

Hanukkah – Who Is Your Strength?

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MAIN VERSES

[John 10:22-23](#) • [Matthew 24:15](#) • [Matthew 24:21](#) • [Leviticus 11](#) • [Numbers 7:10](#) • [Leviticus 23](#) • [Proverbs 22:6](#) •
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For those of you who have been with me for the last couple years, I love to talk about war and battles and armies and soldiers and warriors and holy war and courage and victory and stepping up to the plate and going against all odds. Specifically back in the Iron Age where weapons were still very primitive. And so this teaching, I'm very excited about because it deals with just that. Hanukkah? What do you mean Hanukkah is not about war and blood and victory and... Actually it is. We're going to be talking about it today. But Hanukkah, let's talk about some Hanukkah. Hanukkah, Yamaka, Yamaha, vroom vroom, let's go through it.

So Hanukkah is a Hebrew word that means to establish or... to dedicate, okay? If you dedicate something, Hanukkah. It's also called the Feast of Dedication or to dedicate. Seems simple enough.

Hanukkah is an eight-day festival celebrated every year during the Hebrew month of Kislev, and there are some traditions that typically go along with Hanukkah that I love to participate in, such as eating fried foods, donuts, a holiday, an eight-day holiday where you eat donuts. Yeah, yeah. One day of Christmas, right? Eight days. You play a gambling game known as dreidel where you spin this little top and it has little symbols on it and lands on something and you get this candy and so on and so forth.

And you tell the story of Hanukkah. And those are the most popular traditions for celebrating Hanukkah.

But what is it? You see, we know that Jesus, Yeshua celebrated Hanukkah or at least made an effort to be in Jerusalem during it. In John chapter 10, 22 verse 23, and it was at Jerusalem, the feast of dedication, which is Hanukkah, and it was winter, and Jesus walked in the temple, in the courts of the temple.

And a lot of people will say, well, just because Jesus was there, Yeshua was there, doesn't mean he was participating in Hanukkah. At the temple, guys, at the courts of the temple, that would be like saying you weren't celebrating New Year's, but you were in Times Square. I mean, let's just say it like it is. I believe Yeshua was celebrating Hanukkah. Why wouldn't he?

A Strange Tradition

But what started this strange tradition? Why do we participate in it? Should we participate in this holiday? A lot of people look at this holiday and say, well, that's a Jewish holiday. And to be honest, it is. It actually started in Judea. The kingdom of Israel used to be one united nation and it was all Israel, all 12 tribes, and then the kingdom split.

The northern kingdom, known as the house of Israel, they sinned against God to an extent that he scattered them and all that was left was southern Israel, the land of Judea, where the tribe of Judah, Benjamin, and the Levites still lived. And so, yes, it's a celebration of the land of Judea that I love celebrating. But we need to start from the beginning to further understand exactly what happened. Why is it that we should or should not celebrate it? Why is it so important?

You see, Hanukkah is described for us in the books of Maccabees. There's actually up to four of them, but most only read the first and second book, which are found in the Apocrypha, the Catholic Bible canon, biblical canon. They are considered historical documents, historical documentation of the events that happened around 168 to 160 BCE in the land of Israel. And it all started with this guy. You know who that is? You look at these Roman head figures and they just all start to blend in, they all look alike. This is Alexander the Great.

Now Alexander was the son of Philip, the king of Macedonia. He was personally tutored by Aristotle until he was 16 years of age. At 16 years of age, his father died and he took the throne of Macedonia. Anybody have a 16-year-old? King of Macedonia. Think about this. Think about this. I was sitting there getting speeding tickets at 16 years old. King. Okay.

Not long after he took the throne, he became very ambitious as a warrior and led the Greek armies on a military expansion throughout the Persian Empire. It was not long after this that he conquered the entire Persian Empire. Persian Empire? Persians, Persians. Those are those guys that took out the Babylonians and then the story of Esther took place. Those Persians, 300, right? 300? The Persians who attacked the 300 Spartans at Thermopylae? Yep, same empire.

Do you know how big their empire was? It was about this big on the map, okay? Okay? Egypt. There's Israel, modern-day Israel, right? Got Greece over here, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan. I mean, you're touching India. Started at 16, he led the armies to conquer this land.

He was met at his greatest defeat right in the border of India when he tried to go in there. Apparently the elephants were a lot for his soldiers to take in, and his soldiers were tired of fighting. He died at the age of 32 in Babylon. It's debatable how he died, but all the same he died.

On his deathbed he was asked, sir, you have the largest kingdom in the world, who do you want it to go to? His response, give it to the strongest. Be an awesome line in a movie, you could just build the drama up, to the strongest.

Alexander the Great

So the kingdom was divided among his four generals. His four generals were Cassander, Ptolemy, Antagonus, and Seleucus, Seleucus. These four generals split up the land into four different quadrants and ruled and reigned over that land. You see Cassander, he got the capital, right? Didn't get a lot of land, but he got the capital, Macedonia, Greece.

Ptolemy down here, he got Egypt, and he got the majority of modern-day Israel. He had the land of Judah. Jerusalem was under his reign. And then Seleucus got all the rest of the land up here.

