

# CANADIAN *Communique*

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# The History &

## A NOTE FROM STEVE

*Hanukkah, O Hanukkah a festival of joy.  
A holiday, a jolly day for every girl and boy.*

This was my favorite song to sing during Hanukkah. It is, indeed, the time to celebrate with great joy.

As you read this issue of the *Communitiqué*, my prayer is for you to experience joy. Bruce Scott begins by explaining Hanukkah. Larry Mitchell gives insight why this Jewish holiday should provide you with a sense of joy in your own salvation. John Plantz shares his joy in taking a basket to his friends in the Jewish community. Richard Toviaah explains why we give these special baskets away. John McKim gives us a glimpse into the Hanukkah memories of Jewish people in his area. Take notice of his Russian friend's memory in Russia. It is great to know that in Canada he need not fear the same reaction. I'm delighted to have FOI Canada board member Bill King tell of the power of a love-gift to his neighbour and how the Lord used it.

Because we extended the number of writers this issue we miss our Minute With Meno, but promise it will return to our first issue next year.

May the Lord bless you this Christmas as you extend a blessing to your Jewish friend with "Happy Hanukkah!"

*Steve Herzig is the  
director of FOI Gospel  
Ministry, Inc.*



In 168 BC in a small town in ancient Israel, the age-old battle between spiritual compromise and godly character waged. The events which took place resulted in one of Israel's most widely observed holidays, the winter festival of Hanukkah, or the Festival of Lights.

### Origin and Description

Hanukkah (lit., "Dedication") commemorates the Jewish people's great military and spiritual achievement during the reign of Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV (or Epiphanes [God Manifest], as he dubbed himself). Antiochus severely persecuted the Jewish people and forbade them from observing God's commandments. He even set up an image of Zeus on the bronze altar in the Temple in Jerusalem and there sacrificed a pig. Though many Jewish people chose to compromise to save their lives, an aged Jewish priest named Mattathias and his five sons were among those who refused to cave. Mattathias' son Judah Maccabeus led an army to fight Antiochus' troops. Facing overwhelming odds, Judah and his men became seasoned warriors. On the 25th day of Kislev, 165 BC, exactly three years to the day that Antiochus desecrated the Temple, Judah and his troops re-dedicated the Temple in Jerusalem and consecrated it to God. They constructed a new Temple lampstand, a new table of showbread, a new altar of incense, new curtains, and new doors. They also tore down the old altar of burnt offering and replaced it with a new one. The people of Israel celebrated for eight days. Judah decreed that such a festival should be observed every year

# Significance of Hanukkah

to memorialize the “restoration of their Temple worship.”<sup>1</sup> Some posit the reason the Maccabees chose to fix the duration of Hanukkah at eight days was because when the Maccabees found only one cruse of consecrated oil with which to light the menorah at the Temple, the oil miraculously lasted for eight days. But since this story is not found in the event’s earliest manuscripts, the miracle of the oil story is probably fictitious. Regardless, the real miracle of the story is how God protected His people and delivered them from their evil oppressors.

## Observance of Hanukkah

Beginning on the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev (November-December), Hanukkah is observed for eight days. It is a joyous time of food, family gatherings, and activities for the children. Jewish families begin the holiday by lighting the Hanukkah menorah, or *hanukkiyah*, which has nine candlesticks. One candle is added each evening; and the ninth candle, called the *shammash* (servant), is used to light the other eight. After lighting the menorahs, families often sing songs, eat special foods such as crispy potato pancakes (latkes), exchange gifts, and play a traditional game called “Spin the Dreidel.”

