

Hanukkah is the story of a righteous remnant who stayed faithful to God even unto death



12Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory rests upon you. 1 Peter 4:12-14

Coming Persecution & the Hanukkah Story

One of the themes of the Hanukkah story is enduring and overcoming in the midst of great persecution and trial. This is an increasingly relevant festival for us to commemorate each year...especially as our world gets darker and darker. There is a small but growing number of Believers who are warning that America is heading for a time of increasing persecution for Believers in Yeshua. And, even if times of greater trials are not imminent for us, Yeshua

prophesied in Matthew 24:9 of a coming time when all ethnic people groups will hate us as Believers because of our identification with Him. In light of this, it is wise for us as His followers to prepare ourselves for coming difficulty. Here are a few thoughts on how we can better do this:

1. We believe the Scriptures that persecution/tribulation is coming for all Believers...and in many cases for our brothers and sisters around the world the tribulation is already here. The worst type of punch is a sucker punch where you are not expecting to be hit. The first item for preparation is simply to understand this and expect that times of greater persecution and tribulation will come to us as Believers. A large number of Christians are expecting just the opposite: namely that we will be "raptured out" before suffering, persecution, and tribulation comes our way. This line of reasoning will leave many Believers unprepared and open to the sucker punch of a coming difficulty that they are not ready for.

2. We inform ourselves of the stories of others who persevered in great trial. This is one of the great benefits of the Hanukkah story. On an annual basis we recount the story of a small group of Believers who stayed faithful to God while enduring great persecution and suffering. There are many other stories of saints who stayed faithful even unto death in the midst of great suffering. Voice of the Martyrs founded by Richard Wurmbrand has a number of helpful resources for those interested in studying the lives of these faithful saints who have gone before us (<https://www.persecution.com>).

3. We cultivate a life-giving relationship with Yeshua and walk in active love and forgiveness. Our relationship with Yeshua is one that is intended to grow and that we are to consistently cultivate. We are also to grow in actively walking in love and forgiveness towards those who hate us because of our identification with Yeshua. We can't remain in this place of love and forgiveness without a life-giving relationship with Yeshua.

4. We set our focus on the eternal. For the joy set before Him, Yeshua endured the cross and despised its shame (Hebrews 12:2). We too can endure difficulty by focusing on the glorious future which is ahead of us as

Believers. We are to realize that our present (or coming) afflictions are working in us an eternal weight of glory beyond compare (2 Corinthians 4:17-18). We also realize that in the midst of our suffering that the Spirit of glory rests upon us (2 Peter 4:14) and that no difficulty can separate us from Yeshua's love (Romans 8:35-39).

5. We stay connected in biblical community. There is a strong admonition for continuing to meet together with other Believers--and all the more in the tumultuous times preceding Yeshua's return (Hebrews 10:25). There is strong accountability, support, and protection in staying actively connected to other weak, fellow saints. This is part of the reason that we are intentional at emphasizing the small house churches within the Lighthouse. In times of greater persecution we will need to continue to draw together but won't be able to do it as easily or safely in a larger setting.

In closing, I have gotten some kickback over the years for continuing to talk about suffering and persecution in the lives of Believers. Many don't appreciate the perceived negativity of such a message. But, I see that the Bible clearly emphasizes repeatedly that we as Believers will suffer for a short time on our earthly sojourn in preparation for the coming glory and joy that will be ours for all eternity at Yeshua's return.