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**Parasha Miketz**

December 28, 2024

*Torah:* Genesis 41:1-44:17

*Haftarah:* Zechariah 2:14-4:7

**See message notes [beitshalom.us](http://beitshalom.us) for parasha specific messages**

*Ketuvim Shlichim:* John 10:22-30

**Specific to today's message**

### Disciples of Yeshua 10

*Shabbat shalom mishpacha!* Today, we continue with our message series, Disciples of Yeshua. This is session 10, and today, we shift from the theme we have been following to the event happening right now, *Chanukkah*. Our reading from the *Ketuvim Shlichim* 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). The TLV has translated *Hanukkah* from the Greek *egkainia* (en-KAI-nee-ah), meaning Feast of Dedication. Here is an aside about the spelling of the word. The TLV has simplified the spelling of *Hanukkah* to make it phonetic and more straightforward to pronounce. The Hebrew word, חֲנֻכָּה, *Chanukkah*, begins with a *chet* and not a *heh* because it comes from חָנַךְ, *chanukh*, starting with a *ch* sound, and meaning “to dedicate.” Although it begins with a *c*, it is pronounced as if it began with an *h*. The Hebrew word *Chanukkah* is not found in the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible, but the original versions of the Maccabees were written in Hebrew. Now, they have been lost and are only written in Greek, found as a part of the Septuagint, the Greek language *Tanakh*. It has been said that this Scripture in John shows that Yeshua celebrated *Chanukkah*. That is likely true. He observed it, but He said nothing more about *Chanukkah*. But the day before His death on the cross, Yeshua spoke about another event that ties the time of the Maccabees to the Great Tribulation. Although few realize it, these two events are physically and spiritually connected.

What do we know about *Chanukkah*? We understand it is not a *moed*, an appointed time commanded by ADONAI, a festival that He instructed Israel to celebrate. However, by the time of Yeshua, Israel had been observing it as a festival for nearly two hundred years. It commemorates the victory of the Israelite Maccabees over the Hellenistic, Greek culture-oriented Syrian army of Antiochus Epiphanes. Antiochus IV was the son of one of four generals who divided Alexander the Great's territories after his death. *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.* (1 Maccabees 1:10). The books of the 1st and 2nd Maccabees are considered apocryphal, a word meaning “of doubtful authenticity.” While not considered Scripture, it is considered historical by Jews and most Christians. All of the *Chanukkah* story is found in 1 Maccabees.

This is the story. There were some Jews in Jerusalem at that time (about 168 BCE) who wanted to follow the Hellenistic (Greek) way, and they sought a covenant with Antiochus. He authorized them to introduce the laws of the Gentiles in Israel, and they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem. Jewish males competed in the nude according to the Gentile custom, having surgically reversed their circumcision and abandoned the holy covenant. (1 Maccabees 1:11-15).

After Antiochus IV defeated Egypt, he attacked Israel and Jerusalem. *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 was Antiochus's first incursion into Israel. He defiled the Temple and stole the Temple treasures then but did nothing to the altar of burnt offerings.

Two years later, we are told that he sent his army to the cities of Judah. They spoke to the people in Jerusalem about peace but deceived them and attacked the city, killing many. He plundered Jerusalem and set fire to it, demolishing its houses and breaking down its walls. His army built up the City of David with a high, strong wall and towers, and it became their fortress. (1 Maccabees 1:29-34).

Already ruling Egypt, Antiochus sought to make his kingdom one people, wanting the Jews to abandon their beliefs and customs. Many Jews changed their religion, sacrificed to idols, and profaned the Sabbath. He sent letters instructing the Jews to adopt his customs and forbade burnt offerings and sacrifices in the Temple. At this time, Antiochus began his second desecration of the sanctuary, specifically the altar of burnt offerings. He constructed pagan altars, sacrificed pigs on them, and ordered the Jews not to circumcise their sons or follow the Law. Whoever refused to act according to the king's command would be put to death. (1Maccabees 1:41-50).

About four hundred years earlier, two hundred years before all this happened, the Prophet Daniel prophesied of this time: *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). Antiochus had already ransacked the Temple, but now he attacked it again, fulfilling Daniel's words. *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.* (1 Maccabees 1:54-61). The abomination of desolation, which Daniel prophesied, is described in these verses and is the pagan altar the Syrians erected on the Temple's altar of burnt offerings. They made offerings on it to their pagan gods and goddesses of ancient Greece.

