

CHANUKAH SIDDUR

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CHANUKAH

THE FEAST OF DEDICATION

In many parts of the world, Chanukah is a relatively unknown feast or holiday. However, this is not the case in America and many parts of Europe. This is a well-known feast or holiday celebrated by millions of people, including non-Jews and some Churches.

Because Chanukah is celebrated in the same month as Christmas (December), which corresponds to the Hebrew month of Kislev, there is some confusion over the difference between these two days. This is further confused by the fact that gifts are exchanged on these days, and lights are the center attraction of both of these festivals. It is sometimes called the Feast of Lights.

Chanukah means dedication, consecration, or inauguration. It is an eight-day festival that commemorates Judah's victory over the Syrian tyrant Antiochus which usually starts around early December. To understand the origins of Chanukah, we need to do a little history lesson on the period just before the birth of our Messiah Yeshua. We also need to be mindful that this period of history is clearly prophesized and meticulously recorded in Daniel Chapter Eleven, additional confirmation of why Chanukah should be celebrated.

Alexander the Great had conquered Yisra'el and most of the Near East. When he died in 323 BCE, his empire was divided among his four generals, two of whom established their own sovereign kingdoms in Egypt and Syria. Yisra'el being located between these two countries was valuable to both. As a result, Yisra'el became a battlefield, sometimes ruled by one and sometimes by the other for 150 years.

In 175 BCE, when Yisra'el was under Syrian control, Antiochus Epiphanes IV became King of Syria. In an effort to strengthen his hold on Yisra'el, he declared that all his subjects must worship the same Greek gods and follow the same Greek customs and speak Greek. Altars to the Greek gods were built in all the cities of Judea, and pagan sacrifices were offered on them.

The Jews were not permitted under the Greek law to study Torah, observe the Shabbat, practice circumcision, speak Hebrew, or do anything Hebrew as this was punishable by death. It was the forced conversion of the Jewish people to Greek culture (called Hellenization), and many Jews were assimilated into the Greek culture. However, there were many Jews who opposed Hellenization because they feared that the influence of Greek culture would destroy Judaism. This movement was called *Hasidim*. This movement grew in strength when on the 25th of Kislev, Antiochus placed a statue of Zeus above the high Altar of sacrifice in the Temple and sacrificed a pig on it. He then made it compulsory for Priests to offer pigs on the Altar.

The Hasidim began their opposition with a simple refusal to obey the laws of Antiochus. As a result, they suffered harshly, and many were killed. They had no choice but to rebel. Beginning in a small town of Modiin, not far from Yerushalem, a Hasmonean priest named Mattathias and his five sons launched a revolt. This revolt developed into a guerrilla war led by one of Mattathias's sons Judah Maccabee. Maccabee means hammer and became the name by which this period is known in history. Two books in the Catholic Bible called Maccabees One and Two record the history of this period.

Judah Maccabees led a small army of Jews in the guerrilla campaign for several years in the surrounding hills and defeated the mighty Syrian Greek army recapturing Jerusalem. It was indeed a miraculous victory! Maccabees cleansed the Temple and removed the statutes of Zeus, and on the 25th day of the month of Kislev (which is in December around the time of the winter solstice, the darkest day of the year) in the year 165 BCE, they rededicated the Temple.

When Maccabees gained control of the Temple, they found only one undefiled cruse of oil with which they could light the temple menorah. According to the tradition, a one-day supply of oil lasted a full eight days, thus keeping the menorah lit while allowing them time to consecrate more oil (Shemoth (Exodus) 31:11). Consequently, this is also called the festival of lights or dedication. This special occasion is now celebrated with a specially created eight, or nine-branched candelabra called a *hanukkiah* (plural *Hanukkiot*). These lamps are lit by the ninth light called the *Shammas*, which means helper servant. These lamps are lit consecutively, one per day, until the last night of the eighth day when all eight have been lit together with the *Shammas*.

According to the Jewish Encyclopedia - in Israel today, "*Chanukah has become a symbol of national liberation and the triumphant Jewish spirit.*" Why then is Chanukah particularly important to us who do not reside in Israel?

This feast is not a Shabbat day; therefore, work is permitted during the week of Chanukah.

You will need the following for this ceremony.

- A white table cloth.
- Nine small to medium-sized candles or lamps.
- A vase of fresh flowers.

Set these items out over the table on a white table cloth. Place the candles or lights in a row of nine across the white cloth. Place the vase of flowers in a safe spot on the table. You are now ready!

Note: Many celebrants of this holiday display a decorative nine-branched menorah inside or outside their home. Many also install festive lights and decorations.

