

Family Chanukah Celebration

By Custom & Craft



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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Contributed by [Custom & Craft](#)

Source: Original

One of the best things about Chanukah is how easy it is to customize for your family or friends. Say some blessings, light some candles, eat some latkes or donuts if you're into that. Add presents if needed. Repeat x7. This leaves lots of room for you to make the holiday your own. You can write your own blessings, or make your own menorah.

Chanukah can be as low key or as high impact as you like. We're getting you started with this booklet of information and resources, and we hope you will come up with your own traditions and rituals to make the holiday special.

But here's one thing to remember: Jewish tradition stipulates that you should not use the light from your Chanukah candles to do other things (like working). Instead, the Chanukah light should be used to appreciate the holiday, and the beauty around you. This year we hope the light of your Chanukah candles will bring you joy, and help you to reflect and appreciate what's most valuable to you.

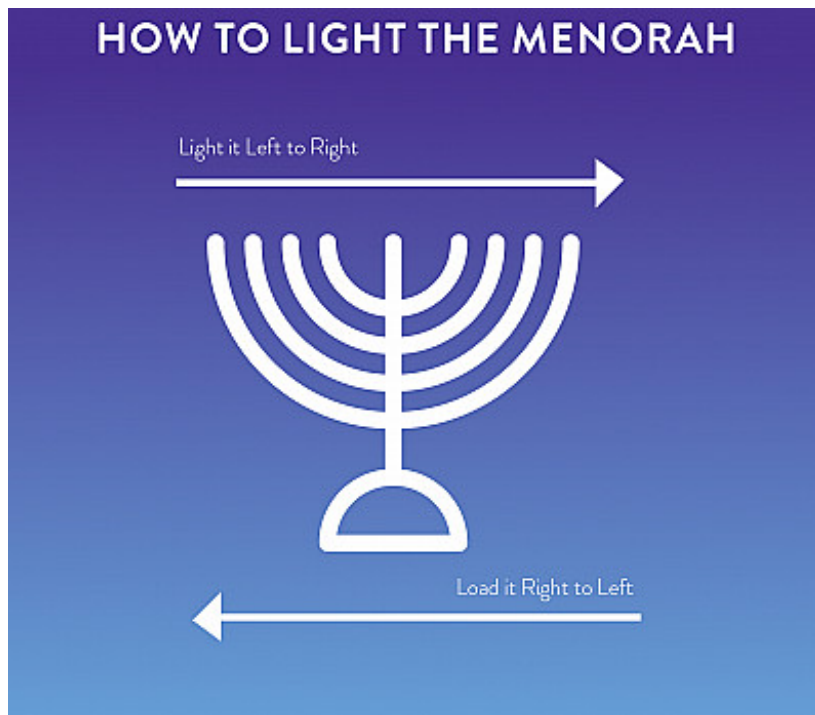
Warmly,

The Team at Custom & Craft

How to Light the Menorah

Contributed by [Custom & Craft](#)

Source: Custom & Craft



A menorah is also called a “Hanukkiyah”

Each night of Chanukah, we light an additional candle to indicate the growing miracle of each successive night. On the first night, we light the shamash (helper) and use it to light one additional candle. On night two, we light the shamash, plus two candles, and so on until the final night when we have a hanukkiyah full of light. It is traditional to place the hanukkiyah on or near a window, so it can be seen from the street.

Hanukkah Blessings

Contributed by [Custom & Craft](#)

Source: <https://reformjudaism.org/beliefs-practices/prayers-blessings/hanukkah-blessings>



Candles are added to the *hanukkiyah* (menorah) from right to left but are kindled from left to right. The newest candle is lit first. (On the Shabbat of Hanukkah, light the Hanukkah lights first and then the Shabbat candles.) Light the *shamash* (the helper candle) first, using it to kindle the rest of the Hanukkah lights. As you do, say or sing:

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haOlam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav
v'tsivanu l'hadlik ner shel Hanukkah.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who hallows us with *mitzvot*, commanding us to kindle the Hanukkah lights.

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

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who performed wonderful deeds for our ancestors in days of old at this season.

First Night Only

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

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who has kept us alive,
sustained us, and brought us to this season.

The Chanukah Story, Two Ways

Contributed by [Custom & Craft](#)

Source: Tamar Fox



THE CLASSIC STORY...

