

הדלקת נרות חנוכה 

*Candles are lit on each of the eight nights of Hanukkah: One the first night, two the second, and an additional candle on each subsequent night. The candle for the first night is placed at the far right of the menorah (hanukiah); on each subsequent night, another candle is added to the left. An extra candle, designated as the "shamash," is lit first — then used to light the others after the b'rakhot are recited. Each night, the candles are lit from left to right, starting with the new candle.*

*One who was present during the lighting of the candles at the synagogue should also light them at home.*

*On Shabbat Hanukkah, the Hanukkah lights are kindled before the Shabbat candles. On Erev Shabbat, it is customary to use special, extra-long Hanukkah candles, since the fulfillment of the mitzvah requires that the Hanukkah lights burn for at least one half hour after dark.*

*On Saturday night, the Hanukkah candles are lit after Havdalah at home, but before Havdalah in the synagogue.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶכֶּ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל חֲנֻכָּה.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶכֶּ הָעוֹלָם,  
שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּיָמֵים הָהֵם וּבְיָמֵינוּ הַזֶּה.

*On the first night only:*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶכֶּ הָעוֹלָם,  
שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיְמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְיָמֵינוּ הַזֶּה.

The practice of lighting lights to commemorate the festival of Hanukkah is connected to the fact that the seven-branched Menorah was rekindled in the Temple in Jerusalem once it was restored to proper usage by the followers of Judah the Maccabee. At that time, the great golden Menorah was perhaps the most important sacred object in the Temple. The Ark of the Covenant had been lost or destroyed at the time of the Babylonian conquest and was never duplicated. The lights of the Menorah were kindled every evening and burned throughout the night (Exodus 27:20–21). Its seven branches symbolized the entirety of creation. It is also likely that the Menorah was a stylized representation of a tree or a bush. Its branches were adorned with buds and flowers (Exodus 25:33). It may even have been a reminder of the “burning bush” in which the Presence of God was symbolized by fire (Exodus 3:2). The Presence of God at Sinai was also signified by fire, “for Adonai had come down upon it in fire” (Exodus 19:18). When the original Tabernacle was dedicated in the wilderness, “fire came forth from before Adonai and consumed the burnt offering” (Leviticus 9:24).

The Menorah as the symbol of God’s power was described by the prophet Zechariah in the famous passage read as the Haftarah on Shabbat Hanukkah: “I see a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl above it. The lamps on it are seven in number . . . This is the word of Adonai . . . Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit — said Adonai Tz’va-ot” (4:2–6).

From the “bowl above it” — the Almighty — all strength flows to the lamps below — human beings. It is not human might that ultimately prevails, but God’s spirit. This is a strange but vital message for a holiday that celebrates, at least in part, a military victory.

**בְּיָמֵים הָהֵם וּבְיָמֵינוּ הַזֶּה** — **from ancient days until our time.** Literally, “in those days and at this time.” God performed miracles for our ancestors then — at the time of the Maccabees — and still performs them today. The miracles referred to here are those that enabled our ancestors to defeat the Syrians, to reconquer Jerusalem, and to restore the Temple to the worship of the one God.

The original observance of Ḥanukkah was for each household to light one light each night for eight nights:

The *mitzvah* of Ḥanukkah is to kindle one light for each household. Those who wish to observe in a special way will kindle one light for each person. For those who wish to be even more stringent — the School of Shammai says: Light eight lights on the first night and decrease the number by one on each subsequent night. The School of Hillel says: Light one light on the first night and increase the number by one on each subsequent night. (Shabbat 21b)

The current practice is to follow the School of Hillel, following the principle that we must also strive to reach greater degrees of holiness — not reduce it. It is also customary to light the lights where they can be seen by others, in order to publicly proclaim the miracle. Only in times of danger was it considered proper to light them secretly where they could not be seen.

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 LIGHTING ḤANUKKAH LIGHTS

#### A ḤANUKKAH MEDITATION

From the joyful nights of our childhood,  
from days of a more distant sober past,  
memories as colorful as these candles —  
as hazy as the shadows  
they will cast on the walls  
when hallowed and lit —  
charge us to recall the sustainers of our faith.  
Standard bearers like this proud shamash  
they stand alone, waiting to be joined.

Maccabees, martyrs,  
men and women of valor  
shall spark to life anew.  
Refusing to be extinguished,  
their very souls are revealed in mystical flares,  
in the last blue glimmer of spiraling flame.  
Ancestors and descendants — searching, reaching —  
they are who we were and who we will yet become.

Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam,  
asher kid-shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Ḥanukkah.

Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam,  
she-asah nissim la'avoteinu ba-yamim ha-hem u-va-z'man ha-zeh.

*On the first night only:*

Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam,  
she-heḥeyanu v'kiy'manu v'higi-anu la-z'man ha-zeh.

Praised are You Adonai our God, who rules the universe,  
instilling in us the holiness of mitzvot  
by commanding us to light the lights of Ḥanukkah.

