



Day 1: Hanukkah Celebrates the Jewish Peoples' Freedom from Oppression

Tonight is the 1st night of Chanukah (or Hanukkah), an 8-day Jewish holiday, known as the "Festival of Lights." Chanukah commemorates the victory of a small group of Jews, the Maccabees, against their oppressors, the Seleucids (Syrian Greeks), who prohibited the Jews from practicing their religion around 200 BCE, and the miracle that followed. When the Jews returned to their Holy Temple in Jerusalem, they found the temple in shambles and only enough oil to light the menorah for one night. Miraculously, the candles stayed lit for eight days. The story of Chanukah reminds us that even one small light has the power to illuminate darkness and spark hope.

WHAT IS ANTISEMITISM?

Antisemitism (or anti-Jewish hate) is the prejudice against or hatred of Jews and has existed for thousands of years. During that time, anti-Jewish hate has manifested in many forms, from discrimination and persecution to scapegoating and stereotyping to violence and attempted annihilation. Antisemitism is like a virus that mutates over time often adapting to falsely link and blame Jews for whatever the societal ills of the era may be. The maltreatment of Jews in society is a warning sign to all as Jews have been compared to a "canary in a coalmine."

STATS

- **Crimes targeting Jews comprised 57.5% of all religious bias crimes - yet Jews make up only approximately 2.4% of the US population.** (*FBI 2020 Hate Crime Statistics*).
- 90% of Jews consider antisemitism to be a problem in the U.S.
- 82% of Jews believe antisemitism has gotten worse over the past five years
- 72% feel less safe as a Jewish person in the US (American Jewish Committee's report *The State of Antisemitism in America 2021*).

To combat antisemitism, it is important to know who Jews are, the origins and beliefs of Judaism and what antisemitism is.

WHAT IS HANUKKAH?

At sundown, Jews around the world will light the first candle on what most of us know as the menorah (it's really called a chanukiah). Each night, a new candle is added, culminating in all candles on the menorah being lit on night 8.

Choose a video to watch or an article to read (or choose them all!)

WATCH: [What is Chanukah?](#) (3:51)

WATCH: [Hanukkah with Mayim Bialik](#) (4:23)

READ: [12 Facts About Hanukkah You Probably Didn't Know](#)

READ: [Hanukkah's true meaning is about Jewish survival](#)

READ: [Hanukkah 101](#)

READ: [JewBelong Hanukkah](#)

HOPE

In this inspiring video, the citizens of Billings, Montana found common ground against escalating white supremacist attacks against their African American, Native American and Jewish neighbors. When a brick was thrown through the window of a 6 year-old boy after he placed his lit Chanukah menorah in his window, community members of all backgrounds moved to action to stand against hate.

WATCH: [NOT IN OUR TOWN \(PBS\) \(5:31\)](#)

ACT

Stand with the Jewish community against hate and antisemitism by joining us in one of these actions to show your support:

PARTICIPATE: *The Blue Light Project.* Stand against hate and “Shine a Light on Antisemitism” by replacing a light outside of your home with a blue light or placing a lamp with a blue light in your window from December through April 18 (Yom HaShoah). In partnership with [Brighton Stands Against Antisemitism](#).

The lightbulbs will be available for pick-up beginning Sunday, December 18th at the Louis S. Wolk JCC. If you are unable to pick up a light bulb please contact ghammond@jewishrochester.org.

The blue light bulbs have been made available through the generosity of **Kovalsky-Carr Electric Supply** and have been sourced from the electrical supply business of Holocaust Survivor, Herb Gildin. Learn about his story here: [The Starfish](#).

DISPLAY: Like the town of Billings, place a menorah in your window during the 8 nights of Chanukah. We have included a link to a paper menorah: <https://bit.ly/3oRLQCI>

DEEPER DIVES:

MORE ON HANUKKAH

READ: [Why Menorahs are Publicly Displayed](#)

READ: [I knew Hanukkah celebrated defeating the Greeks, then I moved to Athens](#)

READ: [Ruins of a Hellenistic fortress show ‘tangible evidence’ of Hanukkah story, Israeli archaeologists say](#)

MORE ON ANTISEMITISM

READ: The American Jewish Committee recently released its findings based on two parallel surveys of American Jews and of the US general public. The survey of American Jews was conducted in September and October 2021. The link to the surveys, insight and analysis follows: [The State of Antisemitism in America 2021](#).

READ: [Antisemitism Defined](#). The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, the only intergovernmental organization mandated to focus solely on Holocaust-related issues has determined that in order to begin to address the problem of antisemitism, there must be clarity

about what [antisemitism](#) is. The IHRA working definition of antisemitism is embedded in the link above (Antisemitism Defined).

INSPIRATION

COURAGE & VALOR: STORIES THAT INSPIRE. The Simon Wiesenthal Center has created a series of short films, focusing on courageous individuals who have made a difference in the world, impacted upon others, and changed the lives of people around them for the better:

WATCH: [Rabbi Jeffrey Meyers, Tree of Life Synagogue](#) (13:26)

WATCH: [Peter Bergman](#) (13:18)