and that they not follow the Law and its ordinances. Whoever refused to act according to the command of the king was to be put to death. (1Maccabees 1:41-50).

About four hundred years earlier, the Prophet Daniel had prophesied: *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). As we have seen, Antiochus had already attacked the Temple, but now he does again. 1Maccabees tells what happened next: *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). What is the abomination of desolation? From reading this, it appears that the abomination of desolation erected on the altar of burnt offering was a pagan altar, one on which offerings were made to the pantheon of Greek gods.

After all this happened, the Maccabees now enter the story. According to 1Maccabees, Mattathias, a *kohen*, lived in *Modein*. He had five sons: John, Simon, Judah, who was called Maccabeus, Eleazar, and Jonathan. When he saw the sacrileges that were being committed in Judah and in Jerusalem, he was distressed. (1Maccabees 2:1-7). When the officers of Antiochus went to *Modein* to make them sacrifice to their idols, many Jews sacrificed, but Mattathias and his sons did not. (Found in 1Maccabees 2:15-22). Because of this the Syrians attacked them and killed many. (Found in 1Maccabees 2:35-38). Mattathias and his sons decided to fight them and were joined by others, gathering an army and tearing down the pagan altars. (1Maccabees 2:39-45). About this time, Mattahias, the father, died and Judah Maccabeus, “the Hammer,” became the leader. Judah and his army began to be feared and when Antiochus heard about it, he was enraged and sent out all of his forces. (1Maccabees 3:25-28). They fought for several years, but in the end, Judah and his forces defeated the Syrian army in the countryside. (1Maccabees 3:29-35).

The story continues. Judah and his brothers took their whole army up to Mount Zion and found the sanctuary desolate, the altar desecrated, the gates burnt, weeds growing in the courts and the priests’ chambers demolished. They attacked the Syrians in their fortress which they had built in the City of David during the time that the Sanctuary was being purified. Judah chose blameless priests, those devoted to the law and they purified the sanctuary and carried away the defilement. They deliberated about what to do with the altar for burnt offerings that had been desecrated and decided it best to tear it down. Then they took uncut stones, according to the law, and built a new altar. They repaired the sanctuary and Temple and consecrated everything. They made new sacred vessels and brought the menorah, the altar of incense, and the table into the Temple. They burned incense on the golden altar, lighted the lamps on the *menorot*, put loaves on the table for the Showbread and hung up the curtains. Early on the morning of the twenty-fifth day of the month of Kislev (**in the year one hundred and forty-eight of the Greek kingdom**) they offered sacrifice on the new altar for burnt offerings. It was the anniversary of the day that the Gentiles had desecrated it and it was rededicated with songs, harps, lyres, and cymbals. All the people prostrated themselves and praised Heaven, ADONAI, who had given them success. For eight days they celebrated the dedication of the altar and joyfully offered burnt offerings and sacrifices of deliverance and praise. There was great joy among the people now that the disgrace brought by the Gentiles was removed. Then Judah and all of the 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 (Found in 1Maccabees 4:36-59). Notice that *Chanukkah* was declared to be observed by the people of Israel. And, they decided to begin the celebration on the 25th of Kislev, the day on which the Syrians had desecrated the holy altar each month while they controlled the Temple. That’s the story according to history as recorded in the Book of 1Maccabees. Along with preserving a way to continue to follow the Covenant made at Sinai, the Maccabees also preserved the Temple so that Messiah Yeshua would have a Temple to which to come.

Yeshua was walking in the Temple one year during *Chanukkah* (John 10:22-23), but He also spoke about something which happened at that same time of the year at another time. The day before His death on the cross, as He sat on the Mount of Olives, 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). Context is important here and "the abomination standing in the Holy Place," refers to forty years in the future at the time when Jerusalem would be surrounded by the Roman army. Two hundred years before the time in which Yeshua was speaking, the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel, was the pagan Syrian altar built upon the holy altar of burnt offerings and the pagan offerings that were made on it. The abomination of desolation about which Yeshua spoke coming in the future was something which the pagan Roman army did in their process of destroying the Temple in the year 70 CE. Josephus, the Jewish historian, wrote: <10> "AND now the Romans, upon the flight of the seditious into the city, and upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings round about it, brought their ensigns to the temple and set them over against its eastern gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus imperator with the greatest acclamations of joy." (THE WARS OF THE JEWS, The History Of The Destruction Of Jerusalem, Book VI, Chapters VI, Flavius Josephus, 75 C.E.). We again note that this is history, not Scripture, but it shows that the Romans did the same thing that the Syrians had done 200 plus years earlier. They set up altars on the Temple mount and offered sacrifices to their Roman gods.

