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by Rabbi Shraga Simmons

Chanukah, the Festival of Lights, begins on the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev, and lasts for eight days. On the secular calendar, Chanukah generally falls out in December.

This primer will explore:

- (1) A Bit of History
- (2) Lighting Instructions
- (3) Other Customs

(1) A Bit of History

The Hebrew word Chanukah means "dedication." In the 2nd century BCE, during the time of the Second Holy Temple, the Syrian-Greek regime of Antiochus sought to pull Jews away from Judaism, with the hopes of assimilating them into Greek culture. Antiochus outlawed Jewish observance – including circumcision, Shabbat, and Torah study – under penalty of death. As well,

many Jews – called Hellenists – began to assimilate into Greek culture, taking on Greek names and marrying non-Jews. This began to decay the foundation of Jewish life and practice.

When the Greeks challenged the Jews to sacrifice a pig to a Greek god, a few courageous Jews took to the hills of Judea in open revolt against this threat to Jewish life. Led by Matitiyahu, and later his son Judah the Maccabee, this small band of pious Jews led guerrilla warfare against the Syrian-Greek army.

Antiochus sent thousands of well-armed troops to crush the rebellion, but after three years the Maccabees beat incredible odds and miraculously succeeded in driving the foreigners from their land. The victory was on the scale of Israel defeating the combined super-powers of today.

Jewish fighters entered Jerusalem and found the Holy Temple in shambles and desecrated with idols. The Maccabees cleansed the Temple and re-dedicated it on the 25th of Kislev. When it came time to re-light the Menorah, they searched the entire Temple, but found only one jar of pure oil bearing the seal of the High Priest. The group of believers lit the Menorah anyway and were rewarded with a miracle: That small jar of oil burned for eight days, until a new supply of oil could be brought.

From then on, Jews have observed a holiday for eight days, in honor of this historic victory and the miracle of the oil. To publicize the Chanukah miracle, Jews add the special Hallel praises to the Shacharit service, and light a menorah during the eight nights of Chanukah.

(2) Lighting Instructions

In Ashkenazi tradition, each person lights his own menorah. Sefardi tradition has just one menorah per family.

What Menorah to Light

To publicize which night of Chanukah it is, all eight candles on the menorah should be at the same height – and preferably in a straight line. Otherwise, the candles may not be easily distinguishable and may appear like a big torch.

In addition to the eight main lights, the menorah has an extra helper candle called the "Shamash." As we are forbidden to use the Chanukah lights for any purpose other than "viewing," any benefit is as if it's coming from the Shamash.

Since the Shamash does not count as one of the eight regular lights, your menorah should have the Shamash set apart in some way – either placed higher than the other candles, or off to the side.

What Candles to Light

The most important thing is that that your candles must burn for at least 30 minutes after nightfall. (Those famous colored candles barely qualify!) Many Jewish bookstores sell longer colored candles.

Actually, it is even better to use olive oil, since the miracle of the Maccabees occurred with olive oil. Glass cups containing oil can be placed in the candle holders of any standard menorah. Many Jewish bookstores even sell kits of pre-measured oil in disposable cups.

Where to Light

To best publicize the miracle, the menorah is ideally lit outside the doorway of your house, on the left side when entering. (The mezuzah is on the right side; in this way you are "surrounded by mitzvot.") In Israel, many people light outside in special glass boxes built for a menorah.

If this is not practical, the menorah should be lit in a window facing the public thoroughfare.

Someone who lives on an upper floor should light in a window. If for some reason the menorah cannot be lit by a window, it may be lit inside the house on a table; this at least fulfills the mitzvah of "publicizing the miracle" for the members of the household.

Since the mitzvah occurs at the actual moment of lighting, moving the menorah to a proper place after lighting does not fulfill the mitzvah.

When to Light

The menorah should preferably be lit immediately at nightfall. It is best to wait, however, until all the members of the household are present. This adds to the family atmosphere and also maximizes the mitzvah of "publicizing the miracle." The menorah can still be lit (with the blessings) late into the night, as long as people are still awake.

The menorah should remain lit for at least 30 minutes after nightfall, during which time no use should be made of its light.

On Friday afternoon, the menorah should be lit 18 minutes before sundown. And since the menorah needs to burn for 30 minutes into the night, the candles used on Friday need to be bigger than the regular "colored candles" (which typically don't burn longer than a half-hour).

How to Light

On the first night, place one candle at the far right, as you face the menorah. This applies whether the menorah is placed next to a doorway or by a window.

Another candle is placed for the Shamash (taller helper candle) which is used to light the others. It is not counted as one of the candles.

First light the Shamash, then recite the blessings, and then use the Shamash to light the Chanukah candle.

On the second night, place two candles in the two far-right positions – and use the Shamash to light the left one first.

