

Apples of Gold

Zvi Kalisher's life-changing spiritual conversations

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CHRISTMAS AND HANUKKAH

It is now the time of year when we Christians celebrate the Lord's birth. In Israel, people are also celebrating the feast of Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights. I recently visited an ultra-Orthodox school and talked with some of the students about Christmas and Hanukkah.

One student said, "Hanukkah is a very holy feast."

I responded, "Then why is it not mentioned in the Jewish Scriptures, and yet Christmas is mentioned several times? Hanukkah only lasts for a few days, and then the light of the festival goes out for another year. The people sink back into darkness. But those of us who celebrate Christmas have an everlasting light in our hearts. We celebrate the coming of the Lord, in whom there is no more darkness, no more sorrow."

The pupils listened carefully, but when I finished, one of them said, "Show us where this one is written in the Bible."

I told them, "I will be glad to show you passages that speak of Him, and then you must show me where the Bible speaks of Hanukkah." They agreed. I then read Isaiah 7:14: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

They thought they had trapped me since this passage did not mention Bethlehem. But then I read Micah 5:2: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,

though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the one to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”

This made them uncomfortable. I told them, “Now show me where the Bible speaks of Hanukkah.” This put them in an unpleasant position because they knew there was no reference to Hanukkah in the Scriptures. They again tried to attack me. I was as one in a lion’s den. But I was not alone. The Lord was with me, and I knew He would not forsake me and He would strengthen me.

One said, “You act as if you own this synagogue.”

I responded, “If you call this a house of prayer, then it should be a place where all people can come to worship their heavenly Father.”

Finally, some began to show a little friendliness toward me. But that did not last. Soon a teacher entered, and one of the students told him what was happening. The teacher became angry with the students. He then asked, “Who are you? Are you a teacher?”

“No,” I replied, “but if I were, I would want to be considered an honest teacher. You and your colleagues are not being honest with your students. “Many of these students have spent most of their lives here, studying under your tutelage. But they do not worship God. Rather, they worship books of tradition and the false teachers who wrote them. As one who believes in the true and living God, I must show them—and you—the right way to worship God according to the Bible.”

The teacher then asked, “How did you come to speak about Christ? Do you know who He is?”

I replied, “I say ‘Christ,’ but you say in Hebrew, ‘Messiah.’ If you like, we

can continue in the Hebrew language only. Then we can speak freely about Yeshua—Jesus—Salvation. These things I am telling you are not taken from books of false teachings but from the Holy Bible.” The teacher was visibly shaken and excused himself, saying he had no more time to talk with me.

I was sad this teacher and his students are still living in deep darkness. I pray I will have further opportunities to speak with them. Then, perhaps some year they too will be able to sing, “Joy to the world! The Lord is come.”

