

Acknowledgements

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I welcome your feedback on this booklet, and your suggestions for future editions. It contains the sacred name of God so please treat with loving respect.

With blessings for an illuminating and inspiring Chanukkah,

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Chanukah Inspirations

North
Shore LIJ



A note from Rabbi Daniel Coleman
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Techinas – heartfelt personal spontaneous prayers - have accompanied the lighting of Shabbat candles since the time of our matriarchs. Perhaps this is also the origin of the custom of making a wish when birthday candles are lit. Less well known is the tradition of personal prayers that have accompanied the lighting of Chanukkah lights through the ages. Foremost among the Kabbalists, Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534-1572) is famed for his meditations at the time of lighting. Chanukkah provides an opportunity to reconnect with the Divine both in and around us. It is ripe for your prayers and for inviting blessing into your life. What prayers and blessings will be on your mind as you light each night?

In the words of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach (1925-1994), I want to bless you and bless myself that this Chanukkah should make us whole, and its light should reach the darkest corners of our hearts. And we should all be blessed to realize that when we do kindle a light, it is God's light we have brought into the world.

As we struggle in the shadow of darkness, may the light of Chanukkah enable us to uncover, recognize, and appreciate the blessings in our lives. May we each have the courage and wisdom to continue our ancient tradition of spontaneous prayer by voicing our concerns and hopes to the Ultimate Source of Light.

A teaching from Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach

Moshav Meor Modiin. Hanuka, 5752.

You can be the richest man in the world, you can have everything between heaven and earth, you can be in the same room with the one thing you have been looking for, but if there is no light to show you where it is, then you do not have it. Chanukah is the holiday of the inside light, the hidden light, the light which is burning amidst the deepest darkness. On Chanukah we celebrate the light which gave the Maccabees the strength in the darkest period to believe that they can drive out the Greeks in the Holy Land.

You see, my best friends, when we are born, God gives us everything, every day God gives us everything; only sometimes we turn off the light by our mistakes. Sometimes we blow out our own lights, so on Chanukah, God gives us back the light we need the most.

Because between husband and wife, parents and children, you can stand next to each other for a thousand years and be as far away as eternity. Chanukah is the great light when we see each other again; according to the Kabbalistic tradition it is holier than Yom Kippur. It is the holy of holies: not in the temple, but in my own house. We kindle the light by the door to tell the people – those outside – who have not yet found their own house, their own soul, their own friend. And we share our light with them.

All the hatred in the world is only because people don't see each other. Chanukah is the holiday that we are closest to the Messiah and, *gevalt*, do we need the world to see us one time! And *gevalt*, do we need all the Jews one time to see the holiness of being Jewish! Let it be this year. Amen.



Let your light shine. Shine within you so that it can shine on someone else. Let your light shine.

Oprah Winfrey (1954 -), O Magazine, Jan 04

Aiding and Abetting

We need a candle to light the other candles: 1 small flame – one small gesture – can make a huge difference. The *shammash* is a critical partner in illuminating the lights. We can't just sit and wait for inspiration. Often, we need outside help, a different perspective. We can also be the one to bring that perspective to others. We need each other to bring light and healing. How do you preserve and transmit important values? Is there something that prevents you from igniting and sharing your fire and passion with others?



The Bare Necessities

We light the Menorah in the window in order to publicize the miracle. The daily miracles of life (each step we take, each word, each breath) must be acknowledged, advertised, shared, celebrated. What miracles are you thankful for? How do you share and celebrate them?



ABC's

Chanukkah is related to the Hebrew words for 'dedication' and 'education.' To what/whom are you dedicated? How have you supported and enhanced Jewish education (your own and others)?

The Talmud asks '*Mai Chanukkah*' – 'what is chanukkah?' How would you respond if someone asked what chanukkah means to you? Does it mean the same as it did last year? 5 years ago? When you were a child? How has another year of life's wisdom prepared you to understand and receive the light of chanukkah differently this year?



Better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.
~Chinese Proverb

36 Lights: Human Initiative and God's Response

Rabbi Simkha Y Weintraub, LCSW

JBFC National Center for Jewish Healing, www.jcprograms.org

To the Jewish mystical mind, the initial, proactive awakening of the Hasmoneans is what triggered Divine animation, and together, this human-Divine partnership is what began to redeem the Jewish minority from the oppressive Graeco-Syrian empire.

