

# The Schmooze

## Stories with a Yiddish Twist

ALL I WANT FOR HANUKKAH IS A \$449.99 PARROT BEHOP DRONE  
AND A BLAHNIK [SHOE] MENORAH

MENORAH  
BLAHNIK



by

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**Syosset, New York**

The late Gertrude Berg (“The Molly Goldberg Jewish Cookbook”) writes, “No matter what Mr. Webster says about the meaning of the word ‘holiday,’ his dictionary can’t even tell you what it really is. Words are not enough to describe a feeling, and for my family to come together to celebrate a holiday, any holiday, is an occasion, a bigger occasion than Mr. Webster even dreamed about in his dictionary.”

December 7 is the first day of Hanukkah. To assist you with the “shop ‘til you drop” season, here’s a lexicon of holiday terms, quotes, and advice.

### ADVERTISEMENT

Joseph Cvinar heard the following radio spot: “We carry all you Hanukkah needs including dreidels, menorahs and guilt.”

### BOOKS

“Blintzes for Blitzen,” by Elise and Philip Okrend, \$8.95

“Can I Have a Cell Phone for Hanukkah” by Sharon Duke Estroff, \$12.95.

“Bubbie And Zaidie Come To My House - A Story for Hanukkah” by Daniel Halevi Bloom, \$16.95.

## CANDLES

Each Chanukah, Jews light candles for eight days--one the first evening, adding one light each night on the nine-branched menorah. A special 9th candle, called the shammes, stands taller than the rest in the menorah.

## CHANUKKAH GELT

Leo Rosten says in some families Chanukah gelt has been augmented by a “new” tradition of Chanukah tzedakah, charitable giving. In Eastern Europe, tzedakah was a traditional part of Chanukah observance, and the melamed, the teacher of young children, often depended upon this gift for his livelihood.

## CHANUKKAH’S SPELLINGS

CHANUKA, CHANNUKAH, HANUKA, HANNUKA, HANUKKA.....

## COMBINATION PRODUCTS

Paul Reiser (“Couplehood”) defined “combination products” as follows:

- A sweater vest and a bottle opener

- A hot beverage thermos and a snorkeling mask

- A cassette rack and a Doberman pinscher

## DEADWEIGHT LOSS

The difference between what the giver spends and the value the recipient puts on the gift.

## DECEMBER DILEMMA

The problem of how to handle the holidays when one half of a couple is Jewish and the other is Christian.

## DEDICATION

In English, Chanukah means “Dedication.”

## ENTERTAINMENT, CHEAP

Showing colored slides or photocopies of cancelled checks for Hanukkah purchases.

## FEAR OF NOT GIVING ENOUGH

“Leads to dizziness in the Broadway Mall, foot fractures on speeded-up escalators, thumb and wrist sprain in the course of package manipulation, eye and facial injuries in

carton-crowded buses and taxis, and fluttering sensations of disorientation and imminent impoverishment.”

## FOOD

A favorite food is “latke,”-- potato pancakes. (see “Potato Latkes recipe)

Film critic, Joel Siegel (“Lessons for Dylan”) wrote, LATKE - A pancake. We make potato pancakes on Chanukah because we celebrate the miracle of one day’s worth of sanctified oil burning for eight days by eating fried foods. Not bad for a religion. OK, you [his son] can’t eat anything on Yom Kippur, but come Chanukah you have to eat fried food. In Israel, instead of potato latkes, they eat jelly donuts on Chanukah.”

## GENERIC GREETING CARDS

Chrismokkah was the faux holiday created on the OC by Seth Cohen for his Protestant-Jewish family. This holiday greeting seems to work:

HOHOHO

OHOHOH (Note: Hebrew is written from right to left.)

## GIFT GIVING

Ari L. Goldman wrote, “Gift-giving doesn’t have to mean following the throngs at the mall looking for the latest gismo...Some families set aside one night when the youngsters forgo their presents for the night and donate them to children at a homeless shelter.”

Twelve-year-old Sidney labored for many days to build a chair for his father, and finally, on Chanukah, he presented it as a gift. But when the boy’s father sat on the chair, he found that the seat was far too high. Sidney said, “I wish it had turned out the way we had hoped. I made the chair too high!” “No, you didn’t,” said his father gently. “It’s just that the table is too low.”

## GRANDMOTHER

Just before Hanukkah, Miriam, a grandmother who resides in Florida, was giving directions to her grown up grandson who was coming to visit with his wife.

