

Eight Night Chanukah Devotional

Introduction

This devotional is themed around the history and prophecies associated with Chanukah and the last days. It begins in the Book of Daniel and explores the prophecies and visions he had centuries before the Maccabees lived and the Messiah was born. Seeing these events unfold on a larger time scale broadens one's understanding of the history, context, and importance of the Chanukah story and how these events are connected to the latter days.

Night 1: Adonai's Sovereignty

Theme: God's control over kingdoms, history, and prophecy

Reading: Daniel 2:1-45; Revelation 18

- Key Verses: "Now in the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed..." (Dan 2:44, TLV)
- Key Verses: "Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you participate in her sins and receive her plagues!'" (Rev 18:4, TLV)

Reflection: Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream reveals the rise and fall of earthly kingdoms, symbolized by the statue's materials: gold, silver, bronze, iron, and iron mixed with clay. Each material represents a kingdom that would rule over Israel, beginning with Babylon, then the Medes-Persians, followed by the belly and thighs of bronze symbolizing the Greek Empire. They were in power over Israel during the Chanukah story. About 150 years later, Rome conquered Greece, symbolized by the legs of iron in the statue, which was the kingdom in power in the time of Yeshua.

Consider that the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The head, which controls the whole body, is Babylon. In other words, no matter which succeeding kingdom came into power, the controlling head was Babylon. Thus, when the king built the statue from his dream, he fashioned the entire thing out of gold. He required everyone to bow down to this idol, which was Babylon. How do you think this relates to "Mystery Babylon" in Revelation 18?

Adonai used all these kingdoms as an instrument of judgment against His people. But despite that, Daniel's interpretation reassures us that ultimately the Kingdom of God will crush all others and endure forever, symbolized by the stone cut without hands that smashed the feet of the statue. We can trust God's eternal plan, even amidst the challenges posed by earthly rulers. How can trusting in Adonai's sovereignty help you to face ungodly rulers in power?

Prayer: Sovereign Lord, thank You for being in control of all things. Help us to trust in Your everlasting kingdom and to remain faithful as we walk in Your ways. Amen.

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Night 2: Daniel's Vision of the Beast Kingdoms & God's Kingdom

Theme: Though God uses world empires and kingdoms to judge His people, only His Kingdom will endure forever.

Reading: Daniel 7:1-8:27

- Key Verses: “After that I looked, and behold, there was another one like a leopard. On its back it had four wings like those of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and it was given authority to rule.” (Dan 7:6, TLV)
- Key Verses: “Dominion, glory and sovereignty were given to [the Son of Man] that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will never pass away, and His kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.” (Dan 7:14, TLV)
- Key Verses: “The male goat became exceedingly great, but as soon as he became mighty, the large horn was broken, and in its place four prominent horns grew up toward the four winds of heaven... It will hurl truth to the ground and prosper in what it does.” (Dan 8:8, 12, TLV)

Reflection: Daniel's vision of the four beasts parallels the kingdoms represented in the statue from Night 1. The third beast, a leopard with four wings and four heads, symbolized the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great and its subsequent division into four parts. In Daniel 8, the vision of the goat with one prominent horn further clarifies this picture: the goat represents Greece, and the single horn is Alexander the Great. The breaking of the horn and the rise of four smaller horns symbolize the division of Alexander's empire after his death. This connects directly to the Chanukah story, as one of these four divisions, the Seleucid Empire, oppressed the Jewish people under Antiochus IV.

Daniel's vision assures us that despite the might of earthly powers, God's kingdom is eternal and His dominion over all things will prevail. How does knowing God's ultimate victory give you strength to face challenges in your own life?

Prayer: Righteous Judge, we praise You for Your authority over heaven and earth. Strengthen our faith in Your justice and inspire us to live as Your holy people. Amen.

