

To Dedicate

An Overview of the Biblical Terms

Notes by Tim Hegg

In the Tanach

הִנָּח, *chānak*, verbal form: “to dedicate”; חֲנֻכָּה, *chanukah*, noun form: “dedication,” “the act of dedicating”

1. הִנָּח - *chānak*, verbal form

Deut 20:5

וְדַבְּרוּ הַשְּׂטָרִים אֶל־הָעָם לֵאמֹר מִי־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר בָּנָה בַּיַּת־חֲדָשׁ וְלֹא חָנְכוֹ יֵלֶךְ וְיָשֵׁב לְבֵיתוֹ פְּנֵי־יָמוֹת בַּמִּלְחָמָה וְאִישׁ אַחֵר יִחַנְכֵנוּ:
The officers also shall speak to the people, saying, ‘Who is the man that has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him depart and return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would dedicate it.

- This is the only mention in the Tanach of “dedicating” a private dwelling or house. It is grouped together with two other situations, i.e., if a man has planted a vineyard but not yet enjoyed its fruit, or if a man is betrothed to a woman but not yet married. In these three scenarios, the man is exempt from military service in order that he might participate in the initial blessings of marriage and home.
- Thus, given the context of Deut 20, to “dedicate a home” seems clearly to be an act of thanksgiving to the Lord for having been given the blessing of home, marriage, and family. The focus seems to be that one dedicates the home as a place where the blessings of God will be realized, enjoyed, and seen by others, thus giving God the praise for His blessings as well as marking one’s home as a place where God would be honored in all aspects of life.
- There is also an obvious connection to the covenant blessings in the dedication of the house, for particularly in Deuteronomy, God’s blessing is promised to those who live in obedience to the covenant obligations. Thus, for someone to be given the blessings promised in the covenant, but who is unable to receive those blessings (being called off to war), seems to diminish God’s covenant promises. Thus, the dedication of the house (which involves actually living in the house) is an act demonstrating that God is faithful to His covenant promises.

1Kings 8:53

וַיִּזְבַּח שְׁלָמָה אֶת זֶבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים אֲשֶׁר זָבַח לַיהוָה בְּקֹר עֲשָׂרִים וּשְׁנַיִם אֶלֶף וְצֹאן מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים אֶלֶף וַיִּחַנְכוּ אֶת־בַּיִת יְהוָה הַמִּלְוֶה וְכָל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Solomon offered for the sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered to the LORD, 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the sons of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD.

2Chron 7:5

וַיִּזְבַּח הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלָמָה אֶת־זֶבַח הַבְּקָר עֲשָׂרִים וּשְׁנַיִם אֶלֶף וְצֹאן מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים אֶלֶף וַיִּחַנְכוּ אֶת־בַּיִת הָאֱלֹהִים הַמִּלְוֶה וְכָל־הָעָם:
King Solomon offered a sacrifice of 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. Thus the king and all the people dedicated the house of God.

- The dedication of Solomon’s temple marks the faithfulness of God to His covenant, for He had not only redeemed Israel from the slavery of Egypt, but had also sustained Israel through the wilderness trek to the Promised Land. Thus, the Temple stood as a testimony of God’s faithfulness, and the dedication was therefore the public testimony that God continues to dwell in the midst of Israel.
- The dedication further marked the Temple as the central place of worship to Israel’s God and only to Israel’s God. Thus, in the dedication itself, the leaders of Israel, representing the whole of Israel, pledge themselves to the true worship of God alone. The dedication of the Temple was therefore equally a dedication of the people themselves, to worship and serve God alone, rejecting all pagan deities and the pagan rituals connected to them.

