

UNITED STATES ARMY
JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO - FORT SAM HOUSTON

CHANUKAH

HANDBOOK



18-26 DECEMBER, 2022 • KISLEV 25-TEVET 2, 5783



Foreword



Chanukah is a delightful eight-day holiday that begins this year in the evening on Sunday, December 18. It celebrates the rescue of our people's spiritual and national identity in the second century BCE.

The threat emerged from the Holy Land's rulers, the Seleucids (Syrian-Greeks), who tried to forcefully Hellenize the Jews. Our rescue arrived when G-d granted success to a tiny band of faithful Jews in driving the mighty Seleucid army from the country, whereupon the Jews reclaimed

the Jerusalem Temple and rededicated it to G-d's service. That service included lighting the Temple's menorah daily, but only a single jar of olive oil had survived the Seleucid defilement. G-d sent another miracle, and the one-day oil supply burned for eight days, until fresh oil was procured. These two extraordinary events—the victory over Hellenism alongside the menorah miracle—trumpet the triumph of light over darkness, purity over adulteration, and spirituality over materialism.

For millennia, the menorah's silent flickering flames roar with symbolism. Our role is to pay attention. As the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitschak Schneersohn, once directed, "We need to listen carefully to our Chanukah lights—they are recounting critical messages." This year, after kindling your own menorah, take time to pause and ponder the lessons that leap from your lights.

Here's a pointer: Jewish Scriptures (Proverbs 6:23) equate *mitzvot* with flames. Our ancient sages (*Shemot Rabah*, Tetsaveh 36) applied this comparison to our daily decisions: We are conflicted at times, longing to perform a mitzvah but cringing at its cost in time or resources. Our solution is to realize that a mitzvah is a flame—we can ignite a thousand candles from a single flame without diminishing the original flame. Similarly, we pursue good deeds without diminishing ourselves financially, materially, or emotionally. To the contrary: a mitzvah is a torch that supports its bearers and expands their blessings.

Chanukah is itself a bright and beautiful mitzvah. We are pleased to offer you this Chanukah Handbook to better prepare yourself for this year's joyous celebration. On the following pages, you will discover illuminating and inspirational insights into the nature of the Festival of Light, alongside practical guidance for facilitating a meaningful holiday experience.

Brightest wishes for a holiday of light, warmth, and joy,

Chaplain Mendy Stern

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Edifying Messages from the Chanukah Menorah



Judaism views life as flowing with lessons. Each event and encounter is instructive. Certainly, the specifics of our sacred heritage radiate Divine guidance. Here is a series of life lessons that spring from each facet of our menorah lighting, based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of blessed memory.

WICK, OIL, FLAME



We are comparable to wicks, and *mitzvot* are comparable to our oil supply. Our *mitzvah* action causes divinity to erupt from us into glowing flames, illuminating our surroundings.

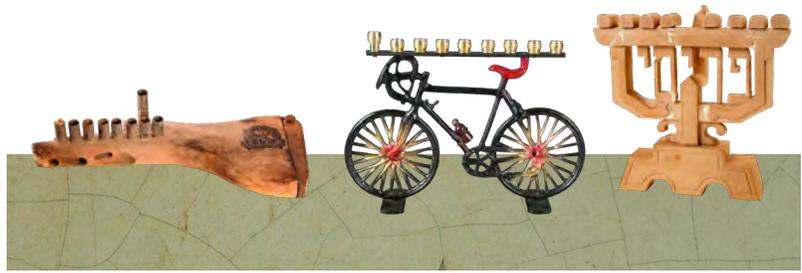
OLIVE OIL

It emerges in humility amid olive crushing, but it adopts supremacy, separating itself and rising above all liquids. We must operate with profound humility—we are merely G-d's agents. But precisely this attitude propels us to the top: for what is more supreme than a humble agent of G-d?



THE MENORAH'S DESIGN

The cups holding the burning oil represent our individual environments. These menorah cups come in countless designs and shapes, because our role is to brighten our *unique* personal circumstances and vicinities.



FROM ONE TO EIGHT

We light one flame on Night One, then add another each night, until we have eight flames on Night Eight. The message: always climb. Yesterday's achievement was optimal *for yesterday*, but it is a stage for *greater* achievement today. And today's perfection is a ladder for tomorrow's climb.

EIGHT NIGHTS

The number seven represents nature, hence time spins on a seven-day cycle. The number eight runs deeper than nature. In our personal lives, we often live from within our natural proclivities, leaving our deeper resources untapped. But to truly brighten our world, we must tap our deepest internal goodness.



