

HANUKKAH OR FEAST OF LIGHTS

1. Hanukkah is the Feast of the Dedication commemorating the purification of the Temple in Jerusalem built by Zerubbabel, which had been defiled by Antiochus Epiphanes IV of Syria. (John 10:22). **NOTE:** It is called the “(re)dedication of the altar” in the non-canonical book of 1 Maccabees 4:52-59 found in the Apocrypha. The purification included the removal of the old polluted altar and the restoration of the worship of God.
2. It is also called the Feast of Lights lasting (8) days in commemoration of the restoration of this temple by Judas Maccabees (Maccabees means “Hammer”) and the miracle associated with the dedication. (Josephus, *Antiquities*, xii, 7, 7)
3. It begins on the 25th of the Hebrew month of Kislev (9th month) and continues until the 2nd of Tebeth (10th month).
4. The word Hanukkah comes from the Hebrew and Aramaic:
 - a. חֲנֻכָּה - hanukkah - (Heb. noun) - an initiation; a dedicatory service or sacrifice. (found only in: Num. 7:10, 11, 84, 88; 2 Chron. 7:9; Neh. 12:27a, 27b; Psa. 30:[title]1)
 - b. חָנַךְ - hanak - (Heb. verb) - to make narrow, to put into the mouth, to taste; to initiate, to dedicate, to commence, to use (found only in: Deut. 20:5a 5b; Prov. 22:6; 1 Kings 8:63; 2 Chron. 7:5)
 - c. חֲנֻכָּה - hanukkah - (Aramaic noun) - a dedication (found only in: Ezra 6:16, 17; Dan. 3:2,3)
5. The word dedication is found in the Greek:
 - a. ἐγκαινία - enkainia - (noun) - dedication (found only in John 10:22)
6. The chronology leading to this dedication is found in 1 Maccabees 1:1-4:61:
 - a. Jerusalem was captured by Syria in 170 BC. (1 Maccabees 1:20-28)
 - b. The temple was defiled by Antiochus in 168 BC. (1 Maccabees 1:54-64)
 - c. Mattathias and his five sons began a revolt in 167 BC. (1 Maccabees 2:1-70)
 - d. Judas Maccabees and his brothers and an army of 10,000 won the revolt and restored the temple in 164 BC. (1 Maccabees 4:36-61)
7. **Talmudic** tradition tells us that while preparing for the dedication there was found only enough oil to kindle the **eternal lamp** for one night, but when the oil was put into the lamp it burned for (8) nights.
 - a. **Talmud** - the authoritative written body of Jewish tradition.
 - b. **Ner tamid** - (נֵר תָּמִיד - Heb. noun) - eternal light

8. In memory of the courageous freedom fighters, the Maccabees, and as a reminder of the miracle of the oil, Hanukkah is celebrated yearly by lighting (8) candles, one each night, beginning on the 25th of Kislev.

- a. To commemorate Hanukkah, a nine branched candelabra, called the Menorah, (מְנוֹרָה - Heb. noun) is used.
- b. One of the (9) candles, usually the center one, is called Shammash, (שָׁמַשׁ - Heb. noun), meaning: wise man or prophet. This is a reference to the Lord. (Psa. 136:7; cf. James 1:17) **NOTE:** John 8:12 - Jesus said, “*I am the light of the world.*”
- c. Each of the (8) candles, called Neroth (נְרוֹת - Heb. noun), has a special meaning:
 - (1) Faith - perceiving, believing, and the things believed
 - (2) Freedom - free will, self determination, and the ability to choose
 - (3) Courage - confidence to act based on God’s Word and His power
 - (4) Love - an attribute of God, the chief virtue of man
 - (5) Charity - mercy, demonstration of God’s grace (plan) in action
 - (6) Integrity - possessing righteousness and justice
 - (7) Knowledge - true knowledge and understanding come from God’s Word
 - (8) Peace - freedom from oppression, prosperity, reconciliation

9. The Lord Jesus Christ taught in the temple on Hanukkah. (John 10:22-30)

10. Hanukkah today is a time of remembering, of receiving gifts, of singing songs, worshipping, and praying. Children play games such as the “Dreidle Game”, originally played as a means of covering the teaching of God’s Word during the oppression of Antiochus. Hanukkah is a time of commemorating political and religious freedom.

Principle: All political and religious freedom comes through military victory. (Prov. 21:31; Josh. 1:5-9; 11:23; 21:44; Rev. 19:11-21)

Principle: All spiritual freedom comes through spiritual victory. (John 8:32, 36; Rom. 8:2; 1 Cor. 3:7; 15:57; Gal.5:1; 1 John 5:4, 5)