



“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

John 8:12

The Menorah

Menorah

The Hebrew word *menorah* means “lampstand.” The King James Version of the Bible translates it as “candlestick.”

The original menorah was made for the tabernacle in the wilderness. It was made of solid gold and placed opposite the table of shewbread (see Exodus 25:31–37; 37:17–24). It had seven oil lamps that were level with each other—a central stem with three branches curving upward on either side. It burned only pure olive oil (see Exodus 27:20). The wicks had to be saturated with oil and regularly trimmed in order to burn brightly.

An almond motif was used in its design, including almond-shaped bowls with almond blossoms.



branches

central stem

wick

olive oil



HANUKKAH CANDLES ▶

The nine-branched lampstand used in the modern celebration of Hanukkah is technically called a *hanukiyah*, though people often call it a menorah. Hanukkah celebrates the story of how Jews around 165 B.C. cleansed the temple and burned the temple lamps for eight days (the time needed to consecrate more oil) with only a single day's worth of oil.



The menorah from ancient Israelite temple worship focuses us on God's presence and guidance in our lives.

The sacking of Jerusalem in A.D. 71, when the menorah and other temple articles were carried away, is depicted on the Arch of Titus in Rome, Italy.



What We Can Learn

The menorah:

Requires purity. The menorah was solid gold and was meant to hold only pure olive oil, which “is sometimes a symbol for purity and for the Holy Spirit and its influence” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Oil,” scriptures.lds.org). Nothing impure can enter God’s kingdom (see 3 Nephi 27:19).

Gives light. Jesus Christ said, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). As we follow Jesus Christ and strive for purity, the Holy Ghost can be our constant companion and light our way.

Represents making and keeping covenants. Our covenants can light our path through life, reminding us of our ultimate goal of returning to our Heavenly Father. As we honor our covenants and saturate our lives with thoughts, words, and deeds that invite the Spirit, we can receive strength from God and be a light to others.

Represents wholeness and the Lord’s presence. If we repent and make and keep covenants, we can be made whole through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and, ultimately, enter the presence of our Heavenly Father again. ■

BIBLE FACTS

- In Jewish tradition, the menorah, with its treelike form and ornamentation, is often associated with the burning bush as well as the tree of life. And these are associated with the presence of the Lord (or the *shechinah*, the fiery pillar and cloud of His presence; see Bible Dictionary, “Shechinah”).
- The menorah has seven lamps. The number seven often represents wholeness, completeness, or perfection. It was also associated with covenants (the Hebrew word meaning “to swear an oath” is derived from the word for “seven”).
- Solomon’s temple had 10 menorahs (see 1 Kings 7:49). And a menorah was also found in the temples of Zerubbabel and Herod. The Roman emperor Titus carried away the menorah and other temple articles as spoils of victory over Judea in A.D. 71 (as depicted in the Arch of Titus in Rome).
- The Savior said that His disciples “are the light of the world” and should not “put [their light] under a bushel, but on a candlestick” (Matthew 5:14–15). The Greek word translated as “candlestick” here is the same word translated from “menorah” in the Greek Old Testament (or Septuagint).
- Zechariah saw a menorah in vision as an emblem of Israel’s restoration and the rebuilding of the temple (see Zechariah 4). And John saw seven golden menorahs in the Lord’s presence, representing seven ancient Christian churches he was addressing (see Revelation 1:12–13, 20).