Night 3: The Abomination of Desolation

Theme: Oppression under Antiochus IV

Reading: 1 Maccabees 1:1-64; Daniel 12; Matthew 24:15-16

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- Key Verses: "...They set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side... Now the **five and twentieth day of the month** they did sacrifice upon the idol altar, which was upon the altar of God." (1Ma 1:54, 59, KJVA)
- Key Verses: "From the time that the daily burnt offering is taken away, and abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days." (Dan 12:11, TLV)
- Key Verses: "So when you see 'the abomination of desolation,' which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the Holy Place (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains." (Mat 24:15-16, TLV)

Reflection: Antiochus Epiphanes set up the abomination of desolation on the 25th of the ninth month, which is Kislev. This fulfilled part of Daniel's prophecy, but like all things Biblical, prophecy is cyclical with lesser and greater fulfillments. Yeshua referenced Daniel's prophecy in Matthew 24 as a warning about a future, greater "abomination of desolation." Antiochus is a type of antichrist, and his tactics reveal how such a figure seeks to corrupt worship and oppress God's people.

Consider his strategies: he desecrated the holy altar, banned circumcision (the sign of the covenant), he made keeping God's Torah illegal, he forbade worship on the Shabbat (the sign demonstrating that God is the Creator and King of all creation) and outlawed God's feasts and new moons; he forced the people to sacrifice and eat unclean meat. All these things are idolatry. By understanding the events of the Chanukah story, we can better grasp Yeshua's warning and remain spiritually vigilant. When we see these things happening again, we know that the antichrist spirit is at work and determined to destroy God's people once again.

The good news is that Adonai has been faithful to reveal these things to His people. We can choose to respond to antichrists with faith like the Maccabees and not fear. Seeing prophecy fulfilled displays the LORD's incredible foreknowledge of world events and His faithfulness to His people. This is another faith builder. When world governments or other enemies seek to silence us, prevent us from worshipping and serving the One True God, may we become Maccabees, Hammers, that stand our ground and fight for Truth, Justice, and Righteousness. How does seeing prophecy fulfilled affect your faith?

Prayer:

Blessed are You, Adonai, the faithful One of Israel. We thank You for your Mercy, Your Word, Your faithfulness, and Your love for us even when we have been rebellious and disobedient. Help us with any unbelief that we wrestle with and fill us with the faith of Yeshua. Amen.

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Night 4: Fleeing Unlawful Edicts

Theme: Pray that your flight be not in winter or on Shabbat

Reading: 1 Maccabees 2:26-41; Matthew 24:15-28

- Key Verses: “Then Mattathias cried out in the town with a loud voice, saying: ‘Let every one who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me!’ Then he and his sons **fled to the hills** and left all that they had in the town.” (1Ma 2:27-28, NRSVA)
- Key Verses: "So when you see the abomination that causes desolation... **escape to the hills.**" (Matthew 24:15-16, CJB)
- Key Verses: “Pray that your escape will not happen in winter, or on Shabbat.” (Mat 24:20, TLV)

Reflection: The story of Mattathias and his sons marks the beginning of the Jewish revolt against Antiochus IV. In a time of profound oppression, Mattathias chose to defy the king’s decree, refusing to forsake God’s Law or compromise his faith. His act of courage and his call to others to join him in resisting injustice and idolatry became the foundation for the Maccabean movement.

These events provide a prophetic template for understanding the end of days, and the parallel warnings Yeshua gave in Matthew 24. Yeshua calls His followers to vigilance and preparedness, urging them to flee to the hills and pray that their flight would not be in winter, the season when the Maccabees fled to the hills to preserve their lives, and that their flight wouldn’t be on the Sabbath. Many Maccabees lost their lives when the enemy attacked them while they were resting on Shabbat. Yeshua also mentioned woe to pregnant and nursing mothers, an allusion to the mothers whose infants were killed and tragically hung around their mother’s necks (1 Mac 1:60-61). Yeshua’s words in Matthew 24 would have reminded any first century Jew of the Chanukah story. He made these allusions on purpose.

As scary and as dark as these accounts are, they also proclaim a message of hope and light for God’s people. Being zealous for His Torah, resisting the temptation to fear the enemy, and standing up and fighting for righteousness and truth inspires, encourages, and prepares us for what is to come. Adonai is faithful, and He keeps His promises. What areas in your life call for faithful resistance to forces that seek to draw you away from God? How can you prepare your heart to be watchful and ready for the coming of the Son of Man? Could you flee and leave behind all your worldly possessions without regret?