Way back in 167 BCE, the Jews were living in the land of Israel, and were ruled by a Syrian Greek king named Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Antiochus wanted the Jews to assimilate into Hellenistic culture, so he outlawed three core Jewish commandments: circumcising male babies, observing the Sabbath, and studying Torah. He also desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem. A Jewish priest named Mattathias and his five sons—collectively known as the Maccabees, which means “hammers” — led a revolt against Antiochus, and though they were heavily outnumbered, they ultimately succeeded in driving out the Syrian Greeks and rededicating the Temple to God.

When the Maccabees were cleaning the Temple for rededication, they discovered that the oil used to light the huge lamp had almost all been desecrated. There was only enough oil to light the lamp for one night, but when they lit the lamp, the oil miraculously burned for eight days and nights.

To commemorate this miracle we light a nine pronged candelabra, adding one candle each night. We also eat greasy foods, because oil was part of the Chanukah miracle.

AND THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY...

The real Chanukah story is a little more complicated. Some Jews were happy to assimilate into Hellenistic culture, and the Maccabees declared war on those Hellenized Jews as much as on the Syrian Greeks. The Maccabees used guerilla warfare tactics in a bloody war that went on for years, and only one Maccabee survived to see the end of the war in 164 BCE. That year the war prevented the Jews from being able to celebrate the autumn festival of Sukkot, so they decided that Sukkot should be celebrated once they rededicated the Temple, which they did on the 25th of the month of Kislev. Sukkot lasts seven days plus one extra day for the holiday of Shemini Atzeret, so the new holiday of rededication (Chanukah) became an eight day holiday.

So where did the oil story come from? About 600 years later, the Talmud tells the story of the oil miraculously lasting for eight days to explain why it's forbidden to fast on Chanukah. Many scholars believe that the story of the miracle was a later addition.

Lighting the Menorah

Contributed by [Custom & Craft](#)

Source: Alison Laichter



One of my favorite Chanukah tradition and “rule” is that we aren’t supposed to use the Chanukah candles’ light for any purpose. You shouldn’t use the light from the menorah to read or do work or even light your way through the dark. Instead, we are supposed to simply gaze at the light and enjoy it. Have you ever lit a candle and just sat and watched it burn? I recommend it. When I lead Chanukah meditation workshops, that’s always a profound exercise. It’s incredibly lovely to watch the candles burn out, one by one, returning us to darkness.

This time of year, I’m thinking a lot about bringing light to dark places. I’ve learned that we don’t just light candles to bring light to the darkest time of year during Chanukah. We are also reminding ourselves that we’re in constant motion. Things will change. Darkness lead to light and light to darkness, and somehow, there’s some comfort in that.

It’s been my experience that the scariest part of feeling lost or anxious, depressed or sad, is that we fear that we’ll feel that way forever. Of course, we know, intellectually, that everything changes and we won’t be stuck in any feeling forever, but in dark moments, it’s hard to see the light or sometimes even the possibility of light. So, we light candles and remember our ability to create

light, joy, peace, love, and also that darkness precedes light and light goes to dark and back again.

We learn in the story of Chanukah that even the holiest place, the Temple, could be desecrated, that the eternal light can go out. How heartbreaking that must have been for the people of that time. And, if that's possible, what are the chances that our fragile, human hearts could ever stay whole and holy for our whole lives? Just like the Maccabees rededicated the Temple and searched through all of the brokenness for light, I'm using the holiday of Chanukah (which means "dedication") to excavate my own heart and life, and rededicating myself to creating a life that brings light into the world.

Each night, when you light the candles, adding more and more as the holiday continues, take at least a few moments to simply gaze at the candlelight. Enjoy the gift of light, look inside and see what needs your dedication, and notice the tiny and huge miracles that have brought you to this very moment.

Happy Chanukah.

How to Recite the Chanukah Blessings

Contributed by [Custom & Craft](#)

Source: Tamar Fox



Blessings are at the core of most Jewish holidays and rituals, and Chanukah is no different. Before lighting the candles we say two blessing, one for the commandment to light Chanukah candles, one for the miracle that was performed for our ancestors in the time of the Maccabees. On the first night we also say Shehechyanu, a blessing of thanksgiving for bringing us to this day.

When you think of blessings, you may think of good wishes, of making something holy. But Hebrew blessings are different. Most Hebrew blessings begin *Baruch Ata Adonai*, which means, Blessed are you, God. We're not blessing the candles, or the challah, or the ritual in front of us, we're blessing God (or the Universe, or the Source of Creation, or the Great Magical Unifier) for giving us the opportunity to experience the special moment of the present.