AT NIGHT, VIEWABLE OUTSIDE

We are here to transform darkness, not only in our homes but also in the street. According to the Talmud, ground-level dwellers set the menorah at the front door, while *upstairs* dwellers place it in the window. Not only those who are *well grounded* but also those with upstairs lifestyles—heads in the heavens—must act to brighten society.



SHAMASH

We want to avoid using the menorah's light for personal purposes, so we add the *shamash* candle to ensure that if we are to benefit from the Chanukah light it should be from the *shamash*, not from the actual mitzvah flames. The lesson: We are often drawn to a particular mitzvah because it provides us with a personal benefit. That's acceptable, but the shamash reminds us that we can find at least a single mitzvah to perform altruistically, free of ulterior motive.

SOURCES: Wick, Oil, Flame: *Likutei Sichot* 10, pp. 445–446. Olive Oil: *Igrot Kodesh* 2, p. 279. The Menorah's Design: *Ibid.* From One to Eight: *Torat Menachem* 5742:2, pp. 610–611. Eight Nights: *Likutei Sichot* 3, p. 812. At Night, Viewable Outside: *Igrot Kodesh* 1, pp. 62–63. Shamash: *Sichot Kodesh* 5739:1, p. 520.

Chanukah and the Hasmoneans



301 BCE

Beginning of the influence of Hellenic culture in the Land of Israel. Following the death of Alexander the Great, his empire is split among his generals, with the Land of Israel falling under the rule of the Ptolemaic kings of Egypt. The Ptolemaic rulers build Greek-style cities throughout their realm, and build theaters, sports arenas, and temples. Many Jewish "Hellenists" abandon traditional Judaism in a desire to assimilate into the pagan culture of the Greek rulers of the Land.



198 BCE

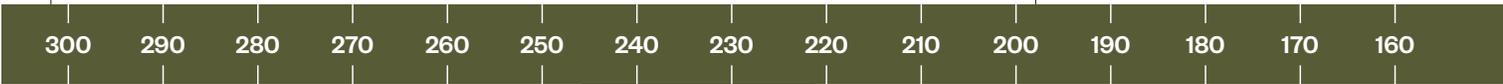
The Seleucids (Syrian-Greeks) are victorious in their wars against the Egyptian-Greeks, and the Land of Israel is annexed to the Seleucid Empire.



140 BCE

The Hasmonean revolt.

Torah-faithful Jews revolt against the Greek suppression of Judaism and their desecration of the Holy Temple. The rebellion is led by Matityahu the Hasmonean and his five sons: Yochanan, Shimon, Yehudah, Elazar, and Yonatan.



246–221 BCE

During the reign of Ptolemy III, The Jewish Hellenists gain power and influence, using bribes to usurp the office of the High Priest and other positions of authority.



145 BCE

Loss of religious freedom. The Seleucid ruler Antiochus Epiphanes (referred to in Jewish sources as "Antiochus the Wicked") issues decrees compelling all inhabitants of his empire to worship the Greek gods and adopt the Greek way of life. This is in contrast to previous Greek rulers, who allowed each nation to follow its own religion and culture. The Jews are singled out and targeted by Antiochus's decrees. The *mitzvot* of circumcision, Shabbat and the Jewish festivals, and the study of Torah are forbidden on the pain of death, and Jews are forced to bring offerings to pagan gods. A pagan idol is placed in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, and swine and other impure animals are offered to it there.



מִי כַמֹּכֵה
בְּיָדָם ה'

139 BCE

Matityahu dies. The revolt continues under the leadership of his son, Yehudah the Maccabee. *Maccabee* means "hammer," and the word is also an acronym for the phrase *Mi kamocho ba'elim Hashem*—"Who is like You among the mighty, O G-d"—the banner under which Yehudah led his troops into battle.



Year on the Jewish calendar

139 BCE

The miracle of Chanukah. Though vastly outnumbered, the small Maccabean army drives the Greeks from Jerusalem, liberates the Holy Temple, and rededicates it to the service of G-d. Miraculously, a small cruse of olive oil, sufficient to light seven lamps of the Temple's menorah for one day, burns for eight days, until new ritually pure oil can be prepared. Jewish independence is established in the Holy Land for the first time since the conquest of the Land by the Babylonians 405 years earlier.



138 BCE

In the effort to reassert their dominance over Judea, the Seleucids attack with an army of 100,000 foot soldiers, 20,000 cavalry, and 32 war elephants. Judah's brother Elazar dies a hero's death when he dashes under the lead war elephant and kills it by driving his spear from underneath its belly. In the ensuing havoc, the army disperses in disarray from before the Jewish fighters.



61 BCE

Civil War. The Hasmonean brothers Aristobulus and Hyrkanos fight over the crown, with each enlisting the aid of the Romans against the other. This event marks the beginning of Roman influence in the Land of Israel and of the Land's eventual subjugation to Roman rule.



