



A Guide to

Hanukkah at Home



On One Foot: An Intro to Judaism Coursebook



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“There are two ways to live in a world that is often dark and full of tears. We can curse the darkness or we can light a light. And a little light drives out much darkness.”

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks



What is the Miracle of Hanukkah?

At the darkest time of the year, the Jewish People celebrates our Festival of Light. The story of Hanukkah began in the year 167 BCE, when the Greek governor of the Land of Israel, Antiochus, outlawed the practice of Judaism. The uprising that followed, led by an army that called itself the Maccabees, threw off Greek rule and re-established religious freedom.

Centuries later, the Talmud would relate the legendary story that when the Maccabees re-entered the desecrated Temple in Jerusalem, they found there only enough oil to re-light the *ner tamid*, the Eternal Flame, for one night. Yet, it burned on for eight nights, giving them time to prepare more oil and keep the lamps lit.

For eight nights we light the nine-branched menorah (more correctly called a *hanukkiyah*) and place it in the window to fulfill the mitzvah of *pirsumei nisa*, “publicizing the miracle.” Yet, many people misunderstand exactly what miracle it is that we are actually supposed to be publicizing.

It’s not really the miracle of a little bit of oil that lasted longer than it should have a long time ago, but of a little People that has persisted against all odds through the millennia up to today. The little flickering flames of the Hanukkah candles are a metaphor for us. We are still here. We are glowing bright. Nothing that has ever been thrown at us has had the power to extinguish our light.

And nothing ever will.

May the radiance of the Hanukkah candles, and of the Jewish spirit, shine on forever.

Rabbi Adam Greenwald

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Light

The Hanukkiyah

Each night of Hanukkah, we light an additional candle to indicate the increasing miracle of each successive night. On the first night, we light the *shamash* (helper) candle and use it to light the first candle. On night two, we light the *shamash*, plus two candles, and so on until the final night when we have the *shamash* plus eight burning candles, a *hanukkiyah* full of light.

PLACE the *hanukkiyah* near a window, so it can be seen from the outside.

LOAD the *hanukkiyah* with the number of candles corresponding to the night, plus the *shamash*, going from **right to left**.

LIGHT the *shamash*, and use it to light the other candles going from **left to right**.

RECITE the Hanukkah blessings together. On most night we say the two blessings on the facing page, but on the first night we add a third, the *shehehiyanu*, found on the following page.

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

*Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam,
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav
v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Hanukkah.*

Blessed are You, God of the Universe,
Who makes our lives holy with mitzvot,
and commands us to kindle the Hanukkah lights.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ
בְּיָמֵים הָהֵם בְּזִמַּן הַזֶּה

*Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam,
she'asah nissim la'avoteinu
ba'yamim ha-hem bazman ha'zeh.*

Blessed are You, God of the Universe,
Who performed miracles for our ancestors,
in those days and at this season.

On the first night, we add a third blessing:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיָּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה

*Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam
shehehiyanu v'kiyemanu
v'higiyanu lazman hazeh.*

Blessed are You, God of the Universe,
Who has kept us in life, sustained us,
and allowed us to reach this moment of celebration.



Some people then recite:

הַנֵּרוֹת הַלָּלוּ שְׂאָנוּ מְדַלִּיקִין עַל הַנְּסִים וְעַל
הַנִּפְלְאוֹת וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת וְעַל הַמִּלְחָמוֹת
שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזֶמֶן הַזֶּה

*Hanerot halalu, anu madlikin. Al hanisim ve'al hanifla'ot,
ve'al hateshu'ot, ve'al hamilkhamot, she'asita la'avoteinu,
bayamim haheim bazman hazeh*

These Hanukkah lights we kindle in honor of all the miracles,
the wonders, the triumphs, and the victories that You
performed for our ancestors, in those days and at this season.



Sing

Hanukkah Songs

While the candles are burning, many families will sing Hanukkah songs. Some are centuries old, and some are much more modern. The most famous of these songs is *Maoz Tzur*, which was composed in the 13th century. In addition to Hebrew songs, there are Hanukkah songs in many languages, including English, Yiddish, and Ladino (the historic language of Sephardic Jewish communities from Spain.)

Maoz Tzur

Rock of Ages

<i>Ma-oz Tzur Y'shu-a-ti</i>	מעוז צור ישועתי
<i>Le-cha Na-eh L'sha-bei-ach</i>	לך נאה לשבח
<i>Ti-kon Beit T'fi-la-ti</i>	תכון בית תפילתי
<i>V'sham To-da N'za-bei-ach</i>	ושם תודה נזבח
<i>L'eit Ta-chin Mat-bei-ach</i>	לעת תכין מטבח
<i>Mi-tzar Ha-mi-na-bei-ach</i>	מצר המנבח
<i>Az Eg-mor B'shir Miz-mor</i>	אז אגמור בשיר מזמור
<i>Cha-nu-kat Ha-miz-bei-ach</i>	חנכת המזבח

Rock of Ages, let our song
Praise Your saving power.

You amidst 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)

Oh Hanukkah

English & Yiddish

Oh, Hanukkah, Oh, Hanukkah
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'vivon 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. (2x)

*Oy Khanike, oy Khanike,
A yontif, a sheiner,
A lustiker, a freylicher,
Nito noch a zeyner.*

*Alle nakht in dreydl shpiln mir,
Zudik hesse latkes, essen mir
Geshvinder, tsindt kinder
di Khanike likhtelekh on.*

*Zol yeder bazunder bazingen dem vuner
un tantzen freylekh in kohn. (2x)*

Ocho Kandelikas

Ladino, Lyrics by Flory Jagoda

*Chanukah linda sta aki,
Ocho kandelas para mi (2x)*

Chorus:

*Una kandelika, dos kandelikas,
Tres kandelikas, quatro kandelikas
Sintyu kandelikas, sej kandelikas,
siete kandelikas, ocho kandelas para mi*

*Muchas fiestas vo fazer,
Kon alegriyas y plazer (2x)*

English translation:

Beautiful Hanukkah now is here
And eight candles now for me appear

Chorus:

One little candle, two little candles, three little candles, four
little candles, five little candles, six little candles, seven little
candles, eight little candles for me.