Kabbalah teaches us that primeval Adam/Eve, created the morning of the sixth day, enjoyed a special light that illuminated their world through Shabbat – 36 hours in total. This light was then stored as a treasure to be summoned in dark times, a resource for hope and redemption. Indeed, during Chanukkah's eight days, our Shammash lights 36 lights in total. In our modest - yet public - lighting, we affirm in the shortest days of the calendar that Spirit is never extinguished, that through community and tradition we illuminate a better world.

We celebrate eight days and not seven, suggesting that the one precious cruse of oil, the earthly awakening, is equal to the seven days of creation, since without mortal initiative, the Divine response would not have been ignited.

Chanukkah comes at the moon's waning, underscoring that we are not drawing on the natural lights of sun, moon, and stars, but on a different dimension, a spiritual light born of human-Divine partnership, pointing to the ultimate redemption in history. God is relying on us to actualize a world of moral and spiritual light; if everyone lights their own light, Godliness and goodness will triumph over darkness.



Dear God,
We read Thomas Edison made light. But in Hebrew school they said you did it. So I bet he stole your idea.
Sincerely,
Donna



Children's Letters to God (Hample/Marshall)

Lighting for Chanukah

Lighting the Chanukkah Menorah is intended to model the Temple's Menorah that was lit with oil that produced a flame. As candles cannot be used in hospital, a battery-operated incandescent flashlight may be substituted*. Alternatively, patients may ask a family member to light at home with them in mind.



At home, one candle is added to the menorah each night from right to left. After reciting the blessings use the *shammes* (helper candle) to light the Chanukkah lights from newest to oldest. Light an extra candle each night so that on the eighth night, all 8 are lit. Lights should be left burning for at least half an hour after nightfall.

1. Blessing over the lights

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל חֲנֻכָּה.

*Barukh atah Adonai, Elohaynu, melekh haolam
asher keed'shanu b'meeztvotav v'tzeevanu
l'had'lik neir shel Chanukkah.*

You, Lord our God, sovereign of the universe, are the source of all blessing Who has made us holy us with mitzvot** and commanded us to kindle the lights of Chanukkah.

2. Blessing acknowledging God's guiding hand in history

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים
לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ בְּיָמֵם הָהֵם בְּזִמְן הַזֶּה.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Haolam,
sheasah neeseem laavotaynu bayameem haheim baz'man hazeh*

You, Lord our God, sovereign of the universe, are the source of all blessing, Who performed miracles for our ancestors in those days at this season.

The Spirit of Chanukkah

Mitzvah derives from the Hebrew word *tzav* – meaning *connect*. Mitzvahs are ways of connecting to the Divine within and beyond us, as well as the Divine found in others. Chanukkah's mitzvah is to publicize the miracle of Chanukah. How does this unique mitzvah help us achieve the ultimate goal of connecting with the Divine?

Perhaps *halacha's* instruction not to do work that distracts us from the Chanukkah lights is more than a fire safety precaution. It allows us just to sit and take time to consider how spiritually connected we are and how connected we wish to become. Here are some questions to assist with this task:

- What is our true purpose in this life? Are we fulfilling, or even attempting to fulfil it?
- Are our careers and jobs a means to an end, or an end in and of themselves?
- Do we truly appreciate our children, parents, spouses, family, and friends?
- Are we placing our faith in God, or are we trying to totally control our destiny?
- Are we spreading light to the world around us?

After you light those sacred Chanukah lights, make the next half hour special. Gaze at the lights and connect to the unbroken chain of Jewish history. Think about your life, and how you can add more meaning, and light, into it. Think about how you can be a light to those around you. May this Chanukah be a time of light and blessing for us all.



We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light. ~ **Plato**

If you're in a spaceship traveling at the speed of light, and you turn on the headlights, does anything happen? ~ **Steven Wright**

Eight Chanukkah Questions

1. Where in life could you use a little more light, enlightenment, or energy?
2. Where, what, or to whom could you look a little more closely to find it?
3. What keeps you from seeing the potential contained in unexpected places, including yourself?
4. How could you tap into the energy within yourself, other people, places and things more effectively?
5. To whose life could you contribute a little more light, enlightenment, or energy?
6. When have you felt connected to the ability you possess to direct your own life or contribute to the lives of others?
7. What gift lies within you that you would like to use more or share more with others?
8. What goal will you pursue between this chanukkah and the next one, trusting that the pursuit alone will bring rewards not yet even imagined?



