

Nanuet Hebrew Center: **Chanukah 5779** – from the desk of Rabbi Paul M. Kurland



Join us for:

DECEMBER 2nd - 9:00 AM - 11:15 AM

Religious School Family Event – Pre Chanukah Chappening

DECEMBER 4th - 6:00-6:30 PM

All ages invited to join our students in Upstairs for our **Chanukah Candle Lighting & Sing-a-Long.**

DECEMBER 5th - 6:15 PM @ NORTHERN MANOR - MIDDLETOWN & SMITH Roads

Bringing Chanukah joy to those who are alone. We visit for an hour of singing & sharing of memories.

Contribute a modest gift **for the residents**

Toiletries, i.e. decorative comb & brush sets, cologne, bath powders, pretty soaps, etc. No item should exceed \$5

Wrap & mark your gift with a removable label to indicate whether it's appropriate for a man, woman or either.

Bring it to NHC **no later than December 4th.** (There is a large box near the office to place it in.)

We're counting on our entire congregation, Religious School, Kadima & USY, Parent's Association, Sisterhood, Men's Club, Choir, etc. to make this a truly memorable occasion.

Please note: Our NHC evening minyan will be @ Northern Manor that evening.

DECEMBER 7th - 7:30-8:30 PM

Our **CHANUKAH FAMILY SERVICE** - filled with warmth, song, prayer & friendship.

AND followed by a delicious Oneg!

DECEMBER 9th –Chanukah Wars - 5:00 - 7:00 PM

All ages invited to join our Chanukah Cookie Decorating, Dreidel Spinoff & Chanukah Building Challenge

Bring your own chanukah for our congregational candle lighting! RSVP 708-9181

THE STORY OF CHANUKAH IN BRIEF

After the year **175 B.C.E. Antiochus Epiphanes**, ascended the throne of Syria and, urged by Hellenized Jews, attempted to force Jews to abandon their religion & language and to accept Greek idols & Greek language. The Jewish people resisted, and so Syrian soldiers were sent to enforce the king's orders. In the Temple in Jerusalem they set up idols & started offering pagan sacrifices on the sacred altar. Resistance brought martyrdom to many Jews including the aged sage **Eliezer**, who was killed when he refused to eat swine meat. A Jewish woman, **Hannah**, lost her 7 sons rather than have them bow down to Greek idols.

In the town of **Modin** an old priest named **Mattathias** & his 5 sons broke up an attempt to enforce idol sacrifices. They scattered the king's soldiers and fled to the hills with the slogan "**Whoever is for the Lord, follow me!**" Around this family of **Maccabees** grew many fearless patriotic men who waged guerilla warfare from the caves in the mountains. When **Mattathias** died, leaving leadership to his son **Judah Maccabee**, warfare was taken into the open in a series of successful battles, culminating with the great victory of **Emmaus**. The Syrian armies were routed. **Right won out against brute might**. The powerful kingdom of Syria had to recognize the independence of the little state of Judea.

The walls of Jerusalem were repaired. The holy Temple was cleansed and rededicated.

THE REAL REASON HOW & WHY CHANUKAH WAS OBSERVED

Our oldest historical sources differ as to the nature of the festival. In chapter 4 of **1 Maccabees**, the festival is clearly a **rededication of the Temple** with no description other than the mention of songs & praise. **1 Maccabees** is thought to have been written down during the rule of John Hyrcanus (134-104 BCE) by an eyewitness to the events.

Per **2 Maccabees 10:1-8** (probably written in the last century BCE), **Chanukah**, still with no name, was not only the festival of rededication but also **an observance of Sukkot**. Judah and his warriors had been unable to observe Sukkot at its proper time as they were gathering to attack Jerusalem at that time. It's also likely that they modeled the rededication of this Temple on the dedication of the Temple of Solomon, which was held on Sukkot (1 Kings 8).

To this point, our sources yield no name for this celebration nor is there any mention of the lighting of lights, other than the rekindling of the ceremonial candelabra in the Temple which were lit every day of the year (1 Maccabees 4:49-50).

It's in the **Talmud** (*Shabbat* 21b) that the story of **the flask of oil** first appears, given as the explanation for celebrating Chanukah. This is about 300 years after the rededication of the Temple by the Maccabees, and therefore so long after the ceremony of lighting lights was firmly established. Therefore, **it seems to have been created to give religious consent to an already popularly observed custom**.

The **Midrash** offers a different answer for the question of lights: "When the sons of Hasmonean, the High Priest, defeated the Greeks, they entered the Temple and found there 8 iron spears. They stuck candles in these spears and kindled them." (Pesikta Rabbati 2.5) This explanation lends an added symbolism to the lights: **implements of war are transformed into the shining lights of religious service**.

Some modern scholars have even speculated that the lights had their origin in the pagan celebrations of the winter solstice in which fire & torches played a prominent role as nights grew long & dark. Jews participated in this folk festival & later it was tied to Chanukah. The Jews of those times kept the popular root of the Pagan holiday but Judaized it.

None of our liturgy mentions the oil lasting for 8 days. In fact, the main prayer added to our daily worship is **Al Hanisim** which speaks of the lights without reference to miracles. It explains the lights as reminders of those rekindled in the sanctuary by the Maccabees.