The third night, place three candles in the three far-right positions – and use the Shamash to light them in order, from left to right.

Follow this same procedure each night of Chanukah... until all the lights are kindled and glowing brightly!

The Blessings

The first two blessings are said with the Shamash already lit, but immediately prior to lighting the Chanukah candles.

BLESSING #1

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל חֲנֻכָּה.

Baruch ata Ado-noi Elo-heinu melech ha-olam, Asher kid-shanu bi-mitzvo-sav, Vi-tzee-vanu li-had-leek ner shel Chanukah.

Blessed are You, the Lord our God, King of the universe, Who sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the Chanukah light.

BLESSING #2

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
 שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ
 בְּיָמִים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה.

Baruch ata Ado-noi Elo-heinu melech ha-olam, Shi-asa nee-seem la-avo-seinu, Baya-meem ha-haim baz-man ha-zeh.

Blessed are You, the Lord our God, King of the universe, Who made miracles for our forefathers, in those days at this season.

BLESSING #3

This blessing is said on the first night only.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
 שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיְמָנוּ
 וְהַגִּיעֵנוּ לְזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה.

Baruch ata Ado-noi Elo-heinu melech ha-olam, Sheh-he-che-yanu vi-kee-yimanu Vi-hee-gee-yanu laz-man ha-zeh.

Blessed are You, the Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.

The following paragraph is said each night, after the first light has been kindled:

*We kindle these lights
 For the miracles and the wonders
 For the redemption and the battles
 Which You performed for our forefathers
 In those days at this season
 Through Your holy priests.*

*During all eight days of Chanukah
 These lights are sacred
 And we are not permitted to make ordinary use of them
 But only to look at them
 In order to express thanks and praise to Your great Name
 For your miracles, Your wonders, and Your salvations.*

(3) Other Customs

After lighting the Chanukah menorah, families enjoy sitting in the glow, singing and recalling the miracles of yesterday and today. The first sing traditionally sung after lighting the candles is Maoz Tzur (Rock of Ages).

A number of other customs have developed, including:

- eating "oily" foods like fried potato latkes (pancakes) and sufganiyot (jelly donuts), in commemoration of the miracle of the oil
- giving Chanukah gelt (coins) to children
- spinning the dreidel, a four-sided top with a Hebrew letter on each side (sivivon in Hebrew)

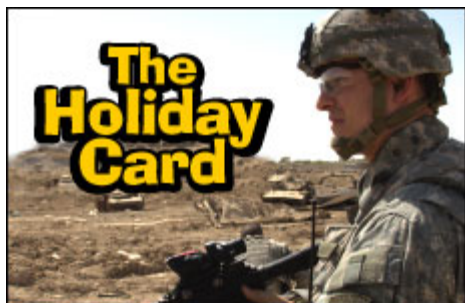
What is the origin of the dreidel?

In times of persecution when Torah study was forbidden, Jewish children would learn anyway. When soldiers would investigate, the children would pull out a dreidel and pretend to be playing.

The letters on the dreidel are nun, gimmel, hey, shin – the first letters of Nes Gadol Haya Sham – "A Great Miracle Happened There." (In Israel, the last letter is a Pey – "Here.") One way to play dreidel is to see who can keep theirs spinning for the longest time. Or alternatively, to see how many dreidels you can get spinning simultaneously.

Another version of dreidel is where players use pennies, nuts, raisins, or chocolate coins as tokens or chips. Each player puts an equal share into the "pot." The first player takes a turn spinning the dreidel. When the dreidel stops, the letter facing up determines:

- Nun – nothing happens; next player spins the dreidel
- Gimmel – the spinner takes the pot
- Hey – the spinner takes half the pot
- Shin – the spinner matches the pot



by Kaila Lasky

It was our first big celebration as a family since our son's bris, eight years earlier. Our daughter Aliza was becoming a Bat Mitzvah. We had a fun idea for how to celebrate it: We had been married years earlier on a boat in Manhattan, and since Aliza was born on our first anniversary, we thought we would do it again.

So we hired a boat and invited a small group of mostly relatives and classmates. In planning the food and the flowers and the music, there seemed to be something missing. We had the "bar," but where was the "mitzvah"? Aside from my daughter's Dvar Torah ("the speech"), what could we do to elevate this gathering from being just another birthday party?

Provisionally, there was a request in our synagogue to pray for a local soldier who was being deployed to Iraq. The idea was born; let's have all the kids at our simcha (celebration) make Chanukah cards to send to Jewish soldiers overseas. Nothing earth-shattering, just a way to inject some meaning into the festivities.

