

# Hanukkah in the New Testament – and why this might be the best year to join in the celebration!

*20 Kislev 5784 B"H*

*With Israel in the news and the ongoing war against Hamas, the celebration of Hanukkah will be especially meaningful this year. If you and your family have never celebrated Hanukkah, may this be the year! Pray and stand in solidarity with the nation of Israel and celebrate the victory God has given us through His Son, Messiah Jesus!*

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## Hanukkah is mentioned in the New Testament

Many Christians do not realize that [Hanukkah](#) is actually mentioned in the [New Testament](#).

**Yes, the New Testament!**

*Did you know?*

Hanukkah is mentioned in the New Testament



The reference to Hanukkah (the Feast of Dedication) is found just after Jesus (Yeshua) tells us that He is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for His sheep in [John chapter 10](#).



Our Good Shepherd Jesus (Yeshua) was being criticized by some of the Jewish leaders about His amazing claim and His revelation that He would lay down His life for His sheep.

Jesus (Yeshua) knew how to deal with the spirits of criticism, contention, and unbelief: He focused simply on declaring Truth and revealing who He is.

John records "[. . . many of them said, "He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him?" John 10:20 NKJV](#)

## **Christians should not be uncomfortable with Hanukkah**

Similarly with Hanukkah, you will find that **some Christians get very uncomfortable with the** topic of Hanukkah. I've heard it all:

*"Hanukkah is a holiday only for Jews."*

*"We live in the time of grace."*

*"We aren't bound to the Old Testament."*

*"Hanukkah has nothing to do with us."*

It makes me terribly sad that Christians have sat under teachings that ultimately reflect a supercessionist viewpoint.

Like the pharisaical accusers of [John 10](#), some Christians accuse other Christians of being "out of their mind" for sharing in the celebrations of Hanukkah and even Passover. Let us learn from our Master Teacher, Rabbi Jesus, who shows us by His example how not only to respond to questioning but also how to live.

## **Supercessionist teachings have unwittingly caused *Christian* antisemitism**

"Supercessionism" (also known as "replacement theology") is the teaching that Christianity has completely "replaced" Judaism and so the "religion" of Christianity is therefore

superior. "[Replacement theology](#)" leads to antisemitism because Christians distance themselves from their Hebraic beginnings and unwittingly lose sight of the fact that it was *the Jews* who were waiting for *their* Messiah. And Jesus came and lived as a Jew among Jews.

On the contrary, Christians really ought in some ways to feel *indebted (!)* to Israel for being welcomed by the grace of the God of Israel and grafted in to the chosen nation!

While we know that our Savior Jesus (Yeshua) fulfilled the entirety of the Law's requirements, Biblical Judaism provides the framework for our faith and we need to understand our Hebraic roots. The Scriptures come alive when we immerse ourselves in the culture that is ours both to the native and to the grafted in.

We also need to collectively repent for the antisemitism that does lurk in the church.

**The antisemitic attack against Israel by Hamas on October 7, 2023 was an attack against all of us – Jew and Gentile believer alike. We must show our support and love for Israel during such a time as this.**

## **Jesus (Yeshua) is the King of Israel**

*Do you ever feel like you don't belong?*

In America, sometimes people feel like they don't belong neither here nor there because they don't know much about their family history or the countries from which their ancestors emigrated. I think these genealogy sites are helping like [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) because people can start to piece back a bit of their story!

But what is so neat about the Gospel, if you really think

about it, is that we see how united we really are. We might be from Europe or from Asia or Africa or Australia, but ultimately, **heaven is our homeland:**

[“But our homeland is in heaven, and we are waiting for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to come from heaven. By His power to rule all things, He will change our humble bodies and make them like His own glorious body.” Philippians 3:20-21 NCV, emphasis added](#)

And while we are here on earth, **our identity is found in Christ (our Messiah) – the King of Israel.**

This time of year many churches celebrate the coming of our Emmanuel. *O Come, O Come Emmanuel . . . . **born is the King of Israel.***

You absolutely belong and you are not without country. We have a King! **Our Jesus is the King of Israel and the King of all.**

