



## Reflections of Light: A Guide to a Meaningful Celebration of Chanukah

**First night:** The dreidel is a top that has on each of its sides a letter which symbolizes the famous Chanukah phrase: A great miracle happened there. In Israel the dreidel reads: A great miracle happened here!

*What is a miracle you hope for this Chanukah season?*

**Second night:** Latkes smell so good! Everybody has their favorite recipe or story about a relative who has the best one! Jewish life is filled with connections between food and ritual celebration. The scents wafting from the kitchen into the rest of the house are a part of what makes a house a Jewish home. Some say that our most vivid memories are linked to familiar scents of food.

*Share tonight your favorite food memories.*

**Third night:** On the third night the candles seem to take on a collective glow. It is just one more candle, yet it seems to give us the sense that now a community of light is growing.

*What are the ways in which you bring or would like to bring the light of your presence to the community?*

**Fourth night:** The number four has many references in Jewish life. We have four matriarchs. At Passover we ask the four questions. Our Jewish calendar is attentive to the movement of the four seasons of the year. Tonight you might pick one of the ways in which the number four functions in our lives and use it to reflect.

*For example, what are four important questions you might ask of yourself, God or the community? Who are four role models you have had in your life? How have the past four seasons been for you this past year?*

**Fifth night:** In a couple of days, we will celebrate the new moon, Rosh Chodesh. The new Hebrew month will be Tevet. This year it arrives on Monday night. Many women's groups have claimed Rosh Chodesh as a holiday in which to celebrate the miracles of life that they embody. No matter our gender or who raised us, our first original home in this world is the womb.

*This night in the darkness of December with the sounds, smells and feel of the winter rain, what do you hope will nourish you as you continue to develop more fully into your God created self?*

**Sixth night:** As we know, in Jewish life a holiday "day" is from sunset to sunset. Tonight we leave the fifth day and enter the sixth night with the lighting of these Chanukah candles - and the new day actually begins in the darkness of the evening.

*What are some of the ways in which the evening and the night can be comforting and healing?*

**Seventh night:** When the Greeks outlawed Jewish study, our ancestors could not study the Torah, the Five Books of Moses. Underground, they began to study the prophets and other writings such as the Book of Esther and the Book of Ruth instead of the weekly Torah portions. Once Judah Maccabee prevailed, and we could once again worship in the open. Our community took the experience of studying these other biblical writings and integrated them into what we today call the Haftarah portion; that portion of the Bible which complements the theme of the weekly Torah portion.

*What are some of your experiences that you have integrated into your Jewish practice?*

**Eighth night:** Chanukah comes to an end. The past eight days have begun with the evening light from candles that are newly bought, saved from last year, or maybe found suddenly in a frantic search for just a few more. The word *Chanukah*, “dedication,” shares the same root as the Hebrew word for *chinuch*, “education.”

*What is something new you have learned these past eight days?*

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