

The JWOW Guide to Hanukkah





HANUKKAH, CHANUKKAH... WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

The story of Hanukkah is the struggle for religious freedom. Over two thousand years ago, the Syrian rulers of the Israelites outlawed the Jewish religion and decreed that the Jews bow down to the image of their leader, Antiochus, and their Greek gods, whose statues were erected in the Temple.

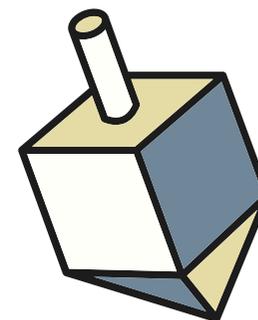
But the Jewish people were forbidden by the law of God to bow to statues or idols. Inspired by Mattathias and led by his son, Judah, a small group of Jews called Maccabees (meaning “hammer”) rebelled. The Maccabees risked their lives to live according to Jewish law and to drive the Syrians out of Jerusalem. Although the Maccabees won, the Temple in Jerusalem, the Jews’ holy place, was destroyed. The Jews had to clean and repair the Temple, and when they were finished they rededicated it to God by rekindling the menorah, the candelabrum symbolizing the eternal covenant between God and the Jewish people and the continuity of tradition through the generations. But there was only enough olive oil to fuel the menorah for one night, and it would have taken eight days to make more oil. The legend of the miracle at Hanukkah says that the one day supply of oil burned for eight days and nights until more oil could be made.

Hanukkah means "dedication." There are eight days of Hanukkah corresponding to the legend of the miracle of the oil in the Temple. Foods cooked in oil are traditional, particularly potato pancake (latkes). Today, candles are used instead of oil. On each night, the number of candles lit increases by one. Prayers accompany the lighting of the candles.

HANUKKAH TRADITIONS

MENORAH

The menorah originated as a religious symbol in biblical times. A seven branched menorah adorned the Holy Temple in Jerusalem until its final destruction in 70 C.E. There is a seven branched menorah on the Knesset today (the capital building in Jerusalem). The nine branched menorah was adapted for Hanukkah likely in the first century. It was originally used with oil, but most use candles today. It is customary to display the menorah in your window during Hanukkah



DREIDELS

During the time of Antiochus' oppression, those who wanted to study Torah (an illegal activity) would conceal their activity by playing gambling games with a top (a common and legal activity) whenever an official or inspector was within sight.

GELT

Gelt is the Yiddish term for money. Hanukkah is a time to give gifts and an important time to put some money away for tzedakah (charity) or share with those in need.

FOOD

It is customary to eat oily foods to commemorate the oil that lasted 8 days, like latkes (potato pancakes) and doughnuts!

DID YOU KNOW??

The letters on the dreidel represent the Hebrew phrase, "A Great Miracle Happened There" (Nes Gadol Hayah Sham). But in Israel, one letter on the dreidel is different – the shin is replaced with a pey, for "A Great Miracle Happened Here" (Nes Gadol Hayah Po)!

HANUKKAH BLESSINGS

Candles are added to the menorah from right to left but are kindled from left to right. After the blessings, the newest candle is lit first. (On Shabbat, light the Hanukkah lights first and then the Shabbat candles.)

Light the shamash (the helper candle) first, using it to kindle the rest of the Hanukkah lights. As you do, say or sing:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר חֲנֻכָּה.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים
לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ, בְּיָמִים הָהֵם בְּזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tsivanu l'hadlik ner shel Hanukkah.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, she-asah nisim laavoteinu bayamim hahaim baz'man hazeh.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to kindle the Hanukkah lights.
Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who performed wondrous deeds for our ancestors in days of old at this season.

The first night only, add:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁחַיֵּינוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ
וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה:

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higianu laz'man hazeh.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, for giving us life, for sustaining us, and for enabling us to reach this season.

HANUKKAH SONGS

MAOZ TZUR

Ma'oz tzur yeshu'ati,
lecha na'eh leshabe'ach,
tikon beit tefilati,
vesham todah nezabe'ach.
Le'et tachin matbe'ach
mitzar hamenabe'ach.
Az egmor
beshir mizmor
chanukat hamizbe'ach

HANUKKAH OH HANUKKAH

Hanukkah, oh Hanukkah, come light the menorah
Let's have a party, we'll all dance the horah
Gather 'round the table, we'll give you a treat
Dreydles to play with and latkes 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.

SEVIVON SOV SOV SOV

Sevivon, sov, sov, sov	ḥag simḥa hu la-am
ḥanukah, hu ḥag tov	Nes gadol hayah sham
ḥanukah, hu ḥag tov	Nes gadol hayah sham
Sevivon, sov, sov, sov!	ḥag simḥa 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.

Oh, dreidel, dreidel, dreidel
I made it out of clay
And when it's dry and ready
Then, dreidel I will play.

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

Oh, dreidel, dreidel, dreidel...

My dreidel is so playful
It loves to dance and spin
A happy game of dreidel
Come play now, let's begin.

Oh, dreidel, dreidel, dreidel...



ILLUMINATE HANUKKAH-- 8 DAYS OF FUN AND MEANING!

1. CELEBRATION

Game Night – Pick a game for the whole family to play! Dreidel, perhaps?

2. APPRECIATION

Family History Day – interview each other, make a family tree, show pictures of relatives/ancestors. Learn about stories of hardship and resilience in your family. Skype with relatives that are far away.

3. TRADITION

Make Latkes - (recipe is included). Make sure to make them extra oily!

4. CHARITY

Tzedakah – Gather up saved money and, as a family, choose a meaningful charity. Check out Charity Navigator or Guidestar for suggestions.

5. LIGHT

Bring light into someone's else life – make a gift bag to bring to a friend/neighbor.

6. EDUCATION

Visit a new place – in your neighborhood or take a short trip! Some suggestions are: Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center (in Glen Cove), Vanderbilt Museum and Planetarium(Centerport) and the Cradle of Aviation Museum (Garden City).

7. FAMILY

Donut trip! Did you know that jelly doughnuts are a tradition on Hanukkah? Put your phones down, take a trip to get some donuts (or try to make them!), and enjoy spending time together

8. JOY

Music Night – Check out our list of Hanukkah songs (or any other songs), gather some instruments and have a sing-a-long!

The Hanukkah story teaches us many positive values - freedom, identity, courage. This Hanukkah, think about what you would stand up for and how you can make it happen.

Happy Hanukkah from your friends at JWOW!



Rosh Hashanah In-A-Box is brought to you by Jewish Without Walls.
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www.JewishWithoutWalls.org