

Shmanners 288: Hanukkah

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Travis: Hey, everybody! It's Travis here, your husband host. Uh, first, before we get the show started, I wanted to let you know, had some technical difficulties in this one so my mic sounds a little bit weird, but the episode is still really, really great, so I hope you enjoy!

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to *Shmanners*.

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: For ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: How are you?

Teresa: I am very excited.

Travis: What? 'Cause you're here with me?

Teresa: Of course I'm here— I'm excited to be here with you.

Travis: It doesn't seem like it.

Teresa: But we are being joined today by Jennifer Grayson!

Travis: Jennifer, hi! I didn't see you there. How are you?

Teresa: [laughs]

Jennifer: Hi, I'm great, how are you?

Travis: Doing so good. Will you introduce yourself and tell the *Shmanners* listeners at home— or I guess in their car, I don't know, wherever they are— a little bit about yourself?

Jennifer: Absolutely. So, hi, my name is Jennifer Grayson, and I serve as the Rabbi Aaron D. Panken Assistant Professor of Jewish history at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. And I also have a secondary affiliation as a professor of history at Xavier University in Cincinnati.

Travis: And I don't wanna brag on you, but Jennifer has a Ph.D, uh, which I think makes her the smartest guest we've ever had, absolutely.

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: So really taking the show to a new level. Thank you so much, Jennifer, really appreciate you being here. Really slumming it with us here on *Shmanners*.

Teresa: [laughs]

Jennifer: [laughs] No.

Teresa: Uh, so specifically we wanted to ask you some questions about Hanukkah.

Travis: First of all, how's it spelled?

Jennifer: Oh, gosh. That is the eternal question.

Travis: [laughs]

Jennifer: Um... okay. So, basically you can spell it however you'd like. Hanukkah is a Hebrew word. It means dedication, so in Hebrew it's spelled chet, nun, kaph, heth. So the question becomes, how do you spell this in English?

So, the first letter is like a “[guttural] chuh” sound in Hebrew, and we don't really have that sound in English. So some people like to write Hanukkah. with a C-H at the beginning of the word, uh, which sort of sounds like a German sort of “ach,” like a “chuh.” That sort of guttural noise. But of course that also gets confusing,

because some people look at that and read [with "C-H" as in "chair"] Chanukah, which is not, uh, accurate.

Travis: No, that sounds like a city in Minnesota.

Jennifer: [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Jennifer: Absolutely. So, sometimes you'll see that Hanukkah is spelled C-H-A-N-U-K-A-H. Interestingly, that's more true to the original pronunciation, the way that this would be pronounced in modern Hebrew today.

Teresa: Hmm.

Jennifer: Turns out, though, that that letter might have actually been pronounced more like "[breathily] ahh," like sort of a breathy H kind of, during the time period of the Maccabees.

And so, some people prefer to spell it with an H or maybe with an H with a dot under it. Um, you know, it really just depends on whatever style guide you're using.

Teresa: So is it fair to say that it's more about saying it right than spelling it right?

Jennifer: Absolutely. Uh, I do realize that in, like— I've gotten a number of sort of correspondences about Hanukkah in the past few, you know, days and week, and they all spell Hanukkah differently, and often differently in the same document. I mean, it's just one of these things.

Travis: I mean, to be fair, I— for whatever reason, I spell the word "restaurant" differently every time I spell it, so...

Jennifer: [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: ... I understand completely. Now, I do— in all seriousness, I have a question. So, I, uh, do not celebrate Hanukkah, and was raised Southern Baptist.

Um, when I say "Hanukkah" is it... okay. Is it weirder to make the guttural sound at the beginning or to not? Like, which one is, like, more, for lack of a better word, offensive, I guess? Is it weird if I'm like, "Yeah, happy [over-emphasizes the guttural noise] Channukah." Or is it, like, yeah, no, don't do that.

Teresa: [laughs quietly]

Jennifer: Um, I think it depends on who your audience is. I think saying Hanukkah sounds totally fine.

Travis: Okay.

Jennifer: You know, if you're speaking to somebody who's maybe Israeli, you know, you can definitely try the guttural, but, uh, I don't think it's necessary.

