

*The Board, Administration, Faculty, &
Staff
at Vancouver Talmud Torah
wish a*

חג אורים שמחה

Hag Urim Samei'ah

Happy Festival of Lights

to you and your extended families.

*Cathy Lowenstein
School Principal*

*Rabbi Matthew Bellas
School Rabbi*

Hanukkah

December 21st - December 29th, 2008

חנוכה

שנת תשס"ח

“What is Hanukkah? For the Rabbis have taught: Beginning with the twenty-fifth day of the month of Kislev, there are eight days upon which there shall be neither mourning nor fasting. For when the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oil that was there. It was when the might of the Hasmonean dynasty overcame and vanquished them that, upon search, only a single cruse of undefiled oil, sealed by the High Priest, was found. In it was oil enough for the needs of a single day. A miracle was wrought and it burned eight days. The next year they ordained these days a holiday with songs and praises.” (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat 21b)

Now on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, which is called the month Kislev, in the hundred forty and eighth year, they rose up in the morning and offered sacrifice according to the law upon the new altar of burnt offerings, which they had made. At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it was it dedicated with songs, harps, and cymbals. Then all the people fell upon their faces, worshipping and praising the God of heaven, who had given them good success. And so they kept the dedication of the altar eight days and offered burnt offerings with gladness, and sacrificed the sacrifice of deliverance and praise...Thus was there very great gladness among the people, for that the Gentiles were put down. Moreover, Judah and his brethren with the whole congregation of Israel ordained that the days of the dedication of the altar should be kept in their season from year to year for eight days, from the twenty-fifth day of the month Kislev, with joy and gladness. (I Maccabees 4:52-59)

These are two differing textual bases for the celebration of the festival of hanukkah. The first text is from the Talmud, the primary text that records early rabbinic discussions of Jewish law and serves as the foundation for all later rabbinic legal discourse. In this text, hanukkah is a celebration commemorating two great miracles wrought by God on behalf of the Maccabees and the greater Israelite people: the overcoming of a significantly larger and stronger Assyrian army by the small Maccabean army and the small amount of oil lasting for eight days. To the Rabbis, hanukkah is a religious festival that emphasizes the relationship between God and the Jewish people.

The second text is a quotation for the book of I Maccabees, one of the collection of books that comprise the Apocrypha. This volume contains material that comes from the same historical period as some of the texts of the *Tana"kh* (Hebrew Bible), but were not considered by the Rabbis to be of the same sacred status as those books that were selected for biblical canonization. Primarily historical books, I & II Maccabees were included in the Hebrew Bible. However, they were preserved in the apocryphal literature and, therefore, a “historical” account of the events that lead to the addition of the festival of hanukkah to the Jewish calendar. A close reading of the text will reveal no mention of the miracle of the oil lasting for eight days. Rather, the focus of the text (of

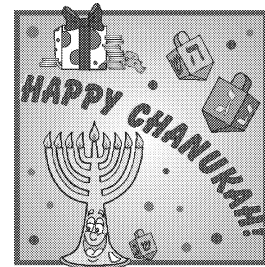


which we have only a small portion here) is on the military victory of the Maccabees over the Assyrians and the rededication of the Temple to God after its having been defiled with pagan sacrifice and worship. So, what we have here is a stark contrast of rationales for the celebration of hanukkah. By no means should it be said that the Rabbis “made-up” the miracle of the oil in order to create a religious motivation for hanukkah, but it is clear from rabbinic tradition that they were uncomfortable with the military emphasis of the Maccabean account. For a nation that emphasizes the need to achieve peace, a primarily military festival did not quite fit in. Therefore, the Rabbis shifted the emphasis away from war and toward miracles. This emphasis serves as the basis for the message of the *dreidl* and the requirement to publicize the miracles by lighting the *hanukkiyah* near a public-facing window.

