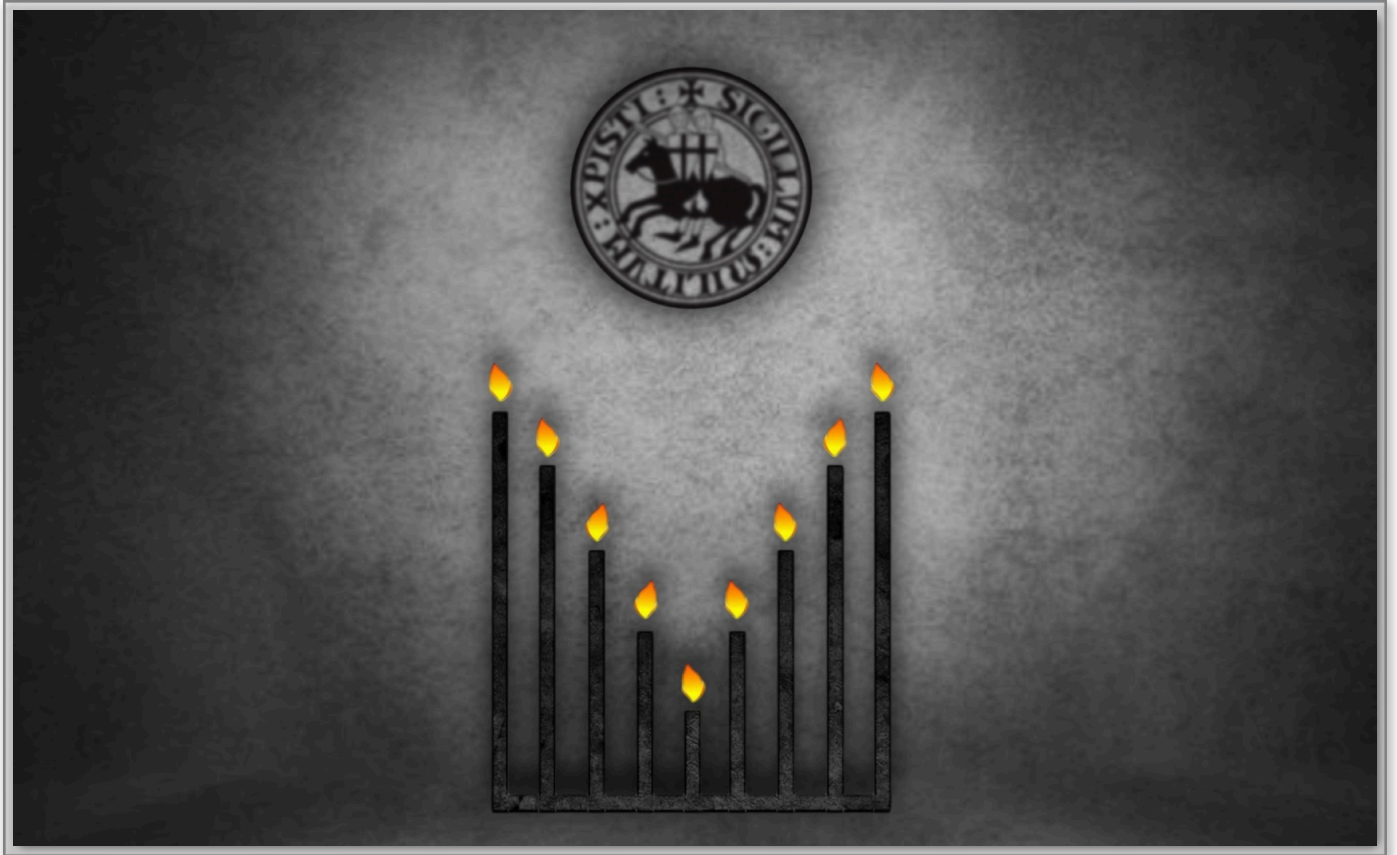


A TEMPLAR HANUKKAH

+ Christopher Talmidian Kkt +



Yes you read that right.
The Templars celebrated Hanukkah...
Although they called it Encaenium or Enkain.

