

Hanukkah and the Advent of the Messiah



CELEBRATE
MESSIAH

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| YESHUA CELEBRATED HANUKKAH | MESSIAH IN PROPHECY | ANNOUNCING NEW MESSIANIC TRAINING CENTRE |

YESHUA CELEBRATED HANUKKAH

Shalom,

Happy Hanukkah! And soon to be, Merry Christmas. I love this season of the year... lights, joy, lots of presents, and the ability to freely focus on our faith in Yeshua: the reason for the season. When I say the reason for the season, I am including Hanukkah, not just Christmas!



Lawrence Hirsch

Executive Director of
Celebrate Messiah

There is an amazing connection between the two holidays. It is a bit hidden, but I am sure that, once you see it, you will be as thrilled about it as I am. We find this extraordinary link in John 10:30, where Jesus said, *"I and the Father are one."*

We know from the gospel that the events in John chapter 10 occurred during the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22–23), also called Hanukkah. The Hebrew word *hanukkah* means "dedication." It is still the most often used name for this great holiday.

Yeshua Celebrated Hanukkah!

Curiously, the only biblical mention of Hanukkah is in the New Testament. The origin of Hanukkah is in the intertestamental literature, particularly in the First and Second books of Maccabees, which many people consider significant records of Jewish history.

The story of Hanukkah serves as the stunning backdrop to the words of Yeshua, particularly in John chapter 10 and especially in verse 30.

The saga begins with a well-known historical figure, Alexander the Great.

Upon his death in 323 BC, Alexander's kingdom was divided among four of his generals. Eventually, the lands that included Israel came under the control of Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 BC. His name alone tells the story; the word epiphanes means "revealed" or "manifestation" and refers to the Greek gods who often took on human form. In this instance, Antiochus probably had Zeus in mind

as he desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem by sacrificing to Zeus (1 Maccabees 1:54; 2 Maccabees 6:2).

Antiochus demanded loyalty from the Jewish people to Greek culture and the Greek gods. He sent his emissaries with a statue of himself to each village in Israel and made them bow down to it. According to Jewish tradition, the emissaries entered the town of Modi'in and demanded that the Jewish people bow down and worship the Greek gods and their representative, Antiochus.

But a family of Levitical priests was living there. Mattathias and his five sons refused to bow and began a revolt. Mattathias cried out, "Let everyone who has zeal for the Law and who stands by the covenant follow me!" (1 Maccabees 2:7). His call is one of the grand statements of loyalty and unity that every young Jewish child learns at his mother's knee.

His family and followers fled to the Judean foothills and waged guerrilla warfare against the Syrian Greeks for the next three years, between 167–164 BC. When Mattathias died, Judah became the leader of the rebel forces.

During that time, Antiochus perpetrated one of the most heinous acts against the Jewish people recorded in all of history. After defeating Antiochus, the Maccabees discovered that he had sacrificed a pig on the altar in Jerusalem, one of the holiest sites in Israel. The Maccabees retook Jerusalem and wanted to cleanse the Temple. However, when they realised that a pig's blood had defiled the altar, they took it apart and stacked the stones off to one side. In a very intriguing tradition recorded in 1 Maccabees, they left the rocks for someone more powerful to do the cleansing (1 Maccabees 4:46).

They built a new altar, and according to Jewish tradition, only had one day of oil left in the Temple's eternal light (the seven-branched menorah), although it took eight days to cure olive oil to keep the light shining. The miracle that took place, according to tradition, was that the oil lasted for eight days, which allowed the Maccabees to prepare the oil needed, and prevented them from being extinguished.

This legend provides the rationale for why we celebrate Hanukkah over eight days, and why the symbol of light is so important. It reminds us that the *ner tamid*, the ceremonial light that shone in the Temple, must never be extinguished. Of course, the physical Temple was destroyed in AD 70 when the Romans conquered Jerusalem. Many Jewish people fled, and the Romans took the remaining Jewish people as captives. The menorah and other holy implements were looted and brought to Rome by the armies of Titus. To celebrate the victory, the Romans engraved these historical events inside the Arch of Titus, which you can still see today in the Roman Forum, near the Roman Colosseum.



The Declaration of Divinity

Yeshua made His declaration of divinity in John 10:30, amid the grand traditions observed during the magnificent Hanukkah celebrations at the Second Temple. These traditions are described in the Mishnah, a collection of rabbinic commentaries on the Bible.

The story of Hanukkah, which would have taken place fewer than 200 years earlier, was well-known by the Jewish people at that time. The average Jewish person living in Israel would have known that Antiochus Epiphanes, also called "Antiochus the Madman," had declared himself to be a god. The Jewish people were commanded not to have any other gods but the Lord, and were forbidden to worship idols (Exodus 20:3-4).

