



**Eight Days of Learning**  
**A Bonim B'Yachad Chanukah Companion**

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# Chanukah Day 1—Publicizing the Miracle

## Talmud Tractate Shabbat

תנו רבנן מצות חנוכה נר איש וביתו

The Sages taught: The basic mitzva of Hanukkah is each day to have a light kindled by a person, the head of the household, for himself and his household.

תנו רבנן נר חנוכה מצוה להניחה על פתח ביתו מבחוץ

The Sages taught in a baraita: It is a mitzva to place the Hanukkah lamp at the entrance to one's house on the outside, so that all can see it.



In Jerusalem, this is still the custom; many of us in America place the Chanukah Menorah in our windows, facing the street.

The placement of the Chanukah Menorah on the outside of our homes is, among other symbols, a statement of the role and obligation of the Jewish people in the world.

**Membership in the Jewish people is not a declaration of superiority -  
it means acceptance of responsibility.**

## The Prophet Isaiah Ch. 42

ה' 5 כה-אמר האל יהוה, בורא השמים ונוטיהם, רקע הארץ, וצאצאיה... Thus saith God the LORD, He who created the heavens, and stretched them forth, He who spread forth the earth and everything that comes from it ...

ו' 6 אני יהוה קראתיך בצדק, ואחזק בידך; ואצרך, ואתנך לברית עם--לאור גוים. I the LORD have called you in righteousness, and have taken hold of your hand, and kept you and establish a covenant with you, so that you can be a light to the nations;

ז' 7 לפקח, עינים עורות; להוציא ממסגר אסיר, מבית כלא ישבי חשך. To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and those that sit in darkness – taking them out of the prison.

**How is the modern-day state of Israel a living example of this value?**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jgwppc0bAeQ>

<http://www.israaid.org/about>



## Chanukah Day 2—Reaching Our Goals

### Talmud Tractate Shabbat

והמהדרין בר לכל אחד ואחד

And the *mehadrin*, i.e., those who are meticulous in the performance of mitzvot, kindle a light for each and every one in the household

“We have found that in Judaism, **there is a general Torah and a private Torah**. There are 613 mitzvot that obligate us all. But **privately, each person has a specific mitzvah that his or her soul connects with more than any other mitzvah**. There is a mitzvah unique to each soul, a mitzvah that in your heart of hearts, you feel more connected to...”

- Rabbi Avigdor Nebenzhal

“The bedrock of piety and the root of flawless Divine service **lies in man’s effort to clarify and verify what his duty is in his world**. He must determine what he is aiming for and how to achieve this – in all of his labors throughout his lifetime.”

- Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto, *Path of the Just*

Check out this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r66yZrRt4bk>

- What do you think the students’ attitude was before Mr. Keating, the poetry teacher’s “huddled” with them?
- What’s the difference, according to Keating, between Medicine, Architecture, etc and poetry?
- What did Keating mean when he said, “You may contribute a verse. What will your verse be?”
- What was the response of the students to the “huddle” that the teacher conducted with them? How do you know?



### Thought Question...

Can you suggest a connection between the poetry teacher, Mr. Keating’s message to his students and the comments of Rabbi Luzatto and Rabbi Nebenzhal regarding mitzvot?

*See the fascinating short film about the “The Chicken Lady” of Jerusalem. What mitzvah has she chosen for herself, and why?*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-g0J0fg\\_BE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-g0J0fg_BE)

**Suggested family activity:** In the course of the eight nights of Chanukah, have one family member present an ambition/goal/passion of theirs that he/she has not yet shared in detail with the rest of the members of the family.



## Chanukah Day 3— Lighting Logistics

### Talmud Tractate Shabbat

It was stated in a dispute between Amora'im that Rav said: One may not light from one Hanukkah lamp to another lamp. And Shmuel said: One may light in that manner.

**Rav Adda bar Ahava said to his students: ... the reason for Rav's opinion is due to the fact that he thereby weakens the mitzva. By lighting from lamp to lamp he slightly diminishes the oil and wick designated for the purpose of the mitzvah.**

Abaye said: In all halakhic matters of the Master, Rabba, he conducted himself in accordance with the opinion of Rav, except these three where he conducted himself in accordance with the opinion of Shmuel.

**He ruled: One may light from one Hanukkah lamp to another lamp.**

“Eight Thoughts for Eight Nights” -

Check out this video with Rabbi Jonathan Sacks:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4tSWdgho88>



### Thought Question...

How does Rabbi Jonathan Sacks interpret the disagreement between the two views of Rav and Shmuel? Do you agree or disagree with him?

כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה

All Jews are mutually responsible for one another.

Watch to the song “אני יהודי”: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h\\_UJn14n49E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_UJn14n49E)



## Chanukah Day 4—Living the Miracle

### Talmud Tractate Shabbat

What is Hanukkah, and why are lights kindled on Hanukkah?

The Gemara answers: The Sages taught in Megillat Ta'anit: On the twenty-fifth of Kislev, the days of Chanukah are eight. One may not eulogize on them and one may not fast on them.

