

**Chanukah** [ חֲנֻכָּה ] means dedication or inauguration.

The **1<sup>st</sup> 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 **2<sup>nd</sup> dedication** was the temple of Solomon [הֵיכַל שְׁלֹמֹה] - 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 7<sup>th</sup> month and lasted a total of 14 days - from 2 days before Yom Kippur to Sukkot, and then to the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> day of Sukkot - then they went home on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month.

The **3<sup>rd</sup> 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 on Yom Teru'ah (Nehemiah 8:2) and renewed their covenant, and celebrated Sukkot. The wall had its own dedication after that (Nehemiah 12:27).

Now we get to the dedication we celebrate today.

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

*2 Maccabees 10:6-7*

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.

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 from Jerusalem 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 he blessed God and greeted the high priest. Alexander had a dream about this meeting, that the troops from Israel would help Alexander in conquering Persia. He granted them political and religious freedom because of this, and they did not need to 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 a 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 in Israel 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 the expectations of Epiphanes, 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, an old priest (Mattathias) 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 (gambling) 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 Seleucid government, but the Hellenists still continued their pagan ways, so the fundamentalists fought fellow Jews as well as Syrian military.

The Hellenists and Syrian polytheists took control of the Temple, and after a few months they polluted and desecrated the Temple mount and the Temple by performing pagan rituals there for three and a half years. When the Maccabees recaptured Jerusalem and began the purification of the Temple, they were faced with a problem. 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 first act of the Maccabees was to belatedly celebrate Sukkot, ten weeks later than normal, in the month of Kislev. They had NOT celebrated Sukkot in the Temple 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 actually 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).

And now you know the rest of the story.

But wait - there's more!

Chanukah is mentioned in the Bible - in the gospel of John.

Yeshua went to the Temple to celebrate Chanukah.

*John 10:22-30*

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 point is - Yeshua considered Chanukah as an important celebration.

Chanukah is a holiday on which we can give thanks to God for the freedom to worship Him.