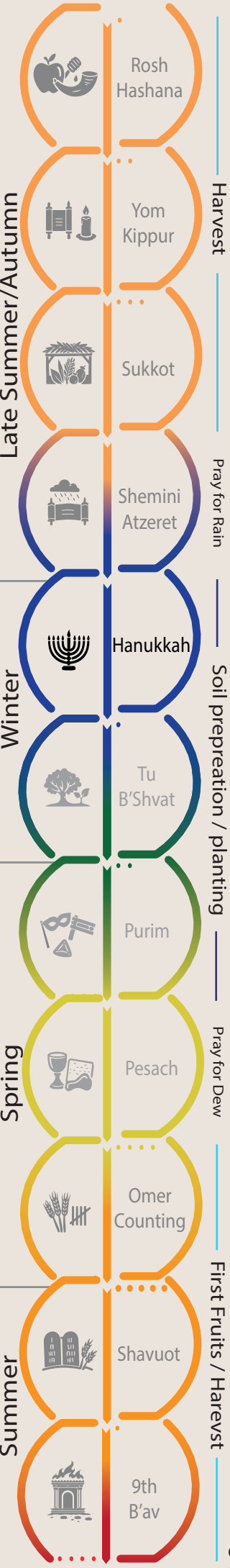


Late Summer/Autumn  
Winter  
Spring  
Summer



## What is Hanukkah?

In the second century BCE, Judea was ruled by a Greek king named Antiochus IV Epiphanes. In 167 BCE, he banned Jewish practices and turned the Temple in Jerusalem into a place for Greek worship. A small band of Jewish fighters—the Maccabees, led by Judah Maccabee—rose up to defend their faith. After tough battles, they won back Jerusalem and Temple Mount to clean, repair, and reclaim the holy space.



Coin with the head of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, circa 175 BCE



## Hanukkah in Ancient Texts

**Books of Maccabees 1 & 2** describe the Hanukkah events that took place **2,200 years ago**, when the Jewish people in Judea were ruled by the Greek Seleucid Empire.

Jews celebrating Hanukkah **2,000 years ago**. **Josephus Antiquities 12.7.7:** *“Now Judah celebrated the **festival of the restoration** of the sacrifices of the temple for **eight days**...And from that time to this, we celebrate this festival, and **call it [the festival of] Lights.**”*



# Hanukkah

## חנוכה



Hebrew Date(s):  
25 Kislev - 2 Tevet  
כ"ה כסלו - ב' טבת

Hanukkah (“Dedication”)

Hanukkah  
(English)

חנוכה  
(Hebrew)

## Hanukkah Miracles

**Miracle 1:** On 25 Kislev, 164 BCE, the priests rededicated the Temple and found only **one sealed jar of pure olive oil**—enough to light the Menorah for a single day. **Miraculously, it burned for eight days** until new pure oil could be prepared. We commemorate this miracle by lighting the Hanukkah for eight nights.



The best surviving 1,000-year-old representation of the Menorah was found during excavations in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem.



**Miracle 2:** The Jews were completely outnumbered by the mighty Greek armies. But **against the odds, the Jews won the battle** and regained the Temple.

The Menorah on the Coin of the Hasmonean Mattathias Antigonus, 37 BCE



## Why Hanukkah Matters



Hanukkah reminds us that **being Jewish is something to celebrate** with pride and joy.



**Fight for what you believe in:** The Maccabees fought so that Jews could freely practice their traditions and live according to their values.



**Expel darkness with light:** Today, when so many people are challenging or misunderstanding who we are, Hanukkah encourages us to shine our light proudly by embracing our Jewish identity, heritage, and beliefs.

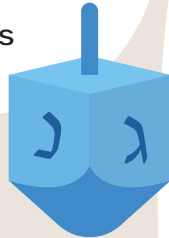


## Today in Israel

Today, Hanukkah is celebrated throughout Israel with **public menorah lightings in cities**.

Many families **visit Modi'in**, the hometown of the Maccabees.

**Bakeries** across the country fill their shelves with sufganiyot, jelly doughnuts.



## Key Rituals

1

Each night of Hanukkah, families light the **Hanukkah lamp (hanukkiyah)**, adding one candle each evening for eight nights after dark, while saying blessings and singing songs like *Maoz Tzur* at home.

2

The **prayer "Al HaNissim"** is added to the *Amidah*, the silent blessings we say during prayer, and *Birkat HaMazon*, the prayer we say after eating a meal, to thank God for the miracles.

3

We **recite Hallel**, a series of psalms praising God, in the mornings.

4

We play with **dreidels** and give tzedakah (charity).

5

We **eat foods fried in oil** like latkes and sufganiyot, commemorating the miracle of the oil.



**Small nation, mighty battles, ongoing miracles:** Even today, Israel is surrounded by hostile nations calling for its destruction. For over 80 years, Israel has had to defend itself against much bigger armies, and still Israel stands strong.



A Hasmonean oil lamp, used roughly in the 1st and 2nd centuries BCE, and commonly found in Judea during the Hasmonean kingdom.



Greek arrowhead and sling bullet with the Greek word for victory, *Nikh* (Nike), remain as a testament to the hard-won Maccabean victories that took place across the Judean Kingdom.



## The Menorah as a Symbol of Jewish Identity

The menorah has been a persistent sign of Jewish identity. It was used long before the Star of David as a symbol of the Jewish people in and outside of Israel. The Menorah is still used today as the official emblem of the State of Israel



Hanukkah celebrates the Maccabees' battle and victory over our enemies and makes us proud to be Jews. What makes you proud to be a Jew?



For more information on Hanukkah

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