



## Walking in the *Foot Prints* of Jesus

A Discipleship Journey

*The OLD TESTAMENT*- Their Story is Our Story

### *Chanukah*

Chanukah, the Jewish feast of Lights, is very briefly described in Maccabees 1 and 2. Yet this is an important holiday for our Jewish brothers and sisters and another example of a miraculous work of God in the Old Testament.

Following the exile, a small portion of the remaining Jews returned to Jerusalem. Alexander the Great ruled the land. These Jews lived in relative peace and some of them even began to take on Greek customs and worship Greek gods. The faithful Jews were allowed to practice their religion and customs. When Alexander died, his two generals divided all the land that Alexander had conquered. The 2 factions fought with each other and both ruled Jerusalem at one time. They did not tolerate the Jews' way of life, traditions and religion and began to force the Greek way of life on the Jews. The Jews were forced to eat port, and to worship the Greek gods. They were not allowed to circumcise their sons and if caught, both father and child would be killed. The Greeks erected a statue of Zeus on the altar of the temple and would not allow the observance of the Sabbath. The faithful Jews grew tired of this and began to hate the Greeks. Mattathias Maccabee and his 5 sons gathered an army and using guerilla warfare, eventually took possession of Jerusalem from the Greek oppressors. This was a miracle in itself as the Jews had an army of 6000- 12,000 warriors while the Greeks had 50, 000 or more.

When the Jews recovered Jerusalem from the enemy, the first thing they did was to go to the temple and tear the statue of Zeus from the altar. The altar had been desecrated and so they removed it and built a new one according to the Law. They cleaned the area and replaced the necessary items of worship as best they could. When it was time to light the sanctuary lamp, only found one small flask of uncontaminated oil with the seal of the High Priest could be found. By Torah law, the flame of the *Menorah* (Candelabrum) in the Temple could only be lit with specially prepared pure olive oil. The amount of oil remaining in the one uncontaminated flask was only enough to burn for one day, and it would take eight days to produce a new batch of pure oil. Miraculously, it lasted 8 days, thus the reason that the Festival of Lights lasts 8 days. The winning of the battle was miraculous in itself but the feast focuses on the small lamp that shed a great light on God's goodness and power.

"Not by the army, not by power, but through My Spirit, says God" (Zechariah 4:6).

Why do you think the Jews decided to honor the miracle of the oil in the lamps rather than the miraculous winning of the battle with the Greeks?