FIRST NIGHT ONLY

One each night light one candle or lamp until all nine are lite on the last day.

All present read or sing:

Barukh Atah, יהוה, Eloheinu Melekh ha'Olam, Shehecheyanu v'kiyemanu v'higianu laz'man hazeh.

Praised are You, YHWH, our Elohim King of the Universe, Who has kept us in life, and sustained us, and enabled us to reach this festive season.

The Father or Leader reads:

Following the lighting of the candle or light, a longer section of the text, called *Hanerot Hallalu* (“these Lights”), is recited.

We kindle these lights *Hanerot Hallalu* to remember the wonders, the salvations, and the battles which you performed for our ancestors in the former days at this season through your Kohen (set-apart Priests). During these eight days, these lights are set-apart. We are not permitted to use them for mundane purposes, only to gaze at them intently as a way of thanking you for your unending miracles, wanders, and salvations.

At this season, we remember that the set-apart Temple and its Alter was rededicated to you. Similarly, we (re)dedicate our home and prayer alter to you and may it be that when you listen to the supplications of your eved (servant), when we shall make tefillah (praise) on our alter: and listen in the shamayim your dwelling place and when you hear us grant us speedily your miracles, wanders and deliverance as did for our ancestors in the former days at this season.

An additional prayer may be added here to acknowledge the light of salvation that was given at this time.

We also remember that at this time, the light of our salvation was conceived by Ruach haKodesh, your Son Yeshua haMoshiach, and for this gift, we are eternally grateful.

“For unto us a Child is born, to us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty-El, The Everlasting Abba, The Sar Shalom” Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 9:6.

Hosanna in the Highest Shamayim!

ON EACH NIGHT

One each night, light one candle or lamp until all nine are lit on the last day.

All present read or sing:

Barukh Atah יהוה; Eloheinu Melekh ha'Olam, Asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Chanukah.

Praised are You YHWH, our Elohim King of the Universe, Who made us set-apart by Mitzvot (commandments) and instructed us to light the Chanukah candles.

Barukh Atah יהוה; Eloheinu Melekh ha'Olam, She'asah nissim la'avoteinu bayamim hahein bazman hazeh.

Praised are You, YHWH, our Elohim King of the Universe, Who performed miracles for our ancestors at this season in ancient days.

The Father or Leader reads:

We kindle these lights *Hanerot Hallalu* to remember the wonders, the salvations, and the battles which you performed for our ancestors in the former days at this season through your Kohen (set-apart Priests). During these eight days, these lights are set-apart. We are not permitted to use them for mundane purposes, only to gaze at them intently as a way of thanking you for your unending miracles, wonders, and salvations.

Many people, particularly Sephardic Jews (those descended from Spanish Jews), recite **Psalm 30** following the lighting of the candles.

All present read:

TEHILLIM (PSALM) 30

1 I will extol You, O יהוה; for You have lifted me up, and have not made my foes to gilah (rejoice) over me. 2 O יהוה my Elohim, I cried to You, and You have healed me. 3 O יהוה, You have brought up my being from Sheol: You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. 4 Sing to יהוה, O you kidushim (saints) of His, and give hodu (thanks) at the remembrance of His set-apartness. 5 For His anger endures but for a moment; in His favor is chayim: weeping may endure for a night, but simcha (joy) comes in the morning. 6 And in my ease I said, I shall never be moved. 7 יהוה, by Your favor You have made my har (mountain) to stand strong: You did hide Your face, and I was troubled. 8 I cried to You, O יהוה; and to יהוה I made my plea. 9 What profit is there in my dahm (blood), when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust hallel (praise) You? Shall it declare Your emet (truth)? 10 Hear, O יהוה, and have Rachamim (mercy) upon me: יהוה, be my helper. 11 You have turned my mourning into dancing: You have put off my sackcloth, and clothed me with simcha (joy); 12 So I will shir halleluyah (sing praises) to You, and not be silent. יהוה my Elohim, I will give hodu (thanks) to You le-olam-va-ed (forever).

CHAG TOV

The traditional well wishes for the festival season

All present say to one another:

Chag same'yakh!

Have a good holiday, a holiday of peace and success.

The meal is served.

BAREICH

The blessing after the meal

All present read:

Barukh Harachman Mazon ha'acilah Hazot.

Praised be the Merciful One, Provider of this food.

Harachaman, Hu yishlach b'rakha m'ruba babayit hazeh v'al shulkhan zeh she'achalnu alav. Amein.

May the Merciful One send abundant blessing upon this dwelling and the table at which we have eaten.
Amein.

All Scripture reference is from the RSTNE version



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