## Hanukkah and Christmas

Biblical Christians believe without Hanukkah, there could be no Christmas. If God had not preserved the Jewish people during the events surrounding Hanukkah, then Jesus would not have been born, nor could He have affirmed

His Messianic credentials. Jesus chose Hanukkah as the occasion to make His startling claim: “I and My Father are one” (Jn. 10:22–30). His statement affirmed the truth there is only one God, but that God exists as one being in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Isa. 48:12–16). How could He make such a claim? The answer is found in the empty tomb. Antiochus IV claimed to be God. So did Jesus. But while Antiochus IV remains dead, Jesus the Messiah is alive. Like the Hanukkah menorah, the Messiah came as “a light to . . . the Gentiles, and the glory of [God’s] people Israel” (Lk. 2:32; cf. Isa. 49:6). Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (Jn. 8:12). Like the *shammash*, the servant candle, the Messiah “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mt. 20:28). That is the good news of Hanukkah.

If you would like to learn more about this holiday, you can access the extended version of our Hanukkah brochure, available for download at [foi.org/canada](http://foi.org/canada).

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## ENDNOTE

- 1 William Whiston, trans., *Josephus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1960), *Antiquities of the Jews*, 12.7.7.

Bruce Scott is the director of Program Ministries for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry.



# Does Hanukkah Ma



# Matter to Christians?

Pulitzer Prize author Herman Wouk said of Hanukkah and Christmas in his 1964 book *This Is My God*, “The two festivals have one real point of contact. Had Antiochus succeeded in obliterating Jewry a century and a half before the birth of Jesus, there would have been no Christmas. The feast of the Nativity rests on the victory of Chanukah.”

Does Hanukkah matter to Christians? Yes! The events that took place on the first Hanukkah fulfilled Bible prophecy. The Lord, through the prophet Daniel, prophesied about the abomination of desolation when Antiochus Epiphanes would defy the Temple in 168 BC (Dan. 11:31–33). The abomination of desolation also foreshadows a future abomination of desolation which will take place when Antichrist erects an image of himself in the third Temple (Mt. 24:15–16; 2 Th. 2:4). But most importantly, Jesus was in the Temple on the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) (Jn. 10:22).

It was on Hanukkah that Jesus confirmed He was the Messiah. Jesus had performed many miracles, which would suggest that He might be the Messiah. Since the Maccabees had liberated the Jews from Antiochus Epiphanes on Hanukkah, perhaps Jesus might liberate the Jews from the Roman oppression. So they asked Him, “How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the

Messiah [or Christ], tell us plainly” (v. 24). Jesus replied, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me” (v. 25).

Jesus also declared that He was the only way to the Father. “But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand” (vv. 26–29).

It was on Hanukkah that Jesus announced, “I and My Father are one” (v. 30). His audience understood what He meant! They took up stones to stone Him. Jesus answered them, “Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?” They answered Him, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God” (vv. 32–33).

Larry Mitchell  
is the Calgary,  
Alberta, field  
representative  
for FOI Gospel  
Ministry, Inc.





# GIVING OF HANUKKAH BASKETS

The “blessing” section of Deuteronomy 28 (vv. 1–13) is one of my favorite portions of God’s Word, as it gives the blessings from the Lord God of Israel. Verse 5 says “Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store.”

It has been my privilege to take Hanukkah baskets from FOI Gospel Ministry to my friends and acquaintances in the Jewish community for the past few years. What a joy to share your friendship and to build memories that leave people

feeling they are special and knowing that you are always welcome in their presence.

Three close friends shared with me what it means to receive these Hanukkah baskets from their Christian friends.

Ariel, executive director of the Jewish National Fund for Manitoba and Saskatchewan said, “It is always a blessing to have you come to the JNF office.” He was honored to receive the basket from FOI and overwhelmed with this gesture of

friendship. He said “It was so good” that we thought of them as they celebrated the important remembrance of Hanukkah and added, “What a wonderful way to bless others.”

Ami, founding member of the Canadian Magen David Adom said, “As an Israeli living in Canada, it’s very special to get a basket from The Friends of Israel via my friends John and Irene Plantz.”