3. Blessing focusing on the miracles of our personal and national existence

This bracha is said ONLY when kindling the lights for the first time this Chanukah:

בָּרַךְ אֶתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחֲנֻכָּה
וְקִיְמוֹנוּ וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנָן הַזֶּה.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Haolam,
shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higianu laz'man hazeh.*

You, Lord our God, sovereign of the universe, are the source of all blessing Who has granted us life, Who has sustained us, and Who has enabled us to reach this season.



Space for your, prayers, thoughts, reflections...

*For Shabbat, any electric light can replace candles.

**Mitzvah derives from 'tzav' meaning 'connect.'
Mitzvahs (a.k.a. Mitzvot) are opportunities to connect with our Creator, ourselves, and each other.

Ma'oz Tzur (Rocky Fortress)

The lyrics of this song (colloquially translated "Rock of Ages") date back to the 13th century C.E. The music dates back to at least the 18th century, and possibly as far back as the 15th century. Below is the 1st stanza translated and transliterated.

Rocky Fortress of my Salvation
It is delightful to praise You
Restore my House of Prayer
And there we will give thanks with
an offering
When you have prepared the
downfall for the blaspheming foe
Then I will complete with a song
of hymn the dedication of the altar

Ma'oz tzur y'shuati
L'kha na-eh l'shabei-ach
Tikon beyt t'filati
V'sham todah n'zabei-ach
L'eit tachin matbei-ach
Mitzar ha-m'nabei-ach
Az egmor b'shir mizmor
Chanukat ha-mizbei-ach

Chanukkah, Oh Chanukkah

Below are English and Yiddish versions of this popular contemporary Chanukkah song.

Chanukkah, Oh Chanukkah
Come light the menorah
Let's have a party
We'll all dance the hora
Gather round the table,
we'll have a treat
Shiny tops to play with,
latkes to eat
And while we are playing
The candles are burning low
One for each night,
they shed a sweet light
To remind us of days long ago

Chanukkah, O Chanukkah
A yontev a sheyner
A lustiger a freylicher
Nito noch a zeyner
Ale nacht in dreydl shpiln mir
Zudig heyse latkes es un shir
Geshvinder tsindt kinder
Di dininke lichtelech ohn
Zogt "al ha-nisim," loybt Got
far di nisim
Un kumt gicher tantsn in kon

There are two ways of spreading light; to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.

~Edith Wharton

The Hand that Spins the Dreidel

The letters on the dreidel -- *nun, gimel, hey, shin* -- are reminders of the miraculous event of long ago, but they also point to the ultimate redemption, as their *gematria* (numerical value) equals that of the four letters of *mashiach*, the Messiah -- *mem, shin, yud, chet*.

As the world spins (sometimes rather chaotically) towards redemption, do you still recognize the hand of the Ultimate spinner?



Changing Our Spots

Since the days of the first High Priest, Aaron, the *Cohanim* were known for loving and pursuing peace. Yet they were able to change their spots and learn warfare, taking up arms against the Greeks. How many times do we tell ourselves "it's too late for change" or "I'll never change." We get stuck. We stop imagining. What steps could you take to restore your faith in yourself and others, and your or their ability to change? What do you need to learn? What have you always wanted to learn?



Back to Our Regular Scheduled Program

Upon regaining control of the Temple, why didn't the Hasmoneans/*Chashmonaim* wait a few more days before they lit the Menorah until they were sure they had a supply of oil to keep it going? After all, the Temple service had been suspended for some time. What was the rush?

They did what they could with what they had. How often do we put off tasks justifying the delay because we never quite have all the right resources in place? What a powerful message: Even amidst defilement, and brokenness, we have an opportunity to find something positive (however small) and gradually build a better brighter future (or relationship) upon that foundation.

Rome Wasn't Built in a Day.

Unique to Chanukkah is the concept of *maalin bakodesh* – performing an act that raises the level of *kedusha* (holiness) we can obtain each day. How does the repeated performance of the same act increase our receptiveness to *kedusha*?

