

Chanukah as a Celebration of the Rededication of the Temple

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There is one aspect of the story of Chanukah that doesn't get as much attention as it deserves. When the story of Chanukah is told, the focus is often on the miraculous military defeat of the Syrian Greeks or the miracle that ensued in lighting the Menorah. The rededication of the Temple and specifically, the *Mizbe'ach* (altar), if it does get mentioned, often gets less prominence.

The prominence of this aspect of the story is apparent when one considers the following: First, the very name Chanukah is taken from the term (Bamidbar 7:10) *chanukat HaMizbe'ach*, the dedication of the Altar.¹ Second, the Torah reading for Chanukah is the story of the original dedication of the Mizbe'ach and the offerings that were brought by the *nesi'im* (princes) to commemorate that event (*Megillah* 30b). Third, the prayer *Al HaNissim* references the purification of the Temple (וטהרו את מקדשך). Fourth, there is a tradition in many communities to recite after the morning prayers the 30th chapter of Psalms (מזמור שיר חנוכת הבית לדוד) which is about the dedication of the Temple. While people may be aware that the rededication of the Temple and the Altar plays a role in the celebration of Chanukah, they may not be aware of its exact role. This is perhaps why this aspect of the story is not as popular. In this article, we will present a number of sources that elucidate the role of the rededication of the Temple and the Altar in the celebration of Chanukah.

The Rededication of the Temple

A number of sources indicate that the rededication of the Temple is not merely an aspect of the Chanukah story, but a foundation of the holiday itself. *Megillat Ta'anit*, a compendium of holidays that were celebrated during Talmudic times, presents the centrality of the rededication of the Temple:

Why did they decide to celebrate Chanukah for eight days? Wasn't the Chanukah that Moshe established in the desert (i.e. the dedication of the Mishkan) only seven days? As it states (Vayikra 8:33) "You shall not leave the opening of the Tent of Meeting for seven days." It also states (Bamidbar 7:12) "The one who brought the offering on the first day," and on the seventh day [the tribe of]

ומה ראו לעשות חנוכה שמונה ימים, והלא חנוכה שעשה משה במדבר לא עשה אלא שבעת ימים שנאמר ומפתח אהל מועד לא תצאו שבעת ימים ואומר ויהי המקריב ביום הראשון את קרבנו וגו' ובשביעי הקריב אפרים וכן מצינו

¹ Another popular reason for the name Chanukah is presented by Rabbeinu Nissim, in his *Commentary on Rif, Shabbat* 9b, who quotes an opinion that it is called Chanukah which is a representation of חנו בכ"ה, they rested (from war) on the 25th (of Kislev).

Ephraim brought its offering. Similarly, we find that King Shlomo's dedication was only seven days ... Rather [the reason is that] during the days of the Syrian-Greek Kingdom, the Chashmonaim entered the Heichal, built the Mizbe'ach, installed it with limestone and restored the holy vessels and this took eight days.

Megillat Ta'anit, Ch. 9

The premise of *Megillat Ta'anit* is that the celebration of Chanukah is based on the rededication of the Temple, leading to the question of why Chanukah is celebrated for eight days, one day longer than the previous "chanukah" celebrations. The answer affirms this premise.

A similar view of the centrality of the rededication of the Temple is found in the *Book of Maccabees*:

Now Maccabeus and his followers, the Lord leading them on, recovered the temple and the city; and they tore down the altars which had been built in the public square by the foreigners, and also destroyed the sacred precincts. They purified the sanctuary, and made another altar of sacrifice; then, striking fire out of flint, they offered sacrifices, after a lapse of two years, and they burned incense and lighted lamps and set out the bread of the Presence. And when they had done this, they fell prostrate and besought the Lord that they might never again fall into such misfortunes, but that, if they should ever sin, they might be disciplined by Him with forbearance and not be handed over to blasphemous and barbarous nations. It happened that on the same day on which the sanctuary had been profaned by the foreigners, the purification of the sanctuary took place, that is, on the twenty-fifth day of the same month, which was Kislev. And they celebrated it for eight days with rejoicing, in the manner of the feast of booths, remembering how not long before, during the feast of booths, they had been wandering in the mountains and caves like wild animals. Therefore bearing ivy-wreathed wands and beautiful branches and also fronds of palm, they offered hymns of thanksgiving to him who had given success to the purifying of his own holy place. They decreed by public ordinance and vote that the whole nation of the Jews should observe these days every year.