The date arrived and our ship sailed. God granted us a picture perfect September day and when Aliza's carefully prepared speech blew overboard, she adlibbed admirably. The Chanukah cards were written and colored and decorated. A lovely time was had by all. And the next day, the cards were mailed out with heartfelt wishes and love to our Jewish brothers and sisters. End of story.

Or so we thought. Six months later, when the bat mitzvah was a fond, distant memory, there was a knock on my door in the middle of the day. Bravely, I unlocked the door, even though I didn't recognize the voice on the other side. A pleasant twenty-something man greeted me:

"I'm Lt. Steinberg, and your daughter sent me a Chanukah card when I was in Iraq." Well, you could've blown me over with a feather. But wait – it gets better.

Apparently our few dozen cards had been thrown in with the hundreds and thousands of cards sent to celebrate that other December holiday. The chaplain showed up one day at the army base with an enormous sack, filled to the brim with cards and

letters. As he passed out handfuls of cards to the grateful troops, Lt. Steinberg was hanging back, feeling pretty left out and lonely.

Suddenly amidst the celebratory crowd, the company captain noticed our soldier. "Steinberg, why are you so quiet? How come you're not opening any cards?"

Oh brother, Steinberg thought, don't they get it? "Captain, I'm Jewish, remember?"

"C'mon, Steinberg, don't be a spoilsport. Take a card." Steinberg tried to shrink himself into invisibility. But the captain wasn't having it. "Let's go, Steinberg. These people were nice enough to write to us. NOW TAKE A CARD!"

By now the captain had everyone's attention and Steinberg was getting pretty uncomfortable in the spotlight. Quick, he told himself, just grab a Christmas card and you'll stop being the center of attention.

Steinberg reached deep into the sack, pulled out a card and looked at it. To his complete and utter shock the return address said Wesley Hills, New York. Steinberg is from Wesley Hills.

Hands shaking, he tore it open and found a beautiful hand-made Chanukah card, signed by my daughter Aliza, the Bat Mitzvah girl herself. Steinberg was dumbfounded by the providence of it all. He broke out in a huge grin and proudly showed the card to the captain and the entire platoon. Everyone understood the small miracle they had just witnessed.

Standing there in my Wesley Hills home, with my mouth gaping open and tears in my eyes, I begged Steinberg to come back and retell the story when my children were home. Indeed, he returned the following week with a friend and a camera. For our family, it was an incredible inspiration to see so clearly the power of our "little" mitzvah.

But that's not the end of the story. Just this past September one of the chaplains I had contacted about sending those cards asked if I could help arrange kosher meals and snacks for troops in Afghanistan for the High Holidays and Sukkot. I organized some people in my community and we sent 144 kosher meals to Afghanistan. Aish HaTorah's Project Inspire got involved and sent dozens of personal cards and honey sticks for Rosh Hashanah and then chocolates for Chanukah to troops in Afghanistan, Iraq, Italy and Kuwait.

The story of Lt. Steinberg continues to bear more and more fruit. May all my daughter's mitzvot enjoy such success!

(The story is true; Lt. Steinberg's name has been changed.)



by Rabbi Eytan Feiner

The discrepancy in how the Chanukah dreidel and Purim gragger are spun reflect a profound lesson in the nature of the two holidays.

On Chanukah and Purim, Jews are fond of spinning objects. It is not just the youngsters who take in hand the dreidel (Chanukah top) and gragger (noisemaker). But there is a noticeable difference: During Chanukah we spin while holding the protruding top piece of the dreidel; on Purim, however, we hold the gragger from the bottom part and then begin to turn.

This discrepancy is no mere coincidence; it actually conveys a profound lesson.

Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Shapira, author of B'nei Yissaschar, explains the difference as follows: God wishes to constantly bestow only abundant blessing upon His nation, but we must initiate with an "inspiration from below." If we create an opening the size of the "eye of a needle," then God, in turn, will respond by "opening up the gateway to a large banquet hall." (Shir HaShirim Rabba, 5:3)

In other words, if we but take the first step - even a miniscule one -- in performing good deeds, God will reciprocate with an outpouring of supernatural kindness from the heavens above. Through even small amounts of Torah, repentance, and mitzvot, we can open the gates to allow for boundless "inspiration from above" to come our way, often taking even the form of miracles.

PURIM: BOTTOM UP

In the days of Purim, their lives hanging on a delicate thread, the Jewish People united in sincere prayer and repentance to create an inspiration from below worthy of God's promise to

reciprocate. Their collective efforts to rescind the harsh decree issued against them were successful in opening up the gates of heaven for many hidden miracles that brought about their salvation. With the tremendous effort of repentance on the part of the Jewish People, Haman was subsequently destroyed.

Thus while reading the Scroll of Esther on Purim, we spin the gragger from below upon hearing Haman's name to proudly demonstrate that the Jewish people initiated the overwhelming response from the heavens above; first the bottom part spins, and only then does its upper part follow in kind.