Well, after many years, several generations later, a man by the name of Antiochus appears. He called himself Epiphanes, which means the visible God. He didn't think highly of himself at all. Can you imagine naming yourself, giving yourself a nickname? I have trouble with compliments sometimes. People are like, Matt, you did a great job. And I'm like, well, thank you very much. It would be hard for me to call myself Matthew the Great, no matter how great it sounds. Can you imagine if I said my name is Matthew, the visible God? That's a lot to take in. That says a lot about the confidence of this man.

The Kingdom Divided

And so Antiochus Epiphanes led the kingdom of Seleucus and attacked Ptolemy. He led this land and attacked Egypt. You see, the lands of Syria right up here were a major trading route, and so was Egypt. So what would happen if someone took possession of the two most popular wealthy trading routes in the Near East? They'd control everything. There's only one thing that stops them. It was a little bridge known as Judea right there.

Well, Antiochus thought it would be great to attack the armies of Ptolemy. So he went down to Egypt, attacked Ptolemy. There were some threats made by the Romans, which was another

huge empire at the time. And for the most part, he was a little defeated. He retreated back.

Josephus writes that under the reign of Ptolemy, the Jews in Judea had complete religious freedom. They could pretty much govern themselves. They just had to pay a hefty tribute once a year to basically Egypt, Ptolemy, the division of Ptolemy. But one thing led to another, and Antiochus heard that Israel, or Judea, was really shifted in loyalty.

You see, Antiochus was able to take Judea back under his control, under the control of the Seleucid Empire, and his main goal to convert everybody was to implement a strategy called Hellenism, okay? And I'm going to explain this the right way.

The Strategy of Hellenism

So imagine you come and you take a people. Say we invade Mexico. We invade Mexico. And... It's not very beneficial for us to kill everybody in Mexico. It's not a good idea. No matter how vicious we are, why would we do that? It's more beneficial to us to keep everyone in Mexico, convert them and make their generations after them loyal to us, and then have them pay taxes to us, right? Make sense? So this is the point of conquering all the lands.

When Alexander the Great was conquering all the lands, he would kill the kings, but the armies he would force to convert their loyalty to him. So now you have a bigger army that pays tribute to you and are loyal to you. And so your empire expands. So this was the idea of Antiochus to go to Jerusalem.

So he goes into Israel and he sets up leadership in Israel to try to promote Greek society. There are even stories of a coliseum being built in Jerusalem. So plays could be acted out and so on and so forth. And lo and behold, a lot of the citizens of Judea, the Jews, really liked this idea. Really, I mean, imagine, this is Western mindset coming over, okay?

It'd be like the U.S. bringing all the Western culture to Ethiopia. A lot of people, this is pretty, TVs? Yeah, this is pretty cool. Wealth, careers, let's do this. Money and materialism. And so, the country was split between the religious groups who wanted to stick to Torah, which says do not mix with the pagans, do not do the things of the pagans, do not copy the way of the pagans, and those who enjoyed taking part in the ways of the nations.

Well, at one point, Antiochus heard that Israel was getting more and more loyal to their prior owners, the Egyptians. They missed them. Why do we have to convert the way we think? Why do we have to convert our theology? And Antiochus got very upset and he came to Jerusalem and there was a great massacre that took place in Jerusalem.

I'm skipping slides, I'm sorry. After an unsuccessful military campaign against Egypt, he marched into the temple and plundered all of the gold and he forced the people of Judea to abandon Torah, eat pork, not keep the holidays, not get circumcised under the penalty of death. Pride does a lot to people.

Pride does a lot to people. You ever been at a baseball game and one of the teams loses and there's a fan out in the stadium seats who is a fan of the losing team, and he sees someone cheering on the team that won, and they get mad, and a fight breaks out. It never happens in the UK, right? This is exactly what happened with Antioch.

Kind of embarrassed, he invaded Jerusalem. Walked into the temple, took out the menorah, the altar of incense, destroyed the brazen altar, took all the gold out, pillaged, plundered, and left.

And then he set up generals in and around Israel to start forcing Hellenism. It was no longer an ideal at this point. It's forced. If you circumcise your children, we will kill them and you. If you keep the Sabbath day, we will kill you. If you refuse to eat pork, we will kill you.

Antioch then commanded a statue of Zeus to be erected inside the temple of God in Israel. The book of Maccabees says that this was the great horror that took place in Israel. It was the abomination that made the temple desolate. Pigs were slaughtered and offered inside the temple. This was the abomination of desolation.

The Abomination of Desolation

Remember in [Matthew 24](#), Yeshua's talking about this. His disciples ask him, they say, and granted this is 170 years later when Yeshua's speaking, after this took place. Disciples come to the Messiah and say, hey, tell us what will take place in the end times. Is it coming soon? Is it going to be later? What can we look out for? And Yeshua begins to speak in verse 15. And pray that your flight is not in winter nor in the Sabbath. For then shall be great tribulation. Such was not from the beginning of the world to this time. No, nor ever shall be.

What's interesting is because Daniel prophesied about Antioch of Epiphanies. Daniel prophesied about the four generals that would take the land. Daniel prophesied about the abomination of desolation that would take place in the temple. But Antioch did. But Yeshua is not referring to this. Yeshua is referring to something that will happen in the future.

This last verse gets me. And this is the one thing: when sometimes people get scared, we get scared as believers because we know tribulation is coming. The scripture says so. Are we living in the end times? Perhaps so. Perhaps not. We don't know. But we see the stock market kind of

shaky and we see some things going on. Lots of more atheists in the U.S., lots of coexist stickers, stuff like this.