Book of Maccabees 2:10

בחנוכה שעשה שלמה המלך שלא עשה אלא שבעת ימים ... אלא בימי מלכות יון נכנסו בית חשמונאי להיכל, ובנו את המזבח ושדוהו בשיד ותקנו בו כלי שרת, והיו מתעסקים בו שמנה ימים.

מגילת תענית פרק ט

(א) ורוח ה' צלחה על יהודה המכבי ועל אנשיו, וילכדו את העיר ואת המקדש. (ב) ויהרסו את המזבחות ואת בתי הגילולים אשר הקימו הגויים בחוצות העיר. (ג) ויהי אחרי טהרם את הבית, ויעשו מזבח חדש, ויוציאו אש מן האבנים אשר ליקטו, ויקריבו את קורבנם לה' מקץ שנתיים ימים. (ד) ויקטירו ויערכו את הנרות, ויתנו את לחם הפנים על שולחן ה'. (ה) וככלות כל אלה נפלו על פניהם ויתחננו אל ה' אלוהים לאמור: (ו) אנא ה' שומרנו לנצח מצרה כזאת אשר באתנו. (ז) ואם חטאנו לך, יסרנו כחסדך, ואל תתננו עוד בידי זרים המחרפים את שם קודשך. (ח) ומאת ה' הייתה זאת לחטא את הבית בעצם היום ההוא אשר טימאו אתו הגויים, והוא יום העשרים וחמשה לירח כסלו. (ט) ויחוגו חג לה' שמונת ימים כימי חג הסוכות, ויזכרו את הימים מקדם בחגם את חג הסוכות בהרים ובמערות, ויתעו בשימון כבהמות שדה. (י) ויקחו ערבי נחל וכפות תמרים וישירו שיר שבה והודיה לה', אשר נתן להם עוז ותשועה לטהר את בית מקדשו. (יא) ויעבירו קול בכל ערי יהודה לחוג את החג הזה מדי שנה בשנה.

ספר חשמונאים ב:י

While the *Book of Maccabees* gives prominence to the rededication of the Temple, it differs from *Megillat Ta'anit* in that the celebration is not modeled after the original dedication of the Mishkan but rather, it is modeled after the holiday of Sukkot.²

Why should the rededication of the Temple or the Mizbe'ach be a cause for celebration? R. Meir Simcha of Dvinsk suggests that when the Torah (Bamidbar 10:10) commands us to celebrate on *yom simchatchem*, the day of happiness, it is referring specifically to the dedication of the Temple:

[The verse states] "On your day of joy and on your holidays ... you shall blow the trumpets" ... The simple meaning of the verse is that whenever there is a dedication of the Altar or the Azarah, one must blow the trumpets and that is the joy ... Therefore, on Chanukah, which was the rededication during the days of the Chashmonaim, when they built a new Altar after the Syrian Greek kingdom destroyed [the old one] as stated in Tractate Avodah Zarah 52b, Rambam states that they were days of joy and they established them as days of joy.

Meshech Chochmah, Bamdbar 10:10

ביום שמחתכם ובמועדיכם (ובראשי
חדשיכם) ותקעתם בחצוצרות ...
ובפשטא דקרא, הוא כל זמן שיהיה
חינוך המזבח או העזרה צריך לתקוע
בחצוצרות, וזהו שמחה ... ולכן
בחנוכה, דהיו מילואים בימי חשמונאים,
שבנו מזבח חדש, ששקצום מלכי יון את
אבני המזבח, כמפורש עבודה זרה נב,
ב, כתב רמב"ם דהיו ימי שמחה וקבעום
לשמחה.

משך חכמה, במדבר י:י

According to R. Meir Simcha, Chanukah's status as days of joy is based on Chanukah as a celebration of the rededication of the Altar.

The Anniversary of the Completion of the Mishkan

According to the Midrash, the 25th day of Kislev, which is now the first day of Chanukah, is also the anniversary of the completion of the Mishkan:

The construction of the Mishkan was completed on the 25th day of Kislev and the Mishkan remained folded until Rosh Chodesh Nissan.

Bamidbar Rabbah, 13:2

שמלאכת המשכן נגמרה בכ"ה
בכסלו ועמד המשכן מקופל עד
ר"ח ניסן.

