

Lighting the Hanukkah Lamp – Sephardi Instructions

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The purpose of lighting the Hanukkah lamp is to publicize the miracle of the oil, which burned for eight days when there was only enough for one day. This miracle is also a symbol of Jewish culture's "drive to survive" against all odds. Hence, we light our lamps in a place and time that passersby will be likely to see them and be reminded of these themes.

The Talmud declares that "the commandment of Hanukkah applies from sunset until there are no wayfarers in the street." (Shabbat 21b) Because of the uncertainty about what "sunset" means in Judaism, there is a dispute about whether the Talmud is telling us to light from the beginning of *sheki'ah* (sunset) or from *tset hakokhabim* (when three stars of medium brightness are visible in the sky). The Ben Ish Hai, an important codifier of Iraqi customs, calls for us to light at *tset hakokhabim*. Rabbi Yosef Caro, the author of the premier work of Jewish law, rules that if there is no alternative, one may light as early as *pelag haminhah* (the final period of daylight). Similarly, if one missed the end of the preferred time entirely, the lamp can be lit as long as it is still night. (BIH, Hanukkah 7; SA, OH 672:1-2)

It is the custom among many Sephardim to light exactly one lamp per household regardless of the number of people living there. By contrast, Ashkenazim light one lamp per family member, even including children under the age of majority.

Ideally, a Hanukkah lamp should be placed just outside a doorway that faces the street, on the side of the door opposite the mezuzah. However, because this can be unsafe or impossible for many people, the prevalent custom is to simply place it in a location where it would be most likely to be witnessed by others.

We light the lamp after it has been placed in the location where it will burn, using candles or oil capable of burning for half an hour or more. Because the lights can only be used to publicize the miracle, we light one extra candle called a *shamash* (Syrians have two *shamashim*).

On the first night, we say all three blessings, and thereafter, we say the first two only. If one missed the first night, the third blessing can be said on the first night that a properly lit Hanukkah lamp is encountered. We light the candles directly after saying the blessings, and begin reading *hanerot halalu* immediately after lighting the first candle.

The candles are assembled from right to left as we face the Hanukkah lamp. Hence, only the rightmost candle is lit on the first night, the rightmost two on the second night, and so on. However, the direction of lighting goes from left to right, i.e., from the newest candle to the oldest. Those who have a family tradition of lighting the other direction may do so, since it is validated in several medieval and early modern sources.

On Friday evening, the Hanukkah lamp must be lit before sunset, and many opinions also hold that it must be lit before the Shabbat candles. On Saturday evening, Habdalah must be read before lighting the Hanukkah lamp. Some synagogues allow lighting the Hanukkah lamp first on Saturday evening during the service because of *atah honantanu* (the Habdalah that is read in the amidah). (BIH, Hanukkah 21)

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'. אֲלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם. אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו. וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר חֲנֻכָּה:

bah-ROOKH ah-TAH ah-doh-NAI eh-lo-HEY-nu MEH-lekh hah-oh-LAHM
ah-SHER kee-deh-SHAH-nu beh-meets-voh-TAHV veh-tsi-VAH-nu leh-hahd-LEEK
NER hah-nu-KAH

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments, and ordained that we kindle the Hanukkah light.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'. אֲלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם. שְׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ. בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה:

bah-ROOKH ah-TAH ah-doh-NAI eh-lo-HEY-nu MEH-lekh hah-oh-LAHM
sheh- ah-SAH nee-SEEM lah-ah-vo-TEY-nu bah-yah-MEEM hah-HEM bah-zeh-
MAHN hah-ZEH

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who has performed miracles for our forefathers, in the days of old and in this season.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'. אֲלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם. שְׁהַחַיֵּנוּ. וְקִיַּמְנוּ. וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה:

bah-ROOKH ah-TAH ah-doh-NAI eh-lo-HEY-nu MEH-lekh hah-oh-LAHM sheh-
heh-heh-YAH-nu veh-kee-yeh-MAH-nu ve-hee-gee-AH-nu lah-zeh-MAHN hah-ZEH

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who has given us life and sustained us, and brought us to this happy occasion.