Rob, director of Development and Gift Planning of the Jewish Foundation of Manitoba said, The JFM



is extremely grateful for the warm and heartfelt gift of the Chanukah baskets. This generosity reminds us of the friendship that exists and the connection and bond between us....It always brightens our day when Richard Toviah and John Plantz stop by to pay a visit and it reminds us of the good in the world that is represented by your kindness."

If you are interested in being part of the blessing that God promised Abraham (Gen. 12:3; Gal.

3:8,14), here are a few suggestions of tangible ways to bless the Jewish people and to show that you stand with Israel this Hanukkah season.

1. Pray about supporting the giving out of the Hanukkah baskets (or if you have a Jewish friend, bless them with one).
2. Plant a tree in our FOI forest in Israel through the Jewish National Fund.
3. Support the Canadian Magen David Adom, Israel's emergency

medical service and blood bank, by donating towards an ambulance for Israel.

Just a little gift that shows you care opens doors of friendship and the blessings begin to flow.

Happy Hanukkah 5778 to all our Jewish friends!

*John Plantz is the Winnipeg, Manitoba, Church Ministries representative for FOI Gospel Ministry, Inc.*





## What's in a Hanukkah Basket?

I've had the privilege of being on the giving end of Hanukkah baskets along with my fellow FOI worker John Plantz here in Winnipeg. What a joy that was! These baskets are filled with various goodies such as fruits, chocolate, and Hanukkah cards. The fruits and chocolates were even shaped in the star of David. All beautifully and colourfully arranged and wrapped.

John and I handed out these baskets to some of our friends at organizations like Asper Jewish Community Center, the Jewish National Fund (JNF), the board of Magen David Adom, and to one of our Jewish doctors. Why do we give out these baskets? Because we want to show our Jewish friends that we

are Christians who stand with them and that we love and care for them.

Everyone of these people receive their baskets with a big smile, with many saying, "This has made my day." Our desire is simply to show acts of kindness. Sometimes it leads to opportunities to share the reason for our love for the Jewish people.

We're reminded again and again that we aren't simply handing people baskets. With each handshake and hug we're showing our Jewish friends that we are standing with them and love them. In each case, we see their eyes light up with appreciation and even shock! In the case with JNF, the staff stopped their work and took a break. They took

pictures with us and we had a great time of fellowship.

We went to bless them but they ended up blessing us. This is just one of many ways of showing love and kindness to God's Chosen People, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And maybe, just maybe, the Lord will open the door to deeper and more meaningful and lasting friendships. We plan to repeat this tradition this Hanukkah season, which starts the evening of December 12 and ends the evening of December 20. If this is something we can help you out with, let us know.

Richard  
Toviah is the  
Winnipeg,  
Manitoba, field  
representative  
for FOI Gospel  
Ministry, Inc.



# HANUKKAH MEMORIES

Many of us do not have Jewish contacts or friends. But we love the Jewish people because we are told in the Bible that God loves the Jewish people. I wanted to give you a glimpse into some of my Jewish friends' memories about Hanukkah in hopes you will learn more about this wonderful holiday and the people that celebrate it.

## Israeli Jewish Friend

*My memory of the past would be to wait for evening where we would gather together in my parents' home and light the menorah. My mother made pancakes (latkes) and doughnuts (sufganiyot). After lighting the menorah we sang the holiday songs and then ate together. I try not to change the custom which was passed on to me from my mother's home. It is important that my kids will know the story, because it is part of who we are and about our religious freedom.*

## Russian Jewish Friend

*My early memories from childhood in Russia are of my grandmother who taught us about the traditions. For us the hanukkiah (menorah) had to be lit away from the windows, so that non Jews who passed by would not see it, due to discrimination. Many Jewish people in Russia were poor and could not afford an ornate hanukkiah, so my mother would slice a large potato in half, scoop out the inside, and replace it with oil and wick, and that would be our hanukkiah. Then she would take the scooped potato and*