Kind of freaks us out. Is oppression coming? What's going to happen? People come to me, I'm scared the world's going to end soon. Always look. Verse 21, great tribulation is going to happen. Abomination of desolation, something's going to happen in Israel, and then tribulation is going to happen the world has never seen. We're talking about the Holocaust will not be worse than what's going to take place. The genocides in Africa will not be worse than what takes place. The oppressions of the Crusades will not be worse than what takes place.

Book of Maccabees writes, "...mothers who allowed their babies to be circumcised were put to death in accordance with the king's command. Their babies were hung around their necks, and their families of these who had circumcised them were put to death." But many people in Israel firmly resisted the king's decree and refused to eat food that was ritually unclean. They preferred to die rather than break the holy covenant and eat unclean food, and many did die. This is recorded in the books of Maccabees.

How strong would our faith be? I think about this. I love, guys, I love adventure movies, action movies. And why do guys like action movies? It's not necessarily because of violence. It's not. Special effects are cool and everything. But the reason why I think guys like action movies is because there's always someone in the movie that stands. There's always someone in the movie that stands up and says, "I will fight when no one else will." And typically takes a really cool looking gun and he fights. Right? And most of the time he wins. And that's someone I want to emulate. I want to win. I want to stand. When all else is going downhill, I want to be able to stand and fight with a really big gun. But I think that's something that we all yearn to do one day. Somehow stand up when no one else will, against all odds, even if it may cost us our life, and fight, hopefully to win.

Standing When No One Else Will

But this is real. This isn't an action movie. There were no glorious deaths like in the movie 300 at the end. Arrows coming at them, yeah! Yeah! Music, epic music playing. This is real life. This is recorded. These things happened. Here's a piece of ham. The king says that you must eat this or we're going to kill your family. And the reason why we're making you eat this is not because it's necessarily some type of grave sin for us to be unclean or eat something that's unclean. It's not this grave sin. It's certainly not like murder. Seriously, if I took a bite of it, it's not like I'm killing someone.

No, the reason why we're giving you this piece of meat is because your God told you not to eat it. Now, sometimes we accidentally eat stuff, especially processed food, whatever. Get your order wrong at a restaurant, have bacon bits, something. This was different. This wasn't about being unclean and clean. This was about one king's authority over you versus another. See, the God of the universe, who you pledge loyalty to, who you're in covenant with, said, listen, my people don't eat these things, okay? And we responded as a people, everything you say, Father, we will do because it is what is in your scriptures. And then another king comes along, coincidentally by the same name, the visible God. I'm the God. I'm Antioch, the visible God. Slice of ham, just a little slice of ham. I say that you will eat this meat because I am greater than your God and I'm going to show you that you will be loyal to me. You will recognize my greatness by you chewing on this piece of swine here. And the people firmly resisted and were killed.

These weren't glorious deaths. These were people who the soldiers killing them didn't even know their names. Next. Delete button on a computer. No one remembers their names. We remember the people. We don't know their names. We don't know how many children died. If that happened today, would I still want to be that one guy in that action movie? No one will remember me. Will I stand with my God or will I kneel to someone else's? That's tough. To read this stuff and actually try to put yourself in that situation. You have kids. Kids. This decision will kill them. It's rough. This is rough. I'm not trying to tell you, of course, of course, yes, we're always going to stay loyal to the Lord of God, but to really put that in your mind.

I'm sorry, I downed everybody. That wasn't my intention. I was going to read. I have another story from the book of Maccabees. I'm kind of scared to read it because it goes through the trial of a family. I'm letting you know it's violent. Okay, the story is called Hannah and Her Seven Sons, even though I'm not sure if her name is ever mentioned. And it's a story about a woman, a Jewish woman, who had seven boys. What a blessing.

Hannah and Her Seven Sons

You see, boys and girls were the most precious treasure you could have. Okay? What do you do with the treasure in your house? You protect it, right? It doesn't just sit in your nightstand. You put that sucker in a box with all these cushions in it, and you wrap it up, and it's safe. It's safe. It's safe. Because you don't want it to get dirty. You don't want it to fall down the toilet or something. You keep it safe. Girls were the most precious item you could ever have. The most valuable item in a household. You guys are reading the stories and you're going to be like, don't read it. Boys, on the other hand, it was an honor to have boys. It was an honor to have sons.

Why? Because don't you ever get to the end of a movie and "to be continued" is at the end? What if you had a movie that was never complete and they didn't put "to be continued" at the end of it? It'd be kind of bad, right? This is how the human life is observed. Your life is a movie. It didn't have a beginning and it didn't have an end. Your life is a segment within your family lineage. Lineage of your family starts at the very beginning and has all these chapters. And every time a son was born, it was a "to be continued" to the next chapter of the movie. So you would love to have sons because that's your "to be continued." Your name will be carried on and the movie will continue to roll. Does that make sense? I know in Mesopotamia, they believe that having sons, being remembered in this life, had a lot to do with the status of your afterlife. We see this in Torah about the "to be continued" thing. If a man marries and he dies and he doesn't have any sons, then guess what? His brother has to step in, marry his wife, and at least have one son to raise up in his name. That's what the whole story of Ruth is about. Read it, chapter 4. Ruth's dead husband was the main character of the book of Ruth. So that being said, what a rabbit hole. There's a mother who had seven sons. Sorry, guys. On another occasion, a Jewish mother and her seven sons were arrested. The king was having them beaten to force them to eat pork. A piece of ham, guys. Not to kill each other, not to somehow go to the temple of Corinth and do something really bad. I mean, we're talking about a piece of ham for which her and her seven sons were beaten. Then one of the young men said, what do you hope to gain by doing this?