133 BCE

Yehudah the Maccabee is killed in battle with the Greeks. His brother Yonatan replaces him as leader.

← BCE



127 BCE

After Yonatan's passing, the last surviving Maccabee brother, Shimon, is crowned as king. Shimon also assumes the office of High Priest.



73-64 BCE

Reign of Shlomzion. A high point of the Hasmonean Era is the nine-year reign of Queen Salome Alexandra, also known as "Shlomzion." She restores the authority of the Torah sages, and the Land knows peace and prosperity in her time.



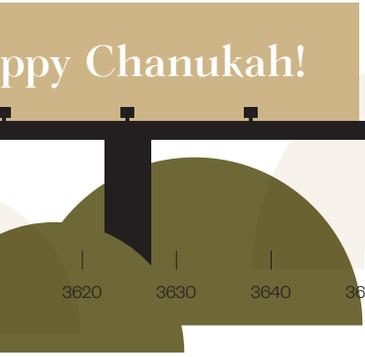
36 BCE

End of the Hasmonean dynasty. The reign of the Hasmonean kings lasts for 102 years, until the Edomite usurper Herod slaughters the entire royal family and is installed as king of Judea by the Romans.



138 BCE

The eight-day festival of Chanukah is instituted to commemorate the miraculous military victory and the miracle of the oil of the previous year.



Chanukah in the Sources

ANTIOCHUS'S DECREES

Maccabees 1:41–61

King Antiochus . . . sent letters by the hands of messengers to all the cities of Judah: that they should follow the law of the Gentile nations: that they should forbid burnt-offerings, sacrifices, and atonements to be made in the Temple of G-d: that they should profane the Sabbath and the festival days: that they should pollute the Sanctuary and the priests. He commanded altars to be built, and temples, and idols; and that swine's flesh be offered. . . . And that they should leave their children uncircumcised and make their souls abominable with all manners of uncleanness and profanation, to the end that they should forget the Torah and should change all the ordinances of G-d. . . . They drove the Israelites into secret places, even wheresoever they could flee for succor. . . . They cut to pieces and burned with fire the books of the law of G-d. All who were discovered possessing a copy of the covenant or practicing the Torah, the king's decree sentenced them to death. . . . Women who had had their children circumcised were put to death according to the edict, their babies hanged around their necks; and the members of their household and those who had performed the circumcision were executed with them.



THE START OF THE HASMONEAN REVOLT

Maccabees 2:1–30

In those days, there was a Priest in Israel, and his name was Matityahu the son of Yochanan. . . . He dwelt in Modi'in, and he had five sons: Yochanan, Shimon, Yehudah the Maccabee, Elazar, and Yonatan. . . . It came to pass that the king's officers came to Modi'in to forcefully remove the people from G-d's Torah and compel them to worship idols and offer sacrifices to them. Many of the people of Israel joined with them, but Matityahu and his sons held strong.

The king's official said to Matityahu, "See, you are a leader and an honored person amongst your people, and you have many sons and a large family. Now, you come first to carry out the king's command, as was done in all the provinces of his kingdom, and by all the people of Judah and Jerusalem, and you and your sons will find favor in the king's eyes, and gold and silver and precious gifts will be awarded to you."

Matityahu raised his voice and said, "If indeed nation after nation of the king's subjects have turned away from their gods and obeyed his decree to betray the religion of their ancestors, it shall not be so with me and my family! . . . It is unthinkable for us to transgress the commandments of our G-d and to violate His covenant with us. . . ."

As he concluded speaking, a Jewish man approached the altar, in sight of all those standing there, to offer a sacrifice in accordance with the king's command.

Matityahu saw this and his heart burned with zeal. . . . He ran toward the man and slew him near the altar. Also the king's official he slayed, and he destroyed the altar. . . . He then ran through the city, calling out with a great voice, "Whoever fears for G-d's Torah and holds fast to His covenant—follow me!" And all the people in whom the Torah of G-d had touched their hearts followed Matityahu, and they fled to the wilderness. . . .

WHAT IS CHANUKAH?
Talmud, Shabbat 21b

What is Chanukah? The sages taught: On the twenty-fifth of Kislev begin the eight days of Chanukah, on which a lamentation for the dead and fasting are forbidden. For when the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oils therein. And when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed against and defeated them, they searched and found only one cruse of oil that lay with the seal of the High Priest. It contained sufficient oil for one day's lighting only; yet a miracle occurred, and they lit [the menorah] with it for eight days. The following year, they established these days as festival days with the recitation of Hallel and thanksgiving.



