

Hanukkah: Time For Dedication

The message that Hanukkah holds for us is timeless. In fact, it is far more relevant to today than most adults realize. Hanukkah, like Purim was not instituted by Torah decree, but rather the people of Israel following a turbulent period in Israelite history instituted these holidays.

Josephus (*Book of Antiquities*, chapter 6), describing a vicious Greek attack against the Jewish uprising—in which more than 1,000 men, women and children perished—writes that, “they avoided to defend themselves on that day, because they were not willing to break in upon the honor that they owed the Sabbath even in such distress, for our law requires that we rest upon that day.” Learning of their refusal to fight on the Sabbath, Mattahias a Cohen decreed that should the enemy attack on the Sabbath day, “we shall go out to meet them and defend our lives, and we shall not perish like our brothers in the caves.” (*Book of the Hasmonians* I 2:44) With his religious decree, Mattahias guaranteed Israelite survival and paved the path to the ultimate victory in the Hanukkah story.

Hanukkah celebrates this victory of the few against the many, and it demonstrates what the human resolve can accomplish when there is a collective sense of nationhood. The Holy Temple was purified and the oil of one day lasted for eight days and the people brought gifts to the Knesset Hagadol. Through the action of one family of Kohanim, the people of Israel resolved within themselves to fight for their freedom against an enemy that seemed unstoppable. The cry of the Macabees was “Those for G-D are with us.”

Today during this season of Hanukkah, we too have the opportunity and the honor of lighting the menorah to commemorate the **Rededication** of the **Knesset HaGadol** that occurred more than two-thousand years ago. During this time, we must **rededicate** ourselves to our way of life. We must **dedicate** ourselves, to building our communities through educating our children and grandchildren and supporting the Israelite Academy that educates our spiritual leaders. We must **dedicate** ourselves to building an infrastructure that will unite Israelite throughout this country and indeed the world.

We must **consecrate** our houses of worship, by being regular attendees on Sabbath. We must **contribute** our time and energy, to the various programs in our synagogues. We must also **donate** through our tithes and offerings, to ensure that our communities are self-sustaining and self-reliant. When we do these three things, then and only then does Hanukkah really have meaning in our lives.

Torah Blessing and Happy Hanukkah

Rabbi Shmuel Funnye