The Maccabees' Stand

We would rather die than abandon the traditions of our ancestors. This made the king very angry—furious that he gave orders to have huge pans and kettles heated until red, and it was done immediately. Then he told his men to cut off the tongue of the one who had spoken and to scalp him and to chop off his hands and feet while his mother and six brothers looked on. After the young man had been reduced to a helpless mass of breathing flesh, the soldiers tortured him just as they did the first one. But with his dying breath, he cried out to the king, "You butcher! You may kill us, but the king of the universe will raise us up from the dead and give us eternal life because we have obeyed his laws, not yours."

The soldiers then began entertaining themselves with the third brother. When he was ordered to stick out his tongue, he quickly did so. Then he held out his hands courageously and said, "God gave these to me. But his laws mean more to me than my hands, and I know God will give them back to me again." And the king and those with him were amazed at his courage and his willingness to suffer. And after he died, the soldiers tortured the fourth in the same cruel way.

But his final words were, "I am glad to die at your hands because we have the assurance that God will raise us from the dead, but there will be no resurrection of life for you, Antiochus."

When the soldiers took the fifth boy and began torturing him, he looked the king squarely in the eye and said, "You have the power to do whatever you want with us, even though you also are mortal. But do not think that God has abandoned our people. Just wait. God will use his great powers to torture you and all of your descendants." The sixth was killed in the same manner. And then the seventh. The seventh—I didn't put the rest of the script in here. This is 2 Maccabees chapter 7, by the way, if you ever wanted to review it. They didn't put the second in here because it'd be really, really long.

But the seventh son went up with courage and his mother looked at him. She looked at him and said, "Remember who you are. Remember you are an Israelite. Remember you are in covenant with the God of the universe. Remember who you are as one who is loyal to God and do not be afraid to die this day." And he was killed and then she was killed after that. Would this generation even have the guts?

Mathias Rises Up

There was a priest by the name of Mathew that moved his family to Modin and saw everything that happened. Modin was about 17 miles northwest of Jerusalem. An officer came to the city commanding that all must sacrifice, eat pork, and denounce their God. Mathew had other plans. You see, Mathew was a priest and he had several sons. He had several sons that looked up to him. And he stood there. He was a well-respected leader. If I don't do this, this will cause all my people to die. Five sons.

At one moment, he saw one of his friends stand up and walk forward to eat the meat, to bow down to the ambassadors of Antioch and to denounce Yahweh their God. At that moment, Matthias was filled with zeal and honor for his King. He stood up, he took a sword. The man had picked up the meat, ready to take a bite, and Matthias got there before he could bite the swine and ran him through with the sword.

Some scholars believe that he did this out of vengefulness. Why would you do this, you have no right, kill his friend because he was about to deny God. Other scholars tend to believe that perhaps Matthias felt so bad for this man—who was weak in his faith—that he saved his life. Regardless, Matthias held up his sword. "All who stand with me this day, join me right now." The townspeople rose up and killed the squad of Greek soldiers that were there, purged them

from the town. He was now an insurgent in the land of Judea. He took his sons and all the people that would follow him and fled to the mountains for about a year.

Training Without Experience

Now remember, the Judeans at this point hadn't fought for hundreds of years. The last time they fought was probably the incident with Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar. Hundreds of years. These guys weren't trained. Looking up the weapons they had, the number one weapon they probably had was a mace, crudely made. A mace? What's a mace? Is that a big old thing? No, it's a stick with maybe a heavy ball on the end, like a round hammer. Hit people. Didn't really have swords. They could take scavenged swords off their Greek soldiers. But they continued to have these hit-and-run tactics throughout the land of Judea.

Anyone ever saw the movie Red Dawn? Not the new one. Patrick Swayze, Jennifer Grey with an AK-47. Oh, yeah. So the movie goes about the same type of story. Russians in Mexico join forces and they invade the United States of America. They take over all the towns and there's only like five or six teenagers at a high school that escape. And on their way out they go through a hardware store and they grab some bows and arrows and a few little rifles and that's it.

So they're up in the mountains looking over their town and it's just military bases, compounds. They're putting all the mayors and congressmen, all the leaders, city councilmen in these concentration camps, rehabilitation camps, killing the leadership, converting the people. And one by one they see a couple soldiers walking around outside the perimeter, take them down. Start with two. You have two guns, two professional military grade weapons you can take. And so then you hit up a larger squad and a larger squad and a larger squad. And you're not trying to dismantle their military, you're trying to build up yours.

And finally, by the end of the movie, man, they got bazookas, they got sniper rifles, just from the soldiers they picked off. And this was the same type of tactics that Matthias used and trained his people in.

A New Leader Emerges

Okay. Now, about a year later, Matthias passed away. And his middle son, Judah, stepped forward and said, "I will lead this guerrilla band of brothers. Okay. Now, wouldn't even call it a military. Wouldn't even call it an army at this point. Just a band of guerrillas.

