



# Venture into Hanukkah



*Activities, recipes, information, and more  
that will help you learn about and  
celebrate Hanukkah.*





# Venture into Hanukkah



## tool • kit

a personal set of resources, abilities, or skills.

*"Venture into Hanukkah is a toolkit full of things you can use to learn, play, and celebrate Hanukkah!"*

**In this kit,** you will find activities, recipes, information, and more that will help you learn about and celebrate Hanukkah. If you have questions or are seeking more information, please reach out. jkidphilly is here to help!

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## The Hanukkah Story

### For 2-4 year olds:

A very long time ago, a king who was not Jewish wanted to make everyone believe what he believed. He said all his soldiers had to go break the Jewish Temple building, which was the most important place for the Jews. The king also said the Jews could not celebrate any of their holidays.

But! The Jews put together an army called the Maccabees and they fought back. Even though there weren't very many of them, they beat the king's soldiers. It was a miracle!

When the Jews went back to the Temple to clean it up, they found out that they did not have enough oil to light the lamp. It took eight days to get more oil, but the small amount of oil they had lasted the whole time they were waiting for more oil to arrive! That was a miracle, too!

Now, we celebrate Hanukkah for 8 days to celebrate the miracle of winning the battle and the miracle of the oil lasting for 8 days.

### For 5-9 year olds:

The story of Hanukkah has been told in different ways. This is one of them. A very long time ago, a king named Antiochus Epiphanes (An-TAY-uh-kiss Eh-PIF-a-neeZ) wanted to stop Jews from practicing Judaism; he wanted to make them all worship Greek gods instead of their god. He sent his soldiers to destroy the Temple, the most sacred place for Jews. Antiochus also said Jews could not observe Shabbat or any of the holidays.

But the Jews fought back, led by a family named the Maccabees (MACK-ah-beez) and even though there were many more Syrians than Maccabees, the Maccabees won!

Winning the battle is one of the miracles we talk about when we talk about Hanukkah. The other is the miracle of the oil.

As the story goes, The Maccabees went back to the destroyed Temple to clean it up, but they found only a single jar of oil, which was just enough to keep the flame going for one day. A messenger was sent to get more oil and it took the messenger eight days to return, but miraculously, the one single jar of oil continued to burn!

The story says that Hanukkah lasts 8 days because of the miracle of this single jar of oil lasting 8 days.

### For ages 10+

There have been different versions of the Hanukkah story told over the years. This is one of them.

In the year 168 B.C.E. (which means "Before the Common Era"), the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes (An-TAY-uh-kiss Eh-PIF-a-neeZ) sent his soldiers to Jerusalem. The Syrians destroyed the Temple, the holiest place for Jews at that time. Antiochus also said practicing Judaism was no longer allowed. Jews could not observe Shabbat or any of the holidays. Instead, he said everyone had to worship the Greek gods. He said Jews could either stop being Jews or they would be killed.

On the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev in 168 B.C.E., the Jewish Temple was renamed for the Greek god Zeus, but the Jews fought back, led by a family named the Maccabees (MACK-ah-beez) The head of the family, Mattathias, was very old, so his son, Judah, led the fighters against Antiochus. Even though there were many more Syrians than Maccabee fighters, the Maccabees miraculously won two major battles, defeating the Syrians.

Winning these battles, even though the Syrian army was much bigger than the Maccabees, is one of the miracles we talk about when we talk about Hanukkah. The other is the miracle of the oil.

Did you know that the first story of Hanukkah did not include anything about oil or the miracle of it lasting 8 days? Hanukkah is an 8-day festival because it was supposed to be like the 8-day celebration of Sukkot. Only many, many, many years later did the story of the oil show up in the Talmud (a book of rabbinic writings and debate about the Torah.)

In *that* story, when the Maccabees entered the destroyed Temple after they won the battles, they immediately relit the *ner tamid* (Neer TA-meed) which means "eternal light" and is a flame that had burned constantly in the Temple before it was destroyed. (If you've been inside a synagogue, you've probably seen a *ner tamid* there; although, most of them nowadays are electric lights and not flames.) In the Temple, the Maccabees found a single jar of oil, which was only enough to keep the flame going for one day.