Even if you don't believe in God, Hebrew blessings can be a powerful way to express gratitude. It's a moment to stop and reflect, to feel thanks for the experience.

If you're not comfortable using the traditional blessings on Chanukah, try listing things you feel grateful for each night. Start with one thing on the first night, and build up to eight on the last night.

1. *Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Chanukah.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to kindle the Chanukah lights.

2. *Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam, she'asah nissim la'avoteinu ba'yamim ha-hem bazman ha'zeh.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who performed wonderful deeds for our ancestors in days of old at this season.

** On the first night, we add:*

Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam shehehiyanu v'kiyemanu v'higiyanu lazman hazeh.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, for giving us life, for sustaining us, and for enabling us to reach this season.

Miracles Quote

Contributed by [Custom & Craft](#)

Source: Custom & Craft

“Miracles, in the sense of phenomena we cannot explain, surround us on every hand: life itself is the miracle of miracles.”

– George Bernard Shaw

A Chanukah Writing Meditation

Contributed by [Custom & Craft](#)

Source: Alison Laichter



Just as the Maccabees rededicated the Temple (the Hebrew word Chanukah means “dedication”), looked through the rubble, and miraculously found the ingredients for light, we can use this holiday to look through our own rubble and find our own sources of light. Use this writing meditation to take time to pause and reflect on light, dedication, and miracles. Consider these eight questions and the time you’re taking to write your answers a gift to yourself. Happy Chanukah!

Instructions:

Take a deep breath. Close your eyes. Take a full breath. Check in with your body, and ask yourself, “What does it feel like to breathe?,” and return to the physicality of your breath. Become aware of how your breath comes and goes, how your lungs fill and empty, your belly rises and falls.

Use the following questions to guide your writing meditation practice. Take your time and give yourself the gift of presence. This is being present. This is your practice, your exploration of dedication, and your opportunity to find out what lights up your life. Who knows, you could discover some hidden miracles!

When your mind inevitably wanders, because that's what minds do, gently bring yourself back to this moment on your next inhale. Practice returning to your self, and to this paper in your hands.

The Questions:

What brings light to my life?

How can I kindle that light?

How can I bring more light into the world?

What miracles have I experienced during difficult times?

What miracles am I trying to cultivate in my life?

How can I bring about miracles in the lives of others?

What will I (re)dedicate myself to this year?

May our practice light us from within and allow us to radiate outwards, during the darkest time of the year and always, bringing light and peace to ourselves and the world.

Dreidel Rules

Contributed by [Custom & Craft](#)

Source: Alison Laichter



Dreidel (a Yiddish word, in Hebrew it's *sevivon*, and in either language means "to turn around") is a top with four sides. Each side of the dreidel has a different Hebrew letter: Nun, Gimmel, Hey, and Shin. Together the letters are an acronym for the phrase, "Nes gadol haya sham," "A great miracle happened there." The "there" signifies Israel, and in Israel, dreidels have a Pey instead of a Shin. The Pey stands for the word "Po," which means "here."

Dreidel is a game played all over the world during Chanukah, with any amount of players, and you can play with gelt (gold foil wrapped chocolate coins), or actual coins, nuts, candies, whatever you want. Here are the rules:

Each player has a bunch of pieces of gelt. Everyone puts one piece into the center. The center "pot" may need to be replenished after every round, so every time it's empty, everyone again puts one piece of gelt in the pot to continue playing.

Now, it's time to spin. Each player spins the dreidel, and if the dreidel lands on

Nun: The player does nothing.

Gimmel: The player wins everything in the pot!

Hey: The player takes half of the pot.

Shin: The player puts a piece of gelt in the pot.

If you run out of gelt, you're out. If you get all the gelt, you win!

ACTIVITIES

Chanukah Hack: Crayon Menorah

Contributed by [Custom & Craft](#)

Source: Custom & Craft



<https://www.youtube.com/embed/sP8AJ6A6bGg>

Ran out of candles for your Chanukah Menorah? Try crayons! They'll burn for about 30 minutes. But, be prepared: your house may smell like a burning Crayola factory when it's all done.

