

Hanukkah

How We Relate Hanukkah

1 Maccabees 4:36-59 (Rededication of the Temple)

36 Then said Judas and his brethren, Behold, our enemies are discomfited: let us go up to cleanse and dedicate the sanctuary.

37 Upon this all the host assembled themselves together, and went up into mount Sion.

38 And when they saw the sanctuary desolate, and the altar profaned, and the gates burned up, and shrubs growing in the courts as in a forest, or in one of the mountains, yea, and the priests' chambers pulled down;

39 They rent their clothes, and made great lamentation, and cast ashes upon their heads,

40 And fell down flat to the ground upon their faces, and blew an alarm with the trumpets, and cried toward heaven.

41 Then Judas appointed certain men to fight against those that were in the fortress, until he had cleansed the sanctuary.

42 So he chose priests of blameless conversation, such as had pleasure in the law:

43 Who cleansed the sanctuary, and bare out the defiled stones into an unclean place.

44 And when as they consulted what to do with the altar of burnt offerings, which was profaned;

45 They thought it best to pull it down, lest it should be a reproach to them, because the heathen had defiled it: wherefore they pulled it down,

46 And laid up the stones in the mountain of the temple in a convenient place, until there should come a prophet to show what should be done with them.

47 Then they took whole stones according to the law, and built a new altar according to the former;

48 And made up the sanctuary, and the things that were within the temple, and hallowed the courts.

49 They made also new holy vessels, and into the temple they brought the candlestick, and the altar of burnt offerings, and of incense, and the table.

50 And upon the altar they burned incense, and the lamps that were upon the candlestick they lighted, that they might give light in the temple.

51 Furthermore they set the loaves upon the table, and spread out the veils, and finished all the works which they had begun to make.

52 Now on the five and twentieth day of the ninth month, which is called the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and eighth year, they rose up betimes in the morning,

53 And offered sacrifice according to the law upon the new altar of burnt offerings, which they had made.

54 Look, at what time and what day the heathen had profaned it, even in that was it dedicated with songs, and citherns, and harps, and cymbals.

55 Then all the people fell upon their faces, worshipping and praising the God of heaven, who had given them good success.

56 And so they kept the dedication of the altar eight days, and offered burnt offerings with gladness, and sacrificed the sacrifice of deliverance and praise.

57 They decked also the forefront of the temple with crowns of gold, and with shields; and the gates and the chambers they renewed, and hanged doors upon them.

58 Thus was there very great gladness among the people, for that the reproach of the heathen was put away.

59 Moreover Judas and his brethren with the whole congregation of Israel ordained, that the days of the dedication of the altar should be kept in their season from year to year by the space of eight days, from the five and twentieth day of the month Casleu, with mirth and gladness.

2 Maccabees 10:1-8

1 Now Maccabeus and his company, the Lord guiding them, recovered the temple and the city:

2 But the altars which the heathen had built in the open street, and also the chapels, they pulled down.

3 And having cleansed the temple, they made another altar, and striking stones, they took fire out of them, and offered a sacrifice after two years, and set forth incense, and lights, and shewbread.

4 When that was done, they fell flat down, and besought the Lord that they might come no more into such troubles; but if they sinned any more against him, that he himself would chasten them with mercy, and that they might not be delivered unto the blasphemous and barbarous nations.

5 Now upon the same day that the strangers profaned the temple, on the very same day it was cleansed again, even the five and twentieth day of the same month, which is Casleu.

6 And they kept eight days with gladness, as in the feast of the tabernacles, remembering that not long afore they had held the feast of the tabernacles, when as they wandered in the mountains and dens like beasts.

**7 Therefore they bare branches, and fair boughs, and palms also, and sang psalms unto him that had given them good success in cleansing his place.
8 They ordained also by a common statute and decree, That every year those days should be kept of the whole nation of the Jews.**

Josephus: Antiquities of the Jews, Book 12, Chapter 7, Section 7

“Now Judas celebrated the festival of the restoration of the sacrifices of the temple for eight days; and omitted no sort of pleasures thereon; but he feasted them upon very rich and splendid sacrifices; and he honored God, and delighted them by hymns and psalms. Nay, they were so very glad at the revival of their customs, when, after a long time of intermission, they unexpectedly had regained the freedom of their worship, that they made it a law for their posterity, that they should keep a festival, on account of the restoration of their temple worship, for eight days. And from that time to this we celebrate this festival, and call it Lights. I suppose the reason was, because this liberty beyond our hopes appeared to us; and that thence was the name given to that festival.”

