

Joseph S. Jemal Synagogue

Al & Sonny Gindi Building
83 Hathaway Avenue, Deal, NJ 07723



Edmond J. Safra Synagogue

Mourad & Sarine Kattan Building
75 Hathaway Avenue, Deal, NJ 07723



The Light We Don't Even Know We Shine

The As we celebrate Hanukkah, we're reminded that sometimes the greatest impact we make is the one we don't even realize.

Daniel, a man from Texas who grew up mostly unaffiliated, joined a tour to Israel. On the last day, at the Kotel, he noticed a man praying with such raw emotion deeply connected, completely absorbed in his conversation with Hashem. Daniel stood there, mesmerized. The image stayed with him long after he flew home.

Weeks later, at his local bank, he noticed the teller wearing a Jewish star necklace. He asked if there were any synagogues nearby, and she directed him to one in the area. Daniel went, and met the rabbi, who invited him to a class the next evening.

He came. Then he

came again. Slowly, through classes and deep conversations, Daniel learned about prayer, Torah, and Jewish life. His spark grew into a real return to Judaism. In time he married a wonderful Jewish woman, built a beautiful family, and used his wealth to donate an entire new synagogue, complete with classrooms, prayer spaces, and Torah learning centers, transforming his community.

And the man he saw praying at the Kotel? He has no idea. No idea that his sincere, private prayer lit the spark that changed a life, a family, and an entire community.

Hanukkah teaches us that even a small light can illuminate great darkness. This story teaches us that a single sincere moment can change someone's world.

We never know who's watching.

We never know the impact we make.

May we continue to shine our light with kindness, sincerity, and heart, trusting that it reaches farther than we'll ever know.



Hanukkah Sameah!

Rabbi Isaac Farhi

Beginning from the 25th of Kislev (this year from Sunday night, December 14th)

We begin the festival of Hanukkah - days of happiness and Hallel. We light oil or candles on each of the Eight Nights of Hanukkah to publicize the miracle of the oil and our deliverance from the Greeks. During these days we are prohibited to fast or eulogize.

Time For Lighting



The proper time for lighting on all other nights is 20 minutes after sunset. The time continues until about a half-hour after nightfall (when the stars come out). If one could not light at the proper time he may still light throughout the night. After daybreak, however, he should light without the blessing. On all days there should be sufficient oil or a large enough candle to burn at least one half hour.

One should not pull his hand away from the wick until he has kindled the majority of the wick coming out of the candle. If the candles were lit in a place where they would not normally be extinguished by the wind, even if they are extinguished by the opening of the window, etc. he need not light again.

Shabbat

On Erev Shabbat, candles must be lit before regular Shabbat candle lighting time, they must last, however until 1½ hour after dark. A total of about 1 1½ hours. This makes it necessary to prepare and light larger candles (such as Shabbat candles) or adding extra oil.



Saturday night

On Saturday night the custom in one's home is to recite Habdalah and then light the Menorah. Whereas in the Synagogue the Menorah is lit prior to making Habdalah, because in the Synagogue we want to extend Shabbat as long as possible. You may ask: it is no longer Shabbat if we are kindling the Menorah? The answer is that Shabbat needs to have ended only for the one lighting the Menorah and the rest of the congregation can let the sweetness of Shabbat linger just a little bit longer.



THE LAWS OF Hanukah

\YALKUT YOSEF\

Blessings

On the first night of Hanukkah three blessings are recited "lehadlik ner Hanukah", "she'asah nisim", and "shehehiyanu". On the other nights the last beracha is not recited. One should not begin lighting until he has completed all necessary blessings.

Candle lighting order

We begin with the light on the right side of the Menorah (plus the Shamash) on the first night, and add one more each consecutive night until on the Eighth Night we have 8 lights (and the Shamash).

Please make sure to light from left to right. Women are obligated to partake in this Misva (to be there and answer Amen at the lighting of the lights), as they, too, were part of the miracle of Hanukah.



One may not perform the Misva with an electric Menorah. In the case where there is absolutely no oil or candles available- he should turn on the Menorah but he may not recite any blessing at all.

Hallel

On the eight days of Hanukah we recite the Hallel in full, while on Purim, no Hallel is said. The reason for this is that the miracle of Hanukah happened in the Holy Land of Israel, while the miracle of Purim occurred in Persia outside of Israel



Spinning to the Top

In Judaism, even something as simple as "spin-the-top" is really not as simple as it appears.