Festival Schedule:

First Hanukkah candle: Sunday night, December 21st
 Second Hanukkah candle: Monday night, December 22nd

Third Hanukkah candle: Tuesday night, December 23rd
 Fourth Hanukkah candle: Wednesday night, December 24th
 Fifth Hanukkah candle: Thursday night, December 25th
Sixth Hanukkah candle/Erev Shabbat: Friday evening, December 26th (no later than 4:20pm)
Seventh Hanukkah candle/Havdalah: Saturday night, December 27th (after 5:20pm)
 Final Hanukkah candle Sunday night, December 28th
 Final day of Hanukkah: Monday, December 29th



Appropriate Greeting for the Festival:

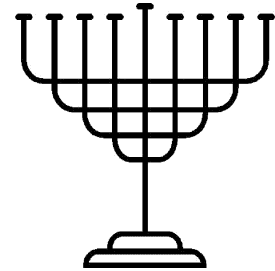
חג אורים שְׁמֵחַ!
Hag Urim Samei'ah!
 Happy Festival of Lights!

Guidelines for the Lighting of the *Hanukkiyah*:

The Hanukkah lights should consist of lamps or candles. The mitzvah of lighting hanukkah lights can be fulfilled using wicks dipped into oil lamps, beeswax candles, paraffin candles or other types of candles. However, gas lights or electric lights are generally not acceptable, except in special circumstances when oil or candles are not available. A Rabbi should be consulted in such a case to determine the acceptability of this practice in the specific case. The lamps or candles must contain enough fuel, at the time of the lighting, to burn until half an hour after nightfall ("nightfall" is the point at which it grows dark enough for three average-sized stars to be visible - about 20-30 minutes after sunset, depending on the location) to ensure that the lights burn into the new Jewish day, which always begins at nightfall. If one is unable to kindle the hanukkah lights during the sunset and

early hours of the night, one may kindle the lights later. However, the lights must be kindled during hours when it can be safely assumed that there would be people in the streets onto which your *hanukkiyah* will be facing in order to satisfy the requirement of *pirsumei nisa*, “publicizing the miracle” (see below for a definition and explanation).

There are special requirements for the construction of a *hanukkiyah* and arrangement of the lights as well. The lamps or candles should be arranged in a straight row and must be of equal height. The *shamash* or "servant" candle that kindles the other lights should be placed apart from the rest (higher, outside the row, etc.). Unfortunately, many decorative *hanukkiyot* are not designed to conform with the requirements for a kosher *hanukkiyah*. We should all take care in checking to make sure our *hanukkiyot* conform to these requirements.



The procedure for the lighting of the *hanukkah* candles is a source of one of the most famous debates between Rabbis Hillel and Shammai. Shammai argued that we should begin by lighting all eight candles on the first night and take one away for each successive night. Hillel argued that we should begin with one candle and add one with each successive night. His rationale for this procedure is based on the rabbinic tradition of:

מַעֲלִין בְּקֹדֶשׁ וְאִין מוֹרִידִין

Ma'alin b'kodesh v'ein moridin.

We increase in matters of holiness and do not decrease.

Hillel's rationale prevailed in this argument, as was almost always the case in his disputes with Shammai. However, the rationale behind his ruling is a beautiful one - that we should always become filled with more and more joy, celebration, and feelings of connection to God over the course of a long holiday, not focus on the fact that the remaining time in the festival is getting increasingly short. Therefore, according to the tradition of Rabbi Hillel, we light one light and add one each day. The first light is lit on the extreme right side of the *hanukkiyah*. With each additional night, a light is added on the left side of the light that was lit the previous night. The new “birthday” light is always lit first. The *shamash* (servant light) is used to light each of the lights of the *hanukkiyah*.

As is the case with all celebrations of “Jewish time,” the next day begins at nightfall of the “previous” day. Therefore, the first *Hanukkah* light is kindled in the evening of the first day and the eighth light is kindled in the evening prior to the eighth day. One is urged to kindle the lights of *hanukkah* as close to the onset of the new day of the festival as possible. Like with all ritual practices, our excitement to fulfill the commandments is supposed to drive us to perform rituals at their earliest possible available and permissible moment. This is particularly important on a Friday night of *Hanukkah* because once Shabbat begins on Friday evening, the kindling of fire of any kind is forbidden.

