

## Why Didn't The Grinch Steal Chanukkah?

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Christmas has never found a warm spot in my heart. I was not raised with the holiday, just like I wasn't raised with winter in Los Angeles.

Recently, on a morning just before Thanksgiving, I was at the entrance to a Spokane public library waiting for it to open. I had a meeting scheduled with my editor. On my head I wore my black kippa (Jewish skullcap). Below that lay a longish graying beard on my chest.

A small loose group of people stood around. One man arrived who didn't see me. Soon, out of some light chit-chat, in a loud voice, he innocently said, "Christmas! Who doesn't like Christmas?" No one answered. Rhetorical boast? Yes.

I thought, *Who doesn't like Christmas? Well, gee, I don't.* But, no one turned to me with an inquiring, defining look, "And what about YOU?" Nor, did I do the throat-clearing maneuver to announce, "Ah hem! If you're curious—I don't!" The moment passed like the settling Red Sea—after closing over the Egyptian army. But, that merry exclamation posed as a question, set off all kinds of seasonal disorder affects which collided in my Messianic Jewish psyche. My mind and heart rattled as though fearing the next four weeks' imprisonment in an isolated cell in which Christmas carols are piped in 24/7. I have an extremely low threshold for the mostly artificial joyful song repertoire. Whether Frosty the Snowman or Handel's Messiah, I've heard more than enough in retail stores for one lifetime.

While waiting for the library doors to open, I felt like the elephant no one wanted to acknowledge. No one said, "Oops, hey buddy! It's doubtful that this Jew here celebrates....ahh well, never mind."

One annual Christmas gripe I have is the typical cast of the standard Nativity scene. I believe each set needs to have a number of small signs staked in the ground. The word "Jew" with a red arrow pointing to the appropriate players. That would help. I can hear the shocked expressions, "A Jew!" "Mary one of them?" "No, not the awestruck shepherds, too!" "The sheep, nah?" (Yes, sheep can be Jewish too—for years my parents doted over their two pet dogs who eventually converted to Judaism with tails wagging.) The quaint baby Jesus somehow ended-up being a Jew too (born King of the Jews)—a much overlooked truth which a simple sign could rectify. Poor Joseph, he's always old and bald—Jewish. No sign needed for the dutiful generic angels in attendance. Only the gift-giving foreigners—those three mysterious wise men—their lineage? Unknown.

Gripe #2. Akin to WMDs (Weapons of Mass Destruction), many astute Bible teachers postulate that Jesus, born King of the Jews, was not a December baby! They believe the event occurred in late Spring or was it the Fourth of July? There are good reasons which deal with translations, cultural stuff and something to do with sun spots--which I bid you to research. This theory requires a

hand-held calculator, a scorecard and hopping through several scriptural hoops. Certain brands of Messianic Judaism require the same; but having “Yeshua” born during the harvest festival (September or October). This holiday is called Sukkot, otherwise known as the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths/Shelters. To them, the Gospel’s “no room at the inn” meant that Yosef and Miriam found – not a cave – not a manger--but something called a sukkah. They borrowed or rented one for the night. A sukkah is a temporary, three-sided hut with palm leaves and tree branches for a roof, with produce of the Land dangling. These are built today, especially in Israel, during the week long Sukkot celebration. Historically, December 25<sup>th</sup> had something to do with a smokin’ hot pagan holiday, which the controversial Roman Emperor Constantine, in 336AD, wedded to something called Christianity and its founder’s birth. Some Eastern Orthodox churches hold to January 7<sup>th</sup> as the birth date. Unsettling is the simple fact that the New Testament does not provide a day, month or season.

Gripe #3. Recently, I visited a Hobby Lobby store. Semi-trucks stuffed with holiday decorations had come, then off-loaded, left, and would no doubt be returning soon with more. Aisle after aisle provided hundreds of ways to fluff up Christmas. Chanukkah? I could’ve purchased all the Jew-gear in stock, and by using simple laws of physics I’d still have room in my shopping cart for several grinning unisex elves!

Oh, about the self-centered, devious Grinch? He passed over the target of Jewville during Chanukkah. He knew that the inhabitants, already having experienced a long bitter history of discrimination, persecution from Christians (including good ol’ Martin Luther), attacks by Moslems, made fun of, cruel Inquisitions, pogroms, burned alive, accused of being Christ-killers, murdered by Crusaders, and nightmarish expulsions from country after country – *Jews* were prone to expect abuse on a grand scale. Without satisfaction to be enjoyed, the Grinch visited his evil elsewhere.

Do I wish that the Grinch had stolen Christmas for real? Yes and no. If he were to remove the commercialism to shop til you drop, and then left standing the generic winter-appropriate characters, i.e. snowmen and snow-women, etc. (who hold no religious beliefs). And, if Mr. Grinch reigned in Santa’s workaholic, excessive global traveling, and his multitude of belling-ringing, human imitator clones. And, finally, finally, if he made Nativity scene(s) historically accurate...I might be against the Grinch’s diabolical holiday thievery.

But for now, WATCH OUT Whoville. Sleep with one eye open!

Another story from REAL LIFE (that I made up!) This parody news story is for amusement. Any similarity to real people, Grinches, places or things is fictitious and not to be taken as fact.

*These Things Make Me Grumpy*