

## Hanukkah Blessings

Source Sheet compiled by Rabbi Shari Shamah  
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*Not My Might, nor by power, but by My spirit, says God. (Zechariah 4:6)*

The word Hanukkah means “dedication” and refers to the joyous 8-day celebration during which Jews commemorate the victory of the Maccabees over the armies of Syria going back to 168 BCE. After the victorious battle, the Jews were able to go into the Temple in Jerusalem and cleanse, repair and “rededicate” the sacred space. Hanukkah is a “minor” Jewish festival that is not mentioned at all in the Torah, Prophets or Writings. The Hanukkah legend (going back to the Talmud) relates that when the Jews were able to go into the Temple, they found one jar of oil that should have only burned for one day, but which lasted for eight days.

The oil reference is played up during the holiday when a special Hanukkah lamp (used to be made of oil, now generally candles are used) called a Menorah or Hanukkiah is kindled. Foods fried in oil are also eaten during the eight days. Two favorites are *latkes* (potato pancakes) and *sufganiyot* (jelly doughnuts). A *dreidel* is a special toy that is played with on Hanukkah. On the dreidel there are four Hebrew letters (*Nun, Gimmel, Hey, and Shin*) that stand for “*Nes Gadol Hayah Po/Sham*” (“a great miracle happened here/there”). In Israel the letter is *Peh* (*poh* = “here”), and outside of Israel the letter is *Shin* (*sham* = “there”).

Frequently, the dreidel game is played with M&M’s, peanuts, raisins, Skittles, or some other small candy. In older times it was customary to give a coin to someone to celebrate, called gelt. In recent years, for some, the custom of giving gelt has turned into one of giving presents for some families. Chocolate gelt is also enjoyed as a sweet treat.

## Hanukkah Blessings

The Hanukkiah is lit in the evenings and is set aside for those around to appreciate its light and beauty. Hanukkah is not a holiday on which one needs to stop working.

- Candles are placed in the *Hanukkiah* (Hanukkah Menorah) from right to left
- Candles are lit from left to right so that you increase in light each night
- The *shamash* (helper candle) is used to light each of the other candles
- On Erev Shabbat, you light the Hanukkah lights first, then the Shabbat candles
- At the conclusion of Shabbat, you make Havdalah and then light the Hanukkah candles

<b><i>The First Blessing – Over the Candles</i></b>		
Praised are You, Our God, Ruler of the universe, Who made us holy through Your commandments and commanded us to kindle the Hanukah lights.	<i>Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tsivanu l'hadlik ner shel Hanukkah</i>	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל חֲנֻכָּה

<b><i>The Second Blessing – Over Miracles</i></b>		
Praised are You, Our God, Ruler of the universe, Who performed wondrous deeds for our ancestors in those ancient days at this season.	<i>Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, she-asah nisim la'avoteinu bayamim hahem bazman hazeh</i>	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ, בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בַּזְּמַן הַזֶּה

<b><i>The Third Blessing – Shehechyanu (First Night Only)</i></b>		
Praised are You, Our God, Ruler of the universe, Who has given us life and sustained us and enabled us to reach this season.	<i>Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, shehecheyanu, v'kiyimanu, v'higiyanu la'zman hazeh</i>	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיָּנוּ, וְקִיַּמָּנוּ, וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזְמַן הַזֶּה