

Chanukah [חַנּוּכָה] means dedication or inauguration - today we call it a grand opening.

The 1st dedication was the tabernacle, the tent of meeting.

Exodus 40:34-35 Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of YHVH filled the Tabernacle. Moses was unable to enter into the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud resided there and the glory of YHVH filled the Tabernacle.

The 2nd dedication was the of the temple of Solomon [הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הַשֵּׁנִי] - the first Temple.

Solomon was in charge of building the temple [1 Kings 6:1,37-38] - it took seven years. When it was finished, Solomon had the dedication at the time of Sukkot [1 Kings 8:2-6].

2 Chronicles 5:11-14 [summary] When the priests and the singers made themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify YHVH, accompanied by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, saying, "He indeed is good for His lovingkindness is everlasting," then the house, the house of YHVH, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand up to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of YHVH filled the house of God.

It was a huge barbecue of 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep as peace/goodwill/friendship offerings. *2 Chronicles 5:2-7:11 (1 Kings 8:1-66)* It was in the 7th month and lasted a total of 14 days - from 2 days before Yom Kippur to Sukkot, and then to the end of the 8th day of Sukkot - then they went home on the 23rd day of the 7th month.

After 490 years of not performing shmita (the sabbatical years), God sent the Jews out of the land until those 70 sabbatical years were completed (490 ÷ 7).

2 Chronicles 36:20-21 He exiled to Babylon those who had escaped the sword and they became slaves to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia - in fulfillment of the word of YHVH by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had paid back her Shabbat rests - for as long as it lay desolate - the Shabbat rest was kept till 70 years were complete.

Jeremiah 25:11-12 "So this whole land will be a desolate ruin, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon for 70 years. Then it will come to pass, when 70 years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation," declares YHVH, "the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, and I will make it ruins forever."

Jeremiah 29:10 For thus says YHVH: "After 70 years for Babylon are complete, I will visit you, and fulfill My good word toward you - to bring you back to this place."

Nebuchadnezzar II destroyed Jerusalem in his 18th year (587 BCE), and a later deportation occurred in Nebuchadnezzar II's 23rd year (582 BCE). Most Jews were deported to Babylon, and there they managed to survive - like stories from Daniel and Ezekiel and Esther.

Later the Medes and Persians take over Babylon, and the Jews are even allowed to prosper.

538 B.C.E.	Edict of Cyrus (first return from Exile).
------------	---

Isaiah 44:28 while saying of Cyrus, "He is My shepherd, and he shall fulfill all My purpose;" while saying to Jerusalem, "You will be built;" and to the Temple, "Your foundation will be laid."

Isaiah 45:1-3 Thus says YHVH to His anointed, Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him, to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him so that gates may not be shut. I will go before you and make crooked places straight. I will shatter bronze doors and cut through iron bars. I will give you treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, so you may know that I am YHVH, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.

Isaiah 45:13 "I stirred Cyrus up in righteousness and I will level all his roads. He will build My city and set My exiles free, with no price or bribe," says YHVH-Tsva'ot.

2 Chronicles 36:22-24 Now in the first year of King Cyrus of Persia - fulfilling the word of YHVH by the mouth of Jeremiah - YHVH stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing, saying: "Thus says King Cyrus of Persia 'YHVH, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. He has appointed me to build Him a House in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever among you of all His people may go up and may YHVH his God be with him.'"

520-515 B.C.E.	Jerusalem ("Second") Temple rebuilt.
----------------	--

520 B.C.E.	Judean Prophet Haggai .
------------	---

450-400 B.C.E.	Reformation led by Ezra and Nehemiah.
----------------	---

This was also the time of the book of Esther.

438 B.C.E.	Achashverosh becomes king of Persia.
426 B.C.E.	First decrees by Haman; fast ordered by Esther, Haman's downfall and execution.
425 B.C.E.	Haman's ten sons executed; Purim celebration.
424 B.C.E.	Megillah recorded.

