

Eight Lights for Eight Nights



**A home companion to help you
celebrate Chanukah at home**

Including thoughtful insights, stories and activities for each night

www.Chabad.org/Chanukah

Dear Friend,

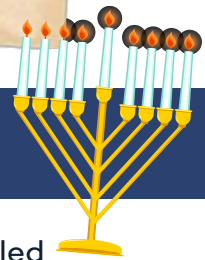
Chanukah, the festival of lights, traditionally celebrated in the cozy company of dear family and close friends. Chanukah, when we gather 'round the menorah and share stories of strength and survival. Chanukah, when we celebrate the miraculous victory of the few over the many, the G-dly over the profane, and the weak over the mighty.

For many, this Chanukah will be like no other, celebrated in isolation, either alone or only with close family members. Yet Chanukah is a time of miracles, when we remind ourselves and the world that G-d is present in our lives, that miracles happen, and that anything is possible.

To help you celebrate a most uplifting and joyous Chanukah, we present you with a night-by-night program. Each night, you get an uplifting teaching, a heartwarming story and a fun craft or story.

*Wishing you a happy Chanukah, from our homes to yours,
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How to Celebrate Chanukah



Chanukah begins on the eve of Kislev 25 and continues for eight days. Chanukah 2020 runs from Dec. 10-18.

At the heart of the festival is the nightly menorah lighting. The menorah holds nine flames, one of which is the shamash ("attendant"), which is used to kindle the other eight lights. On the first night, we light just one flame. On the second night, an additional flame is lit. By the eighth night of Chanukah, all eight lights are kindled.

The Chanukah lights are kindled every evening of Chanukah, containing enough fuel to burn for at least thirty minutes after nightfall.

On Friday night the menorah is lit **before** sunset, and on Saturday night it is lit **after** nightfall.

On the first night, set one candle to the far right of the menorah. On the following night, add a second light to the left of the first one, and then add one light each night of Chanukah - moving from right to left.

Before lighting the menorah, holding the shamash in your right hand, recite the following blessings:

1. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר חֲנֻכָּה.

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the Chanukah light.

Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nai Eh-lo-hei-noo Meh-lech Ha-olam A-sher Ki-deh-sha-noo Beh-mitz-vo-tav Veh-tzi-va-noo Leh-had-lik Ner Cha-noo-kah.

2. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּיָמִים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה.

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who performed miracles for our forefathers in those days, at this time.

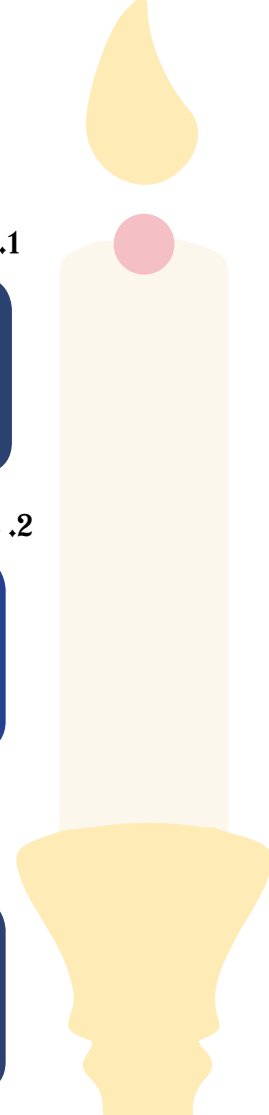
Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nai Eh-lo-hei-nu Meh-lech Ha-olam Sheh-a-sa Nee-sim La-avo-tei-noo Ba-ya-mim Ha-hem Bee-z'man Ha-zeh.

On the first night only, add the following blessing:

3. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהַגִּיעֵנוּ לְזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה.

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.

Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nai Eh-lo-hei-noo Me-lech Ha-olam Sheh-heh-cheh-ya-noo Veh-kee-yeh-ma-noo Veh-hee-gee-a-noo Liz-man Ha-zeh.



Each night, light the newest (left-most) candle first and continue lighting from left to right. (We add lights to the menorah from right to left, while we light from left to right.)

A menorah is lit in every household (or even by each individual within the household) and placed in a doorway or window.

We also recite the special Hallel prayer daily, and add V'Al HaNissim in our daily prayers and in the Grace After Meals, to offer praise and thanksgiving to G-d for “delivering the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few ... the wicked into the hands of the righteous.”

Since the Chanukah miracle involved oil, it is customary to eat foods fried in oil (see Nights # 3, 5, and 6). The Eastern-European classic is the potato latke (pancake) garnished with

applesauce or sour cream, and the reigning Israeli favorite is the jelly-filled sufganya (doughnut).

It is also customary to play with a “dreidel” (a four-sided spinning top bearing the Hebrew letters, nun, gimmel, hei and shin, an acronym for nes gadol hayah sham, “a great miracle happened there”). The game is usually played for a pot of coins, nuts, or other stuff, which is won or lost based on which letter the dreidel lands when it is spun. Learn how to play on Night #1.

Lastly, many have the tradition to give Chanukah gelt, gifts of money, to children. In addition to rewarding positive behavior and devotion to Torah study, the cash gifts give the children the opportunity to give tzedakah (charity).



Tonight's Light:

One Candle a Day

It's the first night of Chanukah. You've got a Chanukah menorah in front of you with eight little cups for oil or candles. But you only light one (plus the shamash—but that doesn't count). Tomorrow you'll light two. The next day, three. Until you get to eight.

I know it sounds simple and obvious. But think about it for a minute. If you have an opportunity to light eight lights and bring all that light to shine right now, what are you waiting for? What's this step-by-step incremental process all about?

It's all about making real change. You see, your goal isn't just to make a big flash of light and then walk away all burnt out. Your goal is to make yourself a shining light and your world an enlightened place.

And the only way to do that is in incremental steps.

Say you want to start keeping kosher. First, start buying kosher meat and other products. Then start separating milk and meat. Get used to that and then you can make your kitchen kosher. It's all step-by-step, just like the menorah.

The same with being a nicer person. Or becoming a more giving person. Or studying more Torah. Or attending synagogue services regularly. Real changes of habit only come through small, incremental steps.

Wherever you're at in life, know you haven't yet arrived. There's a whole line of lamps waiting for you to light. But arriving is not what counts. What counts is that you're on the right path, moving upward.

Related: Going Kosher on a Budget www.chabad.org/1057022

Story for Tonight:

Chanukah 1944 in Buchenwald

When writing the little diary in which I entered the Hebrew dates and festivals, I discovered with great delight that Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, the festival on which we commemorate the recapture of the Temple from the mighty Greeks by a handful of faithful Jews, was only a few days ahead. I decided that we should light a little Hanukkah lamp even in Niederorschel (a forced labor subcamp of Buchenwald) and that this would go a long way towards restoring our morale.

Benzi was immediately consulted because he had become the most reliable and trusted person in the block. Even those at the other two tables—the “intellectuals’ table,” where the doctors, lawyers, dentists, architects, and businessmen ate, and the “free table,” where the non-believers sat—even they came to Benzi to settle their quarrels, which were mostly about the distribution of their rations. Benzi would stand no arguments at his own table. He cut every loaf into eight portions and shared it out indiscriminately. He who complained received the smallest portion.

“If you are dissatisfied,” Benzi would shout angrily, “go and join another table, where they have scales and judges.”

Nobody ever left our table.

Benzi was enthusiastic about my idea. “Yes, we should get a Hanukkah light burning,” he said. “It will boost our morale and lighten the atmosphere. Work on a plan, but be careful.”

Two problems had to be overcome: oil had to be “organized,” and a place had to be found

where the lighted wick would not be seen.

There was no lack of oil in the factory, but how could we smuggle even a few drops into our barrack in time for Monday evening, December 11, the first night of Hanukkah?

We knew, of course, that Jewish law did not compel us to risk our lives for the sake of fulfilling a commandment. But there was an urge in many of us to reveal the spirit of sacrifice implanted in our ancestors throughout the ages. We who were in such great spiritual, as well as physical distress, felt that a little Hanukkah light would warm our starving souls and inspire us with hope, faith, and courage to keep us going through this long, grim, and icy winter.

Benzi, Grunwald, Stern, Fischhof, and I were in the plot. We decided to draw lots. The first name drawn would have to steal the oil; the third would be responsible for it, and hide it until Monday evening; and the fifth would have to light it under his bunk. I was drawn fifth.

