

What is Chanukah?

Chanukah (also spelled Chanuka, Hanuka, Hanukka, Hannukah, or Hanukkah) is the Jewish Festival of Lights and Feast of Consecration (or the Feast of the Maccabees). Celebrated for 21 centuries, Chanukah is celebrated with a series of rituals that are performed every day throughout the 8-day holiday, some are family-based and others communal.

Chanukah (Hanukkah translated from Hebrew as “Dedication”) commemorates the anniversary of the “rehabilitation” and “rededication” of the Second Temple by the Hasmoneans in 167/165 B.C.E. The Festival of Lights is observed by lighting the candles in a unique nine-branched candelabrum (known as the hannukiyah) and it is celebrated for eight nights in which families light a candle each night. The ninth candle is called a *Shamash* is in a visually distinct location, usually above or below the rest. The purpose of the *Shamash* is to have a light available for practical use, as using the Chanukah lights themselves for purposes other than publicizing and meditating upon Chanukah is forbidden.

There is no mention of Chanukah in the Torah (5 books of Moses) or Hebrew Bible. It was a product of the Rabbinic sages to establish an annual celebration of a great miracle. There are two schools of opinions in regards to that miracle: 1) there are those who look to the military victory of a small band of Jews who, led by Judah Maccabee, who broke the Syrian Greek occupation of Palestine, the Holy Land of Israel. 2) Others look to the story of the oil that was placed in menorah of the rededicated Temple, which lasted for eight days when it should have burned for only one. Chanukah honors both, the Festival of Lights and Feast of Consecration with the emphasis on the importance of their freedom of worship.

The central ritual of Chanukah is the lighting successively greater numbers of candles, preceded by the appropriate blessings, on each of the eight nights. Other customs include making of and eating oil based foods such as latkes (potato pancakes), enjoying sufganeot (jelly donuts), exchange of gifts and spinning the dreidel, a four sided top. Chanukah has evolved into today's traditions that help bind the family together, the essence of Judaism.

Acknowledgements

This songbook was compiled from the songbooks of three chapters of *The Holiday Project*, with additions by the Colorado Chapter Volunteers.

- **Wilmington, Delaware Chapter:** I am most grateful to Lynne Majewski for providing their songbook in the 1990's to start the Colorado Chapter's Songbook.
- A special thanks to **Annette Greenberg** who volunteered to do the work necessary to change the hardcopies to .doc format for the Colorado Chapter.
- Thanks to the Business Center Staff at **The Pickens Technical Center** in Aurora, CO for their work on the songbook, Kim W. & Erika.
- Thanks to **Bruce Geller** for contributions to the Chanukah songs.
- Special thanks to Chelsea Kruszka: Completion Editor (2013)



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Blessings

1. Baruch atah adonai elohenu melech ha'olam, asher kid shonu b'mitsvotav vitsivonu l'hadlikner shel channukah
Blessed art thou, O lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has commanded us to light the lights of Channukah.
2. Baruch atah adonai elohenu melech ha'olam, she'oso nisim la' avotenu bayomim ho'hem baz'man hazeh
Blessed art thou, O lord our G-d, King of the universe, who performed miracles for our forefathers in those days.
3. Baruch atah adonai elohenu melech ha'olam shehecheyonu, v'ki'yonu v'higi-ony, laz'man hazeh
Blessed art thou, O lord our G-d, King of the Universe, who has permitted us to be present at this happy time.

MA'OZ TZUR

Ma'oz Tzur Yeshu'ati
lehaha na'eh leshabe'ah.
Tikon beit tefilati,
vesham toda nezabe'ah.
Le'et takhin matbe'ah
mitzar hamnabe'ah.
Az egmor beshir mizmor
hanukat hamizbe'ah.
Az egmor beshir mizmor
hanukat hamizbe'ah.

MI Y'MALEL

Mi y'malel g'vu-rot Yie-ra-el otan mi yim-
ne?
Hen beh col dor ya-kum ha-gi-bor go-el ha-
am.

Shma! Ba-ya-mim ho-hem ba'z-man ha-zeh.
Ma-ki-bi mo-shi-a u-fo-deh
U-v'ya-mey-nu kol am Yis-ra-el
Yit-a-ched Ya-kum l'hi-ga-el.

Mi y'malel g'vu-rot Yie-ra-el otan mi yim-
ne?
Hen beh col dor ya-kum ha-gi-bor go-el ha-
am.

CHANNUKAH, CHANNUKAH

Channukah, Channukah
Chag yafeh kol kach
Or cha viv misa viv
Gil l'yeled rach.
Channukah, Channukah
S'vivon sov sov
Sov, sov, sov
Sov, sov, sov,
Ma nayim va tov

IN THE WINDOW

In the window where you can see the glow
from my menorah on newly fallen snow,
I will set you one little candle on this the
first night of Chanukah

ROCK OF AGES

Rock of Ages let our song,
Praise thy saving power;
Thou amidst the raging foes,
Wast our sheltering tower.
Furiously they assailed us,
But Thine arm availed us
And Thy word broke their sword,
When our own strength failed us.
And Thy word broke their sword,
When our own strength failed us.

WHO CAN RETELL

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

Hark! At this time of year; in days of yore.
Maccabees the Temple did restore.
And today our people as we dreamed
Did arise, unite, and were redeemed.

