



Happy
Hanukkah!
Chag Urim Sameach!
חג אורים שמח

Hanukkah Resources

The story of Hanukkah is filled with tales of courage, triumph, perseverance and thankfulness for all that we have. The stories and people described below allow us to reflect on our own lives and ask important questions. What would you stand up for? What parts of Judaism do you most identify with? How do you inspire others?

Use the stories and people below to consider these themes with your friends, family and chapters. Include these details in Hanukkah parties, or pose questions at your chapter meetings.

The Story

Jewish life under Greek rule in the 2nd century BCE was challenging. Antiochus IV was spreading Greek practice across his empire, and many Jews saw this Hellenistic way of life as the new way, choosing to assimilate. Those who wanted to maintain their religion came up against strict rule when Antiochus began prohibiting certain Jewish customs. Under the leadership of Judah the Maccabee and his family, a small band of Jews was able to overthrow Greek rule and regain control of the second *Beit HaMikdash*, Second Temple. When they attempted to restore order to the Temple, they found that there was limited holy oil to light the Temple *menorah*, candelabra.

People

Antiochus IV: Ruler of the Seleucid Empire from 175 BCE until his death in 164 BCE. He was the son of King Antiochus III The Great. When Antiochus IV ruled the land, he favored assimilation among Jews, thus limiting some of their Jewish rituals, in particular around Shabbat and Temple practices.

Seleucid Dynasty: Existing from 312 – 64 BCE, the ancient empire stretched from the ancient Balkans all the way to the border of India. It was a center of Hellenistic culture, meaning its people often favored Greek customs and practices over local Middle Eastern practices.

Hasmonean Family: The Hasmonean family, consisting of Mattisyahu and his five sons, could not bear to see the decline of Judaism as they knew it. Led by son Judah, the family sparked a battle against the Greeks to return to Jewish ritual practice and regain control of the Temple.

Judah Maccabee: The son of Mattisyahu, he took over as leader of the family when his father passed away and continued the charge of inspiring others to help wage war against their rulers, secure their freedom and rededicate the holy Temple according to the laws of the Torah.

Judith: The story of Judith's heroism is considered a parable to some, but mirrors the courage of Judah the Maccabee. In the 2nd Century BCE, the town of Bethulia was under attack by the Assyrian Empire. The Jews of the town were ready to give up if G-d did not grant them help within five days. Judith stood up to them, saying they needed courage to succeed in their fight and G-d would support them. She and her servant infiltrated the Assyrian camp and gained entry to the general's tent. When he fell asleep in a drunken stupor, she used his own sword to kill him. She returned to Bethulia with news of her success, providing hope to the Jews and allowing them to succeed in defeating the Assyrians.



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Objects

Hanukkiyah: Hanukkah *menorah*, consisting of 8 branches, all at equal heights, and a 9th branch separated from the rest. The 9th branch is the place holder for the *shamash*, the candle used to light all other candles. Everyone is supposed to participate in the act of lighting Hanukkah candles, from young to old, male and female, and the custom states that all who participate should have their own *menorah*.

The Second Temple: Beit HaMikdash was home to the holiest rituals to honor G-d. Only Jews were allowed in the Temple where holy sacrifices were made and a Temple *menorah* burned with holy, purified oil. During Antiochus' reign, an alter to Zeus was erected, non-Jews were allowed entrance to the shrine and pigs were sacrificed. The Maccabees led the revolt to regain control over the Temple, resume holy sacrifices, remove unwanted alters and relight the Temple *menorah*.

Dreidel: This four-sided spinning top, used in children's games, has a Hebrew letter on each side. נ (Nun), ג (Gimmel), ה (Hay) and ש (Shin). The letters stand for *Ness Gadol Hayah Sham*, a great miracle happened there [in Israel]. In Israel, the last letter is replaced with פ (Pey), and the phrase states, *Ness Gadol Hayah Poh*, a great miracle happened here.

Oil: The oil that was used in the Temple *menorah* looked, tasted and smelled like any other oil that you would find today, but the *Cohen Gadol*, High Priest, gave it his seal and made sure that it was ,ritualistically pure. The idea of ritual purity frustrated the Greeks and as such they were sure to destroy all of the holy oil they could find in the Temple. That is why there was only one small vial left when the Maccabees regained control of the Temple.

Stories about Hanukkah

To add candles, or to take away candles, that is the question.

Two of our great scholars, Hillel and Shammai, had many debates. It is no surprise that they argued about Hanukkah as well. When it came time to light the candles Beit Shammai, The House of Shammai, stated that we must begin with the days remaining. On the 8th day we light 8 candles. On the 7th day we light 7 candles. That way we maximize the potential of the holiday. There are still 8 days left, and so we must celebrate those 8 days with 8 candles. Beit Hillel, The House of Hillel, disagreed, and said we recognize only what we have achieved. It is the 1st night of celebration and thus we light 1 candle to celebrate. On the 2nd night of celebration, we will light 2 candles. In the democratic spirit of the Talmud, the dispute was put to a vote and Beit Hillel won. To this day, we light our candles in increasing order, from 1 on the 1st night to 8 on the last night.

