

How to Light the Chanukah (חֲנוּכָּה) Menorah

1. What to light

Buy or make a Chanukah Menorah (also called a Chanukiah). The Menorah should have eight candle holders in a row and a separate candle holder for the "Shamash." The Shamash or servant candle is used to light the other eight candles. If you don't have a Chanukiah, it is very proper to make one, however simple. The doing is what is important, not the showing.

I've used birthday candles after melting the bottom end and sticking them onto aluminum foil for safety. Arranging 8 candles in cups, drilling 9 holes to receive the candles in a block of wood, etc. will work. Any way of arranging 8 candles on the same level, in a row, with the Shamash at a higher level is kosher.

2. Where to light

To best publicize the miracle of Chanukah, the Chanukah Menorah is ideally lit outside the doorway of your house, 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 the Menorah cannot be lit by the window, it may be lit inside the house on a table, which at least fulfills the mitzvah of "publicizing the miracle" for members of the household.

3. When to light

The Menorah should preferably be lit immediately at nightfall. If it isn't, however, the Menorah can be lit late into the night. As long as it's till Chanukah, it's nighttime and someone is still up, it's time to light up the dark by lighting the Menorah. It is best to wait until all members of the household are present to light the Menorah. The Menorah should remain lit for at least 30 minutes after nightfall. On Friday afternoon, the Menorah should be lit before sundown.

4. How to light

First, light the Shamash with a match. Then, say the blessings. Next proceed to light the candles, one on the first night, two on the second night, . . . eight on the eighth night, as follows. On the first night, light the one candle on the extreme right of the eight locations. If the Chanukiah is outside the door or in the window, the right side is as viewed from the street. If the Chanukiah is inside the house, and not visible from the street, the right side is as viewed from inside the house.

5. On the first night

Light the Shamash, say the three blessings, light the one candle on the right side, and return the Shamash to its place.

1.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר (שֶׁל) חֲנוּכָּה

Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheynu Melekh Ha'olam Asher Kiddeshanu Bemitsvotav Vetsivanu Lehadlik Ner Shel Chanukah.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us by His commandments, and has commanded us to kindle the lights of Hanukkah.

2.

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

Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheynu Melekh Ha'olam She'asa Nissim La'avoteynu Ba'yamim Hahem Bazman Hazeh.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, who wrought miracles for our fathers in days of old, at this season.

3.

ברוך אתה אדני אלהינו מלך העולם,
שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheynu Melekh Ha'olam Shehekheyanu Vekiymanu Vehigi'anu Lazman Hazeh.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has kept us alive, and has preserved us, and enabled us to reach this time.

6. On the second night

After lighting the Shamash candle and saying the first two blessings, add a candle to the left of last night's candle, light it first and then light the remaining (older) candle.

7. On the third night

After lighting the Shamash candle and saying the first two blessings, add a candle to the left of last night's candle (s), light it first and then light the remaining (older) candle(s).

The pattern: add candles from the left; light to the right.

8. After the reciting of the Hanukkah blessings and lighting the new light for that night, Hanerot Halalu is traditionally sung or recited as additional lights are lit:

We light these lights
For the miracles and the wonders,
For the redemption and the battles
That you made for our forefathers
In those days at this season,
Through your holy priests.

During all eight days of Chanukah
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.

9. Once the candles have been lit, Maoz Tzur is traditionally sung. The literal translation follows:

O mighty stronghold of my salvation,
to praise You is a delight.
Restore my House of Prayer
and there we will bring a thanksgiving offering.
When You will have prepared the slaughter
for the blaspheming foe,
Then I shall complete with a song of hymn
the dedication of the Altar.

(Free 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.)

My soul had been sated with troubles,
my strength has been consumed with grief.
They had embittered my life with hardship,
with the calf-like kingdom's bondage.
But with His great power
He brought forth the treasured ones,
Pharaoh's army and all his offspring
Went down like a stone into the deep.

To the holy abode of His Word He brought me.
But there, too, I had no rest
And an oppressor came and exiled me.
For I had served aliens,
And had drunk benumbing wine.
Scarcely had I departed
At Babylon's end Zerubabel came.
At the end of seventy years I was saved.

To sever the towering cypress
sought the Aggagite, son of Hammedatha,
But it became [a snare and] a stumbling block to him
and his arrogance was stilled.
The head of the Benjaminite You lifted
and the enemy, his name You obliterated
His numerous progeny - his possessions -
on the gallows You hanged.

Greeks gathered against me
then in Hasmonean days.

They breached the walls of my towers
and they defiled all the oils;
And from the one remnant of the flasks
a miracle was wrought for the roses.
Men of insight - eight days
established for song and jubilation

Bare Your holy arm
and hasten the End for salvation -
Avenge the vengeance of Your servants' blood
from the wicked nation.
For the triumph is too long delayed for us,
and there is no end to days of evil,
Repel the Red One in the nethermost shadow
and establish for us the seven shepherds.