CHANUKAH: TOP DOWN

On Chanukah, however, our prayer and repentance were not as sincere. A mere handful of Hasmoneans led the charge, while most of our nation failed to display the requisite inspiration from below to warrant abundant blessing from above. And yet God showered us with miracles regardless. He provided us, mercifully, with inspiration from above, although we were undeserving of His open involvement. The miracles arrived and we emerged the victors; we re-dedicated the grand Temple and lit a miraculously burning oil.

On Chanukah we spin dreidels upon which are inscribed the first letters of the words, "neis gadol ha'yah sham" – a great miracle happened there. We rejoice with our dreidels, but we spin them specifically from their top part to constantly remind ourselves that Chanukah was a time when miracles came gratis, when God bestowed His infinite compassion upon His people and things began to spin down to us in the form of undeniable miracles.

On Purim the spinning is from below, on Chanukah it begins from above.

PLAYING GAMES

This difference is also seen in how we play with these items. People often "play the dreidel" by spinning it for money. Whether it lands on the "gimmel" and the winner takes the whole pot, or the "shin" and money is lost – one is at the mercy of a fate totally outside his control. We're also unsure as to how long the spinning will last. If we don't take the initial step in triggering God's promise to reciprocate in disproportionate

fashion favorable to us, then we leave ourselves up to simply hoping for the best, wishing for God's undeserved mercy.

Purim time, on the other hand, we can all spin our noisy graggers as a sign we've played a role in bringing about Haman's demise. Just as the cacophony emitted from our graggers is not at all pleasing to the ears, our fasting, crying, and heartfelt repentance might not always look so pretty either. But it gets the job done. When we do our part, we can rest assured that God will do His. And thus, as opposed to the Chanukah top left to spin on its own, the gragger's spinning duration is controlled by us.

REFLECTED IN PRAYER

This distinction is fleshed out in the contrasting liturgies of the two holidays as well. In the prayer known as the "Al HaNissim," we find mention in the passage for Chanukah of God having fought their [the Jews] battle, and having avenged their vengeance.

In the blessing recited at the conclusion of the reading of the Scroll of Esther, however, we encounter instead: "You [God] fought our battle, avenged our vengeance." To consider it our battle, our war, and our victory, we must take the all-important initiative. It was specifically on Purim that we, as a unified nation, took collective action in a heartfelt effort to inspire and evoke God's boundless mercy and compassion. We all put in the time with several days of serious and sincere prayer and repentance.

In stark contrast, the miracle on the battlefield against the far superior Greek army was a total gift from God in response to the noble sacrifice of but a few select individuals.

This Chanukah, let's get the inspiration started from below. We must do our utmost to unite as a nation, to work together as individuals and as a People on growing in all areas of spirituality, and hopefully we'll trigger God's mercy and miracles like never before. Let's increase our charity, good deeds, dedication to prayer, and let's start spinning those dreidels upside-down!



by Ross Hirschmann

Growing up, there was not much about Judaism that I loved, or even liked for that matter. Passover was a bust (the Four Questions was the only acting gig I met that I didn't like), and don't get me started on Yom Kippur (can you say, "Starvation without meaning"?).

With my father making me miss high school football games and dances for something he called "Shabbos," you can pretty much guess how I felt about Judaism by age 16. Hated it!

But there was one Jewish thing that I connected with from the time I was a kid: Chanukah. I know it sounds so cliché to say that the only Jewish holiday a secular Jewish kid from Walnut Creek like me enjoyed was the one that occurred close to Christmas, but it's true. I've always loved Chanukah. In fact, it was Chanukah that probably saved me from giving up on Judaism all together.

As a kid, my house was not the place to be for the holidays. Any holiday. There was always so much pressure to have the "perfect holiday" that usually everyone ended up very tense and unhappy by the day's end.

My father was always particularly tense around Rosh Hashana, but not without some justification. It was tough trying to get five little kids into the car so we could all get to temple on time to celebrate the festive New Year. But since we were always running late (inevitably someone's shoe was missing or hair wasn't just right), we usually brought in the New Year in a manner that was, well, let's just say "less than festive." Yom Kippur was the same situation, different holiday, but with the added "wildcard" of a fast mixed in.

Thanksgiving did not fare much better either. The turkey always took longer than the "meat guy" at Safeway said it would (which led to us reliving the Yom Kippur fast), the yams weren't as good as the year before and the true pain of having to sit through yet

another Detroit Lions football game on TV all added up to, well, not much fun.

But Chanukah was different. Maybe it was because my dad lost steam after all the tension of the "big" holidays, or maybe it was because nobody had grand expectations of making a "Chanukah to Remember," or maybe it was because no one particularly cared. I don't know. Whatever the reason, Chanukah was relaxed and even fun.

