



CHANUKAH: THE FESTIVAL OF DEDICATION

By the 25th of every lunar month, the moon has gone into exile. The nights are dark, and getting darker. Late in the month of Kislev, we are close to the moment of the winter solstice - when the sun is also in exile. It is the darkest moment of the year, the moment when it is easiest to believe that the light will never return. It is at this dark moment that we celebrate Chanukah by lighting candles for eight nights. Night after night, the candle-light increases, and we make our way into, through, and out of the darkness of the sun and moon. It is only by recognizing the season of darkness that we know it is time to light the candles in order to bring new light to the rest of the year.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHANUKAH

In the year 168 B.C.E., the Syrian tyrant Antiochus sent his soldiers to Jerusalem. The Syrians desecrated the Temple, and Antiochus declared that Judaism was to be abolished. The only options offered to the Jewish people were conversion or death. Altars and idols were set up for the purpose of worshipping Greek gods. On the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev in 168 B.C.E., the Temple was renamed for the Greek god Zeus. Pigs were offered as sacrifice and the Torah was burned. Many Jews chose to die rather than to commit idolatry. Slowly a resistance movement developed against the cruelty of Antiochus led by a family known as the Maccabees. The head of this family was Mattathias who with his five sons left Jerusalem and moved to a small town called Modi'in. When the Syrian soldiers commanded Mattathias and his sons to offer sacrifices to Zeus, they refused and turned on the Syrian soldiers. The Maccabees became folk heroes, and fleeing to the hills with their followers, they continued to fight against the Syrian forces. Mattathias's son Judah, known as "The Hammer," became the leader. Furious, Antiochus sent a large army to destroy the Jewish people. Though outnumbered, Judah Maccabee and his followers miraculously won, driving Antiochus away, thus winning victory for their land and their faith. On the 25th day of Kislev, the Temple was reconsecrated. The legend of the miracle relates that when the Maccabees entered the Temple to cleanse it, they relit the "Ner Tamid," The Eternal Light. A single jar of oil remained, enough for only one day. Someone was sent for more oil, but miraculously, the small amount of oil continued to burn for eight days. Chanukah also commemorates the miracle of the little jar of oil. We continue today to celebrate the liberation of the Jewish people and their affirmation of human dignity and the freedom of religion. In Jewish homes throughout the world, the eve of the 25th day of Kislev begins an eight day celebration during which we affirm our identity as a people, a people of light, dedication and faith.

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Jewish Learning Bites

Mount Zion Temple Outreach



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CELEBRATING CHANUKAH AT HOME

THE LIGHTING OF THE MENORAH (CHANUKIAH)

Menorah is the Hebrew word meaning “candelabrum”. A Chanukah Menorah is a special nine-branched lamp in which the Chanukah candles are placed and then blessed. To “announce the miracle” the chanukiah should be placed near a window for all to view. The candles should be tall enough to burn for a half an hour, and should be lit as soon as possible after the stars come out each evening. The kindling of the lights is a most joyous and beautiful ritual.

On the first night, place one candle in the chanukiah at the extreme right. Light the “Shamash”, the “helper” candle that stands apart from the other eight and is used to light each candle, then recite the blessings. On each subsequent evening, the candles are placed from RIGHT to LEFT as you face the Menorah. But you light the candles from LEFT to RIGHT so that on each night the NEWEST candle is lit first. On Friday night the Chanukah candles are lit before nightfall and **before** the Sabbath candles. On Saturday night, they are lit **after** the conclusion of Shabbat.

THE CHANUKAH BLESSINGS

(Suggested reading before lighting candles. Recited after the Shamash is lit but before the other candles are kindled.)

“The lights of Chanukah are a symbol of our joy. In time of darkness, our ancestors had the courage to struggle for freedom to be themselves, freedom to worship in their own way. Theirs was the victory of the weak over the strong, the few over the many and the righteous over the arrogant. It was a victory for all ages and all peoples. Let the lights we kindle shine forth for the world. May they illuminate our lives, even as they fill us with gratitude that our faith has been saved from extinction time and again”.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של חנוכה.