הַנִּירוֹת הַלָּלוּ אֲנַחְנוּ מִדְּלִיקוֹן. עַל הַנְּסִים. וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת. וְעַל הַנִּפְלְאוֹת. שְׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ. עַל יְדֵי כַּהֲנִיף הַקְּדוֹשִׁים: וְכָל־שְׂמוֹנֵת יָמֵי חֲנֻכָּה הַנִּירוֹת הַלָּלוּ קִדְּשׁ. וְאִין לָנוּ רְשׁוּת לְהַשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בָּהֶם. אֲלֵא לְרְאוּתָם בְּלִבְדֹּ. כְּדֵי לְהוֹדוֹת לְשִׁמְךָ. עַל נִסֶּיךָ. וְנִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ. וַיִּשׁוּעוֹתֶיךָ:

hah-neh-ROT hah-LAH-lu ah-NAH-nu mad-lee-KEEN AL hah-nee-SEEM veh-AL
hah-teh-shu-OHT veh-AL hah-neef-lah-OHT sheh-ah-SEE-tah lah-ah-voh-TEY-nu
AL yeh-DEY koh-hah-NEH-kha hah-keh-doh-SHEEM veh-KHOL sheh-moh-NAHT
yeh-MEY hah-nu-KAH hah-neh-ROT hah-LAH-lu KOH-desh veh-EN LAH-nu
reh-SHOOT leh-heesh-tah-MESH bah-HEM EH-la leer-oh-TAHM beel-VAHD
keh-DEY leh-hoh-DOT leesh-MEH-kha AL nee-SEH-kha veh-neef-leh-oh-TEH-kha
vee-shu-oh-TEH-kha

We kindle these lights to mark the miracles, salvation, and wondrous deeds that You did for our forefathers through Your holy Kohanim. For all eight days of Hanukkah, these lights are sacred, and we are not permitted to use them, but rather only to look at them so as to give thanks to Your name for your miracles, wondrous deeds, and salvation.

Psalm 30

(1) A Psalm of David, a Song at the Dedication of the Temple. (2) I will extol You, O Lord, for You raised me up, and did not let my enemies rejoice over me. (3) O Lord my God, I cried to You, and You healed me. (4) O Lord, You brought up my soul from the netherworld; You kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. (5) Sing praises to the Lord, righteous ones, and give thanks to His holy name. (6) For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but joy comes in the morning. (7) I had said in my security: 'I will never falter.' (8) In Your favor You established my mountain as a stronghold; you hid Your face and I was afraid. (9) I called to you O Lord, and made supplication to my God: (10) 'What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise You?! Will it declare Your truth?!' (11) Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me; O Lord, be my helper.' (12) You turned my mourning into dancing; You loosened my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness (13) So that my glory may sing praise to You, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever!

(א) מזמור שיר חנכת הבית לדוד: (ב) אָרוּמָמָהּ ה' כִּי דָלִיתָנִי וְלֹא שִׂמַּחְתָּ אֵיבֵי לִי: (ג) ה' אֲלֵהֶי שְׁוַעַתִּי אֵלֶיךָ וַתִּרְפְּאֵנִי: (ד) ה' הֶעֱלִיתָ מִן שְׂאוֹל נַפְשִׁי חַיִּיתָנִי מִיָּרְדֵי בּוֹר: (ה) זָמְרוּ לֵה' חֲסִידָיו וְהוֹדוּ לְזָכַר קִדְשׁוֹ: (ו) כִּי רָגַע בְּאַפּוֹ חַיִּים בְּרָצוֹנוֹ בָּעָרֵב יָלִין בְּכִי וְלִבְקָר רִנָּה: (ז) וְאַנִּי אָמַרְתִּי בְשִׁלְוֵי בַל אֲמוּט לְעוֹלָם: (ח) ה' בְּרָצוֹנָה הֶעֱמַדְתָּה לְהַרְרִי עַז הַסִּתְרָתָּ פָּנֶיךָ הֵייתִי נִבְהַל: (ט) אֵלֶיךָ ה' אֶקְרָא וְאֵל אֲדֹנָי אֶתְחַנֵּן: (י) מַה בָּצַע בְּדַמִּי בְרַדְתִּי אֵל שַׁחַת הַיּוֹדֶךָ עֶפֶר הַיְגִיד אֲמַתְּךָ: (יא) שְׁמַע ה' וְחַנּוּנִי ה' הִנֵּה עֵזֶר לִי: (יב) הִפַּכְתָּ מִסְפְּדֵי לְמַחֹל לִי פִתַּחְתָּ שַׁקִּי וַתִּאֲזַנְנֵנִי שְׁמַחְתָּ: (יג) לְמַעַן יִזְמְרָךָ כְּבוֹד וְלֹא יִדָּם ה' אֲלֵהִי לְעוֹלָם אוֹדְךָ:

Ma'oz Tsur

Rock of my salvation! It is pleasant to sing Your praises.
Restore my house of prayer, and there we will give thanks.
When You will have completed the barking foe's demise,
Then we will sing a psalm of the altar's dedication.

