

## Hanukkah Poems



### **Let's be Happy**

Malvine P. Hoenig

Let's be happy, let us cheer,  
Hanukkah again is here.  
All the lights are shining bright,  
Isn't it a lovely sight?

You know these lights remind us  
Of the time long, long ago,  
When God caused one,  
tiny light,  
for eight long days to shine so bright.

## Joyous Hanukkah!

Eva Grant



At last! At last! Hanukkah is here!  
The whole house is bursting with holiday cheer.

Pancakes are sizzling as hard as they can,  
Browning delectably crisp in the pan.

The dreidels can scarcely wait to be spun;  
Presents are hidden for Hanukkah fun;

And there, on the table, polished and bright,  
The shining menorah gleams through the night,

Like the oil lamp in ancient history,  
That burned on and on miraculously!

And each flaming candle proclaims the great story  
Of the Maccabean heroes, their deeds and their glory.

## Happy Hanukkah!

Eva Grant



Outside, snow is slowly, softly  
Falling through the wintry night.  
In the house, the brass menorah  
Sparkles with the candlelight.

Children in a circle listen  
To the wondrous stories told,  
Of the daring Maccabeans  
And the miracles of old.

In the kitchen, pancakes sizzle,  
Turning brown, they'll soon be done.  
Gifts are waiting to be opened,  
Happy Hanukkah's begun.

Dreidel



Nun, gimel, heh, and shin,  
See the wooden dreidel spin.  
Nes gadol hayah shin,  
If I'm lucky I will win!

I play with my new dreidel  
upon the shiny floor.  
I ask some friends to play with me-  
we must have two or more.

I give the players pennies-  
the same amount to each.

We sit down in a circle,  
the pennies within reach.

Each player puts a  
penny in the proper spot.

The middle of the circle  
is what we call the pot.

Next I take the dreidel  
and spin it round and round.  
Which letter does it land on?  
What fortune have I found?

I read the letter facing up-  
it tells me how to play.  
The letters are in Hebrew,  
and here is what they say.

Nun means I do nothing-  
I neither give nor take.  
Heh means I take half the pot-  
what a lucky break!



Gimel means I take it all.  
It looks as if I'll win!  
But I must put a penny back  
when it lands on shin.

We go around the circle-  
it's lots and lots of fun,  
till one has all the pennies.  
Then the game is done!

Nun, gimel, heh, and shin,  
See the wooden dreidel spin.  
Nes gadol hayah sham,  
If I'm lucky I will win!



Light the first of eight tonight—  
the farthest candle to the right.

Light the first and second, too,  
when tomorrow's day is through.

Then light three, and then light four—  
every dusk one candle more

Till all eight burn bright and high,  
honoring a day gone by

When the Temple was restored,  
rescued from the Syrian lord,

And an eight-day feast proclaimed—  
The Festival of Lights—well named

To celebrate the joyous day  
when we regained the right to pray  
to our one God in our own way.

## **Feast of Lights**

Emma Lazarus



Kindle the taper like the steadfast star  
Ablaze on evening's forehead o'er the earth,  
And add each night a luster till afar  
An eightfold splendor shine above thy hearth.  
Clash, Israel, the cymbals, touch the lyre,

Blow the brass trumpet and the harsh-tongued horn;  
Chant psalms of victory till the heart takes fire,  
The Maccabean spirit leap new-born.

Remember how from wintry dawn till night,  
Such songs were sung in Zion, when again  
On the high altar flamed the sacred light,  
And, purified from every Syrian stain,  
The foam-white walls with golden shields were hung,  
With crowns and silken spoils, and at the shrine,  
Stood, midst their conqueror-tribe, five chieftains sprung  
From one heroic stock, one seed divine.

Five branches grown from Mattathias' stem, The Blessed  
John, the Keen-Eyed Jonathan, Simon the fair, the Burst-  
of Spring, the Gem, Eleazar, Help of-God; o'er all his clan  
Judas the Lion-Prince, the Avenging Rod, Towered in  
warrior-beauty, uncrowned king, Armed with the  
breastplate and the sword of God, Whose praise is: "He  
received the perishing."

They who had camped within the mountain-pass,  
Couched on the rock, and tented neath the sky,  
Who saw from Mizpah's heights the tangled grass  
Choke the wide Temple-courts, the altar lie  
Disfigured and polluted--who had flung  
Their faces on the stones, and mourned aloud  
And rent their garments, wailing with one tongue,  
Crushed as a wind-swept bed of reeds is bowed,



Even they by one voice fired, one heart of flame,  
Though broken reeds, had risen, and were men,  
They rushed upon the spoiler and o'ercame,  
Each arm for freedom had the strength of ten.  
Now is their mourning into dancing turned,  
Their sackcloth doffed for garments of delight,  
Week-long the festive torches shall be burned,  
Music and revelry wed day with night.

Still ours the dance, the feast, the glorious Psalm,  
The mystic lights of emblem, and the Word. Where  
is our Judas? Where our five-branched palm?  
Where are the lion-warriors of the Lord?  
Clash, Israel, the cymbals, touch the lyre,  
Sound the brass trumpet and the harsh-tongued horn,  
Chant hymns of victory till the heart take fire,  
The Maccabean spirit leap new-born!