

The celebration of **Hanukkah** focuses on the lighting of the menorah. It is a special time for families and friends to spend together singing, playing, giving gifts, telling stories, and **meditating on the meaning of Hanukkah**.

Eight Days of Hanukkah (day 4 of 8)

The Feast of Dedication and The Feast of Light

by Michael Gibson, Key2Changes.com

The True Meaning of Hanukkah The “Conception” of the Light of the World

“Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus (Yashua – I am Salvation, I am the Light of the World).” Luke 1:31

On the fourth night:

Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what it brings forth, who gave breath to the people upon it and life to those who walk thereon:

I the Lord, in My grace, have summoned you, and I have taken you by the hand. I create you, and appointed you a covenant-people, a light to the nations . . .

Opening eyes deprived of light, rescuing prisoners from confinement, from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

I form light and create darkness, I make peace and create woe . . .

I the Lord do all these things.

I will lead the blind by a road they did not know, and I will make them walk by paths they never knew. I will turn darkness before them into light, rough places into level ground. These are promises – I will keep them without fail.
Isaiah 42:5-7, 45:7, 42:16

Prayer on the fourth night:

Daily Exercise - Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a Latin term that means “divine reading.” It is a way or method of reading the Scriptures in such a manner that facilitates the reader in receiving a “specific word” from God. The practice was developed early in the church’s history with Origen first expressing its principles around 220 AD. The system consists of four parts: reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation. It may be practiced privately or in a small group setting. There are four elements to be considered in preparing for this exercise:

1. Set aside enough time to complete the exercise so that you don’t have to rush through it. Usually thirty minutes is adequate.
2. Find a quiet place free of distractions.
3. Read the Selected Passage Above of Scripture.
4. Transition from what you have been doing by calming you mind and body. This can be done by taking a few slow, deep breaths and inviting the Lord to speak to you through His word.

Reading

1. Read the passage aloud slowly a couple of times.
2. Be silent for one-to-two minutes.
3. Is there a word or phrase that is meaningful to you?
4. Repeat the word or phrase several times silently as if to memorize it.

* If in a group share it in turn. Do not elaborate simply state what it is.

Meditation

1. Read the passage again.

2. Be silent for two to three minutes.
 3. Think about how the reading applies or touches your life today.
- * If in a group share it in turn. Briefly state "I hear, I see, I feel ..."

Prayer

1. Talk with God about what he is showing you.
- * If in a group pray quietly.

Contemplation

1. Read the passage again.
 2. Be silent for two to three minutes.
 3. Reflect on "I believe God wants me to _____ today/this week/etc."
- * If in a group share in turn. At this point you can elaborate somewhat on what you believe God is telling you to do.

Study on the fourth night:

The Seven-branched Golden Lampstand and Its Light:

The common name for the seven-branched golden lampstand is **menorah**. It provided the only light in the Temple of God. And it was the one in use at the first Hanukkah feast in 164 BCE.

At the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD the Romans took the seven-branched golden lampstand as a spoil. This event is depicted in a sculptured relief on the Arch of Titus in Rome. At that point the rabbis had to make another menorah to celebrate Hanukkah. Only they could not light its lamps with the fire from the altar of burnt offerings because it had been destroyed so they devised another method. This led to the development of an eight-branched menorah.

The rabbis thinking went like this. When you look at the seven-branched golden lampstand you actually see eight branches. The staff or trunk is one branch and it supports the other seven. So, since the staff is in a supporting role we call it the "Shamash" or **servant**. Therefore, let us make the Shamash an independent branch and light its lamp first from another source. Then it in turn can be used as a servant to light the remaining seven lamps. The total number of lamps represented the eight days of the feast. Later on, the shamash became a separate lamp lighting in turn eight other lamps, which represented the eight days of the feast. And this is why the Jewish people currently use a nine-branched candlestick called hanukkiah for Hanukkah today.