Indeed, the order to bow down and worship a statue would have been especially repugnant to the Jewish people. To this day, Jewish resistance to incarnation is rooted in the Jewish rejection of idolatry, and the belief that God cannot be corporeal. Resisting the claim that Yeshua is God in the flesh, has been viewed as a testimony of Jewish loyalty throughout the centuries. The fact that any Jewish person can overcome thousands of years of Jewish faith and tradition and accept Yeshua's deity is a miracle.

The Deity of the Messiah Is Rooted in the Hebrew Bible

I was raised in a traditional Jewish home and taught to reject this possibility out of hand, not only for Jesus but for anyone.

I remember when I was thinking about becoming a believer in Yeshua and was confronted with the idea that Yeshua claimed to be God in the flesh. After reading the Gospels and seeing the way Yeshua acted and spoke, I concluded that if anybody was God in the flesh, it would be Him. I am so glad that the Lord worked in my heart and enabled me to accept this glorious and fundamental truth: that Yeshua is God, fully divine and fully human.

If Yeshua was just a very bright and articulate itinerant Jewish rabbi, then you and I are still walking in our sins and face judgment on the last day. But because He is God in the flesh, His death provides a perfect atoning sacrifice for our sins, allowing you and me to receive forgiveness of sins and stand in the presence of the Lord forever.

I came to realise that the Hebrew Scriptures actually did teach that God could appear in the flesh. Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:6-7, and several other prophetic passages in the Old Testament teach that God would take on flesh one day.

I understand why the Incarnation rubs Jewish people the wrong way. We were raised celebrating Hanukkah and taught that bowing to any corporeal god is idolatry.

I would agree that the Bible teaches against idolatry. Isaiah wrote with a combination of anger and humour, it seems, concerning how idolators worship

Half of it he burns in the fire; over this half he eats meat as he roasts a roast and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, "Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire." But the rest of it he makes into a god, his graven image. He falls down before it and worships; he also prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god." (Isaiah 44:16-17)

Yet, we do not worship a God made of wood or stone but one who became a man while fully retaining His divine nature. A glorious mystery!

There is no stipulation against the true God taking on flesh. Without the Incarnation, Yeshua would not fulfill the Messiah's prophetic description and qualify as the Saviour of the world. There is no other way to be the Messiah, as no human being could accomplish what the Bible prophesied the Messiah would achieve. The deity of the Messiah is essential to His Messianic role in the story of redemption.

With this background, we understand that Yeshua's declaration that He and the Father are one was a declaration that He is God in the flesh. There is no other. Antiochus Epiphanes was a fraud; the statue was merely an image that was eventually destroyed.

Yeshua is not an idol made of wood or stone, nor is He just a man or a great rabbi or miracle-worker. He is the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies that teach us that the true Messiah and Saviour of the world would be God in the flesh.

Dear friend, it is the Incarnation that forms the magnificent bridge between the holidays. I cannot tell you how happy I am that our Messiah Yeshua chose Hanukkah to declare Himself God in the flesh. What could be more appropriate? What could be more Jewish?

I hope you enjoy the additional teaching on this great topic in this newsletter.

I also hope you are able to send a generous gift to Your Mission to the Jewish People during this Hanukkah/Christmas season. It is a time for giving, and we are busy giving the gospel to His kinsman according to the flesh in Australia, New Zealand, Far East Russia, Israel, and around the globe.

We are so grateful for your prayers and sacrificial support!

Blessings and Happy Hanukkah,



Lawrence



Messiah in Prophecy



But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. Micah 5:2

There were two Bethlehems: one in the south of Israel and one in the north. The adding of Ephrathah indicates that this is the Bethlehem that is approximately 8 kms south of Jerusalem, and is the ancestral home of Ruth and King David (Ruth 1:1–2; 4:11; 1 Samuel 17:12).

Micah alluded to the passage in Genesis 49:10 where Jacob predicted that the ruler of Israel would come from the tribe of Judah: *“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”* Judah was the fourth son of Jacob, not the first. So, God is apparently upsetting the usual order of inheritance by telling the Jewish people that their ultimate ruler would come from the descendants of the fourth son of Israel.

