

[note – this is the main Rabbi's article]

Celebrating Re-Dedication

Most of know the story of Chanukah. After a successful revolt against Syrian occupation forces in 165 BCE, Jews were once again allowed to reenter and clean our Holy Temple. The Temple was in a horrible state. It had been used as a Temple to Zeus and had been fouled with garbage and with the sacrifice of pigs. Many must have despaired of ever being able to use the Temple again.

But at long last, the Temple was cleaned and ready once again to become the center for Jewish worship. In spite of having insufficient lamp oil, the re-dedication of the Temple was planned. As we all know, our tradition tells how the *Ner Tamid*, the eternal lamp that had only enough oil for one day lasted a miraculous eight. Because of this, some 2141 years later, we light candles for eight days, give gifts and eat foods heavy with oil.

The word *Chanukah* in Hebrew means “dedication.” I think it is especially meaningful that we celebrate the re-dedication of the Temple even though we don't celebrate its original dedication. The First Temple was dedicated by Solomon in about the year 1000 BCE and the Second Temple dedicated some 500 years later. We have no holidays associated with these events. But we do have a wonderful holiday celebrating the re-cleansing and re-dedication of our Temple.

What personal lessons can we draw. When a baby enters the world, we all celebrate new life, pure, innocent and sweet. And we all live through the trials of parenthood and growth of our children and ourselves. We ache for the innocence of the time before we made the mistakes that we must live with. But God and Judaism are wiser. Our tradition holds that in the place reserved in heaven where one who repents and cleanses and re-dedicates his/her life will be, a perfect *tzadik* (one who has never sinned) cannot stand. God doesn't expect us to be perfect. God wants and expects and stands ready to help us rebuild our lives even when we may have “trashed” certain parts. We celebrate Chanukah, a re-dedication, a re-cleansing, and a re-building of the sacred in our history and in our lives.

I wish you and your families a *chag saymayach*, a happy holiday. May you all have the faith and confidence in God and yourselves to cleanse and re-build the parts of your lives that need attention and to celebrate your accomplishments all the days of your lives.

B' Shalom ---- Rabbi Michael Lotker