



IN YOUR HOME

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Hanukkah • חנוכה

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Shalom Parents,

Hanukkah has traditionally not been a major Jewish holiday. Nevertheless, it has become a very festive and exciting time for American Jewish families, with themes of religious freedom and strength of convictions making it compelling and widely observed. American Jews often like to highlight essential elements of *Hanukkah* while distinguishing its observance from the Christmas festivities of Christian neighbors.

***Hanukkah* is a national holiday in Israel**, celebrated there by both religious and non-religious Jews.

Jews worldwide feel united because the message of the festival has remained a source of strength and hope throughout the ages.

The *Hanukkah* story, told in books I and II of Maccabees, provides information on the festival. In 167 BCE, the Jewish priest, Mattathias, and his five sons, lead the Jewish forces against the Hellenized Syrian forces of Antiochus Epiphanes who hoped to destroy the Jewish people's faith. A small group of Jewish leaders, called Maccabees, defeated the well-armed Greek forces, demonstrating the power of courage and faith in God.

The word *Hanukkah* means "dedication" in Hebrew. After the Temple in Jerusalem was wrested from pagan forces, it was rededicated on the 25th of the Hebrew month of *Kislev*. The Talmud refers to the cruse of oil used to light the Temple *menorah* for eight days, even though there was only enough oil to last for one day. The miracle of *Hanukkah* relates,

not to the oil that lasted longer than expected, but to the success of the small group of freedom fighters against their more formidable enemy.



A major ritual of *Hanukkah*, is the nightly lighting of the *Hanukkah* menorah (also called a *hanukkiah*). The *hanukkiah* has nine branches; one for each of the eight days of *Hanukkah* and the ninth, (the *shamash*) is used to light the other candles. As the *hanukkiah* is lit each holiday night, if possible, it is placed in or near a window so that it can be seen from outside the house. As it is lit, blessings are recited.

Reciting the blessings

1. Bah/rooch ah/tah Ah/do/nai
El/lo/hay/noo me/lech ha/oh/lam
Ah/sher kid/shah/noo b/mitzv/vo/tahv
V/tzee/vah/noo l/had/leek nayr shel cha/nu/kah.
2. Bah/rooch ah/tah Ah/do/nai
El/lo/hay/noo me/lech ha/oh/lam
Sheh/ah/sah nee/seem lah/ah/voh/tay/noo
Bah/yah/meem hah/hem baz/mahn hah/zeh.
3. Add, (on the first night only):
Bah/rooch at/tah Ah/do/nai
El/lo/hay/noo me/lech ha/oh/lam
Sheh/heh/cheh/yah/noo v/key/mah/noo
V/hee/gee/ah/noo laz/man hah/zeh.

***Hanukkah* dates this year are:** The first candle will be lit on Tuesday evening, December 20, and the eighth one on Wednesday evening, December 28.

HAVING FUN AT HOME

Hanukkah is a home holiday, centering around the lighting of the *hanukkiah* (a special *menorah* for *Hanukkah*), eating *latkes* and jelly doughnuts; singing special songs and playing special games.

DECORATING YOUR HOME

Creating Lights

Materials: Paper, markers or crayons in a variety of colors, masking tape.

With your child: Observe and discuss different *Hanukkiot*; on the internet, in a Jewish gift shop, in a synagogue. She can create pictures of *Hanukkiot* and use them as decorations



REACHING OUT TO OTHERS

Sharing the holiday with guests, helps make our holiday more fun and creates Jewish memories.

With your child: Make a list of guests to invite. Suggest that he decorate an invitation to post or help with phone calls or emails to guests.

Giving Tzedakah (Charity) is a traditional way to celebrate Jewish holidays.

With your child: Discuss potential *tzedakah* recipients and ways to help them.

PREPARING AND EATING SPECIAL FOODS

Oil is the most popular ingredient in *Hanukkah* dishes, reminding us of the oil that burned in the Temple for eight days. Both *latkes* (potato pancakes) and *sufganiyot* (deep fried jelly donuts; favored in Israel) require lots of oil for preparation.

Potato Latkes

6 medium potatoes	1 onion, chopped
½ teaspoon baking soda	2 eggs
½ cup flour	dash of salt and pepper
vegetable oil for frying	

Peel and grate the potatoes. Squeeze out the liquid. Mix all ingredients together. Fry the batter in hot oil.



