

# Family Guide for Chanukah

Kislev 5771

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## Chanukah

Chanukah is known as the Festival of Lights. It is an eight-day long holiday which commemorates the end of Greek rule over the Temple in Jerusalem. Therefore, Chanukah celebrates the victory of the few over the many, religious freedom and the triumph of the Jewish way of life over great adversity. The very lighting of the Hanukkiyah brings a sense of hope into our homes.

## Lighting the Candles

The candles are the heart of the Chanukah celebration. The Hanukkiyah has nine candle holders – eight for the eight days of Chanukah, and one for the Shamash or helper candle. This candle is used to light all the other candles. The Shamash stands taller than the other candles or is off to the side, so that you can identify its correct place.

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We put the candles in each evening beginning on the right of the Hanukkiyah (the way we read Hebrew) but light them in the opposite direction (newest candle first). Each night we add a candle – on the first night there is one candle on the far right plus the Shamash; on the second night two candles on the right plus the Shamash and so on...

Light the Shamash. Hold it, say the blessing and then light the candles with the Shamash. On the first night of Chanukah we add a third prayer, the Shehecheyanu prayer. This prayer expresses our appreciation at reaching this occasion once again.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של חנוכה.

*Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tsivanu l'hadlik ner shel Chanukah. Blessed are You, our God, Sovereign of all, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to kindle the Chanukah lights.*

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם שעשה נסים לאבותינו ואמותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

*Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, she-asah nisim laavoteinu v'imoteinu bayamim hahaeim baz'man hazeh. Blessed are You, our God, Sovereign of all, who performed wondrous deeds for our ancestors in days of old at this season.*

*For first night only:*

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

*Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higianu laz'man hazeh. Blessed are You, our God, Sovereign of all, for giving us life, for sustaining us, and for enabling us to reach this season.*

# Fun and Games!

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## Key Terms

- Shamash = “server” The candle used to light all of the other candles.
- Maccabees = Defenders of Jewish religious freedom; Mattathias, Judah and his brothers = the heroes of Chanukah. The word literally means “hammer,” (given to Judah and his followers because of their might in the fight for freedom).
- Chanukah = “rededication” of the Holy Temple to the Service of God.
- Antiochus = Greek (Assyrian) Ruler over Israel. During the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.E. he forced the Jews to worship Greek gods by prohibiting the study of Torah.
- Menorah = More specifically “Hanukkah.” The eight-branched candelabrum which we kindle during Chanukah. The eight branches represent the eight days of the holiday.
- Nes Gadol Hayah Sham = “A great miracle happened there,” the miracle of the oil... The first letter of each Hebrew word appears on the dreidel.



## Rules of the Game

To play the dreidel game, each player needs some candies or pennies. Each player puts one into the “pot.” Everyone takes turns spinning the dreidel.

If the dreidel falls on:

- Nun = don't take or put anything
- Gimmel = take everything in the “pot”
- Hay = Take half the “pot”
- Shin = put one back into the “pot”

The player who has all of the pennies or candies at the end wins.

## Home Activities

- ✓ Check out the URJ website for Chanukah: <http://urj.org/holidays/chanukah/>
- ✓ Chanukah is a festival of lights. Try using (or even making) a different Hanukkah for each person in your household.
- ✓ Freedom is very important. Today in some places in the world there are still people who are not free to practice their religion. Write letters on their behalf. You may find information on where to write through Amnesty International.
- ✓ Visit a hospital's children's ward and organize a game of dreidel for the children there.
- ✓ Talk about as a family:
  - How can we be more like a Shamash in our lives?
  - What do the lights of Chanukah help us remember?
  - Why is Chanukah the festival of re-dedication?
  - What is the “real” miracle of Chanukah?

# Chanukah Foods

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## Potato Latkes

### Ingredients

2 cups peeled and shredded potatoes  
1 tablespoon grated onion  
3 eggs, beaten  
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour  
1 1/2 teaspoons salt  
1/2 cup peanut oil for frying

### Directions

1. Place the potatoes in a cheesecloth and wring, extracting as much moisture as possible.
2. In a medium bowl stir the potatoes, onion, eggs, flour and salt together.
3. In a large heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-high heat, heat the oil until hot. Place large spoonfuls of the potato mixture into the hot oil, pressing down on them to form 1/4 to 1/2 inch thick patties. Brown on one side, turn and brown on the other. Let drain on paper towels. Serve hot!

## Doughnuts (Suf-gan-i-yot)

### Ingredients

2 (.25 ounce) envelopes active dry yeast  
1/4 cup warm water (105 to 115 degrees)  
1 1/2 cups lukewarm milk  
1/2 cup white sugar  
1 teaspoon salt  
2 eggs  
1/3 cup shortening  
5 cups all-purpose flour  
1 quart vegetable oil for frying  
1/3 cup butter  
2 cups confectioners' sugar  
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla  
4 tablespoons hot water or as needed

### Directions

- Sprinkle the yeast over the warm water, and let stand for 5 minutes, or until foamy.
1. In a large bowl, mix together the yeast mixture, milk, sugar, salt, eggs, shortening, and 2 cups of the flour. Mix for a few minutes at low speed, or stirring with a wooden spoon. Beat in remaining flour 1/2 cup at a time, until the dough no longer sticks to the bowl. Knead for about 5 minutes, or until smooth and elastic. Place the dough into a greased bowl, and cover. Set in a warm place to rise until double. Dough is ready if you touch it, and the indentation remains.
  2. Turn the dough out onto a floured surface, and gently roll out to 1/2 inch thickness. Cut with a floured doughnut cutter. Let doughnuts sit out to rise again until double. Cover loosely with a cloth.
  3. Melt butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Stir in confectioners' sugar and vanilla until smooth. Remove from heat, and stir in hot water one tablespoon at a time until the icing is somewhat thin, but not watery. Set aside.
  4. Heat oil in a deep-fryer or large heavy skillet to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Slide doughnuts into the hot oil using a wide spatula. Turn doughnuts over as they rise to the surface. Fry doughnuts on each side until golden brown. Remove from hot oil, to drain on a wire rack. Dip doughnuts into the glaze while still hot, and set onto wire racks to drain off excess. Keep a cookie sheet or tray under racks for easier clean up.

**Hanukkah**