A messenger was sent to get more oil and it took the messenger 8 days to return, but miraculously, the one single jar of oil continued to burn! The rabbis in the Talmud argued that Hanukkah lasts 8 days because of the miracle of this single jar of oil, which is why we celebrate it as we do.



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## The Hanukkah Blessings

Candles are added to the Hanukkiah (menorah) from right to left but are lit from left to right. Light the shamash (the helper candle) first, using it to light the rest. As you do, say or sing:

### Blessing 1

ברוך אתה, יי  
אלהינו, מלך העולם,  
אשר קדשנו במצותיו  
וצונו להדליק נר של חנכה.

*Baruch atah, Adonai  
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,  
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav  
v'tsivanu l'hadlik ner shel Hanukkah.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to kindle the Hanukkah lights.

### Blessing 2

ברוך אתה, יי  
אלהינו, מלך העולם,  
שעשה נסים לאבותינו ואמותינו  
בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

*Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu,  
Melech haolam, she-asah nisim  
laavoteinu v'imoteinu  
bayamim hahaeim baz'man hazeh.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who performed wondrous deeds for our ancestors in days of old at this season.

### For the First Night Only

ברוך אתה, יי אלהינו,  
מלך העולם, שהחינו וקימנו  
והגיענו לזמן הזה.

*Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu,  
Melech haolam, shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu  
v'higiyanu laz'man hazeh.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.





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## Hanukkah Celebrations around the World

In **North America**, Hanukkah is traditionally celebrated by lighting the *Hanukkiah*, a menorah with nine candle holders: one for each of the eight nights of Hanukkah and one for the *Shamash* (or helper candle). Giving a small gift to children on each of the eight nights is also customary, as is playing dreidel and eating potato *latkes* and *sufganiyot*.

In **Cuba**, plantains fried in oil — called *tostones* or *patacones* — are part of their Hanukkah celebrations.

Jews in Avignon, in southern **France**, make a toast with a bottle of local wine. They then walk to neighbors' homes to try their wines.

Jews in **Romania**, make menorahs out of potatoes. They scrape out potatoes, filling each space with oil and a wick.

The Jewish community of **Aleppo, Syria**, which is comprised of mostly Sephardic Jews, lights an extra *Shamash* (helper candle) on each night of Hanukkah.

In **Mexico**, children play a game called *toma todo* (winner takes all), which is similar to the version of dreidel that we play except the top has six sides instead of four. The *toma toda* dreidel is known as a *pirinola*.

Women and girls in some parts of **North Africa** have been celebrating "The Festival of Daughters" (*Eid Al Bnat* in Arabic or *Chag HaBanot* in Hebrew) for centuries. The traditions include lighting the Hanukkah candles, playing music, and dancing.

In some parts of **Morocco**, Jewish children spend the last day of Hanukkah going from house to house to collect the leftover cotton wicks that Moroccan Jews use in place of candles. At sundown, the wicks are ignited to create a large bonfire, and each community gathers to sing and dance.

Hanukkah in southern **India** is celebrated by making *gulab jamnun*, a milk-based ball of dough that is deep fried and then drenched in sugar syrup. The treat is also eaten by non-Jewish Indians during celebrations like Diwali.

It is a mitzvah to place the Hanukkiah outside for all to see. However, in parts of **Israel**, winters can be windy, so they make glass boxes to protect the flames. Some of Jerusalem's oldest homes have a shelf carved out of the home's exterior walls to place the glass boxes in.



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## The Hanukkiah (Hanukkah menorah)

*What is the difference between a menorah and a Hanukkiah?*

Did you know that menorahs are not just used during Hanukkah? The Hebrew word *menorah* means, simply, lamp and can actually mean any number of lamps, including the seven-branched candelabra lit every day in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. This is the menorah we are referring to in the Hanukkah story when we talk about how the light was lit with just enough oil to last for one day but miraculously lasted for 8 days.

A *Hanukkiah* is a type of menorah. Specifically, it is the celebratory nine-flame\* candelabra lit during the eight nights of Hanukkah.



\*The ninth flame is the *shamash*, the candle that we light each night to help light the others. In some Sephardic communities, Jews light an extra candle each night (in addition to the *shamash*) to show gratitude for their safe arrival in their new land after having been forced out of their homeland.



