

Why we light the candles?

Lighting the Chanukah candles might be one of the mostly Godly acts we do in life. At the opening of the Torah, in the first day of creation, the earth is described as “being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface.” God’s reply to this predicament is so simple and obvious: “Let there be light.”

The Hebrew month of Kislev, which usually falls in November/December, is the darkest time of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. During these eight nights/days of Chanukah, our tradition calls on us to focus on light and illuminate the darkness. Specifically, we light candles to celebrate the miracle that a flame did not extinguish despite all odds. The light of our Chanukiah reminds us of our ability to practice our faith and live freely. Thus, we are encouraged by the light to fight dark forces of evil in the world, and to shine in our differences as humans.

Where we light the candles?

Chanukah is a time to show our Jewish pride. One way we do this is by placing our candles in a visible place, usually next to a window or entry way where people will see them. By advertising the miracle (pirsumei nisah) we are reminded how fortunate we are to practice Judaism freely, and we show pride in our observance of Jewish rituals and traditions. Advertising the miracle of Chanukah shows our determination to never “let the light go out”.

When to light the candles?

Candles are traditionally lit at night, after sunset. In Atlanta this year, candles can be lit after 5:15 pm and should be lit together with family.

*Note: On the Friday evening of Chanukah, we light Chanukah candles first then Shabbat candles.

How to light the candles?

Jewish tradition holds that we add one candle each night until the last night when we have a fully illuminated Chanukiah. We find an argument in the Talmud between two of our wisest teachers, Hillel and Shammai, who disagreed on whether we should start with eight candles and remove one each day (Shammai’s position), or light one candle on the first day and work up to eight (Hillel’s position).

Shammai’s reasoning was that the number of candles would correspond to the days of the holiday remaining, lighting eight on the first day because eight days remained, seven on the second day because seven days remained, and so on. Hillel, who believed the number of candles should increase, reasoned that when we perform any holy act, we should focus on increasing the mitzvah and not decreasing. Today, we side with Hillel and add one candle each night, increasing the amount of light we bring into the darkness.





Lighting the Chanukiah

1 Set up candles

Place the candles in your Chanukiah from right to left and light them from left to right. Light the *shammash* (the helper candle) first, then use it to light the other candles.

2 Recite the blessings

Recite all three blessings on the first night, just the first two blessings on nights 2-8.

★ First blessing: Illuminating and Appreciating

ברוך אתה אדני אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קד שנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר חנוכה.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tsivanu l'hadlik ner shel Chanukah.

Blessed are You, Source of Life, who has sanctified us with commandments, and enables us to kindle the Chanukah light.

★ Second blessing: Remembering our Ancestors

**Recited only on the first night or the first time lighting this Chanukah*

ברוך אתה אדני אלהינו מלך העולם שעשה נסים לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, she-asah nisim laavoteinu v'imoteinu bayamim hahaeim baz'man hazeh.

Blessed are You, Source of Life, King of the universe, who performed miracles for our ancestors in those days, at this time.

★ Third blessing: Bless this special moment

ברוך אתה אדני אלהינו מלך העולם שהחיינו וקימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higiyanu laz'man hazeh.

Blessed are You, Source of Life, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.

3 Light the newest candle first, then each previous day (left to right).

Commence with singing Chanukah songs and enjoying the light of the Chanukiah. The 30-45 minutes that the candles burn is a great opportunity to unplug and spend special time with family.

Mi Yimaleil
The Davis Academy



Oh Hanukkah
Maccabeats



Ocho Kandelikas
Cantor Sheila Nesis



Chanukah Time
Josh and the Jamtones

