

HANUKA

SHOULD WE OR SHOULDN'T WE?

by Avram Yehoshua

[The Seed of Abraham](#)

Hanuka is a Jewish holiday. It's like a mini July 4th (Independence Day holiday in the USA). There has been more than one time that God has saved His people Israel from slavery, oppression and death, and Hanuka is one of those times. Purim is another time. They both commemorate God's deliverance of His people and as such, are mini-pictures of the great deliverance known as Passover—both the First Passover by Moses in Egypt and the Second Passover of Yeshua (Jesus) in Jerusalem.

Hanuka and Purim are holidays, not holy days (or holy times) like Passover. There are no Sabbaths associated with either Hanuka or Purim (except for the weekly 7th Day Sabbath, which might fall within their days of celebration). Neither Hanuka or Purim are found in Torah (Mosaic Law), but Purim is found in the *Tanach* (Old Testament) in the book of Esther, and Hanuka is seen in John 10:22. It's usually translated into English as the Feast of Dedication and that's what *hanuka* means—to dedicate, which specifically speaks of the Temple being rededicated, but also pertains to the men and women who were so dedicated to God that they were willing to die for His Name and His Ways of living out their faith in Him.

The First Book of Maccabees is inspiring and faith building. I love the accounts where the Jewish priests and people are greatly outnumbered, but their leader, an Aaronic priest by the name of Judah Maccabee, offers powerful prayers to God, and God gives him victory after victory.

I center in on just the First Book of Maccabees (there are four books), because it has the historical reality of the persecution, suffering, battles, prayers and conditions of the Jewish people. It's a story of biblical heroism against all odds, grounded in faith toward Yahveh, the God of Israel. This is the basis for Hanuka (the Feast of Dedication).¹

Hanuka celebrates the mighty deliverance of God, which began in the town of Modin, not too far from Jerusalem, through the High Priest Mattathias and his five sons, who fought against the evil dictates of the Syrian king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes. In 168 BC Antiochus looted the Temple, massacred many Jews and forbid the observance of Torah (e.g. Sabbath and the 8th day circumcision of newborn sons) upon penalty of death. Also, he ordered the Jews to worship the Greek gods and goddesses and adopt a Hellenistic lifestyle. Anyone who kept the Sabbath, or who wanted to circumcise their eight day old son was brutally murdered—mother, father and child.

In 167 BC Antiochus erected a statue to Zeus, with his face on it, in the Temple. He wanted the Jewish people to worship him as Zeus incarnate, hence the title Epiphanes (God incarnate/manifest). The Jews called him Antiochus Epimanes (Antiochus the madman), a play on the word Epiphanes (incarnate). The Syrian king also had pigs sacrificed on the Temple's bronze Altar of Sacrifice, thus defiling it.

Outnumbered by trained armies, the priests and people of Israel, under Judah, who would become known as Judah the Maccabee (the Hammer!; *Yehudah haMakabi* in Hebrew), fought and won battle after battle, due to their faith in God and love for His holy Torah (cf. Rom. 7:12, 14). They were able to retake posses-

¹ The First Book of Maccabees can be read in the New Revised Standard Version, etc., or ask me to email you its PDF.

sion of the Temple and cleanse it of the idol statue of the Syrian king three years to the day that Antiochus IV had robbed it (i.e. 25 *Kislev* 165 BC; *Kislev* is the 9th Jewish month corresponding approximately to December). The celebration of Hanuka begins on *Kislev* 25 and lasts for eight days. In the annals of Jewish history Judah the Maccabee is acclaimed as one of the greatest warriors, alongside Joshua, Gideon and King David.

Did Yeshua Celebrate Hanuka?