Travis: Okay. I just don't wanna sound like somebody who, like, goes to, like, a Mexican restaurant and, like, when they're ordering only does, like, an accent on the dishes when they're saying it.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I don't wanna be that person.

Jennifer: [laughs] Yeah, you don't wanna be that person.

Teresa: Um, so I would actually like to know a little more about your person background. Where are you from? Are you from Cincinnati?

Jennifer: I'm not. I grew up in New Jersey, in Montclair, New Jersey, which is a town about 12 miles from New York City, and I grew up in a Jewish family, uh, and... yeah, spent my whole life basically on the east coast. Uh, college in Rhode Island, I went and got my Ph.D at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, and then I moved to Cincinnati about five years ago to take up this position.

Teresa: That's awesome. Um, what would you say are the differences between, like, your childhood Hanukkah and the Hanukkah that you see kind of represented here in Cincinnati? Because I— I do find that it's kind of a special thing, here in Cincinnati.

Travis: Cincinnati seems to take it more seriously? Make a bigger deal. Out of everything, frankly. But also— we have a whole parade because a kind of beer comes out once a year.

Teresa: Yeah. [laughs]

Jennifer: [laughs]

Travis: It's a thing, yeah.

Jennifer: Yeah. Yeah, Cincinnati does, um, you know, find whatever it can to celebrate, I think.

Travis: [laughs loudly] That's a good way to— we're just graspin' at straws here in Cincinnati. Whatever we can do to get through the cold months.

Teresa: [laughs] Yeah.

Jennifer: Um, I actually don't think there's a huge difference, necessarily, in terms of how the holiday is celebrated regionally. I think it's more maybe a difference in terms of how I experience this as a child versus maybe how I relate to the holiday as an adult.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Well, so— yeah, I was gonna ask about that too, because I— I was told for a long time growing up by my Jewish friends that, like, Hanukkah in comparison to Christmas is, like, not— in no way a, like, major holiday in the grand scheme of things the way that Christmas is in, you know, Christian culture at this point. Have you seen that evolve over time? Like, Hanukkah getting a little bit more in the game as it goes?

Jennifer: Yeah. So, Hanukkah— it's a minor Jewish festival. It's really— so, Jews have a lot of holidays, and most of the other Jewish holidays that you celebrate— like, there are a lot of things you need to do for them, whether it's Passover where you're having a huge Seder meal, and there are all of these restrictions on what you can and can't eat, and all of these sort of required ritual foods to have, and, you know, this huge sort of home-based celebration. Or, you know, even something like Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, many Jews will sort of go to synagogue for, you know, these very lengthy services and what-have-you.

Hanukkah isn't like that. There's not really a lot there that you're sort of specifically supposed to do. So, yeah. I mean, so, in the context of Jewish calendar, it's sort of like this minor festival. You know, it's fun, it celebrates a happy occasion, if you will. Uh, but it's not necessarily that big a deal. Of course in relationship to Christmas, when you're Jewish in the United States, uh, it's really hard not to sort of be making that comparison.

Travis: Especially, I assume, for children, right?

Jennifer: Yes.

Travis: There's gotta be a lot of, like, "So what— we get stuff too, right? Like, we're all... on the same page about this, right?"

Teresa: Right, because we're constantly— I mean, it seems the Christmas creep comes in earlier and earlier.

Jennifer: Yes.

Teresa: And, you know, even before, like, fall decorations are out, you know, the autumn leaves and pumpkins and whatnot, we start to think about Santa, and bows of holly, and on all that kind of stuff. Um, which doesn't necessarily have much to do with the Christian holiday of Christmas, but this kind of collective cultural winter Christmas celebration.

Jennifer: Absolutely. Uh, actually when I was very little, I remember I said to my mom, "Is— you know, is it okay— I think Christmas is prettier than Hanukkah," 'cause I loved looking at all the Christmas lights. And, um, you know— and, I mean, she thought it was very funny and she was like, "Yes, Christmas is very pretty. Uh, but we have other holidays." [laughs]

Travis: [laughs] I— I'm not gonna lie, I think my favorite, like, Jewish holiday is Sukkot. With the sukkahs around, 'cause I think that— if I were a little kid I'm like, "We're gonna build, like a fort outside? This rules. This is—" like, if I was eight years old, I'd be so into it. I love that.

