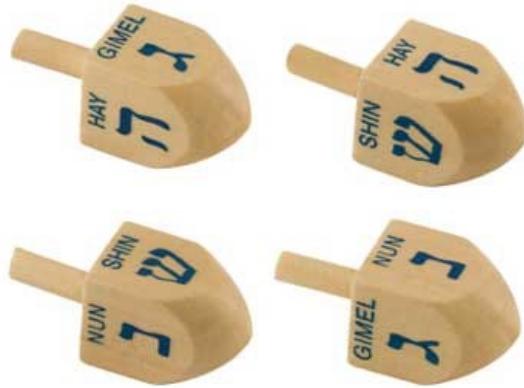


Hanukkah Guide



The word *dreidel* derives from a German word meaning “spinning top,” and is the toy used in a Hanukkah game adapted from an old German gambling game.

Hanukkah was one of the few times of the year when rabbis permitted games of chance. The four sides of the top bear

four Hebrew letters: *nun*, *gimmel*, *hey*, and *shin*. 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

וְנַעֲ

- *nun* – take nothing;
- *gimmel* – take everything;
- *hey* – take half;
- *shin* – put one in.

Over time, the letters on the dreidel were reinterpreted to stand for the first letter of each word in the Hebrew statement “*Neis gadol hayah sham*,” which means “A great miracle happened there” and refers to the defeat of the Syrian army and the re-dedication of the Temple. In Israel, one letter on the dreidel differs from those used in the rest of the world. The *shin* has been replaced with a *pey*, transforming the Hebrew statement into *Neis gadol hayah po*, which means “A great miracle happened here.”

We kindle these lights in remembrance of the wondrous deliverance You inspired our ancestors to struggle for and attain. During the eight days of Hanukkah these lights are sacred; we are not to use them but only to gaze upon them, that their glow may rouse us to give thank for Your wondrous saving power.

The lights of Hanukkah are a symbol of our joy. In a time of darkness, our ancestors had the courage to struggle for freedom to be themselves, freedom to worship in their own way. These lights remind us of the victory of the weak over the strong, the few over the many, and the righteous over the arrogant. Let the lights we kindle shine forth for the world. May they illuminate our lives, even as they fill us with thanks that our people have been saved from destruction time and again.



Ritual of lighting the Hanukkah Candles

Menorah is the Hebrew word meaning “candelabrum”. A Hanukkah menorah (a Hanukkiyah) is a special 9-branched menorah in which candles for Hanukkah are placed, lit and blessed. To “announce the miracle” the Hanukkiyah should be placed near a window for all to see. On the 1st night, place one candle at the extreme right, facing you. Light the shamash, the helper, which stands apart from the other 8. Light the candle for that night with the Samash and then say the blessings. On the following nights place the candles in from Right to Left but light them from Left to Right so that you are placing the new candle last but lighting it first. In the first century before the Christian Era, two Sages, Hillel and Shammai had a debate on the ritual of lighting the Hanukkah Menorah: Shammai wanted to honor and remember the sacrifices in the Temple of Jerusalem of Sukkot (the feast of Tabernacles) so he said we should start with 8 lights and decrease by one for each night of the holiday. Hillel disagreed. Hillel ruled that we should start with one and increase the light each night. While we follow the custom of Hillel, we honor and remember the minority opinion of Shammai.

Hanukkah Blessings



ברוך אתה ה' אלקיינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצוותיו וצונו לשבור נר של (שבת ושל) חנוכה.

Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzi-vanu l'hadleek ner shel (Shabbat v'shel) Hanukkah.

Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who makes us holy when we do mitzvot and command us to kindle the candles of (Shabbat and of) Hanukkah.

ברוך אתה ה' אלקיינו מלך העולם, שעשוה נعمות לאבותינו ואמותינו בימים הרים בזמן זהה.

Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam, she-asah neeseem l'avoteinu v'imoteinu, bayamim ha'hem ba-zman ha'zeh.

Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who did miracles for our ancestors on these days in ages past.

Say only on the first night:

ברוך אתה ה' אלקיינו מלך העולם, שהחינו וקיימנו והגינו בזמן זהה.

Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam, shehecheyanu v'keyamanu, v'higgeyanu, lazman hazeh.

Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, for giving us life, for sustaining us and

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