Grunwald, who was to “organize” the oil, did his part magnificently. He persuaded the hated *Meister Meyer* that his machine would work better if oiled regularly every morning, and that this could best be arranged if a small can of fine machine oil was allotted to us to be kept in our toolbox. *Meister Meyer* agreed, so there was no longer the problem of having to hide it.

On Monday evening after *appell* (roll call), everyone else sat down to his much awaited portion of tasteless but hot soup, while I busied myself under the bunk to prepare my *menorah*. I put that oil in the empty half of a shoe-polish tin, took a few threads from my thin blanket

and made them into a wick. When everything was ready I hastily joined the table to eat my dinner before I invited all our friends to the Hanukkah Light Kindling ceremony. Suddenly, as I was eating my soup, I remembered we had forgotten about matches.

I whispered to Benzi.

“Everyone must leave a little soup,” Benzi ordered his hungry table guests, and told them why.

Within five minutes, five portions of soup were exchanged in the next room for a cigarette. The cigarette was “presented” to the chef, Josef, for lending us a box of matches without questions.

And so, as soon as dinner was over I made the three traditional blessings, and a little Hanukkah light flickered away slowly under my bunk. Not only my friends from the “religious” table were there with us, but also many others from the room joined us in humming the traditional Hanukkah songs. These songs carried us into the past. As if on a panoramic screen, we saw our homes, with our parents, brothers, sisters, wives, and children gathered around the beautiful silver candelabras, singing happily the *Maoz Tzur*. That tiny little light under my bunk set our hearts ablaze.



Tears poured down our haggard cheeks. By now, every single inmate in the room sat silently on his bunk, or near mine, deeply meditating. For a moment, nothing else mattered. We were celebrating the first night of Hanukkah as we had done in all the years previous to our imprisonment and torture. We were a group of Jewish people fulfilling our religious duties, and dreaming of home and of bygone years.

But alas! Our dream ended much too soon.

A roar of “*Achtung*” brought our minds back to reality, and our legs to stiff attention. “The Dog”—that skinny little *Unterschaarfuehrer*—stood silently at the door, as he so often did on his surprise visits, looking anxiously for some excuse, even the slightest, to wield his dog-whip. Suddenly he sniffed as loudly as his Alsatian, and yelled:

“*Hier stinkts ja von Oehl!*” (“It stinks of oil in here.”)

My heart missed a few beats as I stared down at the little Hanukkah light flickering away, while “The Dog” and his Alsatian began to parade along the bunks in search of the burning oil.

The *Unterschaarfuehrer* silently began his search. I did not dare bend down or stamp out the light with my shoes for fear the Alsatian would notice my movements and leap at me.

I gave a quick glance at the death-pale faces around me, and so indeed did “The Dog.” Within a minute or two he would reach our row of bunks. Nothing could save us... but suddenly...

Suddenly a roar of sirens, sounding an air raid, brought “The Dog” to a stop and within seconds all lights in the entire camp were switched off from outside.

“*Fliegeralarm! Fliegeralarm!*” echoed throughout the camp! Like lightning I snuffed out the light with my shoes and following a strict camp rule, we all ran to the open ground, brushing “The Dog” contemptuously aside.

“There will be an investigation... There will be an investigation,” he screamed above the clatter of rushing prisoners who fled out into the *appell* ground.

But I did not worry. In delight, I grabbed my little menorah and ran out with it. This was the sign, the miracle of Hanukkah, the recognition of our struggle against the temptations of our affliction. We had been helped by G-d, even in this forsaken little camp at Nieder-Orschel.

Outside, in the ice-cold, star-studded night, with the heavy drone of Allied bombers over our heads, I kept on muttering the traditional blessing to the G-d who wrought miracles for His people in past days and in our own time. The bombers seemed to be spreading these words over the host of heaven.

This account of Chanukah 1944 in Niederorschel slave labor camp, a Buchenwald subcamp in Germany, is an excerpt of The Yellow Star by S.B. Unsderfer. It was originally published in 1961. Unsderfer's personal account of surviving Auschwitz and Buchenwald became a classic in Holocaust literature. Now, a new edition is available, with a foreword by Colonel Richard Kemp (2015, The Toby Press).



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What to Do Tonight: **Play Dreidel** (Sevivan)

What Is a Dreidel?

The classic dreidel is a four-sided spinning top made of wood, plastic, or the proverbial clay. On the four sides of the dreidel appear four letters from the Hebrew alphabet—nun (נ), gimmel (ג), hey (ה), and shin (ש). These four letters are an acronym for "nes gadol hayah sham"—"a great miracle happened there."



In Israel, the actual setting of the Chanukah miracle, the last letter, shin, is substituted with a pey (פ), which stands for "po"—"here."

Getting Your Dreidel Game Started

- In addition to dreidels, you'll need the currency—nuts, pennies, nickels, chocolate coins, or just about anything else...
- All players sit around the playing area.
- The currency is equally divided amongst all players.
- Everyone takes a turn at spinning the dreidel; the one with the highest spin has first turn. (Nun is highest, then gimmel, hey, and shin.) If there is a tie for highest, those who tied spin again.
- Everyone puts one unit of the currency (penny, nut, etc.) into the pot.
- The one who has first turn is followed in clockwise direction by all the others.



How to Play Dreidel

If the dreidel lands on a...



Nun Absolutely nothing happens. Nun stands for the Yiddish word nul, which means zero. It's time for the player to your left to take a spin.



Gimel You get to take the whole pot! Gimmel stands for gantz, which means whole. Everyone, including you, now puts another unit into the pot, and the person to your left tries his luck at spinning.



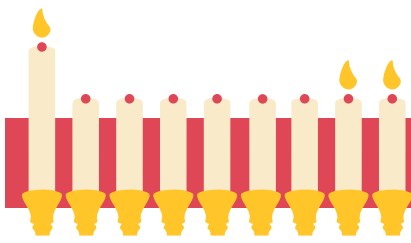
Hey You get to take half of the pot. Hey stands for halb, half. If the pot has an odd amount of units, don't try to split that penny, nut, or piece of chocolate in half. Leave the odd item there.



Shin You put a unit into the pot. Shin is for shenk; yes, that means "give."

You can speed up the game by upping the ante, raising shin and post-gimmel contributions to two, three or even four units.

Any player that cannot contribute after landing on a shin or after a fellow player lands on a gimmel, is out of the game. The game ends when there is one player left.



Fri. afternoon, Kislev 26, Dec. 11

NIGHT TWO

Tonight's Light: **The Two Strategies of Light**

You know how we're always told to light Shabbat candles before sunset? Not the last minute before sunset, but at least 18 minutes before sunset.

When it comes to Chanukah candles, it's the opposite way around. Wait until it's dark.

Sure, you can light before sunset—if you won't be able to light later. On Friday, for example, we light the Menorah before lighting Shabbat candles. But we use extra long candles or extra oil, so that those flames will keep burning for at least half an hour after sunset.

Because the real time for lighting the Menorah is when it's dark outside, almost a half-hour after sunset—the opposite of Shabbat, when it is never permitted to light candles after sunset.

Why the difference?

Yet more puzzling: The Chanukah candles are meant to represent the Golden Menorah that shone in the Temple in Jerusalem. That menorah was lit an hour and a quarter before sunset. So why don't we do the same on Chanukah?

And even stranger: The Temple Menorah, like the Shabbat candles, were lit indoors. The Chanukah light was originally lit outside the front door. Nowadays, most of us light it indoors—but we still try to place it where everyone outdoors will see.

So here's an explanation that has many applications in life:

All these three kinds of light—the Temple Menorah, the Shabbat candles, and the



Chanukah candles—are meant to illuminate a darkness that is not just the physical absence of light, but the spiritual absence of wisdom, kindness, empathy and goodness that results in a darkness of ignorance, suffering, cruelty, and evil.

There are two ways of dealing with that darkness. One is to create a place of light so bright and beautiful that all who seek light will be drawn inward. That’s the idea of the Shabbat candles and the Temple Menorah.

Then there’s the alternative: Go out into the dark and make it shine. Let it shine even to those who aren’t looking for it. To those who don’t know they’re missing it.

That’s the strategy of the Chanukah candles.

The first strategy is best when dealing with regular darkness. The Chanukah strategy is

what you need when the darkness gets so vicious that people don’t even know they are in the dark. That’s when you’ve got to beat darkness on its own territory.

The first strategy will bring in those who are lost in the dark, but are looking for some light.

With the Chanukah strategy, you can grab those who take an active part in that darkness, turn them around, and enlist them to the side of light.