John 10:22-30 (Jesus at the Feast of Dedication)

**22 And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.
23 And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch.
24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.
25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.
26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.
27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:
28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.
29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.
30 I and my Father are one.**

Supporting Scriptures on Light and Dedication

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (Believers as God's Temple)

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

John 8:12 (Jesus as the Light of the World)

12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

Psalm 119:105 (God's Word as Light)

105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

2 Corinthians 6:16 (God Dwelling Among His People)

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

The rededication of the Second Temple, which is commemorated during Hanukkah, occurred in late Kislev, the ninth month of the Hebrew calendar. Based on historical sources, the event took place in 165 BCE. Specifically:

Date of the Rededication

- **Historical Record:**
According to 1 Maccabees 4:52-56, the rededication ceremony began on the 25th day of Kislev:

"Early in the morning on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, which is the month of Kislev, in the one hundred forty-eighth year, they rose and offered sacrifice, as the law directs, on the new altar of burnt offering that they had built."

- **Modern Equivalent:**
The date corresponds to late November or December in the Gregorian calendar, depending on the lunar-based Hebrew calendar. For example:
 - In 2024, Hanukkah begins on the evening of December 25th.
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Time of the Day

The time of day is not explicitly mentioned in the historical accounts, but based on Jewish ritual practices:

1. **Early Morning Rituals:**
 - The passage in 1 Maccabees 4:52 notes that the sacrifices began "early in the morning." This aligns with the standard time for offering the Tamid (daily offering) in the Temple, which occurred shortly after dawn.
 2. **Lighting the Menorah:**
 - The lighting of the menorah likely occurred in the afternoon, as the menorah in the Temple was typically lit before dusk so that its light would shine through the night.
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Symbolism of the Timing

- **The 25th Day of Kislev:**
 - This date may have been chosen symbolically to contrast the defilement of the Temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who desecrated it with pagan worship and sacrifices.
 - The rededication marked the triumph of purity and dedication over defilement and oppression.
 - **Winter Season:**
 - The timing in winter underscores themes of light overcoming darkness, which is central to the Hanukkah celebration.
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Historical Significance

1. **Victory of the Maccabees:**

- **The rededication followed the Jewish victory over the Seleucid forces, culminating in the purification of the Temple.**
- 2. Establishment of Hanukkah:**
- **The eight-day celebration was instituted to remember the miraculous supply of oil and the restoration of worship in the Temple.**
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Conclusion

The rededication of the Second Temple occurred on the 25th of Kislev, early in the morning, with the lighting of the menorah likely in the afternoon. This timing, during the dark days of winter, symbolizes the triumph of faith, light, and dedication—a message that continues to resonate with both Jewish and Christian audiences today.

Lesson on John 10:22–23: A Deep Exploration and Its Application to Contemporary Christianity

Scripture Focus:

John 10:22-23 (KJV)

"And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Yahoshua walked in the temple in Solomon's porch."

This passage offers a rich intersection of historical context, Christological significance, and enduring spiritual applications for believers. Let's delve deeply into the layers of meaning, themes, and their relevance.

Historical and Cultural Context

- 1. The Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah):**
 - Also known as **Hanukkah** or the **Festival of Lights**, this feast commemorates the Maccabean revolt against Antiochus IV Epiphanes (circa 167 BCE), a Seleucid

king who desecrated the Second Temple by erecting a pagan altar and sacrificing unclean animals.

- The Jewish victory under Judas Maccabeus restored Temple worship, and the eight-day celebration emerged to honor the miracle of the menorah oil burning for eight days, though there was only enough oil for one day.
2. **Winter in Jerusalem:**
- The mention of "winter" situates the narrative during a season of physical and metaphorical reflection. Winters in Jerusalem are marked by shorter days, colder nights, and a time for inward contemplation—aligning well with the themes of rededication and light overcoming darkness.
3. **Solomon's Porch:**
- This colonnaded area on the eastern side of the Temple was a place for teaching, debate, and gathering. By walking here, Yahoshua places Himself in a public yet sacred space, foreshadowing His deeper teaching about being the true **Temple** and the **Light of the World**.
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Yahoshua' Actions and Presence

1. **Participation in Hanukkah:**
- Although Hanukkah is not a Mosaic feast (like Passover or Tabernacles), Yahoshua' presence at the Temple demonstrates His recognition of its spiritual and historical importance. His actions affirm Elohim's hand in historical deliverance and the need for continual dedication to Elohim's purposes.
2. **Walking in the Temple:**
- Yahoshua' movement during this festival shows His readiness to engage with those present. It's significant that this passage transitions into His discourse on His divine identity (John 10:24-30), where He declares:
 - **"I and my Father are one"** (v. 30).
 - This reinforces His role as the fulfillment of all that the Temple symbolized—Elohim dwelling among His people.
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Key Themes and Their Implications

1. Dedication of the Temple

- **Historical Dedication:** The Temple was cleansed and rededicated after being defiled, symbolizing the restoration of Elohim's dwelling place.
- **Christ as the Living Temple:** Yahoshua identified Himself as the ultimate Temple:
 - **John 2:19:** "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."
 - His death and resurrection established the new locus of worship, no longer confined to a physical building but found in Him.