During the time of the Maccabees, Jews were imprisoned for the "crime" of studying Torah. While in jail, these Jews would gather together to play dreidel. Under the guise of idling away their time, they'd engage in Torah discussions and thus defy the enemies of Judaism. Every dreidel has four sides with one Hebrew letter on each side. Each of these letters begins a word. The four letters are:

- Nun – the first letter of the word nes, - "miracle"
 - Gimmel – the first letter of gadol, "great"
 - Hey – the first letter of haya, - "was"
 - Shin – the first letter of sham, - "there"
- "A great miracle happened there."

Until today, the "game of dreidel" reminds us of our eternal defiance of anyone who tries to stand between a Jew and the Torah.



Spinning Through History

To some, life is a game, a joke, an arbitrary abyss. Not to the Jewish people. We've been "spinning" through history for 3,000 years. To some, history may seem like an arbitrary string of events whose frequent tragedies seem to proclaim life's futility. But the message of the dreidel is just the opposite. Our Rabbis tell us, there is another dimension to the dreidel. The four letters represent four different historical empires – Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman – that have unsuccessfully tried to destroy the Jewish people.

Are we just spinning haphazardly from one tragedy to another, or is there some rhyme and reason to all that has happened in our history?

It is at times of tragedy that the dreidel presents its message: If we believe there is ultimate meaning to the Jewish people, if we know that despite the dizzying blur of events in our history there is some purpose to it all, and if we are prepared to fight to remain Jews regardless of what history throws at us, then we will be worthy to see a miracle and be reassured that it is Hashem's hidden hand guiding us through every step of the destiny of the Jewish people.

Please join us for a special breakfast Leiluy Nishmat

Edmond J. Safra

Refael Edmond Ezra ben Esther A" H

Sunday morning, December 14th, to commemorate his Yartzait



The Miracle of Nature

There are many different customs associated with the Jewish holidays. The meaning behind some of the customs is readily apparent. Eating latkes and doughnuts fried in oil on Hanukah, for example, recalls the miracle of the flask of oil that lasted eight days. The significance of the dreidel, the four-sided top with Hebrew letters on each side, however, is not as clear. The dreidel was invented at the time of the Syrian-Greek decrees against the Jewish people. One of the prohibitions was the study of Torah. Fearlessly, the Jews continued teaching and studying Torah in secret. Should a Greek soldier appear, they would hide their books, pull out tops and play with the children. Let us explore a deeper interpretation of the dreidel.

During the Second Temple era, a small band of Jews fought valiantly against the great Greek armies, miraculously overcame them and regained religious freedom. Although the war did not end for several years, on the 25th day of Kislev the Jews resumed kindling the Menorah in the Temple. All the flasks of oil had been contaminated by the Greeks, yet one little sealed flask was miraculously found, containing enough oil to burn for one night.

Another miracle occurred and the oil burned for eight days, until they could procure new oil.

The name "Hanukah" is a contraction of the words hanu kaf-heh, "they camped [and rested from war] on the 25th day of Kislev." It seems strange that the name of the holiday recalls the lull in the fighting instead of the final victory itself. Why celebrate the job before it is completed?

Let us understand the role of miracles in general and the Hanukah miracle in particular. Our rabbis teach that there is no real difference between nature and miracles; G-d's hand guides everything in the world. However, we sometimes are so distracted by our routine that we fail to see G-d's hand around us. "Nature" is really nothing more than the breathtaking beauty and symmetry of G-d's Creation becoming routine. The purpose of a miracle, a break from the routine, is to draw our attention to G-d's control over all areas of life – even the natural.

That is why the holiday was named Hanukah, reflecting the lull in the war. It was only then the Jews had a chance to stop and consider the Divine assistance rendered during their lop-sided battles – something they had not appreciated in the midst of war.

This may help us understand another question often asked about Hanukah. The little flask contained enough oil to last for one day, so the miracle was really only for seven days and not eight. Then why is Chanukah celebrated for eight days?

The answer lies in the same principle. We take it for granted that oil can fuel a flame, whereas apple juice cannot. But why should that be so? Why does the juice of one fruit fuel a fire, while that of another actually extinguishes it? We have become so accustomed to the routine that we fail to see the fascination in the mundane. The extra day of celebration awakens us to see G-d's hand in the natural as much as in the miraculous.