What's an abomination? It is a thing which causes disgust or hatred and by its presence causes desolation for the Jews. It makes the Holy Place desolate for the Jews. They can't rebuild the Temple while it's there. Following its destruction and its desolation in the year 70, the Temple has never been rebuilt nor has the Temple Mount ever been cleansed. And, there is now a new abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. It is collectively the Dome of the Rock and the Mosque of Omar. While the Muslims don't offer sacrifices, the buildings there are honoring a false god, Allah. In that regard, this third generation of "the abomination of desolation" is now standing on the Temple Mount, making it desolate. The abomination of desolation is not the Anti-Christ standing in the Temple as some believe. The Gospel of Mark clears that up for us. Yeshua said: 14 "But when you see 'the abomination of desolation' standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains." (Mark 13:14 TLV). The Greek word translated "it" is spelled *dei*, pronounced "die" and meaning it. The abomination of desolation is not a man, the Anti-Christ. In the year 70, some followers of Yeshua did escape and flee to the mountains. The Temple Mount was in Gentile hands for more than 2000 years, but the Nation of Israel has regained sovereignty over it. It happened in 1967 when another of Yeshua's prophecies was fulfilled. He spoke about what would happen in the year 70 and also the far future: 24 "They 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). In the Six Day War, Israel defeated the attacking Muslims and now controls the Temple Mount, but because of the political situation, they cannot rebuild the Temple. However, "the times of the Gentiles" have been fulfilled as Yeshua prophesied.

Yeshua spoke further about the year 70: 21 "For then there will be great trouble, such as has not happened since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will." (Matthew 24:21 TLV). Great trouble is "the Great Tribulation." The Greek word *thilipsis* (thlip'-sis) in addition to "trouble" means persecution, affliction, distress and tribulation. The Great Tribulation happened in Jerusalem in the year 70 and Yeshua said it will never happen again.

Two days before His death on the stake, as Yeshua was leaving the Temple, He had told His disciples that it would be destroyed and not one stone would be left on top of another.

Later that same day, sitting on the Mount of Olives, he continued to speak on the subject. He said: <14> 20 “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. 21 Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those inside the city must get out, and those in the countryside must not enter her.” (Luke 21:20-21 TLV). 40 years later, what Yeshua prophesied, happened. The pagan Roman army surrounded and then destroyed the Temple. They set up the “abomination of desolation,” their ensigns, their flags bearing the images of their false gods, and made offerings to them. (Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14, Luke 21:20), That also fulfilled what Yeshua had prophesied earlier that same day: 2 “Don’t you see all these?” He responded to them. “Amen, I tell you, not one stone will be left here on top of another—every one will be torn down!” (Matthew 24:2 TLV). All that remained were the retaining walls, the Temple Mount. The Great Tribulation happened in the year 70 CE, 40 years after Yeshua spoke these words.

Yeshua said that the Great Tribulation would occur in Jerusalem. Of what happened in the year 70, Josephus wrote: “Now the number of those that were carried captive during this whole war was collected to be ninety-seven thousand (**97,000**), as was the number of those that perished during the whole siege eleven hundred thousand (**1,100,000**), the greater part of whom were indeed of the same nation [with the citizens of Jerusalem], but not belonging to the city itself; for they were come up from all the country to the feast of unleavened bread, and were on a sudden shut up by an army, which, at the very first, occasioned so great a traitness among them that there came a pestilential destruction upon them, and soon afterward such a famine, as destroyed them more suddenly.” (*The Works of Josephus*, translated by William Whiston, Hendrickson Publishers, 1987). That’s a total of 1, 197,000, many of whom died from disease and famine, a very great tribulation. The large number of Jews were there because of Passover and had been shut in and cut off from any supplies from before Passover until the 9th of Av, when the Romans broke in and destroyed the Temple. That’s more than four months. Yeshua, in prophesying a Great Tribulation, spoke of Jerusalem and said that a great tribulation would never happen there again.

