righteousness? 52. Joseph, in the time of his distress, kept the commandments, and became lord of Egypt. 53. Phineas, our ancestor, for his zeal received the promise of eternal priesthood. 54. Joshua kept the Law and became a judge in Israel. 55. Caleb for bearing witness in the congregation gained inheritance of land as his reward. 56. David for being merciful inherited the throne of an everlasting kingdom. 57. Elijah, because of his love of the Law, was taken up to heaven. 58. Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael, because they had faith, were rescued from the fire. 59. Daniel for his integrity was saved from the mouth of the lions. 60. Consider how, throughout every generation, none who trust in Him lack strength. 61. And do not fear a wicked man's words, because his glory will end in filth and worms. 62. Today he may be in high honor, but tomorrow he will nowhere be found, because he will have returned to the dust, and the memory of him will have vanished. 63. But you, my children, be strong and courageous for the Law, for by it you will achieve great glory. 64. Now here is Simon your brother: I know that he is a man of wisdom. Listen to him always, for he shall be a father to you. 65. Judah Maccabee has been strong and brave from his youth; he shall be your captain and fight the people's war. 66. And all of you must gather together those who observe the Law, and avenge your people's wrongs. 67. Repay the pagans for what they have done, and heed the Law's commands."

68. Then Mattathias blessed them and was gathered to his fathers. 69. He died in the year 146, and his sons buried him in the tomb of his fathers at Modin. All Israel made a loud lament for him.

2:70 HE DIED IN THE YEAR 146. In Seleucid reckoning it was 146, or 165 B.C.E.
chapter three  The War Under Judah

1. Then his son Judah, who was called Maccabee, took his father’s place. 2. He had the support of all his brothers, as well as all his father’s followers, and they fought Israel’s war with spirit.

3. He increased his people’s glory far and wide.
   He put on a breastplate like a giant, and girded on his weapons of war.
   He set battles in array, protecting his army with his sword.
4. He was like a lion in his actions, like a lion’s cub roaring for its prey.
5. He hunted and tracked down those who broke the Law, and consumed those who troubled the people.
6. Those who violated the Law covered for fear of him, all who broke the Law were confused, and freedom was accomplished by his hand.
7. He angered many kings, but made Jacob glad by his deeds; he is remembered forever in blessing.
8. He went among the towns of Judea, he destroyed the godless there, and turned away the anger from Israel.
9. To the furthestmost places he was renowned, and he saved a people from destruction.

10. Now Apollonius gathered together a large pagan army from Samaria, to fight against Israel. 11. When Judah heard of it, he marched out to meet him and he defeated and killed him. Many fell wounded, and the rest made their escape.

3:10  APOLLONIUS. According to Josephus, Apollonius was governor of Samaria. A good part of his army consisted of Samaritans, enemies of the Judeans from the time of the building of the Second Temple.
12. Then they took their arms, from among which Judah took the sword of Apollonius, and fought with it for the rest of his life.

13. When Seron, the commander of the Syrian army, heard that Judah had gathered a force of faithful men about him, many of them experienced in warfare, 14. he said, "I will make a great name for myself and achieve a reputation in the empire by making war on Judah and those who are with him, who rebel against the king's command." 15. And with him there marched a strong expedition of godless men, to help him take vengeance on the Israelites. 16. When he reached the pass of Beth-horon, Judah moved forward to meet him with a small company of men. 17. When his followers saw the army coming against them, they said to Judah, "How can so few of us in number fight against so many? Besides, we are weak, for we have had nothing to eat today."

18. Judah replied, "Many can be overpowered by a few. It makes no difference to Heaven to save by many or by few. 19. Victory in battle does not depend on the size of the army, but rather on strength that comes from Heaven. 20. They are coming against us, full of violence and lawlessness, to destroy us, our wives, and our children. They come to plunder us. 21. But we are fighting for our lives and our Law. 22. He Himself will crush them before us. You have no need to fear them."

23. When he finished speaking, Judah launched a sudden attack, and Seron and his army were crushed before him. 24. They pursued them from the pass of Beth-horon to the plain, and about eight hundred men were slain; the rest made their escape into the land of the Philistines. 25. It was then that the fear and dread of Judah and his brothers began to spread among the pagans around them. 26. His fame reached the attention of the king, and the story of his battles was told among all the peoples.

