

# FROM OUR HOUSE TO YOURS



90 Years of Connection 1925-2015

## CELEBRATING HANUKKAH AT HOME HOLIDAY ENHANCEMENT PACKET

Did you know that the word Hanukkah (הַנּוֹכָחַ) means “dedication”?

During the time of the Second Temple, the Syrian-Greeks were hoping to assimilate the Jews into Greek culture. Antiochus outlawed Jewish observance of all types, including the study of Torah and the observance of Shabbat. The story goes that when the Greeks demanded that the Jews sacrifice a pig to a Greek god, some Jews took to the Judean hills. Mattathias and later, his son Judah Maccabee, the Hasmonean, led a small group of Jews against the Syrian-Greeks for three years.

Did you know that Maccabee means “the hammer”? Also, Maccabee could have been the battle cry of the Jewish fighters. It is also an acronym for “*Mi komocho ba'alim Adonai*”—“Who is like you, O Lord, among the mighty” (Exodus 15:11).

Although Antiochus and the Syrian-Greeks had a much larger army, Judah and his band of Jews defeated the Syrian-Greeks. When Judah and his army arrived back in Jerusalem, they found the Temple in disarray and filled with idols. They were only able to find one small jar of olive oil bearing the seal of the High Priest. The Menorah was lit and burned for eight days—enough time for more pure oil to be prepared.

This is the story as described in the book of Maccabees. Modern historians question some of the details, assuming that rather than fighting the Syrian-Greeks, the Hasmoneans were actually conducting a civil war. They were battling those within the Jewish community who wanted to Hellenize Jewish culture, to abandon sacred Jewish practices in order to better enjoy the best of Greek society. Either way, Hanukkah becomes a time to celebrate Jewish values, rituals, and religious freedom.

The book of Maccabees and the Talmud describe a second miracle of Hanukkah. When the Hasmoneans went to purify the Temple, they found only enough oil to light the Menorah for one day. A miracle happened such that the oil lasted for eight days, long enough to produce new oil to keep the Menorah lit as it was supposed to be.

# CANDLE LIGHTING



Place your first candle to the far right in your *hanukkiyah*. Place the shamash, or helper candle, in the special place designated for that candle. Facing the *hanukkiyah*, start at the far right and add a candle to its left on each successive night. Light the candles beginning from the left, beginning with the newest one placed there for that evening.

There are two blessings to recite each night before lighting the *hanukkiyah*:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל חֲנֻכָּה.

*Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzi-vanu l'hadlik ner shel Hanukkah.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has sanctified us with the commandments and commanded us to kindle the Hanukkah lights.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּיָמֵים הָהֵם בְּזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

*Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, she-asah nissim la-avoteinu ba-yamim ha-hem baz'man ha-zeh.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who performed miracles for our ancestors in those days at that time.

On the first night, we also add the Shehe-heyanu blessing:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁהִתְיָנוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

*Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, she-he-heyanu v'kiy-manu v'higi-anu laz'man ha-zeh.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has kept us in life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this sacred moment.

On Friday evening, light the Hanukkah candles first, and then light the Shabbat candles. On Saturday nights, perform Havdalah first, then light the Hanukkah candles.



Be sure to take photos of your family lighting the *hanukkiyah* or playing with your dreidels, and then share them on B'nai Israel's Facebook page.

[www.facebook.com/bnaiisraelcong](http://www.facebook.com/bnaiisraelcong)

# INTERESTING FACTS

- Mattathias was a Kohen (priest). His son, Simon, became *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest), but he chose not to call himself king because he was not from the line of David. Simon's descendants did not honor this choice and they started a new ruling dynasty of Hasmoneans. Simon's son, Yohanan Hyrcanus, became the next ruler and tried to expand the borders of Israel and forcibly convert the newly conquered people, something the Jewish people had never done before or since.
- One group of people who were converted were the Idumeans who lived in Tel Maresha. Once the people were conquered, they moved to Beit Guvrin. If you have traveled to Israel, perhaps you have traveled to Bet Guvrin-Maresha National Park, the land of a thousand caves. If so, you have had the opportunity to be an archeologist for a day and explore the underground storerooms, hideouts and dovecotes.
- You can also visit the area of the Tombs of the Maccabees in Israel, in the Ben Shemen Forest near Modi'in. During the Hanukkah holiday, ceremonies are held here honoring the Maccabees.
- Did you know that in Israel, there is a Torch Relay from Modi'in (where the rebellion broke out) to Jerusalem? The road from Modi'in to Jerusalem's Old City is lined with people and a burning torch is passed until it reaches and lights the giant *hanukkiah* at the Kotel (Western Wall) in Jerusalem.
- In Jerusalem and B'nei Brak, you can take a self-guided tour in the evenings to view the *hanukkiyot* on the windowsills.
- Herod, who will later be appointed King of the Jews, was a descendent of the Hasmonean family. Although he was ruthless towards his subjects and even his own family, he is remembered for his remarkable building projects: the port city of Caesarea, the fortress at Masada, and the expanded Temple Mount that we know today. These are "must see" sights for every visitor to Israel.

