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2017

Hazzan Rob Menes

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Perceptions of Modern Judaism

Christian, Muslim and Atheist Views of Chanukah

From jellytelly.com

Understanding Hanukkah From a Christian Perspective

by Guest Writer on October 14, 2016

Hanukkah is an eight day celebration that honors the miracle that occurred as the Maccabees worked to clean the temple and rededicate it to God after the army of the king Antiochus IV Epiphanes had desecrated it. Although the Maccabees only had enough oil to burn the lamp for one night, God made the oil last eight nights.

Today, Jewish people around the world celebrate the holiday by lighting candles in a menorah over the course of eight nights.

Here are some resources, articles and videos to help you learn more about Hanukkah!

Should Christians Celebrate Hanukkah?

In this blog post, Lisa Strnad reminds us that as Christians, we can celebrate all of God's miracles, including the burning of the oil for eight nights. The menorah can help us remember God's provision in our lives as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus!

Buck Denver Asks... Why Do We Call It Christmas?

The story behind Christmas, Santa, Hanukkah, holiday traditions and more, giving families a culturally-relevant and Jesus-honoring overview of the Christmas season.

Clive & Ian Explain Hanukkah

Our favorite British brothers explain Hanukkah in their 12 Questions of Christmas video series. Clive explains to Ian that Hanukkah is a holiday that comes before Christmas in history, therefore Jesus celebrated Hanukkah and Christmas celebrates Jesus! After watching the video, read a history of Hanukkah below to learn more about the origins of the holiday.

Sunday School Lady Explains Hanukkah

In this video from Why Do We Call It Christmas?, Sunday School Lady explains the history of Hanukkah. Learn about the Maccabees and how they spent eight days re-dedicating the temple to God.

<https://www.charismanews.com/opinion/standing-with-israel/46721-here-s-why-christians-should-celebrate-hanukkah>

Here's Why Christians Should Celebrate Hanukkah

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Hanukkah

Christians would do well to celebrate Hanukkah. (iStock photo)

A common understanding of the December holiday season is that Christmas is the holiday for Christians and Hanukkah is the holiday for Jews.

Few Christians relate to Hanukkah since it is not one of the biblical feasts of Israel. But, the fact that Jesus celebrated Hanukkah should make Christians curious enough to investigate the possible importance of the festival to their faith.

It is no exaggeration to say that had it not been for Hanukkah, there could have very well not been a Christmas. Hanukkah prepared the way for the birth and ministry of Jesus. Therefore, Christians may want to not only wish the Jewish community a Happy Hanukkah, but also celebrate it themselves!

God Gives the Victory

The story of Hanukkah begins during the period between the Old and New Testaments, when Antiochus IV Epiphanes became the ruler of the Greek empire. While the Hellenization of the area already threatened the survival of the Jewish religion, Antiochus seemed obsessed with ensuring the demise of the Jewish faith and thereby, the future of the Jewish people.

He not only murdered the High Priest, Onias III, but he slaughtered 40,000 inhabitants of Jerusalem. All sacrifices, the service of the Temple, and the observance of the Sabbath and of

feast days were prohibited. The Temple was dedicated to Zeus, the Holy Scriptures were destroyed, and the Jews were forced to take part in heathen rites.

In his attempt to destroy every trace of the Jewish religion, the final assault was the slaughter of a pig on the sacrificial altar of the Temple, thereby desecrating it. The Maccabean family, from the priestly line of Aaron, led a revolt against this evil ruler and miraculously experienced victory after victory over the mighty Greek forces, until at last the Temple could be purified and its services restored.

This rededication of the Temple to the God of Israel is celebrated during Hanukkah, originally known as the Festival of Dedication. Hanukkah is a Hebrew word derived from the word "to dedicate."

The defeat of the Greek forces by this small band of Jewish zealots was nothing short of a miracle. God had once again demonstrated His steadfast love and faithfulness to His people by saving them from the threat of extinction. This in itself is cause enough for celebration.

The story goes on to claim that when the Jews re-entered the city of Jerusalem and the Temple, there was only enough of the special oil to light the Temple menorah and keep it burning for one day. But the oil miraculously burned for eight days while more was being brought from Galilee—an eight-day trip there and back.

The story of the miracle oil is nowhere found in the inter-Testamental writings, therefore it is largely believed to be a legend, however, the very first Hanukkah was indeed celebrated for eight days, and the festival was called the festival of lights as early as the first century. Perhaps archeology will one day uncover a clue to the story's authenticity.

A Turning Point in History

The events leading up to the Maccabean revolt were prophesied in vivid detail in the Old Testament book of Daniel. In chapter 8, the Angel Gabriel described to the prophet Daniel the coming abomination of a king who would put a stop to sacrifices and desecrate the sanctuary.

The fact that it was prophesied some 250 years before it occurred indicates how serious the threat was to the Jewish people. The Maccabean revolt was a turning point in history that saved the Jewish people and their religion from the threat of extinction.

This story, and the various archeological finds that support it, provide further proof as to the existence of the Temple in Jerusalem. So, while Israel's modern-day enemies attempt to rewrite history and distort fact by denying the Temple ever existed in Jerusalem, the celebration of the Hanukkah story takes on new meaning.

Jesus and Hanukkah

In John's Gospel, chapter 10, Jesus entered the Temple during the Feast of Dedication. He would have surely known the story behind the Feast and that the Temple He stood in would not have been in operation without it.

Christians today would also do well to remember the faithfulness of God to the Jews on that first Hanukkah. Had Antiochus succeeded to annihilate the nation of Israel, there would have been no Jewish woman named Mary to become the mother of Jesus Christ.

