

1. What is Chanukah about?
2. What makes us think that – what evidence do we have?

### *1 Maccabees Chapter 3*

- 1 Then his son Judas, called Maccabeus, rose up in his stead.
- 2 And all his brethren helped him, and so did all they that held with his father, and they fought with cheerfulness the battle of Israel.
- 3 So he got his people great honor, and put on a breastplate as a giant, and girt his warlike harness about him, and he made battles, protecting the host with his sword.
- 4 In his acts he was like a lion, and like a lion's whelp roaring for his prey.
- 5 For He pursued the wicked, and sought them out, and burnt up those that vexed his people.

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What is this text about? How is it different from the childhood story that we know?

Who is “He” in the last line of the text? What do we make of this sentence? (And - why might the writer have chosen such intense words here?)

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### *1 Maccabees 4:41-57*

- 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 bear 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.

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What is this text about? How is it different from the childhood story that we know?

What is the cultural battle that's being fought? Who lost?

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- 52 Now on the five and twentieth day of the ninth month, which is called the month *Kislev*, 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 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.

### Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat 21b

The rabbis taught in a Baraita, The requirement is to place the Chanukah light by the doorway of one's house, from the outside. If one lived on an upper floor and had no place in the courtyard to put his Chanukah light, he should place it in a window that is adjacent to the public domain. And in time of danger he should place the light on his table, and that is sufficient for him to fulfill the mitzvah.

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What were the rabbis concerned with? Why, do you think?

What political battle(s) might the rabbis have been fighting?

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When one is compelled to kindle the Chanukah light inside his house, it is necessary that he kindle another light in the same room so that he will be able to use its illumination, and not that of the Chanukah light, should the need arise. In that way it will be discernible that the Chanukah light was kindled solely for the sake of the mitzvah.

1. So – what is Chanukah about, really, over the ages? What do we do with the disconnect between the understandings of Chanukah over the years?
2. What is Chanukah about for us?
3. Questions and lessons learned:
  - a. What do we need to cleanse from our spaces?
  - b. Who are the cultural “losers” in our societies today?
  - c. What (or whose) light are we celebrating? What light can we create?
  - d. To what might we rededicate ourselves?