Now that’s the ultimate bearer of light—someone who takes everything he learned from the darkness and makes it shine bright. Very bright.

As it turns out, the Chanukah Menorah is the ultimate strategy for subverting darkness—just what we need today.

Related: Darkness Speaks www.chabad.org/2621981



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Story for Tonight:

The Miracle of the Missing Menorah

The household of Rabbi Chaim Halberstam of Sanz was used to things vanishing without warning. Whether it was a silver goblet, an ornate spice box, or the Shabbat candlesticks, all they could do was acknowledge the disappearance and continue on with their day. There was no thief to catch, no mystery to solve. Well known for his expansive adoration of fellow Jews, Rabbi Chaim pawned whatever he could find to help those seeking monetary relief, whether it was an orphan collecting for his wedding or a mother in need of food for Shabbat. With nothing spared, his house remained bare of furnishings most of the time.

Weeks before Chanukah, Rabbi Chaim opened the door to a haggard-looking gentleman and invited him into his study. The Jew, who had traveled long distances to get to Sanz, didn't say much, but pulled a scroll from his pocket and began showing Rabbi Chaim a distinguished pedigree. He spoke eloquently, with an air one would expect from

an aristocrat. When he had finished introducing himself, he rolled up the scroll, buried his face in his hands, and began to sob. Through his tears, he managed to describe his impoverished life. His daughter had reached the age of marriage, and he didn't have the means to provide for her wedding.

Looking on with softhearted eyes, Rabbi Chaim solemnly shared the man's misfortune.

"G-d will help," he promised.

In his mind, he was already thinking about what to give this poor gentleman.

Rabbi Chaim disappeared into the house. All of his shelves were empty. He skimmed the walls, shelves, drawers, praying he would find something to give the man. Nothing but dust. Everything had been pawned. But he could not send the man away without even a single coin.

The menorah!



Sitting on top of his bookcase was the handsome silver menorah he lit each Chanukah. Rabbi Chaim quickly brought it down, blew off the thin coating of dust, and wrapped it in paper to prevent unwanted stares. The man watched Rabbi Chaim, peering from behind the door, his worry melting into a wide grin.

The man gingerly accepted the menorah, blessed Rabbi Chaim, and soon disappeared from view.

It was a week before Chanukah when the Rebbetzin finally discovered the missing menorah. Though she didn't confront her husband, she felt a twinge of sadness. She couldn't imagine her window bare of the festive lights while the homes around them glowed.

One day before Chanukah, she reminded her husband that their house had no menorah. Rabbi Chaim seemed to be unbothered, even calm. He smiled underneath his thick mustache and said nothing.

Late afternoon, after praying Minchah, all the townspeople rushed home to light the Chanukah lights. One by one, flames popped up in the neighboring windows, but the Halberstam house remained gloomy and dark despite the late hour. Rabbi Chaim was in his study, learning the mystical themes of the holiday. Despondent as they felt, no one wanted to bother Rabbi Chaim and remind him about the neglected mitzvah. The pain they knew they would see on their father's face was too much to bear.

Suddenly, the study door opened and Rabbi Chaim appeared. If he was worried, he hid it perfectly as he busied himself with the lighting preparations,

leisurely going about the room, gathering oil and rolling wicks. But there was still no menorah to light.

As that thought crossed the minds of all present, a rhythmic clatter and the whinnying of horses sounded from outside. A luxurious coach had pulled up to the house. The door opened and a well-dressed couple stepped out, a package visible in their hands.

The two breathlessly apologized for the late hour, but also seemed impatient to speak with Rabbi Chaim. For an hour or so, Rabbi Chaim and the couple sat in his study, door closed, discussing a matter of urgent nature. Rabbi Chaim listened and showered them with blessings.

As the couple stood to leave, the man placed the package on the table.

"This is our thank you," he said, removing the paper.

A tall menorah, wrought of the finest silver, stood twinkling on the table.

Rabbi Chaim's face registered no surprise. Rather, he delicately moved the menorah to its usual place and crowned it with olive oil and wicks. In his right hand, Rabbi Chaim held the shamash and recited the three blessings.

The miraculous atmosphere of Chanukah was undoubtedly felt by everyone that year.

By Asharon Baltazar: Asharon has liked to write since childhood and found a good outlet for his creativity here. He currently resides with his wife in Jerusalem, where he studies in Kollel.



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Sat. night, Kislev 27, Dec. 12

NIGHT THREE

Tonight's Light: ***The Most Beautiful Way***

The Talmud tells us there are three ways to light a Chanukah menorah: A good way, a beautiful way, and the most beautiful of the beautiful way.

The good way is for each household to light a single lamp or a candle each night of Chanukah.

The beautiful way is for every member of each household to light a single lamp or a candle each night of Chanukah.

The most beautiful of the beautiful way is for every member of each household to light one more candle each night, until there are eight candles for every one of them. (Rema Shulchan Aruch 671:2. Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 139:6. See chabad.org/4568664 for details.)

As you may have realized, the Jewish people

decided unanimously that they want to do this mitzvah in the most beautiful of the beautiful way. It doesn't matter that they don't all necessarily do every other mitzvah in the best way possible. The light of Chanukah gets special treatment.

Because the light of Chanukah is lit in the dark of winter when darkness is strongest.

When you're sitting in a place of light, it's okay to just do what needs to be done. But when a thick darkness covers the face of the earth and a cold wind freezes all life outdoors, that's when you need to really shine—to create the most beauty you possibly can.

Today is a time of deep spiritual darkness in the soul of humankind. Shine all you can. And then more.



Story for Tonight:

How the Gulag Judge Lit the Menorah

Repeatedly arrested for his “counter-revolutionary” activities to preserve the flickering flame of Judaism in the Soviet Union, Reb Mordechai Chanzin frequently found himself behind bars. His first sentence amounted to 10 years in a forced-labor camp. After his release, Reb Mordechai was again found guilty and punished with five more years. His third and final sentence resulted in six years. Overall, between the years 1935 and 1956, he spent 21 years in Soviet prisons and camps. In his short stints of freedom he selflessly devoted himself to preserving Judaism behind the Iron Curtain.

Among his many experiences, there was one story that he would tell again and again:

As the Siberian winter deepened, Chanukah came, and a group of young Jewish men, all prisoners of the Gulag, convened for a short meeting. The topic: how to obtain and light a secret menorah. One promised to supply margarine to be used as fuel. Some frayed threads from standard-issue camp garb would suffice as wicks. Even small cups to hold the margarine were procured from somewhere. Of course, all this was against camp regulations, and they all understood the implication of their actions should they be caught.

Reb Mordechai was the eldest of the group of 18 men, and was therefore honored to usher in the holiday by lighting the first candle. In the dead of night, in a small garden shed, the hardy crew crowded around their makeshift menorah and listened to Reb Mordechai’s emotional voice as he recited the first blessings, tears trickling down his

cheeks. Reb Mordechai and his comrades gazed silently at the small yellow light, each one recalling Chanukah in his parents’ home.

The loud crash of the door opening shattered the men’s reverie. Camp guards rushed through the doorway and flooded the cramped space. The Jewish inmates were grabbed by brutish hands and shoved through the camp. When they reached a small dank cell, they were ordered to pile inside.

The first to be brought to trial was the ringleader, Reb Mordechai. Inside the small courtroom, which consisted of the judge’s desk and a bench for the defendant, the proceedings were all but pro forma. Reb Mordechai had already predicted his indictment, and solemnly awaited the verdict.

“This is an act of treason,” said the prosecutor. “By lighting the candles, you intended to signal to enemy forces. The penalty for this is death.”

The judge regarded the young man standing in front of him. “Do you have anything to say for yourself?”

Reb Mordechai’s heart pounded in his chest as he approached the judge. “Is it just me, or is it the rest of the group too?”

“All of you,” enunciated the judge dryly.

Reb Mordechai was devastated.

The courtroom began to spin around him. Whatever indifference he was able to afford until then vanished in the terror-stricken realization that his fellow brothers would be led to their deaths. He blamed himself.

Reb Mordechai burst into bitter tears, and for a few minutes he stood in front of the



judge, sobbing uncontrollably. Years of crushing pain and pent-up emotions overwhelmed him and couldn't be stopped.

"Come close," said the judge.

Reb Mordechai took a step towards the judge's desk. Softly, the judge asked about his relatives, their means of livelihood and other personal details. Reb Mordechai answered the judge's inquiries.

"What do you have to say for yourself?" the judge pressed on.