*make latkes. Even though some of us were poor, we always found a way to preserve our traditions and pass them down to the next generation.*

## Canadian Jewish Friend

*Thinking of Hanukkah brings back the memories of our traditions, like the giving of gelt (chocolate money). Playing games with the dreidel (Yiddish for a spinning top) that was marked on four sides with Hebrew letters, which tell us - "A great miracle happened there." Then we sang songs like "Yemei Ha Hanukkah" (Days of Hanukkah) or "Banu Choshech Legresh" (We came to drive away the darkness) in Hebrew; or "I Have a Little Dreidel" in English. Another part of the celebration was eating latkes and doughnuts. The most obvious was the lighting of the menorah candles each night for eight nights. I've noticed changes over the years like plastic dreidels instead of wooden, the menorah from oil and wick, to candles, and occasionally lit by electricity. Hanukkah is an integral part of our history, it reminds us of who we are as a nation. Therefore, it is of vital importance that we continue with our traditions or we will lose our identity as a people.*

To all our Jewish Friends - CHAG URIM SAMEACH!

John McKim is the Saint John, New Brunswick, field representative for FOI Gospel Ministry, Inc.





# A Neighbour's Small Act of Kindness

Naomi and her daughter moved in next door to us and, as is our practice in greeting new neighbours, my wife, Elizabeth, and I knocked on her door to welcome them. I could not help notice a *mezuzah* placed conspicuously at the front of their new home. A *mezuzah* is a decorative case placed on the door post of the home containing a piece of parchment with the verses of Deuteronomy 6:4-9 rolled up very small.

After welcoming Naomi and her daughter, over the ensuing weeks and months I felt that the Lord had provided me an opportunity to befriend my new neighbours in our very predominantly Gentile community. I had recently completed several IJS courses and much time was spent learning about Jewish culture and customs

and here was a perfect opportunity to put into practice much of the learning I had acquired. At this point, my learning from and relationship with our North American Ministries director, Steve Herzig, was invaluable.

The Lord “moves in mysterious ways His wonders to perform.” The high holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur were imminent, followed by Hanukkah. Having shared my burden for Naomi and her daughter, who is a medical doctor, with many at FOI, I knew that many were in prayer asking the Lord to give me opportunities to minister to them. On seeking Steve’s advice as to what would be a wise approach in showing our love not just for Naomi and her daughter but for the Jewish people, he suggested that I purchase a

gift basket and present it to Naomi with good wishes for the Hanukkah season. With that in mind, I went to a local Orthodox Jewish delicatessen and purchased a kosher gift basket, well put together and beautiful looking. It should also be noted that approximately six months had gone by, since Naomi and her daughter became our neighbours.

The next day Elizabeth and I rang the doorbell and presented Naomi with the gift basket. She was totally surprised!! Both the expression on her face and her several thank you’s told the story.



We could sense that the ice had cracked if not broken. As the weeks and months went by, a much warmer relationship began to develop and much of her guard was coming down. Indeed, even a small act of genuine kindness like a Hanukkah basket started a relationship that has already led to visiting each other, sharing, and meeting other members of her family. My wife and I feel this is a significant breakthrough.

Some recent exciting developments that are taking place:

- Naomi has now moved to Ottawa as

her daughter pursues a higher career in medicine.

- A strong enough bond has developed between our two families as we were asked to assist in the move.
- She leaves her mother behind in a seniors home in Vancouver and has asked us to assist wherever needed.
- We are communicating on an ongoing basis.
- I have introduced her to the ministry of The Friends of Israel through interactions with her.
- I have been able to

share the love of our Messiah with her and the most exciting—Naomi has invited us to accompany her to Israel to visit relatives and show us the neighbourhood around Ben Yehuda Street in Tel Aviv where she grew up.

Could this really have happened because of a basket? Yes! God uses many things for us to minister and love the Jewish people.

*Bill King is an  
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