Application:

Believers, as the **Temple of the Holy Spirit** (1 Corinthians 6:19), must continually rededicate themselves to Elohim, ensuring spiritual purity and alignment with His will.

2. Light Over Darkness

- **Festival of Lights:** Hanukkah emphasizes the triumph of light over the physical and spiritual darkness of Hellenistic oppression.
- **Yahoshua as the Light:** In John 8:12, Yahoshua declared, "**I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.**"
- **Symbolism:** Yahoshua embodies the eternal light that guides humanity out of spiritual blindness and sin.

Application:

Christians are called to reflect Christ's light:

- **Matthew 5:14-16:** "Ye are the light of the world."
 - This involves living in a way that illuminates Elohim's truth and love in a world darkened by sin and despair.
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3. Faithfulness of Elohim

- **The Miracle of the Oil:** Elohim's provision of light for eight days with limited oil symbolizes His faithfulness and ability to sustain His people through the impossible.
- **Yahoshua as the Good Shepherd:** In John 10, Yahoshua emphasizes His faithfulness, saying:
 - "**My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life**" (vv. 27-28).

Application:

Just as Elohim provided for the Maccabees, He provides for His people today. Believers are reminded to trust His provision in times of scarcity and uncertainty.

4. Standing Against Spiritual Compromise

- **The Maccabean Resistance:** The revolt was a stand against the Hellenistic culture that sought to erase Jewish identity and worship.
- **Yahoshua's Teachings:** Yahoshua continually warned against spiritual defilement and compromise, calling for wholehearted dedication to Elohim.

Application:

In today's context, Christians must resist worldly influences that conflict with Elohim's standards, remaining steadfast in faith and practice:

- **Romans 12:2:** "And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."
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Contemporary Reflection

1. Rededication in a Modern Context

- Just as the Temple was cleansed and rededicated, believers are encouraged to examine their lives and identify areas that need purification.
- Spiritual rededication can occur during personal reflection, fasting, or even through communal worship.

2. Celebrating Light in Darkness

- The themes of Hanukkah align with the Christian focus on Yahoshua as the Light, especially during the winter season (often overlapping with Advent or Christmas).
- Lighting candles, both literally and metaphorically, becomes a way to proclaim the hope and truth of Christ.

3. Spiritual Warfare

- The Maccabees' story reminds Christians of the importance of standing firm against spiritual oppression or compromise, equipping themselves with the Word of Elohim (Ephesians 6:10-18).

4. Emphasizing Elohim's Sustenance

- Just as the oil miraculously lasted, believers today can trust Elohim to supply their needs and empower them for His service:
 - **Philippians 4:19:** "But my Elohim shall supply all your need."
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Supporting Scriptures

1. **Temple as Elohim's Dwelling:**
 - 2 Corinthians 6:16: "For ye are the temple of the living Elohim."
2. **Yahoshua as the Fulfillment:**
 - Hebrews 1:3: "Who being the brightness of his glory... when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

3. **Christ's Faithfulness:**

- Lamentations 3:22-23: "Great is thy faithfulness."
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Practical Application for Christians

1. **Daily Rededication:**

- Pray for personal cleansing and dedicate your actions, thoughts, and resources to Elohim's glory.

2. **Shine as Light:**

- Actively share the hope of Christ in your community by serving others and speaking truth.

3. **Trust in Elohim's Provision:**

- Recall Elohim's past faithfulness in your life and trust Him for your future needs.

4. **Resist Compromise:**

- Identify areas where you are tempted to conform to worldly values and recommit to Elohim's standards.
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Conclusion

The account of Yahoshua during the Feast of Dedication in John 10:22-23 bridges the historical and the eternal. It calls for believers today to embrace themes of dedication, faithfulness, and light in their walk with Christ. By reflecting on this passage, Christians are inspired to live as dedicated temples of the Holy Spirit, steadfastly proclaiming the light of Christ in a darkened world.