AL HANISIM PRAYER

In the days of Matityahu the son of Yochanan the High Priest, the Hasmonean and his sons, the wicked Hellenic government rose up against Your people Israel to make them forget Your Torah and to violate the decrees of Your will. But You, in Your abounding mercies, stood by them in the time of their distress. You waged their battles, defended their rights, and avenged the wrong done to them. You delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and wanton sinners into the hands of those who occupy themselves with Your Torah. You made a great and holy name for Yourself in Your world and effected a great



"The many into the hands of the few"

deliverance and redemption for Your people

Israel to this very day. Then Your children entered the shrine of Your House, cleansed Your Temple, purified Your Sanctuary, and kindled lights in Your holy courtyards; and they instituted these eight days of Chanukah to give thanks and praise to Your great name.



Menorah Lighting

TUTORIAL



→ WHAT TO LIGHT

Use an oil or candle menorah. If you are using oil, it is preferable to use olive oil. If you don't have a menorah, you can line up the correct number of candles or tea lights in a straight row.

Electric menorahs are often used as holiday decorations or to raise awareness of the festival, but they do not fulfill the mitzvah of kindling the Chanukah lights.

→ WHERE TO LIGHT

Chanukah lights are placed on the left side of a doorway (opposite the *mezuzah*), or in a window overlooking a public thoroughfare.

→ WHEN TO LIGHT

Chanukah 2021 begins on the evening of **Sunday, December 18**. Some communities light the candles at sunset, while others wait for nightfall (approx. 20–30 minutes after sunset). In either case, the oil should be sufficient (or the candles large enough) to burn for 30 minutes after nightfall.

One who is unable to kindle the lights in the beginning of the evening can do so later at night.

On the sixth night of Chanukah, **Friday, December 23**, the lights must be lit before sunset, prior to the onset of Shabbat. We kindle the menorah before lighting the Shabbat candles.

On the seventh night of Chanukah, **Saturday night, December 24**, the Chanukah candles can be lit only after the Shabbat ends at nightfall.

HOW TO LIGHT

Kindle one light (the one on the far right) on the first night of Chanukah, two lights on the second night (the two furthest on the right), and so on—until the eighth night, when eight lights are kindled.

Use an additional light, the *shamash* ("servant candle") to kindle the lights. Then place it in a designated location above or to the side of the lights.

Recite the blessings, and then kindle the lights. Begin with the newest light, the one farthest to the left, and then proceed from left to right. After kindling the menorah, it is customary to chant or sing "Hanerot Halalu."



THE Blessings

On the first night, or if this is the first time you are kindling the Chanukah lights this year, recite all three blessings.

On all other nights, recite the first two blessings only.

(There are a few variations in the text and pronunciation of these blessings. The following is the Chabad custom.)

BLESSING 1

*Baruch atah Ado-nai Elo-heinu
melech ha'olam, asher
kidshanu bemitsvotav vetsivanu
lehadlik ner Chanukah.*

ברוך אתה אד-ני, אל-הינו מלך העולם,
אשר קדשנו במצוותיו, וצונו להדליק נר חנוכה.

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the Chanukah light.

BLESSING 2

*Baruch atah Ado-nai Elo-heinu
melech ha'olam, she'asa
nisim laavotenu, bayamim
hahem bizman hazeh.*

ברוך אתה אד-ני, אל-הינו מלך העולם,
שעשה נסים לאבותינו, בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

Blessed are you, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe,
Who performed miracles for our forefathers in those days, at this time.

BLESSING 3

*Baruch atah Ado-nai,
Elo-heinu melech ha'olam,
shehecheyanu, vekiyemanu,
vehigi'anu lizman hazeh.*

ברוך אתה אד-ני, אל-הינו מלך העולם,
שהחיינו וקימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.

We kindle these lights, to commemorate the saving acts, miracles, and wonders that You have performed for our ancestors, in those days at this time, through Your holy Kohanim. Throughout the eight days of Chanukah, these lights are sacred. And we are not permitted to make use of them, but only to look at them—in order to offer thanks and praise to Your great name for Your miracles, for Your wonders, and for Your salvations.

"HANEROT HALALU"



הנרות הללו אנו מדליקין,
על התשועות, ועל הנסים,
ועל הנפלאות, שעשית
לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן
הזה, על ידי בהניך הקדושים.
וכל שמונת ימי חנוכה, הנרות
הללו קדש הם, ואין לנו
רשות להשתמש בהן, אלא
לראותם בלבד, כדי להודות
ולהלל לשמך הגדול,
על נסידך ועל נפלאותיך
ועל ישועותיך.