Baruch ata Ah-do-nai Eh-lo-haynu Melech Ha'olam, asher kid'sha-nu b'mitz-vo-tav vetzi-va-nu- l'had-lik nayr shel Chanukah

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has sanctified us with Your commandments and commanded us to kindle the light of Chanukah.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, שעשה נסים לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

Baruch ata Ah-do-nai Eh-lo-haynu Melech Ha'olam, she'asa ni'sim la'avotaynu ba'ya'mim ha'haym ba'zman ha-zeh

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the Universe, who performed miracles for our ancestors in days of old at this time of the year.

(On the first night only)

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

Baruch ata Ah-do-nai Eh-lo-haynu Melech Ha'olam, she-he-che-ya-nu, v'ki'y'ma'nu, v'hi-gi-a-nu la'zman ha-zeh

Blessed are you, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to celebrate this season.

(After the blessings it is customary to sing “Rock of Ages”)

MA-OZ TZUR (Rock of Ages)

Ma-oz tzur ye-shu-a-ti, le-cha na-e, le-sha-bey-ach;
ti-kon beyt te-fil-la ti, ve-sham to-da ne-za-beh-ach.
le-eyt ta-chin mat-bey-ach, mi-tsar ha-me-na-beh-ach,
az eg-mor, be-shir miz-mor, cha-nu-kat ha-miz-bey-ach (2x)

Rock of ages, let our song, praise Your saving power;
You amid the raging foes, were our sheltering tower.
Furious they assailed us, but Your arm availed us,
And Your word broke their sword, when our own strength failed us. (2x)



CREATING CHANUKAH TRADITIONS

(Try one of these or create your own)

In today's world, it is sometimes difficult to separate the commercialism of the holidays with the true spirit of Chanukah. Below are some ideas for you to consider so you might enrich your **Festival of Lights**.

- I. **Select a theme for each night.** When lighting candles do an appropriate activity relating to that theme:
Family: Share old pictures, stories and traditions.
Miracles: Cut pictures out of magazines and make a collage of miracles.
Jerusalem: (Where the first Chanukah took place) Use picture books from the library to share Jerusalem Of Gold pictures. Draw your own skyline.
Us: Celebrate the family, let each member tell others why they are special, make a card for every person.
Tzedakah: Decide as a family a special tzedakah project you can do together and/or dedicate a night when "gift money" is used for "tzedakah gelt".
- II. **Put aside one can of food for each candle during Chanukah, and donate them to the Mitzvah Food Shelf.**
- III. **Celebrate Jewish tradition by selecting eight important Jewish items in your home (from cookbooks to candlesticks). Place each one near the chanukiah each night and share why it is important.**
- IV. **Give your child a "gift of love" each day of Chanukah. (a thought, letter, special outing)**
- V. **Write your won Chanukah songs, poems or stories - keep them from year to year!**
- VI. **Because this is a holiday of light, eat one meal by candlelight.**
- VII. **Tradition tells us we should light one chanukiah for every family member. Let each member of your family have or make their own.**
- VIII. **Keep an empty chanukiah next to your lit one in commemoration of those Jews who are not yet free to light their own.**



CHANUKAH SONGS



O CHANUKAH

O Chanukah, O Chanukah, come light the menorah.
Let's have a party we'll all dance the hora.
Gather 'round the table, we'll give you a treat,
S'vi-vo-nim to play with, le-vi-vot to eat.

And while we are playing, the candles are burning low,
One for each night, they shed a sweet light
to remind us of days long ago
One for each night, they shed a sweet light
to remind us of days long ago.