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## Make a Hanukkiah in Nature

*Use materials you find in nature to create a Hanukkiah!*



### Materials

The materials you use for this hanukkiah will be different each time you make it, depending on where you're searching and what you find. As the seasons and locations change, so will the available items.

Some things to look for might be *sticks, rocks, blades of grass, leaves, seashells, sand, acorns, pebbles, wood mulch, pinecones, flowers, seed pods, etc.*

### Steps

1. Take a walk in your neighborhood, at a park, on the beach, or anywhere else you can think of.
2. Collect items (in a bag, a basket, or something else) that you think would be useful for your Hanukkiah. Think about the shapes of the candle holders, the candles, and the flames.
3. Gather all your materials and lay them out either on the ground or on a table and create a Hanukkiah!
4. Take a photo or draw a sketch of your creation to remember it before returning the items back to nature.



**Try this:**

*Can you "edit" your Hanukkiah to make it a menorah that's not meant to be used for Hanukkah? What changes do you need to make? Can you search for all new materials to make a menorah that's entirely different from your Hanukkiah?*





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## All About the Dreidel

### Why do we play dreidel at Hanukkah?

Before the Maccabees defeated King Antiochus, Jews were not allowed to study Torah or celebrate any holidays. In order to continue to study, they would go deep into the forest and pull out their Torah scrolls in secret. But — if a Greek patrol walked by, they would quickly hide their Torahs and pull out small spinning tops to make it look like they were just playing. Today, we play the dreidel game as a reminder of those times.

### What do the letters mean?

The Yiddish word dreidel comes from the word *dreyen*, meaning "to turn." The letters on the four sides of a dreidel have two meanings:

1. They stand for Yiddish words that help players remember the rules of the game. *Nun* stands for *nisht*, meaning "nothing"; *gimel* stands for *gants*, meaning "entire, whole"; *hey* stands for *halb*, or "half"; and *shin* stands for *shtetl arayn*, meaning to "put in."
2. The letters also are the first letters in each word of *nes gadol hayah sham* — "a great miracle happened there." (In Israel, the last letter is a *peh* and stands for "*po*" which means "here.")

### What are the rules of the dreidel game?



1. Each player begins with an equal number of game pieces (usually 10–15). The game pieces can be any object, such as chocolate gelt, pennies, raisins, etc.

2. To start the game, everyone puts one game piece into the center "pot". (Every player also puts one piece in when the pot is empty or there is only one game piece in the pot.)

3. Each player spins the dreidel once during their turn. Depending on which side is facing up when it stops spinning, the player whose turn it is gives or takes game pieces from the pot:

If נ (*nun*) is facing up, the player does nothing.

If ג (*gimel*) is facing up, the player gets everything in the pot.

If ה (*hey*) is facing up, the player gets half of the pieces in the pot. If there is an odd number of pieces in the pot, the player takes half the pot rounded up to the nearest whole number.

If ש (*shin*) or פ (*peh*) is facing up, the player adds one of their game pieces to the pot. If the player is out of pieces, they are either "out" or may ask another player for a loan.

The game is over when one player has all the pieces.



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## Dreidel-Spinning Art

*This fun activity is a chance to practice dreidel-spinning while also making beautiful artwork!*



### Materials

1. Disposable aluminum pan (or cafeteria-style tray or shallow cardboard box)
2. Washable acrylic or tempera paint (any colors you choose)
3. Paper plates or disposable pie tins (to put the paint in)
4. Paper (sized to fit inside whichever container you use)
5. Small plastic or wooden dreidels

### Steps

1. Practice a few dreidel spins to get ready.
2. Dip the dreidel into the paint.
3. Spin and watch the paint splatter!
4. Repeat until your artwork feels complete.





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## Hebrew Dreidel-Letter Sensory Bags

*Practice writing the Hebrew letters found on a dreidel with these fun, homemade sensory bags.*



### Materials

1. Gallon-sized zipper-seal plastic freezer bag
2. Duct tape (optional)
3. Letter tracing printables
4. Lightly tinted hair gel or aloe gel
5. Glitter (optional)

### Steps

1. Fill the zipper bag about 1/4 with gel (add glitter, if you choose).
2. Seal the bag tightly
3. Duct tape to secure the seal (if you choose).
4. [Print letter templates.](#)
5. Tape letter template onto the table.
6. Place sensory bag over the template and trace the letter.