Chanukah Customs

In addition to lighting the menorah at home, Jewish communities have adopted a rich variety of customs in honor of the holiday, each with its own unique symbolism and meaning.



FOOD MADE WITH OIL

The custom to consume foods with oil, commemorating the miracle of the menorah oil, goes back many centuries. An eighteenth-century rabbi in Morocco testifies that he saw a manuscript written by Rabbi Maimon (born ca. 1110 CE), father of Maimonides, noting the importance of consuming “sufganim,” meaning fried desserts, on Chanukah. From here we have the widely-observed custom of eating donuts on the holiday today. Another beloved holiday tradition, rooted in the Jewish communities of Central and Eastern Europe and further popularized with their mass immigration to the United States, is to eat fried potato latkes. One of the earliest American Jewish cookbooks, Aunt Babette’s Cookbook: Foreign and Domestic Recipes for the Household, published in Cincinnati in 1889, includes a latke recipe.



DAIRY FOODS

Judith, a Jewish woman of great valor, managed to single-handedly neutralize an army that threatened to hurt her people. After gaining access to an enemy commander’s quarters under the pretense of friendship, she served him cheese, which rendered him thirsty and eager to drink her wine. Once he was inebriated and had fallen asleep, she killed him. A number of sources place this story in the context of Chanukah. To commemorate this victory and Judith’s courage, we consume dairy foods on Chanukah.



DREIDEL

A number of seventeenth-century sources indicate that European Jews would play games involving dice on Chanukah. In time, the *dreidel*, a squared spinning toy, became the norm, with the letters *nun*,

gimel, *hei*, and *shin* written on its

four sides. Rabbi Yitschak of Radvil (1751–1835) writes that in his day, it was widely understood that these letters were an acronym for נס גדול היה שם, “a great miracle occurred there”—the Chanukah miracles that transpired in the Land of Israel. A famous book on Jewish customs, published in 1930, proposes that when the Syrian-Greeks forbade the Jews from teaching Torah, their children would continue to study Torah in secret, at great risk, by pretending to simply be gathering to play dice.

A notable Chanukah custom is for parents (and other relatives) to give children gifts of money. One explanation for this custom points to the name Chanukah itself, which in the Hebrew language comes from the word *chinuch*, “education.” After being unable to teach their children Torah during the period of oppressive occupation, the Jews who lived through the Chanukah story had to begin the education process anew for their children. Giving gifts of money was a way to incentivize these renewed Torah studies. It also carries a great message that is of particular relevance to education: On its own, money satisfies none of our human needs; but with some effort, it can be used to purchase the things we require. In the same way, G-d has given each of us vast resources to learn and grow—but they only become useful if we tap into them and “cash in.”

CHANUKAH GELT

MEGILAH

There was once a common custom to read a special *megilah* in the synagogue recounting the story of *Chanukah*. Called *Megilat Antiochus* or *Megilat Beit Chashmona'i*, the text of this *megilah*, written in Aramaic, is quite ancient, with some attributing its authorship to the students of Hillel and Shamai, who lived during the first century CE. This custom is still observed today by some Jews with roots in the Middle East. Others suffice with a brief text that is inserted into the Amidah and Grace after Meals.

PUBLIC LIGHTING

The obligation to kindle the menorah pertains to the home. It is also customary, however, to light the menorah in the synagogue each evening of Chanukah. This practice began when repressive regimes made it difficult for Jews to light the candles *outside* of their homes. Unable to publicize the miracle from home, Jews began kindling the menorah at the synagogue (in addition to inside their homes) so that the entire community could witness and participate in the commemoration—a modicum of publicity. Today it is common for public lightings to take place in public areas.



SOURCES

Food Made with Oil For the quote from Rabbi Maimon, see Rabbi Yehudah Toledano, *Kovets Sarid Vepalit*, p. 8 (Jerusalem, 1945). About *latkes*, see Carol Green Ungar, “The Little Known Story Behind the Latke,” *Jewish Action*, Winter 2013.

Dairy Foods See *Otsar Hamidrashim* 1, pp. 192–193; Rashi, Shabbat 23a; Shulchan Aruch, *Orach Chayim* 670:2.

Dreidel Regarding the seventeenth century, see *Responsa Chavot Ya'ir* 126. The quote from Rabbi Yitschak can be found in *Or Yitschak* (Jerusalem, 1966), p. 79. The book from 1930 is *Otsar Kol Minhagei Yeshurun* (Lvov, 1930), 19:4.

Chanukah Gelt The explanation provided is from *Likutei Levi Yitschak: Tanach Umaamarei Chazal*, p. 358, and *Igrot Kodesh* 28, pp. 76–77.

