

ha-olam she-hecheyanu v'kee-y'manu v'hee-gi-yanu la-z'man ha-ze. Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has given us life, and has sustained us, and has brought us to this season.

Each evening, after kindling the first light, say this while lighting the others:

Ha-ner-oht ha-lahlu anachnu mahd lee-keen al ha-nissim ve al ha-t'shu-oht v'al ha-neef la-oht shey ahsee-tah la-ahvohteynu al y'dey koh ha-ney cha ha-k'dohsheem v'kol sh'monaht y'mey chanukah ha-ner-oht ha-lahlu kodesh v'eyn lah-nu r'shoot l'heesh'tamesh ba-hem elah lir-ohtam bil'vad. K'dey l'hodoht l'shimcha al nisecha v'al y'shuatecha v'al neef-le-oh teh cha.

We light these candles because of the miracles, the deliverances, and for the wonders that You did perform for our fathers by the hands of Your holy priests. And these lights are holy all eight days of Chanukah. And we do not have a right to use them improperly, but only to look at them in order to thank Your name for Your miracles, for Your deliverances, and for Your wonders.

CHANUKAH DICTIONARY

BEIT HA-MIKDASH

The Second Temple.

CHANUKIYAH

The nine-branched candelabra used on Chanukah.

DEDICATION

English word for Chanukah.

FEAST OF LIGHTS

Another name for Chanukah.

HALLEL

Psalms of praise to God.

HASMONEANS

Family name of Mattathias the Priest.

KISLEV

Name of the Hebrew month during which Chanukah falls.

MACCABEES

The name given in later times to the Hasmoneans.

MA'OZ TZUR

Song sung on Chanukah.

NER TAMID

The Everlasting Light which burned in the Second Temple.

SHALOM SCRIPTURE STUDIES, INC.

A Hebrew - Christian Bible Study

P.O. Box 60580 Savannah, GA 31420

Tel 912-691-0709

P.O. Box 80084 Minneapolis, MN 55408

Tel 952-925-6186

P.O. Box 756 Naples, FL 34106

Tel 239-263-7093

www.shalom-peace.com eli3760@aol.com

CHANUKAH

Compiled By

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History of Chanukah

Upon assuming the Seleucid throne in 175 B.C.E., Antiochus IV, who vainly called himself "Epiphanes" (god manifest), dedicated himself fanatically to the total Hellenization of all the peoples under his rule. Of those peoples, the Jews alone refused to be Hellenized. So Antiochus decided to force Hellenization upon them. He banned the Torah and the Commandments; he sacked and defiled the Beit ha-Mikdash, inaugurating the sacrifice of pigs, and erecting there a statue of Zeus; and he decreed the death penalty for all Jews who refused to worship the Hellenic idols and who remained loyal to the Torah and the Commandments.

The Jewish revolt against this oppressive regime began in 168 B.C.E., when Mattathias the Hasmonean, a priest who had settled in Modi'in (a village northwest of Jerusalem), refused to permit idolatrous worship there, saying:

"Even if all the nations that live under the rule of the king obey him and have chosen to do his commandments, departing each one from the religion of his fathers, yet I and my sons and my brothers will live by the covenant of our fathers!" (I Mac. 2:19)

When a Jew then arose to sacrifice to an idol, Mattathias killed both him and a royal officer who was present.

Then, Mattathias and his sons and followers fled to the hills, and organized to wage a guerilla war, which culminated three years later in the miraculous victory, led by Judah the Maccabee.

However, the eight days of Chanukah do not directly commemorate the spectacular victory of a tiny people over the imperialist ogre. Rather, they directly commemorate the purification of the Beit ha-Mikdash and the rededication of the altar. To the question "What is Chanukah?", our rabbis answered:

When the Greeks entered the Beit ha-Mikdash, they defiled all the oils in the sanctuary. When the Hasmoneans prevailed and

conquered them, they conducted a search and found but one tin of oil, which lay with the seal of the High Priest, and there was in it an amount sufficient for kindling only one day. But a miracle was wrought concerning it, and they were able to kindle with it for eight days, until they could crush olives and produce pure oil. (Shabbat 21b; Maimonides, Hilk. Han. 3:2)

To Jewish people, the miracle of Chanukah is the miracle of Jewish history. Despite the cruelest persecutions of imperialist powers and evil rulers, and despite the temptations of collaboration and assimilation, the light of our Torah and the lamp of the Commandments have never been extinguished. Even in the darkest times of apostasy and genocide, even when it has indeed appeared that we could not possibly preserve the light for more than one day, we have refused to surrender, we have defied the logic of history, and miraculously, time and again, the light continued to burn until we could regroup ourselves and generate new strength. The true

miracle of the Festival of Lights -- which is the miracle of all Jewish history -- was not military but spiritual. The portion of Scripture recited in synagogues for Chanukah is, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts". (Zechariah 4:6)

CHANUKAH BLESSINGS

Before kindling the lights, say these Blessings:

Baruch atta adonai elohenu melech ha-olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzevanu l'hadlik ner shel Chanukah

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us by Your commandments, and commanded us to kindle the light of Chanukah.

Baruch atta adonai elohenu melech ha-olam, she-assa nissim la'avotenu bayamim ha-hem ba-z'man ha-ze.

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

On the First Evening only, add this Blessing:

Baruch atta adonai elohenu melech