Warfare. It's said that Judah fought so viciously that he got the nickname Maccabee. Maccabee. Which many scholars believe comes from the root Macavet, which means hammer. Bring down the hammer. Can you imagine? Moose the hammer. I mean, right? Like they finally built up a force large enough to start taking out former armies of the Greeks of the Seleucid Empire.

Did I miss anything? Yeah. This was the very first battle, hand-to-hand combat that took place between the Maccabees and the Seleucid Empire, the Greeks. The Battle of Wadi Haramiya. Let me redo that. The Battle of Wadi Haramiya. Pretend like I know how to say it. It was the first hand-to-hand battle that took place between the guerrilla faction of Maccabees and Seleucid army, not too far outside of Jerusalem.

This photo was taken in 1912, I believe, of the landscape. The leader, the general of the Greek army was named Apollonius. Carried a really big sword. Apollion means the destroyer. Judah was going up against the destroyer.

The Battle Strategy

Now, what's really interesting is the battlegrounds were drawn and the Seleucid army started coming up, making their rounds to Jerusalem. They started going up the foothills and through these narrow, uphill passages. Now Judah was smart because Judah only had 600 men, guys. 600 men versus a force of over 2,000. They waited for the army to go up where they would be compacted into a narrow gateway outside of Jerusalem. And then he made his attack.

You see, the Greek armies were very strategic in the way they attacked. Just like the Romans were. They'd have formations and squares, kind of like platoons, and they would march close together with their shields intact. It's said that the most common, correct way to march was if you're just nicking the heels of the man in front of you. Anybody ever walk so close to someone you start nicking their heels? Correct. Then you are marching correctly, and the man beside you—elbow. And the idea is that you're so solid that when you march into a group of people, the guys on the outside will take all the blunts, but they can't really fall in, so they just kind of get nick, nick, nick, nick, and you push through. Horrible strategy, but it worked for them.

So imagine all these men going up to this wadi, if you will, raised edges, not realizing what's coming. Judah says, "I'm going to attack now. Attack." He puts a seal—a group of a couple hundred men—right at the front to startle the men up front. Now remember this thing's probably a mile long, this little trail, a couple men, they gotta go up, right? So the men at the front suddenly stop. Now what happens to everyone behind them? Imagine if everyone has shopping carts and we're going down the lane and the guy in front stops. This is what

happened. They started crunching up and then Judah flanked around the rear, sent a couple hundred men back to the rear. So now you have men tripping over each other. Now we got to turn around. Can't turn around. Just like that. And then from the flank, he came in with a barrage of arrows, and the flanking forces pulled their swords.

Apollonius, in Greek warfare and Roman warfare, the general didn't always lead the battle, depending on the situation. He was at the back. So when all this was going on, he's trying to ride up front to see what's going on.

Most of the guys at the back had no idea that hundreds up front had already died. What's the hold up? So he's riding his horse up and he actually dies while trying to reach the front of his army. He didn't even make it. Judah walks up to the defeated army, sees the general dead, picks up his sword, the sword of Apollonius, and uses this sword throughout the rest of the campaign. Pretty hardcore, right?

The next battle—whoa, what happened to my stuff? Oh no. My slide didn't work very well. I'll get it fixed. The next battle took place with a general, Greek general, Siron. And he was sent in to avenge the death of Apollonius. He came in with somewhere around 4,000 Greek troops. The Maccabees went in a very aggressive recruiting campaign. They got their numbers up to about 1,000. Okay? About 1,000. 1,000 versus 4,000 Greeks. Okay? Siron didn't know what he was in for. Poor guy.

The Strategy of Targeting Leadership

Same type of strategy, marching the troops up, surprise attack, most likely at night, Judah attacked. Same type of tactics. This time, Siron was leading the charge. Judah gave explicit instructions to his army. Listen, morale is everything to the Greeks. If you kill their leader, there's no way we can win this if we approach them with standard battle tactics. If we kill their leader, their general, they will lose morale and they will run. Doesn't matter if every last one of us dies, get the general. Siron, go.

So that was every man's objective: get the quarterback. Anyone ever play a defensive end in football? No one? What's your objective? Are you really involved with a lot of strategy? Get the quarterback. Get the quarterback. Get the quarterback. That's what it was. Everyone get the quarterback. Get the general. The battle was a defeat on the Greeks' end once again. Judah had won. In 1st Maccabees it speaks about the Maccabean soldiers calling on God. And one of the newer translations of the first book of Maccabees speaks that they clothed themselves in armor, not of chain mail, not of steel, not of bronze, but supplications and prayers and faith.

A lot of people don't realize that there were two factions in Israel that fought against the Greeks, the zealous Maccabees and the predecessors to the Pharisees. Remember, the ones who would not yield to the Hellenization, the ones who would not partake of the ways of the pagans. The ones who were conservative and following God, they were very much so a part of this as well.

The Rising Threat and Lysias's Campaign

Well, now we have a problem. Antiochus is not in Judea. He has a whole other nation to run. What are we going to do now? We need to rid Judea of this issue. Their army is growing. They don't even know how to fight. We have a professional army. What is the deal with this? So he sends down Lycius, I believe that's how you pronounce his name. This guy was a member of the royal family in the Seleucid Empire. So Lycius came down and he set up camp in Judea. 20,000 Greeks. 20,000 Greeks. Anyone ever seen 20,000 people before? I don't know. Maybe that's what the football stadium... I don't know. I don't know how many they hold. I have no idea. It's too many for me to count. I've got 10 toes, 10 fingers. Don't know.