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Fun-to-Make Hanukkah Lanterns

Contributed by [ReformJudaism.org](https://reformjudaism.org)

Source: Reform Judaism <https://reformjudaism.org/jewish-holidays/hanukkah/fun-make-hanukkah-lanterns>



Original article: reformjudaism.org/jewish-holidays/hanukkah/fun-make-hanukkah-lanterns

Celebrate Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, with hanging and tabletop lanterns.

There are many different types of lanterns that are simple to construct. And although there are many beautiful lessons learned from the open flame, for safety's sake, never leave an open flame unattended. You can also use a battery operated tea light.

Here are two simple lantern examples, hanging or tabletop, although the possibilities are endless.

HANGING LANTERNS FOR AN ILLUMINATING FAMILY WALK

Create a lantern to light your way as you soak in the beauty of the night air and reflect on the miracle of Hanukkah. Once you've made your lantern, enjoy a nature walk observing the night sky illuminated by the glow of your lantern.

Taking a lantern walk provides a wonderful opportunity to express quiet gratitude, for family, celebrations and meaningful connection. Adults will

experience the value in providing time for children to be their guide and follow their light. Children will experience lessons of connection, responsibility and confidence as they lead the starry night walk.

You'll need:

- Stick (to hold your lantern suspended by a wire)
- Colored paper
- Wax paper, parchment paper, or vellum
- Glue stick
- Stapler
- Oil pastels
- Wire or ribbon
- Tea light
- Aluminum foil

Directions:

1. Place a piece of 9" x 12" wax paper, parchment paper or vellum (working horizontally) on your work surface. Size of paper will determine the size of lantern; use any size you'd like.
2. Cut one piece of colored paper, also 9" x 12", in half vertically (the long way). This colored paper will create a secure border along the top and bottom of the lantern.
3. Fold strips of colored paper in half vertically (the long way). Using your glue stick, coat the inside of one colored strip and attach the colored paper to the top of the parchment. The fold sits on the top with the parchment nestled inside. Glue and secure on both sides. The second colored sheet is glued on only one side. When gluing half of the bottom colored sheet, use the fold as your guide. Snip slits into the unglued bottom half of the colored sheet. Later you will fold these tabs inward to create a bottom support for the candle.
4. Place the paper in front of you.
5. Using oil pastels, draw a scene reflective of the holiday, nature scene or event you are celebrating.
6. Roll the paper into a tube, securing with glue stick. Staple at the top and bottom on the colored paper. Fold the bottom slits inward until they overlap and form a bottom. Secure these tabs with glue.
7. Tuck a piece of aluminum into the bottom of the lantern.
8. Place tea light on aluminum foil. If using an open flame, add a dot of glue

to the bottom of the tea light securing it into the center of the aluminum foil in the base of the lantern. The battery operated tea light can freely float on the bottom. Do not secure this since the on/off switch is on the bottom.

9. Punch two holes at the top of the lantern on the colored border and attach wire or ribbon handle.
10. Place wire or ribbon on stick, twisting it once around to secure.

TABLETOP LANTERNS CREATE A FESTIVE MOOD

Fill your paper with beautiful colors. Observe emerging color connections through a color experience in painting. This is a wonderful time to enjoy the quiet, listen to the jingling of brushes in the water jar or play some quiet and festive music. The mood is yours to create! Once your painting is complete, set it aside to dry and later repurpose into your tabletop lantern.

You'll need:

- Painting paper (size of paper will determine size of lantern)
- Watercolor paints
- Paint brushes
- Water jar
- Dabbing cloth
- Sponges
- Stapler
- Paper punches or anything to poke holes

Directions:

1. Set paper horizontally and mark/score 3" from bottom across the sheet.
2. Once your painting is dry, punch, poke, hammer or cut holes into the paper. Make sure you protect your work surface if hammering!
3. Fold the bottom of the paper along the scoring. The folded piece should fold away from your design. Snip four slits up to the fold.
4. Trim the top corners of the paper to any desired shape. Sometimes rounding the corners is enough, but you can unleash your creativity and cut waves or zigzags.
5. Fold the bottom cuts and secure with a few staples. The lantern will be open in the back.
6. Place tea light on folded base.

SONGS

Hanukkah, Oh Hanukkah

Contributed by [Irving Lebow](#)

Source:

Oh, Hanukkah, Oh, Hanukkah
Come light the menorah
Let's have a party
We'll all dance the hora
Gather round the table, we'll give you a treat
Sevivonim to play with and lakes 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
One for each night, they shed a sweet light
To remind us of days long ago

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