Kindling *Hanukkah* lights before and after Shabbat:

Unlike with other festivals that coincide with Shabbat, Shabbat lights and *Hanukkah* lights are lit separately, each having their own blessings recited. In order not to violate the observance of Shabbat, all of the candles must be lit at sunset (see the precise time in the Festival schedule above). The *Hanukkah* candles must be lit first because once the Shabbat candles are lit, Shabbat has begun and no new fire is permitted to be kindled. Since the *Hanukkah* lights must last into the night, long-lasting *hanukkah* lights are needed for Friday night. **It should be noted that the generic**

multi-colored brand of Hanukkah candles do not burn long enough into the night for a Friday night and, therefore, should not be used on a Friday night of Hanukkah.

The principle of kindling no fire during Shabbat also applies on Saturday night for the end of Shabbat. Shabbat lasts until nightfall (one hour after sunset; see the Festival schedule above for the exact time) and no fire may be kindled until Shabbat has been ended with the evening Ma'ariv and Havdalah services. Therefore, these services should be chanted at their proper time, followed directly by the kindling of the Hanukkah lights. If you will not be doing Ma'ariv and Havdalah, then you must still wait until Shabbat has officially ended before kindling the Hanukkah lights.

Hanukkiyah vs. Menorah

A common error in terminology is often made during the festival of Hanukkah. The nine branched candelabrum (including one space for the *shamash*) is not a *menorah*; it is a *hanukkiyah*. Students in the school have spent time studying the differences between these two similar Jewish ritual objects. A few of the most important details to remember are:

- The *menorah* had seven branches, a *hanukkiyah* has nine branches
- The *menorah* was built for and used exclusively in the Holy Temple
- The *menorah* was made only of gold, a *hanukkiyah* can be made of any material
- The *menorah*'s lights were lit throughout the year, a *hanukkiyah* is only for Hanukkah

To reinforce the learning in school, make every effort to refer to the Hanukkah candelabrum by its proper name: *hanukkiyah*.

Pirumei Nisa/Publicizing the Miracle:

The purpose of kindling the lights of the *hanukkiyah* is not only to remind those who are lighting it of the miracles that are commemorated by hanukkah, but also to make the miracles known to the larger non-Jewish public. In Hebrew, this is called פְּרִסְמוֹת נִסִּים (*pirumei nisa*/"publicizing the miracle"). The way that this requirement is fulfilled is by kindling the lights of the *hanukkiyah* so that they can be seen by passers by, either directly in front of a street-facing window or within sight of one. If kindling the lights of the *hanukkiyah* cannot be done in this way for danger of creating a fire, then this requirement can be overlooked. Safety and preservation of life always comes first in Jewish tradition and the law would never require us to practice a ritual in a way that would put life or property at risk. Nevertheless, every effort should be made to kindle the hanukkah lights in a place where they could be seen by the public.



Hanukkah Heroines

There are two famous stories about women associated with Hanukkah, the story of Yehudit and the story of Hannah and her seven sons. The two stories show the courage and inner-strength of the

Jewish people in the time of adversity, and how strength can be shown both in action and in lack of action:

Yehudit/Judith

As the Greek siege persisted against the Jewish town of Bethulia, the inhabitants grew very discouraged. They began to suffer from severe hunger. Out of despair, the town gathered together and the elders announced that in five days time, when they ran out of food, they would surrender. Yehudit spoke out at the meeting, expressing her disappointment in their lack of faith in God. As the meeting ended, Yehudit told the elders that she had a plan that would deliver the enemies into their hands, but they must not ask her what it was. They must simply have faith in her. Yehudit's reputation for wisdom and piety preceded her, so they agreed.

Taking with her one maidservant and a large basket of cheese, bread, and wine, Yehudit left the city and was immediately stopped by the soldiers. She told them that she wished to speak with their commander. When she was brought before him, he welcomed in the beautiful woman. Yehudit told him that she worried for those in the city who were suffering under the siege and had decided to come and tell him how to capture the city and, hopefully, receive in return mercy for her people. He encouraged her to go on.

