



HANUKKAH IS COMING!

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Latkes are frying, the menorah is shining – what holiday is this family getting ready for? By the story’s end, your child will be reciting it with you.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, brings joy and sparkle during a dark time of the year. Beginning on the 25th of the Jewish month of *Kislev*, which falls in November or December in the Roman calendar, Hanukkah is a time to eat delicious latkes (potato pancakes), play *dreidel* (a traditional game featuring a spinning top), enjoy gathering with family and friends -- and, of course, light Hanukkah candles. A *hanukkiyah*, or Hanukkah menorah, holds nine candles – one for each of the eight nights of Hanukkah, plus the *shammash*, or “helper,” which is used to light the other candles (the number of which increases each night of the holiday). Many families exchange gifts during Hanukkah, too.

The Hanukkah story goes back to the second century BCE, when the ancient Greeks ruled Judea and confiscated the Holy Temple. The small Jewish Maccabee army staged a successful revolt. When the Maccabees took back the Holy Temple, they discovered that the *ner tamid*, the eternal light that burned continuously in the Temple, had gone out – and they only had enough oil to relight the lamp for one day. Miraculously, the oil continued to burn for eight full days, the amount of time it took to obtain more oil. Then, as now, the burning flame lighted up dark days, offering a symbol of hope and gladness.