Jennifer: [laughs] Absolutely. Yeah, and so I think as a kid you're very aware of, you know, this sort of Hanukkah, Christmas thing. I guess you were asking, though, if it's kind of changed. And I think how it's maybe changed a little bit is

that I think more people are aware of Hanukkah. Um, I think there are more— these more sort of efforts to kind of include Hanukkah. in the sort of broader sort of commercialization of Christmas and the holidays and what-have-you. So, you know, now you'll go to a store and they'll, you know, be selling random sort of Hanukkah paraphernalia. You know, if they're making a Christmas quilt, they're also gonna sell a Hanukkah quilt, or something like that. And that's not really something that I remember seeing when I was younger, in the same way.

Travis: Okay. Another thought has just occurred to me, Jennifer. Uh, and once again, because of who I am and my general role on the show, it might sound like I'm making a joke, but I mean this in all seriousness.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: How, um— how, for lack of a better word, 'cause I can't think of anything else, like, sacred is a menorah, and is it weird to see it, like, now as, like, a light-up, you know, plastic blown thing sitting on a shelf next to, like, an inflatable Grinch?

Jennifer: [wheezes]

Travis: Is that, like, a weird thing? Or is it just like, "Eh, it's fine."

Jennifer: I mean, I think a little from column A and a little from column B. Yeah, it's sort of a sacred thing. On the other hand, if the whole idea of Hanukkah is, you know, you're supposed to sort of celebrate the miracle and what-have-you, and... I don't know.

Travis: I mean, don't get me wrong. There are— there are inflatable, like, manger scenes too.

Jennifer: Yeah.

Travis: I had to answer—[unintelligible]— my five-year-old was like, "What is that?" And I just went, "Uh, a family." [crosstalk]

Jennifer: [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Jennifer: Yeah, I mean, I figure, like, if you want to sort of go with the inflatable direction, I don't really think I should deny you the ability to do that for Hanukkah.

Travis: [laughs]

Jennifer: I think what is weird though is if you have a manger scene, and then you put a blow-up Hanukkah menorah next to it?

Teresa: Okay.

Jennifer: Like, you know— like, if you're Jewish and you wanna just sort of go all out with the sort of, you know, blow-up decoration thing, like, go for it. But, you know, maybe, you know, don't just sort of try to insert a menorah, you know, in a place that maybe it doesn't really belong.

Teresa: It feels kind of like the— like a mask of diversity. Where, like, "Look at— look at us! We've got everybody here at the party" kind of thing.

Travis: This is kind of a general question that, like, is more opinion-based than fact based. So this is where we're gonna cross out of your Ph.D for a moment and just ask you, Jennifer Grayson our new friend, this question.

If we have, like, a listener who is Jewish but likes the aesthetic of Christmas, do you think it'd be weird for them to just, like, decorate? Not necessarily with all the iconography and stuff but, you know, the lights, the... the...

Teresa: The greenery.

Travis: The greenery, things like that.

Jennifer: I don't know. I think that's really sort of a personal decision there. Like, for me that would feel very weird. Um, and I also know that so many Jews now, you know, have a parent who celebrated Christmas, or celebrates Christmas, or have, you know, family that does celebrate Christmas. And, um, yeah. So, going back to your question, you know, I think it's about an individual's, you know, decision about what they like and how they want to engage with this.

You know, it wouldn't be my decision but, um, you know, if you're like, "You know what? I just like the greenery and lights," um, you know, I think— I think you can definitely do that as a Jew. Though there are gonna be a lot of Jews who also, you know, might disagree with that.

Teresa: Well, you know, we're all about— we do a lot of wedding etiquette specifically, and there are a lot of traditions that we have sort of researched and found that, hmm, maybe not that one is for us. And so I think that it is— it's within the realm of the show to be like, "If that's for you, that's fine. If it's not for you, that's also fine."

Travis: I say this once again, having been raised Southern Baptist and having Christmas have a much more, uh, spiritual significance than it does for me now. Um, but now I'm very much, especially with two kids, in the mindset of, whatever makes it feel special for us and for our family, and feels like this is the way we are meant to celebrate it, that's kind of the direction we go. And sometimes that's watching *Muppet Christmas Carol* like, three times in a row in a single day. You know what I mean? And sometimes that's just what life is, you know?