Praised are You Adonai our God, who rules the universe,  
accomplishing miracles for our ancestors  
**from ancient days until our time.**

*On the first night only:*

Praised are You Adonai our God, who rules the universe,  
granting us life, sustaining us, and enabling us to reach this day.

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**S**aid the Holy One: Do not think that I need the lights of the Menorah. Rather, you should kindle light before Me as I kindled light before you. For what purpose? To elevate you before the nations who will say, "Israel gives light to The-One-Who-Gives-Light-To-All!" *Exodus Rabbah 36:2*

After the lights are lit:

**הַנְּרוֹת הַלְלוּ** אֲנַחְנוּ מִדְּלִיקָם עַל הַנְּסִים וְעַל הַנִּפְלְאוֹת  
וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת וְעַל הַמַּלְחָמוֹת, שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים  
הָהֵם וּבְזֶמַן הַזֶּה, עַל יְדֵי כְּהֵנִיחַ הַקְּדוֹשִׁים. וְכָל שְׁמוֹנַת  
יָמֵי חֲנֻכַּת הַנְּרוֹת הַלְלוּ קֹדֶשׁ הֵם, וְאִין לָנוּ רְשׁוֹת  
לְהַשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בָּהֶם, אֲלֵא לְרֵאוֹתָם בְּלִבְךָ, כְּדִי לְהוֹדוֹת  
וּלְהִלֵּל לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל עַל נְסִיךָ וְעַל נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ וְעַל  
יְשׁוּעָתְךָ.

לָךְ נֶאֱדָה לְשַׁבָּח,  
וְשֵׁם תּוֹדָה נִזְבָּח,  
מִצָּר הַמְּנַבָּח,  
חֲנֻכַּת הַמְּזֻבָּח.

בַּיְגוֹן כְּחֵי כְּלָה,  
בְּשֶׁעֲבוּד מַלְכוּת עֲגָלָה,  
הוֹצִיא אֶת הַסְּגָלָה,  
יָרְדוּ כְּאֶבֶן בַּמִּצּוּלָה.

וְגַם שֵׁם לֹא שִׁקְטָתִי,  
כִּי זָרִים עֲבַדְתִּי,  
כִּמְעַט שֶׁעֲבַרְתִּי,  
לִקְצֵ שְׁבָעִים נוֹשְׁעָתִי.

אֲגִי בֶן הַמַּדְרֵא,  
וְנִגְאֹתוֹ נִשְׁבַּחְתָּה,  
וְאוֹיֵב שְׁמוֹ מְחִיתָ,  
עַל הָעֵץ תִּלְיֵת.

אֲזִי בִימֵי חֲשֻׁמָּנִים,  
וְטַמְאֹו כָּל הַשְּׁמָנִים,  
נַעֲשֶׂה נֶס לְשׁוֹשָׁנִים,  
קִבְּעוּ שִׁיר וְרַנְּנִים.

מְעוֹז צוֹר יְשׁוּעָתִי  
תִּכּוֹן בֵּית תְּפִלָּתִי  
לַעֲת תִּכְיִן מִטְּבַח  
אֲזִי אֲגַמֵּר בְּשִׁיר מְזֻמּוֹר

רַעוֹת שְׁבָעָה נִפְשִׁי  
חֵזִי מְרָרוּ בְקִשִׁי  
וּבִידוֹ הַגְּדוּלָה  
חֵיל פְּרָעָה וְכָל יָרְעוּ

דְּבִיר קֹדֶשׁוֹ הִבִּיאֲנִי  
וּבֵא נוֹגֵשׁ וְהִגְלֵנִי,  
וַיִּזֵּן רַעַל מִסִּכְתִּי  
קֵץ בְּבַל, זְרַבְבָּל,

כֶּרֶת קוֹמַת בְּרוֹשׁ בְּקֶשׁ  
וְנִהְיֵתָה לוֹ לִפַּח וּלְמוֹקֶשׁ  
רֵאשׁ יְמִינִי נִשְׁאַתָּה,  
רֵב בְּנֵיוֹ וּקְנִינֵיו

וַיִּוְנֵם נִקְבְּצוּ עָלַי  
וּפְרָצוּ חוֹמוֹת מְגִדְלִי  
וּמְנוֹתֵר קְנִקְנִים  
בְּנֵי בֵינָה יָמֵי שְׁמוֹנָה

## Rock of Ages

## מעוז צור

This poem was written by Mordecai ben Isaac during the first half of the thirteenth century and has often been set to music. The first letter of each Hebrew paragraph forms an acrostic, spelling out the name Mordecai. The poet speaks in the first person, taking upon himself the persona of the people Israel. Israel begins by praying that God will reestablish the Temple so that Israel can sing songs of praise at the dedication (*hanukkah*) of the altar, as did the Maccabees. Israel then describes its history of sorrows and deliverances, beginning with the Egyptian slavery, which was followed by the drowning of Pharaoh's army. Next the Babylonian Exile is outlined, followed by the Return to Zion. The next verse concerns the story of Purim and Haman's defeat. Finally, the story is related of the Hasmoneans (the Maccabees) defeating the Greeks, including a reference to the legend of the miraculous oil.

