

# WHAT, WHEN AND HOW TO LIGHT

*By Rabbi David Rosen*



## What To Light

When the Hanukkah Menorah is lit, it must be easily recognizable exactly how many candles have been lit (i.e. to publicize what night of Hanukkah it is). It is for this reason that Jewish law says that on your Menorah, all 8 of the lights should be at the same height -- and preferably in a straight line. Otherwise, the candles may not be easily distinguishable and may appear as more like one big "torch."

In addition to the main 8 lights, each Menorah has an extra candle called a "Shamash," or helper. The reason for this is because we are forbidden to use the lights of Hanukkah for reading or any purpose other than "viewing." This way, if we do come to use the Hanukkah lights, it is as if the benefit is coming from the Shamash.

Since the Shamash does not count amongst the regular 8 lights, your Menorah should have the Shamash set apart in some way - either placed higher than the other candles, or significantly off to the side.

As for what type of candles to use, the most important thing is that burn for at least one-half hour after nightfall. (Those famous colored candles just barely qualify!)

The Sages said it is even better to use olive oil, since the miracle of the Maccabees was performed through olive oil. However, wax candles are also acceptable.

## Where To Light

The Menorah is ideally lit on the outside of the doorway, on the left side when entering. If this is not practical, then the Menorah should be lit in a window facing the public thoroughfare. If someone lives on an upper floor, he should light in a window. If for some reason the Menorah cannot be lit by the window, it may be lit inside the house on a table; this fulfills the mitzvah of "publicizing the miracle" for at least the members of the household.

Since the mitzvah is the actual lighting of the Menorah, it must be lit in the proper place. Moving it to a proper place after lighting does not fulfill the mitzvah.

## When To Light

The Menorah should preferably be lit immediately at nightfall. It is best to wait, however, until all the members of the household are present. This adds to the family atmosphere and also maximizes the mitzvah of "publicizing the miracle." However, the Menorah can be lit (with the blessings) late into the night, as long as people are still awake.

The Menorah should remain lit for at least half an hour after nightfall, during which time no use should be made of its light.

On Friday afternoon, the Menorah should be lit 18 minutes before sundown. And since the Menorah needs to burn for one half-hour into the night, the candles used on Friday should be bigger than the regular "colored candles" (which may not burn longer than a half-hour).

## How To Light



### Blessing #1

The first two blessings are said with the *Shamash* already lit, but immediately prior to lighting the Hanukkah candles.

*Baruch ata Ado-noi Elo-heinu melech ha-olam Asher kid-shanu bi-mitzvotav Vi-tzee-vanu li-had-leek ner shel Hanukkah.*

Blessed are You, the Lord our G-d, King of the universe, Who sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the Hanukkah light.

### Blessing #2

*Baruch ata Ado-noi Elo-heinu melech ha-olam Shi-asa nee-seem la-avo-teinu Baya-meem ha-haim baz-man ha-zeh.*

Blessed are You, the Lord our G-d, King of the universe, Who wrought miracles for our forefathers, in those days at this season.

### Blessing #3

**This blessing is said on the first night only.**

*Baruch ata Ado-noi Elo-heinu melech ha-olam Sheh-he-che-yanu vi-kee-yimanu Vi-hee-gee-yanu laz-man ha-zeh.*

Blessed are You, the Lord our G-d, King of the universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.

Ha-nerot ha-lalu

**This paragraph is said each night, after the first light has been kindled.**

*Ha-nerot ha-lalu anach-nu mad-likin*

*Al ha-nissim vi-al hanif-laot*

*Al ha-tshu-ot vi-al ha-milchamot*

*She-asita la'avo-teinu*

*Ba-yamim ha-heim, ba-zman ha-zeh*

*Al ye-dey kohan-echa haki-doshim.*

*Vi-chol shmonat ye-mey Hanukkah*

*Ha-nerot ha-lalu kodesh heim,*

*Ve-ein lanu reshut li-heesh-tamesh ba-hem*

*Ela leer-otam bilvad*

*Kedai le-hodot u-li-hallel li-shimcha*

*Al ni-secha vi-al niflo-techa vi-al yeshua-techa.*

We kindle these lights

For the miracles and the wonders,

For the redemption and the battles

Which You performed for our forefathers

In those days at this season,

Through Your holy priests.

During all eight days of Hanukkah

These lights are sacred

And we are not permitted to make ordinary use of them,

But only to look at them;

In order to express thanks and praise to Your great Name

For your miracles, Your wonders, and Your salvations.

## Here are some songs to sing after lighting the candles.

### Hanukkah, Oh Hanukkah

Hanukkah, Oh Hanukkah, come light the Menorah  
Let's have a party, we'll all dance the hora  
Gather round the table, we'll all have a treat  
Sivivon to play with, and latkes to eat.

And while we are playing  
The candles are burning bright  
One for each night, they shed a sweet light  
To remind us of days long ago.  
One for each night, they shed a sweet light  
To remind us of days long ago.

### Maoz Tzur - Transliteration

Maoz tzur yeshua-ti  
Lecha na-eh li-sha-beyach  
Tikone bait ti-fee-lati  
Vi-sham todah ni-za-beyach.

Li-ate ta-chin mat-beyach  
Mee-tzar ham-na-beyach  
Az eg-more vi-sheer meez-mor  
Hanukkaht ha-meez-beyach  
Az eg-more vi-sheer meez-mor  
Hanukkaht ha-meez-beyach.

(Translation)

O Rock of my salvation, with delight we praise  
You.

Restore the Temple where we will bring offerings.  
When You will eliminate our enemies,  
Then I shall sing at the rededication.

### Hanukkah, Hanukkah

Hanukkah, Hanukkah  
Chag yafeh kol kach  
Ohr chaviv, mi-savis  
Gil li-yeled rach.

Hanukkah, Hanukkah  
Sivivon, sov, sov  
Sov, sov, sov! Sov, sov, sov!  
Ma nayim vi-tov.

(Translation)

Hanukkah is a great holiday.  
Surrounded with lovely light.  
Fun for little children.  
Dreidel, spin, spin, spin.  
How wonderful!



## Additional Hanukkah Prayers

On Hanukkah, the special paragraph of "*Al HaNisim*" is added to both the *Amidah* prayer and the Grace after Meals. "*Al HaNisim*" praises G-d for delivering the Jewish People at the time of the Maccabees.

During the morning (*Shacharit*) service, the complete *Hallel* (Psalms of Praise) is said all eight days. The Torah is read every day in the synagogue. The readings (from Numbers chapter 7) describe the offerings brought by the heads of the Twelve Tribes of Israel at the dedication of the Tabernacle during the time of Moses. This is significant because the Talmud reports that construction of the Tabernacle was completed on the 25th of *Kislev*. However, its inauguration was postponed until Spring-time. In return, G-d "promised" the 25th of *Kislev* that in the future it would be a day of dedication. Some 1200 years later, the miracle of Hanukkah -- and the re-dedication of the Temple -- occurred on the 25th of *Kislev*!