3:25 THE FEAR AND DREAD OF JUDAH. Until this point, Judah was looked upon as a guerilla nuisance. But the victory over General Seron and his army showed Judah to be a serious threat to the Syrian rulers.

3:16 THE PASS OF BETH-HORON. Beth-horon is about twelve miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was an important military station and the scene of many battles. Because of its strategic location, Beth-horon was the key to the capture of Jerusalem.

9:18-22 MANY CAN BE OVERPOWERED BY A FEW. Judah Maccabee's address before battle is brief but impassioned. He believes in the justice of their cause and is convinced of victory under God's guidance.
27. When King Antiochus heard these reports, he was enraged, and he gathered together all the forces of his empire, a very powerful expedition. 28. He opened his treasury, gave his forces a year's pay, and ordered them to be prepared for any duty. 29. But he found that the money in his treasury had run short. The revenues had dwindled because of the discord and violence he had brought upon the land by abolishing the laws which had existed from earliest times. 30. He now feared lest he might not have enough, as had happened once or twice before, for the expenses and for the gifts he had been accustomed to distribute with even more extravagance than any of the kings who ruled before him. 31. For a time he was perplexed; then he decided to go to Persia, collect the tribute due from the provinces, and raise a large sum of money. 32. He left Lysias, a renowned member of royal descent, as governor of the territories between the Euphrates and the Egyptian frontier. 33. He also entrusted him to be the guardian of his son, Antiochus, until his return. 34. He handed over to Lysias half of his armed forces, and the elephants. He gave him orders about everything he wanted done, especially about the inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem. 35. Against these Lysias was ordered to send an army to root out and destroy the strength of Israel and the remnant of Jerusalem, to erase their memory from that place. 36. He was to settle foreigners in all their borders, and to distribute their land among them.

37. Then the king took the remaining half of his armed forces and set out from Antioch, his royal city, in the year 147. He crossed the Euphrates River, and marched through the upper provinces.

38. Meanwhile Lysias chose Ptolemy, son of Dorymenes, with Nicanor and Gorgias, mighty men of the Friends of the King, 39. and sent them forty thousand infantry and seven thousand cavalry, to go to Judah and to destroy it as the king had commanded. 40. They set out with all their forces and encamped near Emmaus in the plain country. 41. The

3:29 HIS TREASURY HAD RUN SHORT. Antiochus was dependent on a mercenary army; the Judean fighters were dedicated patriots.

3:34 THE ELEPHANTS. These were valuable in the ancient military arsenal, the equivalent of modern tanks. They trampled obstacles, were hard to attack and carried troops.

3:37 FROM ANTIOCH. In Syria, this city was on the left bank of the Orontes.

THE YEAR 147. 165 B.C.E.
THE UPPER PROVINCES. Persia and Media.

3:40 EMMAUS. Modern Amman, which is approximately twenty-two miles from Jerusalem on the road to Jaffa.
merchants of the country heard about them and took a great quantity of silver and gold, with a supply of fetters, and came to buy the Israelites for slaves. An army from Syria and Phoebus joined Lysias, too.

42. When Judah and his brothers saw that their plight had become critical, and that armies were camping on their borders, they knew, too, of the orders which the king had issued for the complete destruction of the nation. 43. So they said to one another, "Let us repair the evil fortune which has come upon our people; let us fight for our nation for the Temple." 44. They gathered together in full assembly to be ready for war, and to pray and to seek divine mercy.

45. Jerusalem was deserted, like a wilderness; none of her children went in or out.
The Sanctuary was shattered, and sons of pagans were in the citadel.
Joy was taken away from Jacob,
and the flute and the harp ceased.

