

# HOSTING GUESTS FOR CHANUKAH

## *Some practical pointers on how to maximize the opportunity*

*P*eople are usually very touched when you care enough to invite them into your home. Jews often want to connect to their heritage and are excited to take you up on a Chanukah invitation. You create positive feelings just with the invitation even if they can't attend!

1. Invite your guests at a time when it is reasonable for them to join you. (A sundown candlelighting will probably be too early.)
2. Since your guests are ideally supposed to light in their own homes, when you light your own candles tell them that you will be including them in your bracha and that they should answer amen to the blessings.
3. After you and the members of your household light, you can have menorahs set up for your guests (tin menorahs with candles work well) and they can light their own without a bracha. We would suggest perhaps giving your guest this menorah to take home plus a box of candles.
4. Sing Maoz Tzur with the transliterated version for guests.
5. A little dancing and singing with your kids is a beautiful way to share the simcha of the festival. Encourage the guests to join in (where appropriate!).
6. When sitting down for food or refreshments, it's a good time to "catch up," to find out what is going on in their lives and to develop the warmth of the relationship.
7. If serving bread, you can invite them to bentsch. It is helpful to have NCSY bentschers (with transliterations) or at least bentschers with English translations.

## GENERAL DO'S AND DON'TS

1. Remember that 95% of Kiruv is caring and relationship, so be warm, hospitable and make your guests feel like part of the family.
2. A happy Jewish family and a traditional Chanukah experience sell themselves with very little extra needed. Just the lighting of an oil menorah, singing or reciting the brachos and Maoz Tzur and a short rikud (e.g. singing Y'vanim, Y'vanim) can make a deep impression.
3. The natural participation of your children can be very touching. We suggest sitting down with your children prior to that night and briefing them on what to expect and how to make your guests feel most comfortable.
4. Don't feel pressured to impart a lot of Torah. If it happens naturally great. Sometimes it will occur in response to questions or over the meal. Also, don't be afraid to say "I don't know" to a question. You are establishing trust and you can follow up with a phone call when you do know. This way their question can be the start of a chavrusa session!
5. Be sensitive to the possibility that your guests may be afraid of embarrassment when "rituals" are performed. Therefore, go through the lighting, etc. with short introductions and be as helpful as possible. Particularly when speaking Hebrew, give them transliterated texts to follow and/or translate for them (see card provided).
6. After lighting, sit down for some refreshments. It is good to show them that you appreciate them as well as their attempts to strengthen their Jewish identity or any Jewish involvement that they have. This positive feedback and validation is important in developing an on-going relationship that will allow future successful Kiruv iy"H.
7. Don't expect anyone to "become frum" overnight. Just reach out with care and allow the Almighty to do the rest! Providing an enjoyable experience is a wonderful success.

**HAPPY CHANUKAH!**

## EXPLANATIONS

### THE FESTIVAL OF CHANUKAH

In the 2nd century BCE, the Syrian-Greeks outlawed Jewish practices in Israel, including the study of Torah. Many Jews abandoned their heritage, assimilating into Greek culture. Yehudah the Maccabee (“The Hammer”) and a small band of pious Jews fought back and won a miraculous victory against the Syrian army. On the 25th Kislev, the Jews entered a desecrated Temple, finding only one small but pure jar of oil with which to light the menorah. Miraculously, the oil burned for eight days instead of one.

### THE MENORAH

When we light the Menorah we recall the miracles that happened: the miracles of the oil and the military victory that occurred. A tiny and ill-equipped people took on the superpower of its day, because they believed in the value of the Jewish People and its role in world history - a People that, despite all the odds, has miraculously brought morality, values and spirituality to the world. When we take pride in our heritage and maintain a commitment to our Jewish values, miracles truly occur. The flames of the menorah remind us that a little light - our good deeds and our understanding of the Torah - can push away much darkness.

*“The Egyptian, the Babylonians and the Persians rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away. The Greeks and the Romans followed and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was; exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains.”* —Mark Twain

## OLIVE OIL OR CANDLES?

It is ideal to light with olive oil which reminds us of the miracle of the oil. One can also use candles. Olive oil is symbolic of the Jewish people. To obtain the finest oil from an olive, you've got to press it very hard. This represents the idea that the harder the enemies of the Jewish People have tried, throughout our history, to "crush" us, the brighter the flame of our people has become. It is often precisely at the times when we are pushed to the breaking point, that our finest character shines through.

## WHY DOES ONE LIGHT AN EXTRA CANDLE EACH NIGHT?

It reminds us of the daily miracles, as the one-day supply of oil continued to burn for eight days. There is also a principle of *ma'alim b'kedushah*, "increasing in holiness". On Chanukah this symbolizes that we should strive each day to improve ourselves, and to attain higher levels of spirituality and appreciation of the gifts we are constantly being given.

## WHY IS THE MENORAH BY THE DOOR OR WINDOW?

In order to publicize the miracle of Chanukah as much as possible.

