


8 Fascinating Facts about Hanukkah

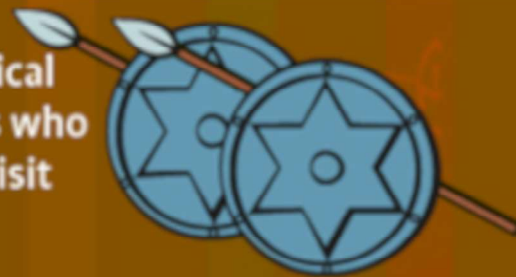
By
Aish.com



In the 2nd century BCE, the brave Maccabees recaptured the Holy Temple in Jerusalem from the Greeks. The first thing they did was light the golden menorah. They found only one jar of oil, but it burned miraculously for eight days. Today we light a menorah for eight days to recall this miracle, and to be inspired by its message.

1

The war of the Maccabees was the world's first ideological war, fought by a small band of pious Talmudic scholars who engaged in cunning stealth warfare. (In Israel you can visit the caves they hid in!)



2

Around 17.5 million oily doughnuts (*sufganiyot*) are eaten in Israel during Hanukkah, commemorating the miracle of oil. (Not a good time to start a diet!)

3

The word Hanukkah means dedication. That's what it takes to launch a war against a superpower, and light a single flask of oil that can't possibly last enough time. With enough dedication and commitment, God creates miracles.

חנוכה

4

Spinning the dreidel was originally done by students illegally studying Torah. When Greek soldiers would make a surprise raid, students would whip out a dreidel, pretending to play a gambling game.



5

Hanukkah is celebrated 8 days even though the miracle of the oil was really only 7 (the first day's light shouldn't count – it's natural) to teach us that everything in the 'natural' world is really a miracle caused by God. Nothing happens without Him willing it.



6

Throughout Hanukkah, each menorah burns through 44 candles, adding one candle each night, plus the "shamash" – the extra helper candle. That's a lot of light to dispel the darkness.



7

The menorah in the Holy Temple was gold. The Maccabees lit one made out of wood. Your menorah can be made out of any material, any size. You can see a solid gold replica of the menorah right outside Aish HaTorah in Jerusalem. It cost 3 million dollars.



8

Hanukkah is not the Jewish Christmas. There is no significance to giving gifts during the holiday. But there is a tradition to give *gelt* (money) to give kids an incentive to learn Torah (Hanukkah also comes from the Hebrew word "*hinuch*," education).



For more inspiring wisdom on Hanukkah visit Aish.com/hanukkah



How to Light Up

- 1. Use candles big enough to burn for at least 30 minutes.**
Many use olive oil, to recall the original miracle in the Temple.
They should be the same height, and preferably in a straight line.
- 2. The prevalent custom is to light the menorah indoors by a window facing the street.**
In Israel many light the menorah outside their front doorway.
- 3. The preferable time to light the menorah is at nightfall.**
It is best to light in the presence of many people in order to publicize the miracle.
- 4. Light the *Shamash*, recite the blessings, then use the *Shamash* to light the Hanukkah candles. Light the new candle added that day first.**