

Hanukkah Blessing

Praised are you, Eternal One,
our God, source of all life,
who has made us holy with sacred
obligations and commanded us to
kindle the Hanukkah lights.

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Praised are you, Eternal One,
our God, source of all life,
who has given us life, sustained us and
enabled us to reach this moment.

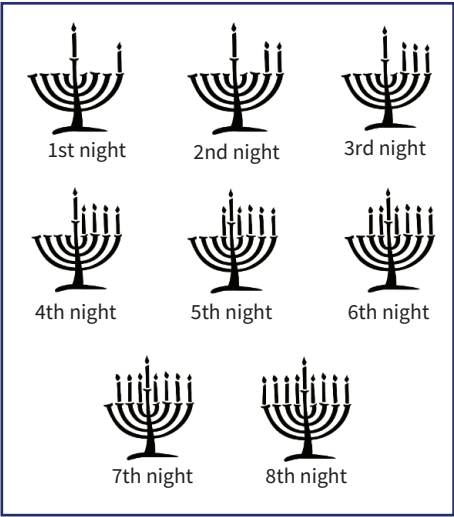
How to Light the Hanukkiah
(special nine-branched menorah)

- 1. Load the candles from right to left.
One candle (the shamash) is used to light the other candles. The shamash is placed in a candle-holder slightly elevated from the other candles.
- 2. Light the shamash.
On the first night, say Blessings 1, 2 & 3.
On all other nights say Blessings 1 & 2.
- 3. Light the candles from left to right.
Add a candle each night until all eight candles, plus the shamash, are lit on the eighth night.
- 4. Celebrate!
Sing, play dreidel, and eat delicious latkes!

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר
קדשנו במצותיו, וצונו להדליק נר של חנוכה.
*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech haolam asher
kidshanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Hanukkah.*

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם, שעשה
נסים לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה.
*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech haolam she'asah
nissim l'avoteinu ba'yamim ha'hem bazman hazeh*

On the first night only:
ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם,
שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.
*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech haolam shehechyanu,
v'kiyamanu, v'higiyanu laz'man hazeh.*



When Did Hanukkah Start?

Hanukkah celebrates the victory of the Maccabees, a small band of fighting men led by Judah Maccabee, over the much larger and more powerful Syrian-Greek army of Antiochus the IV, who controlled Jerusalem and the province of Judea. At that time, there was conflict between those Jews who wanted to fully embrace Greek culture and those Jews who wanted to maintain traditional Jewish Life. In support of the assimilationists, Antiochus made decrees outlawing the practice of Judaism and set up idols of Greek gods in the Temple in Jerusalem and throughout the area, forcing the Jewish population to bow down to them. The Maccabean revolt was a battle to preserve the Jewish way of life.

Having defeated Antiochus' army, Judah and his men went to the Temple, cleansed it, and rededicated it to the service of the one God. Judah restored its sacred furniture and wanted to light the menorah (candelabrum) that stood in the central courtyard using pure olive oil as was customary. However, all he could find was one small bottle of oil, with just enough to burn for one day. Miraculously, that little bit of oil burned for eight day and nights, until new oil could be made. This is why Hanukkah is known as the "Festival of Lights."

What is Hanukkah?

The Hebrew word Hanukkah literally means "re-dedication." Just as Judah and the Maccabees rededicated the Temple in Jerusalem, we have the opportunity to rededicate ourselves to our most cherished values.

Hanukkah takes place in the winter, usually in December, at the time of year in the western hemisphere when the days are the shortest and the nights the longest. It's a time of year when many faiths and cultures engage in a ritual of lighting candles. Lighting the Hanukkah candles reminds us of our responsibility to bring light into dark places and to repair the world's brokenness. Some families have adopted the tradition of dedicating each new candle lit over the eight nights to a specific hope or cause, and then giving a donation to a supporting organization.

How Do We Celebrate?

The central ritual of Hanukkah is the nightly lighting of the *hanukkiyah*, a nine-branched candelabrum. Each evening, one candle is added until the hanukkiyah is ablaze with light on the eighth evening.

This meaningful ritual most often takes place at home, with the whole family gathered. As the candles burn brightly, Hanukkah songs are sung and the game of *dreidel* (spinning tops) is played. In commemoration of the miracle of the oil, it is traditional to eat delicious foods fried in oil: *latkes* (potato pancakes), and an Israeli favorite, *sufganiyot* (jelly donuts).



An Exercise for All Faith and Backgrounds

- As darkness falls one evening of Hanukkah, join loved ones and choose a beautiful candle to light. Enjoy the warm glow of family, friendship and love.
- Talk or think about something that you would like to (re)dedicate yourself to in the coming months.
- Make a donation to a cause you care deeply about.
- Many traditions teach that "the body is the Temple of the spirit." Do something special for your body: take a yoga class, go for a swim, enjoy a spa treatment, or explore new wellness activities.

Explore Hanukkah from Different Jewish Perspectives

- myjewishlearning.com/hanukkah
- exploringjudaism.org/hanukkah
- chabad.org/hanukkah
- pjlibrary.org/hanukkah