It's more than interesting that Yeshua came to Jerusalem during the time of Hanuka, at the beginning of the winter, which was no small task when traveling by foot from the area around the Sea of Galilee. The Apostle John writes:

‘At that time, the Festival of the Dedication (Hanuka) took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the Temple, in the portico of Solomon.’ (John 10:22-23)

Yeshua's main area of ministry in Israel was the northern part of the Sea of Galilee in its surrounding villages, like Capernaum. The Sea of Galilee is one hundred miles (160 kilometers) north of Jerusalem, and because the villages, Tiberias and the Sea are in a basin, about 700 feet (215 meters) below sea level, it's a much milder and warmer climate than Jerusalem in December. Jerusalem is 2,300 feet (700 meters) above sea level, in the mountains of Judah, and in December it's very windy, cold and rainy.

Why would the Lord Yeshua leave that comfortable climate and travel in the dead of winter to the cold and rain of Jerusalem for a non-Sabbath, non-Torah holiday? Generally, the only times we see Yeshua in Jerusalem are at major Feasts of Israel² because Scripture commands all Israeli male adults to appear before God for those feasts.³ Why would Yeshua be in Jerusalem at the time of Hanuka unless it was to celebrate Hanuka?

There's no reason for Him to be in cold, windy and wet Jerusalem in the winter, other than He went there, with many other Jews, to celebrate God's mighty deliverance of Israel through the Maccabees about 200 years earlier. Now I realize that this is not definitive proof, but it is a strong indication that Hanuka was seen by Yeshua as a Jewish feast to be observed. He was there, and John records it to make a point—Yeshua came to celebrate Hanuka. As we're to emulate our Lord it's also good for us to celebrate Hanuka!

The Parallel

There's an interesting parallel between Yeshua's Hanuka and the reason for Hanuka. The King of Syria, Antiochus IV, who called himself Epiphanes (God with us; i.e. Immanuel), had control of Judah before the Maccabees rose up. Into the Temple he placed a statue of himself to be worshipped as God. On the Altar he had many pigs sacrificed to himself and other gods. The Maccabees put an end to that demonic intrusion, destroying the Altar (because it had become defiled by the pigs), and building another (1st Mac. 4:38-47). They also took out all the pagan statues and objects of worship for the sun, moon and the stars. Once cleansed of the false god, the Temple was then dedicated, or rather re-dedicated, for the eight days that are known as the Feast of Dedication—Hanuka.⁴

² Mt. 26:2, 17; Lk. 2:41; 22:15; Jn. 2:23; 6:4; 11:55; 13:1, etc.

³ Ex. 23:17; 34:23; Dt. 16:16.

⁴ I'm indebted to Margaret of San Antonio, TX, USA for the thoughts in this, and the following paragraph. Her email spoke of the blasphemy that began Hanuka by Antiochus, and the blasphemy of some Jews rejecting

With Yeshua, the true Immanuel (God with us; Is. 7:14; Luke 7:16), God the Son came into the Temple, the Living God manifest, just the opposite of the idolatry of the Syrian King. Unfortunately, as the parallel continues, there were Jews in Messiah's day who wanted to stone Yeshua because He was telling them that He was God incarnate; one with God (Jn. 10:22-39). Yeshua told those Jews that they weren't His sheep (but later we see many other Jews who did believe that Yeshua was the Messiah; Jn. 10:40-42).

Yeshua's Hanuka is very significant. The Maccabees fought so they could worship the Living God. With the appearance or manifestation of Yeshua we see the Living God enter His Temple (Malachi 3:1; John 14:1-11), a direct opposite and refutation of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and his setting himself up as Zeus incarnate in the Temple. (Shades of the anti-Christ to come!)

Hanuka Traditions

Rabbinic Judaism teaches that when the Temple was re-taken there was a day's worth of olive oil found in it for the Menorah (the seven branched Lampstand; Ex. 25:31-40), yet miraculously, they teach, it lasted for eight days. However, there's no reference in Maccabees to any oil being 'found,' or that one day's worth lasted for the eight days of Hanuka. It's a fairy tale made up by the Rabbis to embellish Hanuka and try to find meaning for why Hanuka is an *eight* day celebration (1st Mac. 4:59), and not just a day or two. Eight days for Hanuka is seen in First Maccabees:

'Then Judas (Judah) and his brothers and all the assembly of Israel determined that every year at that time, *the days of dedication of the Altar* should be observed with joy and gladness for *eight days*, beginning with the twenty-fifth day of the month of Kislev.' (1st Maccabees 4:59)

Some think the eight days were a substitute for the fact that they hadn't been able to observe the previous Sukote (The Feast of Tabernacles) in October, which lasts eight days (Lev. 23:33-44), and so they were doing it in December. So, in December, when the Maccabees cleansed the Temple of the pagan things and tore down the desecrated Altar, they kept Sukote and its eight days as a way of celebrating their victory in not having been able to celebrate the previous Sukote.