46. They gathered together at Mizpeh, opposite Jerusalem, for in earlier times Israel had a place of prayer in Mizpeh. That day they fasted, put on sack-cloth, put ashes on their heads, and tore their garments. They unrolled the Scroll of the Law, upon which the pagans had drawn likenesses of their idols. They brought out the priestly garments and the first fruits and the tithes; they gathered the Nazirites who had completed their vows, and they cried to Heaven, "What shall we do with these Nazirites, and where shall we take them?"
Your Temple is trodden down and defiled, and Your priests are grieved and humiliated. 52. See how the pagans have gathered against us to destroy us. You know what they design against us. 53. How shall we be able to stand our ground before them, unless You help us?" Then they sounded the trumpets and shouted with a loud voice.

55. After this, Judah appointed officers over the people, leaders of thousands, and hundreds and fifties and tens.

JUDAH APPOINTED OFFICERS. According to the Second Book of Maccabees 8:22,23, Judah divided his army into four

MIZPEH. Modern Nebi Samuel, 4½ miles northeast of Jerusalem. Some scholars identify Mizpeh as Tel en-Nasibe.
56. But he ordered those who were building their houses, or were newlywed, or planting vineyards, or were faint-hearted, every one of them to return home, as the Torah commands. 57. Then the army moved and encamped to the south of Emmaus. 58. Judah instructed them, “Prepare yourselves for action and show yourselves to be brave men. Be ready at dawn to fight against the pagans who are gathered together against us, to destroy us and our Holy Place. 59. Better to die fighting than to witness the ruin of our nation and our Sanctuary. 60. As may be the will of Heaven, so shall He do.”

**Chapter Four  Victories and Temple Rededication**

1. Then Gorgias took five thousand men and a thousand picked cavalry, and his army marched out by night, so as to fall upon the encampment of Judah and attack them unawares. Men from the citadel were his guides. 2. When Judah heard of this, he and his valiant men moved to attack the king’s army in Emmaus, while the forces were still away from the camp. 3. Gorgias came into the camp of Judah during the night, but found no one there. He hunted for them in the mountains, thinking, “These Jews are running from us.”

4. At daybreak, Judah appeared in the plain with three thousand men, though they did not have all the armor or swords they wanted. 5. They saw the camp of the pagans strongly fortified, with mounted guards, experienced troops, patrolling it. 6. Judah said to his men, “Do not fear their numbers or panic when they charge. Remember how our

4:2  MEN FROM THE CITADEL. Hellenized Jews, collaborators, guided Gorgias toward Judah’s troops.

4:8  DO NOT FEAR THEIR NUMBERS. Historical parallels are to be found in many wars in which small armies defeated large ones; at Marathon 10,000 Athenians defeated 100,000 Persians in 490 B.C.E.

4:1  GORGIAS. One of the three generals assigned to lead Syrian troops against Judah.
fathers were saved at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh and his army pursued them. 10. Let us now cry to Heaven to have His mercy upon us, to remember the covenant made with our forefathers, and crush this army before us today. 11. Then all the pagans will know that there is One who liberates and saves Israel.

12. Then the foreign troops raised their eyes and saw them marching forward and they came out of the camp to give battle. 13. Judah's men sounded their trumpets and attacked. 14. The pagans broke and fled to the plain; those who were in the rear fell by the sword. 15. They pursued them as far as Gazara and the plain of Idumea and Ashdod and Jamnia; about three thousand of the enemy were killed.

16. Judah and his army then returned from pursuing them, 17. and he said to his men, "Do not be greedy for plunder, for there is another battle before us. 18. Gorgias and his army are in the nearby mountain. Stand firm now against our enemy and fight!"

19. Before Judah had finished speaking, a detachment of them emerged from the mountain. They saw that their army had been routed and that they were burning the camp. The sight of the smoke showed them what had happened. 21. They were greatly alarmed, as they took in the scene, 22. and when they saw the army of Judah on the plain, ready for attack, they all fled to the land of the Philistines. 23. Then Judah turned back to plunder the camp, and they took much gold and silver, blue and purple cloth, and great riches. 24. On their return they sang a song of thanksgiving and blessed Heaven "for He is good, for His mercy endures forever." 25. And Israel had a great deliverance that day.

4:22 LAND OF THE PHILISTINES. The southern part of the Mediterranean coastal plain.

4:23 BLUE AND PURPLE CLOTH. Precious cloth mentioned in the Bible as tekelet and argaman. Royalty and generals wore garments made of such cloth.
26. Those of the enemy who escaped with their lives came
and reported to Lysias all that happened. 27. When he heard it,
he was overcome with discouragement, because Israel had not
suffered the disaster he had wished for, nor had it turned out
as the king had ordered.

28. In the following year he gathered together sixty
thousand elite infantry and five thousand cavalry to make war
on the Jews. 29. They marched into Idumea, and encamped at
Beth-Zur, where Judah met them with ten thousand men.

30. When he saw the strength of the enemy expedition, he
prayed and said, “Blessed are You, Savior of Israel. Who
stopped the charge of the mighty giant by Your servant
David. You did deliver the camp of the Philistines into the
hands of Jonathan son of Saul, and of his armor-bearer.

31. In like manner put this camp into the hand of Your
people Israel. Let them be ashamed of their army and their
army. 32. Make them cowardly and melt the boldness of
their strength. Let them tremble at their destruction. 33. Strike
them down with the sword of those that love You, and let
all who know Your name praise You with songs of
thanksgiving.”

34. Then they joined battle, and Lysias lost about five
thousand men in the close struggle. 35. When Lysias saw that
his army was routed, and that Judah had grown bold, and was
ready either to live or to die nobly, he departed for Antioch.
There he collected mercenary troops, in order to return to
Judea with an even larger army than before.

36. But Judah and his brothers said, “Now that our
enemies are crushed, let us go up to Jerusalem to purify the
Holy Place and rededicate it.”

37. So the whole army gathered together, and they went
up to Mount Zion. 38. There they found the Temple laid
waste, the altar profaned, the gates burned down, the courts
overgrown like a forest or a wooded mountain, and the priests’
quarters torn down. 39. They tore their garments, uttered

Judea in Fall, 165 B.C.E., on the Festival of Tabernacles. Lysias left for
Antioch on learning of the recent death of Antiochus Epiphanes.

4:28 IN THE FOLLOWING YEAR. 165 B.C.E.

4:29 BETH-ZUR. In southern Judea, it is situated about twenty
miles south of Jerusalem.

TEN THOUSAND MEN. Judah’s army grew with each
ensuing victory.

4:35 HE DEPARTED FOR ANTIOCH. General Lysias left
great lamentations, covered their heads with ashes, 40. and fell on their faces to the ground. Then they sounded the ceremonial trumpets, and cried out to Heaven.

41. Then Judah appointed special troops to fight the garrison in the citadel, until he could cleanse the Temple.
42. He selected priests without blemish, devoted to the Law, 43. and they purified the Temple, removing to an unclean place the stones which defiled it. 44. They deliberated as to what they should do about the altar of the burnt-offering, which had been defiled. 45. They decided rightly that it be torn down, so that it might not be a reproach to them, because the pagans had defiled it. So they pulled down the altar, 46. and put away the stones somewhere in the Temple mount, in a suitable place, until a prophet should come to decide what to do with them.
47. They took whole stones, as the Law commands, and constructed a new altar like the former one. 48. They rebuilt the Sanctuary and the interior of the Temple, and consecrated the courts. 49. They made new sacred vessels and they brought the lampstand, the altar of incense and the table into the Temple. 50. They burnt incense on the altar and lit the lights on the candlestick to shine within the Temple. 51. They put loaves of bread on the table, hung the curtains, and completed all the work they had undertaken to do.

52. Then, on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, that is the month of Kislev, in the year 148, they arose early, 53. and offered sacrifice according to the Law upon the new altar of burnt-offering which they had made. 54. On the anniversary of the day on which the pagans had defecrated it, it was rededicated with songs and harps and lutes and cymbals.

4:47 WHOLE STONES AS THE LAW COMMANDS. Iron tools could not be used in cutting the stones, as commanded in Exodus 20:25 and Deuteronomy 27:5-6. Iron, in warfare, shortened human life. The altar was intended to lengthen life.

4:52 IN THE YEAR 148. 163 B.C.E.

4:54 ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE DAY. The date chosen for the observance of Hanukkah coincided with the date of the defilement of the Temple, by the Syrians, three years earlier.