And it wasn't because of the presents. Believe me, with five kids to shop for there weren't a lot of presents.

As a boy Chanukah had particular appeal because well – let's face it – Chanukah is a really good war story. It's like D-Day for the Jews. My father was a decorated B-25 pilot during WW II and I grew up hearing his war stories. They captivated me. The battles, the heroics, beating the odds, successfully completing the "mission impossible" – my father had done it all. But he did it as a part of the United States Army.

Chanukah told the story how the Jewish Army overcame the odds and beat the stuffing out of the Syrian Greeks. The Chanukah story had everything dad's war stories had: battles, heroics, beating the odds and completing successfully the "mission impossible."

But Chanukah had something more: it had God. The story of Chanukah not only gave me a sense of a proud and even "tough" lineage as a kid, but it also taught me what my mom always told me: You can always rely on God to take care of you.

Every night after we lit the menorah, we'd sing Rock of Ages. Even as a kid, my eyes always welled up with tears when we sang the verse, "And Thy word broke their swords, when our own strength failed us." The thought that God, with just one of His words, could break an enemy's sword and defeat him for us was overwhelming to me. Somehow it got through to me that alone we're helpless, vulnerable, defeatable. But with God's help we can do anything, overcome anything, accomplish anything. Even when we believe we can't.

Now as an adult, I see even more profundity in the Chanukah story. It's still a great war story, but now I also realize that it's a story about my own battles: first against Judaism when I was growing up, and now my present struggle to preserve Judaism within in my family.

Growing up, I was surrounded by the world of Walnut Creek, a world that encouraged me at every corner to assimilate into the general, American, Christian culture. As a kid I thought, "Well,

that sounds good to me!" I mean who wants to stand out as "odd guy out" or worse as "Jewish Guy Out"? Not me. I was no Judah Maccabee. In fact I was just the opposite – I was my own Syrian-Greek. I encouraged myself to assimilate as much as possible.

But just like with the Maccabees, God saved me from losing Judaism all together. The odds against this happening were great: all of Walnut Creek and secular culture versus God saving one Jewish soul. The Almighty had to come up with something good, something powerful. And He did. He gave me a holiday I could enjoy, something Jewish that I could cling to. He gave me Chanukah.

Having that allowed me to say, "Well, maybe I won't chuck all this Jewish stuff just yet. Maybe it's okay to be Jewish – just a little bit." In the end, as in the story of Chanukah, God won. Judaism survived in me.

When you become religious in your 30's, however, you also face some pretty tough battles – against yourself, against society, even against some well-meaning family members – in order to preserve Judaism in your life and your family's life. Sometimes it seems that the battles are overwhelming and the enemies too much to handle.

But even in the face of all of that I realized that the battle has to be won because my wife and I, and our two little daughters are the last strong links to Judaism in both our families. We're the last line of defense.

So during the tough times, I think back to that verse in Rock of Ages and remember that God can help us overcome anything, that He can help us save Judaism in our lives just as he helped the Maccabees so many years ago. My eyes still well up with tears when I think of that verse or sing it.

Chanukah reminds me that God is always there for us, and that if we just allow Him to help us fight our battles – whatever those battles may be – His word will indeed break our enemy's sword. Maybe it's that powerful reminder of God's love for us that makes Chanukah my favorite holiday. And maybe it's that powerful message of God's love for us that kept me from abandoning Judaism during all those years I was so far from it.



by Chef Herschel

I once read many years ago, the only mitzvah that has increased among all the Jewish people was lighting candles on Chanukah. I'm sure it was because in most Jewish homes, candle lighting is followed by jelly doughnuts or potato pancakes (latkes in Yiddish).

It is customary that we eat foods fried in oil on Chanukah because the oil symbolizes the miraculous burning of a small amount of pure oil in the Menorah for eight days in the Holy Temple until new oil was prepared.

In my home in Schenectady, New York, my mother would grate the potatoes and prepare the batter for latkes every Chanukah. It was a race to fry the potatoes before the mixture turned an ugly green. The other race was to make them fast enough to accumulate enough for a meal while everyone was visiting the kitchen to taste just one to see if they were good. The latkes are still the high point of Chanukah for my family. It brings the family together and we sing and talk about the miracle. So I guess it is a good starting point.

Here are several good recipes for latkes. We would eat our latkes with maple syrup, salt, sour cream or apple sauce – any combination, nothing at all, or all of the above. Enjoy!

Potato Latkes & Onion

6 potatoes
1 onion
4 eggs
3 tbsps. matza meal
salt & pepper to taste
1/2 tsp. baking powder

Grate by hand potatoes and onion. Add eggs and then dry ingredients. Fry in hot oil. Replace 2 of the potatoes with zucchini for lighter pancakes.