במדבר רבה יג:ב

Rashi, quoted by R. Tzidkiyahu HaRofei, in his *Shibolei HaLeket* connects this idea with the Torah reading for Chanukah:

I found in the name of Rabbeinu Shlomo³ [stating]: Why did they decide to read the story of the dedication of the Temple on Chanukah? Because Moshe Rabbeinu stood on the mountain 120

מצאתי בשם רבינו שלמה זצ"ל מה
ראו לקרות בחנוכה בנשיאים
בחנוכת המזבח לפי שעמד משה
רבינו בהר ק"כ [יום] וירד בי'

² The Gemara, *Shabbat* 21b, records that Beit Shammai argued for lighting the Chanukah lights in descending order (i.e. on the first day, eight lights, on the second day, seven, etc.) based on the Mussaf offerings on Sukkot which also were offered in descending order (thirteen on the first day, twelve on the second day, etc.). Why should the offering of Sukkot serve as a model? If one assumes that the original Chanukah celebration was based on Sukkot, then the Sukkot model is an appropriate model to use. Although Beit Hillel disagree, they may have felt that despite the connection of Chanukah to Sukkot, there are more appropriate models to use.

³ He is referring to Rashi. We find similar comments in the name of Rashi by Rashi's students in *Sefer HaPardes* no. 198 and *Siddur Rashi* no. 320.

days and descended on the 10th of Tishrei and was told that God had forgiven the people on Yom Kippur, and on that day, he was told "Make me a Temple" ... and on the 25th day of Kislev they finished it.

Shibolei HaLeket no. 189

בתשרי ונתבשר סלחתי ביום
הכיפורים ובו ביום נאמר לו ועשו
לי מקדש ... ובכ"ה בכסליו גמרוהו.
שבלי הלקט, חנוכה ס' קפט

Rashi, in his *Commentary on the Talmud, Megillah 30b*, offers a four word explanation why the Torah reading for Chanukah is the section dealing with the offerings of the *nesi'im*: "דהוי נמי "הנוכת המזבח, it is also a dedication of the Altar." How do we understand this brief comment in light of the explanation attributed to Rashi by R. Tzidkiya HaRofei and Rashi's other students? Is Rashi, in his *Commentary on the Talmud* referring to the original dedication of the Mishkan or the rededication by the Chashmonaim? If he is referring to the latter, are his comments at odds with the explanation presented in his name by his students?

Furthermore, if reading the portion in the Torah dealing with the offerings of the *nesi'im* is supposed to relate to the rededication of the Temple during the times of the Chashmonaim, there are a number of obvious questions one can ask. First, according to Rashi (Bamidbar 7:1) and many other commentators, the first offering of the *nesi'im* took place on Rosh Chodesh Nisan, which was the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan. The offerings, which represented the dedication of the Altar, took place for twelve days. Thus, the dedication of the Temple was completed on the day that the dedication of the Altar began. If Chanukah parallels the dedication of the Mishkan, why do we read about the dedication of the Altar? If Chanukah parallels the dedication of the Altar, why don't we observe Chanukah for twelve days? Second, on the eighth day of Chanukah, we read the section dealing with the offerings on day eight through twelve and then continue to *Parashat Beha'alot'cha* to read the section about lighting the Menorah. Reading about the Menorah seems logical given that the lighting of the Menorah by the Chashmonaim is a major part of the Chanukah story. However, reading it on the eighth day seems a little late. After all, all of the Chanukah lights were already lit. Granted that this is the way it appears in the Torah, isn't there a way to read it on the first day? Is there a reason why it is specifically read on the eighth day?

The Connection between the Original Dedication and Chanukah

Perhaps Rashi, in presenting two different explanations for the Torah reading on Chanukah, is of the opinion that both the original dedication of the Mishkan and the rededication during the time of Chashmonaim play a role in Chanukah.

Rashi, in his commentary on the Torah, discusses the Torah's juxtaposition of the dedication of the Altar with the commandment given to Aharon to light the Menorah. He states:

Why is the section about the Menorah juxtaposed with the section about the princes (i.e. the dedication of the Altar)? Because when Aharon saw the dedication being performed by the princes, he was despondent that neither he nor his tribe was able to participate in

למה נסמכה פרשת המנורה לפרשת
הנשיאים, לפי שכשראה אהרן
חנכת הנשיאים חלשה דעתו, שלא
היה עמהם בחנכה, לא הוא ולא
שבטו, אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא

the dedication. God told him: Yours is greater than theirs because you light and prepare the candles.