Megilah See *Halachot Gedolot* (Berlin, 1888), vol. 3, p. 615. See further Rabbi Yitschak Ratsabi, *Shemen Lama'or*, pp. 45ff.; *Minhagei Yisrael* 5, pp. 102–120.

Public Lighting Shulchan Aruch, *Orach Chayim* 671:7; Responsa Rivash 111.

Chanukah Celebrated throughout the Military!



Chanukah Recipes

POTATO LATKES



- 5 peeled potatoes
- 1 large onion
- 4 eggs
- 1 tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- ¾ c. oil for frying
- ½ c. flour (optional)

Grate potatoes and onion on the fine side of a grater, or in a food processor; or put in a blender with a little water.

Strain grated potatoes and onion, pressing out excess water. Add eggs and flour, and seasoning. Mix well.

Heat ½ cup oil in skillet. Lower flame and place 1 large tbsp. batter at a time into hot, sizzling oil. Fry on one side for approximately 5 mins. until golden brown. Turn over and fry on other side 2 to 3 mins.

Remove from pan and place on paper towels to drain excess oil. Continue with remaining batter until used up, adding more oil when necessary.

VARIATION

Zucchini or Carrot Latkes: Substitute 5 medium zucchini or 5 medium carrots for potatoes.

YIELD: 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

Adapted with permission from the *Spice and Spirit Cookbook*

SUFGANIYOT



- 2 oz. fresh yeast
- ¼ c. warm water
- 2 tsps. sugar
- 1 egg
- ¼ c. water
- ¼ c. orange juice
- Pinch salt
- 3 tbsps. margarine
- 1 tbsp. oil
- ¾ c. flour
- ½ c. sugar
- Oil for frying
- Jam for filling (optional)
- Confectioners' sugar

In a large bowl, dissolve yeast and sugar in water. Allow to stand for several minutes until bubbly.

Add remaining ingredients and knead until smooth, about 15 to 20 min. Cover dough and allow to rise until doubled in bulk—about 1 hour.

Roll out dough ½-inch thick on a floured surface. Cut into circles with doughnut cutter. Let rise again until doubled in bulk, about 30 min.

Heat 3 to 4 inches of oil in a 4-quart pot until hot. Deep-fry doughnuts in hot oil with cover on pot (it makes doughnuts expand).

When golden brown, remove cover, turn doughnuts over, and brown on second side. Remove with slotted spoon.

Drain and cool on paper towels. Fill with jam and sprinkle with confectioners' sugar.

YIELD: 2 DOZEN

The First Chanukah Light in Bergen-Belsen

Chanukah came to Bergen-Belsen. A jug of oil was not to be found, no candle was in sight, and a menorah belonged to the distant past. Instead, a wooden clog, the shoe of one of the inmates, became a menorah; strings pulled from a concentration camp uniform, a wick; and the black camp shoe polish, pure oil.

Rabbi Yisrael Spira chanted the first two blessings in a voice filled with sorrow and pain. When he was about to recite the third blessing, he stopped, turned his head, and looked around as if he were searching for something. But immediately, he turned his face back to the makeshift menorah, and in a strong, reassuring voice, chanted the third blessing: "Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, Who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion." The rabbi then kindled the flame and the ceremony was brought to a close.

Among the people present was a Mr. Zamietchkowski, one of the leaders of the Warsaw Bund. As soon as the rabbi had finished the ceremony, Zamietchkowski elbowed his way to the rabbi and said, "Spira, you are a clever and honest person. But the fact that you recited the third blessing is beyond me. How could you thank G-d for granting us life and enabling us to reach this occasion when hundreds of dead Jewish bodies are lying within the shadows of the Chanukah lights and thousands of living Jewish skeletons are walking around in the camp? For this you are thankful to G-d? You call this 'keeping us alive'?"

"Zamietchkowski, you are correct," answered the rabbi. "When I reached the third blessing, I also hesitated. I asked myself what I should



This menorah, created with Sten gun cartridge cases, was made by a Jewish soldier of the British Army so that the children who survived Bergen-Belsen could celebrate the first Chanukah after liberation (1945). (Imperial War Museum, London)

RABBI YISRAEL SPIRA (1889–1989)



was the spiritual leader and rebbe of the Bluzhov Chasidim. A scion of distinguished Chasidic rabbis, he led congregations in several Polish towns until World War II. His wife and other family members were murdered by the Nazis, but he survived several concentration camps, including Bergen-Belsen. He settled in the United States in 1946, remarried, and reestablished his Chasidic community. Many of his wartime experiences are documented in Yaffa Eliach's *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*.

do with this blessing. I turned my head in order to ask the other rabbis who were standing near me if indeed I might recite the blessing. But as I turned, I noticed the throng standing behind me, a large crowd of living Jews, their faces expressing faith, devotion, and concentration as they participated in the rite of the Chanukah lights.