Latkes from the "Flavor of Jerusalem"

3 large potatoes
3 tbsps. milk
1 egg
1/2 tsp. baking powder
salt and pepper to taste
cooking oil

If the skins of the potatoes are thin and unblemished, do not peel the potatoes but scrub them well. Otherwise, peel them; then grate 1 potato on the large holes of a grater and the other two on the medium holes. Beat in the milk, egg and baking powder. Season with salt and pepper; blend well. If there is a large amount of liquid in the mixture, drain off some of it. Heat a scant 1/2 inch of oil in a large skillet until it is very hot but not smoking. Drop the batter by large spoonfuls, flatten then slightly. Turn them once. When they are golden brown on the bottom side, cook them several minutes longer and drain them on paper towels. (The latkes will have crisp edges.)

Serve hot with sour cream or applesauce. Makes 3-4 servings.

Chanukah "Light" Latkes

This recipe keeps the oil and fat calories at bay...

2 large potatoes, scrubbed and unpeeled
1 small onion
1/2 small carrot
2 egg whites
1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
3-4 Tbls. flour
Pinch celery seed
Scant 1/4 tsp. each curry and fennel
1/4 tsp. pepper

Grate potatoes alternately with onion and carrot in the food processor. Drain. Mix with remaining ingredients. Spray a good quality non-stick frying pan with Pam or another oil spray. Drop mixture by heaping tablespoons into hot frying pan and flatten with a fork to make the latkes thin. Fry on medium-high heat until brown. Flip over and brown the other side as well. Serve with applesauce. Yields 16-20 thin latkes.

Nana's Latkes (from the New York Times!)

2 lbs. Idaho potatoes
 2 lbs. Yukon potatoes
 5 eggs, beaten
 1 cup flour
 salt
 vegetable oil for frying
 sour cream
 apple sauce

Peel potatoes, and keep in cold water until you are ready to grate them.

Grate the potatoes coarsely by hand (or with a Cuisinart using first the shredding blade then the blending blade). The mixture should be slightly lumpy and not too blended. Add the beaten eggs. Mix in up to 1 cup of flour. Add a little salt. The batter should be fairly liquid and not too thick.

Heat about a half-inch of vegetable oil in a frying pan. When the oil is very hot, use a soup spoon as a measure to put in small amounts of batter in the oil. Frying the pancakes on one side, then the other, until they have turned brown on both sides and are crispy around the edges.

Drain the pancakes on paper towels that have been placed on a platter atop a saucepan of simmering hot water or keep warm in the oven.

Makes about 80 3-inch latkes.

The following 3 recipes are from *The Settlement Cookbook*:

Sour Cream Latkes

4 large potatoes or 2 cups raw, grated potatoes
 1/2 cup sour cream or 1/2 cup hot milk
 1/2 tsp. salt
 2 eggs, separated

Grate the potatoes, place in a colander, set over a bowl and drain. When the starch has settled in the bottom of the bowl, discard top liquid. Place drained potatoes in a mixing bowl, add starch, cream or hot milk, and salt. Beat yolks well; add to potato mixture; fold in the stiffly beaten whites. Drop by spoonfuls on a hot, well-greased skillet. Brown slowly on both sides. Serve with apple sauce.

Makes 4 servings.

Amazing Latkes

4 large potatoes or 2 cups raw grated potatoes
 2 eggs
 1/8 tsp. baking powder
 1 1/2 tsps. salt
 1 tbsp. flour, bread crumbs or matza meal
 dash of pepper

