

# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WHETHER JESUS CELEBRATED HANUKKAH

By David Lee Burris

## Hanukkah Is A Religious Tradition Originated During God's Long Silence

### 2 Maccabees 10

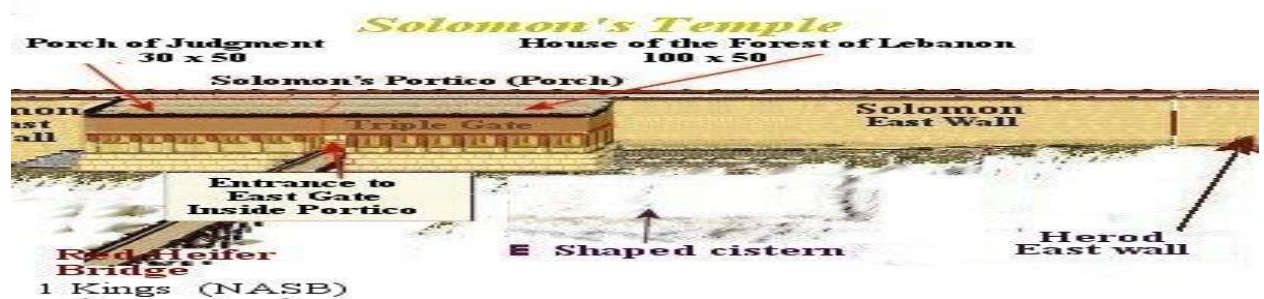
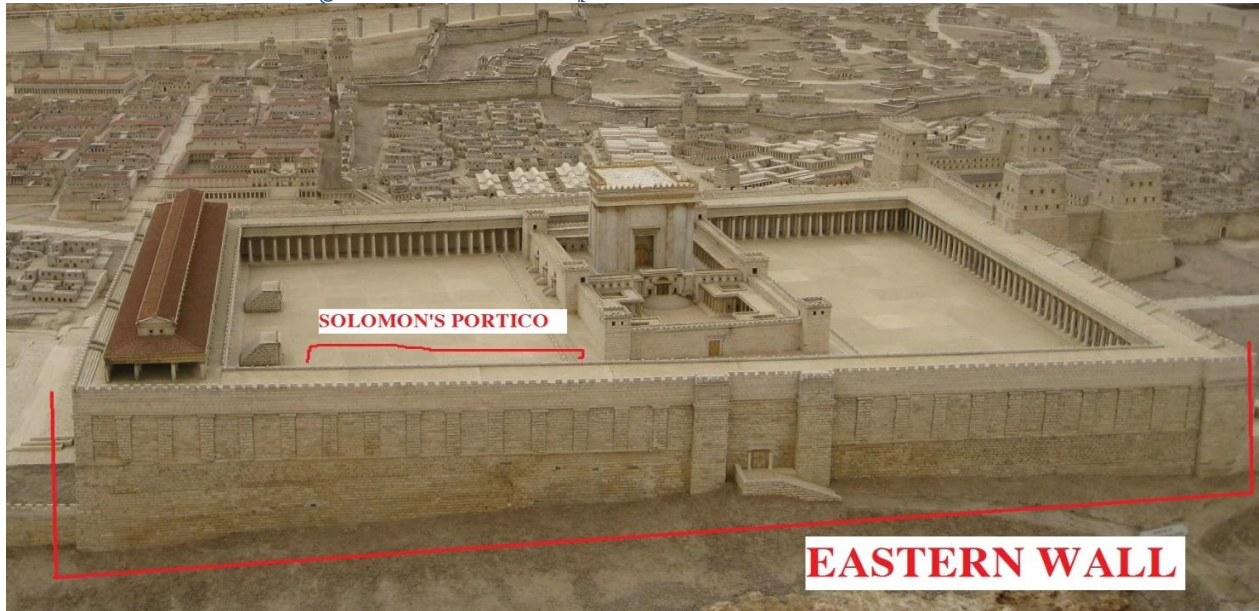
[1] Now Maccabeus and his followers, the Lord leading them on, recovered the temple and the city; [2] they tore down the altars that had been built in the public square by the foreigners, and also destroyed the sacred precincts. [3] They purified the sanctuary, and made another altar of sacrifice; then, striking fire out of flint, they offered sacrifices, after a lapse of two years, and they offered incense and lighted lamps and set out the bread of the Presence. [4] When they had done this, they fell prostrate and implored the Lord that they might never again fall into such misfortunes, but that, if they should ever sin, they might be disciplined by him with forbearance and not be handed over to blasphemous and barbarous nations. [5] 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 Chislev. [6] **They celebrated it for eight days with rejoicing, in the manner of the festival of booths, remembering how not long before, during the festival of booths, they had been wandering in the mountains and caves like wild animals.** [7] **Therefore, carrying ivy-wreathed wands and beautiful branches and also fronds of palm, they offered hymns of thanksgiving to him who had given success to the purifying of his own holy place.** [8] **They decreed by public edict, ratified by vote, that the whole nation of the Jews should observe these days every year.**