It's interesting because the first book of Maccabees records the Greek army as being 70,000. The second book of Maccabees records it as being 20. Most scholars believe it was 20. We'll just say 20. Could be up to 70. Glory to God.

The Battle at Emmaus

So, Lysias had been studying Judah and his battle tactics for a while now. Attack at night, surprise attack, and own the battle. All right, guys. We're going to take 15,000 troops. We can see the encampment of the Maccabees over there. We're going to attack them at night. Tonight we will do it. Begin marching. Only going to leave 5,000 in the camp of Emmaus, the Greek camp.

So they began marching through the mountains and they saw the blazing fires in the camp. And they saw a few men walking around in the camp of the Maccabees. We got them. And so they attacked. Little did they know that Judah already knew about this. Judah had taken his forces of over 5,000, only leaving two or three hundred in the camp to make it look like it was occupied. They stoked up the fires to make it look like it was occupied and that all the soldiers were there. And when those two or three hundred soldiers saw the Greeks coming, they were ordered to run into the mountains, make it look like a retreat so the 15,000 soldiers would run after them, drawing them away from their Greek camp.

Judah saw this happen and flanked the camp of Emmaus, guarded by only a light cavalry on the edge, and overthrew the camp. By the time the general had realized what was happening, "Turn around! Turn around!" Judah had already taken out the whole camp. 15,000 troops. That's not a lot of people to move, right? Sometimes they'll try to get everyone out of here as quick as possible. It's 10 minutes, 100 people. When the troops finally get back, Judah has already arranged to flank them as they are coming back to the camp. Ends up killing a lot of them and scaring the rest of them off. Victory, once again, by an insurgent.

There was a final battle at Beth-zor by the same general, Lysias, about the same amount of Greeks in the army, 20,000, except this time the Maccabees had gained so much support in their country they were able to recruit 10,000 troops ready to fight. This last battle, to no surprise, showed the defeat of the Greeks once again. They couldn't kill the general because he was running so fast he outran all of the troops. This was the battle that awarded them Jerusalem.

The Abomination and the Temple Desecrated

Can you imagine? If someone wants to destroy your temple, they can destroy the temple, right? They can burn it down. What would it take someone to want to shame you so bad to keep your temple fully intact, to reside in the temple of your God, to... Use the restroom inside the temple of your God to set up your chief God inside that temple. You mean pork? Pork makes you unclean? Get a pig. We are gonna sacrifice a pig in the most holy place of your temple. This is what the Greeks did in Israel.

The great whore that took place, the pig on the altar. Pig. A pig. A piece of pig's flesh shut down the temple of God. Shut it down. It was the abomination that made the temple desolate. Like turning the lights off. Little piece of pork. According to scripture. [Leviticus 11](#). Piece of pork.

Applying the Principle to Our Lives

I love how Paul makes mention of this, especially to Corinth. See, Corinth had the temple of Aphrodite, essentially the equivalent. And there was a lot of temple prostitution. It was expected of all the women to participate in this. So where does that put believers? New believers in Corinth, but I got to go to work. I got to pay my tribute to the temple. No. Paul makes this effort. Don't you know your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?

He makes a parallel. Don't you know the Holy Spirit of God dwells in you? Just like his glory dwells in the physical temple? Trying to encourage them, don't go to the temple. Don't. No. Stay

away from those profane things. If... piece of pig flesh shut down the temple of God in Jerusalem. Shut it down. What does a piece of pig flesh do to the spirit inside of you, inside of your temple? That's a midrash. That's something to think about. Honestly, I can't tell you that it does this. All I can view is in Scripture. What does Scripture say? Not saying you're no longer saved if you're ever eating a ham sandwich, but it is a very interesting parallel to make regardless.

The Cleansing and Rededication

So the Maccabees had a decision to make and all the citizens of Judea had a decision to make because they had just won the battle against all odds. I mean we're talking David and Goliath, right? Except it was 20,000 Goliaths, right? And they won. The power of God won through his people. They recrafted the menorah. They recrafted the golden items and they began to scrub. They began to scrub the temple, wash it out, cleanse this temple, we will dedicate this temple to our God. They cleansed out the temple and they rededicated it to God. They lit the fire and everything. It was actually a spectacle that was talked about all over the prior Persian Empire, the Greek Empire, of how they lit the altar fire.

Tradition says that when they had this makeshift menorah, they needed oil for it. And they were looking and looking for the purified oil that the priest made and they found some oil. Enough for one day. Pop the cork. Let's do it. Light it up. You see, the menorah was the lampstand that illuminated the holy place in the temple. Synonymous with God's light hidden in a secret place behind the curtains in the holy place with the altar of incense, with the showbread, and so on. And so they lit the menorah. Can you imagine being under Greek oppression and you light the menorah in the holy place and you see that glow? We're back. So is our God. He gave us the strength to take his house back, to cleanse it.

Isn't that the same thing that happens to us when we make a decision to follow God? See, there is, "I will follow you," and then there's, "I will follow you." One involves only yakking your mouth. One involves walking your feet, okay? But there's this thing, there's this oppression that we are cursed with called flesh. Paul yaks about it a lot. Paul blames flesh for the majority of his stumbling and sin and temptation more than the devil ever got. It's this stuff. And God made Adam and Eve coats of skin to cover them. Something that we struggle with. We have an army that we fight against every day. And in order for God to have his house in us, we call on his strength within us to rededicate this house to him. Always. Same type of thing. Same type of thing.