Mustering temerity he did not feel, Reb Mordechai addressed the judge, "We are Jews, and we lit the candles that night to observe the holiday of Chanukah."

"You lit Chanukah candles? You lit Chanukah candles?" the judge repeated to himself, clearly unsettled. "You don't say . . . Chanukah candles."

Recomposing himself, the judge called to the two guards present in the courtroom and asked them to stand outside. When the door clicked closed, the judge turned his attention back to Reb Mordechai.

"If you lit Chanukah candles, let me demonstrate the right way to light them."

Reb Mordechai watched the judge light a small lamp. Picking up the incriminating documents gingerly, with trembling hands, the judge slid the first one off and held it to the flame. The paper caught fire and disappeared quickly in an orange blaze and a few wisps of smoke. As if he were afraid to delay lest he change his mind, the judge worked quickly through the pile, saying "You see?

This is how you light Chanukah candles." Soon there was nothing remaining of the pile.

Finished, the judge scooped up the scattered ashes, strode over to the window and tossed them into the Siberian wind. Sitting down, the judge reached for the buzzer on his table and summoned the guards.

"Take this group of 18 men," the judge barked, "and separate them, making sure that it would be impossible for them to see one another. There's no point in killing them; they are not worth even one bullet."

The guards marched out, and Reb Mordechai was again left alone with the judge. The latter faced Reb Mordechai and said in a trembling voice, "I too am a Jew, and I beg you to make sure that the future generations of our people will know to light the Chanukah candles."

In 1956, a few years following Stalin's death, hundreds of thousands of prisoners were pardoned and their names cleared. Among them was Reb Mordechai Chanzin, who was finally given permission to leave the camps that had robbed him of decades of life. Chanzin moved to Moscow, where he became secretary to Chief Rabbi Yehudah Leib Levin. A decade later, through the efforts of the Rebbe, he was allowed to immigrate to Israel, where he was reunited with his brother Dovid, the rabbi of Petach Tikva.

Adapted by Asharon Baltazar from Sichat Hashavua, no. 1248, and Sippur Shel Chag, p. 38. Asharon has liked to write since childhood and found a good outlet for his creativity here. He currently resides with his wife in Jerusalem, where he studies in Kollel.



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What to Do Tonight: **Fry Up Some Latkes**

Latke (pronounced LOT-keh, LOT-kah or LOT-kee) is Yiddish for “pancake.” On Chanukah, it is traditional to serve latkes (most often potato) fried in oil to celebrate the Chanukah miracle, which involved the oil of the Temple menorah lasting for eight days instead of just one.

Jews eat foods that reflect the significance of a holiday—such as matzah on Passover and apples dipped in honey on Rosh Hashanah—and Chanukah is no exception. For at least the last thousand years, Jews have traditionally eaten oily foods on Chanukah. You can also make latkes with cheese, carrot, zucchini or just about anything else that fries well. In fact, eating jelly doughnuts (sufganiyot in Hebrew) on Chanukah is a very close cousin to this custom, sharing the same source. We’ll get to doughnuts on Night #5 and cheese latkes on Night #8.

Ingredients:

- 5 large potatoes, peeled
- 1 large onion
- 3 eggs
- 1/3 cup flour
- 1 tsp. Salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- ¾ cup oil for frying

Use: 10-inch skillet

Yields: 4 to 6 servings’

Directions:

Grate potatoes and onion on the fine side of a grater, or in a food processor; or put in a blender with a little water.

Strain grated potatoes and onion through a colander, pressing out excess water. Add eggs, flour, and seasoning. Mix well.

Heat ½ cup oil in skillet. Lower flame and place 1 large tablespoon batter at a time into hot sizzling oil and fry on one side for approximately 5 minutes until golden brown. Turn over and fry on other side 2 to 3 minutes.

Remove from pan and place on paper towels to drain excess oil. Continue with remaining batter until used up, adding more oil when necessary.

Serve with applesauce on the side.

Variation: Zucchini or Carrot Latkes: Substitute 5 medium zucchini or 5 medium carrots for potatoes.





Sun., Kislev 28, Dec. 13

NIGHT FOUR

Tonight's Light:

Wisdom With Light

The story of Chanukah is an ongoing conflict between two approaches to human life.

One approach is that human life is valued because humans are capable of thought and reason. Therefore, the ultimate judge in all matters is human reason, the measure of all things. Everything must follow the dictates of knowledge, science, and human understanding—because there is nothing higher.

The other says human life is invaluable because the human being is essentially bound up with a divine, transcendent truth. “In the image of G-d did He make the human being.”

Yes, reason too is precious. It is the highest quality of the human being. But it is not the ultimate adjudicator of life. For that, humankind has been endowed with divine truths that transcend reason and that are binding upon us even when we don't understand. We are placed here in this world not as owners, but as stewards, with boundaries to our powers over it and responsibilities to one another and to the One who made all things.

Ever since Alexander entered Jerusalem, the civilized world has been the battleground of this conflict, with the Jews always at its vortex—from ancient Greece, Rome and Persia to the Arabic empires to 20th century Europe and the Americas, and even in today's global civilization that encompasses East and West.

One nation in particular excelled beyond all others in the entire gamut of human intellect—in philosophy, in ethics, in music, in history, in mathematics, physics, psychology—to a pinnacle unchallenged in history. The German people took the genius endowed to them



and twisted it into an ideology of genocide justified by the science of its day. The world's most educated nation transformed itself into a brutally efficient death-machine that would have destroyed itself along with the entire world but for the grace of G-d.

And yet, to this day, much of the world still questions the need for absolute values.

Judaism is tasked with transmitting a set of absolute values that was endowed to the world by its Creator at the very dawn of humankind; common values that enable the world to endure with respect and dignity for all living things. It is called the Noahide Code. (See chabad.org/62221 for more on the Noahide Code.)

Because a world of reason, intellect, and knowledge alone is not a sustainable world. Within true wisdom flickers the light of a higher consciousness, an awareness that we are not the end-all of being, that within this reality and within this life breathes the One that created all things. Even reason itself.

Indeed, the battle of Chanukah continues, and its flame becomes yet more vital each day.

Related: [Why Couldn't the Jews and Greeks Just Get Along?](http://www.chabad.org/64639)
www.chabad.org/64639

Story for Tonight:

How a Chanukah Menorah Changed My Life

My story is about one man's search for buried treasure. Not the kind of treasure you can touch or see. Rather, an absolutely different kind of treasure, which is far more precious and valuable—it's priceless.

That man is me, Shlomo Lewis.

I was raised as a secular Jew. I had an excellent education; I went to a good school and university. However, unlike many of my peers, I did not become a lawyer, a doctor or an accountant. Growing up in the 1960s, I embraced the values and ideals of love, peace and some soft drugs. I felt that there was more to life than getting married and acquiring possessions. That wasn't the life I sought—my drive was to transform the world.

Thus, I became interested in politics, taking the first step in what I thought was the way to make

the world a better place.

At the same time, I was aware that there was a spiritual dimension to life. But to me, it wasn't religion. Religion simply had too many rules and regulations. I failed to see it as a way to become a more spiritual and fulfilled person.

After some time, I started struggling with depression. I found it very difficult to hold down a job and earn a decent living. Eventually, in 1996, after living in the south of England for 15 years, I lost my job and my house and returned to my hometown of Manchester, living close to my elderly parents.

Broughton Park, the area where I was living, had a large Orthodox Jewish community. I felt I had nothing in common with them and even suspected that they looked down on me.



Time passed and things only seemed to get worse. In December 2010, I lost my job again. I was on the brink.

Then came Chanukah of 2011. It was late one afternoon and I was walking home from the doctor's, where I had been receiving counseling for depression.

For some odd reason that I can't explain logically, I decided to take a different route home, a route that was totally out of my way. This took me past what I now know to be the Lubavitch yeshivah.

It was late afternoon and the sun was about to set. I heard someone call out to me, "Excuse me, sir, are you Jewish?" Curious to see who was calling out to me, I crossed the road. Standing there were two young men wearing black hats and jackets, the uniform of Orthodox Jews.

They introduced themselves as students from the nearby yeshivah. "Today is Chanukah," they said. After speaking for a few minutes about Chanukah and giving me a fresh kosher doughnut and menorah kit, they invited me to come and learn some more about Judaism in the yeshivah. Intrigued, I accepted their invitation for that Thursday.

I found the session with my young "teacher" extremely interesting and enlightening. I told myself that I would definitely come back for more.