## The Debate Over Jesus' Observance of Hanukkah Centers Around John 10:22

### John 10

[22] **At that time the Festival of the Dedication** [הֲדָנָה] took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, [23] and **Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon.** [24] So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." [25] Jesus answered, "I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; [26] but you don't believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. [27] My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. [28] I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.

[29] What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. [30] The Father and I are one." [31] The Jews took up stones again to stone him. [32] Jesus replied, "I've shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these are you going to stone me?" [33] The Jews answered, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God." [34] Jesus answered, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'?" [35] If those to whom the word of God came were called 'gods' and the scripture can't be annulled [36] can you say that the one whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world is blaspheming because I said, 'I am God's Son'? [37] If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. [38] But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." [39] Then they tried to arrest him again, but he escaped from their hands.



1 Kings (NASB)  
 7 Now Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house. 2 He built the house of the forest of Lebanon; its length was 100 cubits and its width 50 cubits and its height 30 cubits, on four rows of cedar pillars with cedar beams on the pillars. 3 It was paneled with cedar above the side chambers which were on the 45 pillars, 15 in each row. 4 There were artistic window frames in three rows, and window was opposite window in three ranks. 5 All the doorways and doorposts had squared artistic frames, and window was opposite window in three ranks. 6 Then he made the hall of pillars; its length was 50 cubits and its width 30 cubits, and a porch was in front of them and pillars and a threshold in front of them. 7 He made the hall of the throne where he was to judge, the hall of judgment, and it was paneled with cedar from floor to floor.

## Historically Solomon's Portico King's Judgment Porch

### Where was "Solomon's Porch"?

Also known as "Solomon's Colonnade" or "Solomon's Portico," Solomon's Porch was a long, covered but open gallery created by two parallel rows of columns supporting a long wooden roof. Solomon's Porch ran along the eastern edge of the temple area, overlooking the Kidron Valley and facing the Mount of Olives to the east.

### Why did they keep gathering at Solomon's Porch?

It was centrally located and one of the few public places in Jerusalem that was large enough to accommodate a large crowd. It was also where people passed through or gathered to socialize and discuss before or after their sacrifices and prayers at the temple, and therefore a good place to share the Gospel.

