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How to Light Hanukkah Candles

By Rabbi Aaron Shaffier



Lighting the Menorah is the central Mitzvah of Hanukkah. We light the Menorah to remember the Miracle that happened when the Jewish rebels (the Macabees) took back the Holy Temple from their conquerors. The enemy had done everything that they could to defile the Temple, including bringing idols into the Temple.

The Macabees cleaned and restored the Temple service. They had only one small flask of the special olive oil that was used to light the large golden Menorah in the Temple. Miraculously, the small flask lasted for 8 days.

The Rabbis made this 8 day period into a holiday, now known as Hanukkah. They decreed that it would be celebrated by lighting an 8 branched Menorah, and increasing its lights each day to commemorate how the miracle became greater with each day that the oil continued to burn.

There are three blessings that we say over lighting the Menorah on the first night of Hanukkah. On the subsequent nights we only say the first two. (The third blessing called "She-hech-iy-anu" is a blessing thanking G-d for allowing us to celebrate Hanukkah again this year, and is only said on the first time that we light the Menorah any given year.)

Here is how to light the Menorah:

First night

- Gather your family, roommates, friends or anyone else around. The Mitzvah of the Menorah is to publicize the Hanukkah miracle!
- Prepare you Menorah with one candle in the right-most spot in the Menorah.
- Take a second candle with will serve as the "Shamash" (servant candle) this candle will be used to light the other candle and will remain burning with it in its own special spot, set off from the rest of the candles.
- With the lit Shamash candle in your hand, say blessings number 1 ,2.3 (see below)
- Light your single Hanukkah candle. Its light is small but very meaningful.
- Place the Shamash candle in its special spot where it is set apart from the other candles.
- Sing (or read if you don't know the tune) "Hanerot Hallalu" (see below). You can also sing a Hanukkah song like Maoz Tzur
- If possible, stay around the Menorah for a while and think about what the light has to say.



Second night

- Gather your family, roommates, friends or anyone else around. The Mitzvah of the Menorah is to publicize the Hanukkah miracle!
- Prepare you Menorah with two candles in the right most spots in the Menorah.

- Take a third candle with will serve as the "Shamash" (servant candle) this candle will be used to light the other candles and will remain burning with it in its own special spot, set off from the rest of the candles.
- With the lit Shamash candle in your hand, say blessings number 1 and 2 (see below)
- Light the newer candle (the left one) first. Then light the right candle. The light is growing and so is our Hanukkah joy.
- Sing (or read if you don't know the tune) "Hanerot Hallalu" (see below). You can also sing a Hanukkah song like Maoz Tzur.
- If possible, stay around the Menorah for a while and think about what the light has to say.



Third night

- Gather your family, roommates, friends or anyone else around. The Mitzvah of the Menorah is to publicize the Hanukkah miracle!
- Prepare you Menorah with three candles in the right most spots in the Menorah.
- Take a fourth candle with will serve as the "Shamash" (servant candle) this candle will be used to light the other candles and will remain burning with it in its own special spot, set off from the rest of the candles.
- With the lit Shamash candle in your hand, say blessings number 1 and 2 (see below)
- Light the newest candle (the left one) first. Then light the candle to the right of it and lastly the furthest to the right.
- Sing (or read if you don't know the tune) "Hanerot Hallalu" (see below). You can also sing a Hanukkah song like Maoz Tzur
- If possible, stay around the Menorah for a while and think about what the light has to say.



Fourth night

- Gather your family, roommates, friends or anyone else around. The Mitzvah of the Menorah is to publicize the Hanukkah miracle!
- Prepare your Menorah with four candles in the right most spots in the Menorah.
- Take a fifth candle which will serve as the "Shamash" (servant candle) this candle will be used to light the other candles and will remain burning with it in its own special spot, set off from the rest of the candles.
- With the lit Shamash candle in your hand, say blessings number 1 and 2 (see below)
- Light the newest candle (the left one) first. Continue lighting in order from left to right.
- Sing (or read if you don't know the tune) "Hanerot Hallalu" (see below). You can also sing a Hanukkah song like Maoz Tzur
- If possible, stay around the Menorah for a while and think about what the light has to say.



Fifth night:

- Gather your family, roommates, friends or anyone else around. The Mitzvah of the Menorah is to publicize the Hanukkah miracle!
- Prepare your Menorah with five candles in the right most spots in the Menorah.
- Take a sixth candle which will serve as the "Shamash" (servant candle) this candle will be used to light the other candles and will remain burning with it in its own special spot, set off from the rest of the candles.
- With the lit Shamash candle in your hand, say blessings number 1 and 2 (see below)
- Light the newest candle (the left one) first. Continue lighting in order from left to right. Tonight is the first night that there are more lit candles than unlit. The light has overtaken the darkness. It is known to be a night of special miracles.
- Sing (or read if you don't know the tune) "Hanerot Hallalu" (see below). You can also sing a Hanukkah song like Maoz Tzur
- If possible, stay around the Menorah for a while and think about what the light has to say.



Sixth night:

- Gather your family, roommates, friends or anyone else around. The Mitzvah of the Menorah is to publicize the Hanukkah miracle!
- Prepare you Menorah with six candles in the right most spots in the Menorah.
- Take a seventh candle with will serve as the "Shamash" (servant candle) this candle will be used to light the other candles and will remain burning with it in its own special spot, set off from the rest of the candles.