Some time has passed since then, and I have been returning every Thursday evening, and at times even on Shabbat evenings, just to learn, pick

up whatever I can, and even to observe their lively farbrengens (chassidic gatherings).

I have always been interested in spirituality. I had read books about Kabbalah, but not really understood them. At yeshivah, I studied Tanya, a chassidic classic that has made Judaism more meaningful to me.

It is not enough to just read about spirituality; rather, we have a calling and divine mandate to become more spiritual. The greatest way of connecting with the divine is the performance of mitzvahs, I learned. This was all fascinating to me.

Most of all, I have been inspired by the dedication, belief, warmth, commitment and kindness of the students, and by their devotion to the Rebbe.

I had heard of the great Lubavitcher Rebbe, but knew little about him. Now I am learning more and have come to appreciate what a truly remarkable and holy person he must have been to command such reverence and dedication from his followers.

Looking back now, I think to myself, how has my life changed since my chance encounter with the students? In many ways—from putting on tefillin daily, lighting Shabbat candles, affixing a mezuzah on my door, and going to shul on Shabbat—I have reconnected with my Jewish soul.

I have found the treasure I was seeking for so many years—and it was right in my own backyard all along.

By Shlomo Lewis



Get the full story of Chanukah!

WWW.CHABAD.ORG/CHANUKAHSTORY

What to Do Tonight: Make Your Own Wrapping Paper

Potato printing is an old favorite. It's a terrific craft project for the whole family. Together you can make some beautiful materials for your Chanukah celebration: homemade wrapping paper, table cards, aprons, napkins and more. Since you'll be buying many potatoes for your Latkes, why not buy a few extra for this project. It's easy and fun. Just follow the steps below and you'll be creating your own unique projects in no time



You Will Need

- Chanukah-shaped metal cookie cutters
- sharp knife
- large russet potato or sweet potato
- paper towel acrylic paints (fabric paint is best if you are painting on fabric)
- metal tray or paper plate
- paper or fabric on which to stamp

Instructions:

Step 1: Cut a potato in half and use your favorite Chanukah cookie cutter to press into the potato at least ½" deep.



Step 2: Using a paring knife, cut the negative pieces out around the potato and dispose leaving the cookie cutter shape protruding from potato. Pat your potato shape dry with a paper towel.



Step 3: Dip your shape into acrylic paint and stamp onto choice material such as paper, fabric napkins, aprons, tablecloth. The sky is the limit!



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A Light for Tonight: **Chanukah and Purim**

Chanukah and Purim are similar in many ways. Let's try to understand why that is.

Other Jewish holidays—Passover, Shavuot, Sukkot, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur—are special days, similar to Shabbat. We call them Yom Tov. All types of work are prohibited, other than that which is necessary for preparing food.

Chanukah and Purim, on the other hand, are regular weekdays with no work restrictions. On Chanukah, a Jew is permitted to go to work. (On Purim, it's a little more complicated. See chabad.org/648695.)

Chanukah and Purim are also different because they are not mentioned in the Five Books of Moses. Both were instituted later and subsequently accepted by the entire Jewish community.

That would seem to make Chanukah and Purim somewhat less significant than the Yom Tov holidays.

Yet, on the other hand, Chanukah and Purim also have a major advantage over the other holidays: They last forever. We're told that the spiritual light of the messianic era will be so great that the light and celebration of all the holidays will become insignificant—except for the celebration of Purim and the light of Chanukah¹.

That seems a little paradoxical. Are these days more important or less important than the Yom Tov holidays?

Questions like this are best answered by looking inside, into the soul of the holidays. Why does the Torah forbid us to work on a Yom Tov?

A Yom Tov, like Shabbat, is a day where a special sort of divine energy enters our world. On Passover, it's the energy that made the Exodus possible. On Shavuot, the energy of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai is replaying. On Rosh Hashanah, the energy that initially brought the universe into existence re-enters. On Yom Kippur, it's an energy of divine forgiveness. On Sukkot, divine love and protection shines.

The Torah instructs us how to be in tune with the dynamics of those days. The first step is to avoid work. To work means to invest yourself within the mundane, physical world, manipulating and creating from within it. That interferes with the energy of the day, directing it into the channels where it doesn't fit—something like making noise out of music.

Chanukah and Purim also have their special energy—only from a much higher place.

The Greeks had defiled all the olive oil in

of Chanukah will never be extinguished has been lost to us, but it is cited in authoritative sources as "a midrash of our sages."

1. The original source of this statement that the light

the Temple—symbolizing the divine wisdom that shines on a Yom Tov. But the Maccabees reached deep within their conscience to find a yet higher divine light, an inner wisdom that transcends logic and reason. Because by logic and reason, they had no chance against the legions of impenetrable Greek phalanxes, archers, and elephants. But they followed this inner wisdom that told them they had no other choice.

Ever since then, in the light of the Chanukah candles glows a light that has been hidden since the beginning of the universe; a light of consciousness entirely beyond anything we could comprehend.

Since we have no way to comprehend this light, ceasing work won't help us to be in

touch with it. On the other hand, being such a powerful, intense form of light, it reaches much further than the light of Yom Tov, so that it is manifest in the everyday world, waiting for us there to uncover it.

Purim is similar. The energy of Purim is beyond anything we can know—so we connect to it by creating happiness that is “beyond knowing.”

So it's really no puzzle that work is permitted on a day when such a transcendental energy shines. On the contrary, these days are so special, their energy can reach down into our everyday world and everyday activities and make even that shine. As King Solomon taught, “In all your ways, know G-d.”

Based on Derech Mitzvotecha, Mitzvat Ner Chanukah.

Related: Why Is Work Permitted on Purim? www.chabad.org/648695



Story for Tonight: **The Fifth Night**

One of the legendary soldiers in the Lubavitcher Rebbe's army of teachers and activists who kept Judaism alive in Communist Russia in the darkest years of repression was Rabbi Asher Sossonkin, who spent many years in Soviet labor camps for his "counter-revolutionary" activities. In one of these camps he made the acquaintance of a Jew by the name of Nachman Rozman. In his youth, Nachman had abandoned the traditional Jewish life in which he was raised to join the communist party; he served in the Red Army, where he rose to a high rank; but then he was arrested for engaging in some illegal business and sentenced to a long term of hard labor in Siberia.

Rozman was drawn to the chassid who awakened

in him memories of the home and life he had forsaken. With Reb Asher's aid and encouragement, he began a return to Jewish observance under conditions where keeping kosher, avoiding work on Shabbat, or grabbing a few moments for prayer meant subjecting oneself to near-starvation, repeated penalties and a daily jeopardy of life and limb.

One winter, as Chanukah approached, Reb Asher revealed his plan to his friend. "I'll get a hold of a small, empty food can — the smaller the better, so it'll be easy to hide and escape notice. We'll save half of our daily ration of margarine over the next two weeks, for oil. We can make wicks from the loose threads at the edges of our coats. When



everyone's asleep, we'll light our 'menorah' under my bunk...."

"Certainly not!" cried Nachman Rozman. "It's Chanukah, Reb Asher, the festival of miracles. We'll do the mitzvah the way it should be done. Not in some rusty can fished out from the garbage, but with a proper menorah, real oil, at the proper time and place. I have a few rubles hidden away that I can pay Igor with at the metal-working shed; I also have a few 'debts' I can call in at the kitchen...."

A few days before Chanukah, Nachman triumphantly showed Reb Asher the menorah he had procured — a somewhat crude vessel but unmistakably a "real" menorah, with eight oil-cups in a row and a raised cup for the shamash. On the first evening of Chanukah, he set the menorah on a stool in the doorway between the main room of their barracks and the small storage area at its rear, and filled the right-hand cup; together, the two Jews recited the blessings and kindled the first light, as millions of their fellows did that night in their homes around the world.

On that first night the lighting went off without a hitch, as it did on the second, third and fourth nights of the festival. As a rule, the prisoners in the camp did not inform on each other, and their

barrack-mates had already grown accustomed to the religious practices of the two Jews.

On the fifth night of Chanukah, just as Reb Asher and Nachman had lit five flames in their menorah, a sudden hush spread through the barracks. The prisoners all froze in their places and turned their eyes to the doorway, in which stood an officer from the camp's high command.

Though surprise inspections such as these were quite routine occurrences, they always struck terror in the hearts of the prisoners. The officer would advance through the barracks meting out severe penalties for offenses such as a hidden cigarette or a hoarded crust of bread. "Quick, throw it out into the snow," whispered the prisoners, but the officer was already striding toward the back doorway, where the two Jews stood huddled over the still-burning flames of their candelabra.

