



# חַנּוּכָּה CHANUKAH

## HISTORY OF CHANUKAH

The Jewish holiday of *Chanukah*, the “Festival of Lights,” celebrates two miracles — a great Jewish military victory and a miraculous spiritual victory in the Temple.



At *Chanukah*, Jews commemorate the victory of the Maccabees over the Greek/Syrian forces of King Antiochus in the year 165 B.C.E. That regime sought to impose paganism on the Jewish people. A group called the Maccabees, led by a man named Mattathias and his brothers, revolted against these Hellenistic authorities.

On the 25th day of the Jewish month of *Kislev* (usually this date falls during December on our calendar) they miraculously regained control over the Temple, cleansed it from defilement, and rededicated it. That's what *Chanukah* means, "rededication."

## 8 CANDLES

In the ancient Temple, there was a flame that had to stay lit all the time. But when the Maccabees came into the Temple to light the flame, there was only enough oil to keep it burning for one day. After they lit it, however, a miracle occurred — the lamp remained lit for eight days until the new oil arrived. This is how *Chanukah* became known as the “Festival of Lights.” To commemorate this miracle, during *Chanukah* we light the *channukiah* or *Chanukah menorah*. We light one candle each night of *Chanukah* and offer prayers thanking God for the miracles performed for our ancestors and us. The extra candle - used to light the others - is called the *shamash* or “helper.”



## LIGHTING THE CANDLES

**CANDLES** are added to the *channukiah* or *Chanukah menorah*, from right to left but are kindled from left to right. The newest candle is lit first. (On the *Shabbat* during *Chanukah*, kindle the *Chanukah* lights first and then the *Shabbat* candles.)



Light the *Shamash* - the helper candle - first using it to kindle the rest of the *Chanukah* lights; say or sing the prayers.

## MUSIC

*Ma'Oz Tzur* (“Rock of Ages”), a *Chanukah* song, traditionally is sung after the lighting of the candles each night, and at other times throughout the holiday. It was composed in Europe in the 12th or 13th century.

Rock of Ages, let our song praise Your saving power.  
You amid the raging throng were our sheltering tower.  
Furious they assailed us, but Your help availed us.  
And Your word broke their sword when our own strength failed us.

*Ma-oz Tzur Y'shu-a-ti, Le-cha Na-eh L'sha-bei-ach*  
*Ti-kon Beit T'fi-la-ti, V'sham To-da N'za-bei-ach*  
*L'eit Ta-chin Mat-bei-ach, Mi-tzar Ha-mi-ga-bei-ach*  
*Az Eg-mor B'shir Miz-mor, Cha-nu-kat Ha-miz-bei-ach*  
*Az Eg-mor B'shir Miz-mor, Cha-nu-kat Ha-miz-bei-ach*

“I Have a Little Dreidel” is a modern-day children’s song frequently sung during the Festival of Lights. Other holiday favorites include “*Chanukah, Oh Chanukah*,” “*Sivivon, sov, sov, sov*,” a Hebrew folk-song, “*Light One Candle*,” written by Peter Yarrow, and “*The Latke Song*,” by Debbie Friedman, z.l., the renowned Jewish singer and songwriter.

Music and lyrics for Chanukah songs  
can be found at [www.ReformJudaism.org](http://www.ReformJudaism.org)

## PRAYERS /BLESSINGS

On the first night of *Chanukah*, recite all three blessings.  
On all subsequent nights, recite blessings number 1 and 2.

1. Blessed are You, Eternal our God, Ruler of the universe, who sanctifies us with commandments, and commands us to kindle the *Chanukah* light.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי	<i>Baruch atah Adonai</i>
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	<i>Elohanu melech ha-olam</i>
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו	<i>Asher kideshanu bimitzvotav</i>
וּצְוָנוּ	<i>Vitzivanu</i>
לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל חֲנֻכָּה	<i>Lechadlic ner shel chanukah</i>

2. Blessed are You, Eternal our God, Ruler of the universe, who performed miracles for our ancestors in those days, at this time.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי	<i>Baruch atah Adonai</i>
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	<i>Eloheinu melech ha-olam</i>
שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ	<i>Shehasah nissim la'avoteinu</i>
בְּיָמֵינוּ הַהֵם	<i>Ba-yamin ha-heim</i>
בְּזִמְנוֹ הַזֶּה	<i>Ba-z'man ha-zeh</i>

### First Night Only

3. Blessed are You, Eternal our God, Ruler of the universe, who gives us life, sustains us, and enables us to be in this moment.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי	<i>Baruch atah Adonai</i>
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	<i>Eloheinu melech ha-olam</i>
שֶׁהֵחֵיָנוּ	<i>Shehecheyanu</i>
וְקִיָּמָנוּ	<i>V'ki-y'manu</i>
וְהִגִּיעָנוּ	<i>V'higiyanu</i>
לְזִמְנוֹ הַזֶּה	<i>Lazman hazeh</i>

## SPIN THE DREIDEL (S'VIVON)

The word *dreidel* derives from a German word meaning “spinning top,” and is the toy used in a *Chanukah* game adapted from an old German gambling game. In Hebrew it is called a *s’vivon*.



**How to Play:** Players begin by putting into a central pot or “kitty” a certain number of coins, chocolate money known as gelt, nuts, buttons or other small objects.



Each player in turn spins the *dreidel* and proceeds as follows:

- נ *nun* – take nothing
- ג *gimmel* – take everything
- ה *hey* – take half
- ש *shin* – put one in

The winner is the person who collects all the gambling pieces.

## Congregational Shabbat Chanukah Service

Visit [www.commsyn.org](http://www.commsyn.org) for Shabbat service information.