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**A Feast of Lights**

World Jewry will soon be celebrating the 8-day Feast of Hanukah, commemorating events that took place in the Inter-Testamental period. Most of the information regarding these events is derived from the Books of the Maccabees and Josephus' *The Antiquities of the Jews* (XII).

At that this time Judea was a semi-autonomous region subject to the firm control of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (the "[Divine] Manifestation"), the Seleucid ruler of Syria. In an effort to consolidate his rule over Judea, the feisty southwestern part of his kingdom, Antiochus imposed a zealous campaign of Hellenization that met with fierce opposition among the traditional peasantry, the majority of the populace. Antiochus desecrated the temple in Jerusalem, set up idolatrous shrines throughout the country, forbade circumcision and the study of Torah while forcing the worship of idols and the consumption of non-kosher foods.

Opposition was supported by the Orthodox ("the devout"), an increasingly influential branch of what was then pluriform Judaism. They later came to be known as the Pharisees, the "separated ones" (Prushim). Led by successive members of the Hasmonean family, the revolt ultimately led to Antiochus' defeat following what turned out to be one of the world's earliest guerrilla campaigns against a well equipped and well trained army. Two years after the conflict began, after gaining popular support, equipping and training an army, the rebels engaged in pitched battles, the first of which was the Battle of Emmaus in 166. By then the victorious Hasmoneans, led by Judah (known as "*the Maccabee*"), had established a solid military reputation and won the confidence of their troops.

One of the first steps taken by Judah was to purge the temple and restore Divine worship. The temple was rededicated on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the Jewish month of Kislev, December, 164 B.C. in the course of a delayed Feast of Tabernacles normally celebrated in September. The same day was the traditional date for the dedication of the first temple built by Solomon. Since the biblical feast is an eight-day event, the Feast of Dedication (Hannukah) is likewise celebrated over the course of eight days.

Customs now considered necessary features of the holiday have no basis in scripture and went largely undocumented until the Middle Ages although the Feast itself has its earliest mention in the New Testament (John 10:22) and incidental reference is also made to it in the Mishna (Taanit 1:3, Rosh HaShanah 1:6, Bikkurim 6:6, Moed 3:6 and 3:4, Megillah 2:10 and Bava Kama 3:9 Katan), composed around 220 AD. These include the lighting of an increasing number of candles (hence "the Feast of Lights") until the eighth day when all eight are lit; playing with tops (dreidels) and the consumption of a jelly doughnut (*sufganiya*) and potato pancakes .

All of these but the tops are related to oil. Legend narrates to the need to prepare a quantity of sacred oil before temple worship could be restored. Later, more developed tradition tells the story of a single flask of sacred oil found in the temple, sufficient to burn the eternal lamp for one day, but which miraculously lasted for eight. The legend dates from the Middle Ages; it enjoys no support from earlier sources.

Still later, under the influence of Christmas traditions, which is celebrated at approximately the same time, Jews began gifting their children with "Hannuka money," monetary gifts which are now often translated into or accompanied by chocolate coins. The eight-branched candelabrum (Hannukiya), with a ninth candle (the "Shamash") used for the progressive lighting of the candles, is reminiscent of the seven-branched temple candelabrum but distinct from it.

The Hasmoneans became rulers of the country and, ironically, later were transformed into one of the main Hellenizing influences in the country, supported by the Jerusalem priestly caste led by the High Priest of the Zadokite family, whence the nomenclature "Sadducean" (a corruption of "Zaddocean") is derived. They were opposed by the Pharisees, whose own nomenclature probably derived from their resistance to Hasmonean cultural and religious compromises, ultimately withdrawing from the Hasmonean rule (*Pharisee* means 'one who withdraws'). Thus the ground was prepared for the landscape of religious convictions we find in the New Testament.

### Political Developments in Israel



Twenty months into the present Government's four-year term, Israel is facing new elections, scheduled for March 17, 2015. The coalition which formed the Government has collapsed both due to Prime Minister Netanyahu's lack of leadership skills and the significant disparity of political visions adhered to by the parties that have made up the coalition.



Netanyahu was primarily engaged in sustaining his Prime Ministership and the leadership of his party. As a result he has lost the first and is very likely to lose the second. On his right, upstart political novice Naftali Bennet was bent on strengthening his political standing as Israel's foremost right wing politician. On his left centrist Yair Lapid and Tsipi Livni laboured for the renewal of negotiations with the Palestinians and, at the same time, Lapid strove to be seen as Israel's primary centrist politician.

