



What's your light?

A Miraculous Time

Hanukkah arrives at the coldest, darkest time of year, which might sound perfect for devils – but this holiday is the Festival of Light, and it's all about miracles. The first Hanukkah miracle occurred in the land of Israel in the second century BCE, when a small group of Jewish soldiers, the Maccabees, triumphed over the much larger Greek-Syrian army. The second miracle happened while cleaning up the Holy Temple after the battle. There was only enough oil to light the Temple's menorah for one day, but the oil burned for eight days. On Hanukkah, it is traditional to light menorahs and display them for others to see. Pirsum hanes (Hebrew for "publicizing the miracle") reminds us that miracles can happen even in darkest times. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/zigazak.

HANDS ON!

The Disappearing Gelt Trick

Want to have your own magical Hanukkah night? Make a coin or a piece of chocolate gelt (Yiddish for "money") disappear – no devils required.

1. Hold the coin in your right hand (if you're left-handed, reverse the directions). Announce to all that you are going to make it disappear.
2. Pretend to turn the coin over to your left hand, but keep your right thumb under the gelt as you do so.
3. Now close your left hand and hold it up for your audience. It will look like you're holding the coin in your left hand, but the gelt is still really in your right hand.
4. "Now watch," you can say as you slowly open your left hand finger by finger, keeping your audience's attention there as your right hand drops the coin in your pocket.

The coin is gone! Happy Hanukkah!

Seeing Is Believing

Are miracles still miraculous if nobody notices them? The rabbi in this story knows a miracle when he sees one. Perhaps that's why the Jews of Brisk say that evil spirits have no power over him. In Eastern European shtetls (Yiddish for "small villages") like Brisk, the rabbi held a place of honor. He was the authority on Jewish law and was often considered a tzadik, a person of righteousness and compassion. This particular rabbi is also quite clever, tricking the devils into making Hanukkah even more miraculous. Miracles do happen, but we can help them along a bit.

Sparks of Holiness

The rabbi's message – that "sparks of holiness exist in all things" – is a beautiful teaching for Hanukkah. The rabbi isn't afraid of dancing dreidels, flying latkes, and candle fireworks because he sees what's delightful about them, and soon the rest of the townspeople do, too. Hanukkah is known as the Festival of Lights, so there couldn't be a better time to try to find a sparkle of goodness in all things – and all people. As the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Hasidic movement, said: "From every human being there rises a light."

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

WHY do you think the rabbi isn't afraid of the devils?

HOW would you feel if you saw dancing dreidels, flying latkes, and candle fireworks? What do you think you would do?

WHAT do you think is the most fun part of Hanukkah in Brisk?