Real change – real kedusha – is achieved step by step. Hour by hour. Day by Day. Night by night. *Maaseh Breishis* – Creation – happens and unfolds over time as expressed in the Torah's account of our world being created in 6 stages – 6 steps.

Anything worthwhile in life takes time and energy to achieve and sustain. What is your spiritual destination? What steps do you need to take to get there?



Pride and Prejudice

The Macabees succeeded against huge odds to reclaim the Temple and ensure religious freedom.

What have or could you succeed at against great odds? Do you value religious freedom (your own? fellow Jews? other faiths?) How do you help protect & sustain it?



One of the qualities of Chanukah, which the Talmud emphasizes, is the concept of *pirsuma nissa* - the requirement to publicize the miracle of Chanukah. Thus the lights of Chanukah are lit in a window that opens to the outside so that they shine on the street and passers by. The lights of Chanukah, the symbol of the miracle, and the lessons of this holiday, thereby become a public statement of Jewish faith and of our deepest instincts and Godly intuition. What we cannot say in words, either out of ignorance, shame, or weakness, we say therefore with the lights themselves.

Rabbi Berel Wein

During the 8 days of Chanukkah the same spiritual lights that were created by the miracle are once again available to every Jewish soul. However, in order to experience and to feel this new light, we need to detach ourselves from the natural order of things and thereby ready ourselves to receive that which emanates from above the natural order.

Sefas Emes (early Chassidic master, 1847-1905)

Chanukah is not just some celebration of miracles performed in the past. Neither is it just a commemoration of righteous people who lived in the distant past. It is a guiding light for people from all walks of life, from all eras of time, to see through the darkness of their personal lives and to become a part of history. It is encouragement for those who face insurmountable odds as a result of personal history. It is a declaration that God will perform miracles for us when we courageously stand up for battle. It is inspiration for us to be our own Maccabees in waging our inner battle. It is also the knowledge that God is with us, even when we lose the battle.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772 – 1810)

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you *not* to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we're liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of "A Course in Miracles", Harper Collins, 1992.

Jewish Quotes about Light and Darkness

Let there be light!
Genesis 1:3

Let us walk in the light of God.
Isaiah 2:5

In Your light do we see light.
Psalms 36:10

Light is sown for the righteous.
Psalms 97:11

Your word O Lord, lights my steps and my path
Psalms 119:105

Light is sweet.
Ecclesiastes 11:7

For a *mitzvah* is a lamp; & the Torah is light...
Proverbs 6:23

Place oil within the lamp before it is extinguished.
Yalkut, Psalms, 979

Why did Saul deserve royalty? Because his grandfather had busied himself lighting up the dark passages.
Tanhuma Tetzaveh

Many candles can be kindled from one candle without diminishment.
Sifre B'haalot'kha, 93

A lantern in the hands of one who walks alone at night is like one companion; Moonlight is like two companions.
Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 43b

During all eight days of Chanukah these lights are sacred, and we are not permitted to make ordinary use of them.
Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 21b

A light for one is a light for a hundred.
Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 122a

God said to Israel: "You and I will together give light to Zion."
Shimon b. Lakish, on Isaiah 60:1, in Pesikta deRav Kahana, ch. 21

"Bring pure olive oil...to kindle the (Temple's) Menorah."
Leviticus 24:2

God said to Moses: "I give you this command, not because I have need of your light, but in order to endow you with merit."
B'midbar Rabbah 6

Israel gives light to the One who gives light to the world.
Sh'mot Rabbah 36:2

Fire was not created during the six days, but at the conclusion of the Sabbath, God gave Adam the good sense to rub two stones together to make fire.
Babylonian Talmud, Pesachim 54

Lord, may it be Your will to place us on the side of light.
R. Hamnuna, Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 17a

Of what use is a lamp in broad daylight?
Shimon b. Pazzi, in Babylonian Talmud, Hullin 60b

Light is perceived only out of darkness.
Hasdai (ca. 1230), The Prince and the Ascetic, Ch. 18

You God are the source of blessing...Who forms light and creates dark
Morning prayers

A little light will dispel much darkness
Issachar ber Eilenburg, Tzeda laDerekh, 1550-1623

Kindle your own candle. Ignite your soul.
Chanukah is your story.
Likutey Halakhot, Shiluakh HaKen 5:8