

ROCK OF ISRAEL

Update

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Fall 2002

Chanukah

By Dale Cohen



The story of Chanukah takes place during the second century before Christ, when Hellenism was dominant and the Jewish people were assimilating to the Hellenistic way of life. The rise of Hellenism came to a climax under the rule of Antiochus IV, who changed his name to Epiphanes, meaning “god manifest”. In the year 167 B.C.E., Antiochus made a series of decrees which outlawed the practice of Jewish rituals such as circumcision, the celebration of the Sabbath and the study of Torah. According to the book of Maccabees, 1 Macc. 1-4 (One of the books in the Apocrypha, not considered Scriptures by Jews nor Evangelical Christians), after the decrees were enacted, an Idol of Zeus was erected on the altar on the fifteenth day of Kislev. The Jewish people were made to bow down and worship his image. On the twenty-fifth day of Kislev Antiochus had a pig sacrificed on the altar and took the vessels that were created for the service of God and used them in debauchery and drunkenness and extinguished the light in the Temple.

That same year the Greeks came to a village called Modi'in and set up an altar. They commanded that the Jews sacrifice a pig to show their obedience to the decrees enacted by Antiochus. An old priest by the name of Matthias became incensed when he witnessed a Jewish man coming forward to offer the sacrifice. Matthias and his five sons then turned and fought the Greek detachment. Finally, the Maccabees were able to liberate Jerusalem and three years to the day (25th Kislev) that Antiochus had defiled the Temple, the Maccabees



reclaimed it. As they entered they found that their beautiful Temple was in disarray. The vessels created for the worship and service of God had been defiled. According to legend, written in the Talmud, they searched the Temple and found a small cruse of oil, still bearing the seal of the high priest. The jug contained enough oil to light the Menorah for one day, but God performed a miracle and made the cruse of oil to last for eight days, long enough for more oil to be made and consecrated to the service of God.

Chanukah parallels the story of redemption in that it speaks of one who thought he was God (Satan) and took the Temple (man) that had been created for the worship of God and desecrated it through sin extinguishing the light. In the courtyard (man's heart) he erected idols and caused the people to bow and worship them. He took the vessels (man) that were used in the service of God and used them in debauchery and drunkenness and caused the people to forsake the Torah. Yet there was a priest (Yeshua) who refused to bow down but instead rededicated the Temple and its vessels to the service of God bringing light back into the world. Praise His Name! ♦

P r a i s e H i s N a m e !

GOD GAVE HIS BEST

by Warren Frankel



This is the season of Christmas and Chanukah. I think of both holidays as a time of giving. God gave His very best in the form of His only begotten son. At Christmas, believers exchange gifts to celebrate this event. Jewish parents give gifts to their children on each of the eight days of Chanukah.

God has given us so much it would take up volumes to write of His marvelous gifts. You may not particularly see it this way, but I look at the Ten Commandments as a gift. I would reference particularly the Fourth Commandment, where God gave us the gift of Sabbath. He told us to remember it and keep it holy.

What does this all mean to a Jew? Well, I'm glad you asked. It is a commandment that gave to the world something that it never had. That is a weekly day of rest. Before that time people worked day in, day out, all throughout the year. No one gave much thought of a day of rest. Then God gave us a day of rest, first to the Jewish nation and later for all mankind.

For the Christians, Sunday eventually became a day of rest. The Mohammedan followers chose Friday. But everyone agrees that a day of rest was originally given to the Jewish nation.

The Sabbath is probably the oldest of Jewish holidays and is observed every week throughout the year. There is a legend of the Sabbath angel who sits upon a special throne. On the Sabbath, thousands of angels dance before this throne. They sing in praise of the day of peace and rest, which they claim is a foretaste of the world to come. This is a time when all shall live in everlasting peace and harmony. Every day will then be as joyous as the Sabbath.

I have a news flash for you. That day is coming and will be ushered in by our precious Messiah. So you might look at the Sabbath as a rehearsal if you will. She arrives on Friday evening and is the "Queen" of the Jewish home.

It is a time when they stop the world, get off and reflect on the things of Almighty God. The whole of the Sabbath day is spent in happiness and relaxation. Sabbath meals are feasts which are accompanied by special songs. These songs express the joy which is to be found in the Sabbath.

After the meal, the family fellowships, entertains guests, reads or perhaps goes to synagogue. The morning of the Sabbath is spent in synagogue. The afternoon is a good time to take a walk or visit relatives. In Israel, Sabbath takes on a special meaning. There is a spirit of peace and holiness covering the whole land.