**הַנְּרוֹת הַלְלוּ** — **These lights.** This paragraph is not a prayer, but a declaration of the meaning and purpose of the lights. The text is found in Sofrim 20:6. The first few lines reflect the Al Ha-nissim prayer, which is recited during Hanukkah in the Amidah and in Birkat Ha-mazon. (See, for example, page 290.) Here, as there, the miracles are identified as the wondrous actions of God that enabled our ancestors to overcome their enemies. The *Kohanim* referred to are Mattathias and his sons, who led the rebellion.

**וְאִין לָנוּ רְשׁוֹת לְהַשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בָּהֶם** — **We may not make use of their light.** Unlike Shabbat candles, which are intended to give illumination in the home during Shabbat and may be used for seeing and reading, the Hanukkah lights are dedicated to a specific purpose: proclaiming the miracle. Therefore they may not be used for any utilitarian purpose. For this reason an extra light, known as the *shamash* (the “serving light”) was introduced. It is not holy. Any light that may be used, even mistakenly, may be said to come from this extra light.

The Talmud notes that the practice of having special observances at the turn of the year, the winter solstice when days are shortest, was common among pagans. The Romans had special holidays at that time known as Kalenda and Saturnalia. The Sages told the following legend in explanation:

When Primal Adam saw that the days were getting progressively shorter, he said, "Woe is me! Perhaps because I sinned, the world around me is turning dark and returning to its state of chaos and confusion. This then is the 'death' that was decreed against me from Heaven!" He proceeded to fast for eight days. However, when the solstice came and he saw that the days were becoming progressively longer, he said, "This is the natural course of the world." He then proceeded to observe eight days of festivity. He created these days for the honor of Heaven, but [the pagans] appointed them for idolatrous worship.  
(Avodah Zarah 8a)

*After the lights are lit:*

**These lights** which we kindle recall the wondrous triumphs and the miraculous victories wrought through Your holy *Kohanim* for our ancestors from ancient days until our time. These lights are sacred through all the eight days of Hanukkah. **We may not make use of their light**, but are only to look upon them, and thus be reminded to thank and praise You for the wondrous miracle of our deliverance.

<b>Ma-oz Tzur</b> y'shu-ati Tikon beit t'filati L'et takhin matbe-ah Az egmor b'shir mizmor	l'kha na-eh l'shabe-ah, v'sham todah n'zabe-ah, mi-tzar ha-m'nabe-ah, Hanukkat ha-mizbe-ah.
Ra-ot sav'ah nafshi Hayay mer'ru b'koshi U-v'yado ha-g'dolah Heyl par-oh v'khol zar-o	b'yagon kolhi khilah, b'shi-bud malkhut eglah, hotzi et ha-s'gulah, yardu kh'even bi-m'tzulah.
D'vir kod-sho hevi-ani U-va noges v'higlani V'yein ra-al masakhti Ketz bavel, z'rubavel,	v'gam sham lo shakat'ti, ki zarim avad'ti, kim'at she-avarti, l'ketz shiv-im noshati.
K'rot komat b'rosh bikesh V'nih'y'ta lo l'fah u-l'mokesh Rosh y'mini niseita, Rov banav v'kinyanav	Agagi ben ham'data, v'ga'avato nishbatah, v'oyev sh'mo mahita al ha-etz talita.
Y'vanim nik-b'tzu alai U-fartzu homot migdalai U-mi-notar kankanim B'nei vinah y'mei shmonah	azai bimei hashmanim, v'tim-u kol ha-sh'manim, na'asah nes la-shoshanim, kav-u shir u-r'nanim.

**Rock of Ages**, let our song praise Your saving power. You amid the raging throng were our sheltering tower. Furious they assailed us, but Your help availed us. And Your word broke their sword when our own strength failed us.

**W**hat is [the miracle of] Hanukkah? As our rabbis taught: Beginning on the twenty-fifth of Kislev and extending for eight days, one does not eulogize the dead or fast. The reason is that when the Greeks entered the Temple, they desecrated all of the oil [used for lighting the Menorah]. When the Hasmonean Dynasty overcame them, they searched but found only one container of oil that was still sealed with the seal of the High Priest. It contained enough oil for only one day. But a miracle occurred and with [the oil of that one container] they were able to keep the light [of the Menorah] burning for eight days. The following year they decreed that those days should be celebrated as a festival with the recitation of Hallel and the prayer of thanksgiving [Al Ha-nissim].  
*Shabbat 21b*

**W**hy are we commanded to light lights [on Hanukkah for eight days]? At the time of the Greeks' domination, when the Hasmoneans entered the Temple, holding eight iron spears, they struck them into some wood and kindled lights upon them. This they did for eight days.

*Scholium (annotation) to Megillat Taanit*