The prophecies of returning to Zion are linked to Cyrus (the first one). Some Jews did return, in three different migrations. Eventually a temple was built - not nearly as grand as the one Solomon built, but still a working temple - see the stories in Ezra and Nehemiah and Haggai.

The 3rd dedication was when the wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. The people gathered before the remnant of the Temple at Yom Teru'ah (Nehemiah 8:2) and renewed their covenant, and celebrated Sukkot. The wall had its own dedication [חנוכה] after that (Nehemiah 12:27).

The 4th dedication was restoring the Temple one year after the Syrians (under Greek leadership) had desecrated the temple. It took one year to clean up everything.

2 Maccabees 10:5-8 Now upon the same day that the temple had been polluted by the strangers, on the very same day it was cleansed again, to wit, on the five and twentieth day of the month of Kislev. And they kept eight days with joy, **after the manner of the Feast of the Tabernacles**, remembering that not long before they had kept the Feast of the Tabernacles when they were in the mountains, and in dens like wild beasts. Therefore they now, carried boughs, and green branches, and palms for Him that had given them good success in cleansing His place. And they ordained by a common statute, and decree, that all the nation of the Jews should keep those days every year.

This did not just "happen" suddenly. The background to this is important.

333/331 B.C.E.	Alexander the Great conquers the Land of Israel.
----------------	--

Alexander (the Great) met the high priest who came out to welcome him - it was a complex political move of pledging troops to Alexander after turning away from both Persia and Egypt. The story is in the [Jewish Antiquities](#) of Josephus. The priests and others from Israel had come out in their best dress - no weapons - and impressed Alexander so much the he blessed God and greeted the high priest. Alexander had a dream about this meeting, and that the troops from Israel would help Alexander in conquering Persia. He granted them political and religious freedom because of this, and they did need not pay tribute every seventh year.

After Alexander died, his generals divided Alexander's conquests into three kingdoms - Greece and the area around it, Asia Minor and Syria, and Egypt. The Ptolemy rule in Egypt clashed with the Seleucid rule in Syria over who should rule the area we now call Israel. Eventually Ptolemy won, and allowed Israel the same freedoms as Alexander promised. Later the Seleucids won, and initially did the same for Israel. Both rules extended Greek culture (Hellenism) into the area, but not forcing it.

When Antiochus (the Seleucid ruler) died, his descendant Antiochus Epiphanes took over, and he had strong desire for all his subjects to completely convert to Hellenism, to convert Israel to just another government of people who lived like the Greeks. The Seleucids were from Syria, so there was a Middle Eastern influence, and the culture was mostly from Greece, allowing a mixture of false gods, and requiring rejection of YHVH. This did not go well in Israel.

At first the Hellenized Jews went along with the new royal proclamations to shut down worship of other religions and only honor the gods of Greece; they were met with fierce resistance by fundamentalists, who continued to live by the Torah. During this time Epiphanes attempted to defeat the Ptolemy rulers in Egypt, but when he arrived, he discovered that the Romans had allied with Egypt, so he returned. At that time, a rumor came that he had died in the conflict - not true, but the fundamentalists took advantage and removed the Hellenists from power by tossing them over the Temple walls to the canyon one hundred feet below. Epiphanes was furious, and retaliated by killing 10,000 Jews in Jerusalem, and then declaring Greek worship a requirement and anything else punishable by extreme measures. He totally prohibited the fulfillment of any mitzvot of the Jewish religion, and any Jew found observing the Sabbath or circumcising his son was put to death. He likewise forced upon the Jewish population idolatrous rites and food prohibited by Torah, chiefly the eating of swine's flesh. The Temple was desecrated and henceforward named after Olympian Zeus. Contrary to Antiochus' expectations, the majority of the nation remained faithful to its religion, and members of its various classes showed a readiness to undergo martyrdom.

In the village of Modin, and old priest was shocked when a fellow Jew went forward to make a sacrifice on the Greek altar, so Mattathias killed that Jew and the Syrian officer superintending the event. The sons of Mattathias, from the Hasmonean family, continued the rebellion after their father died. They were known by the nickname Maccabees (hammer). Many Israelites suffered tremendous persecution. Hiding the Torah and masquerading as obedient subjects was not enough for the truly dedicated believers, so they revolted. The war surprised the Hellenists, who were shocked at the extreme measures of the government, but they still continued their pagan ways, so the fundamentalists fought fellow Jews as well as Syrian military.