Which brings us back to the dreidel. Written on the sides of the dreidel are the letters nun, gimme, heh, and shin, representing the words nes gadol haya sham, "A great miracle happened there."

While the dreidel spins, the letters disappear in a blur and are visible only when coming to a stop. The dreidel represents how we – immersed in the dizzying hustle-bustle of daily routine – cannot see the miracles regularly happening all around. Only when we stop to reflect are our eyes opened to the miracles that were there the whole time.



The Three Decrees

The Greek culture was one that extolled physical beauty and physical might. A self-aggrandized diet of sport became the essence of Greek culture, which they sought to spread to the entire world. Yavan the Greeks took this concept and used it as the only reality of existence. The three letters of Yavan – yud, vav and nun – look like singular thin lines that have no framework or depth to contain anything, representing a totally external approach to look at the world; physical pleasure disconnected from anything deeper.

The Jewish religion is centered around the concept of spirituality; and that physical beauty can be expressed and reflected by adjoining spiritual beauty. Lasting beauty is one which is connected to truth, depth, wisdom and profundity; Shabbat is a day focused on the spiritual world; as the Sages say it is like the World to Come. Yet on Shabbat we beautify ourselves, our tables and our family and communal lives as well. The Greeks outlawed the observance of the spiritual day of Shabbat because it represented the inner soul of the physical world.

Rosh Hodesh, sanctifying the New Moon each month, was also outlawed because it represented the inner holiness of the faculty of time. Brit Millah was banned because it represented the inner holiness of the body. It is no irony that Hanukah contains within it a Shabbat, a Rosh Hodesh and contains the same transcendental number of days as a Brit Milah.

Every Hebrew word has a deep meaning. The hand contains a total of 14 joints which is the gematria (numerical value) of the Hebrew word "Yad" which means "hand." When two hands come together there is a unity, and the combination of putting "hand in hand" (yad yad) forms the Hebrew word "yedid," which means close friends. When two hands come together there is a total of 28 joints. The number 28 written in Hebrew is kaf het, spelling the Hebrew word "koah" which means "strength."

The main cause for the destruction of the temple was due to Jews fighting against each other. During the rededication of the temple on Hanukah the Jews repaired their spiritual breeches and reunited around the temple. When the Jewish people unite they are the strongest, like two hands coming together.



Growing our Gratitude

Although most people are polite enough to say thank you, there are few who have a feeling of true gratitude in their hearts for the goodness that others have done for them. From the Holiday of Hanukah we learn how great the obligation to give thanks is, This does not mean that we must show gratitude only to those who have done us tremendous favors, but even for simple things that are done for us. This includes people who serve us in a store, people who work for us, even our spouses and our children. Anything that is done for you deserves words of thanks and feelings of gratitude in your heart.

One should say thank you with a smile. When you smile, you demonstrate that you are appreciative and happy with what you received. If you say thank you with a frown, it means nothing, because you are not expressing it with your heart. People watch your face when you say thank you, and it is important that your face reflect the essence of what you are saying.

One reason people refrain from expressing gratitude is because they feel that the other person has to do his job anyway. For instance, the tailor had to sew the suit, the grocer had to sell us the produce. These are their jobs, what room is there for thanks? They feel this way particularly when the other person is making money from us and benefitting from the profit we are giving him.

This attitude is a mistake. This can be learned from the fact that the Torah obligates us to feel gratitude to our parents even though they are obligated to take care of their children. Our obligation of gratitude does not depend on the calculations of the one that gives. Don't make calculations to determine why the person is doing what he is doing. Instead, work on yourself to always be thankful to others.

Our sages say that we are not allowed to throw a stone in a well that we drank from. Of course, the well has no feelings and does not need our gratitude. Nevertheless, we need to show gratitude. Therefore, we must practice showing gratitude even to a well.



PRAYER OF Thanks

Thank You, Hashem, King of Kings and Master of the World.

Thank You for the infinite times that You helped me, supported me, rescued me, encouraged me, cured me, guarded over me and made me happy.

Thank You for always being with me.

Thank You for giving me the strength to observe Your commandments, to do good deeds and pray. Thank You for all the times You helped me and I didn't know how to say "Thank You."

Thank You for all the loving kindnesses You do for me each and every moment. Thank You for every breath I breathe.

Thank You, Hashem, for all the things that I do have, and thank You, Hashem, even for the things that I don't have.