For a very long minute the officer gazed at the menorah. Then he turned to Reb Asher. "P'yat? (Five?)" he asked.

"P'yat," replied the chassid.

The officer turned and exited without a word.

Originally published in the Hebrew weekly Sichat Hashavua; translation/adaptation by Yanki Tauber.



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What to Do Tonight:

Fry Homemade Jelly Doughnuts

Ingredients:

- 3 cups white bread flour + more for dusting
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 envelope dry active yeast (2½ tsp)
- ¾ cup lukewarm milk
- 2 tbsp sugar + 2-3 more cups for coating the donuts
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 tbsp unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- 1 jar preserves/jelly of choice
- vegetable oil for frying
- cinnamon (optional for coating doughnuts)
- Equipment: candy thermometer that you can clamp to the inside of your pot

Yields: 12-14

Directions:

1. In a small bowl, combine 2 tbsp of warm milk and 2 tbsp of sugar. Add the dry active yeast and let sit until foamy, about 5 minutes.
2. In the bowl of a mixer, combine 3 cups flour and 1 tsp salt. Add yeast mix to the flour. Add the eggs and butter to the flour mixture. Mix the ingredients until they come together into a crumbly mix.
3. Mix in the rest of the milk, 1 tbsp at a time until the dough sticks together in a ball.
4. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead until the dough is smooth. (You can do this in a mixer fitted with a dough hook as well.) Form the dough into a ball and transfer it to a lightly oiled bowl, cover with a kitchen towel, and let rise until doubled in size, about 2 hours.
5. Punch down the risen dough. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface. With a lightly floured rolling pin, gradually roll out the dough to about ½" thick. When rolling dough, let it rest periodically to relax the dough and make it easier to roll out.
6. Cut out 3-4" rounds with a lightly floured biscuit cutter or drinking glass. Re-roll the scraps to make more rounds.
7. Place the doughnuts on lightly floured baking sheets that are lined with parchment paper, spacing them apart, and cover lightly with a dry towel. Let rise in a warm spot until doubled in size, about 30 minutes.
8. Heat a deep, heavy pot filled 3" high with vegetable oil to 350°.
9. Transfer the risen doughnuts to the pot and fry the doughnuts, a few at a time, until golden and puffed. About 1-2 minutes each side.
10. Prepare a plate with 2-3 cups of mixed sugar and cinnamon.
11. Lift the doughnuts from the oil using a slotted spoon and blot briefly on a paper towel-lined plate. While donuts are still hot, sprinkle with cinnamon-sugar (tongs are a good tool for holding the donuts). Set donuts aside.
12. Fill a pastry bag (¼" round tip), squeeze bottle or zip-top bag with the corner cut off with jelly preserves. Insert the tip into the end of each doughnut and pipe approximately 1-2 tbsp of preserves into them and serve.

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Tonight's Light: ***The Megillah of Antiochus***

Now here's an interesting difference between Chanukah and Purim: Both holidays have a small scroll—called a megillah—that tells their story. Purim has the Megillah of Esther. Chanukah has the Megillah of Antiochus.

On Purim, we are required to read that megillah publicly at night, and again in the day. But on Chanukah, there's no such requirement. Yes, there have been communities that read the Megillah of Antiochus in the synagogue on Chanukah. Indeed, some Yemenite communities still keep this custom. But it's done without a blessing, since all agree that it was never instituted by any rabbinical authority.

Another distinction between these two megillahs: The Talmud tells that Esther requested from the Men of the Great Assembly, which included prophets together with sages, that they “write my story for all generations.” And indeed, the Megillah of Esther was inducted into the exclusive set of twenty-four books of Tanach.

The Megillah of Antiochus, on the other hand, is not considered a sacred work. Rav Saadia Gaon, the foremost authority for Jews in the 10th century, held it in high esteem. He wrote that the Hasmoneans, Judah, Shimon, Johanan, Jonathan, and Eliezer, sons of Mattathias, wrote this megillah about their own experiences, and similar to the book of Daniel, they wrote it in the language of the

Chaldeans (Aramaic). He translated it into Arabic along with his translations of other books of Tanach. Nevertheless, it was never inducted into Tanach, as was the Megillah of Esther.

The distinction gets yet sharper when we consider the names of these two megillahs. The Megillah of Esther is named after the heroine of the story. The Megillah of Antiochus is named after the villain!

None of this is coincidental. Something is going on over here that represents a deep distinction between the dynamics of Purim and Chanukah.

The stories of both Purim and Chanukah are about taking a real dark situation and turning it around for the good. But there are two ways of effecting this transformation.

In the story of Purim, the royal decree to eliminate the Jewish population was transformed into royal support for a Jewish victory over those that desired their elimination. The house of Haman became the house of Mordechai.

In the story of Chanukah, the dictatorship of a foreign, insane megalomaniac who forbade Jewish practice and demanded he be worshipped led to the liberation of the Temple in Jerusalem and a miracle of light.

Yet, while Purim pulls inward, Chanukah radiates light outward.

On Purim, the Megillah of Esther is read in the synagogue. The Purim feast and exchange of foodstuffs, as well as the gifts to the poor, is done principally within the Jewish home.

So it makes sense that the story of Haman and King Achashverosh is also pulled inward, to become a sacred book of Torah named after a righteous Jewish heroine, and read each year by decree of the sages. The telling of the machinations and greed of these villains becomes a mitzvah, just as the house of Haman became the house of Mordechai. Pulled into the Torah and declared a mitzvah, they are transformed.

The miracle of Chanukah, on the other hand, is about shining light outward, and to the outside. The original requirements for the Chanukah menorah stipulate that it be lit only once it is dark. And where? “At the door of your house, on the outside.” Why? As the Talmud states, “to publicize the miracle.”

Who are we publicizing it to? That becomes obvious from another requirement: Until when can you light it? Until the marketplace is quiet. Until all the stragglers have gone home, including, the Talmud says, the Tarmodai.

Who are the Tarmodai? Merchants from the Syrian city of Tarmod (a.k.a. Tadmur, a.k.a. Palmyra) who were known for staying late in the market at night, collecting leftover wood.

They were also known for having rebelled against King Solomon, and for having acted as mercenaries in the destruction of both Temples.

And it’s with these people that we measure the ultimate darkness that Chanukah can reach!

Which means: The celebration of Chanukah is meant to reach all those people out there as they are out there. Where Purim deals with the dark characters of this world by transforming them into players in a holy book of Torah, the light of Chanukah reaches into the thick darkness of night, as darkness remains darkness, outside of the holiness of Torah, and shines even there. Nothing is excluded, and nothing is changed.

That’s why we absorb the message of Purim by being pulled into the words of a megillah, while the message of Chanukah is broadcast out there by shining the light of a menorah.

Because this light is the light of divine wisdom, for which there is no “outside.” As the Baal Shem Tov taught, “G-dliness is everything. Everything is G-dliness.” We just need light to see it there.

Read the Megillah of Antiochus in English at chabad.org/2830773

—Source: *Hitvaduyot 5750*, vol. 2, pg. 43ff.



Story for Tonight:

The Miracle of the Long Candles

Reb Pesachya from Kherson was a chassid of the Rebbe Rashab, the fifth rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch. Once, at a Simchat Torah gathering with the rebbe, Reb Pesachya—having already said l'chaim once or twice—stood up and declared:

"The Rebbe always says that he does not perform miracles—but I have a story to tell!

"One summer, I had a private audience with the Rebbe, and the Rebbe told me the following: 'You work in the forests, and sometimes you even need to spend a few days in a row in the forest. When Chanukah arrives, don't forget to bring candles with you. Just make sure that they are big candles.'

"When Chanukah arrived, I indeed needed to spend a few days in the forest. Recalling the Rebbe's words, I brought some large candles with me.

"While in the forest, thieves came upon me, took all my money and said they were going to kill me. I pleaded with them to spare my life, but they said they could not do so, since I would certainly go to the police, who would then pursue them. They said

they had no choice but to kill me.

"My continued pleading went nowhere. I asked them if I could have one final request, and they agreed. It is Chanukah, I said, and our tradition requires us to light candles each night. Out of their 'great compassion,' they permitted me to light my candles.

"As I was lighting the candles, a local landowner passed nearby and saw the light. He had a revolver with him, arrested the robbers and saved me."

Concluding his story, Reb Pesachya said, "Is that not a miracle?!"