Genesis 49:10 and Micah 5:2 both make the point that this ruler would profoundly impact the Jewish people since he would rule the Jewish people forever (2 Samuel 7:13ff). Micah used two terms to indicate the duration of his reign. The first word *“mikedem”* may be translated as *“from ancient times,”* and the second term *“olam”* as *“eternal,”* which often describes the everlasting character of the God of Israel (Psalm 25:6; 90:2; Habakkuk 1:12). The combined use of these terms speaks of the eternity of the coming ruler which was fulfilled in the person of the Messiah Jesus, the eternal Son of David, spoken of in the New Testament.

The eternal nature of the promised ruler would reach forever into the past and extend forever in the future. This can only be describing the eternal God. Whoever this ruler is would be God in the flesh!

Matthew indicates that Yeshua is the promised ruler. He is the son of David from the tribe of Judah who was born in the traditional Davidic homeland, and He will prove Himself to be the eternal Son of God and Messianic King through His perfect character and miracles. The *“bread of life”* would be born in Bethlehem (which means *“house of bread”*), as He would be both the bread of life and the ultimate sacrifice for our sin; born to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.



For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this. Isaiah 9:6-7

In this passage, the prophet Isaiah used four different names for the coming Messiah, two of which indicate that this future son of David would be God in the flesh. Names in the Hebrew Bible often indicate character, and these names (especially when the two verses are taken as one unit) speak to the very nature of the Davidic king.

The opening phrase of this passage indicates that the child being spoken of would be an actual baby, born of a woman. However, this would not be just another baby. This baby would be called by all four names that follow. What child, in that time or any

other, could live up to the name Eternal Father, *avi-ad* in Hebrew, not to mention Mighty God, *El-Gibbor*? How could an earthly king be “Mighty God”? Literal readings of the Hebrew reveal that the titles describe the King Himself.

In Isaiah 10:21, the title “mighty God” is reserved for God alone. Isaiah 9:6-7 predicts that David’s descendant would be born of a woman, a descendant of David the king, yet fully God. A common theme running throughout the Old Testament (and the New Testament as well) is the expectation of an eternal reign of King David. In 2 Samuel, God made a covenant with King David. The Lord says: “*When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom*” (2 Samuel 7:12).

The Hebrew word translated in 2 Samuel 7:12 as “your descendant” is *zarakha*, which is from the root *zarah* meaning “seed” or “offspring.” Verse 13 continues to describe the eternal kingdom of this descendant, and verse 14 tells us that the Lord Himself says, “*I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me.*”

There were many Davidic kings in the generations following David’s death; however, only one person could fulfill this prophecy. He would have to be born as a human baby, live a human life, yet be the eternal God and everlasting Father at the same time. He would have to rule as King and establish an eternal peace as the Prince of Peace. The only individual ever to fit this description is Yeshua, the Messiah of Israel, who was both God and man.



Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14

In Isaiah’s day, two enemies were conspiring against Judah: Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel (the northern kingdom). Isaiah comforted the terrified people of Judah by going to King Ahaz with his aptly named son, *Shear-jashub* (“a remnant

shall return”). God will bring a remnant back to the Land. The terrorists of that day, who were mere men, would be shattered.

Ahaz was challenged to believe this prophecy. In fact, he was to ask God for a confirming sign, something really spectacular, as “*deep as Sheol or high as heaven*” (Isaiah 7:11). When he refused, God gave him a sign, even though he had exasperated the Lord. What is that sign? It is a son named Immanuel, which means “God with us.” God’s people needed His very presence when surrounded by the enemy. It was true in Isaiah’s time, and it is true today.

The son will be born to a “virgin,” said the prophet. Regardless of how one interprets the Hebrew word “*almah*,” there would be nothing spectacular about her if she were impregnated normally. Something supernatural attended this birth.

What child in Isaiah’s day “fulfills” this prophecy? We do not know. Some say the “young maiden” was Isaiah’s wife, but she already had a child, Shear-jashub, and her second child was not named Immanuel but Maher-shalal-hash-baz (Isaiah 8:3). Others say she was a virgin when the prophecy was given, but she then married and had a child whose early life is described by Isaiah to show that the Syria-Israel confederacy would be defeated very soon. Neither view is too remarkable, deep, or high.

It is clear that the supernatural, spectacular component of this birth finds its fulfillment in the Person of the Messiah, born of a virgin, through the work of the Holy Spirit, before Mary and Joseph “came together” (Matthew 1:18–25). Whatever the meaning to Ahaz, which is obscure at best, the meaning to all believers around the world is that the baby who was named Immanuel was supernaturally conceived.

The virgin conception is a different miracle than the cases where God caused a barren womb to open. Whether due to old age or another reason, the manner of conception was still the union of man and woman; the child born was fully human. Rather, the result of the virgin conception is that the child would be both fully human AND fully God. The Apostle Paul affirmed this unique circumstance when he referred to Yeshua as having “*existed in the form of God*,” and “*being found in appearance as a man*” (Philippians 2:6–9).