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

O CHANNUKAH, O CHANNUKAH

O Channukah, O Channukah
Come light the menorah
Let's have a party
We'll all dance the Horah
Gather 'round the table
We'll give you a treat
S'vivon to play with
L'vivot to eat.
And while we are playing
the candles are burning low.
One for each night
They shed a sweet light
To remind us of days long ago
One for each night
They shed a sweet light
To remind us of days long ago

SEVIVON - Hebrew

Se-vi-von, sov, sov, sov,
Cha-nu-kah, hu chag tov,
Cha-nu-kah, hu chag tov,
Cha-nu-kah, hu chag tov,
Se-vi-von, sov, sov, sov,
Chag sim-chah, hu-la-am,
Nes ga-dol ha-yah sham
Nes ga-dol ha-yah sham
Chag sim-chah, hu-la-am,

SEVIVON - English

Spin little dreidel,
Spin, spin, spin,
Chanukah is a day of joy.
Great was the miracle
that happened in Israel long ago.

CHANUKAH PANCAKES

Bring the flour from the bin,
Pour the oil from the tin,
Chanukah is here,
Festival so dear.
La, la, la...
Chanukah is here,
Festival so dear.
La, la, la..
Mix the flour so snowy white,
with oil so golden bright
that's how mother makes
Chanukah pancakes!
La, la, la...
Add an egg; the batter's done,
and some sugar; Oh, what fun!
Come now take your seats,
Steaming pancakes eat.
La, la, la...

IT'S CHANUKAH TONIGHT

Rise on tip-toes
Lift your light
Up-up-up
Flick-er Flick-er
Shine and shine
It's Cha-nu-kah tonight.
Sway and dance
Little light
Up and up and up.
Whirl and flicker
Flicker whirls
It's Cha-nu-kah tonight.

HIPPETY HOP

Hip-pe-ty, hip-pe-ty, hip-pe-ty hop
Mother and I went out to the shop.
Buy me a dray-dle a Chan-nu-kah top,
A tip-pe-ty, tip-pe-ty top!

So many gifts on the very first day!
Chan-nu-kah gifts with which to play!
So many things I'd been hoping for
I'm glad there are seven days more.

HAIL THE MACCABEES

Hear Judea's mountains ringing,
Hail the Maccabees!
Hosts from cleft and cave up springing
Hail the Maccabees!
Shining shields and spearheads glancing
See the lion broad advancing
Hail the Maccabees! O, Hail the Maccabees!

See the bright procession wending,
Hail the Maccabees!
Hear the songs of praise ascending,
Hail the Maccabees!
Holy great the dedication,
Of a liberated nation,
Hail the Maccabees! O, Hail the Maccabees!

HATIKVAH

Kol-od ba-le-vav p'ni-ma
Nefesh Y'hu-di ho-mi-ya.
Ul'fa-atey miz-rach ka-dima
Ayin l'-Tzi-yon tzo-fi-ya.
Od lo av-da tik-va-tey-nu
Ha-tik-va sh'not al-pa-yim
Li-yot am chaf-shi b'-artzenu
B'ereztz Tzi-yon viru-shalayim.

DREIDEL, DREIDEL, DREIDEL

I have a little dreidel
I made it out of clay
And when it's dry and ready
Then dreidel I shall play!

Oh - dreidel, dreidel, dreidel
I made it out of clay
And when it's dry and ready
Then dreidel I shall play!

It has a lovely body
With legs so short and thin
And when my dreidel's tired
It drops and then I win!

Oh - dreidel, dreidel, dreidel
I made it out of clay
and when it's dry and ready
Then dreidel I shall play!

My dreidel's always playful
It loves to dance and spin
A happy game of dreidel
Come play now, let's begin!

Oh - dreidel, dreidel, dreidel
I made it out of clay
And when it's dry and ready
Then dreidel I shall play!

KING OF THE FRY

Who will deny the King of
The Fry, the latke precious?
Who can withhold all glory
And gold, from such as he?
Tzimes and fish, and kugel and
knish, and blintze blessings.
Tagelach and schnaps, are
truly the tops, in ev'ry home.
Hear!... Hamantashen for festivity.
Kreplach are the food for piety.
Honey for New Year's prosperity.
Latke is the food for bravery!

MRS. MACCABEUS

Each Chanukah we glorify brave Judah
Maccabeus
Who had the courage to defy Antiochus,
and free us?
Yet it is not fair that we should forget
Mrs. Maccabeus, whom we owe a debt.
She mixed it, she fixed it
She poured it into a bowl
You may not guess, but it was the Latkes
That gave brave Judah a soul.
You may not guess but it was the Latkes
That gave brave Judah a soul.
The Syrians said: "It cannot be that old
Mattathias
Whose years are more than 83 would dare
to defy us!"
But they didn't know his secret, you see
Mattathias dined on Latkes and tea.
One Latke, two Latkes
And so on into the night
You may not guess but it was the Latkes
that gave him the courage to fight.
You may not guess but it was the Latkes
that gave him the courage to fight.
Now this is how it came about this
gastronomic wonder
That broke the ranks of Syria like flaming
bolts of thunder
Mrs. Maccabeus wrote in the dough

Portions of the teachings then fried them
so.

They shimmered - they simmered
Absorbing the olive oil
You may not guess but it was the Latkes
that made the Syrians recoil.
You may not guess but it was the Latkes
that made the Syrians recoil.
Now these little Latkes brown and delicious
must have hit the spot 'cause with appetites
vicious
All the heroes downed them after their toil
Causing in our Temple a shortage of oil
One Latke, two Latkes,
And so on into the night.
You may not guess but it was the Latkes
that gave us the Chanukah light.
You may not guess but it was the Latkes
that gave us the Chanukah light.
You may not guess but it was the Latkes
that gave us the Chanukah light.