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חנוכה Hanukkah

Because learning Torah is sweet

DEVASH

כ"ה כִּסְלֵו - ג' טֵבֵת תשפ"ד

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בּוֹאוּ נְדַבֵּר עַל זֶה • Talk about it!

What's Hanukkah all about? That's exactly what the Gemara wants to know!

Talmud Bavli Shabbat 21b

What is Hanukkah?

Our Rabbis taught: Starting on the 25th of Kislev there are eight days of Hanukkah when it's forbidden to mourn or fast. This is because, when the Yevanim (Greeks) entered the Beit Ha-Mikdash, they made all the oil there impure. When the kingdom of Hashmonaim (aka the Maccabim) triumphed and defeated them, they searched but only found one jug of oil that still had the seal of the High Priest (which showed it was pure). This was just enough to light for one day. A miracle happened and they lit from it for eight days.

Later, they established these eight days as holidays with Hallel and thanksgiving.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף כא עמוד ב

מַאי חֲנוּכָּה?

דְּתָנוּ רַבָּנַן: בְּכ"ה בְּכִסְלֵיו יוֹמֵי דַּחֲנוּכָּה תְּמָנְיָא אִינּוּן דְּלָא לְמִסְפַּד בְּהוֹן וּדְלָא לְהִתְעַנּוֹת בְּהוֹן. שֶׁכְּשֶׁנִּכְנְסוּ יְוָנִים לַהֵיכָל טִמְּאוּ כָּל הַשְּׁמָנִים שֶׁבַּהֵיכָל. וּכְשֶׁגָּבְרָה מַלְכוּת בֵּית חַשְׁמוֹנַאי וְנִצְּחוּם, בָּדְקוּ וְלֹא מָצְאוּ אֶלָּא פַּךְ אֶחָד שֶׁל שֶׁמֶן שֶׁהָיָה מוּנָּח בְּחוֹתָמוֹ שֶׁל כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל, וְלֹא הָיָה בּוֹ אֶלָּא לְהַדְלִיק יוֹם אֶחָד. נַעֲשָׂה בּוֹ נֵס וְהִדְלִיקוּ מִמֶּנּוּ שְׁמוֹנָה יָמִים.

לְשָׁנָה אַחֶרֶת קְבָעוּם וַעֲשָׂאוּם יָמִים טוֹבִים בְּהַלֵּל וְהוֹדָאָה.



In the Beit Ha-Mikdash, there was a mitzvah to light the menorah every single day, and that was supposed to be done with pure olive oil. R. Menachem Meiri (800 years ago) says that the oil lasting for eight days gave the Jews enough time to make new pure oil so they could continue lighting the menorah.

- There are many parts of this story worth celebrating. How many can you find?
- Which ones are miracles? What makes these miracles different from each other and special in their own way?
- Why do you think lighting the menorah with pure oil is so important? What could that represent? What's lost by not being able to do it?

The "Menorah" was the lamp (or candelabra) used in the Beit Ha-Mikdash. It had **7** branches and was made of pure gold. The lamps we use on Hanukkah have spots for **8** candles, and usually a shammash too, and the name for them is: "hanukkiyah."



הֲלָכָה • Halakhah

The central mitzvah of Hanukkah is to light candles each of the holiday's eight nights.

What should I light?

The truth is, you could light any kind of candle (Shulhan Arukh Orah Hayyim 673:1). But, if you can light lamps with olive oil, that's the ideal (Rema).

How many should I light?

Each night, the number of candles in the hanukkiyah tells you what night it is. On the first night it has one candle, on the second night it has two, and so on.

Sephardic Jews light one hanukkiyah per home (based on Tosafot, Shabbat 21b), and only one person lights the candles. Ashkenazic Jews light a hanukkiyah for every person in the home (based on Rambam, Hanukkah 4:1-2), and every person lights their own (Rema OH 671:2).

Plus, you're supposed to light another candle every night as well. This is called the שַׁמָּשׁ (shammash, assistant). It's not really a Hanukkah candle, so the spot for it is separate from the other candles in most hanukkiyot. You light it because you're not allowed to use the light of the real Hanukkah candles (like for reading or seeing where you're going). The shammash is there just in case you happen to use the candlelight, there will be some light to use there that's not from the Hanukkah candles (Shulhan Arukh OH 673:1).

But if you're in a pinch, lighting just one candle, no matter what night it is, will also fulfill the mitzvah!