The Rebbe Rashab said: "Zogt a niggun!" "Someone start a song!"

From Shmuos v'Sippurim, R. Raphael Kahn, vol. 1, pg. 91

Adapted into English by Shaul Wertheimer. The director of Chabad of Queens College, Shaul has a degree in philosophy from Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., and graduated from the Rabbinical College of America in Morristown, N.J. He lives in Queens with his wife and children.



What to Do Tonight: **Decorate Doughnuts**

Step 1: Make the Glaze

If you want to make colorful glazes, make the white glaze and then divide into separate bowls. Add a few drops of food coloring to each bowl, in the colors of your choice.



Classic White Glaze

- 1 cup confectioners sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2 tbsp. milk (dairy or non-dairy), or hot water

Sift confectioner's sugar into a bowl. Add the vanilla and the milk or hot water 1 tablespoon at a time, mixing with a spoon in one direction until frosting is smooth.

Optional: Divide the glaze into separate bowls and add a couple of drops of food coloring to each in the colors of your choice.

Classic Chocolate Glaze

- 1¼ cups confectioner's sugar
- ½ cup cocoa
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 3–4 tbsp. hot water

Sift cocoa powder and confectioner's sugar into a bowl. Add salt. Whisk with a fork to combine. Add the hot water 1 tablespoon at a time, mixing with a spoon in one direction until frosting is smooth.

Step 2: Glaze

Dip each doughnut into your preferred glaze. Use wax or parchment paper to catch the drips.



Step 3: Decorate

Choose your toppings and sprinkle them on top before the glaze sets.



By Miriam Szokovski. The author of the historical novel Exiled Down Under, and a member of the Chabad.org editorial team, Miriam shares her love of cooking, baking and food photography on Chabad.org's food blog, Cook It Kosher.



Wed., Tevet 2, Dec. 16

NIGHT SEVEN

Tonight's Light:

Counting Up Versus Counting Down

Everyone knows that each day of Chanukah you add another candle to your menorah. Well, it wasn't always that way. Originally, this was a matter of serious debate.

The Jewish sages who lived not long after the Chanukah miracle were divided between the disciples of Shammai ("Beit Shammai") and the disciples of Hillel ("Beit Hillel").

Beit Shammai said, "Look, on the first day of Chanukah you've got eight days of miracles ahead of you. That's a lot of potential light. So it makes sense to light eight candles. The second day, there's only seven days to go, so you should light seven. Until, on the last day, you light only one!"

But Beit Hillel said, "You don't have any light until you've actually lit a candle. What you think you can do means nothing. It's what you actually do that counts."

Both sides had a strong point.



On the one hand, if you're fighting darkness, you want to start by pulling out all the light you have. Then you're left just cleaning up the leftovers, so less light is necessary.

On the other hand, in a time of darkness, you usually don't have a lot of light to fight back with. So you start with what you've got, and you discover something amazing—that whereas a vast empire of darkness can't extinguish a single light, one small light can chase away an entire army of darkness.

Indeed, this debate between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel, of potential versus actual, extends throughout the entire Talmud, spilling over into every facet of Jewish law and life.

But in the end, the Jewish people decided unanimously to follow the disciples of Hillel. Indeed, the very word "Chanukah" in Hebrew (חנוכה) is an acronym: ח' נרות והלכה כבית הלל—which means "Eight candles and the halachah is like Beit Hillel."

Why?

Because when you do a mitzvah, its light never goes out. It remains with you, protecting you, guiding you, and channeling blessings toward you. So that today you have the light you gained from yesterday. And tomorrow you will have the light from yesterday and today.

Darkness fades and disappears with time, but the light that shines from a mitzvah can only increase.

Related: Increasing Light and the Message of Chanukah
www.chabad.org/1950141

Story for Tonight:

What Do I Stand For?

It was the twenty-fifth of December, and when she closes her eyes she remembers, just how it was. A Jewish girl from Queens had fulfilled her secret dreams, decorating that bright, forbidden tree. She helped hang the tinsel merrily.

Her boyfriend's family was as friendly as could be. They grinned, watching her exuberance. Soon everyone gathered around the fireplace that night, singing carols. She knew almost every song by heart.

After that, they piled into a big station wagon, calling out holiday greetings to those they'd pass along the snow-covered road. It wasn't a long drive. Each year his family went to Midnight Mass.

But there in one of the center pews, with the lifelike figure nailed to the huge cross hanging in front of the Catholic church, she didn't know what to do, as everyone else bent down to kneel. In those long moments, she felt as if her future was being sealed.

Alone, trembling, she stood, still uncertain if she should. What stopped her from kneeling in that place?

In a congregation of 500 people, she was the only one standing up. But as she felt the word, "Jew" being stamped on her forehead for all to see, she realized that she had no idea what she was standing for.

Afterwards, nobody said one word to her about it. And it was still fun opening up the presents nestled under the tree the next morning and then going sledding down the big hill in their backyard

during the next afternoon. These were things she had wanted to experience for years. But a certain glitter was gone after the first night. She had stood up for something that she couldn't even explain, but still she knew that it was something real, deep within her.

After that, she had a yearning that wouldn't ever go away entirely. Or maybe it had always been there, a yearning for something intangible that she didn't have in her life. She kept feeling at the strangest of times, that she was missing something, and it clearly wasn't X-mas anymore.

Little by little, she started learning more about her own religion. A different way of life had seemed more exciting because she hadn't really experienced the luminescence of Judaism. She started reading inspiring Torah books, and she sought out spiritually-nurturing Jewish mentors that kindled the tiny flame still flickering within her. Later, going on a trip to Israel she got to glimpse rays of the elusive enlightenment for which she had longed. And she realized that she had come close to discarding Judaism, before seeing it.

At the time when the story of Chanukah first unfolded, many assimilated Jewish people, called the Hellenists, also did not really understand the value of a Jewish way of life. They were not just willing, but anxious to give it up for the Greek lifestyle.

She was a Hellenist left standing, who had once also chosen tinsel over gold.

During Chanukah we remember how one tiny

sanctified jar of oil was found in the Temple after it had been rampaged and desecrated. From this small amount of pure oil emerged a light that miraculously would not go out.

Over time she discovered that the tiny pure light within her also wouldn't ever go away, no matter what. That inner spark kept yearning to grow stronger. And it was one more miracle that it did.

What she found out through the years was that the Jewish people stand for purity and joy - a pure joyous connection to G-d, with no intermediaries.

She also learned that flashing bulbs can't come anywhere near the glow that the light emanating from a pure Jewish home can radiate to the world.

Many years have passed, with Chanukahs spinning by as quickly and colorfully as dreidels. When the family gathers together,

her home resounds with lively songs of gratitude during each warm celebration. She hadn't realized the source of what she loved so much. Her Jewish home shines with treasures she didn't know.

As my grandchildren line up to light their menorahs, I stand behind them now, absorbing the illumination created by all these miraculous Jewish children who might never have been. I whisper thanks that I didn't kneel.

By Bracha Goetz, a Harvard-educated author of dozens of books to help children's souls shine, and the new and candid memoir, Searching for G-d in the Garbage



What to Do Tonight: Make a Dreidel Snow Globe



You will need:

- 1 glass jar
- 2 dreidels (wood or plastic)
- Glitter
- Water
- Glycerin
- Hot glue
- Stuffing

Directions:

1. Decide if you'd like to use plastic or wooden dreidels. Wooden ones will get moldy from the water as time goes on, so if you're using wooden dreidels, coat them with clear nail polish first.
2. Use hot glue to attach the first dreidel to the inside of the jar lid. The dreidel should be lying down flat. Make sure it is not jutting out over the edge of the lid, so it fits in the jar. Then use hot glue to attach the second dreidel to the first one. This will be the dreidel that will be visible, so position it carefully.

3. Place some stuffing around the base dreidel. Use the hot glue to attach it to the lid.
4. Set the lid aside to dry. Do not continue if the glue isn't fully dry.
5. Fill the jar with water. Add 1–2 tablespoons of glycerin. Pour in some glitter. Mix. (The glycerin will make the glitter fall more slowly.)
6. Make sure the jar is filled to the very top. Then screw the lid on tightly. Turn over and watch the glitter fall.
7. Optional: Decorate the rim with ribbon or Washi tape. Decorate the outside of the jar with Chanukah stickers.
8. Shake and enjoy watching





Thu., Tevet 3, Dec. 17

NIGHT EIGHT

Tonight's Light:

The Slippery Slope of Yavan

Here's how you spell Greece in Hebrew: יוון

Pretty simple really. You just make a dot. That's called a yud. Then you move left and make a line downward. That's called a vav. Then you make a longer line, one that goes below the line. That's a nun.