By the way, **you absolutely have the freedom and invitation to celebrate the miracles that God has done**, right along with Israel. Some unbelieving orthodox Jews consider the participation of Christians in Jewish holidays as religious appropriation, but that is because they do not (yet!) understand the full picture of salvation. We pray for and with them. This really is not religious appropriation because **the story of Israel is truly the story of God’s plan for the salvation of the entire world: Jew and Gentile alike.**

As to those who are concerned that perhaps we are “binding” ourselves back to Old Testament Law. By no means! Instead, we see our place in history, celebrate all that God has done throughout history, and await the future reality when our King will return for us. We respect and value the entirety of Scripture and embrace the Biblical celebrations of our faith.

# The King of Israel celebrated Hanukkah

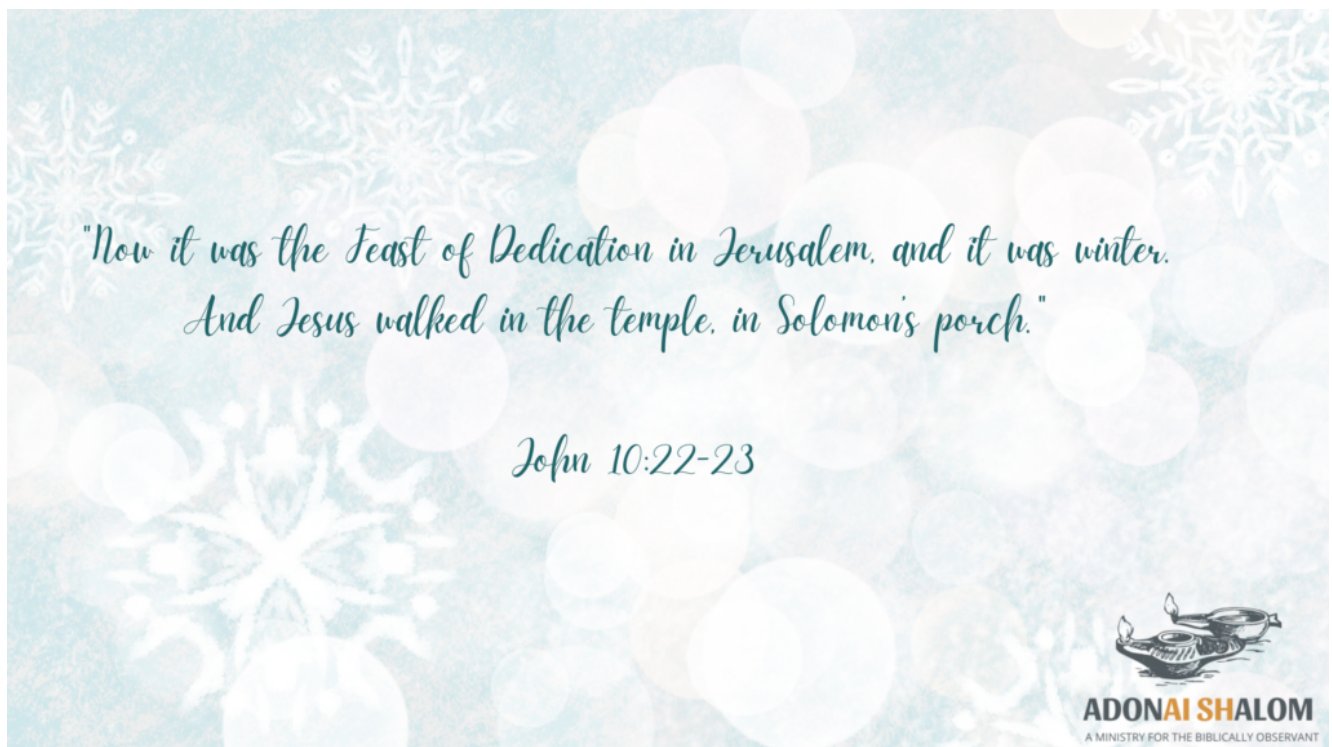
Our LORD Jesus (Yeshua) revealed Himself as the Good Shepherd who would give His life, even for those who would oppose Him or act incredulously toward Him.