## Pulpit Commentary

Verse 7. - **Then he made a porch** [or **the porch**] **for the throne where he might Judge** [i.e., it was at once audience chamber (throne room, ch. 10:18) and court of justice], **even the porch of judgment** [Stanley remarks that this "porch, or gate of justice, still kept alive the likeness of the old patriarchal custom of sitting in judgment at the gate." He then refers to the "gate of justice" at Granada and the "Sublime Porte" at Constantinople. It is, perhaps, not quite so certain that "this porch was the gem and center of the whole empire," or that because it was so much thought of a similar but smaller porch was erected for the queen (ver. 8) ("Jewish Ch.," 2. p. 195)]; **and it was covered with cedar from one side of the floor to the other.** [Heb. from **the floor to the floor**, as marg. Gesenius understands these words to mean, "from one floor to the other," i.e., to the ceiling (the floor of the other story); in other words, the walls from bottom to top. So the Vulg., **a pavimento usque ad summitatem**, and Syr., **a fundamento ad coelum ejus usque**, which have led Thenius to suggest the reading עַד קוֹרֹת (unto the **beams**) instead of עֲדָהֶקֶקֶע. Keil thinks the ceiling served as the floor of an upper story, built over the porch of judgment, but, as Bahr observes, no such upper story is even hinted at elsewhere. It seems to me that, on the whole, the A.V. rendering is to be retained, the meaning being that the whole space, both of wall and ceiling, from one side of the floor to the opposite side, covered with cedar.] 1 Kings 7:7

## Very Much Related We Should Ask: Was Jesus Observing Purim @John Five?

### Meyer's NT Commentary

[John 5:1](#). ἐορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων] *a feast of the Jews*; John does not describe it more definitely. But *what* feast is meant appears with certainty from [John 4:35](#); comp. [John 6:4](#). For in [John 4:35](#) Jesus spoke in *December*, and it is clear from [John 4:4](#) Passover was still *approaching*; it must therefore<sup>[203]</sup> be a feast occurring in the interval between December *and the Passover*, and **this is no other than the *feast of Purim*** (יְמֵי הַפּוּרִים, [Esther 9:24](#) ff; [Esther 3:7](#)), **the feast of lots, celebrated on the 14th and 15th of Adar ([Esther 9:21](#)), consequently in March, in commemoration of the nation's deliverance from the bloody designs of Haman.** So Keppler, d'Outreïn, Hug, Olshausen, Wieseler, Krabbe, Anger, Lange, Maier, Baeumlein, Godet, and most others. So also Holtzmann (*Judenth. u. Christenth.* p. 374) and Märcker (*Uebereinst. d. Matth. u. Joh.* 1868, p. 11). In favor of this interpretation is the fact that, as this feast was by no means a great one, but of less importance and less known to Hellenistic readers, the indefinite mention of it on John's part is thoroughly appropriate; while he *names* the greater and well-known feasts,—not only the Passover, but the σκηνοπηγία in [John 7:2](#), and the ἑγκαίνια in [John 10:22](#). To suppose, in explanation of the fact that he does not give the name, that he had forgotten what feast it was (Schweizer), is compatible neither with the accuracy of his recollection in other things, nor with the importance of the miracle wrought at this feast. It is arbitrary, however, to suppose that John did not wish to lay stress upon the *name* of the *EOPTH*, but upon the fact that Jesus did not go up to Jerusalem *save on occasion of a feast* (Luthardt, Lichtenstein); indeed, the giving of the name *after* *ἸΟΥΔΑΙΩΝ* (comp. [John 7:2](#)) would in no way have interfered with that imaginary design.

It is objected that the feast of *Purim*, which was not a temple feast, required no journey to Jerusalem (see Hengstenberg, *Christol.* III. p. 187 f., Lücke, de Wette, Brückner); and the high esteem in which it is held in *Gem. Hier. Megill.* i. 8 cannot be shown to refer to the time of Jesus. But might not Jesus, even without any legal obligation, have availed Himself of this feast as an occasion for His labors in Jerusalem? **And are we to suppose that the character of the feast—a feast for eating and drinking merely—should *hinder Him from going to Jerusalem?*** The *Sabbath* ([John 5:9](#)), on which apparently (but see Wieseler, p. 219) the feast could never occur, may have been before or after it; and, lastly, what is related of Jesus ([John 6:1](#) ff.) between this festival and the Passover, only a month afterwards, may easily have occurred within the space of that month.

