

# Eight Ways to Create Light This Hanukkah

*Hanukkah* is called the Festival of Lights because not only does it bring physical light into the darkest time of the year, but because it is also the story of how we brought light into one of the darkest periods of Jewish history.

In the second century BCE, the Jewish people faced persecution as the Seleucid army desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem by setting up altars and idols to Greek gods, and outlawed Jewish prayer, study, and rituals. A small band of Jewish warriors known as the Maccabees defeated the much stronger army, and upon reentering the Temple they lit the menorah, a seven branched candelabra that would traditionally have been lit every day.

Today, we witness pain, destruction, and darkness at home, in Israel, and around the world. Just as the Maccabees brought light into the darkness of a desecrated Temple, we too can find ways to bring light into our world today. As we light the *Hanukkah* menorah for each of the eight nights, we call upon the themes of the holiday to help us find that light.



HOPE

**Night 1:** Despite the challenges and persecution the Maccabees faced, they held onto Jewish tradition and took action to secure a future for Judaism. As we bring light forth from darkness with the first candle, we hold onto hope for future possibilities.

**Reflect:** What moments, experiences, or ideas do you call upon when you need to find hope? What have been your sources of light this year?

---



STRENGTH

**Night 2:** Bound together by their shared beliefs and commitment, the Maccabees found strength in spirit as they joined together against persecution. As we light the second candle, we consider both our personal and our communal strength.

**Bless:** May we continue to hold the pain of this darkness, may our hearts be strengthened *but not hardened*.

---



REDEDICATION

**Night 3:** When the Maccabees returned to the Temple, they began rebuilding their shattered society by lighting the Temple menorah and setting an intention for the society they could build. As we light the third candle, we consider how we can rededicate ourselves.

**Act:** Rededicate yourself to learning more about a topic or cause you care about by reading, seeking out a new perspective, or listening to a podcast. [Want to learn more about Israel? Check out this list of resources.](#)

---



REIMAGINING

**Night 4:** We celebrate the Maccabees' vision for leadership. They did not stop with the rededication of the Temple, but worked to rebuild their entire society. They imagined a new, independent Jewish state in the Land of Israel. As we light the fourth candle, we imagine the world we want to create together.

**Reflect:** As you think about the coming year, what future do you imagine for yourself? For your family? For your Jewish community? For Israel?



## REPAIR OF SELF

**Night 5:** Each Hanukkah menorah has nine places for candles – eight for each night of Hanukkah and one for the *shamash*, the helper candle. The *shamash* sits apart from the other candles, sometimes slightly higher or off to the side. The *shamash* serves as a reminder of how important it is to take care of ourselves, how we must attend to our light before we can do so for others. As we light the fifth candle (and the *shamash*!), we take notice of our self care.

**Reflect:** What are you doing to take care of yourself? How can you make more space for these practices in your life?

---



## REPAIR OF COMMUNITY

**Night 6:** The Maccabees fought not only for the Temple, but for their community and their way of life. They fought to preserve their Jewish traditions and values. A value central to Judaism, and one of the ways we strengthen our community, is through acts of *tzedakah*, or acts of charity and justice. As we light the sixth candle, we consider how we can help our own community.

**Act:** What volunteer activities can you take on this year? Are there organizations to which you could give? Consider a gift to HMI and [Pay It Forward](#) to help strengthen the unique HMI community and impact even more young couples.

---



## REPAIR OF WORLD

**Night 7:** *Tikkun Olam* is the Jewish idea that we all have an ethical obligation to repair the world. This is a monumental task, but one that we can slowly build on if we do so together, both during this Hanukkah season and all year. As we light the seventh candle, we commit ourselves to doing good.

**Bless:** May our hearts and eyes be opened to the fractures in our world. May we be given the opportunity to mend and repair.

---



## MEMORY

**Night 8:** On the last night of *Hanukkah*, we remember that even though our celebration is coming to a close, the core messages of the holiday last all year. One of the commandments to celebrate *Hanukkah* is to publicize the miracle, to place your *Hanukkah* menorah in a window so all can see it, and to share the story and lessons of *Hanukkah* with others. As we light the eighth and final candle of this Hanukkah season, we are reminded of the miracles in our lives.

**Reflect:** As *Hanukkah* concludes this year, what will you do to share the story, themes, and values of *Hanukkah* throughout the coming year? How can you share the miracle of light all year long?

Wishing each and every one of us in the HMI community a Happy *Hanukkah*!

May the One Who brings us from light to light, give us strength to bring that light to the entire world. May our light continue to shine out into the world during *Hanukkah* and all year.