And since He was not always met by cheerful recipients of His message, He sometimes went away.

In this case though, Jesus (Yeshua) did not retreat to the wilderness or the mountains.

He decided to head over to the celebration of the Feast of Dedication!

["Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch."](#)  
[John 10:22-23](#)



In Hebrew, "the Feast of Dedication" is "Hanukkah."

So if we realize this, it is plain to see that Jesus (Yeshua)

went up to the temple for Hanukkah.

Simply, He went for a winter walk.

**He got away from his critics and chose to attempt to focus on the beauty of the holiday feast.**

Sometimes we need to follow this exact example.

When you find yourself as an outsider or feeling attacked or burdened, step away for a while. Do something you enjoy and surround yourself with those who love you.

## **The enemy is always on the prowl**

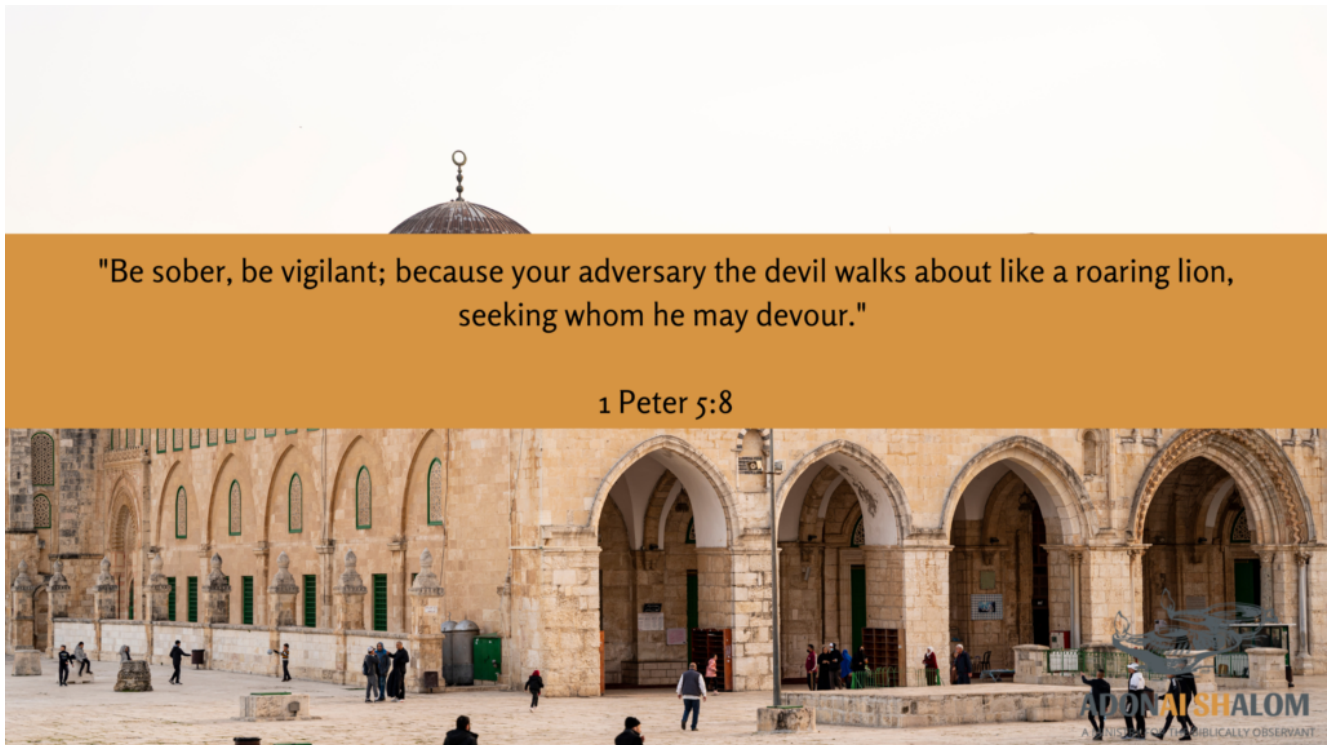
Despite His efforts to have some time to enjoy the Hanukkah celebration, Jesus (Yeshua) quickly had to deal with His critics all over again.