When the *latkes* have browned on both sides, remove them from the oil and drain on paper towels. Serve hot with applesauce, sour cream or a preferred topping.

Find *latke* recipes: <http://www.epicurious.com/recipes/food/views/Garden-Vegetable-Latkes-978> <http://www.marksdailyapple.com/vegetable-latkes/>

With your child: Decide which *latkes* are tastiest, healthiest, easiest to make.

Sufganiyot are sold on Israeli street stands during the month before *Hanukkah*.

Check *sufganiyot* recipes: http://kosherfood.about.com/od/hanukkah/r/han_lsufganiot.htm

With your child: Decide on different fillings for *sufganiyot*, and which ones are tastiest.

PLAYING GAMES

It is traditional to play games while the *Hanukkah* candles burn.

Dreidle

It is fun to play a *dreidle* game on *Hanukkah*. The significance of the letters on each of the four sides is as follows:

ש (Shin) put one in
 נ (Noon) skip your turn
 ה (Hay) take half the pot
 ג (Gimel) take all of the pot



Each is the initial letter in “*nes gadol haya sham*” (“a great miracle happened there”).

Players take equal numbers of nuts (or candies or marbles). A player spins the *dreidle* and does what the letter showing up indicates. Then the next person takes a turn, and so on, until everyone agrees to end the game.

Charades

Players take turns acting out events (taken from the original *Hanukkah* story or from books listed on page 4) without using words. The player who guesses the event takes the next turn.

When it's your child's turn: Help her decide on an event to act out and ways to do it.

continued on page 3

GIFTS FOR HANUKKAH: Enough or Too Much?

The Hanukkah season is a time of excitement and fun. Still, for many, this time of the year has come to be known as “The December Dilemma.” One dilemma is concerned with gift-giving. What should we give our children for Hanukkah?...Big gifts? Small ones? No gifts? One for each night? *Hanukkah gelt* (a small amount of money)? So many choices, but what’s right for each family; and for each child?

How much is Enough? While Jews in other times and places treated Hanukkah as a minor holiday, for many in modern Western society it’s a major event. In past generations, *Hanukkah gelt* was money given as rewards to children for their knowledge of the Hanukkah story. These days, as Hanukkah falls close to Christmas, and is viewed by many as “the Jewish Christmas,” gift-giving is irresistible. Possibilities can become overwhelming.

This “dilemma” has been dealt with creatively by some families. One family makes Hanukkah special and appropriate by making each Hanukkah night somewhat different from the others. One night is called “Homemade Presents Night.” Everyone picks lots to choose someone for whom to make a gift. Parents help their children decide what gifts to make



and how to make them. Other nights are “Big Present Night” (when the children receive requested toys), “Family Night” (when gifts from extended family are given), “Food and Fire Night” (when friends come over to prepare baked goods together), “Music Night” (for singing Hanukkah songs and playing dreidle), “Ticket Night” (when the family receives concert or sports event tickets) and “Tzedakah (charity) Night” (when family members decide together how to donate their savings to charities).

Other families celebrate Hanukkah differently. Some see Hanukkah as a time for community service, or as a time to give their children gelt (money) or to spend precious time with family and friends without gift exchanges.

What will your family do?

Candles should be lit and their lights enjoyed on each night of Hanukkah. Otherwise, the holiday can be celebrated in any way desired. Being creative by adding something new and different each night and each year brings the joy of involvement. A wide range of gift-giving practices can make the holiday meaningful for each family. Judaism has always been blessed with flexibility, thus ensuring its survival and adaptability. Jewish tradition values choices that Jews make for expressing Judaism in a meaningful way in their own homes.

HAVING FUN AT HOME, *continued from page 2*

TALKING

On different nights, after lighting the candles, ask questions and encourage everyone to speak.

Being grateful: *Can you name one thing for which you’re grateful?*

Miracles: *What do you think about the miracle of oil for only one day burning for eight days?*

Hanukkah memories: *Tell about a wonderful Hanukkah event that happened to you.*

Special People: *Name eight people you think are special and tell why you think that.*

DID YOU KNOW THAT?

Chanukah and Hanukkah are two different, English spellings of the holiday’s name. Both are correct.

Candles or oil can be used in the Hanukkah, but since the miracle of Hanukkah involved olive oil, an oil menorah is preferred, as is olive oil.