Jennifer: Yeah, absolutely.

Teresa: Um, I would like to ask. So, as far as wishing someone glad tidings of the season, regarding Hanukkah, what— what do you think that we should advise our listeners to say? So much goes through my mind as far as, like, movies and TV where you talk about the, um— the idea that, quote, "Nobody says merry Christmas anymore," but the thing is, not everybody celebrates Christmas, obviously, so people go into "Happy holidays," which I think is great if you don't know someone very well and you have, you know— it's just, like, a general passing kind of thing. But if you know someone is Jewish and celebrates Hanukkah and other holidays, is it appropriate to wish them happy Hanukkah?

Jennifer: Absolutely. Uh, yeah. Say "Happy Hanukkah." I guess the one thing I'll say is— so, there's a real kind of Christmas season in the US, which, I don't know, I guess starts maybe sometime, like, the week before Halloween at this point. Um—[laughs]

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: If— if not sooner. I saw stuff in late September. Ugh! Don't get me started.

Jennifer: [amused] I know.

Travis: I'm a Halloween kid. Ugh. Okay.

Jennifer: Yeah. Um, so Hanukkah's an eight-day holiday, and the Jewish calendar, it's a lunar calendar, so that means that it doesn't always fall on the same date. So, you know, I think the nice and respectful thing to do would be to, you know, google it, find out when Hanukkah is that year, you know? And don't just sort of assume that you can say "Happy Hanukkah" anytime between, you know, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Teresa: That is a great point, absolutely. Uh, because it does kind of get lumped in that "Happy holidays" jargon when it might be past Hanukkah. [laughs]

Jennifer: Yes. [laughs] Yeah, or it could be like, you know, a month in advance, and it's just, you know... yeah.

Travis: Okay. So, follow-up question to that.

Jennifer: Mm-hmm?

Travis: So, say I'm hanging out with my Jewish friend, and I wanna make small talk about their holiday plans or, like, how their holiday went, anything like that. Is there, like, "Oh, ask them about this, make sure to, like, check in on this," and that will show that, like, you're invested in their experience, and you're not just, like, kind of muddling your way through it. Are there any, like, "Oh yeah, ask about this. This is always important. This is something they probably did." Anything like that?

Teresa: I feel when we were— when I was a kid it was, "What did you get for Hanukkah?" [laughs]

Jennifer: Yeah. [laughs]

Travis: "You got a new Swatch Watch? That rules!" It was always that.

Jennifer: Oh, I think I did get a Swatch Watch. That's really funny.

Travis: There you go. I think there was actually a two-year period where every child was issued a Swatch Watch by, like, I don't know, the world government or something. Like, every kid had to get one.

Teresa: [laughs]

Jennifer: [laughs] And then, like, two years later everyone just stopped, uh, wearing them.

Travis: Yeah.

Jennifer: Yeah.

Travis: I think they actually just disintegrated off of people's wrists.

Teresa: [laughs loudly]

Travis: They just, like, melted. Like, "Oh? Well, that's the end of Swatch Watches. Okay."

Jennifer: Um, I think you could ask your friend, you know, do you have any plans for Hanukkah? The fact is, you know, it's not like other Jewish holidays where there's necessarily a ton of things that are very specific that, uh, one might be doing. I wouldn't necessarily assume that they're making a huge point or plans to, you know, travel far to see their family for Hanukkah. Um, yeah. So, you know, I think you could ask, you know, do you have any plans for Hanukkah?

[theme music plays]

Travis: This week, we want to write a thank you note to Aura. Between your photos, finances, devices, and connections, your world is more online than ever. You may have security systems in place for real life, but what about your online life?

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Let me ask you this. Every day, do you feel like maybe you're eating the same thing over and over again, perhaps a *Groundhog's Day* experience, if you will? It's so easy to fall into this. I know that Teresa and I, especially with two kids, uh, you know, you start to feel like you're just making the same, like, four things over and over again that you know the kids will eat, that you know how to do, that you know is fast, all of those things.

Well, lucky for you, and lucky for us, frankly, there's Fresh & Ready meal delivery from Sunbasket. It's restaurant quality food, packaged up, delivered to your home, and ready to heat and eat.

And man, when it says restaurant quality it means it. This is some good stuff, folks. You're gonna feel like you're sitting at a five-star restaurant even if you're just, like, watching some *Spongebob*, or *Bluey*. I don't know. Whatever you guys are into.

Fresh & Ready meals arrive fresh and fully prepared by award-winning chefs. Their chefs are award-winning, and when I say award-winning we're talking about, like, Michelin stars and James Beard awards. So, like, legit stuff. And they work hand-in-hand with dietitians so the whole menu is dialed, delicious, and good for you.

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[music plays]

Jesse: Hi, it's Jesse Thorn, the founder of Maximum Fun. It's the Thanksgiving season, and I wanna take this opportunity to thank you, the members of Maximum Fun. This Max Fun Drive, your generosity, and your love of pins, helped us raise over \$90,000 to help bridge the digital divide. Families without internet access struggle to do things that the rest of us might take for granted, especially during COVID. Going to school, applying for jobs, finding medical care.

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[music and ad end]

Travis: Is there— is it a big eating holiday? Is it, like, you know, a—

Teresa: We're coming up on Thanksgiving.

Jennifer: Yes.

Teresa: Uh, which is basically the best part about Thanksgiving is the eating.

Travis: Yeah. Is it like— can you ask about, like, what— did you have any good food? So, you know, what— what was the— is that, like, a weird thing to ask?

Jennifer: I guess sort of tradition is to eat, uh, a lot of fried foods. Uh, foods fried in oil.

Travis: What?! That rules!

Jennifer: Yes. So—

Travis: What?!

Teresa: [laughs]

Teresa: —uh, something—

Travis: Wait, hold on! I'm— I'm 100% bought in now. Tell me more about this!

Teresa: [laughs quietly]

Jennifer: So, the— there's the story that, uh, you know, when the Jews go to rededicate the temple they only have enough oil to last for one night, and then miraculously it lasts for eight nights. And to remember this miracle, you know, it's traditional to eat food that's fried in oil. So potato latkes—

Travis: I didn't know the oil extended to the cooking! Oh my God, this rules! Okay, sorry, go on.

Jennifer: Yes. So—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I— I'm on— like I said, southern, and I'm so deep in this now. Okay, go on.

Jennifer: Oh yeah. No, I mean, it's true. It— I think Hanukkah. works very well with, uh, southern cuisine.

Travis: I love this.

Jennifer: So, traditionally Jews from Eastern Europe eat latkes, which are potato pancakes. There's also a tradition— this is, um, something you see a lot in Israel, of eating these sort of fried jelly donuts called sufganiyot. Um, you know, so—

Teresa: That sounds delicious.

Jennifer: It's— it's really good, yeah. Um, you know, there are— other communities have traditions of eating dairy on the holiday.

Teresa: Which is why I've probably seen latkes served with sour cream instead of applesauce?

Jennifer: Yes. That might be one reason, yes. Uh, you know, there's the, um— I think there are sort of two sides of the coin. Like, you know, are you an applesauce person or a sour cream person, there?

Travis: Wait, which one are you?

Jennifer: Applesauce.

Travis: Okay.

Jennifer: Yeah.

Travis: I see. Okay, this is another, like, cringy question, but I have to ask. Is the dreidel actually, like, a thing that people do at Hanukkah?

Teresa: Or is it just we hear it in the songs, right?

Jennifer: Yes. Um, so... yes, it's a children's game. Uh, the dreidel actually has a very weird history, which I can talk about if that would be of interest.

Travis: Yes. You can't introduce the idea of weird history and us be like, "Ehh... [makes uninterested noise]."

Teresa: [laughs]

Jennifer: Yeah. I mean, I think if you ever play dreidel it's pretty boring, in my opinion. I mean, but when I was growing up, you know, I was told this story, and I don't— who knows, uh, but I was basically told this story that the dreidel was this toy that when the Jews were hiding from the Greeks and, like, studying Torah in secret they would, like, take out, you know— if the soldiers came bay, they would take out these spinning tops and pretend that they were just playing a gambling game, and that's where the dreidel comes from.

So it turns out that that's not true, at all. Uh, that's—

Teresa: Oh, I'm so glad that you said that because my Wikipedia and google-isms told me that story about how it was kind of like a covert game of learning, or that it was, like, the dreidel was made to look like a toy so that it could be in hiding.

Jennifer: Yes. So, the earliest reference to that story dates to the year 1890, which is pretty recent.

Teresa: Oh, yep.

Travis: Okay. Alright. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Grand scheme of things, yeah.

Jennifer: Yeah. And the earliest references to Jews playing dreidel actually don't date till the 18th century, so it's a pretty recent phenomenon, at least kind of in the span of Jewish history.

Um, and you know, it might have had some origins in the ancient world as sort of this gambling game where you'd spin a top, uh, but we really first hear about a version of this actually in England. So during the late Middle Ages it's this spinning top game called, uh... it's either teetum or teetotum. And it was commonly played around Christmas-time. Um, you know, and it's, uh, basically a gambling game. Probably, you know, something— I guess it doesn't take a lot of, uh, brainpower or focus to really play. And, you know, might be played in a tavern or something like that.

Teresa: Like a dice game or something, right?

Jennifer: Exactly, yeah.

Teresa: Okay.

Jennifer: And so, the tops all have letters on each side and that would tell you, you know, what to do. Like, you know, when you land on this letter, that means that you, you know, get— take all of the money in the pot, or something like that.

Travis: Oh. So not like Twister where it's just like, "Oh, you landed on this. Now right hand blue."

Jennifer: [laughs]

Travis: It's about, like, the ga— okay, got it.

Teresa: Ga— gambling. Did you miss that part?

Travis: You could gamble on Twister.

Jennifer: [laughs]

Teresa: I... I... I'm speechless. I don't know.

Jennifer: [laughs]

Travis: I've been in some weird back rooms at casinos.

Teresa: [laughs]

Jennifer: [laughs] Sounds like a... so anyway, so this game becomes really popular by the 16th century, and it spreads to Germany. And that's probably where Jews first encounter it. Um, in the German lands in Central Europe, and it's a game that's commonly played in the winter, around Christmas-time, you know, maybe 'cause, you know, you can sort of sit near a fire and spin a top and play this.

Teresa: Not a lot of harvesting to do.

Jennifer: Yeah.

Teresa: Not a lot of other things that people of that age would really have to do.

Travis: Plus, kids love spinning things. Even now, my daughter will sometimes set down her iPad, pick up some yo-yo or something. I don't know. Come on, guys. Grow up.

Teresa: [laughs]

Jennifer: [laughs] Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I think this is, uh, pretty universal. Uh, so anyways, so Jews in Central Europe encounter this game. And they call these spinning tops dreidels, which comes from either a German or Yiddish word that means "to spin." But what they do is that they actually— so, the letters on the side of the dreidel, which were written in German, Yiddish-speaking Jews actually, you know, basically transliterate those letters into the Hebrew alphabet, so into Yiddish, at the time.

So the German letters were, like, N, which would've been, like, nicht, which means none. Uh, and then there was, you know, G, H, and S, and each of these, you know, referred to a German word that says, you know, either you take everything, you take half, or you put a token in. Um, and so the Jews transliterate these into Hebrew, so that the N for nicht becomes the Hebrew letter nun.

So, at some point after that, this gets associated with Hanukkah, and somebody decides that the four Hebrew letters on the dreidel actually, uh, stand for this Hebrew phrase, "Nes gadol haya sham," which means "A great miracle happened there," referring to the Hanukkah miracle.

And then after this happened, somehow you have all of these other Jewish writers who— in the 19th century who are claiming that the dreidel has this sort of mystical significance of, you know, in all of these kind of different ways.

Travis: There are— that is so— it reminds me so much of so much in the Christmas, like— like, where— Santa Claus is the best example. Where it's just, like, people retroactively have, like, ascribed all this stuff. Just like, well, mostly he looks the way he does because of Coke ads.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Like, and then people were like, "Well then, the— oh, the ancient... man... Chris Kringle." And [unintelligible] "Um... uh, guys?"

Teresa: [laughs] That's— that's not it.

Travis: "I don't think this is it."

Teresa: [laughs]

Jennifer: Yeah! So, I mean, it's basically this, like, 14th century English drinking game, or drinking and gambling game that just sort of turns into this symbol of the celebration of Hanukkah.

Travis: There you go. That's fascinating.

Teresa: We love these turns and twists on *Shmanners*, because it really just... it really just goes to show that a lot of the stuff that we do today that we think was, you know, so, uh... that we think was ingrained for some kind of, like, higher purpose, or—

Travis: Or that people have done forever.

Teresa: —or that people have done forever. Turns out? Usually the Victorians.

Jennifer: Yeah.

Travis: Yeah, we have a whole— we have a whole series that we do on just, like, idioms, and there will be ones where it's just, like, you think that this is just, like, "Oh, people have said this forever." And you're like, "Well, the first example of it's, like, 1949." Like, "Hey, what?"

Teresa: [laughs]

Jennifer: [laughs] Yeah.

Travis: Okay. We're gonna be wrapping up here pretty soon, but is there... two questions. First: any, like, and here's, like, a surprising thing that your, you know, general audience might not know about Hanukkah that you'd like to share? And also, I don't know—

Teresa: I mean, other than the dreidel thing, which was fascinating.

Travis: Um, and I don't know, do you do podcasts? Do you write books? Do you do anything you wanna tell people about?

Teresa: Yeah! What do you wanna plug today?

Jennifer: [laughs] Um... well, let's see. So, um, I think first of all, if your audience is interested, you know, one of the questions that I think your producers asked me was if, you know, your audience is interested in learning about Hanukkah, you know, what should they go to?

Travis: Yes.

Jennifer: Um, and I was thinking a lot about this, because, you know, and especially thinking about, you know, what would be good for children? And all of my sort of references for this stuff are, like, totally from the 90's.

So, one— so, one thing I, you know, thought of, uh, actually the Rugrats Hanukkah special. Shockingly good, still really holds up, and it's now on Paramount Plus.

Teresa: Nice!

Travis: Okay.

Jennifer: Um, and the other thing is, you know, for more sort of recent resources for celebrating Hanukkah, PJLibrary.org has great resources for families that want to celebrate Hanukkah, want to learn about Hanukkah., and they also send children's books. You can sign up to have children's books delivered to your home that are high quality, and educational, and well-done.

Teresa: That's fantastic. Anything you would like to plug—

Jennifer: Sure!

Teresa: —for yourself?

Jennifer: Yeah. Um, you know, check out— I don't actually have, uh, social media or Twitter. But I would, uh, you know, if you—

Travis: I'm so jealous.

Jennifer: [laughs] If you want— if you want to learn more about my work or the work of my colleagues at Hebrew Union College, it's— um, I teach at the oldest rabbinical seminary in North America. Uh, it's sort of the center of reformed Judaism in North America. Go to HUC.edu and you can learn more about what we do, and about our research, and there are also a lot of resources there, um, about Jewish history and Jewish culture.

Travis: Well, that's amazing. Thank you, Jennifer, so much for joining us. Uh, everybody at home, I don't know, give a round of applause to Jennifer?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: She can't hear you, but maybe she'll feel it, wherever you are. Thank you so much.

Jennifer: Thank you so much. Alright, have a good one.

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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[*Star Trek* comm noise]

Ben: Do you sometimes wonder what ever happened to the kids at your school who really loved *Star Trek*?

Adam: You might remember a kid like me, the one who read the *Star Trek* novels and built star ship models. I also took music classes to avoid taking gym classes that required showering after, but I don't see what that really has to do with—

Ben: Or a kid like me. I introduced myself to kids at my summer camp one year as Wesley, but when the school year started and some of those kids were in my new class, I actually had to explain to my friends that I had tried to take on the identity of my favorite *Star Trek* character. The shame haunts me to this day!

Adam: I'm sure some of those *Star Trek* fans from your childhood grew up to have interesting and productive lives, but... we ended up being podcasters.

Ben: On *The Greatest Discovery*, you'll hear what happens to two lifelong *Star Trek* fans who didn't grow up to be great people, but just grew up to be people who love jokes as much as they love Trek.

Adam: Season Four of *Star Trek: Discovery* is here, so listen to our new episodes every week on Maximumfun.org, or wherever you get your podcasts.

[*Star Trek* comm noise]