“But,” you may say, “I thought Hanukkah was Jewish?” So is your Savior. Or did you forget your Messiah is Jewish? And what’s more, Hanukkah is a celebration He Himself actually practiced while He was with us. And why? Not merely because it’s Jewish or cause He is Jewish. After all just because a particular people celebrate something doesn’t mean it’s exclusively theirs. Most folks these days celebrate Christmas which is an amalgamation of American versions of Germanic customs to commemorate a Christian celebration originally instituted to substitute for a Roman holiday. But adherents don’t think they can’t celebrate it, because they aren’t American or German or Christian or Roman.

Hanukkah is not about being Jewish. It's about being dedicated to the truth against all odds. Hanukkah is about remaining uncompromised and uncompromising in the face of social pressures and sinful practices. So why would all holy people not want to celebrate that? As the world darkens why would every pure soul not wish to celebrate the Festival of Lights? And why would the disciples of Yeshua (He Whom the West has taken to calling "Jesus") not want to follow His example?

The Templars sure did.

No they didn't light menorahs and spin dreidels. They didn't eat donuts and latkes. And they didn't give out presents or have parties. That's all modern fluff built up to make a holiday more like a festive replacement for Christmas than a memorial of why we are set apart and commemoration of what it takes to dedicate the Temple of the Most High and to be a Temple for His Holy NAME.

For the first quarter century the *Order of the Poor Fellow Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon*, better known today as *Templars*, celebrated the Nativity of one "Iesus Christus" upon the 25th day of December just as all other good Christians in their time, a day which held for Templars more significance still being the anniversary of their founding. But Robert De Craon put an end to that initial custom (and a good many others) during his tenure as the second grandmaster of the Order. Not yet known as Christmas, the Nativity of "Iesus Christus" (not yet known as "Jesus Christ") was moved by Robert to the 31st day of May instead, and December 25th, kept as a commemoration of the founding of the Order as well as in many years the ninth day of Encaenium.

For the Templar Knights and Sergeants the celebration of the birth of the Messiah was moved due to its initial addition by the church to replace the birthday celebration of the Roman sun gods which converts were bringing with them, and Robert sought to distance the Order from those darker origins as much as possible. Therefore, for the Knights and Sergeants, the celebration was moved to May, unless it should coincide with a Holy Day, in which case it would be honored the day before or after, and thus might occasionally end up in June. For the rest of the Templars, the Nativity commemoration carried on as always, except it was turned into a day of fasting and prayer which Robert saw fit to utilize as a disguise of piety before the Catholic world which would not understand the abandonment of such longstanding tradition however heathen it had been in its initial introduction.

Robert introduced to the Knights and Sergeants instead what came to be called Encaenium, a memorial of the Dedication of the Temple. While the emphasis was, in fact, placed upon the rededication of the Temple, during the time of the Maccabees, after it had been defiled by the heathen, nevertheless, the Templars came to use this time to commemorate the Temple itself, and all the dedications from the dedication of the Tabernacle in the wilderness to the dedication of Solomon's Temple, the dedication of the Temple of Zerubbabel, in addition to its dedication during the Hasmonean (Maccabean) period.

Since there was always a very real danger of being seen by Christianity as Judaizing, a broad term of over generalization the Church often used (and still does to this day) for any biblical practice that they had already deemed to be exclusively Jewish, it was established that Encaenium would never coincide with the timing of the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah. On years when Hanukkah occurred toward the end of November, or the beginning of December, the Templars would celebrate Encaenium for the nine days leading up to December

25, a date they referred to as Servitum or Auxilium rather than as Nativitatis. And in years, when Hanukkah would fall late in December, the Templars celebrated Encaenium the second week of December, but then only for eight days, still leaving the ninth for December 25th.

The days leading up to Servitum, the Templars called Dies Parorum, also just called Parorum or Paraskain. These were days of repentance in preparation for the day of dedication. When Enkain came early, Paraskain would last from the 8th day till Servitum. And when Encaenium fell late in the month, the Dies Parorum would precede the first day of Encaenium.