*Have you ever tried to step away from something only to immediately be bombarded in another way? Maybe you went home to try to get some rest but the phone keeps ringing as your coworkers try to find you? Maybe you took a day off, but issues managed to arise and your hope for a quiet day turned into anything but? Maybe you even retired from a job only to find yourself back in the workforce?*

*Or maybe you cooked the entire Thanksgiving dinner and wanted to enjoy it, but by the time you finally got to sit down, your portion of food was ice cold. You still loved the company, but you didn't get to enjoy it quite as much as perhaps you wanted! And then after you are tired and worn out, one of your distant relatives has the nerve to insult you. Surely that has never happened!*

Messiah Jesus (Yeshua) was present for the yearly celebration of the rededication of Solomon's temple and there He was on Solomon's porch, but He couldn't just relax and enjoy.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8



He found Himself surrounded by a mob of questioners. The Judean leaders insisted that He reveal whether or not He is the Promised Messiah.

"Then the Judean leaders surrounded Him, saying, "How long will You hold us in suspense? If You are the Messiah, tell us outright!" John 10:24, TLV





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"How long will You hold us in suspense?  
If You are the Messiah, tell us outright!"

John 10:24, TLV



Our Savior would not have been surprised by any of this. The Feast of Dedication was about having overcome adversity. Solomon's Temple had been attacked and desecrated, so Hanukkah was all about rededicating the sanctuary to the LORD and a miracle which occurred when a small amount of oil for the menorah (enough for one day) lasted for 8 days.

