

# Hanukkah

**Hanukkah** is the eight-day celebration that marks the triumph of a small band of Jews, the Maccabees, over the Greek Empire, which ruled Babylonia at the time. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.E., the ruling Greeks sought to assimilate the people of Israel, making it illegal to practice some Jewish rituals. But the Maccabees overpowered the Greeks and reclaimed the Holy Temple.

When they attempted to light the Temple *menorah*, a sacred candelabra, they found only one vial of purified oil, enough to last

for one night. Miraculously, the oil kept the menorah burning for eight nights.

We commemorate the Maccabees' victory, and the miracle of the oil lasting for eight nights, by lighting our own menorah, adding one candle each of the eight nights. In doing so, we celebrate the triumph of good over evil, small over mighty, purity and holiness over indecency, and give thanks for our ability to practice Judaism in any way that brings meaning into our lives.



## V'al Hanissim

This year, Hanukkah begins the evening of Wednesday, November 27, the night before Thanksgiving. This hasn't happened since 1888, and will not happen again in our lifetime. The overlap between these two holidays is quite special. It brings together two moments of thanks, welcomes the celebration of miracles and good fortune into our homes and highlights all that is special in our lives.

The prayer *V'al Hanissim*, added to *Birkat Hamazon* (blessing after meals) during Hanukkah, prompts us to give thanks for G-d's graciousness. Including this prayer on Thanksgiving at our dinner tables with family and friends reminds us to acknowledge what we have, and take note of those who are less fortunate.

**ועל הניסים ועל הפורקן ועל הגבורות ועל התשועות ועל הנפלאות שעשית לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה.**

***V'al hanissim v'al hapurkahn v'al hagvurot v'al hatshu'ot v'al hanifla'ot she'asitah la'avoteinu bayamim hahem bazman hazeh.***

And [we thank You] for the miracles, for the redemption, for the mighty deeds, for the saving acts and for the wonders which You have wrought for our ancestors in those days, at this time.



## Giving Thanks for Eight Days

This year, we have the opportunity to extend the spirit of Thanksgiving throughout Hanukkah. Every night, for eight nights, consider the following when you light the Hanukkah candles.

1

What is something you are thankful for during this holiday season?

2

How can you share with others the things, feelings or experiences for which you are thankful?