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Content

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Unlike papers that try to figure out what the "story" is and then get quotes on each side to presumably lead the reader to conclude what the "truth" is, OCN's role is to report in detail on public meetings of local governmental entities. We report what was talked about and what was decided. By reading OCN, you can find out what you might have learned if you had attended those public meetings. In this context, "truth" is that the articles accurately represent what transpired at the meetings.

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Contact John Heiser, Publisher, at johnheiser@ocn.me or (719) 488-3455 with any questions.

Look for our next issue
Saturday, February 1

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The Rabbi's Corner
Hanukkah 2019 Retrospect

Teachings compiled by Lovena Kiser
as requested by Rabbi Oswald Garagorry

The last candle has been lit and the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) is complete. The center Shamash (Servant) candle has shared its light during each of the eight nights for friends, family gatherings, fun, food, gifts and remembrance; leaving the warm glow of treasured memories for years and generations to come.

The 8-day Feast of Dedication's (aka the Festival of Lights) story has been told over and over again to revere the Jewish lives lost and celebrate the ultimate success to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in freedom. Here is the story, that is etched in the souls of His Chosen People.

The Books of Maccabees relate that 2,200+ years ago, Alexander, the son of Phillip the Macedonian, began winning the rest of his name as he and his legions conquered the whole Middle East, parts of Africa, and Europe. In the early 300's B.C.E. at the age of 21, he forever became known as Alexander the Great. During his short 12-year reign he placed 17-20 governor/generals over his empire to keep it unified. Upon his death at the age of 32, these men grabbed their piece of his empire as their own. After years of fighting, intrigue, murders, and assassinations, his empire was divided into two warring kingdoms: the Seleucids aka the Greek/Syrians in the north and the Ptolemaic aka the Greek/Egyptians in the south. Israel was caught in the middle of these two kingdoms for over 100 years. In the 160's B.C.E. the Greek/Syrians prevailed under the leadership of the most oppressive and cruelest of the Seleucid kings...Antiochus Epiphanes (Glorious). His plan to keep control of his kingdom was simple: enforce an intensive Hellenization program. This meant that that all ethnic and regional cultures were to be replaced with one unifying culture...the Greek culture. For Israel, this meant that the core of Jewish life; the worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the Great Temple in Jerusalem had to be abolished. Among other things he prohibited was the practice of circumcision, Sabbath observance, Torah study, and Temple Services.

His conquests invariably included the ransacking of local religious temples, taking the gold, silver and fine cloths to enlarge his personal treasury. The Holy Temple in Jerusalem was not spared this plunder, leaving the Temple completely barren. Not content with looting the Temple, he killed thousands in Jerusalem and took 10,000 men, women, and children captive as slaves. He burned down the finest buildings, tore down the city walls, and built a Citadel on high ground overlooking the Temple. He fortified it with high walls and towers and stationed a garrison of Macedonian troops who, with the support of Jews sympathetic to Antiochus, inflicted great suffering on the remaining citizens of Jerusalem. He converted the Temple into a temple for the worship of Zeus, forcing the Jews to build idol altars and compelling them to offer a pig on the altars daily as he profaned the Holy Temple by offering pigs on its' altar.

God-fearing Jews who refused to obey his decrees were whipped with rods, their bodies torn to pieces, and reports of Mothers caught allowing the circumcision of their sons were forced to watch their babies strangled. The Mothers were then strangled, nailed to a cross and their dead 8-day old baby boys were hung around their necks like necklaces as an example to others. Those who performed the circumcision were killed. Anyone who was caught with any sacred book was immediately put to death and the book destroyed.

In order to force all Jews to forsake the worship of YHVH, generals in command of forces of men were sent out of Jerusalem in all directions. When they reached the town of Modin (about 20 miles west of Jerusalem) to build an altar for the sacrifice of pigs they encountered a respected priest by the name of Mattathias and his five sons. The commanding General Appelles, chose Mattathias to sacrifice the first pig, so that others would follow the decreed sacrifices. When Mattathias refused,

one of the Jews in the crowd ran forward to sacrifice the pig. This infuriated Mattathias and he killed him on the altar. His five sons drew their swords killing Appelles and several of his soldiers. Mattathias then cried throughout the city in a loud voice, saying, "whosoever is zealous for the law and maintains the covenant, let him follow me." So, he and his sons fled into the mountains, leaving everything they had. His son, Judah Maccabees became the leader of the rebels known as the Maccabees. It is estimated that Judah's forces eventually numbered around 6,000 men. Over the next 3 years of fierce fighting, Antiochus sent in more than 105,000 men to combat Judah's dramatically outnumbered fighters.

Then in the third year, after a decisive victory over Antiochus' General Lysias in 164 B.C.E., Judah said, "Now that our enemies are crushed, let us go up to purify the sanctuary and rededicate it. And the whole army gathered together, and they went up to Mt. Zion. And they found the sanctuary desolated and the altar polluted. So he (Judah) chose priests of blameless conversation, such as had pleasure in the law, who cleansed the sanctuary...and when as they consulted what to do with the altar of burnt offerings, which was profaned; they thought it best to pull it down, lest it should be a reproach to them, because the heathen had defiled it; wherefore, they pulled it down and laid up the stones in the mountain of the Temple in a convenient place, until there should come a prophet to show what should be done with them." They built a new altar and it was during the eight-day rededication of the holy altar that the legend of the oil for the menorah began. It is said, that when Antiochus took the Temple all the holy oil for the menorah was desecrated, but as they were restoring the Temple, one small undefiled jug of oil was found with its seal still intact. It contained only enough oil to burn the menorah for one day. Rather than wait eight days for new oil to be consecrated, they decided to light the menorah using the one small jug of oil. Yet, a miracle occurred when the menorah stayed lit for eight days, until new consecrated oil could be added.

At that time, Hanukkah was decreed a National Holiday for Jews the world over. It should not come as a surprise that Yeshua kept this Feast along with the Eight Feasts commanded in *Leviticus 23*. The first direct reference to Hanukkah is found in *John, Chapter 10:22-23*: "Then came Hanukkah in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Yeshua was walking around inside the Temple area, in Solomon's Colonnade." This important passage is the setting for Yeshua's public proclamation he was the Messiah. The second reference is found in *Luke, Chapter 19:37-40*, as Yeshua is being welcomed into Jerusalem, by the entire band of talmidim (disciples), singing and praising God, "Blessed is the King who is coming in the name of Adonai!" "Shalom in heaven!" "Glory in the highest places!" It was at this time, that some of the Pharisees in the crowd told him to reprimand his disciples, but he answered them, "I tell you that if they keep quiet, the stones will shout!" The question begs to be asked... "what stones will shout in a land filled with stones?"

Everyone in Israel who had been in the Temple knew the Hanukkah story of "the desecrated Altar Stones," that were piled in a corner of the Temple Court and understood the reference Yeshua was making.

May the Hanukkah story encourage everyone who believes in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; trust that the fight is never ours alone...it is God's and the victory is His.

Shalom to you.

Dr. Garagorry is the Rabbi of Aliyah Congregation that meets on Saturdays at 10 a.m. at the Mountain Community Mennonite Church,

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