What does the word Hanukka mean?

The word *Hanukka* means “dedication,” and it is used in this sense in Hebrew in phrases like *Hanukat-haBayit* (dedication of one’s new home).

So, what dedication are we referring to in our holiday of *Hanukka*?

During the second century BCE, the Jews in Israel lived under the oppressive rule of the Syrian-Greek army led by Antiochus Epiphanes. They were forbidden to practice their religion, and at one point, the *Bet haMiqdash* (the Holy Temple of Jerusalem) was captured and defiled by the Greeks. The Greeks desecrated the Temple by introducing an image of their pagan god, Zeus, and offering sacrifices of impure animals, such as pigs.

In 165 BCE, the Jews, led by Yehuda Makabi, rebelled against the powerful armies of Antiochus. With God’s help, they defeated the Greeks and regained control of the *Bet haMiqdash*. To purify and re-dedicate the Temple to God Almighty, they needed to light the *Menora*, symbolizing that the Temple had fully returned to the service of God.

They found only a small jar containing a limited amount of pure oil, enough to last for just one night. Nevertheless, they lit the *Menora* and joyfully dedicated the *Bet haMiqdash* back to God. The Makabim anticipated they would need to interrupt the dedication until new pure oil could be produced. However, a miracle occurred—the oil lasted for eight days, precisely the time required to prepare new pure olive oil.

Hanukka thus celebrates the dedication (or re-dedication) of the *Bet haMiqdash* to HaShem after years of defilement.

The holiday is observed by kindling candles each night for

eight nights, commemorating the miracle of the oil.

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