

The Dreidel game:

The spinning top or dreidel (from the German, **drehen**, to spin, or the Hebrew, **sivivone**, to spin) remembers the Torah scholars who would pretend to be gambling, so they could study the Torah. One of them would act as a look-out, while the others would study. When the Greek soldiers came by, they would hide the Torah scroll and take out their dice (spinning tops) and pretend to be gambling.

This is how the game works. Everyone is given chocolate coins (**gelt**) or some other form of chocolate, and the gambling begins. Everyone puts in one piece of chocolate at every turn, and the game lasts until someone has won all the chocolate. You are allowed to eat the chocolate as you play, and sometimes merciful winners also share their spoils.

Everyone takes a turn spinning the **dreidel**.

1. If the top falls on the Hebrew letter nun: **N (nothing)**, the player gets nothing out of the kitty. This letter looks like a final square bracket "]"
2. If it falls on the Hebrew letter gimel: **G (gets)**, he or she gets everything out of the kitty. This letter looks like a final square bracket with a tale.
3. if it falls on the Hebrew letter hey: **H (half)**, the player gets half of the kitty. This letter looks like an upside down "U", with a broken leg.
4. If it falls on the Hebrew letter shin: **S (set)**, he or she has to put a piece of chocolate into the kitty. This letter looks like a "W"

The letters represent the phrase: **nes gadol hayah sham (a great miracle happened there), or, today in Israel: nes gadol hayah po (a great miracle happened here).**

In order to play, players receive Chanukah gelt (Chanukah money), which used to be all the presents Jewish people received. The tradition of receiving chocolate coins at Christmas time probably came from this Chanukah tradition.

The rabbis also permitted card games. This is the only time of the year when gambling is permitted by the rabbis.

So spin your dreidels, eat your chocolate, and never forget to study your Torah. Not just at Chanukah, but every day of the year.

Happy Chanukah! Let the games begin.