All stores are closed and one can see people as they hurry to get to synagogue. From these synagogues comes the chant of fervent praying as they sway back and forth welcoming the Sabbath will all their hearts and their souls.

The whole fourth chapter of the book of Hebrews promises us a gift. That is a Sabbath rest for God's people. Verse nine states, "There remains then a Sabbath rest for the people of God." Why not enter into that rest? If you have never accepted the fact that Yeshua is the promised Messiah, why not do so right now? You, too, can enjoy resting in God.

In 1973 I made a life changing decision to serve God. I have not been the same since. May the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob bless you abundantly and may you experience His shalom (peace) as you sabbath in Him. ❖

SHALOM



THE GREATEST GIFT OF ALL YESHUA

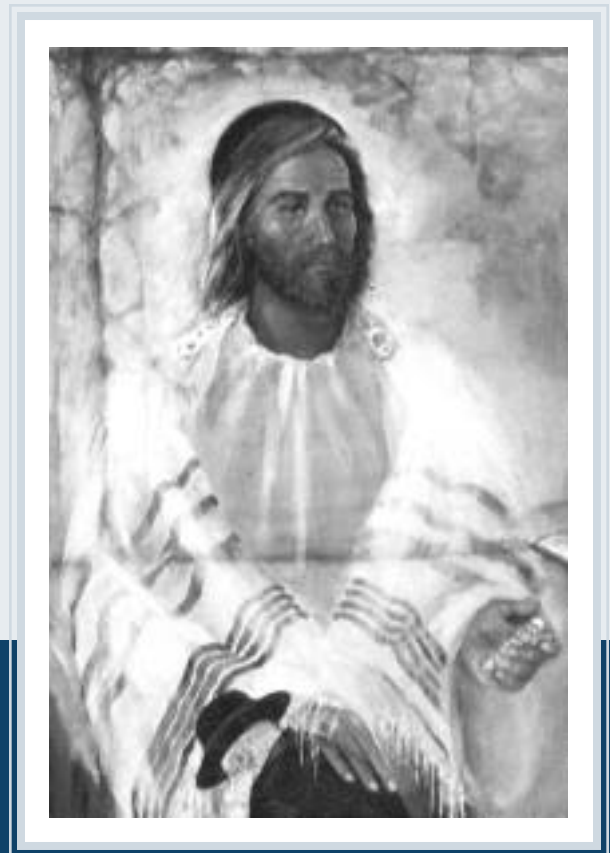
by Michael LaPoff



This is one of my favorite times of the year to be a Jewish believer in Jesus. Of course it's always a great time to be a Jewish believer in Jesus, but this time of year is especially great because I get to celebrate Chanukah and Christmas. I get to rejoice and praise God for His deliverance of my people from the evil King Antiochus who wanted to destroy the Jewish people just 150 years before the birth of Jesus. And as a result of God's miraculous deliverance of the Jewish People I get to celebrate the birth of my Lord, Yeshua.

I also love this time of the year because of all the gifts I get. Now I hope I've not let some of you down. Even though I am an ordained minister, a man of God, I still like getting gifts. And as a Jewish believer I get even more. You see Jewish people exchange gifts for eight nights. So from November 29th to December 6th, each night, after lighting the Chanukah candles Nancy is going to give me a gift and if that is not enough on Christmas day she will give me another one! Of course, it's not quite as exciting as it sounds. One night I get a tin of Altoids, one night a pair of socks, one night a package of underwear, etc. No VCRs, televisions, video games, cars, or jewelry so often associated with this time of the year. I've had all that anyway and truly it does not satisfy. Yet the advertisers will try to convince you that you need to give something large, or extravagant, or costly to demonstrate your love to another. Well, Nancy does not need to buy me a hunk of metal and plastic to demonstrate her love to me. She does it in myriads of ways every day.

Yet God did give us a gift that was large, extravagant, and very costly to demonstrate His love for us. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son." When mankind was lost in sin and separated from a Holy God, He sent His son Yeshua the Messiah, to pay the price for our sin, to undeservedly bear our penalties, so that by faith in Him, we might be reconciled to God. Of all the many gifts that God has bestowed on us, Yeshua is the greatest. He is our portion. He is our inheritance. He is our Lord. Please share this gift with many people as we celebrate Chanukah and Christmas this year. May the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob richly bless you in Yeshua the Messiah in 2003 as we anxiously await His return. ❖



Evangelism in

by Robert Specter

Our last update carried the news of four of our weeks of summer evangelism. But, we went to press before our fifth week which was in Northern New Jersey. This area has a high concentration of Jewish people, estimated at about half a million.