“Go through the gatehouse. Come to the front door of the condominium complex. I am in apartment 2B.” Miriam continued, “There is a big panel at the door. With your elbow (“elnboygn”), hit 2 when you get out, I am on the left. With your elbow, hit my doorbell.”

“Grandma, that sounds easy,” replied Jonathan, “but why am I hitting all these buttons with my elbow?”

To which she answered, “You’re coming to visit for Hanukkah empty handed?”

### GREETING CARDS

“It’s Hanukkah! Time to enjoy yourself, get through and through...and get yourself a tchotchke or two.”

“EAT! EAT! EAT! This Hanukkah message was brought to you by the Jewish Mothers of America. (Hallmark, \$2.99)

### HALLMARK MONEY HOLDER

“After searching for the perfect Hanukkah gift for you, I have some advice: Be a mensch. Go find it yourself. You can do a better job--am I right?”

### HANUKKAH

“Most Texans think Hanukkah is some sort of duck call.” Richard Lewis

### HANUKKAH DESCRIPTION

“Chanukah was a very modest holiday when I was a kid. We’d all gather at my great-aunt’s house, where someone had sewn little cloth purses for all the children. We’d line up and go from one adult to another, and they would drop Chanukah gelt into the purses. Usually, it was a nickel or a dime. A quarter was a big deal.” (Karl Bernstein, “Growing Up Jewish in America”) by Frommer & Frommer

### HANUKKAH REMAINDERS

David was describing his new iPod to his Christian friend, Chris.

“Wow,” exclaimed Chris, “that’s so cool! When did you get it?”

“Last night, for the first night of Hanukkah,” said David.

“Yeah, we get presents every night for eight nights to celebrate the Festival of Lights.”

“Wow, I wish we got eight.”

The next day Chris ran over to David’s house to see what he got.

“Where’s your present from last night?” he asked.

Davie held up a ball of crumpled blue and silver wrapping paper.

“It was leftovers night.”

### MALLITIS

A condition brought on after following your female companion through too many sale racks.

### MINOR HOLIDAY

Joshua Halberstam (“Schmoozing”) wrote about the elevation of Chanukah from the relatively minor holiday it was in Europe to the major Jewish holiday it is in the U. S. today. “The Talmud devoted a scant two pages to Chanukah, while dedicating an entire volume to Purim,” said Halberstam.

#### MISHPOCHA ET AL

A line of greeting cards for interfaith couples. Corporations also use them when they have a multi-ethnic staff.

#### MIXED BLESSINGS

Holiday greeting cards combining the menorah with Santa and elves and reindeer.

#### “MODGOT”

A popular expression said by parents: “Money Doesn’t Grow On Trees.”

#### NIFTY INSTRUCTIONS SHOPPERS SHOULD KEEP IN MIND:

1. Assembles in minutes with just a screwdriver (“shroyfn-tsier”).
2. See back of package for representative sample.
3. Appropriate for all ages.

#### OSKAR MENORAH WEINERS

According to Jeff Warmouth (“Strictly Kosher Style - Recipes Spiced with Jewish Humor”), “Oskar Menorah Weiner are franks specially packaged to be roasted over a menorah. Every dog has its day, and each day’s dog is one candle longer than the next. So, when you light an additional candle, the frank will be cooked to perfection. :-)

#### POTATO LATKES RECIPE [from Molly Goldberg)

4 potatoes, peeled, grated and drained	1 egg, beaten
1 onion, grated	3 tablespoons potato starch or flour
1 teaspoon salt	1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 cup freshly ground black pepper	1/2 cup shortening

Mix the potatoes, onion, salt, pepper, egg, potato starch, and baking powder until very smooth. Heat the shortening in a skillet. Drop the potato mixture into it by the tablespoon. Drain well. Serve with meat dishes, or with applesauce as a separate course.

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUGS FOR THE HOLIDAY MEDICINE CABINET

Vitagrins, Jar of Alka-laffs, and a generous supply of Merriment

## QUOTES OF NOTE

“The excellence of a gift lies in its appropriateness rather than its value.”  
(Charles Dudley Warner, American writer)

## RECYCLING OF GIFTS

Almost 30% of us admit recycling presents, according to a recent survey.

SCROOGE (the Society to Curtail Ridiculous, Outrageous and Ostentatious Gift Exchanges)

## SHOPPING CENTERS

A place for people who don't have to go to the bathroom. Michael Jackson, KABC Radio, LA

## SHOPPING LIST

“LIBELLUS COMPARANDORUM? QUI LIBELLUS COMPARANDORUM?”  
(Latin, “Shopping list? What shopping list?”)