In fine, it can neither have been the *Passover* (Cod. *A.*, Irenaeus, Eusebius' *Chron.*, Rupertus, Luther, Calovius, Grotius, Jansen, Scaliger, Cornelius a Lapide, Lightfoot, Lampe, Paulus, Kuinoel, Süsskind, Klee, Neander, Ammon, Hengstenberg), nor *Pentecost* (Cyril, Chrysostom, Theophylact, Euthymius Zigabenus, Erasmus, Melancthon, Beza, Calvin, Maldonatus, Bengel), nor *the feast of Tabernacles* (Cod. 131, Cocceius, Ebrard, Ewald, Hilgenfeld, Lichtenstein, Krafft, Riggenbach), nor *the feast of the Dedication* (a possible surmise of Keppler and Petavius); nor can we acquiesce in leaving the feast *undeterminable* (Lücke, de Wette, Luthardt, Tholuck, Brückner. Baumgarten Crusius hesitates between Purim and the Passover, yet inclines rather to the latter).

**The Spirit of God intentionally left out the name of the feast because the Lord's name was deliberately left out of the Book of Esther. In John 5, Jesus healed a man who had an infirmity for 38 years near the Pools of Bethesda (John 5: 1-9). It is also the first time in His public ministry that He declared that "God was His Father, making Himself equal with God" (5:18). He also said that He was the "Son of God" (5:25) and the "Son of Man" (5:27).**

**Did Jesus get dressed up in a Purim costume? Did He dress like Mordecai or Ahasuerus or some other contemporary anti-Semite? I do not know if He did. Did Jesus get drunk? No, even though He was accused of being a "winebibber" (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34). Did He eat the "Haman's ears"? I do not know. But He did observe the commandment to give gifts to the poor. I'm sure He attended the reading of the Scroll of Esther in one of the 480 synagogues of Jerusalem (PT *Megillah* 3:1; BT *Megillah* 3b; Fine 1996:9). Did He stomp His feet and say, "Blessed be Mordecai" or "Cursed be Haman" when their respective names were read? I do not know. Yet I'm sure He contemplated the message of the book of Esther. The Esther is this: "God's preservation of His unbelieving people, and the celebration of that event in the feast of Purim" (Shepperson 1975:26).**

## **Jesus' Purim Gift At the Pool of Bethesda**

**Why does the Lord Jesus go into this pagan shrine and pick out one man to heal? Jesus selected this one man because He was using him as an object lesson.**

**The Lord Jesus refers to the Wilderness Wanderings several times. In John 3 He refers to the serpent in the Wilderness (3:14-16). In His conversation with Nicodemus He likens Himself to the serpent in the Wilderness. As the Israelites looked at the serpent and lived, so any individual who looks to the Lord Jesus in faith has eternal life. In John 6 He refers to the manna in the Wilderness (6:31-40). In this passage He likens Himself to the manna as bread come down from heaven. At the end of His discussion with the religious leaders, the Lord Jesus said that Moses wrote of Him (John 5:45-47).**

**The Lord Jesus took advantage of the Feast of Purim to teach His disciples about Himself and to fulfill the commandment to give gifts to the poor.**

**John tells us that by the Sheep Pool's a place they called Bethesda. The word "Bethesda" is made up of two Hebrew words, "beit" and "hesed", meaning "house of mercy." The two words together give the distinct impression that there was a "house" or temple where merciful acts were carried out. Archaeological excavations in the area have demonstrated that there was a healing shrine to the Greek god of healing, Asclepius (Jeremias 1966; Benoit 1968).**

**In the shadows of this shrine, there was a sick man who had been lying on his bed for thirty-eight years.**

**The number thirty-eight is discovered only in one other place, by implication, in the Scriptures. The children of Israel wandered for forty years in the Wilderness. It took them two years to go from Egypt to Kadesh Barnea. At Kadesh Barnea, Moses sent twelve spies into the Land of Canaan. When they came back, they all gave an accurate report of what the Land of Canaan was like. However, ten of them said it was impossible to take the Land. The other two, Joshua and Caleb, said "God has given this Land to us, let's go in and take it" (Numbers 12 and 13). The Israelites listened to the majority report and God said, by implication, **"Because of your unbelief, you will wander for thirty-eight more years" (Numbers 14:29,30)**. They were to wander in the Wilderness for a total of forty years, one year for each of the days the spies were in the Land (Numbers 14:33,34). However, at this point in the wanderings, they had already been in the Wilderness for two years (Num. 10:11). They had thirty-eight more years to go. In Hebrews 4:19 it says that **that generation did not enter into the Land because of unbelief!****