The miracle of *Chanukkah* and also of *Purim* is that the Jews were preserved as a people, a very great miracle of G-d. The Levitical priesthood was also preserved so that Yeshua could be born into a national system of priests and sacrifice system and then replace them, becoming the permanent sacrifice for sin. Replacing the Levitical High Priest, He became the *Kohen Gadol* after the order of *Malchizedek*, High Priest of an everlasting and better priesthood. The modern establishment of Israel as a nation and the return of Jewish rule to Jerusalem both 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 and following His commandments. He told us about 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 12:29b-31 TLV). Our love for ADONAI and His Son Yeshua is shown by our obedience to these two greatest commandments.

What you have just heard is the real story of *Chanukkah*. Let it be a part of our motivation to carry on as Yeshua’s *talmidim* until He returns. As we have seen, there is nothing in 1Maccabees said about the *chanukkiah*, the eight candles, the *shamash* candle or

the oil of one day burning for eight days. All these things come from the *Talmud* (Babylonian *Talmud*, Tractate *Shabbat* 21b), a compilation of writings from the 3rd to the 6th centuries CE, something 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 just to be important traditions of our faith. We also must look at the Books of the Maccabees and the writings of Josephus in the same way. They are historical, but are not canonized Scripture. We do agree that the traditions of *Chanukkah* are worthy of observing as they remind us each year that ADONAI's plan for Yeshua to cut the New Covenant with His body and blood in the 1st century was made possible by the heroic actions of the Maccabees. The traditions also bind us together with our Jewish brothers and sisters throughout the world as we joyously celebrate and observe something which is a part of world-wide Judaism.

We also learn from Yeshua's statement about the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel, that there was coming another abomination like it when the Temple in Jerusalem was to be destroyed in the year 70 CE. Today, two thousand years later, we see another abomination standing where the holy Temple should be, two Islamic buildings. While we know that there is no physical Anti-Christ coming, the spirit of Anti-Christ is already in the world and one of many places that it is found, is on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. What was the abomination of desolation that the Maccabees removed and what was the abomination of desolation in the 1st century Temple? It was the same spirit that is now on the Temple Mount in the year 2023, the spirit of the Anti-Christ, a spirit from *HaSatan*, a worship system of pagan gods in opposition to the true worship of ADONAI. Yeshua's disciple John wrote: *2 You know the Ruach Elohim by this—every spirit that acknowledges that Messiah Yeshua has come in human flesh is from God, 3 but every spirit that does not acknowledge Yeshua is not from God. This is the spirit of the anti-messiah, which you have heard is coming and now is already in the world.* (1John 4:2-3 TLV). This spirit that was in the world in the 1st century is also the same spirit which motivates the pro-Islamic, anti-Semitic crowds which today rush to condemn the nation of Israel. And, it is the same spirit, from *HaSatan* himself, which Yeshua will defeat when He returns. In that sense, *Chanukkah* is also a reminder that there is a pagan entity on the Temple Mount, one which will be destroyed by Yeshua when He returns as King Messiah.

Our prayers today should also be for those trapped in these false ideologies and demonic deception, that their deceptions would be overpowered by the life-giving light of Yeshua. He is the "Light of the World." He declared it, not on *Chanukkah*, the Festival of Lights, but on *Shemini Atzeret*, the Eighth Day concluding festival of *Sukkot*, the Festival of Tabernacles: *12 Yeshua spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. The one who follows Me will no longer walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* (John 8:12 TLV). Pray for Jewish believers in Israel and around the world to be salt and light to those around them. Pray to have divine encounters with Jewish people in this time when they are so troubled by what's happening around them. And, may the truth of the Messiah and the light of His love be apparent through us, Yeshua's followers. *Shabbat shalom and Chag Chanukkah sameach! Happy Chanukkah!*