There are problems, though, with aligning Hanuka with Sukote. Even the Maccabees didn't have the authority to *change* the Lord's time for keeping Sukote, in the 7th month, to the 9th month. Also, their edict speaks of *keeping* the celebration of *Hanuka* in Kislev (December) *annually*, which means that it wasn't Sukote they were keeping during those eight days. The edict plainly states that the celebration was to be kept in memory of 'the days of dedication of the Altar.' Finally, it's hard to imagine that anyone would be living in make-shift huts made of branches and leaves, for that's what Sukote entails in Israel (Lev. 23:33f.), for eight days in Jerusalem in the bitter windy cold and rain of winter!

There is a biblical reason why the Maccabees made Hanuka to last for eight days. When Moses consecrated Aaron and his sons for the priesthood, and the Tabernacle of Moses was initially *dedicated* for service, there's a seven day period of dedication and on the eighth day the Tabernacle 'was open for business' (Lev. 8-9; cf. Ezk. 43:18-27; 2nd Chron. 7:8-9). This was on the minds of the Torah observant Maccabees, and thus, the reason for the eight days because the word *hanuka* means dedication. As such, Hanuka becomes for us an eight day period of re-dedication of ourselves (the temple of God; 1st Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19) to God the Father in the name of His Son, Messiah Yeshua. During this time we can ask Him to cleanse us of our idols, pride and self-worship, that we might be fully dedicated to our Father.

Yeshua at this Hanuka.

Hanuka is a holiday commemorating a time when Yahveh moved mightily for the salvation of His Jewish people. It's a real historical event. It's not a holy time, but a holiday commemorating an historical time in Jewish history that God moved to deliver His Jewish people from certain death and annihilation. It is a mini-deliverance time or mini-Passover (Passover being *the* day of God's deliverance).

Holy Day vs Holiday and Hanuka Traditions

What's the difference between a holy day and a holiday? Holy days (and holy times) are authorized and commanded by God and each one has at least one annual Sabbath within them. These God ordained times are listed in Leviticus 23. Holidays, like Hanuka and Purim, are not holy and fall into the category of something like the Fourth of July (Independence Day) for the USA.

Much on Hanuka is culturally Jewish, of course, like eating potato latkes in commemoration of the Temple's olive oil for the Menorah that allegedly lasted for 8 days (building on the oil of the rabbinic legend because the latkes are fried in oil).⁵ Some things, though, in imitation with Xmas, are not productive, like the giving of gifts for each of the 8 nights. This competition with Christmas is not to be emulated. As nice as gifts are to receive, Hanuka is not about gift giving, but about God's deliverance of the nation of Judah and the re-dedication of the Temple, which speaks of the giving of ourselves to God; our re-dedication (our hanuka) to our Father through His Son, Messiah Yeshua. The Maccabees did not give gifts to their children and their friends in commemoration of Hanuka.

There are many Jewish traditions that surround both Hanuka and Purim, but I choose which ones to follow. I like the lighting of the Hanuka lights. You can use either candles or small oil lamps or tea lights for the 8 days. On the first night 1 lamp is lit, while 7 are positioned, but not lit, with the lighting candle lit and blown out. On the second night two lamps are lit, while 6 watch, with the shamash (the candle that lights the other candles, blown out after the two are lit, etc. They are a visual reminder for each of the 8 days about God's ability to deliver from wickedness and darkness as we dedicate ourselves to Him.