חֲנֹךְ לְנֶעַר עַל־פִּי דְרָכָו גַם בְּיַזְקִין לֹא־יִסּוּר מִמֶּנָּה:

Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it. (NASB)

Train a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. (NET)

Teach* a youth about the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it. (HCSB)

- (*The NET note on the word “Train”*) – The verb חֲנַךְ (*khanakh*) means “to train up; to dedicate” (*BDB* 335 s.v.; *HALOT* 334 s.v. חֲנַךְ). The verb is used elsewhere to refer to dedicating a house (Deut 20:5; 1 Kgs 8:63; 2 Chr 7:5). The related noun חֲנֻכָּה (*khanukhah*) means “dedication; consecration” (*BDB* 335 s.v.; *HALOT* 334 s.v.), and is used in reference to the dedication or consecration of altars (Num 7:10; 2 Chr 7:9), the temple (Ps 30:1), and town walls (Neh 12:27). The related adjective חֲנִיךְ (*khanikh*) describes “trained, tried, experienced” men (*BDB* 335 s.v.; Gen 14:14). In the related cognate languages the verb has similar meanings: Aramaic “to train,” Ethiopic “to initiate,” and Arabic IV “to learn; to make experienced” (*HALOT* 334 s.v.). This proverb pictures a child who is dedicated by parents to the LORD and morally trained to follow Him. On the other hand, a popular expositional approach suggests that it means “to motivate.” This view is based on a cognate Arabic root II which (among many other things) refers to the practice of rubbing the palate of a newborn child with date juice or olive oil to motivate the child to suck. While this makes an interesting sermon illustration, it is highly unlikely that this concept was behind this Hebrew verb. The Arabic meaning is late and secondary — the Arabic term did not have this meaning until nearly a millennium after this proverb was written.
- In this text, the verb חֲנַךְ may well have the sense of parents who “dedicate” themselves to teach and train their children in the ways of God and thus to orient them away from the folly of their endemic selfishness. Thus, similar to the dedication of the Temple which both marked the Temple as the central place of worship as well as the people’s pledge to dedicate themselves to the worship of God alone, so “dedication of a young child” is likewise a commitment of the parents to lead and teach the child in the ways of the Lord. (Note the use of the possessive ל on לְנֶעַר as opposed to the construction of verb with definite direct object [וַיִּחַנְכוּ אֶת־בֵּית יְהוָה] in 1Ki 8:53; 2Chron 7:5. This may therefore have the sense “dedicate *in regard to* a young child.”)

2. חֲנֻכָּה, *chanukāh*, noun form

The noun is found eight times in the Tanach, describing the dedication of the altar in the Temple and the wall of Jerusalem. The superscription of Ps 30 uses the noun to describe the “dedication of the house” (i.e., the Temple).

Dedication of the altar

וַיִּקְרִיבוּ הַנְּשִׂאִים אֶת חֲנֻכַּת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ בַּיּוֹם הַמָּשָׁח אֹתוֹ וַיִּקְרִיבוּ הַנְּשִׂאִים אֶת־קִרְבָּנָם לִפְנֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה נְשִׂא אֶחָד לַיּוֹם נְשִׂא אֶחָד לַיּוֹם יִקְרִיבוּ אֶת־קִרְבָּנָם לְחֲנֻכַּת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: ס

The leaders offered the dedication offering for the altar when it was anointed, so the leaders offered their offering before the altar. Then the LORD said to Moses, “Let them present their offering, one leader each day, for the dedication of the altar.” (Num 7:10–11)

זֹאת חֲנֻכַּת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ בַּיּוֹם הַמָּשָׁח אֹתוֹ מֵאֵת נְשִׂאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל קַעֲרֹת כֶּסֶף שְׁתַּיִם עֲשָׂרָה מְזֻרְקֵי־כֶסֶף שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר כַּפּוֹת זָהָב שְׁתַּיִם עֲשָׂרָה: This was the dedication offering for the altar from the leaders of Israel when it was anointed: twelve silver dishes, twelve silver bowls, twelve gold pans, (Num 7:84)

