

A Sustainable Chanukah...?

Celebrating the first Chanukah:

52 Early in the morning on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, which is the month of Kislev, in the one hundred and forty-eighth year, **53** they rose and offered sacrifice, as the law directs, on the new altar of burnt offering which they had built. **54** At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, it was dedicated with songs and harps and lutes and cymbals. **55** All the people fell on their faces and worshiped and blessed Heaven, who had prospered them. **56** So they celebrated the dedication of the altar for eight days, and offered burnt offerings with gladness; they offered a sacrifice of deliverance and praise. **57** They decorated the front of the temple with golden crowns and small shields; they restored the gates and the chambers for the priests, and furnished them with doors. **58** There was very great gladness among the people, and the reproach of the Gentiles was removed. **59** Then Judas and his brothers and all the assembly of Israel determined that every year at that season the days of dedication of the altar should be observed with gladness and joy for eight days, beginning with the twenty-fifth day of the month of Kislev. (**1 Maccabees 4:52-59. Preserved in the Apocrypha this text is from 135-105 BCE, 30-60 years after the events**)

ואי איכא מדורה לא צריך ואי אדם חשוב הוא אעייג דאיכא מדורה צריך נר אחרת: מאי חנוכה דתנו רבנן בכ"ה בכסליו יומי דחנוכה תמניא אינון דלא למספד בהון ודלא להתענות בהון שכשנכנסו יוונים להיכל טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל וכשגברה מלכות בית חשמונאי ונצחום בדקו ולא מצאו אלא פך אחד של שמן שהיה מונח בחותמו של כהן גדול ולא היה בו אלא להדליק יום אחד נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאום ימים טובים בהלל והודאה תנו התם ג' היוצא מתחת הפטיש

What is [the reason for] Hanukkah? For our Rabbis taught: On the twenty-fifth of Kislev the days of Hanukkah [commence], eight [days] on which lamentation for the dead and fasting are forbidden. For when the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oils therein, and when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed against and defeated them, they searched and found only one cruse of oil which lay with the seal of the High Priest, but which contained sufficient for one day's lighting only; yet a miracle was made there and they lit [the lamp] for eight days. The following year these [days] were appointed a Festival with [the recital of] Hallel and thanksgiving. (**BT Talmud Shabbat 21b, c.500CE**)

Sustainability is for life, not just for Chanukah...

Mar Zutra said, "One who covers an oil lamp [causing the flame to burn inefficiently] or uncovers a kerosene lamp [allowing the fuel to evaporate faster] violates the prohibition of bal tashchit."

(Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat, p. 67b)

Hanukkah Gifts

A history of the practice and some tips for parents.

By **Natasha Rosenstock**

http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish_Holidays/Hanukkah/At_Home/hanukkah-gifts.shtml

Jonathan Sarna, professor of American Jewish history at Brandeis University, explains that Jews used to exchange gifts only on **Purim**, but in the late 19th century there was a shift from Purim to Hanukkah. Christmas itself became magnified in the late 19th century when it became a national holiday in America. The Jewish custom shifted in imitation of Christmas, as its consumerism grew.

Sarna distinguishes the practice of giving Hanukkah gifts from its precursor-- Hanukkah *gelt* (Yiddish for money): "Hanukkah gelt is an old custom, well attested in Europe. Gift giving, by contrast, is new."

The precise origin of Hanukkah gelt is unclear. The most popular explanation is that coins became a symbol of the holiday because the ancient Jews' ability to make their own coins was a symbol of the independence they gained in the battles that the festival of lights commemorates.

In his book *Holidays, History and Halakhah*, **Eliezer Segal** argues that the earliest sources that mention gelt on Hanukkah are about students in Europe giving gelt to their teachers. Segal suggests that this practice was perhaps inspired by semantic and etymological connections between the Hebrew word Hanukkah (dedication) and the Hebrew word *hinnukh* (education).

Models of living Sustainably:

Trying to live off the grid: <http://howilivemylife.co.uk/>

Unplugging for Shabbat – for the environment as much as for Judaism:

<http://www.sabbathmanifesto.org/> The National Day of Unplugging is on March 7-8, 2014