There would have also been no Temple for the beginning of the Christmas story. Luke 1 starts the nativity story in the Temple with an angel announcing to the priest Zechariah that his wife would give birth to John the Baptist. It is no coincidence that God chose to begin the Christmas story in the Temple, the heart of Jewish life and faith at the time.

Without Hanukkah, the celebration of Christ's birth could very well have not been possible. So as you wish friends and family Merry Christmas this year, you might also like to wish them Happy Hanukkah!

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HANUKKAH IS FOR CHRISTIANS

Hanukkah is for Christians

Happy holidays everyone. I just love this time of the year, don't you? I love the lights, the fellowship and family, and displays of generosity.....the cool crisp air..... and good will among men and a genuine hope for peace on earth. I love remembering the birth of God's son, Jesus Christ, and the humility with which our Savior entered this world.

Yet, due to the late time we are in Salvation history....a time in which human history as we know it is coming to a close.....so much seems to be changing. We live in a world of ironies and uncomfortable transition, pulled in so many directions at the same time. This is truly a pivotal moment in history; I dare say that the last time mankind was in this state of both apprehension and hopeful expectation was the last few years prior to the birth of the Messiah. Many of us in the Body of Christ are discovering the Hebrew Roots of our faith, being introduced to God-ordained festivals and appointed times, and in the process we are forced into re-thinking some of our long held traditions in the light of God's progressive revelations.

It might surprise you to know that those of us who have decided to re-open the Torah and the entire Bible and actually read it and study it and take it for what it actually says, are finding ourselves in unfamiliar territory because we at times wonder whether or not we might be defending things that perhaps we should not. Many churches around our wonderful country have begun to rethink our dedication to doctrines and traditions that have but the scantest of connection to Holy Scripture, all the while we dismiss those celebrations that our Lord both ordained and personally participated in.

I want all of you to know that I'm certainly not here to condemn long-standing family traditions, nor do I even pretend to have all the answers. I am struggling with this right along with most of you. But, perhaps, that we are struggling at all is the greatest single sign that we cannot continue business as usual. When the God of all Creation opens our eyes and hearts we cannot simply ignore it. Therefore the issue for us in our time is not whether we should cease to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, but rather when and how.

While it may seem so, this uncomfortable struggle over Christian holiday traditions is in no way a new phenomenon. It might surprise you to know that the very same Puritans who left Europe to escape religious persecution because they did not believe that they should do anything that was not firmly rooted in the Bible....the same Puritans that established the earliest colonies in America, and those whom we rightly venerate and credit with establishing our annual holiday of Thanksgiving.....shunned the celebration of Christmas. Their stated reason? It was common knowledge that Christmas was established by means of a Papal decree and was but the renaming of the ancient holiday called, Brumalia.

Indeed, there is absolutely nothing wrong, and everything right, about wanting to commemorate the advent of our Savior. Yet no serious Bible scholar any longer defends the date of December 25th as the true day of His birth. We do not know the precise date....in fact, we're not entirely certain of the season. It's one of a long list of things we all wished the Bible revealed, but it doesn't. It was far more likely Fall than Winter as the accounts of the Nativity seem to indicate according to where the sheep in the fields, along with their Shepherds, were located....among several other pieces of evidence which we won't go into tonight. But we also need to take into account that NOWHERE do we find in the Bible an ordinance to celebrate the birth of any man, nor will we find a Tradition established for that purpose. In fact, it was abhorrent to Jews and to the early church (long after it had become a gentile organization) to celebrate the birth of anyone because it was standard practice for pagans.

So do we know at what point in history December 25th was chosen to observe Jesus' birth, and the reason for selecting that day? Yes, we do. It is well attested to and recorded even among the archives of the Catholic Church who first ordained it. And it is in this understanding of how and when Christmas was established that we find this strange intersection of Hanukkah, Christmas, and the birthday of Zeus (which was one of the many names for the Sun God). Of course, each of these celebrations has it's own meaning and purpose and is celebrated differently.

It happened during the reign of Constantine, Emperor of Rome, in the 4th century AD, that the first Christ-mass (as it was originally called) occurred. It was precisely in the year 354 and it is recorded on the Calendar of Philocalus, the official scribe for Pope Damasus. It was finally made an official Christian holy day by edict of the Roman Church Pope not quite a century later, in 440. And if one will only take the time to read the actual minutes of the various ecumenical councils of the Bishops of the Church

under Constantine and the councils of Nicea and Laodicea among others.....we will see an ominous and serious religious/political tug-of-war in action.

Listen to this quote from the renowned Shaff Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge: "How much the date of the festival depended upon the pagan Brumalia [The December 25 celebration], following the Saturnalia [an eight-day December 17-24 festival preceding it], and celebrating the shortest day of the year and the 'new sun' . . . cannot be accurately determined. The pagan Saturnalia and Brumalia were too deeply entrenched in popular custom to be set aside by Christian influence . . . The pagan festival with its riot and merrymaking was so popular that Christians were glad of an excuse to continue its celebration with little change in spirit and in manner. Christian preachers of the West and the Near East protested against the unseemly frivolity with which Christ's birthday was celebrated, while Christians of Mesopotamia accused their Western brethren of idolatry and sun worship for adopting as Christian this pagan festival."--

Under Constantine Christianity was legalized in the Roman Empire and certain Christian holidays were ordered to occur on the already well-established pagan holidays so as to not create offense or upset within the vast and diverse population that was Rome. The intent was generally quite honorable: to make Christianity the preferred Roman religion.....but only to a point. In that era, the preeminent religion of the Roman Empire was Mishraim.....Sun Worship. Many religions were present in the super-tolerant Roman Empire, and they were all generally welcome, provided each person respected all the others AND continued to worship the Roman Emperor as a god. That did NOT change with Constantine. What did change was that Christianity, which had been a chaffing problem wherever it cropped up primarily because it refused to acknowledge other religions' gods AND refused to participate in Emperor worship, was now legitimized. Still, Christianity was a minority religion in the Empire. How was Constantine going to encourage Christianity without creating civil and religious upheaval in his empire? Compromise.

