

Yeshua at Ḥanukkah

(John 10:22-42)

By Michael Ladda

There is a place in scripture where Ḥanukkah is mentioned, it is in (John 10:22). Interestingly, since the original Hebrew version of 1 Maccabees is not preserved and we only have Greek translations, this is the oldest known reference to Ḥanukkah in literature.

²²At that time the Ḥanukkah came to be in Yerushalayim, and it was winter. ²³And Yeshua was walking in the Set-apart Place, in the porch of Shelomoh.

I believe that the accounts we have in scripture are there for a reason. We read at the end of (the book of John chapter 21 verse 25):

²⁵Now there is much else that Yeshua did. If every one of them were written down, I think that the world itself would not contain the written books.

The information contained in John is condensed down to only include the critical elements of the story. So, I don't believe that the recording of the time of this event is superfluous information. We read in (Luke 2:41-42):

⁴¹And His parents went to Yerushalayim every year at the Festival of the Pěsaḥ. ⁴²And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Yerushalayim according to the practice of the festival.

This follows a pattern in scripture, I don't believe the Messiah is accidentally in Yerushalayim for this minor feast. Yeshua was accustomed to go to the Temple for the various feast days and appointed times since he was a child. Additionally, if the Messiah was against this minor feast, we should expect some kind of rebuke to the people or religious leaders here about the celebration of this feast and we don't see one. What we do see is a rebuke very much in keeping with the theme of Ḥanukkah.

²⁴So the Yehuḏim surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in suspense? If You are the Messiah, say to us plainly."

Why were they asking this at this time? One of the major themes of Ḥanukkah is one of victory over oppression. That is the reason this minor feast exists in the first place, the Maccabean victory over Antiochus Epiphanes and the Seleucid empire. The Jews at this time are under oppression from the Romans Empire. They were looking for their Messiah, the one who would free them from their oppression. If Yeshua is the one, it's very possible they are wondering why isn't he leading an army like the Maccabees did to defeat the Romans?

²⁵Yeshua answered them, "I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's Name, they bear witness concerning Me.

The works that Yeshua did are proof that he is the Messiah. We read in (Matthew 11:2-6) that John the Baptist had the same question while he was in prison:

²And when Yoḥanan had heard in the prison of the works of Messiah, he sent two of his taught ones ³and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" ⁴And Yeshua answering, said to them, "Go, report to Yoḥanan what you hear and see: ⁵"Blind receive sight and lame walk, lepers are cleansed and deaf hear, dead are raised up and poor are brought the Good News. ⁶"And blessed is he who does not stumble in Me."

Here Yeshua lists various works that are proof of him being the Messiah. These are a foreshadow of the coming Kingdom of Elohim, when sickness and death and ignorance about Elohim are removed from this earth.

²⁶"But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. ²⁷"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

Although professing to know Elohim and follow His ways, these people have rejected Yeshua and his teaching. They have rejected the Son of Elohim, their own Messiah, the one through whom Elohim brings about true salvation in this world. They have stumbled in Yeshua.

²⁸"And I give them everlasting life, and they shall by no means ever 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 My Father's hand.

Yeshua who has the power and authority given to him by his Father to resurrect the dead and give them eternal life will not falter. There is no question as to whether Yeshua will accomplish this wonderous feat. The Father is greater than all, who can defy Him? No one. Why is the Father with Yeshua? The next line answers that question.

³⁰"I and My Father are one."

Yeshua will use this language later in (John 17:11) speaking of his disciples after he is to leave them:

¹¹"And I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Set-apart Father, guard them in Your Name which You have given Me, so that they might be one, as We are.

And again in (verse 22):

²²*And the esteem which You gave Me I have given them, so that they might be one as We are one*

Yeshua's prayer for his disciples to be one as he and the Father are one, is a prayer for complete unity. Unity of purpose and unity of spirit. That we as believers in Messiah wouldn't be quarreling amongst ourselves, but that we would be in unison with each other. Keeping the commandments of Elohim and the Testimony of salvation through Yeshua the Messiah.

Yeshua and the Father are in complete agreement. Yeshua is completely submitted to and committed to the cause of the Father to the point of his own death. This is why he has this great authority; this is why he is the Messiah.

They are looking for fleshly salvation from human oppressors. Yeshua is bringing spiritual salvation from spiritual oppression. Our biggest problems in this life don't come from the outside world, they come from within. We need to be free from the oppression of sin, from the oppression of our own flesh. We need to be spiritually reborn with a new purpose of serving Elohim. Only once we are transformed can we be truly free. This is the Messiah that Elohim knows we need.