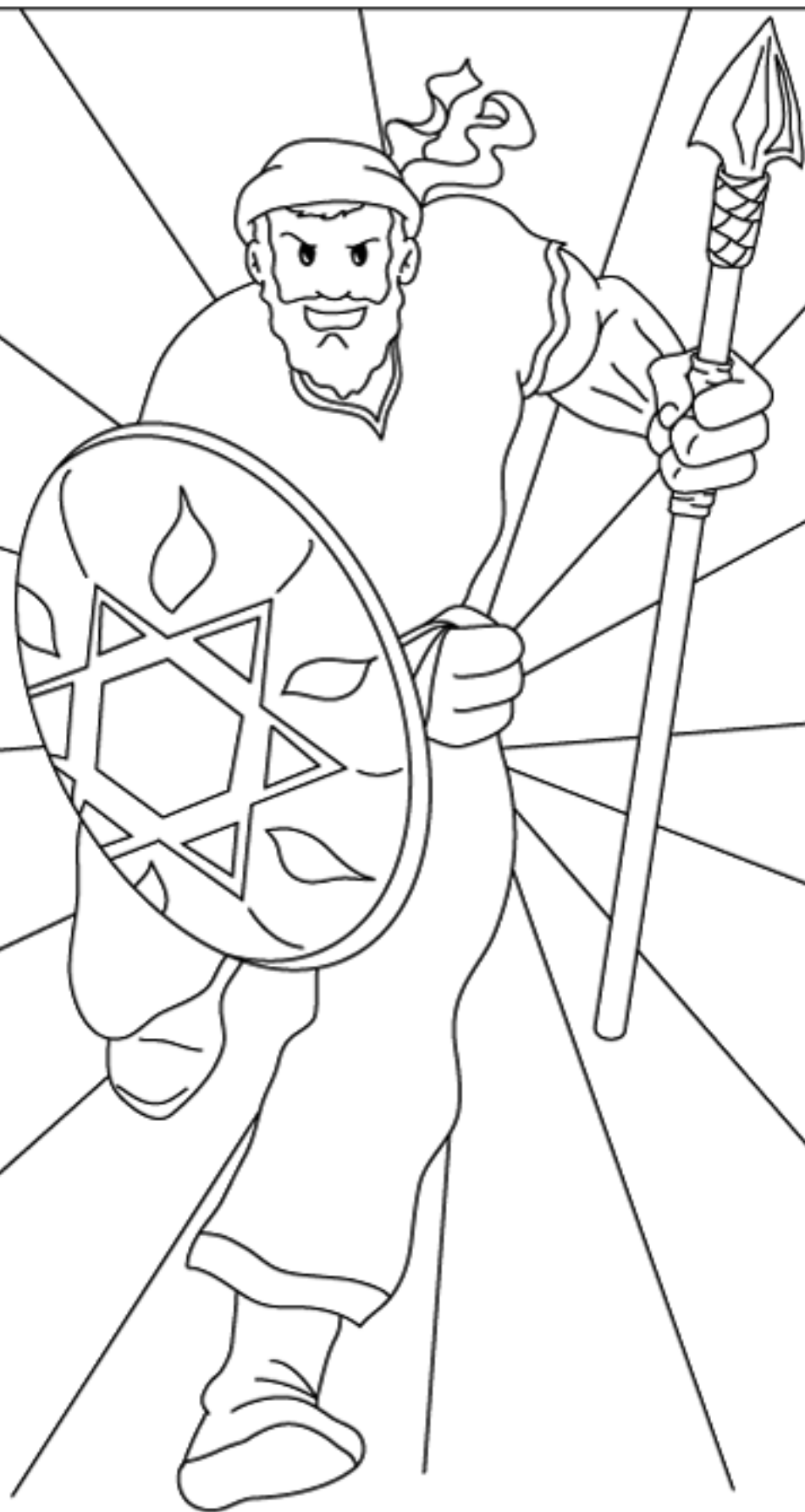
Peel potatoes, grate, drain. Beat eggs well and mix with the rest of the ingredients. Drop by spoonfuls on a hot, well-greased skillet. Brown on both sides. Serve with applesauce.