Since the days of the Greeks, even before the Roman Empire, Zeus was the name of the Sun god. Rome, before the time of Christ, renamed Zeus to Jupiter, because they had become so infatuated with Astrology. In Constantine's era the largest religious group of the Roman Empire gave the sun god yet another name.....Mithras. Not only had a day of the week been dedicated to communal worship of the Sun-god (Sun-day, the 1st day of the week) but also for centuries the birthday of the Sun god had been celebrated. That day was December 25th. The official name of the day was "Dies Natalis Invicti Solis" the Day of the Nativity of the Unconquered Sun". The problem was that there were MANY religions in the empire that worshipped the Sun; each in their own way, with varying degrees of dedication, and each with a different name for their Sun God. So, a common holiday name that would not show favoritism to one faction over another was eventually chosen for the day to celebrate the Sun God's birth: Brumalia. We should well understand and identify with this effort at tolerance and compromise as we see this ongoing battle in America in our day over whether the word "Christmas" should be used for the December holiday season because it causes such a wide range of feelings from warmth for some to downright outrage for others. So the search for a politically correct title for the holiday season is underway in America as we speak; Constantine (almost 1700 years ago) had precisely the same problem and he solved it by renaming the holiday.

The birthdays of gods were celebrated by the Romans as they were in most cultures. It was normal and expected. Now that Constantine had ordained a new God..... Jesus Christ..... obviously they had to

celebrate his birthday, too.....it was a given within the Roman culture. Since no one claimed to know the actual date of his birth.....at least no gentile knew, and certainly the outcast Jews weren't to be consulted on the matter..... the date chosen could have been any day. December 25th was chosen NOT because the Bishops thought this was actually Jesus' date of birth, but because it was politically expedient.

Much like today where too many Christian leaders want to say that whatever the name of the god that a culture or religion celebrates, they just don't realize that they're actually celebrating Jesus.....which I couldn't disagree with more strongly.... the question for Constantine was, how does he Christianize the pagan religions of Rome, without taking away their traditions and starting a civil war? The answer: introduce Jesus as the NEW NAME for the god they had been worshipping all along: the Sun God. After all, it was fairly common to rename gods from time to time.

Therefore, in exchange for Constantine being allowed to encourage citizens of the Empire to adopt Christianity, the Christian Bishops agreed to create a day to celebrate Jesus' birth on December 25th, the Sun-god's birthday; and the Sun-worshippers agreed not to oppose this but to recognize that Jesus was but another name added to the growing list of names for the god of the Sun. But, not everybody was happy about this solution.

Christianity had already become sectarian.....that is, it had quickly broken into many denominations. Several of these denominations erupted and loudly condemned celebrating Christ's birth at all, because nowhere does the Scripture call for such a thing. The book of John and the book of Revelation were written about 70 years after Yeshua's death, and still we find no reference to celebrating any holiday but the ancient Biblical Feasts. Others had no problem with celebrating His birth, but NOT if it was intentionally intertwined with some long-established pagan holiday. Yet, as happens in societies, when the leaders accept something new and encourage it and go forward regardless of the complaints, momentum builds, time passes, and it generally becomes practice. Within a couple of generations just how the whole thing started becomes unimportant. So over the centuries Christmas became an entrenched part of Christianity.

The co-mingling of Christianity and Sun worship can be seen right up to this day. One of the most easily recognizable is the use of the sun-disk (the symbol of the sun god) that we see painted behind the heads of Jesus, Mary, and sometimes the various canonized saints. Eventually, this came to be called a halo, and its use even spread to depictions of Angels. We find the same concept, of course, in the use of wreaths at Christmas time. Evergreen branches have, since time immemorial, been used to symbolize life and fertility. So the Sun worshippers (long before Christ's birth) had developed the tradition of weaving branches of evergreen trees into a circle (representing the sun disk) and hanging them in their homes.

Now the Jews were particularly offended over all this business. Because for them December 25th (or more accurately, by their calendar Kislev 25th) was also a Holy day. Because the Julian calendar and the Hebrew calendar are different, December 25th and Kislev 25th only intersect every few years.....most of the time they are entirely different days. And, this holy day of Kislev 25 was established precisely AGAINST any celebration of the Sun god. On December 25th in the year 168 B.C. the hated Syrian governor Antiochus Epiphanies walked into the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, on Zeus's birthday, and placed a statue of Zeus (the sun god) in the Holy of Holies. Next he sacrificed a pig to the pagan god,

then had the pig chopped up and boiled, and poured the meat and broth over all the sacred Torah scrolls and furnishings of the Temple. The Syrians took complete control of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, and this led to the Jewish uprising led by Judas the Maccabee that is now called the Maccabean Rebellion.

Three years later, on the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev, the Jewish rebels fought and took back the Temple, purified it, removed the statue of the sun god, and celebrated by relighting the Menorah that had been dark for the past 3 years. This event was the first Hanukkah. Hanukkah simply means "dedication"... (hence the translation "Feast of Dedication") for on Kislev 25, 165 BC, the Temple was re-dedicated to the God of Israel.

So with that brief history of Sun worship, Hanukkah, and Christmas, we see what a tangled web has been weaved around the birth of the sun god, the Feast of Dedication, the nativity of Jesus, and the date of December 25th.

We know a lot about Christmas, because most of us have been raised in homes where it would have been unthinkable NOT to celebrate Christmas. It really didn't matter whether we were raised in a home that believed in God or not; because just as in the era Christmas was first invented, Christmas in western culture has long ago become simply a season for corporate merriment and secular celebration at least as much as about remembering the birth of Christ. But, Hanukkah is another matter. So, let's see what Hanukkah is about.