Prayer:

Coming King, we praise You for the wisdom and warnings of Scripture. Teach us to be watchful and ready for the fulfillment of Your promises. Like the Maccabees, grant us the courage to resist oppression and to trust in Your deliverance. Strengthen our faith as we walk in the light of Your truth. Amen.

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Night 5: Victory and Restoration

Theme: God provides our victories and is faithful to bring restoration

Reading: 1 Maccabees 4:30-61; 2 Maccabees 10:1-9; Haggai 2:10-23

- Key Verses: “So they celebrated the dedication of the altar for eight days... Then Judas and his brothers and all the assembly of Israel determined that every year at that season the days of dedication of the altar should be observed with joy and gladness for eight days, beginning with the twenty-fifth day of the month of Kislev.” (1Ma 4:56, 59, NRSVA)
- Key Verses: “It happened that on the same day on which the sanctuary had been profaned by the foreigners, the purification of the sanctuary took place, that is, on the twenty-fifth day of the same month, which was Kislev.” (2Ma 10:5, NRSVA)
- Key Verses: “Now, set your heart back from this day on—from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day the Temple of Adonai was founded, set your heart... From this day on I am going to bless you.” (Hag 2:18-19, TLV)

Reflection: The rededication of the Temple on the very day it was desecrated by Antiochus was a testament to God’s faithfulness. He takes what is foolish and confounds the wise. He transforms ashes into beauty. The cleansing and restoration of the Temple was a victory for God’s people and ensured that Israel would endure so the Messiah would be born in Israel to faithful Believers who kept God’s covenant.

Over 350 years before the Maccabees' victory, the prophet Haggai prophesied that from the 24th of Kislev onward, God would bless Israel and overthrow worldly kingdoms. His prophecy aligns with the triumph over the Greeks and the purification of the Temple, reinforcing the message that God's power is far greater than any earthly empire. Amazingly, He also keeps His promises despite the actions of His people, who are often fickle, rebellious, ungrateful, and disobedient. How glorious is it that God is good and is for us – despite us?!

Realizing His profound mercy, grace, and faithfulness is worth celebrating every day. And we can do that by dedicating our temples, our bodies/lives, to Him every morning. “From this day forward... I will bless you,” He says to the prophet. Today, we can rededicate our hearts to God, seek His blessing, and walk in His ways. How can the example of the Maccabees inspire you to restore and strengthen your relationship with God? How can you dedicate your life and heart to God’s purposes today?

Prayer: Faithful God, thank You for restoring what was/is broken. You are faithful even when we are not. Help us to rededicate our lives to You and to trust in Your promises. All honor, glory, and majesty belongs to You! In Yeshua’s Name, amen.

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Night 6: Dedication & Sukkot

Theme: God's Presence and Holy Fire

Reading: 2 Maccabees 1:1-36; 2 Chronicles 7:1-10; Nehemiah 8:13-18

- Key Verses: “And now see that you keep the festival of booths in the month of Kislev, in the one hundred eighty-eighth year... Since on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev we shall celebrate the purification of the temple, we thought it necessary to notify you, in order that you also may celebrate the festival of booths and the festival of the fire given when Nehemiah...” (2Ma 1:9, 18, NRSVA)
- Key Verses: "When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, ‘For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.’" (2 Chronicles 7:3)

Reflection: The celebration of Chanukah draws a rich parallel to the festival of Sukkot, when God’s presence manifested in the form of fire at the dedication of the first Temple by King Solomon. The Maccabees, understanding the connection between Sukkot and the dedication of the Temple, chose to celebrate the feast as soon as they took back the Temple and cleansed it from defilement, even though it was two months past the actual date of the feast. They likely considered the Torah’s allowance for one to celebrate a late or second Passover in their decision (Num 9:6-14; 2 Chron 30).

The Maccabees’ rededication of the altar and celebration of a late Sukkot was marked with this astounding verse: “**Such then was the end of Antiochus, who was called Epiphanes.**” (2 Mac 10:9)

Dedication and Sukkot *are the end* of Antiochus – a type of antichrist. We commemorate this victory by kindling lights on a menorah with eight branches which represent both the days of Sukkot and the days of Temple dedication. Light overcomes the darkness! In truth, we are always at war – a spiritual battle – with darkness. We fight that darkness with the Light of Adonai, which is His Word and the Messiah.

