



## Chanukah



The basic *Hanukkah* "kindling service" consists of three *berakhot* [blessings] on the first night (two on the next seven nights) . . .

1) First, we say the mitzvah *berakhah*--"*lehadlik ner shel Hanukkah*." [to light the Hanukkah lights]. This defines the act of lighting the *Hanukkah* lights as a "*mitzvah*," a commanded religious experience, and establishes an expectation that this act can lead--if we have the proper intention--to an encounter with the Divine.

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, Eh-lo-hei-nu  
meh-lech ha-o-lam, a-sher  
ki-d'sha-nu b'mitz-vo-tav v'tzi-va-nu  
l'had-lik ner shel Chanukah.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
מְלֶכֶּךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר  
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ  
לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל חֲנֻכָּה.

We praise you, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe: You hallow us with Your Mitzvot, and command us to kindle the *Chanukah* lights.

2) Next, we say a *berakhah* of praise--"*sheh'asah nissim la'avoteinu*." [Who created miracles for our ancestors]. This *berakhah* not only thanks God for the original *Hanukkah* experience that we are now recalling, but defines *Hanukkah* as the commemoration of a time when God performed miracles. In other words, this one-line *berakhah* teaches us *Hanukkah's* essential meaning (as expressed by the Rabbis): "Not by might, not by power, but by My spirit alone, says the [Eternal]." In other words, we are clearly taught that *Hanukkah* is the acknowledgment of God's actions on our behalf.

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, Eh-lo-hei-nu  
meh-lech ha-o-lam, sheh-a-sa ni-sim  
la-a-vo-tei-nu v'i-mo-tei-nu  
ba-ya-min ha-heim ba-z'man ha-zeh.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
מְלֶכֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים  
לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ  
בְּיָמִים הָהֵם בְּזְמַן הַזֶּה.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe: You showed wonders to our fathers and mothers in days of old, at this season.

3) As our final *berakhah* (and only on the first night) we say "*shehecheyanu*." [Who has given us life]. This blessing is said at the beginning of every major Jewish religious experience. It acknowledges our entry into a special time, a holy time. But in a real sense, *shehecheyanu* is a connector. Its words thank God for "continuing our life," "continuing our establishment," and "bringing us along." In short, it is a blessing for growth and continuity. When we say it, we establish a link between the moment we are experiencing and the core of our life. It expresses the hope that this moment's meaning will further enrich the meaning of every experience that has led us here, and help to sharpen our sense of direction from here on. As the last expression of

blessing on the first eve of the mitzvah, *shehecheyanu* is a call for connection and significance.

*Ba-ruch a-ta A-do-nai, E-lo-hei-nu  
me-lech ha-o-lam, she-hecheyanu,  
v'ki-y'manu, v'higi-anu  
la-z'man hazeh.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ  
וְקִיְמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ  
לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

We praise You, Eternal One, Sovereign God of the universe, for giving us life, for sustaining us, and for enabling us to reach this season.



**Note:** Candles are placed in the *Chanukiya* from right to left and are lit from left to right (light newest candle first).

Text excerpts from *Hanukkah: The Family Guide to Spiritual Celebration*, by Dr. Ron Wolfson, (c) 2001 by the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs (Woodstock, Vt.: Jewish Lights Publishing).

Blessings from *On the Doorposts of Your House*, Chaim Stern, ed. (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1994), p. 96.