The Miracle of the Oil

The tradition of oil: one oil, one day's oil goes in the lamp and tradition says that eight days later it was still burning.

The First Hanukkah

Eight days until the oil went out. It's a really cool story, I admit. Light of the world, the feast of lights. Is this story accurate? We don't really know. It's not found anywhere in any of the books of Maccabees. It's Jewish tradition that came several hundred years later.

But what is Hanukkah? Do you guys know when the first Hanukkah was in Torah? Torah was written thousands of years before this ever happened. In Numbers chapter 7, verse 10. And the priests, princes, offered for dedicating of the altar in the day that it was anointed. Even the princes offered the offering before the altar.

See, this is speaking about when priests and the princes of Israel were dedicating the newly built altar to God. Remember what Hanukkah means? It means to dedicate. Hanukkah. It's the very first time Hanukkah is ever mentioned in the Hebrew scriptures. When they Hanukkahed the altar of God. Dedicate.

People ask why I celebrate Hanukkah. All through the year, I know that I need to wake up every day. I need to recognize my flesh, the grasp, the opposition that it has on me. And what's Paul say? Die daily. Kill this flesh daily so you can move on and live in spirit and truth with God's glory within you. Walking out his ways, walking out his kingdom.

But Hanukkah is special because Hanukkah is a celebration of rededication. Hanukkah is the time of year where we look back and we say, I need to pray for more strength. I need to have more courage. It's really interesting because we pray for courage a lot and I've realized recently that we don't need to pray for courage. You have courage. You need to pray that God will help you recognize it and God will feed it. You have courage. Ask God to feed it.

The Maccabees' Problem

1 Maccabees 1:18, "Therefore, whereas we are now purposed to keep the purification of the temple upon the five and twentieth day of the month of Kislev, we thought it necessary to certify you thereof that you might also keep it as the feast of tabernacles." 1 Maccabees 1:18. [Leviticus 23](#) speaks about the seven festivals, the seven feast days of God that we participate in and we remember every year. The last and final one is an eight-day feast called the Feast of

Tabernacles, Sukkot. It was on this festival that Solomon dedicated the temple of God that he had built for him, God's first temple in Jerusalem.

So the Maccabees have a problem. They've cleansed out the temple. We're ready to sanctify it back to God. We're ready to dedicate it back to God. What's the protocol for this, guys? We were just kind of farmers. We come from a priestly lineage, but we've been under all this Hellenized Greek oppression for so long. What do we do? How do we do this? Well, we know King Solomon dedicated the Feast of Tabernacles, eight-day celebration. And the narrative of Scripture tells us exactly what offerings to make, how to do this, exactly how to do this. But it's winter. We got like almost a year to go. A couple months shy of a year to go. We can't wait that long. You know what? We're going to do Sukkot again. We missed it this year. It's winter now. We're going to have an eight-day feast of dedication, the Feast of Tabernacles, just as our ancestors did in the desert. And we will spend these eight days celebrating with our God, bringing tribute with our God, and dedicating this temple back to him and thanking him for the strength that he gave us to accomplish his goals for our lives.

It's a gift for you. If you aren't here, what does God need an earthly temple for? To dwell among you? Build me a house that I can dwell among you? It's for the benefit of Judea. It's for the benefit of us. God gave strength to the Maccabees to take back his house so that he could dwell among them once again. Awesome story.

Standing Against the World

There is no temple in Jerusalem, but we are at war with the standards of the world. We don't see that anywhere. You guys know we don't do Christmas, typically. Yeah, none of us do. For many, many varying reasons. And it's not something I'm too vocal about, because it's a big deal. If you want to know why I don't keep Christmas, come ask me. I'll show you in Scripture why I don't keep Christmas. I do celebrate the birth of the Messiah earlier in the year. And by the time I get around Christmas time, I've only got time for all that nonsense.

So apparently there is an evangelist that you all may know who encountered someone like us who's a believer in Jesus, believer in the Messiah, believer in Yeshua, but doesn't keep Christmas. And he became very, very, very upset by this. So much so that he invested millions of dollars into a movie that told everyone why we don't keep Christmas and then said it doesn't matter. That movie is Saving Christmas. I'm not sure if it's still in theaters anymore. Kirk Cameron.

He depicted the grumpy uncle—who still believes in Yeshua but doesn't celebrate Christmas—as someone who's ignorant, as someone who's radical, as someone who's vengeful of the way other people do things. Regardless, I hope I never come across as the uncle did in that movie. I don't ever want to come across like that. I want to come across as someone who's zealous to have a real relationship with a real God through a real Son who came and paid the price so that I could have that relationship. Elves, trees, Santa, I don't care about. I truly don't.

The Worst Rated Movie

But that movie, Internet Movie Database, IMDB, anyone ever go to that? Really? Two people go to IMDb. Three. Now I go to IMDb. RottenTomatoes.com. So IMDb is awesome because users can rate films, and you can see the trailers, and you can see the ratings, and they have a bottom 100 list. So we're talking every movie ever made is on this website, IMDb.com. Think of the worst movie you've ever seen. It's on there. Movies you've never heard of on there. All the way from the 1920s on there. And so they have ratings, they have a top 100 films ever rated, right? The best ratings on the website, really cool. Top 100 action films, top 100 comedies, top 100 films period. And then they have the worst bottom rated 100 films on Internet Movie Database, millions of movies. Saving Christmas is number one on the bottom 100 list currently. I didn't realize this until yesterday. Really?