It was at this point that the Maccabees entered the story. Mattathias, a *kohen*, lived in the town of *Modein*. He had five sons: John, Simon, Judah, who was called Maccabeus, Eleazar, and Jonathan. When he saw these sacrileges being committed in Judah and Jerusalem, he was distressed. (1 Maccabees 2:1-7). The officers of Antiochus went to *Modein* to make them sacrifice to their idols. Many Jews offered these sacrifices, but not Mattathias and his sons. (1 Maccabees 2:15-22). Because they refused, the Syrians attacked their city, killing many Jews. (1 Maccabees 2:35-38). At that point, Mattathias and his sons decided to fight them. Joined by others, they formed an army and began tearing down the pagan altars. (1 Maccabees 2:39-45). Mattathias soon died, and Judah Maccabeus, “called the Hammer,” became their leader. He and his army began to be feared by the Syrians. When Antiochus heard about their resistance, he was enraged and sent out all his forces against them. (1 Maccabees 3:25-28). The two armies fought for several years, but in the end, Judah and his men defeated the Syrian army in the countryside. (1 Maccabees 3:29-35).

Judah and his brothers then took their army to Mount Zion and found the sanctuary desolate. The altar was desecrated, the gates were burned, weeds grew in the courts, and the priests’ chambers had been demolished. As they began purifying the Sanctuary, they also attacked the Syrians in their fortress, which they had built in the City of David. Judah chose blameless priests who were 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, according to the Law, they took uncut stones 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 *menorah*, 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 sacrifices on the new altar for burnt offerings. The twenty-fifth was the anniversary of the day that the Gentiles had desecrated the altar, and they rededicated it 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 had been 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. (1 Maccabees 4:36-59).

The people of Israel declared *Chanukkah* to be observed, not ADONAI. They decided to begin the celebration on the 25th of *Kislev* because the Syrians had desecrated the holy altar on the 25th day of each month when they controlled the Temple. That’s the story according to the history recorded in the Book of 1 Maccabees. Why they celebrated for eight days is unknown, but some speculate that it was a late celebration of *Sukkot*, which they had been unable to hold that year. In doing this, the Maccabees accomplished two things. They upheld the Covenant ADONAI made with them at Sinai, but also something else. They maintained the Temple, thereby ensuring that Messiah Yeshua, whose coming was foretold by Daniel (9:27), would have a place to come to and a High Priest to replace.

Yeshua was in the Temple during *Chanukkah* one year (John 10:22-23), but He also spoke about what would become the Feast of Dedication at the time that it happened. The day before His death on the cross, He reminded His disciples about Daniel’s prophecy of the

Syrian desecration: 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). Daniel prophesied “the abomination of desolation” which happened at the time of the Maccabees. In this, Yeshua told His disciples that this “abomination” would happen again. Yeshua prophesied that “the abomination” would be present in the Temple again. It would happen forty years later, in 70 CE, after the Roman army surrounded and invaded Jerusalem. About two hundred years earlier, the abomination prophesied by Daniel was the pagan Syrian altar built upon the holy altar and their offerings made to false gods on it. The abomination of desolation that Yeshua said was coming was brought about by the pagan Roman army in the year 70 CE. Josephus, the Jewish historian, wrote about it: “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.). This is history, not Scripture, but it shows that the Romans did the same thing the Syrians had done 200 years earlier. They set up altars on the Temple mount and offered sacrifices to the pagan symbols on their ensigns, their flags.

What’s an abomination? It is a thing that causes disgust or hatred and, by its presence, causes desolation. It made the Temple Mount desolate for the Jews because the place was controlled by another force, a force that would not allow the Jews to be there. The “abomination of desolation,” whenever present, makes the Holy Place desolate for the Jews. They can’t rebuild the Temple while it’s there. Following the destruction and desolation of the Temple in the year 70, it has never been rebuilt, nor has the Temple Mount ever been cleansed. Now, almost two thousand years later, there is a new abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. The Dome of the Rock, a pagan shrine, and the Mosque of Omar are pagan buildings constructed about a thousand years ago. While the Muslims don’t offer sacrifices, these buildings are honoring a false god, Allah. A part of the Dome of the Rock inscription reads: 35. “It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should take himself a child.” (Quran 19:35); in other words, ADONAI does not have a Son. This third generation of “the abomination of desolation” is now standing on the Temple Mount, making it desolate for the Jews. The abomination of desolation is not the Anti-Christ standing in the Temple. The Gospel of Mark makes that clear. 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 *dei* (die) means it. The abomination of desolation is not a man. It’s an “it,” a thing. It was the pagan altars of the Syrians and the Romans and, now, the buildings of the Muslims. In the year 70, some followers of Yeshua escaped and fled to the mountains. Following that, 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. Speaking about what would happen forty years in the future and also the far future, He said: 24 “They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all the nations. **(70 CE)** Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” **(1967 CE)**. (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 and religious situation, they cannot rebuild the Temple, and it remains desolate for the Jews. However, “the times of the Gentiles” have been fulfilled as Yeshua prophesied, it is now “the times of the Jews.”