When I had our congregation in Tulsa, OK, USA (1983-1998) we'd meet every other night for Hanuka (as every night was very taxing on the people), and everyone would bring food. We'd read two chapters from the First Book of Maccabees,⁶ light the lights for the night, bless the Lord and praise Him in a few songs. Then we'd sit down to eat and fellowship together. After that we'd watch something like *Fiddler on the Roof*, or *The Chosen*, or *Exodus* with Paul Newman, for their ethical and cultural Jewish content and dedication to God's people. Also, we might watch Jesus of Nazareth (over a two night period),⁷ which is the best 'Jesus' film ever made, in spite of some flaws (like Joseph wearing *payot*, the long side-curls of the Hasidic and some Orthodox Jews today, and also, many Jews wearing the *yarmulke* or *kippa*, etc., which didn't come about until much later).⁸ We'd also see *The Rabbi From Tarsus* by Phil Goble (again some flaws, like the wearing of the *kippa* and the fact that Paul was never a rabbi, and no one ever spoke of him as such, not even he), but the content is exceptional. We would have 'Happy Hanuka' decorations and balloons, which always gave it a festive atmosphere. It's also a great time to read from the Word about

⁵ Latkes are a small fried 'pancake' made with grated potatoes and eaten with either sour cream or applesauce.

⁶ If you'd like to read from the First Book of Maccabees, see [Hanuka—The 1st Book of Maccabees](#).

⁷ The film *Jesus of Nazareth* is on two DVDs and lasts for six and a half hours. It can be bought from Amazon.

⁸ Why is the *kippa* wrong in the film, Jesus of Nazareth? Because no Jew even heard of a *kippa* back then let alone wore one. The *kippa* is of relatively modern origin, first appearing around the 16th century. What the Jews wore in the days of Yeshua was a traditional head-covering to protect their hair from the sun and the dirt in the air, more like a plain (colored) Arab keffiyeh. See [The Kippa](#).

what it is to be dedicated to the Lord.

Make up your own traditions for Hanuka. It's allowed :) Remember that the theme of the celebration is dedication to God. You might also want to read a portion of a book every night like, *Hinds' Feet on High Places* by Hannah Hurnard, or *A Tale of Three Kings* by Gene Edwards, or *The Cross and the Switchblade* by David Wilkerson, or even *Hudson's Taylor's Spiritual Secret* by Dr. Howard Taylor, which is an exceptional story of an Englishman who was totally dedicated to Jesus whom God used to bring the Gospel to China in the late 1800s.

Is Hanuka the Jewish Answer to Christmas?

Hanuka has nothing to do with Christmas, and so it can't and shouldn't be compared to it. The only 'connection' is that they both come in the winter of December (and because of Xmas Jews give gifts to their children). Christmas is pagan through and through. It celebrates the birth of the *pagan* Christ savior (and every ancient country had one) from the stump of an evergreen tree, in the dead of winter, and hence, why an evergreen tree is a symbol for the pagan, and now, Christian Christmas. This tree symbolizes the pagan Christ's victory over the darkness of winter, as Dec. 25th is the first day that ancient man could determine when the amount of light in the day *increased* (having decreased from mid-summer or the summer solstice), and so, spring, or life, was returning to the world. The god born on Xmas Day was called 'the Christ' (what we would call the false Christ or anti-Christ), and was the son of the sun god. The sun was the greatest natural object of veneration in the ancient world.⁹ On the other hand, Hanuka is an historical event that remembers the God of Israel delivering His Jewish people from annihilation.

I discourage the giving of 'Hanuka gifts.' It's only a recent Jewish custom that has bled over into Hanuka because it's so close to Christmas. The Jewish children would tell their parents of all the toys that the Christian children got for Xmas, and so, the Jewish parents began to give their children gifts for each night of Hanuka, but it's not part of the Maccabean Hanuka, and so we should steer clear of this. It's not only expensive and unnecessary, it pollutes and corrupts the Jewish holiday. If you want to give gifts to your children you can do it on any day of the year (and for Purim as Esther 9:21 declares that it's two 'days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor'). Hanuka is a time of teaching our children to give themselves to Yeshua, not of receiving gifts. They are the gift to God.