God gave Moses specific instructions on how to make the seven-branched golden lampstand. The lampstand with its seven lamps burning is called the Ner Tamid or "**Eternal Light**". The original lampstand was probably five feet tall by three and one half feet wide and represented **a tree that was on fire but not consumed** (A lighted Christmas tree is of pagan origin but carries the same idea. It is a man-made tradition, was never ordered by God and serves as a **counterfeit** designed to keep people from the truth.). Do you remember Moses' encounter with God at the burning bush (tree)?

The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up." When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."
Exodus 3:2-5

As with Moses' burning bush, the seven-branched golden lampstand serves as an indication of God's presence.

From the Scriptures we know that the seven-branched golden lampstand is the representation of an **almond** tree (the instructions for making the menorah are found in Exodus 25:31-40 and 37:17-27) with its calyx, bud and flowers. And when an almond tree is in bloom with its white and pink blossoms it has the appearance of being on fire.

There are several other allusions that can be drawn from an almond tree that tie into the Scriptures. It is the **first** tree to bloom in Israel. The almond itself has the appearance of an eye and is used this way in Jeremiah 1:11-12: "*And the word of the LORD came to me saying, 'What do you see, Jeremiah?' And I said, 'I see a rod of an almond tree.'* Then the LORD said to me, '*You have seen well, for I AM watching over My word to perform it.*'

The almond tree is also known as the **watching** tree in Israel because the Hebrew word for almond is shaqad, meaning to be alert. And since the seven-branched golden lampstand in the Temple is an almond tree on fire you might say it is lighted to help God see. *And from the throne proceed flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.* (Revelation 4:5) The seven lights are the seven spirits of God and when they are taken together as a whole represent the Holy Spirit. The number seven is the number of God and simply represents His fullness or completeness. So you might say that the Holy Spirit helps God see what is going on.

This ability to see is born out in another passage of Scripture in the book of Revelation 5:6: “*And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.*” Here the Holy Spirit is equated to having seven eyes.

The book of Revelation also brings the concepts of fire and eyes together when it speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ. “*And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems.*” **Revelation 19:11-12**

So, it is the Holy Spirit that gives God the ability to see and **judge**. And when we, as Christians, stand before the judgment seat of Christ our works will be judged through the Holy Spirit as well. For it is written: “*Each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work.*” **1 Corinthians 3:13**

Most people think the Holy Spirit is in heaven but from the book of Revelation it is clearly shown that the Holy Spirit revealed through the seven burning lamps rests upon the seven-branched golden lampstand. And that lampstand is the Church.

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.” **Revelation 1:12-20**

Although there are seven churches listed (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea) and each appears distinct from one another, together they represent the Church as a whole. This is borne out by the fact that despite its seven branches, God commanded the entire lampstand to be made out of **one piece** of beaten gold. And being made of gold, the symbol for faith (“*So that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” **1 Peter 1:7**), the Church exists because of its faith.

At this point in the lesson I want to issue you a word of caution. Just because you are a member of the Church does not make you the Light. It only means that you uphold the Light. In fact, Jesus judges the Church and threatens to remove the lampstand of those who leave their first love and do not repent (Revelation 2:4-5). The Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans picked up this theme and language, except he used a fig tree instead of an almond tree.

But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you,

*either. Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who **fell**, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be **cut off**. **Romans 11:17-22***

When we look at the seven-branched golden lampstand or an almond tree we notice one significant fact . . . that all the branches are **supported** by one branch that we call the shaft or trunk (root). This central shaft is representative of Jesus Christ. It is lower than the branches indicating that it is the first to come up and is humbled . . . supporting all the others. Jesus said, "*I am the vine and you are the branches.*" **John 15:5**

When we view the central shaft as Jesus Christ, the Son of God we can also see that He is the branch spoken of in Isaiah and it is upon Him whom the seven spirits or Holy Spirit rests. "*Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. And the Spirit of the **LORD** (or Spirit of Christ) will rest on Him, the spirit of **wisdom and understanding**, the spirit of **counsel and strength**, the spirit of **knowledge** and the **fear** (reverence) of the **LORD**."* (Isaiah 11:1-2) In turn this branch became a tree of which Christians are a part, being members of His body.

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*"The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world." **John 1:9***