What's the real miracle?

The story of Hanukkah is filled with lessons, between the civil war, the victory of the Maccabees and the restoration of the Second Temple. The small band of Jews who fought with Judah the Maccabee beat all odds when they overtook the ruling Greek army and secured their freedom to practice Judaism. At the same time, imagine what it took for one small vial of oil to burn for eight days when it should have run out after one.



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The Books of the Maccabees indicate that the big miracle was their victory. These books were written shortly after the defeat of the Greeks, and were eager to celebrate the military victory. In contrast, The Talmud, written much later, indicates that the big miracle was the oil that burned for eight days. During this time, the Jews were again under external rule, and celebrating the strength that allowed the Jews to defeat their ruler would have been quite dangerous. Instead, the rabbis sited G-d as the hero, making the miracle focused on oil.

To this day, we play games with our dreidels and sing “*Ness gadol hayah sham*,” a great miracle happened there [in Israel], or “*Ness gadol hayah poh*,” a great miracle happened here [in Israel]. But to which miracle are we referring?

Discussion Guide

1. We say the blessing of *shehecheyanu* on the first night only. This blessing is typically said in moments when we celebrate new or unusual occurrences. Why do you think it is important to say *shehecheyanu* on the first night of Hanukkah each year?
2. Hillel and Shammai represent two very distinct perspectives: Living in the present, or looking forward to the future. Who would you side with?
3. How is Judah the Maccabee a role model?
4. What do we learn from Judah and his family, in their fight to retain the ability to celebrate their Judaism?
5. Does the assimilation of the Hasmoneans feel relevant to your life? They felt the need to fight a war over their assimilation.
6. Do you believe in miracles?
7. Which do you value more, the triumph of the Maccabees, or the lasting oil in the *menorah*?
8. Why do you think it is important to publicize our celebration of the miracle of Hanukkah when we light our candles?



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The Nightly Celebration

Gathering together each night with family and friends to light the Hanukkah candles is a great way to celebrate the strength of our communities. Get your chapters together for a special Hanukkah program to mark the occasion. These rituals can help connect us to the history of our people, and allow us to appreciate how far we have come. Use them as a springboard for discussions about the opportunities we have, and what we can do to help those who are less fortunate.

Rituals

Pirsum HaNess: Publicizing of the miracle. Situate yourself in front of a window to light the Hanukkah candles. This allows us to publicize our celebration of the miracle that took place in the Temple. Place one candle in the spot dedicated to the *shamash*. Add candles from right to left, based on which day of Hanukkah is being celebrated.

Candle Lighting:

1. Preparing the *menorah* – Set out the *shamash*, the candle separated from the rest (often higher). Set out one candle for each night of the holiday and place them from right to left.
2. Blessings – Light the *shamash*, then say the blessings while holding the lit *shamash*.
3. Lighting the candles – Once the blessings are complete use the *shamash* to light the remainder of the candles. Begin with the left and move right.
4. Leave them burning until they extinguish themselves.

Blessings

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק
נֵר שֶׁל חֲנֻכָּה.

Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, asher kidishanu b'mitz'votav v'tzivanu, l'had'lik neur shel Hanukkah.

Blessed are you, Adonai, our God, sovereign of the universe, who has sanctified us with Your commandments, and commanded us to light the lights of Hanukkah.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ
בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה.

Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, she'asah nisim la'avoteinu bayamim haheim baziman hazeh.

Blessed are you, Adonai, our God, sovereign of the universe, who performed miracles for our ancestors in those days at this time.

(The final blessing is only said on the first night.)

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחֵינּוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה.

Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, shehecheyanu v'kiyimanu v'higi'anu laz'man hazeh.

Blessed are you, Adonai, our God, sovereign of the universe, who has kept us alive, sustained us and enabled us to reach this season.



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A Spirited Community

The Hanukkah celebration is accompanied by great food and wonderful opportunities to give back to your community. Use the recipes below to add some new flavor to your chapter programs. Look through the sample programs for thoughts on how to deepen the meaning of your celebration this year. Learn some new Hanukkah songs and express the holiday in a musical way. Remember, Hanukkah and Thanksgiving will never again overlap in our lifetime. Take advantage of the opportunity to make the most of our thankfulness as a people, and explore ways to help others around you.

Great Chapter Programs

Latke bake off: Make it a Top Chef Challenge! Who can make the best/most original latkes? Have chapter members come with their family's favorite recipes. Assemble a panel of your most discerning advisors as judges to choose the winner.

Hanukkah Card Cheer: Have each chapter member choose a local Jewish organization they feel connected to. Come together as a chapter to share information about your organization and why you appreciate the work that they do. As a chapter, create Hanukkah cards to send to the organizations thanking them for the wonderful work they do for the community.

