Bible Story-Kindergarten/Preschool

The Maccabees and Hanukkah

1&2 Maccabees
Hanukkah

The term Hanukkah means dedication and is mentioned in the New Testament in John 10:22. The date of the occasion represents the time when the Maccabees regained control of the Temple in Jerusalem from the pollution introduced by Antiochus Epiphanes. The Temple was thereafter rededicated to the worship of Almighty Yahweh. Although the Feast of Dedication is not mentioned in Leviticus 23 as a commanded convocation, the Assemblies of Yahweh each year remembers the occasion. However, we do not celebrate Hanukkah as a substitute for Christmas as the Jews do. We do remember the Feast of Tabernacles during that time, as we light the lamps each night.

The Feast of Hanukkah (the feast of lights) is said to relate to the intertestamental era of Judah Maccabeus. It was his valiant effort as a freedom fighter and guerrilla commander of the Jewish resistance forces that succeeded in driving out the Syrian army during the reign of the pagan Antiochus Epiphanes. After Antiochus initiated the apex of insults against the Temple worship in an effort to stamp out the Israelite Faith by sacrificing a young sow on the altar and erecting a statue of himself in the Temple, the Maccabees fought to drive out the pagan army and cleanse the Temple for the restoration of pure worship. After three years, the Jews were once again in control of Jerusalem and the Temple was cleansed. During the eight days of cleansing, tradition says that a small flask of oil (the only one available) maintained the menorah light.

The account of this period in the history of the Jews can be found in the apocryphal books of Maccabees. The following quotes will give you some idea of the gravity of the situation they faced.

2 Maccabees 6:1-11

“Not long after, the king sent an old Athenian to force the Jews to forsake the laws of their forefathers and cease to live according to the laws of Yahweh, but to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and to call it that of the OLYMPIAN ZEUS, and to call the one in Gerizim that of ZEUS the Hospitable, in keeping with the character of those who lived there. This harshly and most grievously intensified the
and profane the feasts and pollute sanctuary and sanctified; to build altars and sacred precincts and idol temples and SACRIFICE HOGS and UNCLEAN CATTLE; and to leave their sons uncircumcised and defile themselves with every unclean and profane practice, so that they might forget the Law and change all their religious ordinances; and anyone who did not obey the command of the king should die. He wrote to his whole kingdom, to this effect, and he appointed inspectors over all the people, and he ordered the towns of Judah every one of them to offer sacrifice. And many of the people and everyone who was ready to forsake the Law joined with them and they did wrong in the land, and forced Israel to hide in every hiding-place they had. "ON THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF CHISLEV, in the one hundred and forty-fifth year, he erected a dreadful desecration upon the altar, and in the towns of Judah round about they built altars, and at the doors of...
And he appointed priests that were without blemish and adherents of the Law, and they purified the sanctuary and carried out the stones that had defiled it to an unclean place. And they deliberated as to what they should do about the altar of burnt offering, which had been polluted. And a good idea occurred to them—to take it down, so that it might never be thrown up to them that the heathen had polluted it; so they took down the altar, and deposited the stones in the temple mountain, in a suitable place, until a prophet should come and declare what should be done with them. And they took whole stones, as the Law required, and built a new altar like the former one. And they built the sanctuary and the interior of the temple and consecrated the courts. And they made new holy dishes and they brought the lampstand and the altar of incense and the table into the temple. And they burned incense on the altar, and lighted the lamps on the lampstand, and they lighted the temple. And they put the loaves of bread on the table and hung up the curtains, and completed all the work they had undertaken.

And they arose early on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, that is, the month of Chislev, in the one hundred and forty-eighth year, and offered sacrifice according to the Law upon the new altar of burnt offering which they had made. At the time and on the day the heathen had polluted it, it was rededicated with songs and harps and lutes and cymbals. And all the people fell on their faces and blessed heaven which had prospered them. And they celebrated the rededication of the altar for eight days and offered burnt offerings with joy, and offered a sacrifice of deliverance and praise. And they decorated the front of the temple with gold crowns and small shields and rededicated the gates and the priests' quarters, and fitted them with doors. And there was very great joy among the people, and the reproach
the heathen had cast upon them was wiped out. And Judah and his brothers and all the congregation of Israel decreed that the days of the rededication of the altar should be observed at their season, every year, for eight days, beginning with the twenty-fifth of the month of Chislev, with gladness and joy.”

The rededication of the Temple was a memorable occasion. It is observed today strictly as a Jewish festival. Yahshua the Messiah also attended an observance at Jerusalem, John 10:22-24.

Thanks to Mathathias the priest and his five sons (Judah, who was called Machabeus, John who was surnamed Gaddis, Simon, who was surnamed Thasi, Eleazar, who was surnamed Abaron, and Jonathan, who was surnamed Apphus), the Syrian armies were defeated and Yahweh’s True Worship was again established in Jerusalem.

However, this observance was not commanded by Almighty Yahweh in His list of holy days in Leviticus 23. Yahshua the Messiah kept those annual feast days of Yahweh, especially the seven-day observance of the Feast of Tabernacles and the eighth, the Last Great Day (John 7).

Today, even the Jewish authorities express concern about the commercialization of Hanukkah. Orthodox and Conservative rabbis in New York inveigh against the obvious paganism of the decorations and the lavish gifts. Nevertheless, the customs of the Christmas celebration continue to infiltrate Hanukkah.

The True Worshiper seeks with all his heart and soul to exit from the Babylonish system, Revelation 18:4. We keep the commandments of Almighty Yahweh and cling closely to the Faith of Yahshua the Messiah, Revelation 12:17 and 14:12. Keeping the commandments of Yahweh includes keeping holy His sacred time of Leviticus 23. Because of the evident pagan contamination of all the winter holidays—both Christian and Jewish—we avoid observing them.
"And they celebrated the rededication of the altar for eight days and offered burnt offerings with joy, and offered a sacrifice of deliverance and praise."

1 MACCABEES 4:56
Using Your Imagination

“Judah and his brothers and all the congregation of Israel decreed that the days of the rededication of the altar should be observed at their season, every year, for eight days, beginning with the twenty-fifth of the month of Chislev, with gladness and joy.” 1 Maccabees 4:59

Draw and color a picture of a Hanukkah menorah. Make sure you have 8 small branches (for each of the eight days of Hanukkah) and the one tall branch in the middle (the branch that always is lit).
1. Should we keep Hanukkah like X-mas?

2. How many days does Hanukkah last?

3. During Hanukkah we are supposed to remember the Feast of Tabernacles. What is your favorite memory from the last Feast of Tabernacles? Draw and color a picture of your favorite memory.