Lots of celebration to enjoy
Full of fun and joy

Eat

Foods Cooked with Oil

In honor of that little vessel of oil that was only meant to burn for one night, but continued on and on and on – Hanukkah is an opportunity to eat foods fried in enough oil to keep a menorah burning not just for eight nights, but maybe more like eighty!

In the Ashkenazi Tradition, the most popular Hanukkah fried food is potato latkes, while in the Sephardic and Mizrahi communities, Hanukkah is a time for donuts (*sofganiyot*). While we'll give you some traditional recipes, but feel free to pretend you're at the state fair and fry up whatever you can imagine!

Latkes

Ingredients:

2 lbs of russet potatoes
1 large yellow onion
2 large eggs
2-3 tbsp matzah meal
Kosher salt
Black pepper
Optional: Handful of green herbs (parsley, dill, thyme, etc)
Vegetable oil for frying

Directions:

Roughly grate potatoes, then place in a colander and rinse well under cold, running water. Carefully dry potatoes by picking up a handful at a time and squeezing out all the liquid before placing them in a clean bowl. This process will need to be repeated a couple of times until potatoes have given up nearly all of their liquid.

Grate or chop onion in a food processor and place in colander to drain, then combine with the potatoes. Beat eggs and add to potato/onion mixture, together with several heaping tablespoons of matzah meal. If using, chop and add herbs. Combine mixture with hands to achieve a sticky but loose texture. Adjust, if necessary, by adding more matzah meal or more egg. Season liberally with salt and pepper.

Heat a half-inch of vegetable oil in a skillet until shimmering. Add a handful-sized ball of latke batter to oil and press with spatula to flatten. Do not to crowd the pan; latkes should always be completely surrounded by rapidly bubbling oil. Fry on both sides until golden brown and transfer to paper towel-lined dish or wire rack. Serve immediately.

Sofganiyot

Ingredients:

1 tsp baking powder
1 small container of sour cream (8 oz)
3 tbsp sugar
1/8 tsp salt
1/2 tsp vanilla
1 egg
Vegetable oil for frying
Powdered sugar for topping
Optional: Jam or nutella for filling

Directions:

Combine all the dry ingredients together in a large bowl. Fold in egg, sour cream, and vanilla, and mix to a smooth consistency.

Heat oil in a dutch oven to 350 F (use a deep fry or candy thermometer). Drop large spoonfuls of the dough into the hot oil, taking care not to crowd or allow the oil to drop significantly in temperature. Fry for about 4 minutes, until golden on all sides.

Remove from oil using a slotted spoon and let drain on a paper towel-lined dish or wire rack. Dust with powdered sugar.

If desired, use a syringe to fill the donuts with a bit of jam or nutella for a traditional *sofganiyah*.



Play

The Dreidel Game

During the persecution of the Jewish People by Antiochus, that led to the uprising of the Maccabees, it was forbidden for Jews to teach Torah to their children. Legend says that parents continued to teach their children in secret, and when Greek soldiers came too close the kids would quickly trade their books for spinning tops, dreidels, to make it look like they were just playing a game.

This story is almost certainly a fable – dreidel seems to be based on a popular European top game called *totum*, but it's still a fun tradition to carry on and a strangely addictive family game.

A dreidel is a four-sided top, with a Hebrew letter on each side:

Nun - נ, Gimmel - ג, Hey - ה, and Shin - ש.

The letters stand for: נס גדול היה שם “*Nes gadol haya sham*,” meaning “A great miracle happened there.” In Israel, the shin is replaced by a *pei*, and the phrase reads נס גדול היה פה “*Nes gadol haya poh*,” which translates as, “A great miracle happened here.”

Here are the rules for playing dreidel:

To start adds three tokens to the central pot. You can use coins (real or chocolate Hanukkah gelt), small candies, poker chips, or anything else.

The first person spins the dreidel and takes an action based on which side lands up.



SHIN (or pei)	HEY	GIMMEL	NUN
Put one of your tokens into the pot.	You get half the pot.	You win the entire pot.	You do nothing.

Players take turns (clockwise is easiest) spinning. When you run out of the tokens, you are out! If you want, you can give loans to keep players in the game. Just don't eat all your earnings in one sitting.

A Hanukkah Blessing

Hanukkah is all about miracles. One version of the story emphasizes the against-all-odds military victory of the Maccabees over the Greeks, who had forbidden the full and free practice of Judaism. A second version focuses on the little vessel of sacred oil that should have only lasted one day; but instead burned for eight long nights, as the Maccabees restored the Temple in Jerusalem to its former glory.

While these miracles belong to the past, affirming that miracles are possible is the task of the present. As we light the Hanukkah each night, here are just some of the miracles Hanukkah asks us all to believe in:

- When the world feels darkest — literally and figuratively — there is always the opportunity to manifest light.
- Creating a brighter world is incremental work — just add a little more light each day, pretty soon it will all be brighter.
- And, as Mr. Rogers taught, “look for the helpers.”
On Hanukkah, we call it the shamash, the helper candle used to light the others, which is always there, ready to share its light.

Here’s to all the miracles from long ago, and the miracles yet to be.

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Happy Hanukkah!



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