## WHY CHANUKAH GELT?

There is a custom for Jews to give money to children on Chanukah to encourage them to learn Torah, and to sweeten their memories of the holidays.

## THE DREIDEL

During the time of the Maccabees, studying the Torah was prohibited. Under the guise of playing "dreidel," Jews would secretly engage in discussions about Judaism.

The four letters of the dreidel: Nun, Gimmel, Hey and Shin, represent the words "Neis Gadol Haya Sham" - *a great miracle happened there* . . . G-d miraculously saved the Jews from the Greek superpower.

One way to play dreidel is to use nuts, raisins, or chocolate coins as tokens. Each player puts an equal share into the "pot," and spins. When the dreidel stops, the letter facing up determines: *Nun* - nothing happens; *Gimmel* - the spinner takes the pot. *Hey* - the spinner takes half the pot. *Shin* - the spinner matches the pot.

# BRACHOS

## — BRACHA #1 —

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ  
הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו,  
וַאֲנִי לְהַדְלִיק נֵר (שֶׁל) חֲנֻכָּה.

Baruch ata Adonoy Eloheinu melech  
ha-olam asher kid'shanu be'mitzvo'sav,  
ve-tzivanu lehadlik ner shel Chanukah.

*Blessed are you, God, King of the Universe, Who made us holy with  
His commandments and commanded us to kindle the Chanukah light.*

## — BRACHA #2 —

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ  
הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ  
בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה.

Baruch ata Adonoy Eloheinu melech  
ha-olam Shi-asa nee-seem la-avo-seinu,  
Baya-meem ha-haim baz-man ha-zeh.

*Blessed are you, God, King of the Universe, Who made  
miracles for our forefathers, in those days at this season.*

## — BRACHA #3 —

*This blessing is said on the first night only.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ  
הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּי וְקִיָּמָנוּ  
וְהִגַּעְנוּ לְזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה.

Baruch ata Adonoy Eloheinu melech  
ha-olam Sheh-he-che-yanu vi-kee-yimanu  
vi-hee-gee-yanu laz-man ha-zeh.

*Blessed are you, God, King of the Universe, Who has  
kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.*

*The following paragraph is said each night, after the first light has been kindled.*

הַנֵּרוֹת הַלָּלוּ אֲנַחְנוּ מִדְּלִיקִים עַל הַנְּסִים וְעַל הַנִּפְלְאוֹת וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת  
וְעַל הַמַּלְחָמוֹת, שְׁעֲשִׂיתָ לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַיּוֹם, עַל יְדֵי כַּהֲנִיךְ  
הַקְּדוֹשִׁים. וְכָל שְׁמוֹנֵת יָמֵי הַנִּנְכָּה הַנֵּרוֹת הַלָּלוּ קִדְּשׁ הֵם, וְאִין לָנוּ רְשׁוֹת  
לְהַשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בָּהֶם, אֶלֶּא לְרְאוֹתָם בְּלִבָּב, בְּיַד לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְהַלֵּל לְשִׁמְךָ  
הַגָּדוֹל, עַל נִסֶּיךָ וְעַל נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ וְעַל יְשׁוּעָתְךָ.

Ha'Neiros halalu anu madlikin al hanisim ve'al hanifla'os, ve'al hat'shu'os ve'al  
hamilchamos, sh'asisa la'avoseinu bayamim hahem baz'man hazeh, al yedei  
kohaneicha hakedoshim. Vechol sh'monas yemei Chanukah, haneiros halalu kodesh  
hem. Ve'ain lanu reshush le'hishtamesh ba'hem, eh'la lir'osam bilvad, ke'dei le'hodos  
u'lehalel leshimcha hagadol al nisecha ve'al nifle'osecha ve'al yeshu'oshecha.

*We kindle these lights for the miracles and the wonders, for the redemption and the battles  
which You performed for our forefathers in those days at this season through Your holy  
priests. During all eight days of Chanukah these lights are sacred, and we are not permitted  
to make ordinary use of them, but only to look at them - in order to express thanks and  
praise to Your great Name, for your miracles, Your wonders, and Your salvations.*

מְעוֹז צוֹר יְשׁוּעָתִי לָךְ נֶאֱדָה לְשִׁבְחָךְ. תִּכּוֹן בֵּית תְּפִלָּתִי וְשֵׁם תְּהוֹדָה נְזַבְּחָךְ.  
לְעֵת תִּכְיִן מִצַּר הַמְּנַבְּחָךְ. אֲזִ אֲגַמֹּר בְּשִׁיר מִזְמוֹר חֲנֻכַּת הַמְּנַבְּחָךְ.

Ma'oz tzur yeshu'asi, Lecha na'eh leshabe'ach  
Tikone bais tefilasi, Ve'sham todah nezabe'ach  
Le'es Tachin Matbe'ach, Mitzar ham'nabe'ach  
Az egmor beshir mizmor, Chanukas hamizbe'ach.

*O mighty Rock of my salvation,  
to praise You is a delight.  
Restore my house of prayer,  
and there we will bring a thanksgiving offering . . .*