If Hanuka, Can't We Also Celebrate Thanksgiving?

Some Christians see a link between the Pilgrims 'authorizing' Thanksgiving Day in the USA and the Maccabees instituting and authorizing Hanuka. If the Maccabees could do that, why can't Christians keep Thanksgiving Day? There is a resemblance, but the link quickly dissipates because Hanuka, and Purim, do not oppose the holy days of God, but Thanksgiving Day does.

Thanksgiving Day wasn't a creation of the Pilgrims. It was first celebrated in the America by them in 1621, but they had taken the day of giving thanks to God for the harvest from England, where they had come from. England, in turn, had taken it from the ancient Romans and the Greeks, who had taken it from the Babylonians before them. All ancient peoples had a day of giving thanks unto their gods and goddesses for the harvest of the final crops of the year in autumn, but isn't that what the eight day Feast of Tabernacles is all about?¹⁰ Both Hanuka and Purim denote victories of God over the enemies of Israel,

⁹ For why [Christmas—Its Origin](#).

¹⁰ See [The Feast of Tabernacles](#), which is God's ordained 8 day feast for giving thanks unto Him for provision of

while Thanksgiving Day, a *holy* day for the Pharisaic Church, in whatever country it is observed, for many countries have ‘Thanksgiving Day’ (e.g. Canada, who had no Pilgrims, celebrates Thanksgiving Day on a different day than the USA), confronts, contradicts and nullifies *Sukote* (the Feast of Tabernacles)—God’s *eight days of giving thanks to Him* for the end of the year harvest, which is the *exact concept* of Satan’s counterfeit—Thanksgiving Day.

Neither Hanuka nor Purim do away with nor are a substitute for Pesach (Passover), but fall under it as mini-times or days of deliverance, and as such, should be kept by all Christians. Why? Because all Gentile Christians are part of the one Flock of Yeshua, which is called Israel:

“I am the Good Shepherd, and I know My (Jewish) sheep, and am known by them. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father, and I lay down My life for the (Jewish) sheep. And *other* sheep I have (the Gentiles), which are not of this fold. Them, also, I must bring, and they will hear My voice, and there will be *one Flock* and one Shepherd.” (John 10:14-16)

The Apostle Paul taught that the Gentile believer was part of Israel, not that the Gentile believer had replaced Israel, as many churches wrongly teach. That’s called Replacement Theology, but it flies directly against what Paul said:

“I say then, have they (the Jewish people) stumbled *that they should fall?* ***Certainly not!*** But through their fall, *to provoke them to jealousy*, salvation has come to the Gentiles. Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure, riches for the Gentiles, *how much more their fullness?!* For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am an Apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry...And if some of the branches were broken off, and ***you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them***, and *with them* became a partaker of the root and fatness of the Olive Tree (i.e. Israel).”

“You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in’...‘Well said! Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. *Do not be haughty, but fear!*...For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either!...And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again! For if you were cut out of the olive tree, which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature, *into a cultivated olive tree, how much more* will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own Olive Tree?”

“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this Mystery, lest you should be conceited, that blindness, in part, has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, and so, *all Israel will be saved*, as it is written:”

‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.’

“Concerning the Gospel they (the Jews who don’t believe in Jesus) are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election *they are beloved for the sake of the Fathers*; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable!” (Romans 11:11-13, 17, 19-21, 23-26, 28-29)

The Apostle Paul also wrote that the Gentile was specifically now part of the *Commonwealth of Israel*. The Church, according to Scripture, is not a separate entity apart from Israel, and as such, should walk out her faith in Jesus as He did—keeping all Mosaic Law that applies to any believer:

“Therefore, remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called uncircumcision, by what is called the circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you

food, shelter and life.