וְכָל בְּקָר זָבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים עֲשָׂרִים וָאַרְבָּעָה פָּרִים אֵילִם שְׁשִׁים עֶתְדִים שְׁשִׁים כְּבָשִׂים בְּגֵי־שֵׁנָה שְׁשִׁים זֹאת חֲנֻכַּת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אַחֲרֵי הַמָּשָׁח אֹתוֹ: and all the oxen for the sacrifice of peace offerings 24 bulls, all the rams 60, the male goats 60, the male lambs one year old 60. This was the dedication offering for the altar after it was anointed. (Num 7:88)

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי עֲצֵרֶת כִּי חֲנֻכַּת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ עָשׂוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וְהַחֲג שִׁבְעַת יָמִים:

On the eighth day they held a solemn assembly, for the dedication of the altar they observed seven days and the feast seven days. (2Chron 7:9)

Dedication of the wall of Jerusalem

ובחנכת חומת ירושלים בקשו את־הלויים מכל־מקומתם להביאם לירושלם לעשות חנכה ושמחה ובתודות ובשיר מצלילים ובלים ובכנרות:
Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought out the Levites from all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem so that they might celebrate the dedication with gladness, with hymns of thanksgiving and with songs *to the accompaniment* of cymbals, harps and lyres. (Neh 12:27)

Dedication of the Temple

מזמור שיר־חנכת הבית לְדָוִד:

A Psalm; a Song at the Dedication of the House. A Psalm of David. (Ps 30)

- It appears quite certain that the superscript of this Psalm is a later addition, marking Ps 30 as commonly used in the celebration of Hanukkah and the rededication of the Temple at the time of the Maccabees.

3. Other Terms used to indicate “dedication”

- נָזַר, *nāzar* (only in niphil and hifil) – “to vow to become a Nazirite;” “to pledge, devote, dedicate oneself to a particular duty;” “to withdraw from common practices, to behave differently” (*HALOT*)

Negative example: Hos 9:10

כַּעֲנָבִים בַּמִּדְבָּר מִצְאָתִי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּבְבוֹרָה בַת־אֲנָה בְּרֵאשִׁיתָהּ רְאִיתִי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם הֵמָּה בָּאוּ בַעַל־פְּעוֹר וַיִּנְזְרוּ לַבִּשְׁת׃ וַיִּהְיוּ שְׂקוּצִים כַּאֲהָבָם:

I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your forefathers as the earliest fruit on the fig tree in its first season. But they came to Baal-peor and devoted themselves to shame, and they became as detestable as that which they loved.

Positive example: Num 6:2, 5, 12

Num 6:2 דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ אוֹ־אִשָּׁה כִּי יִפְלֵא לְנָזֵר נָזִיר לְהִזִּיר לַיהוָה:
Num 6:5 כָּל־יְמֵי נָזִיר נָזְרוּ תַעַר לֹא־יַעֲבֹר עַל־רֵאשׁוֹ עַד־מְלֵאת הַיָּמִם אֲשֶׁר־יִזִּיר לַיהוָה קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה גְדֹל פָּרַע שְׂעַר רֵאשׁוֹ:
Num 6:12 וְהִזִּיר לַיהוָה אֶת־יְמֵי נָזְרוֹ וְהֵבִיא כֶּבֶשׂ בֶּן־שָׁנָתוֹ לְאֵשֶׁם וְהַיָּמִים הָרֵאשִׁימִים יָפְלוּ כִּי טָמֵא נָזְרוֹ:

Num 6:2 “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When a man or woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to dedicate himself to the LORD,

Num 6:5 ‘All the days of his vow of separation no razor shall pass over his head. He shall be holy until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the LORD; he shall let the locks of hair on his head grow long.

Num 6:12 and shall dedicate to the LORD his days as a Nazirite, and shall bring a male lamb a year old for a guilt offering; but the former days will be void because his separation was defiled.