**The Lord Jesus, in John's gospel, refers to the Wilderness Wanderings several times. In John 3 He refers to the serpent in the Wilderness (3:14-16; cf. Numbers 21:9).**

**In His conversation with Nicodemus He likens Himself to the serpent in the Wilderness. As Israelites looked at the serpent and lived, so any individual who looks to the Lord Jesus in faith has eternal life. In John 6 He refers to the manna in the Wilderness (6:31-40). In this passage He likens Himself to the manna as bread come down from heaven. At the end of His discussion with the religious leaders, the Lord Jesus said that Moses wrote of Him (John 5:45-47).**

**The Lord Jesus approached him to offer him a Purim gift, i.e. good health. He said, "Do you want to be made well" (John 5:6)? The man responded in the affirmative but he added that he had nobody to place him into the pool when the water was stirred up (5:7). The Lord Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk" (5:8). The man accepted the gift and he was healed instantly. – *Gordon Franz***



**How Do These Verses Harmonize With The Apostolic Authority @Galatians 4:10?**

**BUT NOW,  
AFTER THAT  
YE HAVE  
KNOWN GOD,  
OR RATHER  
ARE KNOWN  
OF GOD, HOW  
TURN YE AGAIN  
TO THE WEAK  
AND BEGGARLY  
ELEMENTS,  
WHEREUNTO  
YE DESIRE  
AGAIN TO BE  
IN BONDAGE?  
YE OBSERVE  
DAYS, AND  
MONTHS,  
AND TIMES,  
AND YEARS.**

**GALATIANS 4:9-10**

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## Barnes' Notes on the Bible @Galatians 4: 10

Ye observe - The object of this verse is to specify some of the things to which they had become enslaved. . .

**Days** - The days here referred to are doubtless the days of the Jewish festivals. They had numerous days of such observances, and in addition to those specified in the Old Testament, **the Jews had added many others as days commemorative of the destruction and rebuilding of the temple, and of other important events in their history.** It is a fair interpretation to apply it to all those days which are not commanded to be kept holy in the Scriptures; and hence, the passage is as applicable to the observance of saints' days, and days in honor of particular events in sacred history, as to the days observed by the Galatians. **There is as real servitude in the observance of the numerous festivals, and fasts in the papal communion and in some Protestant churches, as there was in the observance of the days in the Jewish ecclesiastical calendar, and for anything that I can see, such observances are as inconsistent now with the freedom of the gospel as they were in the time of Paul. We should observe as seasons of holy time what it can be proved God has commanded us, and no more.**

## **How Does Messianic Example & Apostolic Authority Harmonize?**

## **Did Jesus Recognize Hanukkah?**

## **What's The Significance Today?**

## **The Answer to the question of Jesus' Unauthorized Holiday Observance is both **Yes & No!****

**Yes & No** is found in the distinction between presence & participation. Presence without participation does not technically meet the definition of observance - although - attendance at such events superficially looks the same. What Jesus did was to “seize the holi-day.” He routinely went where there were crowds assembled and melded with the public mindset. He used these occasions of gift-giving to teach his disciples (Purin) and with Hanukkah - the entire Jewish world - about His Heavenly purpose!

**Significance. Christians today can repurpose holidays to teach the truth about Jesus and His most ultimate gift!!**

THEREFORE LET NO ONE JUDGE YOU  
BY WHAT YOU EAT OR DRINK, OR  
WITH REGARD TO A FEAST, A NEW  
MOON, OR A SABBATH.

*- COLOSSIANS 2:16*

**“It’s easier to keep  
holiday’s than  
Commandments!”**

***– Benjamin Franklin***