Netanyahu has been driven further and further to the right. His government sponsored xenophobic, nationalistic legislation that indicated fear, the lack of national confidence and increased insensitivity to civil liberties. The large non-Jewish minority in Israel was increasingly marginalized.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu was increasingly isolated in his own party and became the object of centrist and leftist scorn. On the right, in the center and the left of the political map there are calls for “anyone but Bibi.” Having served longer than all Israeli Prime Ministers except Ben Gurion, Benjamin Netanyahu has become the butt of widespread disgust. His wife’s reported high handedness, tantrums and hedonism, his own weakness in the home, his inability to make decisions and his reported dishonesty in relation to world leaders all make another term of office unlikely.

The fragmented political geography in Israel does not make for political stability: in the 120 seat legislative body, the Knesset, which confirms Governments into office, the largest party is not expected to win more than 25 seats. In consequence, political blocs composed of smaller parties are being formed in an effort to jointly gain a sufficient body of seats in the Knesset that will render impossible the formation of a Government without the bloc’s participation.

Three political entities will determine who will be asked to form the next government: newcomer Moshe Kahlon’s yet unnamed party (left wing economics, right wing politics), Avigdor Liberman’s Israel Beiteinu (Right wing, laboring to position himself as a Middle-of-the-roader) and the bloc of Orthodox parties. Oncoming elections may well determine whether Israel’s democracy remains intact; the nature of our society; the extent of continued national cohesion due to the growing gap between the extremely rich and the desperately poor, and the future of relations with the Palestinians, Arab nations and the world. Please pray.

### Emmanuel Tremellius

**The notable Hebraist , Emmanuel Tremellius** is perhaps one of the earliest recorded Hebrew Christians in the west. He was born in Ferrara, Italy in 1509/1510 as Giovanni Emmanuele Tremellio. His father, a Jewish doctor who understood the value of a good education, had his son trained in Hebrew, Chaldean and Syriac. The home was often filled with Christians, in particular theologians who wished to learn Hebrew and who gave him his first impressions of Christianity. In the 1530s, while in his twenties he began a course of study in the University of Padua where he was befriended by Alexander Farnese, later to become Pope Paul III. This friendship and Tremellius' discussions with the Cardinal Reginald Pole led to his conversion to Roman Catholicism.



These were the early years of the Protestant Reformation, which was beginning to make itself felt in Italy. The Court of Her Majesty Renata von Ferrara was a gathering point for many sympathetic to the Reformation and her children’s tutors were Evangelical. Tremellius' conversion to the Reformed Faith was due to a close friendship with Petrus Martyr Vermilius, who seems also to have had a great influence on his spiritual development. The acquaintance between the two began

when Martyr sought his aid in improving his Hebrew. They soon became friends. When Martyr founded a school in Lucca, he invited Tremellius to join him as a teacher of Hebrew. The school soon became popular among those who wished to follow the evangelical way.



On 21 July 1542 a papal bull introduced the Inquisition to Lucca. Martyr and his friends, Tremellius among them, were called to report to the court of the Inquisitor. Instead, they fled to Switzerland and there joined the Reformed Church. Later they travelled to Strasburg where Tremellius supported himself by teaching Hebrew and where he married Elisabeth, a former nun from Metz, who gave him two daughters and a son. Soon after his marriage he travelled to

England with Martyr, following an invitation from the Archbishop Cranmer, who lodged him in Lambeth Palace. The two collaborated with Cranmer in drafting the Anglican Articles of Faith and Liturgy. Reformation was furthered in England through the auspices of a Jewish convert.

Tremellius found employment in the University of Cambridge as King's Reader and Regius Professor of Old Testament in 1549. The then-princess Elizabeth visited him often and extended her friendship even when he was obliged to leave England following the death of her brother, King Edward VI, and the rise to power of the Catholic Queen Mary.

Back in Germany, Tremellius accepted a position as tutor to the children of Duke Zweibruecken Wolfgang, and directed the gymnasium at Hornback (1559). His Calvinist convictions, however, caused him to run afoul of his Lutheran employer. He was fired and imprisoned. Upon his release he became a vocal advocate for the imprisoned and oppressed evangelical Christians in Metz, with some success. He fared better the following year, when Frederic II, Count Palatine, himself a Calvinist, appointed him Professor of Old Testament Studies at the University of Heidelberg. There he supported the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism. The 15 years spend in Heidelberg were the most fruitful of his life.