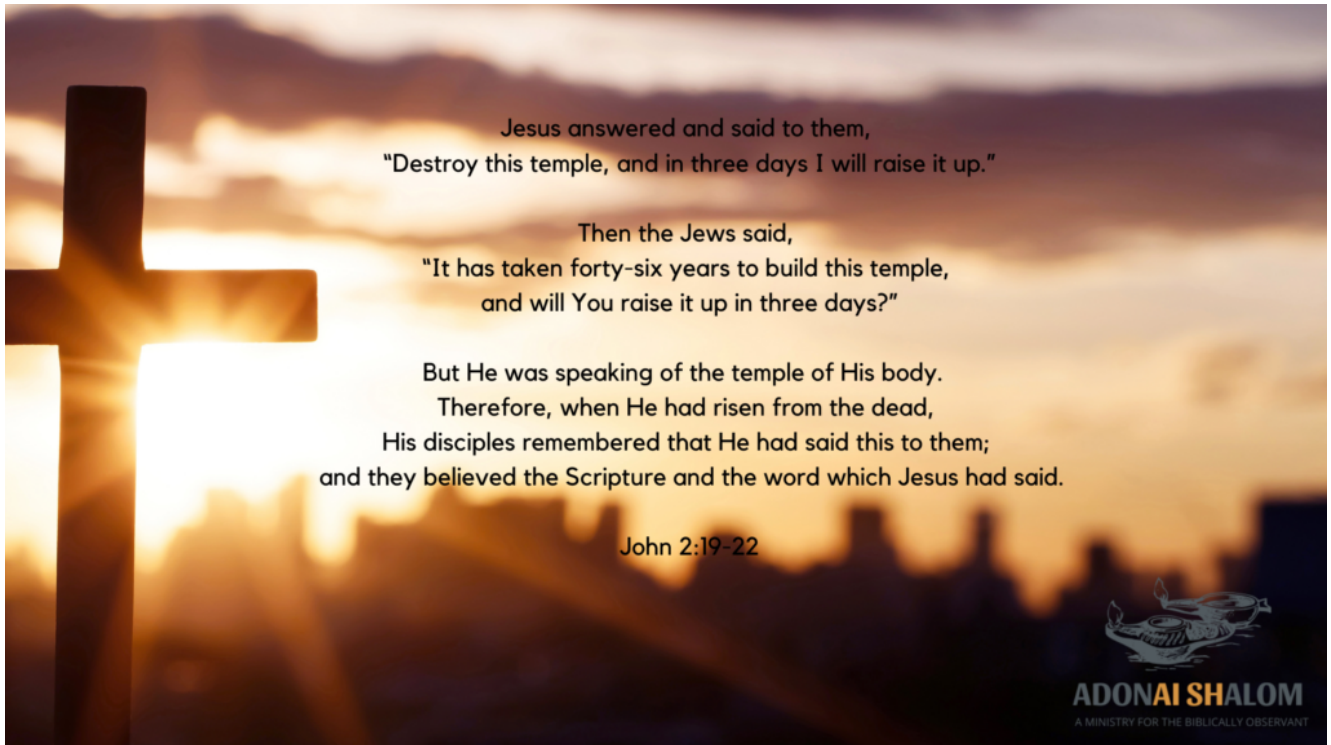
## The Significance of the Temple

On the particular [Hanukkah](#) when Jesus was at Solomon's porch, the mob took up stones as they accused Him of blasphemy. They attempted to stone Him, but His time had not yet come. The Temple would be destroyed and raised in three days – the Temple of His body. This Holy Temple, too, was attacked, but the enemy (again!) could not prevail.

["Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."](#)

[Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"](#)

[But He was speaking of the temple of His body." John 2:19-22](#)



There – together – Jesus and the Jewish leaders were at Solomon's Temple to celebrate the purification of the temple from defilement, and yet the leaders were completely missing the point.

Jesus (Yeshua) is ultimately our Hanukkah miracle – our oil of gladness. He is the Anointed One and He pours out His Holy Spirit upon and into us so that we can shine bright for Him, just like the menorah that didn't go out.

## Hanukkah and the Light of the World

**The Feast of Dedication, or Hanukkah, celebrates the victory of the Maccabees but also foreshadows the coming Light of the World who would give us everlasting victory.**

When it seems that our victories are not long-lasting, we do not need to become discouraged. The Second Temple was ultimately destroyed by the Romans, but we do not cease celebrating the prior victory of the Jewish nation. Likewise in our world today, we have trouble, but we know that our Messiah and Savior has overcome the world.

Jesus (Yeshua) again had to slip away from his enemies. They were intent on stoning Him that Hanukkah, but He escaped and went beyond the Jordan:

[“Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand.” John 10:39](#)

## **Hanukkah during a time of war**

Hanukkah commemorates the reality of war and the reality of victory if we trust in our LORD.

The Jewish people have dealt with diaspora and antisemitism and terrorism throughout their history. But they have not given up. God allowed Israel to become a modern nation in 1948 and it is not time to just give up on the dream of a sustained, safe Jewish homeland.

Israel is at war right now. Yet even so, menorahs have been erected in Gaza and all around the world menorahs will be lit outdoors and placed in prominent windows inside because the Jewish people refuse to cower to fear. Even the dreidels used on Hanukkah represent the toy tops that children would use when they were hiding in the caves during the Maccabean war. Israel is no stranger to war, but Israel will not be destroyed.

**The battle is fierce, but history teaches an important lesson: if we trust in God, the flame ignited in our hearts by the Author of our Salvation can never be extinguished.**

So if you have never celebrated Hanukkah before, this may be the best year to begin. Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Celebrate that God has delivered His people on more than one occasion, and He will not abandon us now. Share online that you are celebrating so that people even in Israel can see how many believers support them and are praying for them. Pray for the salvation of the nation of

Israel!



There is a saying among the Jewish people who say:

***“The story of Hanukkah is they wanted to kill us, we didn’t let them, we won, and now, we eat!”***

So grab yourself some filled donuts (sufganiyot!), make some potato pancakes (latkes), and decorate Hanukkah cookies with your children!

Am Y’israel Chai! Long live Israel! . . . and Have a very Happy Hanukkah!

*If you are interested in learning more about origin and the purpose of the Feast of Dedication, you may well enjoy my post on [“Hanukkah, Zerubbabel, and the Second Temple”](#) found at this [link](#).*

[Hanukkah, Zerubbabel, and the Second Temple](#)