Thank You for my periodic difficulties, my occasional setbacks, and for the times when I don't feel happy, because everything is for my ultimate benefit, even if I don't see that it's always for my best...

Deep in my heart, I know that everything that comes from You is the very best for me and designed especially for me in precision and exacting Divine Providence, of which only The King of Kings is capable.

Thank You for the times that are difficult for me, for only that way they enable me to fully appreciate the good times, for only after being in darkness one can appreciate the light.

Thank You for the wonderful life You have given me.

Thank You for every little thing that I have, for everything comes from You and from no one else.

Thank You for always listening to my prayers.

Creator of the World, I apologize from the bottom of my heart for all the times that I didn't appreciate what You gave me, and instead of thanking You I only complained.

I am dust and ashes and You are the entire universe. Please, don't ever cast me away.



Ignite the Fire Reaching Higher

We all want our children to be responsible and emotionally-healthy adults, let's try a "can-do attitude." Making mistakes, getting stuck and pushing through is an essential part of learning how to cope, gain confidence, grow and finally succeed in life.

Many successful people failed repeatedly before reaching their goals. However, the obstacles they faced were pushed aside, after they achieved success.

- J.K Rowling's "Harry Potter" was rejected 12 times from top publishers.

- Oprah Winfrey was fired from her first TV reporting job because they felt she was unfit for TV.

- Albert Einstein's teachers supposedly considered him sloppy and lazy.

How can we help our children develop the ability to keep trying when they don't succeed, along with solution-oriented thinking patterns? When a baby learns to walk, we clap and cheer for each step taken, no matter if they fall.

Telling a child that something is easy often leads to a double-edged discouragement. If he completes the task, then he merely did something

"easy" and it is not much of an accomplishment. If he can't succeed, he has failed at something that should have been easy.

If we show respect for a child's struggle and say "this can be hard," or "it is not so simple," then we send a message that if he does succeed it is a meaningful accomplishment. If he fails, at least he knows he made the effort on a difficult task.

Be quick with encouraging remarks. Everyone needs encouragement. Try saying things like:

- "Keep at it. You can do it!"
- "If we learn from our mistakes, then they're not really mistakes."
- "Mistakes are a great way to learn new ways to do things."
- "In this house, nobody gets in trouble for a mistake. Just be sure to learn for the next time."

Be a role model. Children do as we do, not as we say. If you learn to persist in your own challenges, this will set the best example for a child struggling to achieve.

In our fast-paced world, it is imperative that we teach our children the lost art of perseverance. It might take a while, but with a little perseverance, we can do it!



United We Must Stand

The story of Hanukkah took place during the time of the Second Temple when the Greek regime of Antiochus sought to pull Jews away from their religion and heritage. Matityahu led the Jewish army in trying to drive out the enemy, after three years the Maccabees were, against all odds, able to succeed in driving out the foreigners from their land. When the Jews re-entered the Holy Temple they found it in shambles and idols were scattered everywhere. When it came time to re-light and re-dedicate the holy Menorah, they searched the entire Temple, but found only one jar of pure oil bearing the seal of the Cohen Gadol. An amazing miracle happened as that small jar of oil burned for eight days, hence the name Hanukkah, meaning 'dedication'.

Antiochus wanted to assimilate and subsume the Jews into Greek culture. The Greeks had no intention of murdering the Jews physically; it was a spiritual and ideological campaign of annihilation. This is why on Hanukkah we celebrate spiritually, by praying and lighting the menorah.

**Joseph S. Jemal
Synagogue**



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Shabbat Mikess - Hanukah and Rosh Hodesh Tebet Prayer & Class Schedule

Friday, December 20th

Shir Hashirim followed by	
Minha, Kabbalat Shabbat & Arbit	4:10 pm
Candle Lighting	4:14 pm

Shabbat, December 21st

Shahrit Jemal Building	8:15 am
Followed by Kiddush & class	
Minha followed by Seuda Shelisheet	4:10 pm
Arbit	5:10 pm
Shabbat Ends	5:18 pm
Menorah Lighting after Haddalah	
Shabbat Shalom!	

Weekday Schedule

Sunday Morning Shahrit	8:00 am
Monday – Friday	
Shahrit	7:30 am
Followed Daily by Breakfast & class	
Minha & Arbit	4:10 pm



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For your convenience! You may zelle or venmo your payment to safrashulnj@gmail.com