were *without* Christ, being strangers from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the Covenants of Promise, having no hope and without God in the world, but now, *in Messiah Yeshua, you who once were far off have been brought near* by the blood of Messiah. For He, Himself, is our peace, *who has made both one*, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,” (Ephesians 2:11-14 NKJV)

What has the Gentile believer been brought near to? According to Scripture the Gentile believer is now *part of Israel*, and therefore, should walk as Israel walks, in Mosaic Law. According to the Pharisaic Church, though, the Gentile *is* ‘the new Israel,’ and doesn’t have to keep Mosaic Law. Because of that she is an Israel that sins against her Savior by eating pig, shrimp and catfish, something her Savior could never do and still remain sinless, and she also keeps pagan holy days that the Church has baptized ‘in the name of Jesus,’ again, something her Savior could never do and remain sinless. The Church has no more authority to change God’s holy days than Antiochus IV had. She can do it, but it’s not of God. One cannot ‘baptize’ a pagan holy day ‘in the name of Jesus,’ because God hasn’t authorized it. It is a sin of presumption, yet **all** the holy days of the Church are not written in the New Testament, but began in paganism and are still pagan. Basically, the only thing that has changed is that the Church has replaced the name of the pagan Christ-god with Jesus.¹¹

The history of Thanksgiving comes straight out of paganism, and no matter how noble Church ideas have been about it (i.e. giving thanks to Jesus for the food and jobs He’s provided), it’s not His Way to thank Him. The Pharisees also had their noble ideas and ways, which also nullified God’s Word:

“Jesus said to the Pharisees, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, *that you may keep your tradition!*” (Mark 7:9)¹²

Should Christians celebrate a pagan holy day to the God of Israel when He expressly forbids it? Here’s what God said to ancient Israel, which Word is still in effect today:

“Observe and obey *all* these words which I command you, that it may go well with you and your sons after you, forever, *when you do what is good and right in the sight of Yahveh your God*. When Yahveh your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, ***take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them***, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘***How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise!***’ ***You must not worship Yahveh your God in that way***; for every abomination to Yahveh, which He hates, they have done to their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it! *You must not add to it, nor take away from it.*” (Deuteronomy 12:28-32)

The first king of northern Israel, Jeroboam, also proclaimed a substitute time for giving thanks to God, but

¹¹ For why every Christian should walk out his faith in Jesus through all the rules of Mosaic Law that apply to him, see these one page articles:

1. [A Snapshot of Church History and Mosaic Law](#)
2. [Christians! Stop Following The Pope!](#)
3. [Have You Ever Wondered?](#)
4. [Seven Reasons Why The Church is Wrong](#)
5. [The Feasts of Israel and the Church](#)
6. [The Two Triangles of the NT](#)
7. [Why Sunday?](#)

¹² For why the Church is Pharisaical, see [Grace, Holiness and the Pharisaic Church](#).

it wasn't acceptable to God, as is evident from what Scripture records about the king (1st Kings 12:26–13:5). Man has no right or authority from God to proclaim a holy day unto Him and Thanksgiving Day is a holy day for the Church, but God has already giving His holy time for giving thanks (The Feast of Tabernacles).¹³ Thanksgiving Day was not acceptable to God 3,000 years ago in the northern kingdom of Israel. How could it be any different for Christians today?¹⁴

Thanksgiving Day came from paganism. It's not something that our God or His people originally came up with. It has nothing to do with the God of Israel, even though the Pilgrims worshipped Jesus. They didn't know or keep Torah, which meant that they didn't know about The Feast of Tabernacles. If they had it would have been different for them. On the other hand both Hanuka and Purim commemorate times when God moved mightily to save His people Israel, and those two times don't take anything away from God's holy days, but enhance them and inspire us.

How To Celebrate Hanuka

If you don't have a group to celebrate Hanuka with you can do it alone or with your family and/or some friends who are like-minded. The theme of Hanuka is dedication—total dedication of ourselves to our risen King Yeshua. We are His temple and He desires to move in and through us to the people around us.