Rashi, Bamidbar 8:2

חיידך, שלך גדולה משלהם, שאתה מדליק ומטיב את הנרות רש"י, במדבר ח:ב

Rashi's comments are based on the comments of the *Midrash Rabbah*, Bamidbar 15:3. Ramban questions why the Menorah specifically was singled out to assuage Aharon's concerns. Why not the myriad of other services that the kohanim perform daily? Ramban suggests:

The purpose of this Midrash is to convey a hint from the section [about the Menorah] relating to the "Chanukah of lights" that took place during the time of the Second Temple by Aharon and his children, meaning the Chashmonean high priest and his children.

Ramban, Bamidbar 8:2

ענין ההגדה הזו לדרוש רמז מן הפרשה על חנוכה של נרות שהיתה בבית שני על ידי אהרן ובניו, רצוני לומר חשמונאי כהן גדול ובניו:

רמב"ן, במדבר ח:ב

According to Ramban, the Midrash specifically connects the original dedication of the Temple to the Chanukah story. The participation of the kohanim in the dedication of the Mizbe'ach took place during the Second Temple. As such, perhaps the celebration of the rededication during the days of the Chashmonaim is not a new celebration, but a continuation of the original dedication.

R. Yitzchak of Vienna also connects the original dedication of the Mishkan to the rededication during the times of the Chashmonaim, though in a slightly different manner:

It states in Megillat Ta'anit that the dedication of the Chashmonaim is observed in all future generation. Why is it observed in all future generations? Because it occurred during a crisis and they recited Hallel and thanksgiving and lit the candles in purity ... Therefore it is called Chanukah based on the dedication of the Altar that was destroyed and rebuilt. This is what is stated in the Midrash: Why is the section about the Menorah juxtaposed with the section about the princes because [the tribe of] Levi complained that they didn't merit offering a sacrifice. God told them "Theirs was only one day per prince and was only observed once. Your dedication will be eight days and in all future generations." The implication is that [it is called Chanukah] based on name of the dedication of the Altar of the princes.

Or Zarua, Hilchot Chanukah no. 321

אמר'י במגילת תענית ולדורות חנוכה בית חשמונאי ולמה היא נוהגת לדורות אלא שעשאוהו בצער ואמרו בו הלל והודאה והדליקו בו נרות בטהרה ... ולפיכך נקרא חנוכה על שם חנוכת המזבחה שנסתר ובנאוהו. והיינו נמי דאמר'י במדרש למה נסמכה פרשת בהעלותך לחנוכה נשיאים לפי שהיה לוי מתרעם על שלא [זכה] להקריב ואמר לו הקב"ה שלהם לא היה אלא יום אחד לנשיא ולפי שעה וחנוכה שלך תהיה ח' ימים ולדורות משמע שגם הוא היה נקרא ע"ש חנוכה המזבחה כמו אותן של נשיאים.

אור זרוע הל' חנוכה ס' שכא

R. Yitzchak of Vienna adds another dimension to the discussion by noting that the original dedication of the Mishkan is no longer celebrated, yet the rededication of the Chashmonaim is celebrated on an annual basis. He explains, based on his version of *Megillat Ta'anit*, that the other aspects of the Chanukah story (the war, the miracle of the oil) contributed to the institution of this dedication as an annual holiday. Because they rededicated the Temple immediately after the war, recited Hallel for their victory and lit the Menorah, the rabbis decided to make this particular rededication an annual holiday. The rededication of the Chashmonaim is

modeled after the original dedication, but unlike the original dedication, the circumstances allowed it to merit becoming an annual holiday.

Whether the rededication on Chanukah was a continuation of the original dedication or whether, as R. Yitzchak of Vienna suggests, it was modeled after the original dedication, we can now explain the apparent discrepancy in the comments of Rashi. The Torah reading on Chanukah highlights the connection between the original dedication of the Altar and the Chanukah story. While Chanukah commemorates the rededication of the Temple, the fact that construction of the Mishkan was completed on the 25th of Kislev is significant because the original dedication of the Mishkan was the beginning of the process (according to Ramban) or the model for the rededication (according to R. Yitzchak of Vienna). Rashi's students focus on the relevance of the Torah reading to the date and Rashi's comments on the Talmud focus on the impetus to read about the dedication.