Just as God’s glory was evident in the light and fire of Temple during Sukkot, it is also reflected in our worship and dedication, especially when the darkness seems to be encroaching more and more. On this sixth night of Chanukah, remember the fire from heaven that wholly consumed and accepted the offerings on the brazen altar. Imagine these flames consuming everything in you that doesn’t belong, while preserving your life to live anew in a cleansed state. Also recall the holy flames on the Temple menorah as they figure the Holy Spirit working in and through you to shine God’s light out into the world.

Prayer: Lord of Light, we thank You for the reminders of Your holy fire and enduring presence in our lives. Thank you for Your Son, Yeshua, Who is the Light of the World. May we reflect Your glory and light to the world as we dedicate ourselves to Your service. Amen.

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Night 7: The Good Shepherd

Theme: No matter what we face, God is the Good Shepherd who promises eternal life to His sheep.

Reading: Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34; Micah 5:1-15; 2 Maccabees 4:7-26; John 10:1-42

- Key Verses: “And you are My sheep, human sheep of My pasture, and I am your God, declares the Lord GOD.” (Ezekiel 34:31, ESV)
- Key Verses: “This One will be shalom. When Assyria invades our land when he treads on our citadels, then we will raise up against him **seven shepherds** and eight human princes.” (Micah 5:4, TLV)
- Key Verses: “I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep... My sheep hear My voice. I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life! They will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand.” (John 10:11, 27-28, TLV)
- Key Verses: "Then came Hanukkah in Yerushalayim. It was winter, and Yeshua was walking around inside the Temple area, in Shlomo's Colonnade." (John 10:22-23, CJB)

Reflection: In John 10, Yeshua was in Jerusalem at the Feast of Dedication, and it was in that context that He proclaimed Himself to be the Good Shepherd of Ezekiel 34. When we find ourselves “walking through the valley of the shadow of death,” as David sang, it is generally because we are facing an enemy that, in the natural realm, is far greater than we are. When do you cry out to God as your Shepherd? It is when you are in trouble. It’s when you have wondered away from the flock or realize you are lost. It’s when you don’t know what to do or where to turn. It’s when false shepherds who really only care about themselves have taken advantage of you or have trampled upon God’s covenant. That’s when we become a bleating sheep who cries out for the Shepherd to come and rescue us.

Shepherd language might not seem to be connected to the Chanukah story, but it is. The traditional Chanukah poem *Ma’oz Tzur* at the end of this devotional requests that God will establish or raise up the seven shepherds mentioned by the prophet Micah. Notice that they are particularly needed when an invading kingdom is trying to destroy God’s people. These “shepherds” can be men, but they must be full of the seven Spirits of God (Is 11:2), which are connected to the seven days of creation and the seven feasts of Adonai. They are a testimony of Messiah, the Lamb, with seven eyes and seven horns. He is the only One worthy to open the seven seals of the hearts of men (Rev 5). He has already overcome all beast kingdoms and powers, sin, and even death itself.

The Good Shepherd will never lead the sheep astray, nor will he kowtow to a foreign wicked power or usurp a position of authority like some of the “shepherds” of Israel did in the days of the Maccabees (2 Mac 4-5). He is trustworthy, right, and true. Thus, Yeshua purposely spoke

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about false shepherds and contrasted them with the Good Shepherd during Chanukah or the Feast of Dedication. He knows His sheep intimately and lays down His life for them. His promise of eternal life assures us that no matter what trials or enemies we face, we are secure in His hands. How does the knowledge shape the way you face challenges and uncertainties? How does this bring you comfort?

Prayer: Sovereign King, Good Shepherd, and Rock of our salvation we thank You for Your unfailing love and care for Your flock. Strengthen our faith as we battle false shepherds even as we war with worldly and spiritual enemies. We look forward to the fullness of Your Kingdom, where Your light will shine forever. Amen.

Night 8: The Eternal Light

Theme: The light that began in Genesis with God's first spoken Word will be fully realized in the new creation.