³¹*Again the Yehudim picked up stones to stone Him. ³²Yeshua answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. Because of which of these works do you stone Me?" ³³The Yehudim answered Him, saying, "We do not stone You for a good work, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself Elohim."*

Are the Jews correct in their assertion? Is the point Yeshua is trying to make here that he is Elohim? Notice that Yeshua and the Jews are talking past each other in this exchange. This follows a pattern throughout John's Gospel of people not understanding Yeshua's words. There are numerous examples up to this point in the story including:

- (John 2:19; 2:21) Yeshua said tear down this Temple, he was speaking of his body, but they thought he was referring to the physical Temple.
- (John 3:4; 3:10) You must be born again, Yeshua was talking about a spiritual rebirth, Nicodemus thought he was taking about physically going back to the womb.
- (John 4:10-11) Yeshua speaking to the woman at the well about giving her living water, she thinks he is talking about physical water mentioning he has nothing to draw water with.
- (John 4:32-33) Yeshua says he has food to eat that the disciples don't know about, they ask who brought him food? He explains this to the disciples that the food he is talking about is to do the will of the Father.
- (John 5:16-19) Yeshua heals on Shabbat and calls Elohim his Father and the Jews accuse him of breaking Shabbat and making himself equal with Elohim. Is healing a violation of Shabbat? Yah forbid. Is calling Elohim our Father, as per Yeshua's instructions in the Lord's prayer, is that a claim of equality with Elohim on our behalf? Obviously not.
- (John 6:42-43) Yeshua told them he came from heaven, and they say we know his father and mother, how can he say he came from heaven? They were ignorant of the prophecy of the virgin birth and Yeshua's true origin.

- (John 7:34-36) Yeshua told them *“You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come.”* And they are wondering what he means, is he going to go to the Greeks?
- (John 8:21-22) Yeshua again tells them they can’t go where he is going, and they wonder if he is going to kill himself.
- (John 8:32-33) Yeshua tells them the truth will set them free and they answer that they are sons of Abraham and they have never been slaves to anyone. He is talking about being slaves to HaSatan and sin, they don’t get it.

This pattern of people misunderstanding Yeshua continues throughout the book of John. Since the audience in (John 10:33) thought Yeshua was making a claim to be Elohim, this would be evidence against such an understanding, not for it. The same people who have been arguing with him at every turn and misrepresenting him are the ones we should be listening to? We know from (John 1:1) that Yeshua’s original nature is of Elohim, but this isn’t a question of his nature, this is of authority, they are saying he is making himself out to be the highest authority. Yeshua’s answer is telling:

³⁴Yeshua answered them, “Is it not written in your own Torah, ‘I said, “You are elohim””? ³⁵“If He called them elohim, to whom the word of Elohim came – and it is impossible for the Scripture to be broken – ³⁶do you say of Him whom the Father set apart and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of Elohim’?”

Yeshua’s response is amazing here. He quotes (Psalms 82) to defend himself:

⁰A Psalm of Asaph. ¹Elohim stands in the congregation of Ėl; He judges in the midst of the elohim. ²How long would you judge perversely, And show partiality to the wrong? Selah. ³Give right-ruling to the poor and fatherless, Do right to the afflicted and needy. ⁴Rescue the poor and needy; Deliver them from the hand of the wrong. ⁵They do not know, nor do they understand, They walk about in darkness. All the foundations of the earth are shaken. ⁶I, I said, “You are elohim, And all of you are sons of the Most High. ⁷But as men you die, And fall as one of the heads. ⁸Arise, O Elohim, judge the earth, For You shall possess all the nations.

A psalm that references the divine council as well as human judges. Yeshua applies this to the teachers of the law that they themselves are called elohim making their assertion that they are going to stone Yeshua for claiming to be Elohim highly dubious. Those teachers of the law and judges in Israel stand in the place of Elohim when judging the nation in the Torah of Elohim. The psalm implores the judges to judge rightly because they are representatives of Elohim and bear His title.

The psalm also mentions the fact that it calls these judges sons of the Most High. They claim Yeshua is making himself Elohim and he corrects them that he said he was “the Son of Elohim” which is the most accurate description of who he is. Their accusation that Yeshua is claiming to be the highest authority is incorrect; Yeshua here and throughout scripture asserts that he is subservient to the highest authority and represents that authority perfectly in every way.

³⁷“If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me;” ³⁸but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.”

Once again imploring them to look past their own bias and just look at the fruit of his works; that they are undeniably done in the power of Elohim. But they are not his sheep and do not listen.

³⁹Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, but He went forth out of their hand, ⁴⁰and went once more to the other side of the Yardēn to the place where Yoḥanan was immersing at first, and there He stayed. ⁴¹And many came to Him and said, “Yoḥanan indeed did no sign, yet all that Yoḥanan said about this Man was true.” ⁴²And many believed in Him there.

One of the major themes of Ḥanukkah is one of victory over oppression. The Jews of this time are looking for a great military leader who will overthrow their physical oppressors, the Romans. But the Messiah came to overthrow the real oppressor, HaSatan and our own sinful nature. That is what we need deliverance from. We need to be delivered from the passions of the flesh and walk in the spirit. I want to quote (Galatians 5:19-25):

¹⁹And the works of the flesh are well-known, which are these: adultery, whoring, uncleanness, indecency, ²⁰idolatry, drug sorcery, hatred, quarrels, jealousies, fits of rage, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, ²¹envy, murders, drunkenness, wild parties, and the like – of which I forewarn you, even as I also said before, that those who practice such as these shall not inherit the reign of Elohim. ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustworthiness, ²³gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no Torah. ²⁴And those who are of Messiah have impaled the flesh with its passions and the desires. ²⁵If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

As believers in Messiah, it is our responsibility to be overcomers with Messiah. As Yeshua said: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” We need to listen to the words and teachings of the Messiah and follow them. Strive to be like him. To live righteous lives in this fallen world. To rededicate our fallen temples to purified and cleansed ones. To shine through us the light of Elohim in the darkness.