

The PhilateliKid

The newsletter for Stamp Collecting Clubs for Kids (SCCFK)

Collect Stamps (The Most Educational Hobby)

www.stampcollectingclubsforkids.org

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Happy Hanukkah!

In 1996 the USPS issued its first Hanukkah stamp, a 32¢ stamp in multiple colors featuring a menorah of nine different colored candles.

Among non-Jewish people, Hanukkah is a little understood holiday. Unlike Christmas, which always falls on December 25th, Hanukkah begins on a different date every year. Actually, that is a little incorrect. Hanukkah begins on the same date every year in the Jewish calendar, 25 Kislev. Kislev is the ninth month in the Jewish year. In the Jewish calendar, we are currently in the year 5778.

Last year, Hanukkah began on December 24, 2016 (the Gregorian calendar.) This year Hanukkah will begin on December 12, 2017. Next year Hanukkah will begin on December 2, 2018

The beginning of December 12, 2017 is 24 Kislev. At sundown the Jewish calendar begins a new day. So at sundown, December 12, 2017 the date becomes 25 Kislev.

Unlike Christmas which is celebrated on one day, Hanukkah is celebrated over a period of time, hence the term “begins on” to describe Hanukkah, which is celebrated over an 8 day period.

What is Hanukkah?

Hanukkah (sometimes spelled Chanukah) is a festival of lights. In the second century BCE, the Holy Land was ruled by the Seleucids (Syrian-Greeks), who tried to force the people of Israel to accept Greek culture and beliefs instead of mitzvah observance and belief in God. Against all odds, a small band of faithful Jews, led by Judah the Maccabee, defeated one of the mightiest armies on earth, drove the Greeks from the land, reclaimed the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and rededicated it to the service of God.

When they sought to light the Temple's Menorah, they found only a single cruse of olive oil that had escaped contamination by the Greeks. Miraculously, they lit the

menorah and the one-day supply of oil lasted for eight days, until new oil could be prepared under conditions of ritual purity.

Today Hanukkah is celebrated by the lighting of the menorah accompanied by special prayers (blessings), songs, and special fried foods.

What is a Menorah?

To commemorate and publicize these miracles, the sages instituted the festival of Hanukkah. A candelabrum consisting of 9 candles is the focal point of the celebration. It is called a menorah. One central candle is always lit, and one additional candle is lit each day during the 8 day celebration.

What is a Dreidel?

A dreidel, or *sevivon* in Hebrew, is a four-sided spinning top that children play with during Hanukkah. Each side is imprinted with a Hebrew letter.

- נ (*Nun*)
- ג (*Gimel*)
- ה (*He*)
- ש (*Shin*)

These letters are an abbreviation for the Hebrew words נס גדול היה שם ("**N'es Gadol Haya Sham**", "A great miracle happened there"), referring to the miracle of the oil that took place in the Beit Hamikdash.

On dreidels sold in Israel, the fourth side is inscribed with the letter פ (*Pe*), rendering the acronym נס גדול היה פה ("**N'es Gadol Haya Po**", "A great miracle happened here.")



The 32¢ Hanukkah stamps issued by the USPS in 1996 and the 1997 reprint featured menorahs and are essentially identical, Scott 3118, differing only slightly in the die cuts. The same stamp was issued by the USPS in 1999 but now was denominated 33¢

and the date on the lower left side now read 1999, Scott 3352. Then in 2001 the same stamp was issued with a 34¢ denomination, and a small date of 2001, Scott 3547. In 2002, the same stamp again was issued with a 37¢ denomination. The date of 2002 is in the lower left corner, Scott 3672.

In 2004 the USPS finally came up with a new design – a dreidel, Scott 3880, with a 37¢ denomination dated 2004. In 2006 the same stamp featuring a dreidel was issued in the denomination of 39¢, dated 2006, Scott 4118, in 2007 the same stamp was issued in the denomination of 41¢, Scott 4219, and in 2008 the same stamp denominated 42¢, Scott 4372.

In 2009 the USPS came up with a new design or a menorah for the Hanukkah stamp, denominated 44¢, Scott 4433.

In 2011 the USPS designed yet another new stamp for Hanukkah, a “forever” stamp, with a sales price of 44¢. The design spells “HANUKKAH” in white block letters, each letter on a different colored background. The date appears in the upper left corner, and the word “FOREVER” appears horizontally in white along the bottom border, Scott 4583.

The year 2013 brought yet another design of a menorah on a light brown background. “FOREVER” is printed vertically along the right border. Scott 4824.

For the 2016 Hanukkah stamp, a different menorah is featured on a purple background. “FOREVER” appears horizontally along the top right border. Scott xxxx.

What do you think? Thoughtful comments are welcomed and will be published, so please feel free to write! (150 words or less, please.) Mail it to Robert W. Martin, P.O. Box 1809, Kihei, Hawaii 96753-1809. It should be written as if the reader knows nothing about your topic, so beginners can understand it.

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