The people's faith in God remained strong, she explained. So long as they had faith, they would not surrender and God would not allow the army to take the city. However, before long, every scrap of kosher food would be gone, and in desperation, the Jews would begin to eat the flesh of unclean animals, turning God's anger against them, allowing the town to fall. She proposed to stay with commander Holofernes in the camp of his army, but would return to Bethulia each day in order to find out how low the supplies were. She would then tell Holofernes when to strike. Eager to spend time with the beautiful widow, as well as to end the siege victoriously, he agreed.

After several days of Yehudit relaying that the people in Bethulia were almost out of supplies, she felt that she and her maidservant had gained the trust of the army. They came and went as they pleased. It was time to implement the second half of the plan. Yehudit informed Holofernes that Bethulia was now out of food and there remained only to wait a few days until they would be eating the non-kosher animals. He invited her to come alone to his tent that night to celebrate. She agreed, insisting that he partake of her 'renowned' goat-cheese. As he ate the salty cheese, he grew thirsty and Yehudit hurried to give him the heavy wine she had brought with her. While Yehudit pretended to eat and drink, Holofernes became sluggish from imbibing and eating. Shortly thereafter, he was in a deep sleep. Calling her maidservant in, Yehudit took Holofernes' sword and cut off his head. The two women wrapped the head in a cloth and returned to Bethulia.

The elders were surprised to see her. Yehudit showed them Holofernes' head and told them that the men of the city must attack the Assyrian-Greeks immediately. When the soldiers would go to wake their leader, they would find him dead. The elders followed her advice and, sure enough, the enemy fled from before the surprise attack after learning their commander was dead. Yehudit saved the day!

Hannah and her Seven Sons

When Antiochus tried to destroy Jewish culture by outlawing Torah, he mistakenly thought that the Jews would quickly adopt the Greek way of life. While some Jews did assimilate without a fight,

Antiochus was not prepared for the unprecedented obstinacy of the Jews who refused to give up their heritage. Since the Jews would not quietly submit, Antiochus launched a full-scale 'culture war.'

Those Jews who refused to give up studying Torah, who refused to eat pork, etc., were killed or tortured. Antiochus recognized that Judaism and Hellenism were antithetical and that he could not allow Judaism to survive or Hellenism would disappear. One of the well-known examples of the lengths to which Antiochus went to convert the Jews, and their fierce resistance to his attempts, is the story of "Hannah and her Seven Sons."

Brought before the king for the crime of being devout Jews, Antiochus demanded that they bow down to an idol before him. The eldest son stepped forward and said:

"What do you wish from us? We are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our fathers."

Shocked and angered, the king ordered him tortured. His tongue, hands and feet were cut off and he was placed in a cauldron of boiling water. While the tortures continued, the wicked Antiochus turned to the next son and demanded that he worship the idol. This brother refused as well and was similarly tortured. Antiochus continued down the line and each brother held fast to his faith and gave up his life, tortured in front of his mother and remaining brothers until only Hannah and her youngest son remained.

Aware that this event had not gone the way he had planned, and, in fact, was becoming a public relations disaster, Antiochus called the child forward and begged him not to be a martyr for such a small thing as bowing before a statue. The king went so far as to promise him wealth beyond his dreams for this one act. When he saw that he was not getting anywhere, he called Hannah forward and beseeched her to talk some sense into her son so that she might have one child left. Hannah agreed to talk to him, and took him to the side, pretending to beg him for his life.

But Hannah was proud of her sons. She knew what this one small act would mean to her child and to the morale of the Jewish people. Without tears, Hannah told her youngest, a mere child: "My son, I carried you for nine months, nourished you for two years, and have provided you with everything until now. Look upon the heaven and the earth -- God is the Creator of it all. Do not fear this tormentor, but be worthy of being with your brothers."

Without a second thought, the boy refused to obey the king's commandment and was put to death. As her child lay dying, she cradled his body and asked him that, when he arrived in heaven, he say to Abraham that he, Abraham, had been willing to sacrifice one son to prove his loyalty to God, while she had sacrificed seven. For him it had been a test, for her it was reality. Pleading with God that she should be considered worthy to her children in the world to come, Hannah fell to the floor and died.