We have been given a sign. We have been given a Son. We know Him as Immanuel. God is always with us in the Messiah Yeshua who indwells every believer and who said, “*And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*” (Matthew 28:20).



MESSIANIC
TRAINING CENTRE

CENTRE TO EQUIP AND EMPOWER BELIEVERS



A new training centre birthed from the Caulfield Messianic Centre has begun life in the heart of Australia's largest Jewish community.

The Caulfield Messianic Centre was completed earlier this year for the glory of God, and we had a wonderful Dedication service on the 1st of May 2021. One of the most important announcements that we made at the Dedication was about the establishment of the very first Messianic Training Centre in Australia to be accommodated at the newly built Caulfield Messianic Centre.

The Vision of the Messianic Training Centre is to be a *training provider to equip, and empower believers for Messianic Jewish life, ministry, and evangelism, in order to fulfill Celebrate Messiah's vision of "Bringing the Message to the Original Messengers"*.

So, from the 29 June - 27 July, 95 students registered for the Messianic Training Centre's inaugural course on Jewish evangelism which was called "*Bringing the Message to the Original Messengers*." This 5-week introductory course on Jewish evangelism was taught by Lawrence Hirsch, Executive Director of Celebrate Messiah and Rabbi of Beit HaMashiach Messianic Congregation in Melbourne.

The students were introduced to the principles that govern our evangelistic efforts towards Jewish people, and also given an introduction to Jewish cultural and religious distinctives, with the overall intention of helping believers share the faith with Jewish people.



The Messianic Training Centre followed up in September with another course called, "*Yeshua HaMashiach in the High Holidays*." This course was offered free of charge, and a total of 480 people registered for this 3-part seminar on how the Gospel can be seen in the Jewish festivals of *Rosh Hashanah* (the Feast of Trumpets), *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement) and *Sukkot* (the Feast of Tabernacles). The course was taught by Celebrate Messiah representatives: Paul Cohen, Ashley Crane and Robert Miles, and hosted by Lawrence Hirsch.

In 2022, the Messianic Training Centre is planning to offer new courses: "*An Introduction to Hebrew*" and further courses on Jewish evangelism and Answering Jewish Objections.

**Please look out for more information coming your way in the next few weeks
and keep your eye on www.celebratemessiah.com.au/mtc.**

NEWS BRIEFS



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RABBI 'BLOWS AWAY' NEIGHBOURS

Rabbi Lawrence left the Caulfield Messianic Centre after the *Rosh Hashanah* service with a jumbo-sized shofar tucked under his arm.

As he turned into a nearby street towards his car, one of our Jewish neighbours called out to him, "Can you please blow the shofar for us. Oh, but just wait a minute so I can I call my husband, Jacob, to come outside."

Lawrence then took a deep breath and filled the street with the sound that so many long to hear during this high holy day. As other neighbours heard the blast, a small crowd gathered and delighted in the sound of the shofar.

According to Jewish tradition, a shofar blast will signal the return of the Jewish people when Messiah comes. We blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah to remind us of God's salvation in our own lives. And when Messiah comes it will herald a time of universal understanding and recognition of God's unity.

This is something traditional Orthodox, and Messianic Jews, can agree on.

So, let's pray that we can also agree that it is Yeshua who is the Messiah for both Jew and Gentile, and this encounter with our neighbours will bring them to Him.

PSALMS TO SOOTH THE SOUL

For the past few months, our outreach worker Herschel has caught up with his not-yet-believing Jewish neighbour Igor to read from the Psalms. It has been such a comfort and blessing for both of them. It's an evangelistic activity that is possible during the COVID crisis and as well great seed that is being sown into the life of a man who God has a plan for.

Please pray for Igor that he will start to see Yeshua bright and clear in his own Jewish Scriptures.

FRUIT FROM THE FAR EAST

The work of Celebrate Messiah in the Far East of Russia continues. Nicolai and Natasha are in Artyom, and Irena and Genia, formerly in Birobidzhan, are now living in Blagoveshchensk. They handed over the day to day running of ministry in Birobidzhan to Alexandra

(Sasha) who continues the good work they started. So, we now have three areas of ministry in the Far East: Artyom, Birobidzhan and Blagoveshchensk. Celebrate Messiah, primarily through support from Beit HaMashiach, sponsored a Simcha Family camp in Artyom as well as a Family Day Camp in Birobidzhan, which were well attended and with wonderful reports of people coming to faith and being baptised.