## SONG

Leo Rosten wrote, “I have it on indisputable authority that in Scarsdale, during a school celebration of Christmas, one of the children sang the carol as “God rest ye, Jerry Mandelbaum.”

## STAMPS

Sarah goes to the Hicksville post office to buy stamps for her Hanukkah cards, and she says to the clerk, “May I have 50 Hanukkah stamps?”

The clerk asks, “What denomination?”

Sarah says, “Oy Vey, has it come to this? Ok, give me 6 Orthodox, 12 Conservative, and 32 Reform.”

## SWEATER (“SVETER”)

My mother gave me 2 L.L. Bean's Classic Ragg Wool sweaters for Hanukkah. The next time we visited, I made sure to wear one. As we entered her home, instead of the expected smile (“shmeykhl”), she said, “Aaron, what's the matter? You didn't like the other one?”

## TRADITION RETURNS

“Fiddler on the Roof” returns to Broadway and stars Danny Burstein and Jessica Hecht. The first preview date is Nov. 20; opening date, Dec. 20.

Tickets range from \$35 to \$167. What a Hanukkah gift: 2 hours and 45 minutes of sheer enjoyment!

VENI, VIDI, VISA

We came. We saw. We went shopping.

WINDOW SHOPPING

The old expression was “window shopping.” In 2015 it’s Windows shopping. Holiday shopping, according to James Pierce, has become a grueling affair in which one must look through many store windows, not just one.

WISE CRACKING CHANUKAH MESSAGES ON CHANUKAH  
FORTUNE COOKIES

Ray Richmond (“Super Accurate Fortune Cookies”) suggests the following Humorous sayings on his Chanukah Fortune Cookies:

- “Please, you got the best fortune in the box, so stop kvetching.”
- “We’re all ferklempt this time of year, bubele. But don’t shvitz the small stuff.”
- “We could tell you the correct spelling of Channukkahhh, but then we would have to kill you.”

WONDERFUL HANUKKAH

Hanukkah is “vunderlekh.” Plus you don’t have to worry about a fat man getting stuck in your chimney (“koymen”), or if you live in NYC, your radiator.

ZAYDE CLAUS (e-cards)

Who is it that braves the freezing temperatures (without as much as a sweater) to deliver presents under the menorah? ZAYDE CLAUS.

Who is it that nashes on your milk and rugelach in the wee hours of the night? ZAYDE CLAUS.

Who is it that pattering on the roof top eight days in December (excluding the Sabbath)? ZAYDE CLAUS

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Marjorie Wolfe’s favorite holiday story:

There was a woman in a certain congregation who was beloved by all.



She raised a fine family and in the course of the years had carried many burdens, but, in spite of it all, she was lighthearted and gay, and people found it a pleasure to be in her company. The rabbi of the synagogue could not help but marvel at the way she could be so cheerful in the face of so much difficulty. One day he asked her how she was able to do this.

She replied, "Rabbi, I have adopted as my motto: MAKE EVERY DAY A HOLIDAY."

We make a mistake if we reserve only certain special days for consecrating our lives. To do this is to live at a high level only occasionally. For this reason, we must sanctify each day with a prayer, a kind word, a good deed, and a moment of meditation.

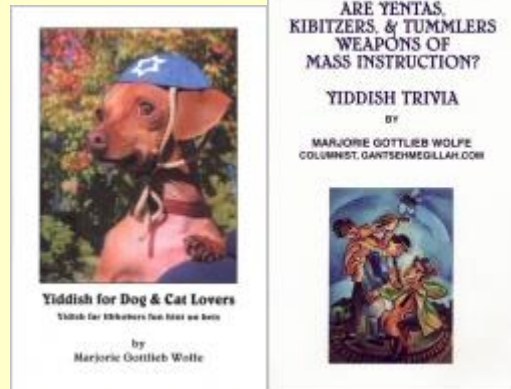
We can do this if we make every day a 'holy day.'"

(Source: "Heart of Wisdom" by Bernard S. Raskas)

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**Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of two books:**



**"Yiddish for Dog & Cat Lovers" and "Are Yentas, Kibitzers, & Tumblers Weapons of Mass Instruction? Yiddish Trivia." To order a copy, go to her website: [MarjorieGottliebWolfe.com](http://MarjorieGottliebWolfe.com)**

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