HOW TO PROPERLY OBSERVE CHANUKAH

1. Family members should celebrate together if possible. Preparations should include decorating the home and preparing the **Chanukiah** (the Chanukah Menorah) for lighting.
2. Special foods, all made with oil, include the **Ashkenazic "Latkes,"** the **Sephardic "Bumuelos,"** or the **Israeli "Sufganiot"** (jelly donuts). Homemade is always best.
3. Perhaps **the most important Mitzvah of Chanukah** is that the **Chanukiah** be highly visible. It is best to place it on the windowsill. If impossible, it should be placed on a table for all family members to see.
4. The lights are to burn for a minimum of $\frac{1}{2}$ hour.
5. One may use candles or oil for the **Chanukiah**, (Olive Oil is preferable as that was what was used in the Temple of old).
6. It's most preferable to have each family member have his/her own **Chanukiah** to light.
7. It's customary not to do **any** work during the time the candles are lit. It's a great time for singing and playing games, etc.
8. The **Chanukiah** should be lit as soon as it turns dark or as close to that as possible. On Friday evening, they are lit before the Shabbat candles prior to sundown. Oil or larger candles should be used so they burn past nightfall.
9. The Shamash (assistant candle) is lit, the blessings made and then the candles are lit with the Shamash. The Shamash isn't counted and is only used to light the other candles.
10. Each night a candle is added from Right to Left as you face the Menorah. However, you light from Left to Right (the new candle of each night first).

LATKES: A blender recipe

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup flour (or 2 tablespoons matzah meal)
2 eggs
1 sliced onion

1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons parsley
3 cups diced raw potatoes (~2 large Idaho)

Put everything except potatoes into the blender.
Cover and blend.

Keep motor on, remove top & add potatoes. As last piece of potato goes in, turn blender off.
Put onto *hot* greased griddle (frying pan). Brown on *both* sides.

Enjoy! Enjoy!

8 CREATIVE WAYS TO CELEBRATE - Rabbi Jack Relmer

1st night - **BIG GIFT** night

Parents supply the gifts to the children.

2nd night - **MOMMY** night

The family honor & give gifts to the mother.

3rd night - **DADDY** night

The family honor & give gifts to the father.

4th night - **POEM** night

Everyone writes/chooses a favorite poem.

5th night - **SMALL GIFT** night

Each family member gives & gets a gift.

6th night - **GIFT FOR SELF**-night

Promise to do something nice for the family.

7th night - **WORD** night

Everyone finds & teaches a new Hebrew word.

8th night - **GIFT OF GIVING** night

Family chooses & gives to a favorite tzedakah.

**Other Gift Alternatives for our Children:
Putting More Mitzvah & Meaning Into All the Days of the Year**

- **Insure a day of good feelings** with no fights or conflicts. Praising the good through words, cards, poems, hugs
- **Set aside serious 'quality' family time** such as a story, favorite meal, special day-trip...
- **Create a lesson in Tzedakah** by taking a trip to a homeless shelter to help serve a meal or an animal rescue shelter to volunteer or the pediatric ward of a hospital to read stories, sing songs or just play or...
- **Invite special guests to your home** - true mitzvah-heroes through the acts of lovingkindness, they perform.
- **"Build" a meaningful gift** through the week. *For example:*
 1. Read your child a book about tigers. 2. Take him/her to the zoo to see the tigers. 3. Request material from the Sierra Club or any other organization that supports endangered tigers. 4. Donate in your child's name to help save wild tigers. 5. Make a card or plaque announcing your donation in your child's name. (Other themes could involve sick children, trees in Israel, honoring the elderly, recycling, etc....)
- **Make a scrapbook of charities** and let your child select one or more that you will send a \$18 check to or help him/her start a project related to such charities.
- **Give your child the world of Jewish learning & growth** by giving a gift certificate to a Jewish bookstore.
- **Have your child donate at least one gift** he/she receives (on birthdays as well) to a less fortunate child.

The Chanukah Blessings



BLESSINGS:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתַיִךְ, וְצִוֵּנוּ
לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל חֲנֻכָּה.

Ba-rukh A-ta A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu Me-lekh ha-o-lam, a-she-
kid-d'sha-nu b'mitz-vo-tav v'tzi-va-nu I-had-lik ner shel Ha-nu-kah.
*Praised are You, Eternal our God, Ruler of the universe, Who has sanctified us with
commandments and commanded us to kindle the Chanukah lights.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים
הָהֵם בְּזְמַן הַזֶּה.

Ba-rukh A-ta A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu Me-lekh ha-'o-lam, she-'a-sa nis-sim la-avo-tei-nu ba-
ya-mim ha-hem ba-z'man ha-zeh.
*Praised are You, Eternal our God, Ruler of the universe, Who did wondrous things for our
ancestors at this season in those days.*

First night only:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לַזְּמַן
הַזֶּה.

Ba-rukh A-ta A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu Me-lekh ha-'o-lam, she-he-he-ya-nu v'ki-y'-ma-nu
v'hi-gi-ya-nu la-z'man ha-zeh.
*Praised are You, Eternal our God, Ruler of the universe, Who gave us life, sustained us, and
permitted us to celebrate this joyous festival.*