A typical Templar Encaenium celebration involved a focus on the books of Maccabees which they would read repeatedly throughout the 8 days during their meals. In the evenings the Knights and Sergeants would gather for special services in honor of the dedication with a focus each day on one of the virtues of the Temple. They did not follow the tradition of lighting the Hanukkiah as this would have been instantly mistaken for a Jewish activity and alert the Inquisition. But in true Maccabean fashion the Knights would stab 9 spears into the ground in a circle with one in the center and these they would light on fire all at once. They burned nine spears every night making a total of 81. These spears, the Templars collected throughout the year from their defeated enemies along with their clothes and swords, otherwise utilized.

The Sergeants developed a private tradition as well, as most of these had lands and homes and families. During Encaenium, the sergeants would celebrate with the Knights but also with their families and in these events, their custom was more subtle than burning spears. They created an alternative form of the Hanukkah Menorah which they called a Rectus or Ferrum Novem. The Rectus was always plain iron shaped in a right angle, and forged from the iron of a defeated foe. On this, four candlesticks protruded running down each arm of the right angle in descending height. The outer ones were tallest and the inner ones shortest with the one on the point, The Servitum, the smallest of all. Throughout the year the Sergeants kept these upside-down as part of tables only breaking them out for Encaenium.

Unlike the Hanukkiah which is traditionally lit one candle the first night with an additional light kindled each evening till the last day of Hanukkah, the Sergeants lit their makeshift lampstands fully each night till the last. They made their candle wicks from the clothes of their fallen foes. At Encaneum the Templars took to praying for the souls of their fallen enemies in hopes that they too would receive mercy on judgement day, and recounting the tales throughout the year of battles and miracles that they each had experienced.

And at Servitum, the Templars commemorated their own dedication, recounted why they had removed the Nativity to a remote location on the calendar and resolved to be more righteous for the following year. On the evening of the 24th they initiated apprentices. During the day time of December 25 they raised up those who were becoming Serving Brothers in the Order or Sergeants. And in the evening the Knights acknowledged the new members of their ranks. Each of these services involved public and private aspects with symbols and customs which would and did seem extremely strange to outsiders...and led to rumors that would later be used against them at their mock trials.

To Templars, Hanukkah or Encaenium was not a cultural commemoration like it has become to the Jews. But instead a memorial of the Temple they were named for, the purpose it stood for and the holiness that it was required to have. Encaenium was to Templars a time to remember that the truth of Scripture is always under threat of annihilation, that those who obey the Book are always at odds with the wider world and much of nominal religion. It was a celebration of the Greater Temple that is the Messiah Himself and of the Temple of our collective selves which must be holy for His glory. And it is a day of dedication looking forward to that

wondrous day to come when the new Temple will be rebuilt on Mount Zion and the King of kings will reign there forever.

Likewise those who account themselves Templar Knights today ought in the same manner to imitate our ancient brethren. If you account yourself a Templar whether real or imagined the manner of your celebration should reflect those who came before you in this office. If you are but a Serving Brother then by all means keep the Nativity of the Messiah on December 25, but cut out that gaudy pomp and pedantry of pagan Germany you have inherited from the heathen. Your Templar forebears never did, nor ever would have so disgracefully behaved, claiming to honor the Savior. Give the heathen back their trees and wreaths, their Yule logs and Yuletide carols, their mistletoe and holly. If you are a Templar Serving Brother, this time is for you a solemn day of fasting and prayer not presents and feasting. And if you are accounted a Sergeant or a Knight, you have no right or business to claim Christmas as anything for you in this time of year. For you it is Servitum, Auxilium, the ninth day of Encaenium. If you are a Knight or Sergeant of the Temple your Christmas celebration is May 31st. And no pagan practices then are attached. It is a joyous occasion remembered with great glee but no garish decorations borrowed from the nations. On May 31st, unless it is a biblically required Holy Day of obligation, the day is Nativitatis (the Nativity) and it is all about the birth of Messiah into this world long ago.

So if you account yourself a Templar then make a choice this season, depending on your place in the House, to abandon the pagan pageantry of your ancestors and treat this day as a solemn ceremony of mourning for your sin or abandon the day entirely for the Knightly celebration in May. Which ever you do you have to choose, because it is not in the Templar way to celebrate the way the world does, and those who came before you in your rank did not do nor approve of what you have been about thus far.