4:40 SOUNDED THE TRUMPETS. To summon the people for an assembly.

4:42 PRIESTS WITHOUT BLEMISH. In the Bible this generally means priests without physical defects. Here it may also imply priests who had not been Hellenized.

4:43 THE STONES WHICH DEFILED IT. From the Zeus altar which had been built by the Syrians on the original Temple altar. The pagan one had defiled all of the stones including the earlier foundation.

4:46 UNTIL A PROPHET SHOULD COME. Prophecy had ceased with Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. Tradition had it that prophecy would be renewed with the return of Elijah, in the Messianic age.
55. All the people fell on their faces and prostrated themselves and offered praises to Heaven which had prospered them.

56. They celebrated the dedication of the altar for eight days, rejoicing as they brought burnt-offerings, and offered a sacrifice of deliverance and praise. They decorated the front of the Temple with gold crowns and small shields. They rededicated the gates of the priests’ quarters, and fitted them with doors. There was great joy among the people; the disgrace brought upon them by the pagans was now removed.

58. Then Judah, his brothers, and the whole congregation of Israel decreed that the days of the dedication of the altar should be observed with joy and gladness at the same season each year, for eight days, beginning on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev.

59. At that time they encircled Mount Zion with high walls and strong towers, so that the pagans could never again come and destroy them as they had done before. 60. Judah established a garrison there to guard it; he also fortified Beth-Zur, so that the people might have a fortress facing Idumea.

4:59 THE DAYS OF THE DEDICATION. The Festival of Hanukkah was inaugurated by Judah Maccabee and his brothers with the enthusiastic participation of the entire Jewish community. *Hanukkah* is derived from *hanukhat ha-mishrah*, the dedication of the altar. Josephus refers to Hanukkah as the Festival of Lights “because this liberty beyond our hopes appeared to us; and therefore was this name given to that Festival.” The legend of the sealed cruse of sacred oil was of later origin and is to be found in the *Talmud,* *Shabbat* 24b.
Kindling the Hanukkah Lights

(Excerpted from A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice by Isaac Klein)

Hanukkah begins on the eve of the twenty-fifth day of Kislev and lasts eight days. It is marked by the kindling of lights at home and in the synagogue.

One light is kindled on the first night; an additional light is added each succeeding night. The lights should be lit after sundown.

Three blessings are recited before the kindling of the lights on the first night. On the seven subsequent nights, the third blessing, שֶׁחָכְיָנֹו (Sheheheynu), is not recited.

It is the custom to sing שָׁנָה נַרְנֵרָה (hu-neirot ha-lalu) while kindling the lights, followed by מַאוֹז לְוַי (maoz l'vov). It is appropriate to sing Hanukkah folk songs as well.

The procedure for placing and kindling the lights is as follows: the first candle is placed on the right side of the Menorah; the second candle to the left of it, always moving to the left on succeeding nights. The lighting of the candles, however, is done in reverse order, moving from left to right.

There is an extra candle used each night which serves to light the other candles. It is called the שָׁמַש (shamash). It is not proper to use one of the Hanukkah candles in the Menorah to light the other candles; nor is it permitted to use them for illumination or for any other purpose. Only the shamash may be used for such purposes. The shamash occupies a special place in the Menorah, apart from the others, and remains lit with the rest of them.

One of the major purposes of the ceremony of kindling
Hanukkah Blessings and Songs

The Feast of Dedication lasts eight days. On the first evening a light is kindled, the number of lights being increased by one each consecutive evening.

The Hanukkah lights should be kindled as soon as possible after nightfall.

The candles are placed in the Menorah from right to left but are kindled from left to right; so that each additional candle is kindled first. The Hanukkah lights must burn for at least one half hour each night.

On Friday the lights are kindled before the beginning of the Sabbath.

Blessings of the Hanukkah Lights

Before lighting the lights:

Barukh attah adonai elo-heinu melekh ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitz-votav v'tzivanu Hadlik ner shel Hanukkah.

