

THE FESTIVAL
OF LIGHTS

| CHANUKAH



Chanukah is a winter holiday, also known as the Festival of Lights. The word “Chanukah” means dedication, as it celebrates the rededication of the ancient Temple after it was defiled by the Greeks and reclaimed by the Maccabees.

The ancient Greeks, led by King Antiochus, tried to forbid Jewish practice and wanted all Jews to assimilate to Greek, pagan practices. Chanukah celebrates a twofold miracle. First, that the Maccabees (a small group of Jewish rebels led by Judah Maccabee and his brothers) had a military victory over the Greek army, reclaiming the Temple in Jerusalem. And second, when the Temple was cleaned, a small jug of oil was found to light the menorah. Instead of only lasting one day, the jug lasted for eight days.

CUSTOMS AND SYMBOLS

CHANUKAH MENORAH (also known as a *chanukiya*)

The Chanukah menorah holds eight candles plus one additional candle that is set aside or in the center of the menorah known as the *shamash*, which is used to light the other candles. A candle is lit for each night of the holiday. Since Chanukah celebrates religious freedom, many light their menorahs in a window, and some organizations have large, outdoor or public menorah-lighting ceremonies.

DREIDEL

The dreidel is a four-sided spinning top that can be used as a children’s game. The legend of Chanukah says that in the times of the Maccabees, people were forbidden from learning Torah. When learning Torah in secret, Jews would bring dreidels with them and if they were caught, they would take out the dreidels and pretend they were just playing the game all along.



SUFGANIYOT AND LATKES

To celebrate the miracle of the oil, there is a tradition to eat foods cooked in oil on Chanukah. One popular food is fried donuts known as *sufganiyot*. Another popular treat is latkes, fried potato pancakes. Many people enjoy their latkes with apple sauce and/or sour cream.

GIFTS OR GELT

Many families give gifts on Chanukah, though this tradition is a newer, American tradition that coincides with the increased practice of gift-giving for Christmas. A slightly older Jewish tradition is giving gelt or money to children or teachers. Today, gelt also refers to chocolate coins, which are another Chanukah treat.

ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES

- **Decorate Your Own Chanukah Cookies or Plain Donuts**
Use frosting, candy and the toppings of your choice.
- **Make Your Own Menorah** Paint a 8-10" block of wood with acrylic paint. Glue nine 3/8" nuts to the top to serve as candle holders for your Chanukah candles.
- **Find the Oil** Buy a small bottle of olive oil and hide it in a different place in your house every night for Chanukah. Have your kids search the house for the bottle of oil!
- **Fry Your Own Sufganiyot** Use defrosted dinner rolls (try Rhodes dough) to fry your very own *sufganiyot*. Fill them with jelly and/or roll them in cinnamon sugar to sweeten.
- **Watch a Chanukah Episode of Your Favorite Show**
Some favorites are Rugrats, The Nanny, Friends (the Holiday Armadillo!) and The Goldbergs.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, ACTIVITIES
AND RECIPES, VISIT

mandeljcc.org/holidays



Jewish Holiday Calendar *The dates of Jewish holidays shift slightly on the secular calendar from year to year since the Jewish calendar is based on the lunar cycle. Holidays begin the evening before at sundown.*