- קָדַשׁ, *qādash*, “to separate (sanctify) or transfer something or someone for specific service/duties to the LORD”

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מִכָּל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת: פ

Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. (Gen 2:3)

וְאִתָּהּ תְּדַבֵּר אֶל־כָּל־חַכְמֵי־לֵב אֲשֶׁר מְלֵאתִיו רוּחַ חָכְמָה וְעָשׂוּ אֶת־בְּגָדֵי אֶהְרֹן לְקַדְּשׁוֹ לְכַהֲנוֹ־לִי:

You shall speak to all the skillful persons whom I have endowed with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron’s garments to consecrate him, that he may minister as priest to Me. (Ex 28:3)

וְהַלְבַּשְׁתָּ אֹתָם אֶת־אֶהְרֹן אָחִיד וְאֶת־בָּנָיו אִתּוֹ וּמִשַּׁחְתָּ אֹתָם וּמְלֵאתָ אֹתֵיהֶם וּקְדַשְׁתָּ אֹתָם וְכַהֲנוּ לִי:

You shall put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him; and you shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them, that they may serve Me as priests. (Ex 28:41)

4. Dedication in the Apostolic Scriptures

- Parallel to the use of שָׁדַשׁ , (*qādash*) in the Tanach, which gives the sense of “set apart,” “sanctify,” and to “appoint (dedicate) someone for a special duty,” the Apostolic Scriptures use the verb $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$ (*hagaizō*) and its related noun, $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\alpha\sigma\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ (*hagiasmos*) in much the same way. Thus, this word group is usually translated in the English as “sanctify” or “sanctification,” meaning to be set apart from that which is unholy, and to set apart unto to God and His righteous ways. Thus, to be “set apart to God” could also be described as “dedicated to Him.”

But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. (Rom 6:22)

For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. (1Thess 4:3–7)

“You fools and blind men! Which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold? And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering on it, he is obligated.’ You blind men, which is more important, the offering, or the altar that sanctifies the offering? (Matt 23:17–19)

- In the Tanach, the noun we studied above (חֲנֻכָּה , *chanukkah*) and its related verb, חָנַךְ (*chanach*) is translated in the Lxx by the Greek noun $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\kappa\alpha\iota\nu\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ (*engkainmos*) and its related verb, $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\kappa\alpha\iota\nu\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$ (*engkainizō*). In the Apostolic Scriptures, we have this word group ($\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\kappa\alpha\iota\nu\acute{\iota}\alpha$, *engkainia* and its related verb, $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\kappa\alpha\iota\nu\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$, *egnkainizō*) found only three times:

At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Yeshua was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. (John 10:22–23)

For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood. (Heb 9:17–18)

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Yeshua, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Heb 10:19–22)

Summary

- Dedication and sanctification are overlapping terms or biblical concepts. In terms of “dedication,” this pictures a person’s resolve with accompanying actions to a particular pattern of life or to a specific activity. Such dedication can be either to that which honors God or dishonors Him. When, however, dedication is accompanied by sanctification, this marks one’s dedication to God in accordance with His word and His purposes.
- The components that comprise true dedication of oneself to God:
 1. Knowing what does and does not please God. Such knowledge is gained
 - through the study of God’s word, the Bible.
 - through prayer and personal communion with God.
 - through counsel from wise and godly people.
 2. Committing oneself to that which pleases God. This requires
 - a willingness to make a marked decision in one’s life; to dedicate oneself to strive for godliness.
 - discipline to maintain and to grow in the means of grace:
 - regularly reading the Bible
 - meditating upon what one reads of the Scriptures (this involves memorizing Scripture)
 - engaging in prayer, both private and corporate on a consistent basis
 - being in regular fellowship with other believers
 - discipline to remove oneself from the entanglements of worldly things, i.e., that which would turn one’s heart and attention away from God
 - associations; the “crowd I hang out with”
 - disciplining myself in terms of entertainment, music, movies, etc.
 - not being trapped into accepting the world’s criteria of what is right or wrong