What is the reason? When the Greeks entered the Sanctuary they defiled all the oils that were in the Sanctuary by touching them.

**And when the Hasmonean monarchy overcame them and emerged victorious over them, they searched and found only one cruse of oil that was placed with the seal of the High Priest, undisturbed by the Greeks. And there was sufficient oil there to light the candelabrum for only one day. A miracle occurred and they lit the candelabrum from it eight days. The next year the Sages instituted those days and made them holidays with recitation of Hallel and special thanksgiving in prayer and blessings.**



**Time to Make Latkes!**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fg51la8Yayc&pbjreload=10>

### Thought Questions...

What is your favorite Chanukah Mitzvah or custom?

Does it have a special meaning in your family?



**“The Little Pancake with a Big History” – Article in the LA Times**

<http://articles.latimes.com/2008/dec/17/food/fo-hanukkah17>

**Chanukah Flash Cards on Quizlet!**

<https://quizlet.com/252928211/chanukah-flash-cards/>



## Chanukah Day 5—Dreidel Time

### “The Many into the Hands of the Few”

The Al-Hanisim (“For the Miracles”) prayer inserted into the daily Amida and in Birkat Hamazon (Grace After Meals) during Chanukah

וְעַל הַנְּסִים וְעַל הַפְּרָקוֹן וְעַל הַתְּבוּרוֹת וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת  
וְעַל הַנִּפְלְאוֹת שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזְמַן  
הַזֶּה:

בַּיָּמִי מִתְתַּיְהוּ בֶן יוֹחָנָן כְּהֵן גָּדוֹל, הַשְּׂמוֹנָאִי וּבְנָיו,  
בְּשַׁעֲמֻדָה מַלְכוּת יוֹן הַרְשָׁעָה עַל עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל,  
לְהַשְׁפִּיחַם תּוֹרְתֶךָ וּלְהַעֲבִירָם מִחֶסְרִי רְצוֹנְךָ, וְאַתָּה בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ  
הַרְבִּים, עָמַדְתָּ לָהֶם בְּעַת צָרָתָם. רַבַּת אַתְּ רִיבָם, דְּנַתְּ אֶת  
דִּינָם, נִקְמַתְּ אֶת נִקְמָתָם, מִסַּרְתָּ גְבוּרִים בְּיַד חַלְשִׁים,  
וְרַבִּים בְּיַד מַעֲטִים, וּמְמַאִים בְּיַד טְהוּרִים, וְרַשְׁעִים בְּיַד  
צַדִּיקִים, וְזוּדִים בְּיַד עוֹסְקֵי תּוֹרְתֶךָ. וְלֶךְ עֲשִׂיתָ שֵׁם גָּדוֹל  
וְקָדוֹשׁ בְּעוֹלָמְךָ, וְלַעֲמֻד יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲשִׂיתָ תְּשׁוּעָה גְדוֹלָה  
וּפְרָקוֹן כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה. וְאַחֲרַי כִּד פְּאוּ בְּנִיד לְדַבֵּיר בִּיתְךָ, וּפְנִי  
אֶת הַיִּכְלָד, וְטַהַרְוּ אֶת מִקְדָּשְׁךָ, וְהַדְּלִיקוּ נְרוֹת בְּחַצְרוֹת  
קְדֻשְׁךָ. וְקִבְּעוּ שְׂמוֹנֵת יָמֵי חֲנֻכַּת אֱלֹהֵינוּ, לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְהַלֵּל  
לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל:

“...You gave the mighty (Syrian-Greeks) into the hands of the weak (Jews), and the many into the hands of the few, and the defiled into the hands of the pure, and the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the malicious into the hands of those who engage in Your Torah. And You made a great and holy name for Yourself in Your universe; and to Your nation, Israel, did You grant a great salvation and liberation, as on this day. And subsequently Your children came to Your holy abode, and they cleared out Your Palace, and they purified Your Temple, and they kindled lights in the courtyards of Your holy place. And they established these eight days of Chanukah in order to give thanks and praise to Your great name.”



### Test Your Chanukah Knowledge...

[https://www.chabad.org/holidays/chanukah/article\\_cdo/aid/114180/jewish/Chanukah-Quiz.htm](https://www.chabad.org/holidays/chanukah/article_cdo/aid/114180/jewish/Chanukah-Quiz.htm)

### Time for “Dreidel Action”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6yTapEcJYQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZ6tX3lw92k>



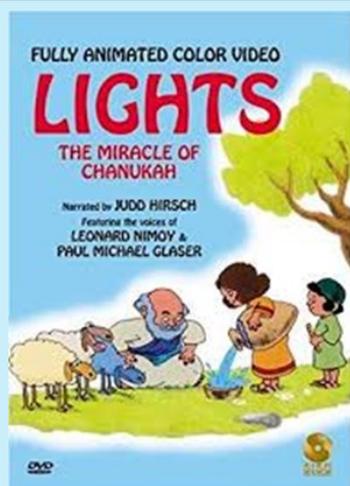
## Chanukah Day 6—The Lighter Side



The Jewish people have always had a sense of humor. This is a self-parody by Jewish comedian Elon Gold; it deals with the phenomenon of a Jew in America, where most people celebrate Xmas and not Chanukah. **What kinds of complications would develop for Jews if trees were part of our holiday?**

Elon Gold on Why Jews are Better Off Without Xmas Trees

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9N6VJoNuVI>



### Our Unique Lights...

We have our own unique “lights”. In 1984, Israel’s “Gesher” produced a short animated film called “Lights”. The movie presents a different version of the Chanukah story than most of us know. Filled with rich symbolism, “Lights” is both entertaining and informative.