First, even though Hanukkah is NOT listed as one of the 7 Biblical holy days, it IS in the Bible and its occasion is validated.....usually under the name of Feast of Lights, or Feast of Dedication. And we know for a fact that Jesus, Yeshua, celebrated Hanukkah, because we're told the story of the trip he made from his home in Galilee to Jerusalem to be a part of that joyous celebration. Further, He used Kislev 25th (Hanukkah) to make a startling statement that is so important to all of us, but also insured that he would not survive too much longer.

Let me read to you John 10:22-30.

NAS John 10:22 At that time Hanukkah took place at Jerusalem; 23 it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. 24 The Jews therefore gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." 25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these bear witness of Me. 26 "But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep. 27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. 29 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 "I and the Father are one."

Yeshua plainly stated that He could grant eternal life, and that He and the Father were echad....one...something the Jews thoroughly understood. He said MORE than the people had expected. They hoped He was the Messiah; but to add "yes I am" and further..... "I am God" was TOTALLY unexpected. They never imagined the hoped-for Messiah to be anything but a man, a human, and a military leader. So even those who at this point were open to Him being Messiah rejected Him because they considered Him an idolater and blasphemer after claiming His own deity.

Even worse, He did it on Hanukkah; he did it on the day of celebration that the Temple was freed from perhaps the most infamous idolater in Jewish history, Antiochus Epiphanies. Epiphanies means “god appearing”; Antiochus had declared himself to be a god. Yeshua’s pronouncement of his own deity could NOT have come at a more sensitive time.

The point is, Jesus Christ knew of, and participated in, Hanukkah. And He chose that day, Hanukkah, to announce His deity.

Hanukkah is an 8 day celebration that begins on Kislev 25th. And the focal point is the Menorah. But, it is a special Menorah; not the standard Temple Menorah. The original Temple Menorah had 7 branches, at the tips of which were 7 oil lamps. The Hanukkah Menorah.....today called a Hanukkiah..... has two extra branches and oil lamps, for a total of 9. Why?

It was to remember the miracle that began on Kislev 25, 165 B.C. The story goes that when the Temple was purged and then the Jews readied the Temple Menorah for lighting, they had a problem; they had only one jar of olive oil for the lamps. It’s not that other burnable olive oil wasn’t present, it’s that the olive oil used for the Temple Menorah was specially made and set-apart, by the priests, as called for in Leviticus. They took the only holy olive oil, carefully filled each of the 7 oils lamps with oil, and to their surprise, the Menorah burned brightly for 8 days.....one jar of oil was typically sufficient for only ONE day.

So in remembrance of that miracle (and after the pattern of the Feast of Tabernacles) Hanukkah was made 8 days, and eventually the 9 branch Menorah was developed (after the Temple was destroyed for the final time in 70 A.D.). Why 9 branches and not 8? This gets interesting.

The center branch that you see here stands above the other 8 branches; it is given a higher place, yet it is called the Shamash, or servant, lamp. The Shammash is lit on the first night of Hanukkah, and from this the first of remaining 8 lamps is ALSO lit on Kislev 25. Each night of Hanukkah, another of the lamps is lit, generally going left to right, using the fire of the Shammash lamp to light the others. Tradition says the Hanukkiah may NOT be used to light your home; it is to be used only to celebrate the holy days; and it is to be placed where passers-by can see it. What wonderful symbolism is here for Disciples of Yeshua; the light of the servant is used to kindle the light of all that follow.

What I would like to finish up with is this: if you’re like me, you don’t want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. You want to celebrate the birth of our Savior. But in light of where we are in history, and what we have (reluctantly) learned about the day we have used for hundreds of years to celebrate the birth of Yeshua, I think Hanukkah represents a wonderful alternative, and a way to have a fresh start free secular influences. Hanukkah has always been a family time, a holy time, a joyous time, and a time of remembrance of divine cleansing and purifying. We know for a Biblical fact that Jesus celebrated that holy day. In addition there is an interesting connection between the traditional reason for Hanukkah and our New Testament theology. The first Hanukkah was about cleansing the Temple, and as St. Paul states, our bodies are now the Temples of God, as within us lives the Spirit of the Lord. Our Temples...our bodies and our lives.... had to first be cleansed by the blood and living water of Yeshua HaMashiach before the Holy Spirit could dwell there. Our Temples, our bodies, have been rededicated to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Since Hanukkah occurs near the same time as Christmas, we can be sure that

neither accurately represents the day of Our Savior's birth, which Jew and gentile Bible scholars agree did NOT occur in the winter. Yet, does that mean that if we do not know the exact day, that we should not acknowledge His nativity?

To my way of thinking we can and ought to celebrate the coming of Messiah into this world. How we do it, though, is no longer so easily settled.....at least its not for some of us. A great scholar once said that ' the rituals of a society reveal that society's values at the deepest levels'. I think he is correct. And, I am sad to say that the rituals of Christmas indeed DO reveal our society's deepest values. Santa Claus, Snowmen, boisterous and drunken parties, and wild spending on a decadent level have become the modern symbols of Christmas, and hold naked our deepest values for all to see. The most visible icon for Christmas in Western Society is no longer the Nativity, but the Christmas Tree. Secular families and institutions think nothing of joining and celebrating the Christmas Season, because all of the focal points of Christmas have become devoid of spirituality and, therefore, quite comfortable for them. That traditional day venerated and cherished by Christians for centuries as the opportunity to remember the nativity of Our Savior has been infected by the virus of secular humanism. Why is it so shocking then that the final step in divesting this celebration of it's last vestiges of it's supposed purpose by severing away it's name, Christmas, is now upon us?