Irena and Genia have forged a relationship with a local Jewish charity, and Nicolai and Natasha report from Artyom that an article was written in the local newspaper about the life of their community, which mentioned support from Celebrate Messiah in Australia.

Please pray also that our work in Australia among the Russian Jews, which saw such miraculous growth under Rita, can be reignited when the fallout from COVID subsides.

ARRIVALS TO ISRAEL GO UP

When Israel celebrated *Yom HaAliyah* (Aliyah Day) earlier this year, it was reported that arrivals of Jewish people moving to live in the Land was up over 30 per cent. *Aliyah* comes from the Hebrew verb "to go up." In the Bible, it is used when the Israelites would ascend to Jerusalem to worship the Lord at the temple. Now, *aliyah* is a term to describe the return of Jews to Israel. In 2020, the numbers were quite low as a result of the pandemic. Currently, *aliyah* is up 31 percent with 20,360 people arriving in 2021 so far. It will likely not reach 2019's total of 34,000 immigrants, the highest in a decade. This year, Russia and the US have topped the list in number of emigrants. Many others are coming to Israel from the UK, Brazil, Argentina, Ukraine, Belarus, and South Africa, and a small number from Australia. There was a large contingent from Ethiopia (1,589 people) who came through Operation Zur and were reunited with family already there for decades, compared with only 285 people who came the previous year. Immigrants have always been essential to Israel's survival and success over her 73 years as an independent state.

Pray for the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel, and for an easy transition and adjustment.

MESSIANIC • RESOURCES



\$125^{AUD}
Nickel plated
rope design

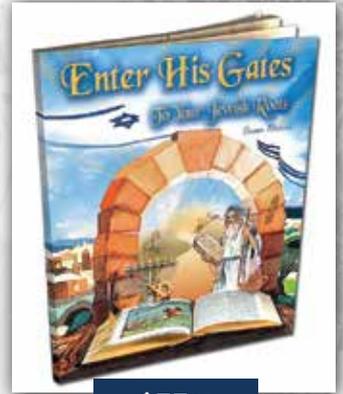
The Hanukkah Menorah brings even more beauty to an already beautiful holiday. Two designs to choose from:

Made in shining nickel plating, the branches are made to look like rope. The base is square with elegantly formed feet. Let this Hanukkiah light up your nights of Hanukkah and bring joy to the atmosphere. Size: 28 x 25 cm



\$140^{AUD}
Blue stones,
floral pattern
and curved

This amazing nickel Hanukkah Menorah has a traditional eight-branch design with curved branches and is decorated with blue beads. The blue beads appear on each of the candleholders as well as on the stem and base. The bottom of the Menorah is decorated with a floral pattern that also includes filigree lines. This Menorah also features a bar running across the top of the Menorah and connects the branches together. Size: 28cm



\$33^{AUD}
Enter His
Gates

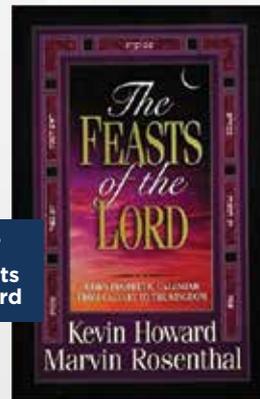
Enter His Gates: To Your Jewish Roots
Is Hanukkah the Jewish Christmas? Can I wear the prayer shawl? What is a mezuzah? This book is an introductory journey through celebrations, blessings and the traditional objects used in Biblical times by Jesus and His Disciples, and still in use today in Jewish homes and synagogues. As you enter His gates on your journey, it is hoped that this book will encourage and enrich your spiritual walk.

Fill in the order form or visit our online store at celebratemessiah.com.au/store for these and other great resources.

Due to ongoing delivery delays with Australia Post, we ask that you would be patient in receiving your order. It may take up to 4 to 6 weeks. All prices include postage and handling.

The Feasts of the Lord covers all aspects of the biblical feasts: historical background, biblical observance, modern observance, and prophetic significance. Yet, this book is not just another reference book on the feasts. It is written from the Hebrew Christian viewpoint, helping you to see the feasts through Jewish eyes.

\$44^{AUD}
The Feasts
of the Lord



ONLINE HANUKKAH EVENT

Join us for the first and final nights of Hannukah in livestreamed services from Beit HaMashiach Messianic Congregation.

Sunday 28 November and Sunday 5 December.

You can access the services on our website www.beithamashiach.com



(The proposed Simcha conference has been cancelled. Please God we can have it next year!)



**CELEBRATE
MESSIAH**

"BRINGING THE MESSAGE TO THE ORIGINAL MESSENGERS"

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