When should I light?

As close to sunset as possible (672:1). The idea is for the lights to be seen by everyone who is coming home from school or work. But if you're not available then, you could light a little earlier or any time during the night. The lights should burn for half an hour after sunset (672:2).

- Why is it important to make sure the candles stay lit while the world is getting dark? What does that teach us about this mitzvah?

Where should I light?

The candles are supposed to be lit in your home. If you're traveling away from home, you can light where you're staying (Mishnah Berurah 677:7). Other options are to have someone light for you back in your home or to join in the candles of your host family by giving them a little money (677:1).

- Why do you think Hanukkah candles are so connected to home? What does that teach us about Hanukkah candles?

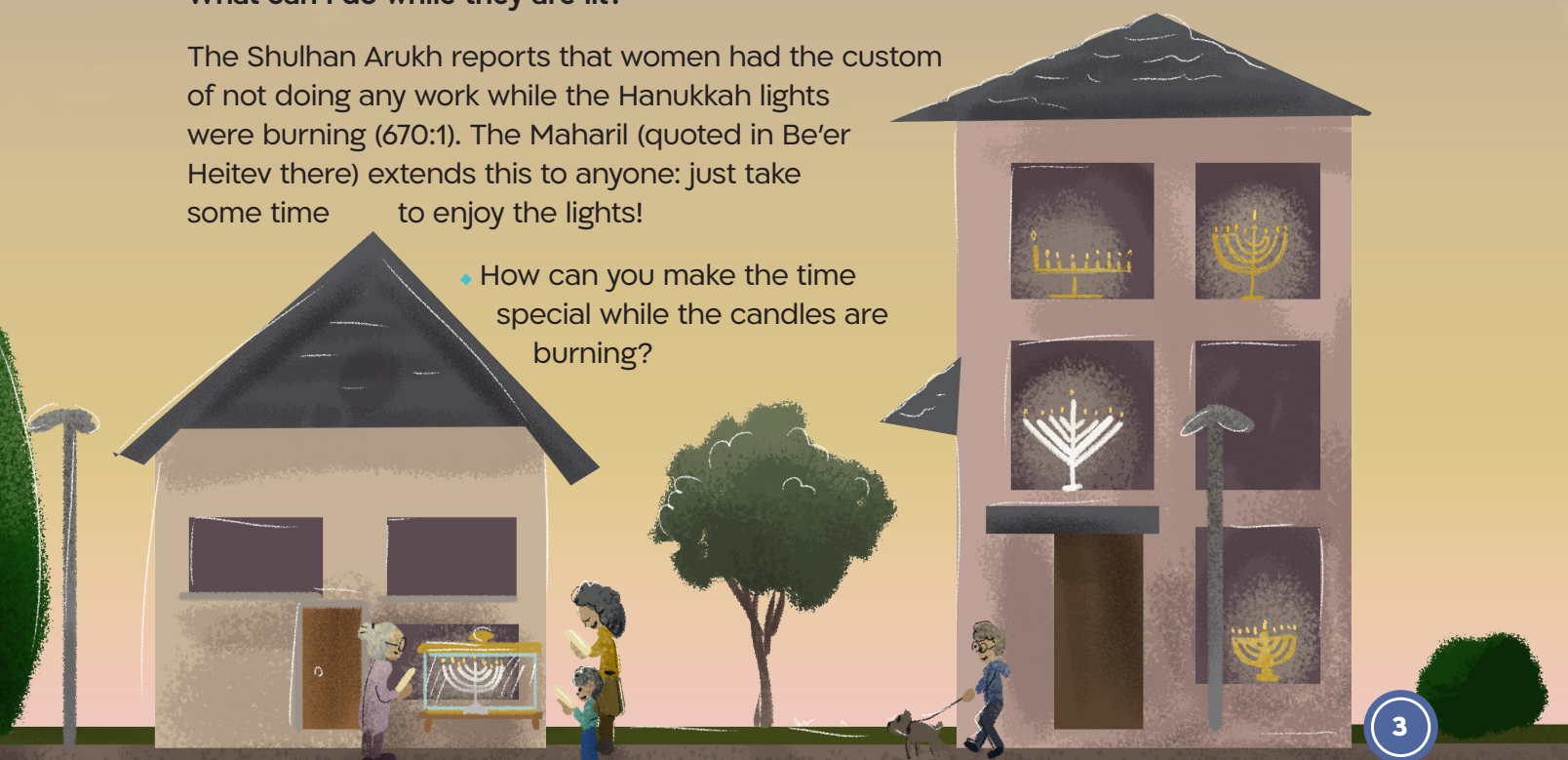
The goal is פִּרְסוּמֵי נִיסָּא (pirsumei nisa, publicizing the miracle). Because of this, if your house opens up to a public street, the mitzvah was to place your Hanukkah lights outside your door on the left side of your entrance. Nowadays, many people light on an inside table or by a window inside their home (Shulhan Arukh and Rema OH 672:5-7).

- Why is publicizing the miracle so important? What does that teach us about the purpose of celebrating this holiday? What can we learn from this to remember during the rest of the year?

What can I do while they are lit?

The Shulhan Arukh reports that women had the custom of not doing any work while the Hanukkah lights were burning (670:1). The Maharil (quoted in Be'er Heitev there) extends this to anyone: just take some time to enjoy the lights!

- How can you make the time special while the candles are burning?



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מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash



Are you afraid of the dark?

According to this midrash, אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן (Adam ha-Rishon, the first human) was!

Talmud Bavli Avodah Zarah 8a

Our Rabbis taught: When Adam ha-Rishon saw that the days were getting shorter, he said: Oy! Maybe I sinned and it's because of me that the world is getting darker and returning to tohu va-vohu (chaos). Maybe this is the death I'm supposed to be punished with from Heaven.

He got up and sat for eight days in fasting and prayer.

When he saw midwinter, and that the days started to get longer, he said: This must be the way of the world. He went and made eight days of holidays. The next year he made both of these (sets of eight days) into holidays.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת עבודה זרה דף ח עמוד א

תָּנוּ רַבָּנַן: לְפִי שֶׁרָאָה אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן יוֹם שֶׁמִּתְמַעֵט וְהוֹלֵךְ אָמַר אוֹי לִי שֶׁמָּא בִּשְׁבִיל שֶׁסָּרַחְתִּי עוֹלָם חָשׁוּךְ בַּעֲדִי וְחוֹזֵר לְתֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ וְזוֹ הִיא מִיתָה שֶׁנִּקְנְסָה עָלַי מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם.

עָמַד וְיָשַׁב ח׳ יָמִים בְּתַעֲנִית וּבִתְפִלָּה.

כֵּיוָן שֶׁרָאָה תְּקוּפַת טֵבֵת וְרָאָה יוֹם שֶׁמַּאֲרִיךְ וְהוֹלֵךְ אָמַר מִנְהָגוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם הוּא. הָלַךְ וְעָשָׂה שְׁמוֹנָה יָמִים טוֹבִים. לְשָׁנָה הָאַחֶרֶת עֲשָׂאָן לְאֵלּוּ וּלְאֵלּוּ יָמִים טוֹבִים.

- What did Adam do wrong that might have caused the growing darkness? (See Bereishit ch. 3 for the story!)
- If the days began to get longer simply because that's "the way of the world," why did Adam make a holiday as if it were a miracle? What does that teach us about how to look at the way the world works?



- The holiday Adam made is just as long as Hunukkah - eight days. And Hanukkah is always part of winter when the nights are longest and the days are shortest. The days usually start to get longer - which means the dark winter starts the process of going into spring - shortly after Hanukkah. What does this midrash add to our understanding of Hanukkah?
- How do you feel in winter, when the days get shorter and the world starts to feel more and more dark? How might Hanukkah candles teach us to find and increase light at those times?



תְּפִלָּה • Prayer

On Hanukkah when we say the Amidah and Birkat Ha-Mazon, we add a special tefillah called Al Ha-Nissim. In it, we thank God for making amazing miracles for our ancestors, and we retell the story of Hanukkah (one version of it!).

As you read it, consider: **What miracles does Al Ha-Nissim describe?**

עַל הַנִּסִּים וְעַל הַפֻּרְקָן וְעַל הַגְּבוּרוֹת
וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת וְעַל הַמִּלְחָמוֹת
שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם
בַּזְּמַן הַזֶּה.

בִּימֵי מַתִּתְיָהוּ בֶן יוֹחָנָן כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל
חַשְׁמוֹנָאִי וּבָנָיו כְּשֶׁעָמְדָה מַלְכוּת יָוָן
הָרְשָׁעָה עַל עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַשְׁכִּיחָם
מִתּוֹרָתֶךָ וּלְהַעֲבִירָם מֵחֻקֵּי רְצוֹנֶךָ.

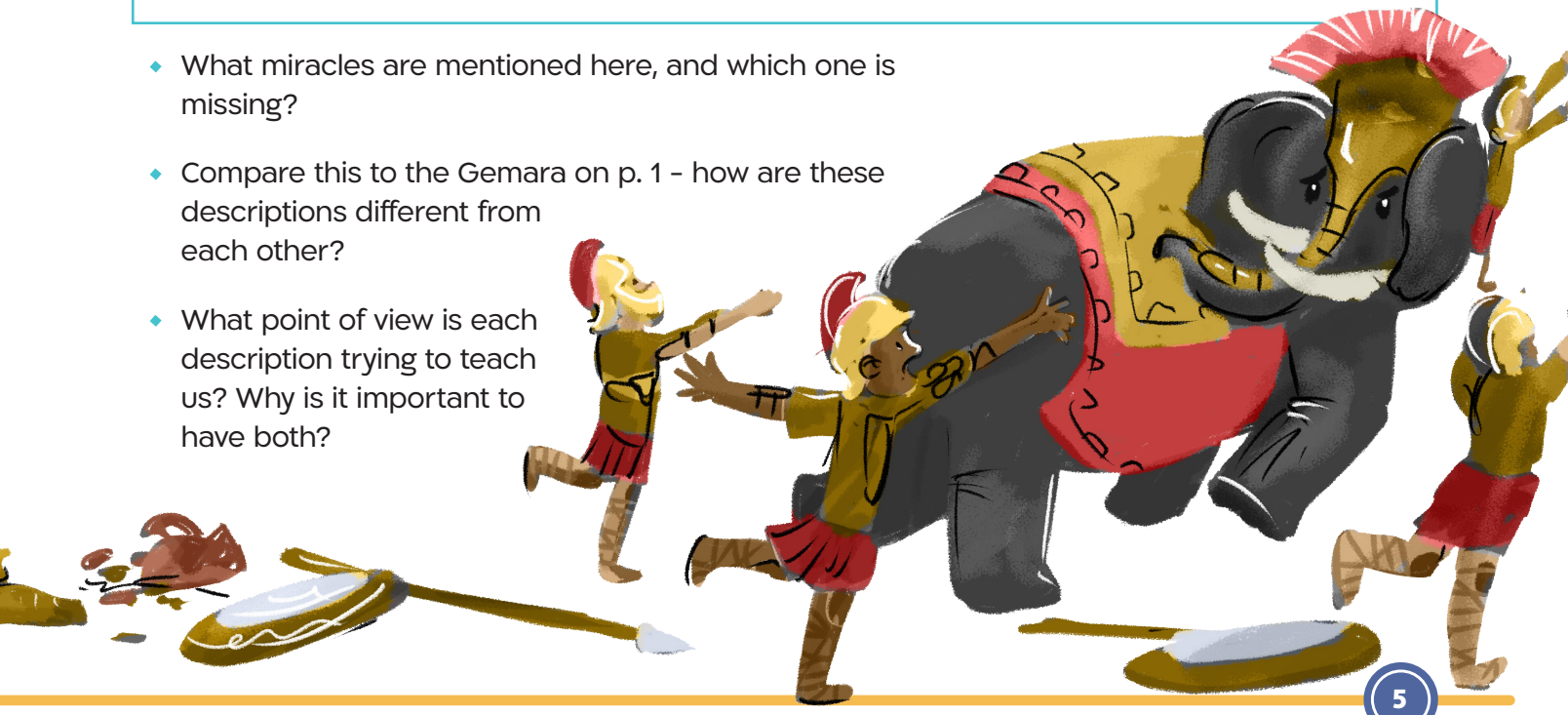
וְאַתָּה בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הָרַבִּים עָמַדְתָּ
לָהֶם בְּעֵת צָרָתָם רַבְתָּ אֶת רִיבָם
דַּנְתָּ אֶת דִּינָם נָקַמְתָּ אֶת נִקְמָתָם
מָסַרְתָּ גִבּוֹרִים בְּיַד חַלָּשִׁים וְרַבִּים
בְּיַד מְעַטִּים וּטְמֵאִים בְּיַד טְהוֹרִים
וּרְשָׁעִים בְּיַד צַדִּיקִים וְזֵדִים בְּיַד
עוֹסְקֵי תוֹרָתֶךָ...

We thank You for the miracles, redemption, mighty deeds, salvation, and wars that You waged for our ancestors in those days, on this date.

In the days of Mattityahu son of Yohanan the High Priest and his sons, when wicked Greece stood against Your people Israel to make them forget Your Torah, and to force them to leave Your mitzvot.

In Your great mercy, You rose up for them in their time of trouble; You fought their fight, You judged their case, You avenged their wrong; You handed over the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the arrogant into the hands of Torah learners...

- What miracles are mentioned here, and which one is missing?
- Compare this to the Gemara on p. 1 - how are these descriptions different from each other?
- What point of view is each description trying to teach us? Why is it important to have both?



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דַּקָּה שֶׁל דִּיּוּן • One-Minute Debate

Debate: The miracle of the oil and light is more important than the military miracle of the Maccabim defeating the Yevanim.

How to play:

- Here are some arguments to get you started, but try to come up with your own. Then debate someone!
- For a true one-minute debate, give each side 30 seconds to make its best case.



Agree!

- Only God could make a small jar of oil last for eight days.
- War is violent and sad. A miracle of light in the Beit Ha-Mikdash is a more inspiring thing to think about.
- Sometimes a weaker army gets lucky and wins, so it's not even so obvious that beating the Yevanim was a miracle. The miracle of the oil was more supernatural, so you definitely know that they are miracles from God and not a fluke.



Disagree!

- The Yevanim were a major military threat. If the Maccabim had lost, there may not have been Jews around anymore to enjoy the oil burning on the menorah! When the Maccabim defeated them, they saved the Jewish people both physically and spiritually. This is more important than oil.
- A miracle that God does together with people is better than one God does alone.
- A more natural miracle is best because it's the kind that we can sometimes experience in our own lives.





מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

Why does God need our candles?

The Rabbis answer this question with a story. This kind of story is called a מָשָׁל (mashal), which is a story that is supposed to symbolize something. As you read it, think to yourself: What does this story symbolize?

For more about how meshalim are used in midrash, see Devash for Behaalotkha 5782!

במדבר רבה טו:ח

לְמָה הַדָּבָר דּוֹמֶה? לְמֶלֶךְ שֶׁהָיָה לוֹ אוֹהֵב, אָמַר לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ תֵּדַע שֶׁאֶצְלְךָ אֲנִי סוֹעֵד, אֶלָּא לֵךְ וְתַקֵּן לִי.

הָלַךְ אוֹהֲבוֹ וְהִתְקִין מִטָּה שֶׁל הֶדְיוֹט, מְנוֹרָה שֶׁל הֶדְיוֹט, וְשֻׁלְחָן שֶׁל הֶדְיוֹט. כֵּיוָן שֶׁבָּא הַמֶּלֶךְ בָּאוּ עִמּוֹ שַׁמָּשִׁין סְבִיבוֹ מִכָּן וּמִכָּן מְנוֹרָה שֶׁל זָהָב לְפָנָיו, כֵּיוָן שֶׁרָאָה אוֹהֲבוֹ אֶת כָּל הַכָּבוֹד הִתְבַּיֵּשׁ וְהִטְמִין אֶת כָּל מַה שֶׁהִתְקִין לוֹ שֶׁהָיָה הַכֹּל הֶדְיוֹטוֹת.

אָמַר לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ לֹא אָמַרְתִּי לְךָ שֶׁאֶצְלְךָ אֲנִי סוֹעֵד, לָמָּה לֹא הִתְקַנְתָּ לִי כְּלוּם. אָמַר לוֹ אוֹהֲבוֹ רָאִיתִי אֶת כָּל הַכָּבוֹד הַזֶּה שֶׁבָּא עִמְּךָ, וְנִתְבַּיַּשְׁתִּי וְהִטְמַנְתִּי כָּל מַה שֶׁהִתְקַנְתִּי לְךָ שֶׁהָיוּ כְּלֵי הֶדְיוֹטוֹת. אָמַר לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ חַיֶּיךָ שֶׁאֲנִי פּוֹסֵל אֶת כָּל כֵּלַי שֶׁהֵבֵאתִי וּבִשְׁבִיל אַהֲבָתְךָ אֵינִי מִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ אֶלָּא בְּשֶׁלְּךָ.

וְכֵן הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא כֻּלּוֹ אוֹרָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "וְנְהוֹרָא עִמֵּהּ שְׁרֵא" (דניאל ב:כב), וְהוּא אָמַר לְיִשְׂרָאֵל הַתְקִינוּ לִי מְנוֹרָה וְנֵרוֹת.

Bemidbar Rabbah 15:8

It's like a king who had a beloved friend. The king said, "I am coming to eat with you, so get ready."

The friend went and prepared an ordinary couch, an ordinary lamp (menorah), and an ordinary table. When the king came to the friend's house, there were assistants all around him and a golden lamp before him. When the friend saw all the glory of the king, the friend became embarrassed and hid all the ordinary things.

The king said to his friend, "Didn't I tell you I was coming over to eat? Why didn't you prepare anything for me?"

The friend said, "I saw all the glory that you came with, and I was embarrassed and hid everything I had prepared, because it was all ordinary."

The king replied, "I promise that I will ruin all my things that I brought with me, and for the sake of my love for you I will use only your things!"

Just like this, the Holy Blessed One is entirely light, as it is said "And light dwells with God" (Daniel 2:22) and yet God says to Israel: Prepare for Me a menorah and lights (in the mishkan).

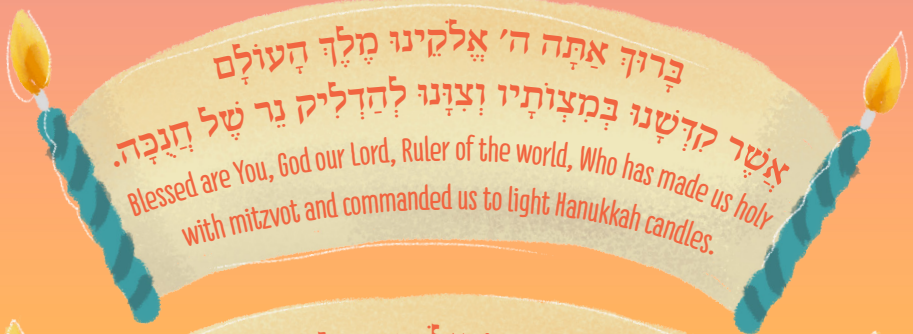


- Every mashal has a נִמְשָׁל (nimshal), which is the lesson or idea being taught in the story. Can you explain the nimshal here?
- Can you relate to the friend in this story? Can you imagine feeling embarrassed or inadequate in your efforts to connect to God? Do you ever feel like your little Hanukkah candles - or your other mitzvot - don't really matter to God?
- Why do you think God loves our ordinary menorah? What does this say about our mitzvot and our relationship with God?

הַדְלָקַת נֵרוֹת • Candle Lighting



These are the בְּרָכוֹת (berakhot, blessings) to recite before lighting Hanukkah candles:









We say or sing Hanerot Hallalu after lighting the first candle (Arukh Hashulhan OH 676:8). It reviews some of the main halakhot and goals of Hanukkah candles (p. 2-3).



הַנֵּרוֹת הַלָּלוּ שֶׁאָנוּ מַדְלִיקִין, עַל הַנִּסִּים וְעַל הַנִּפְלָאוֹת
וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת וְעַל הַמִּלְחָמוֹת, שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ
בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בַּזְּמַן הַזֶּה, עַל יְדֵי כֹּהֲנֶיךָ הַקְּדוֹשִׁים.
וְכָל שְׁמוֹנַת יְמֵי הַחֲנֻכָּה הַנֵּרוֹת הַלָּלוּ קֹדֶשׁ הֵם וְאֵין
לָנוּ רְשׁוּת לְהִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בָּהֶם, אֶלָּא לִרְאוֹתָם בִּלְבָד,
כְּדֵי לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְהַלֵּל לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל עַל נִסֶּיךָ וְעַל
נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ וְעַל יְשׁוּעָתֶךָ.

These candles we light are for the miracles, wonders, salvations, and wars that You made for our ancestors in those days on this date, by the hands of your holy kohanim (priests). During all the eight days of Hanukkah these lights are holy, and we aren't permitted to make use of them; we're only supposed to look at them, so that we can give thanks and praise to Your Great Name for Your miracles, wonders, and salvations.