When the Maccabees recaptured Jerusalem and completed the purification of the Holy Temple, they were faced with a problem. The Hellenistic Syrian polytheists (who had taken over the Temple for the previous three and a half years) had polluted and desecrated the Temple mount and the Temple by the pagan rituals that had been performed there. They had been in control of the Temple a few months before. For a fourth year, in the month of Tishrei, believers had refused to go on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate Sukkot, because the Temple was still unclean.

Now that the Temple was under control of the fundamentalists, the people began cleansing the Temple mount, and then completed the purification of the Temple. It took one year to clean up everything. The (re)dedication of the restored temple happened one year after the Syrians (under Greek leadership) had desecrated the temple.

Their first act was to **belatedly celebrate Sukkot, ten weeks later**, in the month of Kislev. They had NOT celebrated Sukkot for four years! Celebrating the Sukkot pilgrimage in Jerusalem's Holy Temple was so important, that it was "better late than never."

They marched around the Temple altar seven times and sang the Hallel Psalms as on any ordinary Sukkot, celebrating for eight days. They also participated in the Sukkot torchlight processions, and enjoyed the large golden oil lamps burning in the Temple Courtyard which lit up the entire city of Jerusalem. (Mishnah Sukkah 4:9-5:5) There was insufficient oil for the Temple menorah and these other lamps, so that may be how we got the story of the miracle of the oil, reminding us of the story of Elisha and the widow's oil.

SO - The first eight-day celebration of the Maccabees was a belated Sukkot celebration.

The following year, the new Festival of Chanukah, celebrating the purification and rededication (Chanukah) of the Temple, borrowed some of the rituals of Sukkot from that first celebration - the eight days, the recital of Hallel Psalms, the lights brightly glowing (eventually in every Jewish home).

The book of Second Maccabees (in the two letters that open the book) urges the Jews of Alexandria to adopt this new festival, which they were slow to accept. The author claims that his source for the history of the Maccabean war was a (now lost) larger five-volume history by one Jason of Cyrene. The purification of the Temple is summarized here.

2 Maccabees 10:1-8 Judah the Maccabee and his men, under the Lord's leadership, recaptured the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. ... After purifying the Temple, they made a new altar... a new fire and ... offered sacrifices and incense ... lit the lamps. ... On the anniversary of the very same day on which the Temple had been defiled, the 25th of Kislev, they now purified the Temple. And they kept eight days with joy, after the manner of the Feast of the Tabernacles (Sukkot), knowing that (a few months before) on Sukkot they had been unable to celebrate at the Temple and had spent the festival (hiding) like wild animals in the mountains and caves. Therefore they now carried boughs, and green branches, and palms for Him that had given them good success in cleansing His place, and sang hymns of praise (Hallel), to the One Who had given them the victory that had brought about the purification of His Temple. By a vote of the community they decreed that the whole Jewish nation should celebrate these festival days every year.

Yeshua went to the Temple to celebrate Chanukah.

John 10:22-42

At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Yeshua was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. The religious leaders then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Messiah, tell us plainly."

Yeshua answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. **I and the Father are one.**"

The religious leaders picked up stones again to stone Him.

Yeshua answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?"

Chanukah חנוכה

The religious leaders answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God."

Yeshua answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I SAID, YOU ARE GODS'? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father."

Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp. And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where Yochanan was first baptizing, and He was staying there. Many came to Him and were saying, "While Yochanan performed no sign, yet everything Yochanan said about this man was true." Many believed in Him there.

So many paths to pursue in this passage, but the point is - Yeshua considered Chanukah an important celebration.

Chanukah is an additional holiday on which we can give thanks to God, not just for the fruits of the land, but even more importantly, for the fruits of attaining freedom to worship according to our own religious principles.