I told myself: "If G-d has such a nation that even at times like this, when death lurks from every corner, the people nevertheless stand in throngs and with devotion to commemorate His miracles—if, indeed, I was blessed to see such a people with so much faith and fervor, then I am under a special obligation to thank G-d for keeping me alive to witness this occasion."



Yaffa Eliach, Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust

(New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 13–15

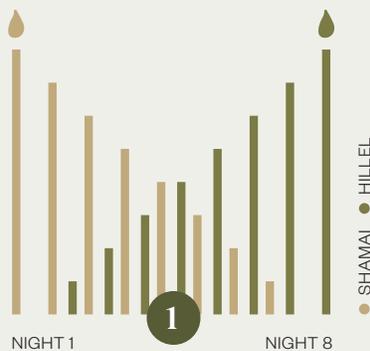
8

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

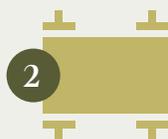
Enliven your menorah-lighting ritual or holiday party with family and friends by posing these meaningful discussion starters:

The Talmud debated the progression of Chanukah lights—whether to progressively *decrease* (from eight flames on night one until a single flame on night eight), or to *increase* (from a single flame on night one until eight flames on night eight).

Can you suggest an argument for both of these approaches?



How would you describe the proper balance between maintaining a strong Jewish identity and integrating into the larger society?



Among other things, Chanukah celebrates the victory of the underdog.

Can you share an experience in which you were involved in an underdog victory?



What were the Maccabees fighting for? Is their struggle relevant today? How so?



Many foods are associated with Jewish life and culture.

Can you argue for the primacy of the Chanukah latke by pointing to life lessons we can derive from this food?



Imagine you had the ability to *briefly* communicate with the Jews of old who were suffering under Syrian-Greek persecution.

What would you tell them?



There are numerous Jewish symbols—the menorah, Star of David, Torah scroll, etc.

Can you present an argument for identifying the menorah as the ideal Jewish symbol?



What do you find to be the most emotionally powerful element of Chanukah?



The Festival's Visuals

THE TEMPLE'S MENORAH



SYNAGOGUE MURAL

In 1928, the nearly intact ruins of a synagogue were excavated in Eastern Syria's Dura-Europos, a former garrison and trading center along the Euphrates. Its construction was traced to 244 CE, making it one of the world's oldest synagogues. Remarkably, it featured extraordinary wall paintings, depicting narratives from the Torah, including several menorahs. The branched menorah in this image

(flanked to the right with an *etrog* and *lulav*, the Temple façade, and a depiction of the Binding of Isaac) was painted above a niche that housed the Torah ark. The murals were removed and preserved in the National Museum of Damascus.

MAIMONIDES'S DRAWING

Maimonides's original handwritten commentary to the Mishnah, composed in the Arabic language using Hebrew characters, survives to this day. In this nearly 900-year-old text, Maimonides personally sketched the design of the Temple's menorah. Of particular interest is his decision to draw diagonal rather than arched branches, indicating that he regarded this to be the proper shape of the Temple's menorah.



Bodleian Library, Oxford, U.K., MS. Pococke 295, fol. 184v

THE CHANUKAH STORY



Keter Kehunah—Sefer Yosipon (Yiddish translation), Amsterdam, 1743 (Library of Agudas Chasidei Chabad, Brooklyn, N.Y.)

JUDAH THE MACCABEE

The Mishnah and Talmud contain surprisingly sparse information on the Chanukah saga. For further detail, Jews have turned to *Yosipon*, a Hebrew version of the writings of Josephus Flavius, who composed historical works during the first century. Presented here is a Yiddish translation of *Yosipon*. Unique to this edition are accompanying woodcuts depicting key scenes—including Judah the Maccabee's battle against the Greeks, shown above.

Judith, a Jewish woman of great valor, single-handedly neutralized an army threatening her people. She gained access to the enemy commander's tent under the pretense of friendship and served him cheese that made him thirsty, followed by strong wine. Once he fell into inebriated slumber, Judith killed him. Several sources place this story in the context of the Chanukah saga. Judith's story was a favorite for many Jewish artists, including the artist of the Rothschild Miscellany, crafted in northern Italy between 1460–1480. Here is a liturgical poem recited by several communities, with a depiction of Judith leaving the general's tent, her mission accomplished.