Hannah is considered a heroine for her faith in God. By teaching her sons that sometimes one must give up even life itself for the sake of one's beliefs and by not begging for mercy from this evil king, by encouraging even her youngest son not to bow to evil, Hannah made a stand that resonates with all who hear her story.

Program for Ritual Practices in the Home:

Candle Lighting for Hanukkah

הדלקת נרות לחנוכה

On each night of hanukkah:

ברוך אתה ה' א-להינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו, וצונו להדליק נר של חנוכה.
Barukh Atab Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik neir shel hanukkah.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, sovereign of the universe, who has sanctified us with the commandments, and commanded us to light the candles of hanukkah.

ברוך אתה ה' א-להינו מלך העולם, שעשה נסים לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה.
Barukh Atab Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam she'asa nisim la'avoteinu bayamim ha'heim ba-z'man hazeh.
Blessed are You, Lord our God, sovereign of the universe, who wrought miracles on behalf of our ancestors in those days and in this time.

On the first night of hanukkah:

ברוך אתה ה' א-להינו מלך העולם, שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.
Barukh Atab Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam she'hecheyanu v'kaymanu v'higeyanu la-z'man hazeh.
Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season.

On a Friday night/Erev Shabbat of hanukkah:

ברוך אתה ה' א-להינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו, וצונו להדליק נר של שבת.
Barukh Atab Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik neir shel shabbat.
Blessed are You, Lord our God, sovereign of the universe, who has sanctified us with the commandments, and commanded us to light the candles of Shabbat.

Traditional Hanukkah Songs for After Candle lighting:

Ma'Oz Tzur

*Ma'oz tzur yeshu'ati
Lekha na'eh l'shabeyah
Tikon beit t'filati
V'sham todah nezabei'ah.*

*Le'et takhin matbei'ah
Meetzar hammabei'ah
Az egmor veshir mizmor hanukat ha'mizbei'ah (x2)*

O mighty Rock of my salvation,
to praise You is a delight.
Restore my House of Prayer
and there we shall bring a thanksgiving
offering.
When you will have prepared the slaughter
for the blaspheming foe,
Then I shall complete with a song of hymn
the dedication of the Altar.

Mi Y'malel

*Mi yimalel g'vurot Yisrael
otan mi yimneh
hein b'khol dor yakum hagibor
go-el ha'am (repeat)*

*sh'ma, bayamim habem baz'man hazeh
Macabee mosh'ya ufodeh
u'vyamenu kol am Yisrael
yitahed yakum l'higa'el*

Who can retell the things that befell us,
 Who can count them?
 In every age a hero or sage
 Came to our aid.

Hark, In days of old, in Israel's ancient land,
 Brave Maccabee led his faithful band.
 And now all Israel must as one rise,
 Redeem itself through deed and sacrifice.

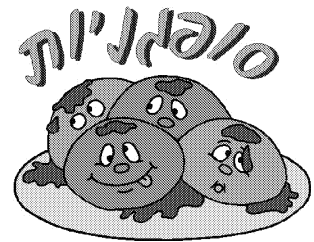
Festival Customs:

Latkes and Sufganiyot

What would a Jewish holiday be without food? Traditional hanukkah foods are traditional (though not the most healthy) because they are fried in oil. The most common food is *latkes*, fried potato pancakes. Originally, the pancakes were made of cheese. From the custom of eating cheese delicacies grew the custom of eating pancakes of all kinds.

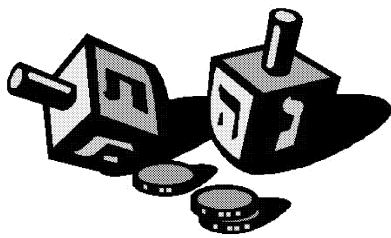
During the Middle Ages, Jews explained this custom by connecting it with the story of Judith, which they linked with the story of hanukkah. Judith, according to legend, was a daughter of the Hasmoneans. She fed cheese to the leader of the enemies of the Jews. He was made thirsty by the cheese and began to drink much wine. When he grew quite drunk she cut off his head. For this reason, it was said, Jews eat cheese delicacies on hanukkah.