We had a team of 9, most whom had been on past ventures in other cities. So we only had three in our training session. This meant that I was able to take the others out on the streets the very first day, while Doug Carmel spent the day training the new volunteers.

New Jersey was different in a number of ways. Usually we are in a downtown area of a metropolitan city. But here, we were in the suburbs. Many of the people worked in downtown Manhattan (New York City, where we were last year.) So some of our outreach was in downtown of smaller cities (Teaneck, Ridgewood, Hackensack), some at the train stations leading to New York (Hoboken), and we also did door hangers in a couple of neighborhoods. In Teaneck a Jewish lady told me that I shouldn't be there, that this is "a Jewish city". Obviously they don't get too many people doing street evangelism there. We knew we were in the right place. A Rabbi told one of our volunteers that he was going to call the police. We were sure that if he did, our rights of free speech would protect us. Sometimes we forget and don't appreciate the freedoms we have in this country. I am afraid that many Christians are wasting opportunities to be a witness and someday they may lose their rights to do so openly. On the positive side we had some great conversations with Israelis and young people. They were not afraid to discuss their belief or to listen to our witness.

At the same time we were there, our TV Evangelism ads were being aired on Cable TV. We had about 130 spots aired on many Cable stations like ESPN, Court TV, CNN, TBS, TNT, CNBC, ETC. Though we didn't get many responses, we know the message got out and we are praying that God will use this seed to bear fruit. At the very least we hope that these ads encouraged Christians to witness to their Jewish friends.

In terms of people praying to accept Jesus as their Lord and Messiah, we had 14 Gentiles pray with us. Praise the Lord. We also kept track of the number of conversations and had over 300. More than half of those conversations were with Jewish people. Our team handed out about 14,000 tracts (printed with "Light for the Lost" funds) and hung about 300 door hangers on homes. (It was easy to spot Jewish households, they were the ones with Mezuzahs on their front door frames and on their garage door frames).

All in all we had a great summer of evangelism and I am already thinking ahead to next year when we can train volunteers and go out to share the good news: Jesus is the Messiah and he has come to reconcile us to God. ❖

New Jersey



GIFTS THAT IMPRESS



by Scott Roberts



Gifts, Gifts, I have never been impressed by gifts. I cannot think of a time in my life when a gift influenced or impressed me longer than a moment or two. My usual reaction and comment after receiving a gift is a smile and polite thank-you. It is not that I don't appreciate the kindness showed to me, I do. In most

cases I am more impressed by the effort and thoughtfulness of the individual who has given me the gift than the gift itself. The majority of gifts I have received over my lifetime are temporal. After a period of time or use the gift is worn out or not needed any longer, rendering it useless.

I wonder if Mary and Joseph were impressed with the gold, frankincense, and myrrh they received in behalf of Mary's first-born son Jesus. I don't think so. What about Jesus the "Son of Man?" No, how could a newborn baby be impressed by something he never saw or experienced before. Well what about Jesus the Son of God?" Was he impressed by the gifts that were presented to him at his birth? In the tradition of our Jewish elders let me answer the question with a question. How could God whose wealth is incalculable, be impressed by these gifts?

What I believe impressed Mary and Joseph about the wise men was not their gifts but their worship. Matthew 2:11 says, "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him". As far as impressing Jesus, He himself said in John 4:23, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him"

Let us take a closer look at gifts from one biblical perspective.

In Luke 11:13, Jesus tells his disciples, "If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask for it.

After examining this passage of scripture, we discover Jesus is teaching his hearers the importance of persistence in prayer. He tells us that our earthly fathers who are imperfect desire to give their children good gifts. Switching from earthly fathers to our Heavenly Father he says, "how much more will your Heavenly Father give you the Holy Spirit". One thing is immediately clear in this passage. Earthly gifts are good, but Spiritual gifts surpass earthly gifts and move the heart of God with greater passion.

Interestingly enough, your gifts, that which you have invested into the Rock of Israel over the last year, have produced spiritual gifts. This last year we have seen many birthed into God's Kingdom accepting their Messiah. These people have become worshippers of the Most High God. **THAT IMPRESSES ME!** Didn't Yeshua teach us to lay up our treasures in Heaven where moth or rust does not corrupt? Thank you for sharing our burden to win the lost, Jew and Gentile alike.