S'VIVON

S'vivan, sov sov sov
Chanukah hu chag tov

Chanukah hu chag tov
S'vivan, sov sov sov

Chag simcha hu la-am
Nes gadol haya sham
Nes gadol haya sham
Chag simcha hu la-am



DREIDEL SONG

I have a little dreidel, I made it out of clay.
And when it's dry and ready, then dreidel I shall play!

CHORUS:

O! Dreidel, dreidel, dreidel, I made it out of clay.
O! Dreidel, dreidel, dreidel, then dreidel I shall play.

It has a lovely body, with legs so short and thin,
And when it gets all tired, it drops and then I win.

CHORUS

My dreidel's always playful. It loves to dance and spin.
A happy game of dreidel, come play now let's begin!

CHORUS

POTATO LATKES

(to the tune of "Are You Sleeping?")

Potato latkes, potato latkes.
Are they good? Are they good?
I could eat a million. I could eat a million.
Yum, yum, yum. Yum, yum, yum.

POCKET OR WALLET SIZE RULES FOR PLAYING DREIDEL

(Don't leave home during Chanukah without them!)

Dreidel is a derivative of a German word meaning “top,” and is an adaptation of an old German gambling game. Chanukah was one of the few times of the year when the rabbis would allow games of chance. The dreidel game thus was adopted as Chanukah entertainment.

A dreidel is a spinning top with four sides. There are four letters: NUN ð GIMMEL â HEY ä SHIN ù on each of the four sides. The four letters represent the words “A great miracle happened there”. To play dreidel, each player should begin with an equal number of candies, raisins, nuts or pennies. Each player puts one candy in the center. The players then take turns spinning the dreidel.



- ☞ If the dreidel lands on the NUN, the player gets nothing
- ☞ If the dreidel lands on the SHIN, the player puts one candy in the center
- ☞ If the dreidel lands on the HEY, the player wins half the candies in the center.
- ☞ If the dreidel lands on the GIMMEL, the player wins all the candies in the center.

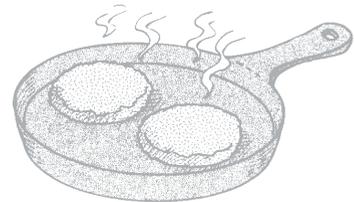
The game will end after a certain amount of gimmels, or until one player has won all the candies, or it can last indefinitely!

LATKES

We typically eat Latkes on Chanukah because they are cooked in oil and thus remind us of the miracle of the single jar of oil which lasted for eight days. In Israel, it is a tradition to eat jelly doughnuts for the same reason. Whichever you choose, these customs give us all a reason to forget about calories and fat grams!

BASIC POTATO LATKES

2 lbs Idaho potatoes, well scrubbed, unpeeled
1 medium onion
2 eggs
1/4 cup matzah meal or flour
salt and black pepper to taste
vegetable oil for frying



1. Grate potatoes alternately with the onion. (This keeps the potatoes from darkening.)
 2. Drain potatoes and onions.
 3. Mix eggs, then matzah meal or flour. Season with salt and pepper.
 4. Pour oil into a skillet to a depth of 1/4 inch and heat. Oil should be hot but not smoking.
 5. Using a large tablespoon, form round or oval pancakes about 3 inches across, flattening them with the back of the spoon. Fry on both sides. Drain them on paper towel, and serve as soon as possible.
 6. Pancakes can be reheated in a 400-degree oven about 10 minutes.
- Yields about 24 pancakes.

CHANUKAH BOOKS

For the very young child: Zalben, Jan Breskin. Beni's First Chanukah. H. Holt, 1988.

For the young child: Kimmel, Eric. Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins. Holiday House, 1989.

For the older child: Brodmann, Aliana. The Gift. Simon and Schuster, 1993.

For Adults: Goodman, Philip. The Hanukkah Anthology. Jewish Publication Society, 1976.

Waskow, Arthur. Seasons of our Joy. Beacon Press, 1982.

Drucker, Malka. The Family Treasury of Jewish Holidays.