



Hanukkah

Eight days in December or November (eight days starting on 25th day of Kislev) • Jews worldwide

Hanukkah (also spelled Hanukah or Chanukah) is an important Jewish holiday that celebrates freedom and a miracle. Share details of this important event in Jewish history while learning about some of the holiday's more playful traditions.

★ Book Links

Alexandra's Scroll by Miriam Chaikin (Henry Holt, 2002). Picture book, intermediate. A young girl tells about life in Jerusalem in 165 B.C.

Hanukkah: A Counting Book in English, Hebrew, and Yiddish by Emily Sper (Cartwheel Books, 2001). Picture book, all ages. Students will enjoy counting in Hebrew and Yiddish with this book.

Holiday History ★Read Aloud★

What is the miracle of Hanukkah? More than 2,000 years ago, the Jews successfully fought to worship as they wished in the Temple. They reopened the Temple and relit the "eternal light" candle, which wasn't ever supposed to go out. Although they had enough oil for the candle to burn for only one day, a miracle occurred: The candle stayed lit for eight days until a messenger brought new oil. That's why Hanukkah lasts for eight days.

Fast Fact ★Read Aloud★

The menorah is the best-known symbol of Hanukkah. The special menorah of Hanukkah is called a hanukkiah. It has nine holes for candles—one for each of the eight days of Hanukkah, plus a shamesh, or "servant" candle, from which the other candles are lit.



In Other Words

Jewish children count from 1 to 8 in Hebrew for the eight days of Hanukkah. Here are the Hebrew symbols for the numbers and how they are pronounced.

Count on Eight

Math

Form eight groups (groups can be uneven). Assign a number from 1 to 8 to each group. Let each group decorate a poster that includes the number (in English), with the Hebrew symbol and its phonetic spelling at right. Students can include the number names in other languages they know. **FOR OLDER STUDENTS:** Challenge students to use the Hebrew symbols in word problems they create.

1	(one)	א	(e-HAD)
2	(two)	ב	(SHTA-yeem)
3	(three)	ג	(sha-LOSH)
4	(four)	ד	(AR-bah)
5	(five)	ה	(ha-MESH)
6	(six)	ו	(SHEY'SH)
7	(seven)	ז	(SHE-vah)
8	(eight)	ח	(SHMO-neh)

Hanukkah



Holiday History ★Read Aloud★

It is said that when the Syrians occupied Israel more than 2,000 years ago, they forbade children to read the Torah, the Jewish holy book. The children read it anyway. When the Syrians came to their homes, the children quickly took out their dreidels, or spinning tops, and pretended they were playing. The dreidel is now a special symbol of Hanukkah.

★Talk About★ Discuss how the Jewish children must have felt during the time of the occupation. How would you feel if you couldn't read a book you wanted to read or learn something that you wanted to learn?

In Other Words

The symbols or letters on dreidels today represent the first letter of each word in the Hebrew phrase “Neis gadol hayah sham,” which means, “A great miracle happened here.”

The Dreidel Game **Social Studies** **Language Arts**

Try this traditional spinning top game where players add to or give up their stash of goodies. Each letter or symbol on the dreidel corresponds with a move in the game:

- ⸀ N (nun): The player gets nothing.
- ⸁ G (gimmel): The player gets everything from the pot.
- ⸂ H (heh): The player gets half the objects from the pot.
- ⸃ S (shin): The player puts one object back into the pot.

How to play:

- ★ Pair students and give each pair a bag of goodies and a dreidel. (Though children traditionally use candy or pennies, you might include raisins or erasers.)
- ★ Partners take turns spinning the top. As it's spinning, children sing, “Dreidel, dreidel, dreidel, I've made you out of clay. And when you're dry and ready, then dreidel I will play.”
- ★ Each player then takes, or gives back, the amount of goodies indicated by the dreidel symbol. The “pot” is the space or container between the players.

Homemade Dreidel **Social Studies** **Art**

Make a large dreidel: Cut a ½-gallon milk carton so that only the bottom 2 inches remain. Have students glue squares of blue paper to each side of the carton. Each square should include one letter: N, G, H, S. Poke a pencil through a hole in the bottom of the carton and then spin! To make mini-dreidels, substitute pint-sized milk cartons (rinsed out!) and follow the directions above.

