



Chanukah

Chanukah (Hebrew for “dedication”) is the festive holiday that commemorates the victory of a small group of Jews, the Maccabees, in their courageous revolt against the religious oppression of the Assyrian-Greek regime in

165 BCE. When the Maccabees rededicated the Temple in Jerusalem that had been desecrated, they found one small flask of ritually pure oil. Although it was enough to light the menorah for only one day, the oil miraculously lasted for eight days.

Rabbinic sages wondered why Chanukah should last for eight days, not seven. After all, the oil naturally lasted for one day; wasn't the miracle that the oil *continued* to burn for seven *more* days? Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman explains why the first day is, indeed, a miracle: “It is the unaccountable human penchant to light a flame in the first place, to dare to hope that if we can just get through at least one day, the defeat we fear just might not come.”

Why are the candles lit in *ascending* order every night? The rabbinic sages' answer: to teach us that every day of our lives, we need to bring more light – compassion, healing, justice, dignity, kindness – into the world, especially for people whose worlds are dark with loneliness, poverty, and other hardships.

So, this Chanukah, give yourself – and others – a *real* present: the gift of hope and renewal of spirit even as the night grows darkest in the midst of winter. Light a candle in your soul, let the flame be a source of strength and inspiration, and share the light with others. In the words of *Light One Candle*, the Chanukah song by Peter Yarrow (of Peter, Paul, and Mary):

Don't let the light go out – It's lasted for so many years!

Don't let the light go out – Let it shine through our love and our tears!

THINGS TO DO:

- ▶ Celebrate Chanukah – light candles!
- ▶ Think about all the miracles in your life, and with an “attitude of gratitude,” express thanks for these miracles.
- ▶ Make the Festival of Lights brighter for those who especially need more light (for example, provide toys for children who are ill, make and deliver Chanukah cards for people who are elderly and lonely, etc.).

For more information, visit hofstrahille.org/vje.