The twenty-fifth day of Kislev is the Festival of Hanukkah, a/k/a the Festival of Lights. This year, 5784, Hanukkah begins on the evening of December 7th. This Festival lasts for eight days. The Hanukkah Menorah is different than the Menorah that was in the Temple. It has nine branches instead of seven; it is called the Hanukkiyah, which loosely translated means 'to begin again with G-d'. One of the branches sits higher than the others and is called the Shammash or Servant Candle. The Shammash lights all others. The oil lamps or candles are lit at twilight. The Hebrew sages say this points to the twilight of history.

The G-d-given traditions of Hanukkah are filled with prophetic insight and Messianic symbolism. The Rabbis say that Hanukkah is meant to serve as an introduction and preparation for the future redemption of Israel when the Messiah will come to transform the DARKNESS of the world into the LIGHT of the Messiah's Reign on earth. Hanukkah is meant to draw the participants into the Bible's final prophetic unfolding of the final deliverance from the final galut. (exile from G-d).

Hanukkah was established as a Festival after the defeat of the Greek/Syrian Antiochus Epiphanes who sought to erase Judaism in the land of Israel. Antiochus forbade the celebration of the Sabbath (the sign between man and G-d). He forbade circumcision (the sign of G-d's covenant with the Jewish people). He forbade the New Moon Celebration (the way the Feasts of the L-rd were determined). He also stopped all sacrifices and worship at the Temple of G-d. On the 15th of Kislev, 168 BCE, Antiochus sacrificed a pig on the bronze altar of sacrifice, desecrating the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, sparking a rebellion among the Jews.

Israel formed a small 'army' to fight against Antiochus' soldiers. Under the leadership of Mattathias the Maccabee, Israel defeated the Syrian forces exactly three years after the Temple of G-d was polluted. The Israelites began to repurify the Temple but could find only one small cruse of unprofaned oil, which would have been sufficient to keep the Temple Menorah lit for one day. It was lit on the 25th of Kislev and miraculously remained lit for eight days. It is believed that the light that emanated from the Menorah was Otherworldly Fire, or Primordial Light.

It is fascinating that one of the names that Jewish scholars ascribe to the Messiah is *Nehorah*, which describes that Primordial Light. In Daniel 2:22, Daniel says of G-d,
"He knows what dwells in darkness, and light dwells with him."
The Midrash
[1]

interprets this scripture as pertaining to the Messiah: ‘And Nehorah dwells with him.’ This is the Messiah-King, for it is written:
‘Arise, shine, for your light has come
’” (Isaiah 60:1). In other words, the Hebrew sages taught that Nehorah (a secret name for the Messiah) dwells with G-d.

When G-d said, *“Let there be light”* on the first day, the sun, moon, and stars had not yet appeared; they don’t emerge until the fourth day. The sages understood that the LIGHT that appeared on that first day alluded to the Messiah, Primordial Light, i.e. light that existed from the beginning of time. Primordial Light, the light that was separated from darkness in the beginning, is said to have been preserved by G-d for the righteous.

The prophet Isaiah has much to say about the Messiah, often referring to Him as LIGHT. He calls the Messiah: a great LIGHT (Isaiah 9:2), the LIGHT of Israel (10:17), a LIGHT to the Gentiles (42:6; 49:6), the LIGHT of justice (51:4), the everlasting LIGHT (60:19, 20). There were several times that this LIGHT appeared in the Torah. For instance, the ‘Burning Bush’ was not actually burning, but Fire was resting upon it, that Fire being the Nehorah. Then, at Mt. Sinai, Exodus 19:18 says the L-rd descended upon the mountain in Fire. The mountain did not burn up, but the L-rd appeared as Fire, the Nehorah. In the same way, the menorah lights that stayed lit for eight days did so because their source of fuel was not earthly. It was Otherworldly, the Nehorah.

But, long before the Festival of Lights was established, the prophet Haggai gave a word to the returning exiles. On the twenty-fourth of Kislev, he said, the people of G-d would be blessed from that day forward, i.e. the twenty-fifth of Kislev, *“Yet from this day on I will bless you.”* (Haggai 2:19c)

While Haggai was speaking of their obedience in rebuilding the Temple of the L-rd during that day, it is a cryptic reference to the far future blessing of G-d that the Israelites experienced when they rededicated the Temple of the L-rd on that same day during the time of the Maccabees. This established the Festival of Hanukkah, during which G-d’s deliverance/redemption from Antiochus Epiphanes is celebrated, as well as the miracle of the Menorah lights remaining lit without ‘natural’ oil.

Yet, as remarkable as this was, it pointed to a still future historic event that was extraordinary and tremendously significant in G-d's plan of world redemption. It marks the day that the angel Gabriel visited Mary, the day the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and the power of the Highest overshadowed her, impregnating her with the Holy One, the Son of G-d, the Light of the world.