Reading: Genesis 1:3; Leviticus 24:1-4; Psalm 119:105; Proverbs 6:23; Isaiah 9:2, 6; Matthew 5:14-16; Luke 8:16-18; John 8:12; 12:46; 1 John 2:10; Revelation 21:23-27; 22:5

- Key Verses: “Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.” (Genesis 1:3, NASB)
- Key Verses: “You will have the LORD as an everlasting light, and your God as your glory.” (Isaiah 60:19, NASB)
- Key Verses: “I am the Light of the world; the one who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.” (John 8:12, NASB)
- Key Verses: “And they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illuminate them; and they will reign forever and ever.” (Revelation 22:5, NASB)

Reflection: God’s first act was to speak light into existence. This light was not physical, but spiritual. Just as we need physical light to see our surroundings, we need God’s Word to see the truth in our lives. Isaiah prophesied of a coming light—the Messiah, who would bring salvation to those living in spiritual darkness. Through Yeshua’s life, death, and resurrection, He dispels the darkness of sin and death. In the age to come, there will be no more night because God’s presence will be so perfectly realized that it will be enough to fill all space and time.

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The menorah, which we've lit for the last seven nights, has symbolized the light of God's presence, His provision, His guidance, our dedication, and the Festival of Sukkot, which also figures the eternal age. Each night, as the candles have multiplied, we've been reminded of how God's light grows brighter and brighter in our lives. But tonight, on the eighth and final night, we celebrate the fullness of God's eternal light. It will shine forever in the new heavens and new earth, where darkness and suffering will be no more.

Once you've lit all the candles, consider how much more glorious a full lamp is compared to only having it partially lit. In a way, we are like this menorah steadily growing and changing, but not quite fully conformed into the image of Yeshua. We can rest assured that One Day He will bring us into completion and our transformation will be complete. Until then, we continue to rededicate our hearts and lives to Him.

Prayer: "Lord, we thank You for the light that has been with us since the beginning. You spoke light into existence at creation, and You will bring forth eternal light at the end of time. We pray that Your Word and the life of Messiah would shine brightly in our hearts, guiding us, comforting us, and transforming us. May we be faithful bearers of Your light to the world, sharing the hope of the gospel with those still walking in darkness. In Yeshua's name, amen."

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Chanukah Blessings

First Blessing (Recited each night):

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam asher kid'shanu al y'day emuna b'Yeshua HaMashiach or ha-Olam uv-veesh-mo mad-lick- keem ha-nair shel Chanukah.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us through faith in Yeshua, the Messiah, the Light of the World. And it is in His Name we kindle the Chanukah lights.

Second Blessing (Recited each night):

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, she'asah nisim la'avoteinu bayamim haheim baz'man hazeh.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who performed miracles for our ancestors in those days at this time.

Third Blessing (Recited on the first night only):

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, shehecheyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higi'anu laz'man hazeh.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.

Maoz Tzur (Strong Rock)

O mighty rock of my salvation,
To praise You is a delight.
Restore my House of Prayer
And there we will bring a thanksgiving offering.
When You will have prepared the slaughter
For the blaspheming foe,
Then I shall complete with a song of hymn
The dedication of the Altar.

My soul had been sated with troubles,
My strength has been consumed with grief.
They had embittered my life with hardship,
With the calf-like kingdom's bondage.
But with His great power
He brought forth the treasured ones,

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Pharaoh's army and all his offspring
Went down like a stone into the deep.

To the holy abode of His Word He brought me.
But there, too, I had no rest
And an oppressor came and exiled me.
For I had served aliens,
And had drunk benumbing wine.
Scarcely had I departed
At Babylon's end Zerubbabel came.
At the end of seventy years I was saved.

To sever the towering cypress
Sought the Aggagite, son of Hammedatha,
But it became [a snare and] a stumbling block to him
And his arrogance was stilled.
The head of the Benjaminite You lifted
And the enemy, his name You obliterated
His numerous progeny – his possessions –
On the gallows You hanged.

Greeks gathered against me
Then in Hasmonean days.
They breached the walls of my towers
And they defiled all the oils;
And from the one remnant of the flasks
A miracle was wrought for the roses.
Men of insight – eight days
Established for song and jubilation

Bare Your holy arm
And hasten the End for salvation –
Avenge the vengeance of Your servants' blood
From the wicked nation.
For the triumph is too long delayed for us,
And there is no end to days of evil,
Repel the Red One in the nethermost shadow
And establish for us the seven shepherds.