Buy a Hanukia, a nine branched lampstand, some Dreidels, and some wrapped candy that you can use for 'money.'¹⁵ Say the blessing, light the Hanukia, and then say the next two blessings,¹⁶ and then play the Dreidel game.¹⁷ We play the game until the Hanuka candles burn out, but you may play as long or as short as you like.

After the Dreidel game is over read a chapter or two of the First Book of Maccabees¹⁸ and then eat some-

¹³ See [The Feast of Tabernacles](#).

¹⁴ See [Thanksgiving Day—Pagan?](#) for where Thanksgiving Day originated from and how Jeroboam instituted it because he didn't want the Israelis of his northern kingdom to go to Jerusalem for God's time of Thanksgiving (the Feast of Tabernacles).

¹⁵ In 2019 we used Hershey's chocolate Kisses and gave everyone playing the Dreidel game seven Kisses each to begin the game with.

¹⁶ The Blessings are found on p. 20 of [Hanuka—The 1st Book of Maccabees](#).

¹⁷ Here are instructions for [the Dreidel game](#).

1. Each player gets an equal amount of Gelt (money), candy or nuts to begin.
2. Each player puts one piece into the pot.
3. The first player spins the Dreidel and follows the instructions for whichever Hebrew letter is on the top, once the Dreidel stops:
 1. Noon⌒ Take Nothing
 2. Gimel⌒ Take All
 3. Hay.....⌒ Take Half
 4. Sheen⌒ Add 1 to the Pot
4. After a play wins the Pot with either a Noon or a Gimel, every player adds one piece to the Pot.
5. Play until one player has all the Gelt (money), candy or nuts or until the Hanuka candles burn out.

¹⁸ The First Book of Maccabees can be found at [Hanuka—The 1st Book of Maccabees](#). It's ten chapters and so for the eight days of Hanuka you'll need to read two chapters on two days to finish it in eight days.

thing to celebrate the Feast of Hanuka. Of course, you may eat something before you light the Hanukia. Then praise the Lord and/or see a movie like:

1. [Above and Beyond](#), is an incredible movie/documentary about how God, in 1948, used a few WWII volunteer American Jewish pilots to fight for Israel's independence and survival, and literally saved the Jewish people there from annihilation. At the time, Israel had no air force nor any military planes! The day after Israel announced its statehood, Israel was attacked by at seven Arab nations (Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq), who spoke of overrunning the country and murdering all the Jews. They said that what Hitler had done would be nothing compared to what they would do to the Jews. Their military might was staggering compared to the Jews who didn't have any tanks or planes, etc., and they were outnumbered by professional Arab soldiers, but God was on the side of Israel. It's free on Amazon Prime.
2. [An American Tail](#). A family of Jewish Russian mice emigrate by boat to America, but young son Fievel is lost overboard, washes ashore in the USA, and experiences thrilling adventures trying to find his parents in this animated family classic. It's \$3.99 on Amazon Prime and great for children of all ages.
3. [Behind the Sun](#). The story of a young man born and raised a Muslim in the Middle East who attended college in America. After receiving a degree, he begins his trip back home to see his family. The young man had a drastic change happen while in America in that he became a Christian, and as a result, he faces a very difficult road ahead. It was made in 1995 and it's free on Amazon Prime.
4. [Ben Hur](#) with Charlton Heston. It's \$3.99 on Amazon Prime.
5. [Defiance](#) with Daniel Craig. It's \$2.99 on Amazon Prime.
6. [Exodus](#) with Paul Newman. The movie is free on Amazon Prime.
7. [Fiddler on the Roof](#) with Topol and Norma Crane. A classic 'must see.' The story of Tevye the Jewish milkman, his family and his Jewish community in anti-Semitic czarist Russia in the early 1900s. It's free on Amazon Prime.
8. [Follow Me](#) is the story of Yoni (Yonatan) Netanyahu, the older brother of the Prime Minister of Israel, Benyamin Netanyahu. Yoni was a lieutenant colonel when he masterminded and led the raid on Entebbe, where more than 80 Israelis were being held captive by a terrorists. The terrorists had hijacked a plane going from Athens to Paris and commandeered it to Entebbe, Uganda. It's free on Amazon Prime.
9. [Jesus of Nazareth](#). Absolutely the best 'Jesus' movie. Starring Olivia Hussey as Mary, this epic film includes Ernest Borgnine, James Farentino, James Earl Jones, Stacy Keach, James Mason, Sir Laurence Olivier, Christopher Plummer, Anthony Quinn, Rod Steiger, Peter Ustinov (who does an incredible job as King Herod), and Michael York as John the Baptist (a super performance). Robert Powell portrays Jesus, the most believable 'Jesus' on film. It's free on Amazon Prime. Made in 1977, it runs a little more than 6 hours. See Avram's [review of the movie](#).
10. [Stars in the Galaxy](#) presented by Louie Giglio. An excellent presentation of the God who designed the universe and our relation to the stars and Him.
11. [The Chosen](#) with Rod Steiger, Maximilian Schell and Robby Benson. The Chosen. Starring Rod Steiger as a Hasidic rabbi and the struggle he has to direct his son (Robby Benson) in the right path. Also starring Maximilian Schnell. An excellent film. It's free on Amazon Prime.
12. [The Devil's Arithmetic](#) with Kirsten Dunst and Brittany Murphy. An exceptional film about the change of attitude a teenage girl has once she's transported back in time to a Holocaust camp. It's free on Amazon Prime.