A new candle is added to the hanukkah each night, going from right to left. First light the shamash (“helper” candle). Use it to light the first candle on the farthest right side of the hanukkah. Then, on the next night, light the candle to its left and the one to its right. Do this each night starting with a new candle to the left and moving to the right, lighting each candle.

A RECOMMENDED SELECTION OF BOOKS

FOR 1-2 YEAR OLDS

It's Hanukkah! by J. Modesitt, Holiday House, 1999. *Dreidles* spin, and everyone wins, in this endearing book. *Hanukkah* blessings and song, directions for playing the *dreidle* game and a *latke* recipe are included.

Rainbow Candles: A Chanukah

Counting Book by M. Shostak, Kar-Ben Copies, Inc., 1986. This simple and engaging counting board book goes through the days of *Hanukkah*, presenting activities for each day.

FOR 3-6 YEAR OLDS

Lots of Latkes: A Hanukkah Story

by S. Lanton, Kar Ben Publishing, 2004. Rivka Leah makes potato *latkes* and invites all her friends to her *Hanukkah* party. But on the day of the party, something goes wrong. What to do?

One Night, One Hanukkah Night by A. Backman, Jewish Publication Society, 1990. The same silver *menorah* that *Bubby* and *Zaidy* used a long time ago enhances a modern home. On each *Hanukkah* night, the children help create a new celebration as another candle is added in this charming story.

Hanukkah Haiku by H. Ziefert, Blue Apple Books, 2008. This beautiful book of poetry in haiku, tells of celebrating with *Hanukkah* rituals and activities.

Chanukah Lights Everywhere by M. L. Rosen, Gulliver Books, 2001. As a little boy and his family celebrate *Chanukah*, something happens each night to remind him of the number of candles they've just lit.

FOR 4-8 YEAR OLDS

Northern Lights: A Hanukkah Story by B. Cohen Conway, Kar-Ben Copies, Inc., 1994. Sara joins her father on medical rounds to remote Eskimo villages in this unusual story. A storm unexpectedly grounds their small plane, and they spend the first night of *Hanukkah* with a Yupik Eskimo family.

Latkes and Applesauce: A Hanukkah Story by F. Manushkin, Scholastic, Inc., 1990. Long ago, as the Menashe family prepares to celebrate *Hanukkah*, a sudden furious blizzard covers their apples and potatoes with snow. With no *latkes* or applesauce but with a *Hanukkah* miracle, the family is able to celebrate.



Jeremy's Dreidel by E. Gellman, Kar-Ben Copies, Inc., Rockville, 1992. While others in his art class make *dreidles* in various ways, Jeremy decorates his with Braille writing, explaining his rationale to his classmates. When the children's families visit the class, they learn to appreciate Jeremy's father.

The Borrowed Hanukkah Latkes by L. Glaser, Albert Whitman & Co., 1997. Rachel's family prepares to share *latkes* with guests. Every year, they invite their elderly neighbor to come, but she stubbornly refuses. This year, Rachel thinks of a clever idea.

Hershel and The Hanukkah Goblins by E. Kimmel, Holiday House, 1989. Hershel of Ostropol saves *Hanukkah* for an entire village by tricking scary goblins who have been haunting the old synagogue and preventing the villagers from celebrating the holiday.

The Chanukah Blessing by P. Schram, UAHC Press, 2000. A mysterious visitor rewards a poor family for showing him hospitality on the fifth night of *Chanukah*.

FOR 6-10 YEAR OLDS

Chanukah on the Prairie by B.E. Schuman, UAHC Press, 2003. Based on true events, this story follows the journey of a family from Poland to the United States, as the new immigrants celebrate their first *Chanukah* in a new land.

Celebrate Hanukkah by D. Heiligman, Part of National Geographic Society's *Excellent Holidays Around The World* series, 2006. Striking photographs show children celebrating *Hanukkah* in Italy, Poland, Ghana, India and Israel. *Hanukkah* symbols, a recipe for potato *latkes*, and instructions for playing *dreidle* are included.

A Hanukkah Treasury by E. Kimmel, Henry Holt and Co., 1998. A wonderful collection of poems, stories, songs, Jewish history, recipes, and colorful and exuberant illustrations are included.

AND WEBSITES

www.holidays.net/chanukah

www.judaism.about.com/od/chanukah/a/hanukkahkids

<http://www.aish.com/h/c/f/>

<http://urj.org/holidays/chanukah/>



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