Now a yud-dot like that in Hebrew always represents wisdom. The ancient Greeks had a lot of wisdom. Amongst them were brilliant philosophers who rationally determined that there was one Prime Mover of all things (although they also judged it proper to give tribute to smaller gods).

But there's a problem with that. The Jew knows G-d exists because He made a covenant with us at Sinai. We exist because He decided to create us. The whole world exists because He decided it should. In the Greek mind, if G-d exists, it's because my reasoning says so.

If G-d's existence hangs on my reasoning, what does my reasoning hang on?

Nothing. And with nothing to hang on to, it falls down.

That's what happened when Jews started thinking like Greeks. They said, "Look, a lot of Torah is amazing wisdom. Great philosophy. But there's also stuff that doesn't make any sense to us. So we'll just take whatever makes sense to us, and drop the rest."

They couldn't accept that Torah was divine wisdom. They couldn't accept the whole idea

of prophecy, of G-d communicating with man. They couldn't accept that G-d would desire anything at all from us, never mind ask a human being to do a mitzvah.

Because when human reason is the measure of all things, there's no place for divine wisdom to enter. The G-d that is a construct of the human mind ends up even more detached from reality than the philosopher himself.

That's when their wisdom started falling, dragged down by their own desires and emotions. Until they fell so low they started doing things that really didn't make any sense at all. They became involved in licentious rituals and made offerings to Greek idols. They turned against their own people and facilitated a war against their own religion.

That was the point when the Maccabees had to stand up and say, "We've had enough!"

Without realizing it, reasoning people begin to mistake emotions for reason. Their minds rationalize what their hearts want to do. And, indeed, in every society throughout history, from Athens to Berlin, and into our day, the most brilliant minds have found sophisticated reasoning to support every infatuation and perversion of their time and place.

Once the yud of wisdom descends down into the vav of emotions, from there it falls all the way down beneath the line of human morality.

From this we learn that the mind must know

the limits of the mind, that there are things the mind can see but not touch. Things that are just absolutes. Foundations of truth. And they have to be treated that way.

Like: Murder is wrong. Incest and adultery are wrong. You must honor your father and mother. There is only one G-d and He is good. And other fundamental laws that the Torah tells us.

Not that you shouldn't think about these things—you should. But however you end up understanding them doesn't change their absolute truth.

Because these are the foundations of our world. If you let your understanding of these things become the measure of their truth, the entire structure crumbles and falls.

That explains another halachah about the Chanukah lights: Like we say in the words immediately after lighting the menorah, “We are not permitted to make use of them.” We don't use the Chanukah menorah to help us read, cook, or sew or for any other practical use. The light's just there for looking at.

This is the light of G-d's wisdom. It's not there for our use that we can manipulate it and modify it to fit our needs and desires. If we're able to figure a little bit of it out, well, that's pretty amazing. But if we can't, that doesn't change its truth one iota.

The Chanukah lights are whispering: Keep up the awe and wonder and you'll never fall down.

—See Reshimot 123 (Chanukah 5696, Paris). Derech Mitzvotecha, Ner Chanukah.

Related: The Mudswamps of Hella www.chabad.org/2683



Story for Tonight:

It Should Again See Light

Several years ago, a physician from southern France contacted me. His granddaughter had taken ill with a disease that baffled the physicians there. He called after reading several of my articles on disorders of the autonomic nervous system. His granddaughter's symptoms seemed to match those I had described, and he asked me if I could help. I readily agreed, and for many months I collaborated with the child's French physicians by telephone and by fax, directing their diagnostic testing. At last we came to a diagnosis, and I prescribed a course of therapy. During the next several weeks, the child made a seemingly miraculous recovery. Her grandparents expressed their heartfelt thanks and told me to let them know should I ever come to France.

In the summer of 1996, I was invited to speak at a large international scientific meeting that was held in Nice, France. I sent word to the physician I had helped years before. Upon my arrival at the hotel, I received a message to contact him. I called him, and we arranged a night to meet for dinner.

On the appointed day we met and then drove north to his home in the beautiful southern French countryside. It was humbling to learn his home was older than the United States. During the drive he told me that his wife had metastatic breast cancer and was not well, but she insisted upon meeting me. When introduced to her, I saw that despite her severe illness, she was still a beautiful woman with a noble bearing.

After dinner, we sat in a 17th-century salon, sipping cognac and chatting. Our conversation must have seemed odd to the young man and woman who served us because it came out in a free-flowing mixture of English, French, and Spanish.

After a time the woman asked, "My husband tells me you are Jewish, no?" "Yes," I said, "I am a Jew." They asked me to tell them about Judaism, especially the holidays. I did my best to explain and was astounded by how little they knew of Judaism. She seemed to be particularly interested in Chanukah. Once I had finished answering her



questions, she suddenly looked me in the eye and said, “I have something I want to give to you.”

She disappeared and returned several moments later with a package wrapped in cloth. She sat, her tired eyes looking into mine, and she began to speak slowly.

“When I was a little girl of 8 years, during the Second World War, the authorities came to our village to round up all the Jews. My best friend at that time was a girl of my age named Jeanette. One morning when I came to play, I saw her family being forced at gunpoint into a truck. I ran home and told my mother what had happened and asked where Jeanette was going. ‘Don’t worry,’ she said, ‘Jeanette will be back soon.’

“I ran back to Jeanette’s house only to find that she was gone and that the other villagers were looting her home of valuables, except for the Judaic items, which were thrown into the street. As I approached, I saw an item from her house lying in the dirt. I picked it up and recognized it as an object that Jeanette and her family would light around Christmas time. In my little girl’s mind I said, ‘I will take this home and keep it for Jeanette, till she comes back,’ but she and her family never returned.”

She paused and took a slow sip of brandy. “Since that time I have kept it. I hid it from my parents and didn’t tell a soul of its existence. Indeed, over the last 50 years the only person who knew of it was my husband. When I found out what really

happened to the Jews, and how many of the people I knew had collaborated with the Nazis, I could not bear to look at it. Yet I kept it, hidden, waiting for something, although I wasn’t sure what. Now I know what I was waiting for. It was for you, a Jew, who helped cure our granddaughter, and it is to you I entrust this.”

Her trembling hands set the package on my lap. I slowly unwrapped the cloth from around it. Inside was a menorah, but one unlike any I had seen before. Made of solid brass, it had eight cups for holding oil and wicks and a ninth cup centered above the others. It had a ring attached to the top, and the woman mentioned that she remembered that Jeanette’s family would hang it in the hallway of their home.

It looked quite old to me; later, several people told me that it is probably at least 100 years old. As I held it and thought about what it represented, I began to cry. All I could manage to say was a garbled “merci.” As I left, her last words to me were “il faudra voir la lumiere encore une fois”—“it should once again see light.”

I later learned that she died less than a month after our meeting. This Chanukah, the menorah will once again see light. And as I and my family light it, we will say a special prayer in honor of those whose memories it represents. We will not let its lights go out again.

By Blair P. Grubb, M.D., Medical College of Ohio, Toledo, Ohio.



For everything Chanukah visit

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What to Do Tonight:

Make Sweet Cheese Latkes

Ingredients:

- 1 cup ricotta cheese
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- 3 tbsp. sugar
- ½ cup flour
- Oil for frying

Yields: 20 small latkes

Directions:

1. Mix the ricotta, eggs, and vanilla.
2. Add the salt and sugar. Mix.
3. Add the flour, mixing gently.
4. Heat oil in a medium skillet. Drop spoonfuls of batter into the hot oil. Use the back of the spoon to spread out each one if necessary. Fry 1-2 minutes on each side. Continue until all batter has been fried.
5. Serve warm.

TIP: They are good plain, but toppings are fun. Since these are sweet, I like to serve them with something tart, like lemon curd, cranberry sauce (pictured), or berry coulis. Fresh fruit works well too. If you want to go extra sweet, maple syrup, honey, or powdered sugar are all good options. Of course, there's always the traditional apple sauce and sour cream... and anything else that sounds good to you.

Note: These latkes are quite pancakey in texture.

By Miriam Szokovski. The author of the historical novel Exiled Down Under, and a member of the Chabad.org editorial team, Miriam shares her love of cooking, baking and food photography on Chabad.org's food blog, Cook It Kosher.



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