13. [The Rabbi From Tarsus](#) excellently played by Phil Goble. An incredible performance of the last day in the life of the Apostle Paul in the dungeon of Nero. Even though it speaks of Paul being a rabbi, which Scripture never does, along with a few other mistakes, it's a beautiful rendition of what might have been, informative and humorous, and a faith builder. It's free to see.
14. [The Secrets of Jonathan Sperry](#) with Gavin Macleod and Robert Guillaume. This movie is especially relevant to children of all ages. It's \$3.99 on Amazon Prime.
15. [The Ten Commandments](#) with Charlton Heston. It's \$9.99 on Amazon Prime to buy it.¹⁹

CONCLUSION

Hanuka is not the Jewish Christmas. Hanuka is a time of remembering and celebrating the great deliverance that God gave to His people Israel and of the cleansing and re-dedication of the Temple, about 200 years before Yeshua began His ministry in Israel. Hanuka is a beautiful time, in the dead of winter, to re-dedicate ourselves to the Lord Yeshua on every one of the eight days of Hanuka.

Yeshua not only celebrated Hanuka, but came all the way from the Galilee area to do so, a six day journey on foot. At that time, while in the Temple, Yeshua became the antithesis to the wicked Syrian king who had made himself into a god and wanted to be worshiped as such. There was Yeshua, though, God the Son, the visible manifestation of the invisible God, what the Syrian king had made himself out to be, dwelling among His people Israel! What significance this lends to Hanuka! Yeshua wasn't seeking to be worshipped at that time, but sought to serve His brethren Israel.²⁰ Yeshua our King authenticates and affirms Hanuka for all of us and our children.

The theme of Hanuka is re-dedicating ourselves, the temple of the living God, to our Father, in the name of Yeshua, and to His purpose for our lives. The cleansing of the Temple, in the days of the Maccabees, is an apt picture for what Yeshua wants to do with us—cleanse us as His temple.²¹

Thanksgiving and Xmas are pagan holy days that the Church 'baptized in the name of Jesus.' Christians who love Jesus shouldn't have anything to do with Christmas and Thanksgiving Day because they are the *traditions of man that nullify God's Word*.²² Welcome to the Commonwealth of Israel!

¹⁹ If your Prime movies are a dollar or two more expensive than I have listed you might want to, for example, plug "Defiance" into a Prime search and it should come up \$2.99...probably the same with the other Prime movies.

²⁰ Dt. 18:18-19; Mt. 15:24; Mark 10:45.

²¹ 1st Cor. 3:16; cf. Mt. 21:10-13; Mk. 11:15-17; John 2:13-21.

²² Revised on Jan 4, 2020.