My soul was sated with misery, my strength spent with grief.
They soured my life with hardship when enslaved in Egypt.
But God took out His treasured people with a mighty hand,
While Pharaoh's entire host sank like a stone into the deep.

He brought me to His holy abode, yet I found no rest there.
The oppressor exiled me because I served strange gods,
And drank of their cup. Yet scarcely had I gone into exile,
When Babylon fell, and within seventy years I was saved!

Haman ben Hamedata plotted to cut Mordecai down,
But it proved a snare to him, and his insolence was silenced.
You raised the Jews' heads and erased the enemy's name;
And hanged his many sons and household upon the gallows.

The Greeks gathered against me, in days of the Hasmoneans.
They broke my towers' walls, and defiled all the oils.
But from the last flask a miracle was wrought for the Jews!
Hence the Sages ordained these eight days for joyful song.

O bare Your holy arm and hasten the time of salvation.
Wreak vengeance on the evil nation for Your servants.
For salvation is long delayed; the evil days are endless.
Push them to the shadows, and set up our deliverance!

מְעוֹז צוֹר יִשְׁוַעַתִּי. לֵךְ נָא לְשִׁבְחָתָךְ:
תַּכּוֹן בֵּית תַּפְלֵתִי. וְשָׁם תּוֹדֶה גִּזְבִּיחַ:
לַעֲת תִּכְיֶן מִטְבַּח. מִצָּר הַמְּנַבַּח:
אֲז אֲגַמֵּר בְּשִׁיר מְזִמּוֹר. חֲנֻכַּת הַמִּזְבֵּיחַ:

רַעוֹת שִׁבְעָה נַפְשִׁי. בְּיָגוֹן כָּחִי כָּלָה:
חַיִּי מָרְרוּ בְקִשְׁי. בְּשַׁעֲבוֹד מַלְכוּת עֲגָלָה:
וּבְיָדוֹ הַגְּדוֹלָה. הוֹצִיא אֶת הַסְּגָלָה:
חֵיל פְּרַעָה וְכָל יָרְעוּ. יָרְדוּ כְּאֶבֶן בַּמַּצְוִלָה:

דְּבִיר קִדְשׁוֹ הִבִּיאֵנִי. וְגַם שָׁם לֹא שָׁקַטְתִּי:
וּבָא נוֹגֵשׁ וְהִגְלֵנִי. כִּי זָרִים עֲבַדְתִּי:
וַיִּזוּ רַעַל מִסְכָּתִי. כִּמְעַט שָׁעַבְרַתִּי:
קִץ בָּבֶל זָרְבָבֶל. לְקִץ שְׁבַעִים נוֹשַׁעַתִּי:

כְּרוֹת קוֹמַת בְּרוּשׁ בְּקִשׁ. אֲגִי בֶן הַמְּדַתָּא:
וְנִהְיֶתָה לוֹ לִפְח וְלִמּוֹקֵשׁ. וְגִאֲוָתוֹ נִשְׁבַּתָּה:
רֹאשׁ יְמִינִי נִשְׂאֵת. וְאוֹיֵב שְׁמוֹ מְחִיתָ:
רַב בְּנָיו וְקִנְיָנָיו. עַל הַעֵץ תִּלִּיתָ:

יְוָנִים נִקְבְּצוּ עָלַי. אֲזִי בִימֵי חַשְׁמֻנָּיִם:
וּפְרָצוּ חוֹמוֹת מְגִדְלִי. וְטַמְאוּ כָּל הַשְּׁמָנִים:
וּמְנוֹתַר קִנְיָנִים. נַעֲשֶׂה נִס לְשׁוֹשְׁנִים:
בְּנֵי בֵינָה יְמֵי שְׁמוֹנָה. קָבְעוּ שִׁיר וּרְנָנִים:

חֲשׂוּף זְרוּעַ קִדְשֶׁךָ. וְקָרַב קִץ הַיִּשׁוּעָה:
נִקָּם נִקְמַת עֲבָדֶיךָ. מֵאֲמָה הַרְשָׁעָה:
כִּי אָרְכָה הַשְּׁעָה. וְאִין קִץ לִימֵי הַרְעָה:
דַּחַח אֲדָמוֹן בְּצַל צְלָמוֹן. הִקָּם לָנוּ רוּעִים שְׁבַעָה: