

Hanukkah Candle Lighting "Dedication" Readings

written for Machar's Jewish Cultural School - Washington, DC - by Rabbi Binyamin Biber © 2006, 2008 - rav.bibi@gmail.com

Today we are gathering to celebrate on the __(#)__ day of Hanukkah, the Jewish festival of lights. Hanukkah in Hebrew means "dedication" in English. People sometimes celebrate the grand opening of a new or newly fixed up building with a "dedication" party. This is what some Jewish people did over 2000 years ago after they fixed up their Temple in Jerusalem that had been damaged by war.

When people "dedicate" a building, it means they decide to use the building for a special purpose or goal. Of course, people can also "dedicate" themselves to goals. We can dedicate ourselves to a goal by caring a lot about it and working to achieve it. We can dedicate ourselves to being kind and honest and helpful, to being a good member of our family, a good friend, a good student, or many other things.

So as we celebrate Hanukkah this week we can also dedicate ourselves to such goals. Here today we will read a "dedication" for each of the nights of Hanukkah. However, at our own homes we might light each evening's candle/s & recite just one dedication reading per evening. That way every night of Hanukkah can have its own special meaning for us. May the ideals we link with our Hanukkah candles help light our way each day of our lives.

1) We light the candle for the first night of Hanukkah as a dedication to kindness, hesed.

Let us always be kind to other people and animals by trying to understand their feelings and by helping them. This will help make us and the whole world more compassionate.

2) We light the candle for the second night of Hanukkah as a dedication to fairness, tsedeq.

Let us always be fair to others by sharing with them and treating them with respect. This will help fill the world with justice.

3) We light the candle for the third night of Hanukkah as a dedication to love, ahavah.

Let us always be thankful for the love of our family and friends. Rooted in their affections, we grow up to help to fill the world with love.

4) We light the candle for the fourth night of Hanukkah as a dedication to each of us being a good, responsible member of the human family, mishpahah.

As citizens of our community and world, let us always work to improve our school and our neighborhood, and also contribute to help others in places farther away.

5) We light the candle for the fifth night of Hanukkah as a dedication to freedom, herut.

Like other peoples, our ancestors struggled many times for freedom. So let us value the liberties and opportunities such struggles have allowed us to enjoy, and let us work together to help others who are less free. This will help fill the world with liberty.

6) We light the candle for the sixth night of Hanukkah as a dedication to peace, shalom.

Hanukkah was first celebrated after a battle as our ancestors began to rebuild after the destruction and suffering and death caused by war. Every day, we can help rebuild the world with peace with our Hanukkah values - by being kind and fair, loving and responsible, and by helping to spread freedom.

7) We light the candle for the seventh night of Hanukkah as a dedication "to life," l'-haiyim!

We can help all to enjoy a good life by working together to create a world of compassion and justice, a world of love and mutual responsibility, a world of freedom and peace. As we hope and work for these ideals, we dedicate this Hanukkah candle "to life!"

8) We light the candle for the eighth night of Hanukkah as a dedication to the improvement of the world, tiggun ha-olam.

May our dedication to our Hanukkah goals inspire us and light our way all year round. Each and every day, may we help to heal the world's suffering and sickness, to repair its brokenness, and to help create what in Yiddish we call a *a besere un sheynere velt*, "a better and more beautiful world."