The Old Testament is filled with "cryptic hints" and prophecy of what the Messiah would be like, when He would appear and how He would live. However, the miraculous virgin birth of the Messiah is probably the most widely disputed prophecy. In a discussion of the scripture in Isaiah 53:2a, *"He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground,"* Torah scholar, Risto Santala says the following:

A Rabbi once said that there was here a cryptic hint of the Messiah's miraculous birth, in that he will be born, as it were, from ground "which has not yet been ploughed and in which no seed has been planted". Anyone who does not understand the figurative language behind those words cannot understand the nature of the Old Testament Messianic hope. [2]

The above Scripture (Isaiah 53:2a) along with the "Closed Womb Prophecy" [3] recorded in Isaiah 7:1 through 9:7 indicates a virgin birth. In the Zohar,
[4]
for instance, it is revealed that in the text of this prophecy
(Isaiah 9:7)
, the scribe of Isaiah used a closed 'mem' in the middle of a word in this passage. Grammatically, the Hebrew letter 'mem' is open at the top except when it appears at the end of a word where there, it appears closed. "The Zohar decides that the closed "mem" in this passage refers to the fact that the Messiah will be born from a closed womb."
[5]

In fact, the renowned Jewish scholar, Prof. David Flusser, when asked about the Virgin Birth of Yeshua said, *"Nor does that go against Jewish thinking."* [6] In the Talmud several rabbis attest that the Messiah will have no [human] father. For instance, R. Simeon Be Jochai states, *"That the Spirit, by the impulse of a mighty power, shall come forth of the womb, though shut up, that will become a mighty Prince, the King Messiah."*
Rabbi Joden likewise commented,
"Truth shall be born, but shall spring out; because the generation and nativity of the Messiah is not to be as other creatures in the world, but shall be begot without carnal copulation; and therefore no one hath mentioned his father, as who must be hid from the knowledge of men till

himself shall come and reveal him."
[7]

If these scriptures and rabbinical commentaries do, indeed, point to the fact that the Messiah would be born to a virgin, we can expect that G-d would have revealed it in the Feasts celebrated by His people. For instance, His death, burial, and resurrection are rehearsed annually in the Feast of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Firstfruits. The outpouring of His Holy Spirit is remembered each year on Shavuot (Pentecost). In addition, many believe His virgin birth occurred on the first day of Sukkot (on the 15th of Tishrei). We can, therefore, be sure that every momentous event in the history of G-d's redemption is and will be marked by a Feast Day (moed). The day that Mary was approached by the angel Gabriel to announce that she was chosen to be the one to give birth to the Messiah "the tender shoot" is certainly a momentous event in the redemption scenario.

"Now in the sixth month (of Elizabeth's pregnancy) the angel Gabriel was sent by G-d to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favored one, the L-rd is with you; blessed are you among women!' … Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with G-d. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name [Yeshua]. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the L-rd G-d will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.' Then Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I do not know a man?' And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of G-d. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with G-d nothing will be impossible.' Then Mary said, 'Behold the maidservant of the L-rd! Let it be to me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her." (Luke 1:26-28, 30-38)

While the date of this occurrence is not given in the scriptures, it does say that Mary's cousin Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy. In the article "Happy Birthday Yeshua", the dates surrounding the Messiah's birth are carefully traced to the information given in the scriptures. Elizabeth's conception can be traced to the festival of Shavuot and since she was six months pregnant at the time Mary was visited by the angel Gabriel, the visitation would have occurred in the month of Kislev.

The number eight symbolizes "the spiritual realm" and "new beginnings". This eight-day festival

points to a new beginning for mankind when the Otherworldly Fire, Primordial Light, Yeshua entered the world through a virgin, procuring the miraculous victory over death (Romans 6:9, 1 Corinthians 15:54),
i.e. spiritual death. Using nine candles memorializes the nine months of Mary's pregnancy. At the moment of conception, "Light" came into the world in Mary's womb. We commemorate the immaculate conception each night when we light the Shammash, the Servant Candle that characterizes the Messiah. As each additional candle is lit by the Shammash, it is visually brighter each night. On the eighth night when all nine candles are lit, the Hanukkiyah becomes an explosion of light, epitomizing the birth of the Messiah when the Primordial Light becomes visible to the world. The last night is called Zot Hanukkah, meaning, "This is it!" — the full brightness expected when the Messiah comes [at the end of days].

The game of Dreidl played on Hanukkah points to the miracle of the oil lasting 8 days when there was only enough for one day. A wooden or plastic top known as a dreidl has different Hebrew letters on four sides--the letters Nun, Gimel, Hay, and Poh. These letters form an acronym for the phrase: Nais Gadol Hoyoh Poh, "A Great Miracle Happened Here." While this game points to the miracle of the oil, it also pointed forward to the Holy Spirit (oil) overshadowing Mary, leading to the wonderful miracle of our Savior's birth. The dreidl has become a national symbol of the Messianic Hope.

When L-rd went back to Heaven to wait for the day of His return (Acts 3:21), His Light never left the world. Instead, He sent His Holy Spirit to live within us to carry that Light to all those still living in the darkness of sin and unbelief.

"And He said to them…you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

We, as carriers of G-d's Holy Light are called upon to bring the Light of the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden." (Matthew 5:14)

Kee Va Mo'ed (The Appointed Time Has Come)

[1] An early Jewish interpretation of or commentary on a Biblical text

[2] Santala, Risto. 1992. *The Messiah in the Old Testament in the Light of Rabbinical Writings*. Jerusalem: Yanetz Limited. p 197

[3] See Articles titled *The Closed Womb Prophecy Part I, II, and III*

[4] The Zohar is a Hebrew spiritual text that explains the secrets of the Bible, the Universe and every aspect of life.

[5] Santala, Risto. 1992. *The Messiah in the Old Testament in the Light of Rabbinical Writings*. Jerusalem: Yanetz Limited. p 194

[6] ibid

[7] http://www.hadavar.org/critical-issues/messianic-prophecy/the-torah/genesis-49-the-lion-of-judah/jewish-positions-or-objections/