Susan and I want to take the time to thank the many Churches, Pastors, and Individuals who have supported our ministry over this last year. Truly you have impressed us with your gifts. Better yet you have impressed the Lord God Jehovah with your gifts. It is our prayer that this Hanukah and Christmas season be one of great joy and peace to you and your loved ones. We thank God every time we think of you and your generosity at work in our lives. **WE'RE IMPRESSED!❖**



TO ALYN CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL GIFTS

by Robert Specter



About every other year we ask our partners to help us bless the children of Israel. There is a Hospital that I have visited in Jerusalem that cares for handicapped children. The children come from many different environments and include both Jewish and Arab children.

In prior years we have given anywhere from \$1,000 to \$3,500 to this hospital, depending on the generosity of our supporters. The funds sometimes earmarked for Toys for Hanukkah, sometimes for wheelchairs (which have to be individually made for the specific needs of each child, they make these in the hospital), and sometimes for computers or computer games that provide both education and enjoyment.

Now some may complain that we are losing our perspective of "Evangelism" in this endeavor. But, I am reminded of the scriptures that Jesus spoke concerning giving a cup of water or even visiting those in prison. Truly some of these children are in a form of prison, their misshapen bodies. Too, I always make

sure that the Public Relations person from the hospital realizes that the monetary gift is from many Christians who want to bless the children of Israel, and we do it in the name of Jesus the Jewish Messiah.

If you would like to participate in giving a gift to the Hospital this year please use the coupon at the bottom of the letter enclosed, or put "Alyn" in the message field of your check.

Below is an excerpt from a letter of thanks for our donation to Israel. ❖



Alyn Woldenberg Family Hospital
Pediatric & Adolescent Rehabilitation Center

Dear Mr. Specter,

I really must apologize for the delay in sending you this letter of acknowledgement and thanks for Rock of Israel's latest generous donation...

The reason for the delay was due to the fact that we were waiting to be able to take, and include, photographs of the computer and software games purchased with your gift...

This time Rock of Israel's kind gift was earmarked for one of our Psychology Department's needs and it is now with the greatest of pleasure that we are sending you the enclosed photograph folder with the pictures of the Computer Equipment and games bringing their benefits to our patients, who unfortunately also include a number of young victims of the terrorist attacks.

...You can certainly consider yourselves partners with us in the vital rehabilitation of these youngsters.

With warmest personal regards,

Brenda Hirsch, Director
Public Relations and Development Department

THE BEST GIFT THAT WE CAN GIVE

by Robert Specter



At this time of year, there is a greater focus on giving and receiving gifts. As believers we understand that the greatest gift ever given is the gift of God. God gave His only begotten Son, who gave His life so that we may be pardoned and have eternal life.

But, what is the greatest gift that we can give? Since we are God's possession by right of ownership (He created us), how can we "give" what is already His. I would suggest that the greatest gift that we can give is our testimony to others. In Acts 1:8 we are promised the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said this gift would be given to enable us to "be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (As an aside, this has been interpreted to mean location but it should be interpreted to mean people groups, first to the Jews then to the world as is also said in Rom 1:16)

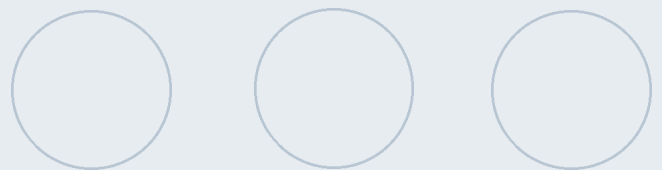
Some would say that they don't want to offend people by "shoving my beliefs down other people's throats." Obviously, I too don't want to shove any thing at anybody, but sharing what God has done for me is not shoving, it is loving. In fact, not sharing something good is selfishness. And the greatest harm one can do is not to throw out the life preserver to rescue someone who is drowning.

There are people that I talk to who say they are afraid of saying the wrong thing. Where is their trust and faith in God? Don't they realize that God is bigger than they are, and that He can interpret in the mind of the listener whatever He wants to be heard? The only words He can't use are the ones unsaid. Now don't get me wrong, of course I

would expect people to study His word to know what to say, but He doesn't expect us all to be experts. He expects us to be people who are appreciative of His goodness and who want others to share in His Love.

Now as to receiving gifts, what joy and happiness are showered upon us as we do His will. Remember the saying "it is more blessed to give than to receive." And according to the parables of planting and harvesting- the more we give the more we receive. "You can't out give God." So during this season let us remember who we serve and how we can give the best gift of all. Share the Good News with everyone, first to the Jews and then to the world. God even promises blessings to those who bless the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. What better blessing could you give someone than pointing them to the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah.

And they overcame him (Satan) by the Blood of the Lamb and by the word of their Testimony: and they loved not their lives unto the death. Rev. 12:11 ❖



"...is our testimony to others."