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who sanctified us with Your commandments and commanded us to light the lights of Hanukkah.

the lights is to proclaim publicly the miracle which Hanukkah commemorates. It is, therefore, the custom to place the Menorah in a conspicuous place where it is visible from outside the house. Some place an electric Menorah in the window for that purpose. However, the use of an electric Menorah for the ceremony itself is not recommended.

Hanukkah lights are lit in the synagogue as well as in the home. Each evening, they are lit before the Ma'ariv service. They are also lit each morning, in the synagogue only, before the Shaharit service, but without the blessings, to proclaim the miracle of Hanukkah. The lighting of the candles in the synagogue is not a substitute for the home service.

On Friday night the Hanukkah lights are kindled before the Sabbath candles. On Saturday night it is the custom to light the Hanukkah candles and then to make Havdalah. Since we recite the Havdalah prayer, בָּרוּךָ הַדָּלָה (barukh havdalah) in the Amidah, it becomes permissible to light the Hanukkah candles before the formal Havdalah ceremony.
These lights we kindle to recall the wondrous triumphs and the miraculous victories wrought through Your holy priests for our ancestors in ancient days at this season.

These lights are sacred through all the eight days of Hanukkah. We may not put them to ordinary use, but are to look upon them and thus be reminded to thank and praise You for the wondrous miracle of our deliverance.

Ma'oz Tzur


Rock of Ages

Rock of ages, let our song
Praise Your saving power:
You amidst 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.

Barukh attah adonai elo-hei-nu melekha ha-olam, sheh-as-nissim la-avo-teinu ha-yamim ha-heim ba-z’man hazeh.

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who performed wondrous deeds for our ancestors in ancient days at this season.

On the first night only:

Barukh attah adonai elo-hei-nu melekha ha-olam, sheh-heh-cheh-yannu v’ki-manu v’hi-gi-anu la-z’man hazeh.

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who kept us in life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season.

After Lighting the Lights

Meditation

Hanukkah commemorates a war against tyranny and oppression, a war for independence and most especially for religious freedom. The Maccabees fought for their people's liberty against a brutal foreign regime. Against tremendous odds, they prevailed. So long as anywhere on earth Jews or any people are persecuted, this dimension of Hanukkah's truth remains passionately valid and urgent.

There is another aspect to Hanukkah too. The Hasmonean uprising was also a civil war, an inner struggle. Hellenism had subtly, insidiously subverted some of the best minds and souls of the Jewish people. It seduced them into assimilation, into a heedless or deliberate betrayal of self and people and God. It meant exchanging the gold of Jewish spirituality, ethics and law, for the tinsel of alien arts, philosophy and sports—a slavish and self-hating imitation of a foreign culture and values. Hanukkah embodies victory over Hellenism, a rejection of assimilation, a joyous reaffirmation of the authentic, timeless truths of Torah. Overcoming the inner as well as the external enemy, cleansing the polluted sanctuary, rekindling the extinguished lights is a hard, almost miraculous endeavor. It must be accomplished anew in every age.
Responsive Reading

Adonai, our constant fortress and our strength, from ancient times have You sustained our people.

In the days of Mattathias, enemies who ruled by might rose to force Your people to follow pagan paths.

Enemies of our people tried to destroy their faith, tried to force them to forsake Your covenant.

Faith moved the Maccabees to rise against the foe, in refusal to submit to idolatry.

You delivered the many into the hands of the few, mighty armies into the hands of the faithful: freedom emerged triumphant, faith victorious.

Who is like You, Adonai, among all that is worshipped? Mi khamakha ba-elim Adonai.

With the arrogant subdued and the wicked put to flight, Your children all rejoiced, praising You in Your Temple.

They purified Your altar and kindled there a light which warms all humanity, spreading Your light afar.

We bear witness to Your triumph and their faith as we kindle lights in gratitude and praise Your name.

May the Maccabees inspire us to consecrate our lives and dedicate anew our hearts and souls to You.

May the lights of Hanukkah continue to declare that we must live not by force nor by might but by Your spirit, Adonai tzon'ot.

Who is like You, Adonai, among all that is worshipped, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, working wonders?

Who is like Your people Israel, risking life for faith, singular on earth?

May we be worthy of this heritage.
Amen.