Yeshua prophesied even more about the coming time: 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) also means persecution, affliction, distress, and tribulation. The Great Tribulation happened in Jerusalem in the year 70, and as Yeshua said, “nor ever will,” meaning 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. (Matthew 24:1-2). Later that same day, sitting on the Mount of Olives, he continued to speak about it: 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, Yeshua’s prophecy was fulfilled. The Roman army surrounded the city, broke in and destroyed the Temple. They set up the “abomination of desolation,” their ensigns, their flags bearing the images of their false gods, and offered sacrifices to them. (Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14, Luke 21:20). After the Romans came, the Temple was gone, and all that remained were the retaining walls of the Temple Mount. The Great Tribulation happened in Jerusalem in 70 CE, 40 years after Yeshua spoke these words.

How great was the tribulation? Regarding what happened, 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 1,100,000 deaths, many of whom died from disease and famine, plus 97,000 taken away as slaves, a very great tribulation. The number of Jews in Jerusalem was greater than its population because they were there for Passover. Once surrounded, they were trapped and received no supplies from before Passover until the 9th of Av when the Romans broke in and destroyed the Temple, more than four months later. The Great Tribulation happened in Jerusalem, and Yeshua said that a great tribulation (of Jerusalem) would never happen again.

The miracle of *Chanukkah* and *Purim* is that the Jews were preserved as a people as part of ADONAI’s unfolding plan. Temple worship and the Levitical priesthood were also maintained so that Yeshua could be born into a national system of priests and sacrifice system and then replace the sacrifices, as the permanent sacrifice for sin. Replacing the Levitical High Priest, He became the *Kohen Gadol* after the order of *Melchizedek*, 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 our covenant with Him. ADONAI established a New Covenant with Israel. (prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31). In it, Jews and Gentiles who have trusted in Yeshua live on earth as citizens of heaven, holding to and following His commandments as we await His return to establish His Kingdom on earth.

This is the real story of *Chanukkah* as told from the historical account. Let it be a motivating factor causing us to continue as Yeshua's disciples until He returns. As we have seen, there is nothing in 1 Maccabees said about the *Chanukkiah*, the eight candles, the *Shamash* candle, or that one day's worth of oil lasted 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, 200-500 years later, which we do not consider equivalent to Scripture. But we can receive these things as joyful traditions, recite the blessings, and light the candles. We consider the Books of the Maccabees and the writings of Josephus similarly, as history, and not canonized Scripture. The traditions of *Chanukkah* are most certainly 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. Observing these traditions also joins us with our Jewish brothers and sisters worldwide.

Today, two thousand years after the Romans destroyed the Temple, there is another abomination standing where the holy Temple should be: two Islamic buildings. The physical and spiritual battle is ongoing. This was reported in the news just this week: "Invoking the claim that Israel wants to "Judaize" the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount, a Hamas official has called on Jerusalem Arabs to commit violence in order to "defend" their holy site on the eve of Hanukkah, *Israel National News* reported Tuesday." (World Israel News, December 24, 2024). Hamas, a Muslim terrorist group whose name means "violence," continues *HaSatan's* fight against Israel. While we know that there is no physical Anti-Christ coming, the spirit of Anti-Christ is already in the world, and one of the billions of places 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? The spirit of the Anti-Christ was behind those perpetrators, the same spirit that is now on the Temple Mount in 2024 in the occupying Muslims. It is a spirit from *HaSatan* promoting 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.* (1 John 4:2-3 TLV). The spirit that was in the world in the 1st century is the same spirit that motivates the pro-Islamic, anti-Semitic crowds that rush today to condemn the Jewish people and the nation of Israel. And, it is that spirit and *HaSatan* himself that Yeshua will defeat when He returns. In that regard, *Chanukkah* is a reminder that there is a pagan entity on the Temple Mount that will be destroyed by Yeshua when He returns as King Messiah. Right now, the spirit, the demon of Anti-Messiah, is in and motivating billions of people of the world.

We should also pray for those trapped in false ideologies and demonic deception that the life-giving light of Yeshua will overpower their deceptions. He is the "Light of the World." He declared it, not during *Chanukkah*, the Festival of Lights, but on *Shemini Atzeret*, the Eighth Day concluding festival of *Sukkot*, the Feast 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). May the truth of Yeshua, the Messiah, and the light of His love be apparent through us, His followers, as we encounter the lost and hurting of the world. *Shabbat shalom* and *Chag Chanukkah sameach!* Happy *Chanukkah!*