With this understanding of the relationship of the original dedication of the Temple and the rededication during the times of the Chashmonaim, we can answer the questions relating to the Torah reading. While *Megillat Ta'anit* only mentions a seven day dedication of the Mishkan,⁴ other Midrashim highlight a number of other important events that took place on the eighth day, including the appearance of the *Shechinah* (Divine presence) and the offering of Nachshon ben Aminadav, the first of the *nesi'im* to offer voluntary sacrifices in honor of the dedication of the Mizbe'ach.⁵ Assuming that the first of the sacrifices took place on the eighth day, the eighth day was a continuation of the dedication of the Mishkan, culminating in the dedication of the Mizbe'ach. In fact, the Torah, in Bamidbar 7, refers to the dedication of the Mizbe'ach four

⁴ It seems that *Megillat Ta'anit* does not follow the tradition that the *nesi'im* began to offer their sacrifices on Rosh Chodesh Nisan. Rather, there were seven days of dedication and the *nesi'im* began to offer their sacrifices on the first day. However, this understanding of *Megillat Ta'anit* is difficult to understand. Why does *Megillat Ta'anit* consider the celebration to be only seven days and not twelve? If *Megillat Ta'anit* does not consider the sacrifices of the *nesi'im* to be included in the dedication of the Mishkan, why does *Megillat Ta'anit* record the first and the seventh sacrifice? Perhaps these questions motivated R. Yitzchak of Vienna to prefer the alternate version of *Megillat Ta'anit* which does not mention the number of days of the original dedication of the Mishkan. R. Avraham Eliyahu Borenstein, in his *Ner LaMaor* commentary on the ninth chapter of *Megillat Ta'anit*, notes the comments of R. Ya'akov Emden, *Mor Uketziah* no. 429, that not all Tannaim are of the opinion that the *nesi'im* began to offer their sacrifices on Rosh Chodesh Nisan. Rather, he suggests that it is possible that the dedication of the Mishkan actually began on Rosh Chodesh and the *nesi'im* began to offer their sacrifices on the second day of Nisan. Based on R. Emden's comments, R. Borenstein suggests that *Megillat Ta'anit* specifically highlights the seventh offering because that offering took place on the eighth of Nisan, the day that the *Shechinah* appeared in the Mishkan. R. Borenstein further suggests that on that day, when Ephraim was given a distinct sacrifice, Aharon realized that Ephraim and Menashe would each be bringing a sacrifice and the Tribe of Levi was to be excluded. It was on that day that G-d comforted Aharon with the mitzvah of lighting the Menorah. R. Yehoshua Hurwitz, in his responsa printed in the back of *Imrei Noam* Vol. III, responsa no. 9, offers a different approach to understanding the comment of *Megillat Ta'anit*. He suggests that *Megillat Ta'anit*, in highlighting the offering of the seventh day, is noting that the offering took place on Shabbat. This is significant because offerings of the individual cannot be offered on Shabbat. R. Hurwitz proves that the offering on Shabbat was not indicative of the public nature of these offerings but rather a special dispensation to Yosef's descendants as a reward for Yosef keeping Shabbat. As such, R. Hurwitz posits that *Megillat Ta'anit* is highlighting the private nature of these offerings and how they were not part and parcel of the dedication.

⁵ *Sifra*, *Shemini* no. 1.

times in recording the offerings of the *nesi'im*. One of those verses mentions a specific day that the Mizbe'ach was dedicated:

The princes offered their dedication of the Altar on the day it was anointed; the princes offered their sacrifices before the Altar.

Bamidbar 7:10

וַיִּקְרִיבוּ הַנְּשִׂאִים אֶת חֲנֻכַּת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ בְּיוֹם
הַמְּלֻשָׁח אֹתוֹ וַיִּקְרִיבוּ הַנְּשִׂאִים אֶת קִרְבָּנָם
לִפְנֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ.
בַּמִּדְבָּר ז':

The Midrash comments on the obvious problem with this verse: How can the Torah state that all of the *nesi'im* offered their sacrifices on the day it was anointed? Didn't they offer their sacrifices over the course of twelve days?:

Did the entire dedication of the Altar take place on the day it was anointed? Didn't it take twelve days to complete the dedication of the Altar? Rather, the verse comes to teach you that all of the tribes are equally precious to God such that the verse credited all of them as if they all offered their sacrifices on the first day.