You can scroll up the list and look at these movies. How did that happen? How did that happen? Was it really? Read the list. How did that happen? It's amazing. RottenTomatoes.com, I think, is the same thing.

Regardless, this is a movie that was put out in response to us, to the way we choose to worship our God. There are people who are against us, guys. The unbelieving world is really against us. People who do not want us to follow a Messiah, to follow a God, are against us.

The World's Opposition

Yeshua warns us about this in John chapter 15 verses 18 through 21. If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you. But if you were of the world, the world would love his own. But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord, and if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

Now I'm not talking about the Kirk Cameron thing right now, that's sad, but I'm talking about the same situation that Judea was placed in. When people rose up and said, listen, you need to start doing things like the world. You need to start training your kids like the world. You don't need to fight us. You need to join us. You need to mix our ways with your ways. That's the world we live in. What happens when you tell the world no? They don't like it. But if the world loves you, there were a lot of Jews that Antioch liked. It was almost a civil war. If the world loves you, know that you're of it.

That's what Hanukkah is about. At the beginning, I spoke about making a stand. Could we make a stand? Hanukkah is that constant reminder of what our ancestors did.

Training Up a Child

[Proverbs 22](#), 6. Train up a child in the way that they should go. When he is old, he will not depart from it. Something I bless the children with. I encourage parents, when you pray for your kids every night, Father, give me the wisdom to train these children up in the way that they will go. So when they are old, they will not depart from your ways. Matthias did this to Judah once. Hasmonean family. That's why Judah stepped up when his father died and said, all right, I will not depart from this way. We will keep the Lord's door.

There was a big debate because when the Maccabees started getting into skirmishes, there was a group of rebels who were fighting the Greeks just like the Maccabees were and they were in a cave and the Greeks knew, yeah, these guys, they're not gonna fight in the Sabbath. So they walked over to the cave, threw some smoke in there. The guys came out, no weapons and died. Because they would not fight on the Sabbath. Judah, on the other hand, said, yeah, that's not going to happen again, guys. We will praise God every day that we are alive.

Regardless, that attitude. A piece of ham—all it took to save families and children. A piece of ham, a slice, no one would even know. A bacon bit saved them. Train a child up in the way they should go.

That word train up is the Hebrew word chanak. That's where we get chanaka, means to dedicate, to establish a child in the way they should go. Dedicate your children in the ways that they should go. Establish your children in the ways that they should go. Raise up the children in the ways that they should go. So when they are old, they will not depart from them. Why? Because they will be established, established in the ways of God.

A Time of Joy and Reflection

This Hanukkah will be a time of joy. It will be. Our ancestors did the fighting. This year we will not be doing fighting. We will be dancing. We will be singing. We will be watching our children play. It's going to be awesome and we'll be eating donuts. But it should also be a time of reflection, cleansing, and dedication or rededication. We have access to the same strength the Maccabees had. All we have to do is ask for it.

The Strength We've Been Given

Scripture tells us this. [Psalms 147](#), oh God the Lord, the strength of my salvation, you have covered my head in the day of battle. Helmet, my favorite verse. [Psalms 144](#), blessed be the Lord my strength, who teaches my hands to make war and trains my fingertips for battle. That's an awesome verse, guys. If I believed in getting tattoos, I'd get that. I'm just saying. That's pretty cool. Yahweh, my God, strengthens, trains my fingertips to battle. I love this verse because I've never been in war, guys. I've never been in a trench. I've never had to fire a weapon at somebody who was firing a weapon at me. I've never had to approach someone with an intention to kill them and them have the same intention on me. I've never been in that type of a battle.

Battles We Face Every Day

I think we've all been in battles before. Every day. Matt, really, you're going to make a parallel between going to war and the stress at work? Yeah, why not? Because life is hard sometimes. Life is hard when you wake up things going the way that you want them to go. Life is hard when relationships begin to crumble and you thought they were so strong. Life is hard when you're no longer joyous about the salvation that God has for you in your life. King David had this problem. He writes in Psalms, "God restore to me the joy of your salvation." Even David lost the excitement of salvation.

We fight battles every day, guys, whether at home, whether at work, whether on the street, whether in our own heads. But whatever battles you face today, know that God is well ready to equip you with the training you need to get through it. Feed my courage, Father. Train me to fight this battle.

The Way of the Lord

Psalms 1029, the way of the Lord is strength to the upright. That's possibly one of the most encouraging verses I could ever read. The way of the Lord is strength to the upright. How did the Maccabees win? Where did they find their strength? We will not bow down to your gods.

We will not eat the swine. We will circumcise our children. We will keep the Sabbath day. We will keep the feast days. And we will praise Yahweh, the God of the universe. This is his way, and I find my strength in it.

How They Won the Battle

I believe this is how the Maccabees won the battle. They marched in the ways of God. They marched as the righteous should. And inexperienced as they were, when they picked up a bow, when they picked up a sword, when they picked up a mace, outnumbered four to one. One inexperienced farmer would have to take down four Greeks for them to win the battle. They did it.

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