

Weekly Teaching

August 3, 2018

Within Rabbinic Judaism we are taught the mitzvah of *Hanukat HaBayit L'HaShem* (Consecrating a House for God). The idea of this mitzvah is to transform the physical structure of the "House" into a "Home" that is worthy of housing God's Spirit amongst its inhabitants and creating a sacred loving place imbued with a sense of God's Omni-presence.

Houses are physical constructions composed of specific materials that require technical knowledge to effectively build. The House can be built well, poorly or anything in-between these two poles of quality. The House can physically shelter its inhabitants.

A Home is different. For a Home, the materials needed are love, kindness, patience, compassion, etc.

We ritually attempt to mark our every-day intentions to always transform our House into our Home with the affixing of a *mezuzah* on our doorposts. By tradition, we invite our family and friends to join us in our ceremony of *Hanukat HaBayit L'HaShem*.

When I have the joyful opportunity to perform this mitzvah with families I will often recite the prayerful meditation:

Across this threshold may these things never cross: anger and anxiety, hatred and hunger, insult and injury. May this mezuzah as we kiss it going in and out, remind all who enter to bring with them only love and laughter, praise and prayer, kindness and comfort.

Let the doors of this house be wide open, so all who enter may find shelter and love.

I will then ask those present to take a moment to meditate silently upon the blessings they wish for this Home and then I will affix the *mezuzah* with the traditional prayers:

B'ruchim HaBa'im B'Shem Adonai...

We bless all who come in God's name with love and peace to sanctify this place, as we make this house our home.

Blessed are You Gracious One our God, Sovereign of all worlds, who makes us holy with Your mitzvot and commands us to affix the mezuzah.

Blessed are You Eternal One our God Who gives us life and keeps us strong and has brought us to this sacred time.

As we bless the Source of Life, so we are blessed.

Psalm 30 was written for the "Dedication of the House." Originally intended for the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, Jewish tradition asserts that every Home is supposed to be a "miniature Temple," a sacred place where the residents are always committed to God's Torah so as to assure the feeling of God's loving presence.

Many Jewish families will conclude their ceremony of *Hanukat HaBayit L'HaShem* with the placing of a *tzedakah* (charity) box on their kitchen table so that before everyone eats at the Consecration Ceremony they have the opportunity to make God visibly present by giving money to support others who might be in need.

The mitzvah of *Hanukat HaBayit L'HaShem* is a highlight within my rabbinic duties. I hope any local Jewish family will give me the opportunity to consecrate or re-consecrate their Home.

Please contact me at rabbimitch@templesholom.com or 203-542-7150 so that we can set a time for this wonderful ceremony.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Mitch