- With the lit Shamash candle in your hand, say blessings number 1 and 2 (see below)
- Light the newest candle (the left one) first. Continue lighting in order from left to right.
- Sing (or read if you don't know the tune) "Hanerot Hallalu" (see below). You can also sing a Hanukkah song like Maoz Tzur
- If possible, stay around the Menorah for a while and think about what the light has to say.



Seventh night:

- Gather your family, roommates, friends or anyone else around. The Mitzvah of the Menorah is to publicize the Hanukkah miracle!
- Prepare you Menorah with seven candles in the right most spots in the Menorah.
- Take a eight candle with will serve as the "Shamash" (servant candle) this candle will be used to light the other candles and will remain burning with it in its own special spot, set off from the rest of the candles.
- With the lit Shamash candle in your hand, say blessings number 1 and 2 (see below)
- Light the newest candle (the left one) first. Continue lighting in order from left to right.
- Sing (or read if you don't know the tune) "Hanerot Hallalu" (see below). You can also sing a Hanukkah song like Maoz Tzur
- If possible, stay around the Menorah for a while and think about what the light has to say.





Eight night:

- Gather your family, roommates, friends or anyone else around. The Mitzvah of the Menorah is to publicize the Hanukkah miracle!
- Fill up all eight spots in your Menorah with candles.
- Take a ninth candle with will serve as the "Shamash" (servant candle) this candle will be used to light the other candles and will remain burning with it in its own special spot, set off from the rest of the candles.
- With the lit Shamash candle in your hand, say blessings number 1 and 2 (see below)
- Light the newest candle (the left one) first. Continue lighting in order from left to right.
- Sing (or read if you don't know the tune) "Hanerot Hallalu" (see below). You can also sing a Hanukkah song like Maoz Tzur
- If possible, stay around the Menorah for a while and think about what the light has to say.



Blessings

The Blessings in English

1. Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the Chanukah light.
2. Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who performed miracles for our forefathers in those days, at this time.
3. Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.

Transliteration of the Blessings:

1. Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai E-lo-he-nu Me-lech Ha-olam A-sher Ki-de-sha-nu Be-mitz-vo-tav Ve-tzi-va-nu Le-had-lik Ner Cha-nu-kah.
2. Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai E-lo-he-nu Me-lech Ha-olam She-a-sa Ni-sim La-avo-te-nu Ba-ya-mim Ha-hem Bi-zman Ha-zeh.
3. Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai E-lo-he-nu Me-lech Ha-olam She-heche-ya-nu Ve-ki-yi-ma-nu Ve-higi-a-nu Liz-man Ha-zeh.

The first two Blessings recited every Chanukah night in the Hebrew original:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר חֲנֻכָּה.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים
לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ, בְּיָמִים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵן הַזֶּה.

The third Blessing recited only on the first night (or the first time lighting this Chanukah) in the Hebrew Original:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחֵינּוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ
וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנֵן הַזֶּה:

Hanerot Hallalu

English

We kindle these lights [to commemorate] the saving acts, miracles and wonders which You have performed for our forefathers, in those days at this time, through Your holy priests. Throughout the eight days of Chanukah, these lights are sacred, and we are not permitted to make use of them, but only to look at them, in order to offer thanks and praise to Your great Name for Your miracles, for Your wonders and for Your salvations.

Transliteration

Ha-nei-rot ha-lo-lu o-nu mad-li-kin
Al ha-te-shu-ot ve-al ha-ni-sim ve-al ha-nif-la-ot,
She-see-ta la-avoi-tei-nu ba-ya-mim ha-heim biz-man ha-zeh,
Al ye-dei ko-ha-ne-cha ha-ke-do-shim,
Ve-chol she-mo-nat ye-mei cha-nu-kah ha-nei-rot ha-la-lu ko-desh hem,
Ve-ein la-nu re-shut le-hish-ta-meish ba-hem,
E-lo lir-o-tam bil-vad, ke-dei le-ho-dot u-le-ha-leil le-shim-cha ha-ga-dol Al ni-se-cha
ve-al nif-le-o-te-cha ve-al ye-shu-o-te-cha.

Haneirot Hallalu in the Hebrew Original:

הַנֵּרוֹת הַלְלוּ אֲנֵנוּ מִדְּלִיקֵינוּ, עַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת, וְעַל
הַנִּסִּים, וְעַל הַנִּפְלְאוֹת, שְׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ
בְּיָמֵינוּ הַזֵּה בְּזֵמַן הַזֶּה, עַל יְדֵי כַּהֲנֵיךָ הַקְּדוֹשִׁים. וְכֹל
שְׂמוֹנַת יָמֵי חֲנֻכָּה, הַנֵּרוֹת הַלְלוּ קֹדֶשׁ הֵם, וְאֵין לָנוּ
רְשׁוּת לְהַשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בָּהֶן, אֲלֵא לְרֵאוֹתָן בְּלִבְךָ, כְּדִי לְהוֹדוֹת
וּלְהַלֵּל לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל, עַל נִסֶּיךָ וְעַל נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ וְעַל
יְשׁוּעוֹתֶיךָ: