

בס"ד

שבעים פנים לדריידל

Shivim Panim L'Dreidel

(The 70 Faces of Dreidel)

INSIGHTS AND VARIATIONS
ON THE DREIDEL GAME



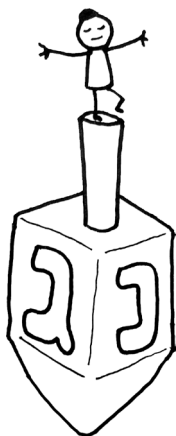
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It's probably best to remove all contents from the table before playing Dreidel (or just use the floor). Also, here's the actual Table of Contents for this booklet.

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Introduction

One of my favorite things about Torah is the layout of a page of the Talmud (which is used in many other Torah books as well), with the actual text in the center, surrounded by commentaries on the top, bottom and sides, often presenting conflicting interpretations. Just looking at any page, without even learning it, you get a perfect visual representation of how multi-faceted Torah is.

But when it comes to Dreidel, for some reason we only ever hear the same 2 things over and over again: "Nes Gadol Haya Sham" and hiding in caves. But as with all aspects of Torah and Judaism, there are actually tons of different ways of looking at the Dreidel (see the first commentary in the Dreidel Playing Guide).

So, in an effort to put a new spin (yes, I had to) on the tradition, I put together the Dreidel Playing Guide with a selection of commentaries revealing some of the varied interpretations of the Dreidel.

But because learning can sometimes be boring, I also included a section on riddles and one on alternate methods of playing Dreidel.

I hope this booklet adds even more joy and fun to your Chanukah celebration.

Happy Chanukah!
Dovid Taub

Dreidel Playing Guide

With Commentaries from Holy People

Spinsights

מאי דריידל

סיבת הסיבוב

1 Since Minhag Yisroel (Jewish custom) is considered Torah, then just as there are 70 sides to Torah, there are also 70 sides to Jewish customs.

(Pinchas of Koretz)

2 The Tzaddikim of old had the custom of playing [games] on Chanukah...

...This is an expression of lowering themselves down to a level of smallness, in order to ascend to the next level. This process is an example of descent for the purpose of ascent, because on Chanukah we ascend from level to level...

(Noson of Breslov)

3 It is Minhag Yisroel to arrange special Jewish activities for Jewish children during Chanukah....
...The common denominator and the core significance of all of these Jewish customs is to strengthen and reveal even more openly the connection between Jewish children and Judaism. And through this the relationship between the children and their parents and teachers is strengthened...

(Lubavitcher Rebbe)

4 Would it not be better to put these words on huge, highly visible billboards all around the world in order to more effectively publicize the miracle? But from this we learn that a tiny Dreidel with an encrypted message on it is better - as long as it is active and spinning - than a giant, static billboard. Because when we spin and effect

1 כיון שמנהג ישראל תורה כשם שיש 'ע' פנים לתורה כך יש 'ע' פנים למנהגים (אמרי פנחס השלם - א, אות סח)

2 היו נוהגים גם הקדמונים הצדיקים לשחק בחנוכה... וזה בחינת מה שמורידין עצמן לבחינת קמנות כדי

לעלות אל המדרגה

השניה, בבחינת

ירידה תכלית

העליה, כמובא,

כי בחנוכה עולין

מדרגא לדרגא...

(ליקוטי הלכות, אורח

חיים, הלכות חנוכה

א'ב')

3 מנהג ישראל

לעשות בימי

החנוכה פעולות

מיוחדות (בעניני יהדות) הקשורות עם ילדי ישראל... והצד השווה והנקודה הפנימית בכל מנהגי ישראל אלו - לחזק ולגלות בגלוי עוד יותר את הקשר שבין ילדי ישראל לעניני יהדות. ועי"ז מתחזק הקשר בין הילדים עם הוריהם ומוריהם...

(תורת מנחם - תשמ"ב, ע' 545)

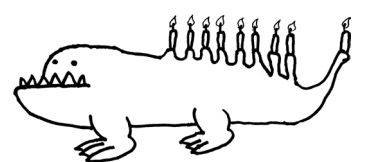
4 והדבר תמוה כלום לא עדיף הי'

לרשום מלים אלו על מודעות גדולות

מאירי עינים, ולתלותם בראש כל

חוצות כדי לפרסם את הנס ביתר

שאת, אלא מכאן, שמוטב דריידל



change non-stop, Hashem makes miracles.

(“Damesek Eliezer” of Vizhnitz)

5 All miracles come from the chamber of Moshiach. On Chanukah the light of Moshiach descends, and this is the symbolism of the four letters which have the same numerical value as Moshiach.

(Pinchas of Koretz)

6 It is written (Bereishis 46:28) “He sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph, to direct him to Goshen...” גשנה (to Goshen) [which has the same letters as the Dreidel] has the same numerical value as Moshiach. [In other words, the verse is saying that] “first he has to make the place Moshiachdik.” And this is the secret of the Dreidel.

(Simcha Bunim of Peshischa)

7 [The letters on the Dreidel] hint to all of the mitzvos of Chanukah, which are lighting candles and saying Hallel. Nun and Shin stand for **Neros Shemoneh** (Eight Candles). Hei and Gimmel stand for **Hallel Gamor** (Full Hallel).

(Pinchas of Koretz)

8 And written on it is Gimmel **ShaNah** (year), because it is mentioned in books that Chanukah is the **Gemar Tov** (good ending) of the year.

(Tzemach Tzaddik of Vizhnitz)

קמן וזעיר ואותיותיו בר”ת, ובלבד

שיסתובב ויפעל הרבה, על פני מודעה

ענקית התלויה

בקפאון בלי הזזה,

שהרי כשמסובבים

ופועלים בלי ליאות

ואין שוקמים על

השמרים, מחולל

השי”ת נסים

(אליעזר הגר - דמשק

אליעזר)

5 כל הניסים

באים מהיכל משיח

וגם בחנוכה יורד

אור של משיח וזהו

הרמז שהר’ אותיות

בנימ’ משי”ח

(אמרי פנחס, שבת

ומועדים אות רכ”ב)

6 כתיב (בראשית

מו, ואת יהודה

שלח להורות לפניו

גשנה, גשנ”ה

בנימטריא משיח,

”עהר זאל פריער

משיחען”, וזה

סוד הדריידעל

(חשבה לטובה, חנוכה)

7 מרמז על

כל המצוות שיש בחנוכה, היינו

הדלקת הנרות ואמירת הלל, וזהו

נ’ש’ נ’רות ש’מונה ה’ג’ ה’לל ג’מור.

(אמרי פנחס, שבת ומועדים אות רכ”ב)

8 וכותבין עליו ג’ שנ”ה,

דאיתא בספרים כי בחנוכה

הוא הגמר טוב מהשנה...

(צמח צדיק)

↓ **Written or inscribed on each side of the Dreidel are the Hebrew letters Nun, Gimmel, Hei and Shin⁵, which form an acronym for the phrase “Nes gadol hayah sham” (“a great miracle happened there”).^{6 7 8} In Israel, the Shin is replaced with a Pei to**

represent the word po (here).

↓ **At the beginning of the game, each player contributes an equal amount of coins (the general custom is to use chocolate coins) into the middle. Throughout the game, players take turns spinning**

9 Yavan (Greece) has the same numerical value as Galgal (orbit, rotation), because they were experts in astrology. But, in truth, all of the orbits are conducted by supernal guidance, as is mentioned in holy books that Elo-Hecha (your G-d) has the same numerical value as Galgal.

(Sfas Emes)

10 The meaning behind the concept of playing with a Dreidel upon which is written the letters Gimme!l, Shin, Nun and Hei, is that the holy Arizal said that גשנה represents Kelipas Nogah, [a spiritual force] which consists of a combination of good and evil [and can be pushed in either direction based on human action]. And in this way we are like Dreidels: sometimes our lot is cast on Gimme!l and we win, but then afterwards we get a Shin and lose everything we gained.

(The Klausenburger Rebbe)

11 If the Dreidel lands on the letter Nun we add money [to the pot], and not on the letter Shin*... Because [Nun] stands for Ner (candle), through which we add to and complete yichudim (unifications of Divine expression).

(Eliezer Tzvi Safrin of Komarno)

12 Shin stands for Shtel (Yiddish word meaning put or place), which means one has to add another coin [to the pot] and spin again*.

(Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Ehrenreich, the Shimloyer Rav)

9 יון גי' גלגל. שהיו בקיאים בחכמת גלגל המזלות. אבל באמת הנהגת כל הגלגל הכל עפ"י הנהגה עליונה. וכמו"ש בספרי קודש אנכי ה' אלקיך. אלקיך גי' גלגל. (שפת אמת, בראשית, לחנוכה כ"ט:ח')

10 דכל הענין

שמשחקים בסביבון שכתוב עליו גשנ"ה, דאיתא מהאר"י הקדוש ז"ל ש'גשנה' הוא קליפת נוגה שהיא הקליפה שמעורבות בה טוב ורע, ועל ידי זה אנחנו כסביבון הזה, שפעם נופל לגורלו אות ג' ומצליח, ואחר כך נופל לו אות ש' ומפסיד כל מה שהרוויח.

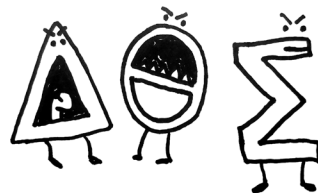
(לקט שושנים - שפע

חיים לחנוכה, שנת

תשמ"ח)

11 אם יפול הדריידל על אות ג' מוסיפים עוד מעות ולא באות ש'... שהוא ראשי תיבות ג"ר כדי להוסיף ולהשלים ביחוד התחתון שאר ב' יחודים... (בן ביתי, פרשת מקץ)

12 ש' הוא שמעל שצריך להוסיף עוד פרוטה ומגלגל פעם אחרת. אבני המקום, אבן (שהם, אות ק"ב)



* This was interesting to me because it presents the rules of Dreidel differently than we play it today.

13 If the Dreidel lands on the letter Hei, one takes half of the money that is there, because throughout the year, on Rosh Chodesh (the first day of each month) we only say half Hallel.

[This is the usual way we say Hallel, in contrast with Chanukah when we say full Hallel.]

(Eliezer Tzvi Safrin of Komarno)

14 If the Dreidel lands on the letter Gimmel, it emphasizes the fact that now, during Chanukah, we say Hallel **G**adol (big Hallel) in its entirety.

Therefore we take all of the money that is there.

(Eliezer Tzvi Safrin of Komarno)

15 There is a legitimate concern that [playing Dreidel] might be considered gambling - perhaps the other player [who loses money] did not give their money wholeheartedly [in which case, winning their money would be similar to stealing]. However, when all Jews are like one person with one heart... then the concern of stealing isn't relevant, and it is not like gambling. This is what we illustrate through doing this custom: the great extent to which we are all connected through Jewish love.

(The Klausenburger Rebbe)

13 מה שאנחנו נוהגים אם יפול הדריידל על האות ה' ליטול חצי מהמעות מה שיש שם, כי הלל אין אנחנו אומרים בכל חודשי השנה אלא חצי הלל...

(בן ביתי, פרשת מקץ)

14 אם יפול הדריידל על אות ג' שמראה שעתה בימי חנוכה אנחנו גומרים את הלל הגדול כולו לזה נוטלים כל המעות מה שיש שם.

(בן ביתי, פרשת מקץ)

⬇️ **If the Dreidel lands on the letter Hei, the player takes half of the coins from the middle.**¹³

⬇️ **If the Dreidel lands on the letter Gimmel, the player takes all of the coins that are in the middle.**¹⁴

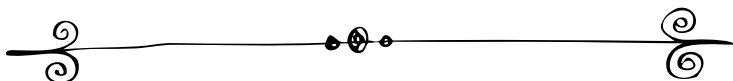
⬇️ **Once any player is left without any coins, they are "out" and the game**

continues without them. When only one player is left the game is over; the last remaining player is the winner and gets to keep all of the coins which they won.¹⁵

15 באמת יש חשש

של משחק בקוביא, שמא אין הלה נותן מעותיו בלב שלם, אולם כאשר כל ישראל כאיש אחד ובלב אחד... א"כ שוב לא שייך חשש גזל, ואינו בגדר משחק בקוביא. ואת זאת רצו להראות במנהג זה, שנתקשרו אז כל כך באהבת ישראל...

(שפע חיים לחנוכה)



Brain Twisters

While I was researching stuff about Dreidel, I discovered that playfulness has been a part of Chanukah even before Dreidels became ubiquitous. Apparently, Rabbi Yisroel Isserlin (author of *Terumas HaDeshen*), who lived in the 1400s used to ask his students riddles on Chanukah! But the examples of his riddles that I saw were confusing and relied on being able to combine deep knowledge of the Talmud with puns and gematria. Above my pay grade. BUT... it turns out that Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Baghdad (the Ben Ish Chai) wrote an entire book of riddles in the 1800s! The following riddles are all from that book. (Warning: Some of them are a little eighteen hundredsy.)

Answers at the back of this booklet... But don't cheat!

The Miracle Cup



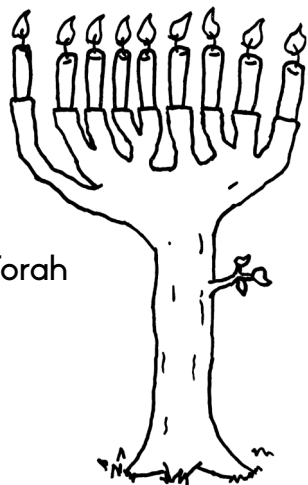
A person fills a cup with a liquid. Then they pour the liquid into a second cup. Afterwards, they pour from the second cup, back into the first cup, filling it once again. Lastly, they fill up a third cup and a fourth cup from the second cup. Nothing else was in the second cup except for the liquid that was originally in the first cup. How can this be?

The Empty Basket

A person goes to the market one morning and buys something and puts it in a basket. When they return home, they hide the basket in a room and lock the door and keep the key with them. When they come back to check on it later that night, the basket is empty! And it's not something that mice or weasels would eat. How is this possible?

The Prolific Scribe

A person says that a particular sofer wrote four hundred Torah scrolls today. He wasn't lying. How is this possible?



The Barrel of Oil

A man marries a woman on the condition that he currently has a barrel full of oil in his house. Witnesses go to his house and see a barrel full of oil and report their findings to the Rabbis. The Rabbis declare that the marriage is a sofek (doubt). Why?

The Old Child

A young boy was going from house to house collecting Tzedakah. A rich man asked the boy "How old are you?" The boy answered "I am eight years old." The rich man asked "How long have you been going from house to house?" The boy answered "Nearly nine years." The rich man replied "Fool! You haven't even been alive that long!" What was the boy's explanation?

Dreidel Spin-Offs

Every year I get super excited about playing Dreidel and then when we do it, I remember that I really don't like actually playing it. I know, it sounds heretical. But I get bored very easily. So here are 8 alternative Dreidel games that I just made up and have never played. Good luck!

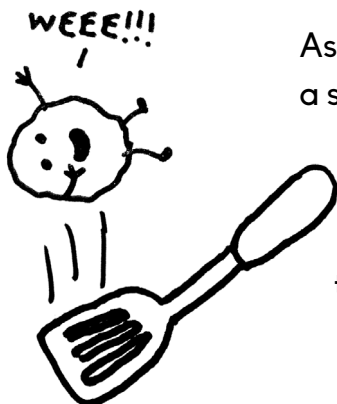
Last Dreidel Standing

All players spin their Dreidels at the same time. Whoever's Dreidel spins the longest wins the round. Maybe they get a piece of chocolate gelt or something. The game ends when everyone is bored or most players are crying.

Dreidel Auction

Rather than taking turns, players bid for a chance to spin the Dreidel in each round. The highest bidder gets to spin and potentially win the pot, but they must pay their bid amount into the pot regardless of the outcome.

Dreidel Challenges



Assign a challenge to each side of the Dreidel (e.g., sing a song, do a dance, tell a joke). When a player spins and lands on a specific side, they must complete the corresponding challenge. All other players reward them with chocolate gelt depending on how much they liked it.

Dreidel Swap

Each player starts with a unique-colored Dreidel. When a player spins a particular result, they can exchange their Dreidel with another player's Dreidel, adding a strategic twist. (An AI made this one up. I don't have any idea what it's saying. Give it a try!)

Driddle

Before spinning, players must answer a riddle posed by the previous spinner. If they answer correctly, they get to spin. If not, they have to skip their turn and the riddle gets passed on to the next player.

(This will likely just make the game longer and even more boring. But hey, I had to figure out 8 of these.)

Rock Paper Dreidel

Two players each contribute chocolate gelt to the pot and then spin at the same time. Gimmel beats Hei, Hei beats Shin, Shin beats Gimmel. If either player gets a Nun it's an automatic draw. Winner takes the pot.



Scoredel

All players spin at the same time and get ten spins. Nun=0 points, Hei=1 point, Gimmel=2 points, Shin=-1 point. Each player adds up their points and the player with the most points wins.

Hey, it's that Dreidel!

Pick the strangest or ugliest Dreidel your family has and hide it somewhere. Whoever finds it hides it again.

(This could go on way past Chanukah)

Brain Twisters Answers

him and took him with her as a baby.

Answer: The boy's mother collected Tzedakah while she was pregnant with

The Old Child

had some oil floating on top of the water.

Answer: The witnesses only saw the barrel and could not reliably determine whether the barrel was actually full of oil, or if it was full of water and only

The Barrel of Oil

paper. (This riddle seems to have been inspired by Bava Basra 14a)

Answer: The sofer wrote the words "four hundred torah scrolls" on a piece of

The Prolific Scribe

like 150 years ago. Sorry, I forgot to mention that).

holes in the basket and then soaked into the dirt floor (this riddle is from

Answer: The person bought snow! It melted and then leaked through the

The Empty Basket

whip it, increasing its volume enough to fill several cups.

Answer: The liquid is egg whites. After pouring it into the second cup, they

The Miracle Cup



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