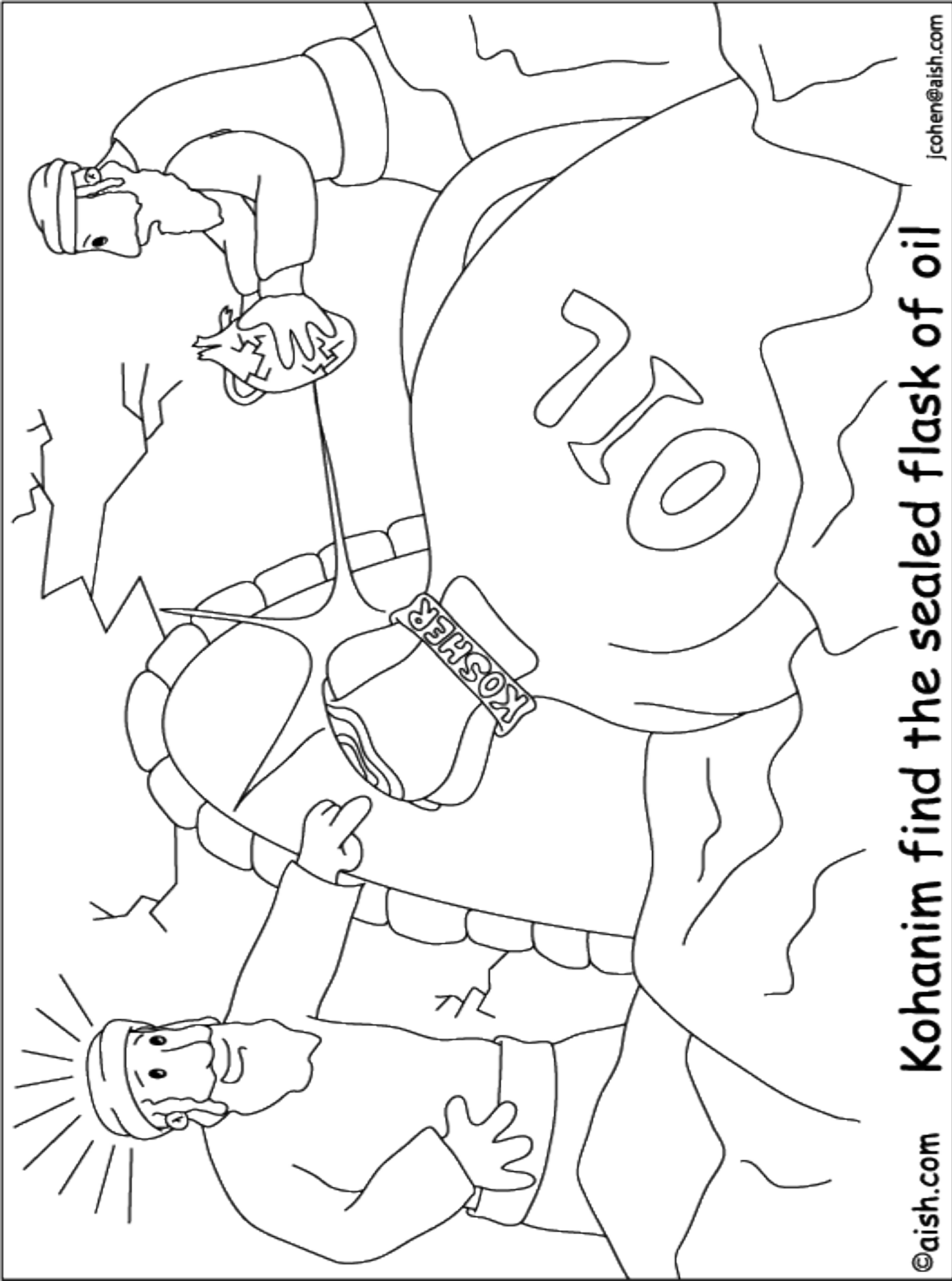
Makes 4 servings.

Baked Latkes

Mix as above. Heat a generous amount of fat in a skillet, add potato batter; bake in a hot oven, 400°F, for 25 minutes.







Chanukah Candle-Lighting

The first two blessings are said with the Shamash already lit, but immediately prior to lighting the Chanukah candles.

BLESSING #1

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל חֲנֻכָּה. Baruch ata Adonoy Eloheinu melech ha-olam
asher kid'shanu be'mitzvo'sav
ve-tzivanu lehadlik ner shel Chanukah.

Blessed are You, God, King of the Universe, Who made us holy with His commandments and commanded us to kindle the Chanukah light.

BLESSING #2

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ
בְּיָמֵים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה. Baruch ata Adonoy Eloheinu melech ha-olam
Shi-asa nee-seem la-avo-seinu,
Baya-meem ha-haim baz-man ha-zeh.

Blessed are You, God, King of the Universe, Who made miracles for our forefathers, in those days at this season.

BLESSING #3

This blessing is said on the first night only.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁהַחַיָּנוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ
וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה. Baruch ata Adonoy Eloheinu melech ha-olam
Sheh-he-che-yanu vi-kee-yimanu
Vi-hee-gee-yanu laz-man ha-zeh.

Blessed are You, God, King of the Universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.

This paragraph is said each night, after the first light has been kindled.

הַנְּרוֹת הַקְּלוּ אֶנְחָנוּ מִדְּלִיקִים עַל הַנְּסִים וְעַל הַנִּפְלְאוֹת וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת וְעַל
הַמִּלְחָמוֹת שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּיָמֵים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה עַל יְדֵי כַּהֲנֵיךְ הַקְּדוֹשִׁים.
וְכָל שְׂמוֹנֵת יָמֵי חֲנֻכָּה הַנְּרוֹת הַקְּלוּ קִדְּשׁ הֵם וְאִין לָנוּ רְשׁוֹת לְהַשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בָּהֶם אֶלָּא
לְרְאוֹתָם בְּלִבָּד כְּדֵי לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְהַלֵּל לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל עַל נִסֶּיךָ וְעַל נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ וְעַל יְשׁוּעָתֶךָ.

We kindle these lights for the miracles and the wonders, for the redemption and the battles which You performed for our forefathers in those days at this season through Your holy priests. During all eight days of Chanukah these lights are sacred, and we are not permitted to make ordinary use of them, but only to look at them – in order to express thanks and praise to Your great Name, for your miracles, Your wonders, and Your salvations.