Bamidbar Rabbah 14:12

וכי ביום שנמשח נעשה כל חנוכת המזבח
והלא עד מלאת שנים עשר יום לא נגמרה
חנוכת המזבח אלא בא הכתוב ללמדך שכל
השבטים הם שוים וחביבים כולם כאחד
לפני הקב"ה שהעלה עליהם הכתוב כאלו
ביום ראשון הקריבו כולם
בַּמִּדְבָּר רַבָּה י"ב

Based on the comments of this Midrash, we can deduce that the primary day for the dedication of the Mizbe'ach was the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan. Although, the dedication of the Mizbe'ach extended for eleven more days, it is possible that we consider that to be due to unique circumstances⁶ and that is why we don't have a twelve day dedication of the Altar in future dedications. The primary celebration of the dedication of the Mishkan was an eight day celebration with the eighth day serving as the day that the Mizbe'ach was dedicated.⁷ As such, on Chanukah, when we commemorate the rededication of the Temple as well as the rededication of the Altar, we read the entire Torah portion dealing with the dedication of the Altar. Yet, it is the eighth day of Chanukah that has the most extensive reading. Perhaps this is because the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan was marked with the actual dedication of the Mizbe'ach and in the Chanukah story, it also marked the completion of the rededication of the Temple. This also explains why we read about the lighting of the Menorah on the eighth day. Based on Ramban's comments, it is possible that we read this section in the Torah to connect the original dedication of the Mishkan to the rededication by the Chashmonaim. The focus is not on the lighting of the Menorah per se, but on the involvement of the kohanim in the dedication.

Observances Relating to the Rededication

Now that we have seen the role of the rededication of the Temple in the Chanukah story, what role does it play in observing Chanukah? The observances of Chanukah seemingly correspond to the various aspects of the Chanukah story. The lighting of the candles commemorates the

⁶ See Bamidbar Rabbah, 12:21, that God decided that it is preferable for each prince to have a unique day to dedicate his particular offering.

⁷ R. Yechiel M. Epstein, *Aruch HaShulchan, Orach Chaim 670:5*, notes that both the dedication of the Mishkan and the dedication of the Beit HaMikdash by Shlomo HaMelech had a seven day celebration and the eighth day marked the completion.

miracle of the oil, the recitation of Hallel commemorates the military victory (see Rashi, *Pesachim* 117a, s.v. *Ve'Al Kol*) and the Torah reading corresponds to rededication of the Temple. Nevertheless, these observances are not exclusively focused on the aspect of the story that they represent. We have already seen R. Yitzchak of Vienna's comment that the miracle of the war and the miracle of the oil play a role in celebrating the rededication of the Temple. Furthermore, the *Pesikta D'Rav Kahanah* suggests that our candle lighting is also a celebration of the rededication of the Temple:

You find the Chanukah that we observe is to commemorate the dedication of the Temple of the Chashmonaim after they waged war with the Syrian Greeks and defeated them and now we light. Similarly, when they completed the construction of the Mishkan they observed a Chanukah as it states "this is the dedication of (Chanukat) the Altar."

Pesikta D'Rav Kahanah no. 6

את מוצא זאת החנוכה שאנו עושים
זכר לחנוכת בית השמונאי על
שעשו מלחמה ונצחו לבני יוון ואנו
עכשיו מדליקין, וכן בשעה
שנגמרה מלאכת המשכן עשו
חנוכה כמו שכתב זאת חנוכת
המזבח.
פסיקתא דרב כהנא פסקא ו

The *Pesikta* seems to highlight a difference between the way the dedications were originally observed and how we observe the rededication of the Temple. While they were originally observed by offering sacrifices, we observe the rededication by lighting Chanukah lights. The *Pesikta* doesn't mention anything about the miracle of the oil, but if not for the miracle of the oil, why would lighting candles have been chosen as an arbitrary event to commemorate the rededication of the Temple? Rather, our observance of lighting candles is based on the miracle of the oil, but ultimately serves to commemorate the rededication of the Temple.

R. Moshe Isserles (Rama, 1520-1572) discusses another area of observance that is relevant to the rededication of the Temple. In his *Darkei Moshe, Orach Chaim* no. 670, he quotes R. Avraham of Prague that if the impetus for celebrating Chanukah is the miracle (or miracles), then Chanukah is a holiday of praise and thanksgiving (*hallel* and *hoda'ah*). However, if it is a celebration of the rededication of the Temple, then Chanukah should be classified as days of feasts and joy (*mishteh v'simcha*) and one should have a festive meal each day. Rama, in his glosses on *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 670:1, ultimately concludes that festive meals are encouraged, but not mandatory. Nevertheless, Rama's designation of festive meals as optional does not necessarily mean that he rejects the component of Chanukah relating to the celebration of Chanukah. He may agree that we celebrate the rededication but do so in other ways, such as the Torah reading or lighting the Chanukah lights (as per the *Pesikta*). Regardless of which observances commemorate the rededication of the Temple, the rededication plays an important role in the story of Chanukah.