In the course of this time, Tremellius paid another visit to England. Parker was the Archbishop and Elizabeth was on the throne. They received him warmly and would have gladly retained him in England. He returned to Heidelberg to find himself once more in conflict with the new ruler, a strong Lutheran, who stripped him of his post and expelled him from the city on 5 December 1577. Tremellius found employment teaching Hebrew at the newly-founded college at Sedan. He died in that town on October 9 1580.

Tremellius was active in this latter part of his life. But his deepest loyalty was to his kinsmen according to the flesh. In 1554 he published a translation into Hebrew of Calvin's catechism, entitled *Chinuch Bechire Jah* (Teaching for the Chosen of God), which taught the tenets of the Christian faith to his Jewish brethren in Question and Answer form, and which included many prayers. Throughout he testified to the truth of the Christian doctrine by expounding the truths of the Old Testament. In his foreword to this book he states the importance of winning the Jewish people for the Gospel by appealing to them in their own language rather than a foreign tongue, and echoed the Apostle Paul in a declaration of love for his

people. This same catechism was published in Hebrew, Greek and Latin in Leyden in 1591, in Yiddish in Madras 1544 and 1819. In 1820 the London Society for Israel republished it, and in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century it was distributed extensively among the Jews in Eastern Europe and Asia.

Perhaps the greatest work Tremellius produced was his translation into Latin of the Old Testament from Hebrew and the New from Syriac. This work was published in Frankfurt in 5 volumes between 1575 and 1579. His rendering was adopted by the Reformers as the most accurate Latin version of the Bible and was published in six different Protestant academic centers in some 30 different editions. John Milton relied heavily on this work, as did John Donne in his *Lamentations*.

### Ministry and Family News

#### **Family**

There is not much to report on the home front. **Eran** lost his father this month, some 18 months after losing his mother. **Avital** is seeking employment. Both the **Thompsons** (Keith and Shlomit) and the **Richardsons** (Marcus and Tamar) are celebrating their wedding anniversaries. **Elinor** Thompson and **Eliya** Richardson are easy, happy babies.

Work on our **old home** has been completed and we await the local Council's final approval. We have not yet been successful in selling our older home. Work on the **new home** is progressing.

#### Ministry

**Baruch** was asked to deliver a short series of lectures on the Pauline epistles. By way of preparation he is writing a brief **introduction to the Pauline epistles** – A brief life of the apostle, a survey of the churches to which he wrote, of the issues that plagued the apostolic church, and then of each of the letters: characteristics, main theme, the argument and an outline. This is turning into a little book of some 50 pages he intends to have published. There is nothing of the sort available in Hebrew.

Preparing for these lectures has forced him to delay further work on **Romans**, but he expects to return to that project within a week or so and is still aiming at completion in the first quarter of 1025. Hopefully, he will also be able to commence, if not complete, writing a commentary on **Nahum**.

Preparations for the USA trip continue with good progress. There are still a number of windows open, particularly as the Maozes travel along the northern border States. Interested Churches should write to [languageservices4u@gmail.com](mailto:languageservices4u@gmail.com)

At the end of this month I celebrate my 71st birthday. This is an opportunity to thank God for 71 years of grace and 51 years in Christ. As I look back, I am amazed by the overwhelming kindness God has shown me through the years. I thank him, too, for unexpectedly good health at this advanced age, for the opportunity to serve by preaching, teaching and writing, for my beloved family, and for the many friends whose prayers and love make my continued service possible. May God have all glory.

**Thank you for your prayers!**

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COME LET US REASON TOGETHER (On the Unity of Jews and Gentiles in the church) P&R. This book presents Christ as the fullness of divine revelation and his work as sufficient for our whole salvation.

JONAH: A PROPHET ON THE RUN, Shepherd Press. A devotional commentary on the book of Jonah.

MALACHI: A PROPHET IN TIMES OF DISTRESS, Crossbooks. A devotional commentary on the book of Malachi.

All three are available from Barnes & Noble and from Amazon.

Baruch's sermons may be heard, among other sites, on [Sermon Audio](#)  
To remain abreast of developing circumstances in Israel, visit the [MaozWeb](#) or "follow" Baruch on [FaceBook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and on [Twitter](#) (@BaruchMaoz).

Intermittent bulletins are produced as necessary.



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