# HOLIDAY ENHANCEMENT IDEAS

**Menorah is the word used to describe the seven-branched candelabra that was housed in the Holy Temple and remains a prominent feature in synagogues today. The *hanukkiah* is a special *menorah* that holds nine candles, one for the shamash and one for each night of Hanukkah.**

- If you don't have a *hanukkiah* or if you just want a new one, visit the Sisterhood Judaica Gift Shop.
- Don't forget to pick up a box of candles for the holiday. Candles must burn for at least 30 minutes. On Friday night, when the candles are lit before lighting the Shabbat candles at sunset, they must burn for nearly an hour and 15 minutes – 45 minutes from candle lighting to when it is dark, and 30 minutes after that! You can also pick up pre-measured olive oil in cups with wicks and use these to light your *hanukkiah*! What is your family's tradition? Do you light one *hanukkiah* for the entire household, or does each family member light their own?
- If you can, place your *hanukkiah* in a window for all to see. It is a *mitzvah* to "publicize the miracle." The lights of the *hanukkiah* are not permitted to be used for any other reason. Be sure to place your *hanukkiah* in a safe place, out of reach of young children and pets.

Play with the dreidel (*s'vivon*, סְבִיבּוֹן, in Hebrew). It is said that dreidel was invented to foil enemies of the Jews when it was forbidden to study Torah. If soldiers came by, those who were studying the Torah would quickly pull out dreidels and pretend to be playing a game.



- The letters on the dreidel are nun (נ), gimmel (ג), hay (ה) and shin (ש), which stands for: *nes gadol hayah sham*, נֶס גָּדוֹל הָיָה שָׁמָּה, אַתְּ הָיָה שָׁמָּה...a great miracle happened there. In Israel, the last letter is pey (פ), which stands for *po* (פֹּה): a great miracle happened here.
- You can play dreidel with pennies, gelt, raisins...or be creative. Each player puts an equal amount into the pot. Take turns spinning the dreidel. What will your dreidel land on?

Each letter stands for a Yiddish word:

- *Nun* (נ) means *nicht*, or nothing. Nothing happens.
  - *Gimmel* (ג) means *gantz*, all. The spinner takes the pot.
  - *Hey* (ה) means *halb*, or half. The spinner takes half the pot.
  - *Shin* (ש) means *schtel*, or put in. The spinner returns one piece to the pot.
- Other fun dreidel activities include: see who can spin their dreidel the longest, see who can spin their dreidel upside down, create actions to do or questions to answer for each letter or the dreidel. Be creative and see what you can come up with!

**Gelt, Yiddish for money, is also connected to Hanukkah. The Talmud states that even a poor person must light the Hanukkah lights. As is the case with other Jewish holidays, the concept of *tzedakah* is important.**

- Although the custom of giving is gelt, not presents, Jews today do give gifts. Here are some thoughts for less traditional gifts: go on a trip, plan an event (i.e. day at the movies and lunch), take a class, give something Jewish, subscribe to a magazine, engage in *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) and spend time volunteering and give *tzedakah* (charity) in someone's name. There are so many options out there!

**Did you know that the song *Maoz Tzur* (Rock of Ages), which is traditionally sung after lighting the candles each evening, was composed in Europe in the 12th or 13th century?**

- Sing “I Have a Little Dreidel.”
- Enjoy Peter, Paul and Mary singing “Light One Candle”, as they connect the themes of the *hanukkiyah* and freedom.
- Enjoy the Candlelight video by the Maccabeats.

# HANUKKAH FOODS

**One custom is to eat foods made with oil.**

- We eat lots of latkes or potato pancakes! Perhaps this is the only time all year you eat fried foods... it is hard to pass up a latke, especially if it is topped with applesauce or sour cream, even if it is fried!
- Eat *sufganiyot* – doughnuts covered in sugar and often filled with strawberry jelly! In Israel, 24 million *sufganiyot* are eaten every Hanukkah!
- *Sfenj*, Moroccan fried fritters, are traditional foods in Israel, as are *loukoumades* and *bimuelos* (fried honey puffs).
- Why not choose to eat foods that include oil, and are not just fried in oil? You would still be commemorating the miracle!
- Dairy products and cheese are customarily eaten on Hanukkah because of the heroism of Judith, a member of the Hasmonean family. It is said that Judith was taken prisoner by a leader of the Greek army. She fed him a dish cooked with salty cheese, and he became very thirsty. She offered wine, which made him tired. Once he was sleeping, she used his sword to cut off his head. She carried it back to Jerusalem for the Greeks to see, and the Greeks retreated when they saw it.
- Russian Jews have a custom to pour brandy over a lump of sugar in a spoon, set it on fire, and then drop it into a glass of tea.
- In Western Europe, goose was traditionally eaten at a Hanukkah dinner.



*Sufganiyot*



*Sfenj*

# HANUKKAH RECIPES

## **B'nai Israel Schilit Nursery School Latke Recipe**

3-4 lg. potatoes  
½ onion  
1 egg  
3 tbsp flour  
½ tsp. baking powder  
salt and pepper to taste  
oil (for frying)

Peel and grate potatoes and onion. Drain well. Add flour, baking powder, salt and pepper. Pour oil into fry pan. Preheat. Drop potato mixture by spoonfuls into hot oiled pan. Brown on both sides. Drain on paper towel.

Serve with applesauce or sour cream. Enjoy!

## **Hanukkah Sugar Cookies**

¾ cup margarine or butter  
1 cup sugar  
2 eggs  
1 tsp. salt  
1 tsp. vanilla  
2 ½ cups flour  
1 tsp. baking powder

Mix margarine or butter, sugar, eggs and vanilla thoroughly. Stir in dry ingredients. Blend well. Chill at least 1 hour. Roll dough 1/8" thick onto a lightly floured board. Cut with Hanukkah cookie cutters. If you'd like, decorate with sprinkles. Place on an ungreased cookie sheet or a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake at 400 degrees for 6-8 minutes or until cookies are delicate golden in color.

Makes about 4 dozen.



*Happy Hanukkah from Your B'nai Israel Family!*