You can watch the film now on YouTube here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WkG6gX7lcE>

***After the film, organize a family or class discussion with one member of your group serving as a discussion moderator.***

- What historical event is the film referring to when it talks about “the lights coming down to earth”? Why do you think this event is referred to as “the lights coming down to earth”?
- Practically speaking, what does the narrator mean when he says that the lights made themselves right at home in Jerusalem?
- What was Alexander the Great fascinated by? What did he not seem to understand?
- Why is the Jewish man embarrassed by the light shaped like an “Aleph”? What do you think this symbolizes?
- What do the Greeks mean when they said, “Those lights make them different, kind of sets up a barrier; they would be better off without those lights.”
- What is the movie suggesting when the characters that appear in the film ALSO appear in modern day Jerusalem at the end of the movie?



## Chanukah Day 7—The Deeper Meanings

### Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim

#### Siman 678

Someone who cannot afford both Chanukah candles and Shabbat candles should buy a Shabbat candle, for the sake of tranquility in his household (see above Siman 263:3); and if he has money for a Shabbat candle, but not enough for a Chanukah candle and kiddush wine, he should be a Chanukah candle, to publicize the miracle. Rem"a: And such is the ruling, that a Chanukah candle takes preference over wine for Havdala, and see above Siman 296:5).

**נר של שבת קודם לנר של חנוכה ובו א"ס:**  
מי שאין ידו משגת לקנות נר חנוכה ונר שבת יקנה נר שבת מפני שלום ביתו [וע"ל סי' רס"ג סעיף ג'] ואם יש לו לשל שבת ואין לו לנר חנוכה וליין לקידוש היום יקנה לנר חנוכה משום פרסומי ניסא: הגה וה"ה נר חנוכה קודם ליין הבדלה וע"ל סי' רצ"ו סעיף ה':



#### Tzadik In A Fur Coat -- Rabbi Mendel of Kotzk

The Kotzker explained: When it is winter and it's freezing cold, there are two things one can do. One can build a fire, or one can wrap oneself in a fur coat. In both cases, the person is warm. But when one builds a fire, all who gather round will also be warmed. With the fur coat, the only one who is warmed is the one

### Thought Questions...

Why do you think that lighting Chanukah candles is more important than Havdalah?

Why is it so important to publicize the miracle of Chanukah?

**"Light One Candle" - Peter, Paul, and Mary**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1cRXgDFiSs>

**"Miracle of Light" - 8th Day**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVhE7\\_AUtNI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVhE7_AUtNI)



## Chanukah Day 8—Eight Days of Celebration

Rabbi **Joseph ben Ephraim Karo** (1488 – March 24, 1575) was author of the last great codification of Jewish law, the *Shulchan Aruch*.

### The Beit Yosef's Famous Chanukah Question – excerpted from Rabbi Gil Student

Chanukah is less an orphan holiday than Shavuot but it still received little attention in ancient rabbinic literature. Lacking classical texts — the books of Maccabees are outside the Jewish canon and the Talmud discusses the holiday only briefly — contemporary rabbis have to be creative in crafting discussion material for the holiday. Sermons and lectures generally focus on the limited topics of the “Al Ha-Nissim” prayer, the Rambam’s description of the holiday and minutia of candle lighting. One issue that has captured rabbinic imagination is what has become known as “the Beis Yosef’s question.”



R. Yosef Karo, in his *Beis Yosef* (Orach Chaim 670), asks why we celebrate Chanukah for eight days. According to the Talmudic explanation of the holiday (Shabbos 21b), when the Jews reconquered the Temple they found a single, sealed bottle of pure oil that would last for only a day but miraculously lasted for eight days until more pure oil could be manufactured and delivered. R. Karo asks why we celebrate Chanukah for eight days, since no miracle occurred on the first — only on the subsequent seven days.

R. Karo offers three answers to this question but subsequent thinkers have challenged them and offered alternatives. His is the question that launched a thousand sermons. In 1962, R. Yerachmiel Zelcer published his *Ner Le-Me’ah*, a collection of 100 answers to the Beis Yosef’s question....

Here are extremely brief summaries of 25 answers from R. Zelcer’s enjoyable book. The first three are offered by the Beis Yosef and the rest by others.

<https://www.bonimbyachad.org/chanukah2>