That said none of this is a surprise to God. We have arrived, I am convinced, at that marvelous time prophesied so long ago, that the division between Jew and gentile would end. That the Jewish people's hearts would soften and be accepting of their own Messiah; and that gentiles would find a love for the Jewish people inexplicably growing in their hearts. That the Gospel would do a full circle: from the Jews to the gentiles, and then from the gentiles back to the Jews.

By we gentiles embracing the God ordained and prophetic Biblical Feasts of Torah, and observing the Scripturally validated celebration of Hanukkah...every one of these observed in the NT by Jesus..... we have a new and exciting avenue to both serve, identify with, and celebrate our Messiah. And perhaps just as important, we have a way to knock down that middle wall of partition between Jew and gentile by worshipping the Lord, together, in common observances.

How do we transition from a rather inauspiciously born tradition to something that is more Bible oriented and godly instead of merely religious? That is for each of us to decide. But Hanukkah at the least gives us a model, a pattern, and a place to start anew. Hanukkah was a re-dedication of the Holy Temple from a place of pagan ritual to worship of the Yehoveh. What could be more appropriate in our time than to use Hanukkah as a point of re-dedication of these fleshy Holy Temples to the one who's entire purpose for being born, was to die for us: Yeshua of Nazareth.

THE BLESSINGS

BLESSINGS OVER THE CANDLES

Typically three blessings (Berakhot singular Berakhah) are recited during this eight-day festival. On the first night of Hanukkah, Jews recite all three blessings, on all subsequent nights, they recite only the first two. The blessings are said before the candles are lit. On the first night of Hanukkah one light (candle, lamp, or electric) is lit on the right side of the Menorah, on the following night a second light is placed to the left of the first and is lit first proceeding from left to right, and so on each night.



THE FIRST BLESSING

Recited all eight nights just prior to lighting the candles:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik neir (shel) chanukah.

Translation: "Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to kindle the Hanukkah lights."

THE SECOND BLESSING

Recited all eight nights just prior to lighting the candles:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, she-asah nisim la-avoteinu, bayamim haheim, (u)baz'man hazeh.

Translation: "Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who performed wondrous deeds for our ancestors, in those days, at this season."

THE THIRD BLESSING

Recited only on the first night just prior to lighting the candles:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, shehecheyanu, v'kiyemanu, vehigi-anu laz'man hazeh.

Translation: "Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has kept us in life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season."

AFTER KINDLING THE LIGHTS

When the lights are kindled the Hanerot Halalu prayer is subsequently recited:

(Ashkenazi version):

Hanneirot hallalu anachnu madlikin 'al hannissim ve'al hanniflaot 'al hatteshu'ot ve'al hammilchamot she'asita laavoteinu bayyamim haheim, (u)bazzaman hazeh 'al yedei kohanekha hakkedoshim. Vekhol-shemonat yemei Hanukkah hanneirot hallalu kodesh heim, ve-ein lanu reshut lehishtammesh baheim ella lir'otam bilvad kedei lehodot ul'halleil leshimcha haggadol 'al nissekha ve'al nifleotekha ve'al yeshu'otekha.

Translation: "We light these lights For the miracles and the wonders, for the redemption and the battles that you made for our forefathers, in those days at this season, through your holy priests. During all eight days of Hanukkah these lights are sacred, and we are not permitted to make them serve except for to look at them in order to express thanks and praise to Your great Name for your miracles, Your wonders and Your salvations."

[edit]

SINGING OF MAOZ TZUR AFTER LIGHTING

Each night immediately after the lighting of the candles, while remaining and staring at the candles, Ashkenazim (and, in recent decades, some Sephardim) then usually sing the following hymn written in Medieval Ashkenaz (Germany).

Ma-oz Tzur Yeshe-ati, lecha na-eh leshabei-ach. Tikon beit tefilati vesham todah nezabei-ach. Le-et tachin matbe-ach mitzar hamnabei-ach. Az egmor beshir mizmor chanukat hamizbei-ach. Ra-ot sav'ah nafshi, b'yagon kochi kilah. Chayai meir'ru b'koshi, b'shibe-ud malchut eglah. Uv'yado hag'dolah hotzi et has'gulah. Cheil Par'oh vechol zaroh yardu ke-even bim'tzulah. D'vir kodsho hevi-ani vegam sham lo shakateti. Uva noges v'higlani ki zarim avad'ti. V'yein ra-al masachti kimat she-avarti. Keitz Bavel Zerubavel l'keitz shivim noshati. Kerot komat b'rosh bikesh Agagi ben Hamdatah. V'nih'yata lo lefach ul'mokesh vegavato nishbata. Rosh y'mini niseita ve-oyev shemo machita. Rov banav v'kinyanav al ha-etz talita. Y'vanim nikbetzu alai azai bimei Chashmanim. Ufartzu chomot migdalai vetimu kol hashmanim. Uminotar kankanim na-aseh nes lashoshanim. B'nei vinah yemei sh'monah kavu shir urna-anim. Chasof z'roa kodshecha v'karev keitz hayeshu-a. Nekom nikmat dam avadecha me-uma haresha-a. Ki archa lanu hash-a ve-ein keitz limei hara-ah. Dechei admon b'tzeil tzalmon hakeim lanu ro'im shiv'ah.

From <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/myths-about-hanukkah>

Misconception: Christians should celebrate Hanukkah

This is probably the most troublesome misconception of all. On the one hand, the story of the Maccabees is part of the Catholic Bible and Hanukkah is mentioned in the Gospel of John (10:22–39). On the other hand, St. Paul firmly asserted that Christians are not obliged to celebrate Jewish holidays (Col. 2:16–17).

There seems to be in many Christian quarters, Catholic and Protestant, a fad among Christians of trying out all kinds of Jewish customs and observances. Christians have been holding Seders on Passover, lighting menorahs on Hanukkah, and holding "Sabbath suppers" on Saturday nights; they have been asking if they can wear yarmulkes, prayer shawls, and phylacteries. There is a genuine interest in the Jewish roots of Christianity that is praiseworthy, but is also troubling for any number of reasons. Here are a few:

Christians can lose focus on their own rich heritage. By focusing on the customs and practices of others, they may lose appreciation of their own. Reciting the rosary, going to eucharistic adoration, holding agape meals are either dismissed as uninteresting or have been forgotten. (Without Googling, can you tell me off the top of your head what an agape meal is?) The novelty of another tradition is elevated over and above one's own.

Many Christians do not know enough about Judaism, or Jewish practice and observance (or the Christian relationship with Judaism and the Jewish people), to be incorporating Jewish customs and holidays into their own devotions. For example, one problem with holding "Sabbath suppers" on Saturday nights as a sort of "vigil" for the so-called "Christian Sabbath" on Sunday is that by Saturday night Sabbath is over and Christians do not observe the Sabbath anyway. (Sunday is the Lord's Day, and is "expressly distinguished" from the Jewish Sabbath—CCC 2175.)

There is a temptation to proselytize Jews by showing off how Christians incorporate Jewish ritual observance into Christian devotion, with the assumption that this means that it should be easy for Jews

to convert to Christianity. Imagine for a moment how a Catholic might feel if a Muslim tried to argue that Catholics can convert to Islam because Islam honors the Mother of Jesus (which it does).

Not surprisingly, Jews often resent Christian cherry-picking of their customs and observances, even when these practices are not then used as a weapon with which to proselytize Jews into conversion. Again, taking the analogy given above, how would a Catholic feel about a Muslim praying the rosary while adjusting for Islamic belief the words of the prayers and their meaning (e.g., "Mother of God" to something Muslim-friendly)?

All of this is not to deny that there can be circumstances in which it is not objectionable, from a Christian point of view, for Christians to incorporate Jewish customs and observances into Christian practice. This is especially the case for Christians of Jewish heritage who are seeking to maintain their identity as Jews and their commitment to their heritage and history. Generally speaking though, any Christian doing so because he thinks "Jewish roots" are "cool," or because he thinks there is some kind of "obligation," or because he thinks doing so will help him proselytize Jews, needs to take a long step back and refocus his attention on learning and valuing his own religious tradition.

The Meaning of Hanukkah

If Christians learn nothing else about Hanukkah, they should learn that it is a holiday that commemorates a rejection of false worship and an affirmation of worship of the one true God.

As noted earlier, Hanukkah is mentioned in the Gospel of John. On the winter feast of the Dedication (the word Hanukkah derives from a Hebrew word meaning "to dedicate"), Jesus is walking near the Temple (10:22–23). He was asked by those there to celebrate this feast, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly" (v. 24). In response, Jesus says to them, "I and the Father are one" (v. 30). He was telling them that he was much more than the earthly messiah that they had been expecting; he was, in fact, God himself.

And that is why "the Jews took up stones again to stone him . . . not for a good work . . . for blasphemy—because you, being a man, make yourself God" (vv. 31–33). They did, in fact, most likely think they were merely doing as their ancestors did—seeking to expel a false god from the Temple dedicated to the one true God of their forefathers.

There is much about Hanukkah that Christians can learn from, appreciate, and claim as a piece of their own heritage. But we cannot do so without respecting Hanukkah for what it is for the Jewish people and for what it means to them.

From Advent through Passover/Easter, to Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah, the Catholic and Jewish liturgical cycles spiral around one another in a stately progression of challenges to God's people to repent, to remain faithful to God's call, and to prepare the world for the coming of God's reign. While each is distinct and unique, they are related to one another. Christianity is engrafted on and continues to draw sustenance from the common root, biblical Israel (God's Mercy Endures Forever).

From slate.com

Bah, Hanukkah

The holiday celebrates the triumph of tribal Jewish backwardness.

By Christopher Hitchens

Menorah. Click image to expand.

What we celebrate when we celebrate Hanukkah

High on the list of idiotic commonplace expressions is the old maxim that "it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness." How do such fatuous pieces of folk wisdom ever get started on their careers of glib quotation? Of course it would be preferable to light a candle than to complain about the darkness. You would only be bitching about the darkness if you didn't have - a candle to begin with. Talk about a false antithesis. But at this time of year, any holy foolishness is permitted. And so we have a semiofficial celebration of Hanukkah, complete with menorah, to celebrate not the ignition of a light but the imposition of theocratic darkness.

Jewish orthodoxy possesses the interesting feature of naming and combating the idea of the apikoros or "Epicurean"—the intellectual renegade who prefers Athens to Jerusalem and the schools of philosophy to the grim old routines of the Torah. About a century and a half before the alleged birth of the supposed Jesus of Nazareth (another event that receives semiofficial recognition at this time of the year), the Greek or Epicurean style had begun to gain immense ground among the Jews of Syria and Palestine. The Seleucid Empire, an inheritance of Alexander the Great—Alexander still being a popular name among Jews—had weaned many people away from the sacrifices, the circumcisions, the belief in a special relationship with God, and the other reactionary manifestations of an ancient and cruel faith. I quote Rabbi Michael Lerner, an allegedly liberal spokesman for Judaism who nonetheless knows what he hates:

Along with Greek science and military prowess came a whole culture that celebrated beauty both in art and in the human body, presented the world with the triumph of rational thought in the works of Plato and Aristotle, and rejoiced in the complexities of life presented in the theater of Aeschylus, Euripides and Aristophanes.

But away with all that, says Lerner. Let us instead celebrate the Maccabean peasants who wanted to destroy Hellenism and restore what he actually calls "oldtime religion." His excuse for preferring fundamentalist thuggery to secularism and philosophy is that Hellenism was "imperialistic," but the Hasmonean regime that resulted from the Maccabean revolt soon became exorbitantly corrupt, vicious, and divided, and encouraged the Roman annexation of Judea. Had it not been for this no-less imperial event, we would never have had to hear of Jesus of Nazareth or his sect—which was a plagiarism from fundamentalist Judaism—and the Jewish people would never have been accused of being decidal "Christ killers." Thus, to celebrate Hanukkah is to celebrate not just the triumph of tribal Jewish backwardness but also the accidental birth of Judaism's bastard child in the shape of Christianity. You might think that masochism could do no more. Except that it always can. Without the precedents of Orthodox Judaism and Roman Christianity, on which it is based and from which it is borrowed, there would be no Islam, either. Every Jew who honors the Hanukkah holiday because it gives his child an excuse to mingle the dreidel with the Christmas tree and the sleigh (neither of these absurd symbols having the least thing to do with Palestine two millennia past) is celebrating the making of a series of

rods for his own back. And this is not just a disaster for the Jews. When the fanatics of Palestine won that victory, and when Judaism repudiated Athens for Jerusalem, the development of the whole of humanity was terribly retarded.

And, of course and as ever, one stands aghast at the pathetic scale of the supposed "miracle." As a consequence of the successful Maccabean revolt against Hellenism, so it is said, a puddle of olive oil that should have lasted only for one day managed to burn for eight days. Wow! Certain proof, not just of an Almighty, but of an Almighty with a special fondness for fundamentalists. Epicurus and Democritus had brilliantly discovered that the world was made up of atoms, but who cares about a mere fact like that when there is miraculous oil to be goggled at by credulous peasants?

We are about to have the annual culture war about the display of cribs, mangers, conifers, and other symbols on public land. Most of this argument is phony and tawdry and secondhand and has nothing whatever to do with "faith" as its protagonists understand it. The burning of a Yule log or the display of a Scandinavian tree is nothing more than paganism and the observance of a winter solstice; it makes no more acknowledgment of the Christian religion than I do. The fierce partisanship of the holly bush and mistletoe believers convicts them of nothing more than ignorance and simple-mindedness. They would have been just as pious under the reign of the Druids or the Vikings, and just as much attached to their bucolic icons. Everybody knows, furthermore, that there was no moving star in the east, that Quirinius was not the governor of Syria in the time of King Herod, that no worldwide tax census was conducted in that period of the rule of Augustus, and that no "stable" is mentioned even in any of the mutually contradictory books of the New Testament. So, to put a star on top of a pine tree or to arrange various farm animals around a crib is to be as accurate and inventive as that Japanese department store that, as urban legend has it, did its best to emulate the Christmas spirit by displaying a red-and-white bearded Santa snugly nailed to a crucifix.

This is childish stuff and if only for that reason should obviously not receive any public endorsement or financing. The display of the menorah at this season, however, has a precise meaning and is an explicit celebration of the original victory of bloody-minded faith over enlightenment and reason. As such it is a direct negation of the First Amendment and it is time for the secularists and the civil libertarians to find the courage to say so.

Christopher Hitchens (1949-2011) was a columnist for Vanity Fair and the author, most recently, of *Arguably*, a collection of essays.

<https://mymonline.org/celebrating-a-non-muslim-holiday/>

muslim youth musings

Essay by Abd Al-Baasit Khan

Nov 12, 2009 · 7 min read

Have you ever wondered about the issue of celebrating or partaking in Non-Muslim holidays, festivals and celebrations? What is the Islamic ruling regarding this? Is it permissible, is it disliked, is it

impermissible? Is there a difference of opinion on this matter? Insha'Allah, in this short article, I hope that all of these (and related) questions will be clearly answered.

1. Greeting the Kuffaar on Christmas and other similar holidays of theirs is Haraam by Ittifaq (consensus of the scholars), as Shaykh-ul-Islaam Ibn al-Qayyim said in Ahkaam Ahl adh-Dhimma:

Congratulating the Kuffaar on the rituals that belong to them is prohibited by consensus, as is congratulating them on their festivals by saying 'A happy festival to you' or 'May you enjoy your festival,' and so on..."

2. It is prohibited for a Muslim to accept invitations on such occasions, because this is worse than congratulating them, as it implies taking part in their celebrations.

3. Similarly, Muslims are forbidden to imitate the Kuffaar by having parties on such occasions, or exchanging gifts, or giving out sweets or food, or taking time off work, etc. because the Prophet Muhammad said:

مَنْهُمْ فَهُوَ بِقَوْمٍ تَشَبَّهَ مِنْ

"Whoever imitates a people is one of them."

This hadeeth was authenticated by a great deal of scholars including Abu Dawood, Ibn Hibbaan, Ibn Hajar, Az-Zarqaani, Adh-Dhahabi, Al-Haythami, Al-'Iraaqi, As-Sakhaawi, As-San'aani, Muhammad Jaarullaah As-Sa'di, Ahmad Shaakir, Ibn Baaz, Al-Albaani, Ibn `Uthaymeen, and others.

Ibn Taymiyyah, in his beautiful and monumental book Iqtidaa' as-Siraat al-Mustaqeem Mukhaalafatu Ashaab'il-Jaheem (In Pursuit of the Straight Path by Contradicting the People of the Hellfire), said:

"Imitating them in some of their festivals implies that one is pleased with their false beliefs and practices, and gives them the hope that they may have the opportunity to mislead the weak." Therefore, whoever does anything of this sort is a sinner, even if he does it out of politeness, friendliness, shyness, or for whatever other reason, because this is hypocrisy in Islam and it makes the Kuffaar feel proud of their ways and festivals.

Please also take note of the following:

1. Remember the hadith of 'Aa'ishah in Sahih al-Bukhari and Muslim where she narrated that on the Day of Eid, two young girls were doing a special performance for her (singing some songs). When Abu Bakr came to visit the Prophet and found these girls with 'Aa'ishah, he rebuked them harshly. So the Prophet (who had been facing the wall), said:

عِيدُنَا وَهَذَا عِيدُ قَوْمٍ لِكُلِّ اِنْ يَكُرُّ اَبَا يَا

Abu Bakr, (know that) every group of people has its Eid (festival). And this is our Eid."

Eid عِيد is the name given to something which returns (Ya'ood), and is used to describe gatherings which happens repeatedly on a regular basis. Therefore, the Prophet clearly stated that the Eid of the people of Islam is the Eid (celebration) after Ramadaan and Eid at the end of the Hajj season. In addition to this, Friday is also considered a Eid for the Muslims, because it is a weekly gathering and is the best day of the week.

2. The Prophet also explicitly expressed his desire to contradict the ways, celebrations, and festivities of the non-Muslims. In this hadith that has a good chain of narration, as stated by Abu Bakr Al-Athram, Umm Salamah Hind Bint Abi Umayyah said that,

أَخْبَرَنَا أَن أَحَبَّ فِ أَدَا لِمُشْرِكِينَ عِيدَانِهَا : وَيَقُولُ ، وَالْأَحَدُ لَسَبْتِ يَصُومُ كَانَ وَسَلَّمْ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
The Prophet used to fast on Saturdays and on Sundays, and he would say: "These are two days of Eid for the Mushrikoon. So I love to oppose them (contradict them, differ from them) in these two." (For more info on the issue of fasting on Saturdays, see:

http://www.islamway.com/?iw_s=Article&iw_a=view&article_id=2325)

So, for the pagans, Saturday and Sunday was a special holiday for them, a Eid. On these days they would party, celebrate, relax, enjoy, dance, sing. And in and of itself, there's nothing wrong with relaxing on Saturday or Sunday, but the mere fact that the Pagans used to do this, was enough reason for our beloved Prophet to differ from their practice and not imitate them and fast on these days (to show his indifference and his disregard for their Eid).

So, just to differ from them, to show that we're different, to indicate that he, in no way, is taking part in their Eid, he would fast on Saturdays and Sundays. It is as if to send a clear message: "I'm not partaking in the Eid of Non-Muslims. I want to differ from them. I love to differ from their practice (of relaxing, enjoying, partying) on these two days." So, even though it's permissible to relax on Saturdays and Sundays, he decided to exert himself and fast on these two days just for this particular purpose. Therefore, one can just imagine what our Prophet would've said if he were alive today and were asked about Christmas or Thanksgiving!

What would he say upon seeing Muslims greeting and warmly congratulating the Kuffaar on their Eids?

What if he saw his Ummah actually having Christmas trees and lights, imitating the Kuffaar and making these Eids of the disbelievers a part of their lives?

Fully indulging, forget contradicting and trying to differ from them, the Muslims are not even shunning their practices, but are rather completely participating in their traditions! "Followers" of Muhammad as they claim, but yet we see them exchanging Christmas cards and presents with the Kuffaar and making Thanksgiving turkeys. On top of all of this, they are even allowing their children to go and partake with the Kuffaar in trick-or-treating and Halloween-related events.

نُهُمُ فَهُوَ بِقَوْمٍ تَشَبَّهَ مَنْ

"Whoever imitates a people is one of them."

So the above Prophetic words do not apply, as some ignorant people misunderstand, to normal common things, like wearing a T-shirt, or tie, or sneakers, or driving a BMW or Mercedes-Benz SLR. Rather, it refers to things that are specific for Non-Muslims and are well-known to be widely practiced by Kuffaar. For 'Eids' like Halloween, Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, there is no doubt whatsoever that such Eids fall into this meaning.

3. Ibn al-Qayyim said in his book, Ahkaam Ahl adh-Dhimmah, "It is not permissible for the Muslims to attend the festivals of the disbelievers, according to the consensus of the scholars whose words carry weight.

The Fuqahaa' who follow the four schools of thought have stated this clearly in their books. Al-Bayhaqi narrated with an authentic isnaad from 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab that he said:

"Do not enter upon the disbelievers on the day of their festival, for divine wrath is descending upon them."

And 'Umar also said:

"Avoid the enemies of Allah on their festivals."

Al-Bayhaqi narrated with an acceptable isnaad from 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr that he said: "Whoever settles in the land of the non-Arabs and celebrates their new year and festival and imitates them until he dies in that state, will be gathered with them on the Day of Resurrection."

So yes, most definitely, as the Prophet told us, as reported in Saheeh Al-Bukhari:

أحب من مع المرء

"A person will be with the one whom he loved (on the Day of Resurrection)."

You will be with the one whom you loved. "Love" is not just saying, 'I love Allah, I love Islaam, I love Prophet Muhammad.' Love is not talk. Talk is cheap! Love is striving to imitate, to be like, and to follow the practices of someone or something.

Now, ask yourselves this: Are you imitating the Prophet more in your life, or are you abandoning his Sunnah? Forget about whether it's obligatory or recommended. This isn't a Fiqh issue. It's an issue of: Do you really love the Prophet Muhammad such that you will strive to imitate him in every aspect of your life? Or are you imitating the Kuffaar more in your life? Do you imitate their traditions more than the traditions of your Prophet? Who do you wish to be resurrected amongst? You will be with those whom you love.