

Messianic Jewish Candle Lighting Ceremony For Chanukkah

Chanukkah is a wonderful holiday. It's found in the prophets Daniel and Zechariah (see Daniel 8:9-14, 23-25, 11:21-35, and Zechariah 9:11-17). These prophets of Israel foretold those great events which took place around 167 BC. At that time, we Jewish people were the only nation on Earth who knew the true God. Had the king of Syria, wicked king Antiochus, been successful in hellenizing us (turning us into Zeus-lovers who adopted Greek culture), there might never have been redemption for mankind. Without the Jewish people, there could be no Messiah, and with no Messiah there could be no salvation. So, Chanukkah commemorates God's victory over Satan's efforts to destroy the people who would bring forth the Savior of the world.

When most people are asked, "What is the miracle of Chanukkah?" the response is: "Chanukkah is about a great miracle that took place in Israel, when the Jewish people fought against the Greeks. After three years they recaptured Jerusalem and the temple, and then relit the Menorah that gave light inside the temple. There wasn't enough holy oil, but a miracle occurred, and the oil for one day miraculously burned for eight days until more oil could be procured. That's the miracle of Chanukkah!"

But that's not the miracle of Chanukkah. The legend of the oil is not found in the original accounts at all, and it probably never happened. The real miracle of Chanukkah is that the Jewish people, supernaturally empowered by God, were able to overcome the vastly superior armies of the Greeks, and win miraculous victory after miraculous victory until the Greeks were defeated, our holy capital city of Jerusalem was recaptured, the temple was cleansed and rededicated for the worship of the One True and Living God. From the rededicated temple the truth of the God who alone can save and redeem mankind again shone forth to the nations of the world.

Therefore it's not surprising that when He came, the Son of God celebrated Chanukkah. In John 10:22-30 it is written: *at that time the Feast of Dedication (Chanukkah means Dedication) took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Yeshua was walking in the Temple in the portico of Solomon. Yeshua sanctified the struggle of the Maccabees - a small faithful band who knew their God, and who, with His help, overcame vastly superior forces.*

The Prophetic Significance

In addition, Chanukkah is a valuable holiday to celebrate because evil king Antiochus is a type of the anti-Christ. Just as Antiochus defiled the temple and declared himself to be a god and then persecuted the Jewish people, so the coming world ruler will declare himself to be god, sit in the temple, demand that the world worship him and persecute all who refuse.

Traditional Prayer: Blessed are You O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with Your commandments, and commanded us to light Chanukkah lights.

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

Baruch Atah Adonai Elohaynu Melech ha-olam, ah-sheer keed-shah-nu b'mitz-voh-tav v'tzee-vah-nu l'hahd-leek ner shel Chanukkah.

Messianic Version: If you do not like the traditional prayer, since, strictly speaking, God never commanded us to light Chanukkah lights, here is a Messianic version: Blessed are You O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has given us holidays, customs, and times of happiness, to increase the knowledge of God and to build us up in our most holy faith.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָנוּ חַגִּים מְנַהֲגִים וּמוֹעֲדִים לְסִמְחָה, לְהַגְדִּיל אֶת
דַּעַת יְהוָה, וְלְבַנּוֹת אֶתְנוּ בְּאַמוּנָה קְדוֹשָׁה וְנִעְלָה.

Baruch Atah Adonai Elohaynu Melech ha-olam, ah-sheer nah-tan lah-nu chah-geem, meen-ha-geem, oo-mo-ah-deem l'sim-cha, l'hag-deel et dah-at Adonai, v'leev-note oh-tah-nu b'emunah kee-doh-shah v'na-ah-lah.

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

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזִמַּן הַזֶּה.

Baruch Atah Adonai Elohaynu Melech ha-olam, she-ah-sah nee-seem la-ah-vo-tay-nu ba-ya-meem ha-hem baz-man ha-zeh.

On the first night you can add: Blessed are You O Lord our God, King of the universe, who granted us life, sustained us and permitted us to reach this season.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁחַיָּנוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמַּן הַזֶּה.

Baruch Atah Adonai Elohaynu Melech ha-olam, she-heh-cheh-yah-nu v'kee-ma-nu v'hee-gee-ah-nu laz-man ha-zeh.

How To Light The Candles

Traditionally, the candles are lit from right to left. The first candle is placed on the right side of the Menorah, and the second one placed directly to the left. But lighting them starts from the left and moves to the right. Thus the first candle that is lit is the new candle added for that day. The shamash (servant) candle is used to light the others.

Shamash (Servant) Candle

Messiah Yeshua stated in Mark 10:44-45: *Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be the servant of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*

First Candle

Genesis 1:3-4 describes the creation of the first light: *God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.*

Second Candle

Exodus 13:21-22 reveals that God is the source of Israel's light: *And the Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.*

Third Candle

King David reminds us in Psalm 27:1 and Psalm 18:28 that God Himself is the source of our own individual light: *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread? For You light my lamp; the Lord my God illumines my darkness.*

Fourth Candle

Psalm 119:105 and Psalm 119:130 describe the light that comes from God's Word: *Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path. The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.*

Fifth Candle

Messiah Yeshua is the greatest light of all: *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it* (John 1:4-5). As Messiah Yeshua was in the Temple in Jerusalem watching the illuminating lights, He declared: *"I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life"* (John 8:12). Aged Simeon was promised by the Lord that he would not die until he saw Israel's Messiah. When he saw Yeshua as an infant in the Temple, he knew that this One was the light of Israel and the Nations. Simeon declared: *"My eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of revelation to the gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel"* (Luke 2:30-32). *For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Messiah* (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Sixth Candle

After we come to know Messiah, we are to be a source of light for the world. King Messiah tells us in Matthew 5:14-16: *You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven.*

Seventh Candle

The prophet Isaiah speaks of the future glory of a restored Israel in Isaiah 60:1-3: *Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you... And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.*

Eighth Candle

Revelation 21:22-27 give us a description of our glorious eternal dwelling place in the New Jerusalem. John writes: *And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the Earth shall bring their glory into it. And in the daytime (for there shall be no night there) its gates shall never be closed; and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life!*