

A Hanukkah Song & Blessings

Maoz Tzur

Ma-oz tzur y'shu-a-tee
L'cha na-e l'sha-be-ah.
Ti-kon bet t'fee-la-tee
v'sham to-da n'za-be-ah.
L'et ta-chin mat-be-ah
mee-tzar ha-m'na-be-ah.
Az eg-mor b'shir miz-mor
Ha-nu-kat ha-miz-be-ah.



Hanukkiah

Rock of Ages

Rock of Ages, let our song
Praise Your saving power!
You, amidst the raging foes,
Were our shelt'ring tower.
Furious, they assailed us,
But Your arm availed us.
And Your word
Broke their sword—
When our own strength
falled us.

Recite these blessings before lighting
the candles each night:

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך
העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו
וצונו להדליק נר של חנוכה.

*Ba-ruch Atta Ado-nai, Elo-heynu Melech
Ha-Olam, Asher Kid'sha-nu B'mits-vo-tav,
V'tsee-vanu, l'had-leek ner shel Hanukkah*

Praised are you, the Eternal our God, Ruler of
the Universe, who has sanctified our lives
through Mitzvot, commanding us to kindle
the Hanukkah lights.

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך
העולם שהחיינו וקיימנו והגינו
לזמן הזה.

*Ba-ruch Atta Ado-nai, Elo-heynu Melech
Ha-Olam, She-Asah Nissim La-Avo-taynu
Ba-ya-mim Ha-haim baz-man ha-zeh.*

Praised are you, the Eternal our God, Ruler of
the Universe, who performed miracles for
our ancestors in those days, in this season.

On the first night we also recite
shehecheyanu:

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך
העולם שעשה נסים לאבותינו
במים ההם בזמן הזה.

*Ba-ruch Atta Ado-nai, Elo-heynu Melech
Ha-Olam, She-heche-yanu, V'kee-y-manu,
V'hig-ee-yanu laz-man ha-zeh.*

Praised are you, the Eternal our God, Ruler of
the universe, for giving us life, sustaining us,
and for enabling us to reach this season.



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A Guide to Hanukkah



The Story

Hanukkah is the eight-day Jewish festival of lights. It recalls the first fight for religious freedom in recorded history.

In the second century B.C.E., Jews rejected the demand of Antiochus IV, a Greek king ruling from Syria, that he be worshipped as a god. He retaliated harshly, invading Jerusalem on Shabbat, burning our holy texts, desecrating the altar of the Temple with idol worship, and slaughtering or enslaving resistant Jews.

From the village of Modin, the priest Mattathias led the revolt against the Jewish Hellenists, who were trying to spread Greek culture and religion. Upon the death of Mattathias in 166 B.C.E., his son, Judah the Maccabee, succeeded him.

Judah and his forces recaptured Jerusalem and purified the Temple, which was rededicated to God on the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev in 165 BCE. The celebration lasted for eight days, and it was decreed that the festival of Hanukkah be observed annually for the same eight calendar days.

The Talmud (Tractate Shabbat, 21b) states that Hanukkah goes on for eight days because the pure oil found in the Temple, enough for only one day, miraculously burned for eight.



jelly doughnut



The Festival

At home, the nine-candled Hanukkah menorah is placed in a window “to advertise the miracle.” On each of the eight nights, candles are lit by a “servant” candle called the **shamash**—one on the first night, two on the second, and an additional one on each successive night. All family members take part in the lighting, which is accompanied by blessings and the singing of “*Maoz Tzur*” (“Rock of Ages”) and other Hanukkah songs.

On Sabbath eve, Hanukkah candles are lit before sunset; on Saturday night, after nightfall. The light of freedom overcoming the darkness of tyranny is a key Hanukkah message.

The festival commemorates a spiritual victory far more than a military triumph. The prophetic reading in the Hanukkah Sabbath service contains the words: “Not by might nor power but by my spirit, says the Eternal.” (Zechariah 4:6)



dreidel

During Hanukkah in Israel, large electric menorahs shine proudly throughout the eight days atop rural settlement water towers; urban public buildings display huge menorahs; public lighting ceremonies and torchlight parades take place everywhere; and a torch lit in Modi’in is raced in relays to Tel Aviv where, before a cheering populace, it lights the Great Synagogue’s menorah.



latke
(potato pancake)

Hanukkah customs worldwide include gift-giving; eating latkes (potato pancakes), sufganiot (jelly doughnuts), or other foods cooked in oil; spinning a dreidel, a four-sided top with Hebrew initials of the phrase: “A great miracle occurred there;” putting on Hanukkah plays; and singing.