Rothschild Miscellany, Ms. 180/51, fol. 217r (Israel Museum, Jerusalem)

OLDEST DRAWING

The oldest extant depiction of a Jew kindling a Chanukah menorah hovers in the margins of a collection of Chanukah laws, *Piskei Rabbi Yeshayah Acharon*, a halachic compendium by Rabbi Yeshayah of Trani (d. 1280). The drawing was created in northern Italy, in 1374. The menorah's tooth-shaped, top-rear wall seems to mimic the parapets of medieval castles—a design familiar to artists and menorah designers of that era. The Jew in this depiction kindles the flame with the left hand—as is halachically appropriate for a left-handed individual.



MS. Oriental 5024, folio 19r (British Library, London)

ATTACHED TO THE WALL

The fifteenth-century rise of printed works caused an initial decline in handwritten manuscripts in the Jewish community. But in the eighteenth century, illustrated manuscript experienced a renaissance—they were commissioned by wealthy Jews eager to invest in Judaica. This image, from a 1724 booklet by the artist Aaron Wolf Herlingen (1700–1768) containing the Grace after Meals and other blessings, illustrates the



Seder Birkat Hamazon, ms. 8232, p. 15 (JTS Library, New York)

Ve'al Hanisim prayer with a depiction of a man kindling a menorah that is attached to the wall beside his door. (In several communities, it is customary to kindle the menorah inside the home, beside a door. According to this custom, the home menorah announces the miracle to the household, whereas the synagogue menorah announces it for the community.)



BH

Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston Jewish Activities



CHANUKAH CELEBRATION

Thursday, December 22, 2022, at 1800 (6 pm)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO RSVP
PLEASE CONTACT THE FSH JEWISH CHAPLAIN AT
MENACHEM.M.STERN.MIL@ARMY.MIL**



על הנסים ועל הפרקן ועל הגבורות ועל התשועות ועל המלחמות שעשית
לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

We thank You G-D 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.

(Chanukah praises, Siddur)



Spreading the light of Chanukah in San Antonio

Night 1

Sunday DEC 18
.....

3:00 pm
6:00 pm

CHANUKAH ON THE RIVER

Arneson River Theater 418 Vilita St.

Day 2

Tuesday DEC 20
.....

3:00 pm
6:00 pm

CHANUKAH WONDERLAND

Chabad Center 14535 Blanco Rd.

Day 3

Wednesday DEC 21
.....

11:30 am
1:00 pm

SUNSHINE CLUB LUNCHEON

Chabad Center 14535 Blanco Rd.

Night 4

Wednesday DEC 21
.....

6:00 pm
8:00 pm

YJSA CHANUKAH AT PEARL

Shade Structure at Pearl 303 Pearl Pkwy

Night 5

Thursday DEC 22
.....

6:00 pm
8:00 pm

CTEEN CHANUKAH AT THE ALAMO

300 Alamo Plaza

Night 8

Sunday DEC 25
.....

7:00 pm
9:00 pm

WOMEN'S ROSH CHODESH

Chabad Center 14535 Blanco Rd.



**Happy Chanukah from the
Chabad Center for Jewish Life & Learning**

20TH ANNIVERSARY

THE CHABAD CENTER PRESENTS

CHANUKAH ON THE RIVER!

ARNESON RIVER THEATRE



SUNDAY
DEC. 18
2022



maccabeats
LIVE IN CONCERT!



3:00 p.m.

Chanukah Cruise Experience

\$8.00/person. Includes:

- Boat Ride
- Interactive Entertainment
- Chocolate Gelt

4:00 p.m. 9 ft. Menorah Lighting

The Maccabeats Live In Concert

Free & open to the public!

- Kosher Concessions
- Community Leaders & Dignitaries
- Free donuts courtesy of H-E-B

CHANUKAHONTHERIVER.COM



THE ANNUAL ALEPH MILITARY

VIRTUAL

CHANUKAH CONCERT

FEATURING: NISSIM BLACK

DECEMBER 19, 7:30 PM EST



*Dedicated in honor of
the Jewish Service Members
of The United States Armed Forces*



Chanukah on the River
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18TH,
2022 1500 (3 PM)

Arneson River Theater (418
Vallita St. 78205)

To reserve your tickets, visit
www.chabadsa.com/5715001

JBSA-FSH Chanukah Celebration
THURSDAY, DECEMBER
22ND, 2022 1800 (6 PM)

Stern Residence, JBSA-FSH, TX

For more info and to RSVP
please contact Chaplain Stern

Virtual Chanukah Concert for
the Military

THURSDAY, DECEMBER
22ND, 2022 1830 (6:30
PM)

[https://alephmilitary.org/
concert/](https://alephmilitary.org/concert/)

For more information please contact Chaplain Stern
Phone: (347) 387-2899
Email: MENACHEM.M.STERN.MIL@ARMY.MIL