Jelly donuts (*sufganiot*) fried in oil, are also eaten as a traditional food of the festival.



Playing Dreidl

A *dreidl* is a spinning top, each side having a Hebrew letter engraved or printed onto a side. Outside of Israel, the letters are the following:



nun = *neis*/miracle נ = נ
gimmel = *gadol*/great ג = גדול
hey = *haya*/was ה = ה
shin = *sham*/there ש = ש

In Israel, the final letter is different to reflect the place:

pey = *poh*/here פ = פ

The phrase constructed by the letters are a reminder of the miracles that are commemorated by the festival: a great miracle happened t/here.

A favorite children's game is played with a *dreidl*, where a player can accumulate a pile of "goodies."

The Rules

Each player starts with the same number of nuts, m&m's, pennies, (you get the idea).

1. Each player antes one piece.
2. The first player spins the Dreidel.
3. When the Dreidel stops, do what the letter tells you:

(Nun) the spinner gets nothing.
(Gimel) the spinner gets the whole pot.
(Hey) the spinner gets half the pot.
(Shin) the spinner adds one to the pot.

S'vivon, Sov, Sov, Sov - The Dreidl Song

*S'vivon, sov, sov, sov, hanukkah hu hag tov.
Hanukkah hu hag tov, s'vivon, sov, sov, sov.*

*Hag simcha hu la'am, neis gadol haya sham.
Neis gadol haya sham, hag simcha hu la'am.*

*Dreidl, spin, spin, spin, hanukkah is a good
festival. Hanukkah is a good holiday, dreidl,
spin, spin, spin.*

It is a festival of joy for the people, a great
miracle happened there,
A great miracle happened there, it is a festival
of joy for the people.

D'mei Hanukkah/“Hanukkah Money”

The tradition now commonly known as “hanukkah gelt” has its origins in the custom called *d'mei hanukkah*. At all Jewish celebrations, we do our best to create a balance by remembering those who are not as fortunate as we are. At hanukkah time, *tzedakah* money was collected and this collection was called *d'mei hanukkah*. Over time, the tradition of giving money on hanukkah also came to include giving money as a gift to loved ones.

Changes to the Daily Liturgy:

Al HaNisim - “For the Miracles”

On Hanukkah, Purim, and Yom Ha'Atzma'ut, this text is added both to the Amidah (the central prayer of each of the prayer services) and the *Birkat HaMazon*. There is an introductory verse, which you will find below, which is then followed by a paragraph that provides a historical account of what occurred in the events leading up to the celebration of the particular festival. The paragraph for hanukkah describes the Maccabean victory over the Assyrians and their rededication of the Temple after it finally returned to Jewish hands.

עַל הַנִּסִּים, וְעַל הַפְּרָקוֹן, וְעַל הַגְּבוּרוֹת, וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת, וְעַל הַמְּלַחְמוֹת, שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם
בְּזַמַּן הַזֶּה.

*Al HaNisim v'al ha'purkan v'al g'vurot v'al ba't'shu'ot v'al ha'mihamot she'asita la'avoteinu bayamim ha'bem
ba'z'man ha'zeh.*

[We thank You God] for the miracles, and for the salvation, and for the mighty deeds, and for the
victories, and for the battles that You performed on behalf of our ancestors in those days and in this
time.

The *Hallel* Service

Hallel is recited in its entirety each day of hanukkah, for each day is considered a day of celebration unto itself. This is not always the common practice for festivals that extend over many days. Thus, it should be taken as a sign of just how joyous each day of hanukkah should be.

***Kri'yat HaTorah* - Torah Reading**

The Torah is read each morning of hanukkah. Since the story of hanukkah does not originate in the Torah, a section that is thematically linked to the festival is read during hanukkah. The reading contains the dedication of the desert Tabernacle by Moses.

General Information:

<http://judaism.about.com/od/chanukah>

http://www.uscj.org/Hanukkah_57655720.html

Information and Activities for the Whole Family:

<http://learn.jtsa.edu/hanukkah/>

If any questions remain unanswered, please feel free to call the school 371-4747 and be in touch with Rabbi Matthew Bellas, who prepared this material, at ext. 312.