Eight Nights of Action or Service: Gather your Brother Alephs or Sister BGGs to make a difference in your community, or even in your homes. Challenge each member to take on some of the suggestions below at home and have a chapter program at the end to discuss the impact you feel you've made.

- **Take the Green Menorah pledge:** This awesome idea, pioneered by [The Shalom Center](#), encourages you make a pledge each night (while lighting your candles, naturally) to make one aspect of your life greener – and inspire friends, family and your community to do the same!
- **Switch to fluorescent light bulbs.** Hanukkah is the festival of lights, after all. So make the switch to fluorescent light bulbs which, according to [Energy Star](#), use about 75% less energy than incandescent bulbs and last 6 times longer.
- **8 Days of Action.** After lighting your menorah each evening, dedicate yourself to being more environmentally sustainable and enacting food justice when possible. Volunteer at your local emergency food provider one night, cook a meal for someone recovering from surgery the next night, and screen a movie relating to food justice another night.
- **Give money for a great cause.** Instead of giving chocolate Hanukkah gelt, give money to your local emergency food provider or hunger relief organization.

New and Different Latke Recipes

With the overlap of Hanukkah and Thanksgiving, this is the perfect opportunity to explore the Sweet Potato Latke phenomenon. Imagine your Thanksgiving table adorned with a Hanukkah-inspired sweet potato dish instead of your standard recipes. Martha Stewart has put together a great, easy-to-follow [recipe](#).

For those looking for something a little more outside the box, take advantage of the common pairing of potatoes and leeks, in this recipe for [Potato and Leek Latkes with Apple Chutney](#).



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Additional Hanukkah songs

Ma'oz Tzur

מְעוֹז צוֹר יְשׁוּעָתִי, לְךָ נֶאֱדָה לְשַׁבַּח
תִּכְוֹן בַּיִת תְּפִלָּתִי, וְשָׁם תִּוָּדֶה נְזִיבָח.
לְעֵת תִּכְיִן מִטְּבַח מִצָּר הַמְּנַבָּח.
אֲזִ אֶגְמֹר בְּשִׁיר מִזְמוֹר חֲנֻכַּת הַמִּזְבֵּיחַ.

Ma'oz Tzur Yeshu'ati, lekha na'eh leshabe'ah.
Tikon beit tefilati, vesham toda nezabe'ah.
Le'et takhin matbe'ah mitzar hamnabe'ah.
Az egmor beshir mizmor hanukkat hamizbe'ah.

My refuge, my rock of salvation! 'Tis pleasant to sing your praises.
Let our house of prayer be restored. And there we will offer you our thanks.
When You will have slaughtered the barking foe.
Then we will celebrate with song and psalm the altar's dedication.

Sevimon, sov sov sov

Hebrew	Transliteration from Hebrew	English Literal Translation
סְבִיבוֹן סב סב סב חֲנֻכָּה הוּא חַג טוֹב חֲנֻכָּה הוּא חַג טוֹב סְבִיבוֹן סב סב סב	Sevimon, sov, sov, sov hanukkah, hu hag tov hanukah, hu hag tov Sevimon, sov, sov, sov!	Dreidel, spin, spin, spin. Hanukkah is a great holiday. Hanukkah is a great holiday. Dreidel, spin, spin, spin.
(In Israel) סב נא סב כה וכה נס גדול היה פה נס גדול היה פה סב נא סב כה וכה	(In Israel) Sov na sov ko va'cho Nes gadol hayah poh Nes gadol hayah poh Sov na sov ko va'kho!	(In Israel) Spin, please, spin like this and that. A great miracle happened here. A great miracle happened here. Spin, please, spin like this and that.
(Abroad) חג שמחה הוא לעם נס גדול היה שם נס גדול היה שם חג שמחה הוא לעם	(Abroad) hag simcha hu la-am Nes gadol hayah sham Nes gadol hayah sham hag simcha hu la-am.	(Abroad) A joyous holiday for the nation. A great miracle happened there. A great miracle happened there. A joyous holiday for the nation.



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Mi yimalel

Hebrew	Transliteration	English (singable version)	English (literally translated version)
מי ימלל גבורות ישראל אותן מי ימנה הן בכל דור יקום הגיבור גואל העם	Mi yimalel gvurot Yisrael, Otan mi yimne? Hen be'chol dor yakum ha'gibor Goel ha'am!	Who can retell the things that befell us, Who can count them? In every age, a hero or sage Came to our aid.	Who can tell of the heroic deeds of Israel? Who can count them? Yes in every generation a hero arises To save the people.
שמע בימים ההם בזמן הזה מכבי מושיע ופודה ובימינו כל עם ישראל יתאחד, יקום ויגאל	Shma! Ba'yamim ha'hem ba'zman ha'ze Maccabi moshia u'fode U'v'yameinu kol am Yisrael Yitached yakum ve'yigael!	Hark! In this time of year in days of Yore Maccabees the Temple did restore And tonight our people as we dream Will arise, unite, and be redeemed.	Listen! In those days at this time The Maccabee saved and redeemed But in our days the whole people Israel Will unite, arise, and save.