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## Dreidel vs. Pirinola

*Toma Todo ("take all") is played with a traditional Mexican top, which is similar to a dreidel.*

**How are they the same and how are they different?**

**Dreidel**



4-sided  
Hebrew letters

wooden  
- spins  
- instructions printed on it  
- used in a "take and put" game  
- played at Hanukkah

**Pirinola**



6-sided  
Spanish words

### Dreidel Letters & Game Instructions

נ (*nun*): Do nothing.

ג (*gimel*): Take all the tokens from the pot.

ה (*hey*): Take half of the tokens from the pot.

ש (*shin*) or פ (*pe*): Add one token to the pot.

### Pirinola Words & Game Instructions

**Toma uno:** Take one token from the pot.

**Toma dos:** Take two tokens from the pot.

**Toma todo:** Take it all (the whole pot).

**Pon uno:** Put one in the pot.

**Pon dos:** Put two in the pot.

**Todos ponen:** Everyone puts a token in the pot.

*Can you make up a "take and put" top game that is similar to but also different than dreidel or toma todo?*





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## Clean Up!

*Help clean up a place that is important to you just like the Jews cleaned up the Temple!*

### Activity



The Hanukkah story tells us that after King Antiochus' army destroyed the Temple, the Jews returned to it to clean and rebuild it. **Locate a local park, schoolyard, playground, or other space that is important to you and needs a little attention. Gather friends and family to help and spend some time cleaning and repairing.** How long you work and what you do depends on the needs of the space you choose.

### Keep Learning!

#### Jewish Value: *Sh'mirat Ha'adamah* Care of the Earth

According to Jewish tradition, part of our purpose is to take care of the world in which we live. Jewish sages explain that along with the gift of human intelligence comes the responsibility to preserve the Earth's resources. Cleaning up a park or other common outdoor space is part of the Jewish value of ***Sh'mirat Ha'adamah*: Care of the Earth.**

**What other things could you do to live out this Jewish value?**

Learn more about  
**Sh'mirat Ha'adamah:**



[jkidphilly.org/resources/jewish-values/shmirat-haadamah-protecting-the-earth/](http://jkidphilly.org/resources/jewish-values/shmirat-haadamah-protecting-the-earth/)

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# Venture into Hanukkah



## More Resources

*More to learn, play, cook, read, watch, and listen!*

### LEARN

- Read our [jkidACCESS Hanukkah Social Story](#).
- Learn some [Hanukkah sign language](#)!
- Try to do a mitzvah each night using our "[8 Nights, 8 Mitzvot](#)" guide.
- Learn the best way to [share Hanukkah at your jkid's school](#).
- Check out PJ Library's [Hanukkah Hub](#).

### PLAY

- Explore all different kinds of [Hanukkah activities](#)!
- Fill out some [Hanukkah mad libs](#)!
- The [jkidphilly Hanukkah Pinterest board](#) is chock-full of fun ideas.
- Check out the [jkidphilly calendar](#) to see what we have going on for Hanukkah.

### COOK

- [4 Latke Recipes](#)
- Make [sufganiyot](#) (filled donuts.)
- Try [bimuelos](#) (fried dough.)
- Make an [edible menorah](#) or a [s'menorah](#)!
- Create a [marshmallow dreidel](#).
- Bake [stained glass cookies](#).
- Try [gulab jamun](#) (milk donut).
- Fry up some [tostones](#) (plantains).
- Make [debla](#) (rose-shaped fried cookie).

### READ

- [Hanukkah Lights Everywhere](#)
- [Hanukkah Cookies with Sprinkles](#)
- [Harvest of Light](#)
- [Queen of the Hanukkah Dosas](#)
- ...and more!

### WATCH/LISTEN

- Baby Bear and Telly talk about Hanukkah in this [Shalom Sesame clip](#).
- Older kids will like [this animated Hanukkah story](#).
- Watch [this reading of Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins](#).
- Spice up your Hanukkah with the [jkidphilly Spotify playlist](#).

### LINKS

- More about the [Festival of Daughters in Northern Africa](#)
- [8 Hanukkah Traditions from Around the World](#)
- [8 Hanukkah Customs from Around the World](#)



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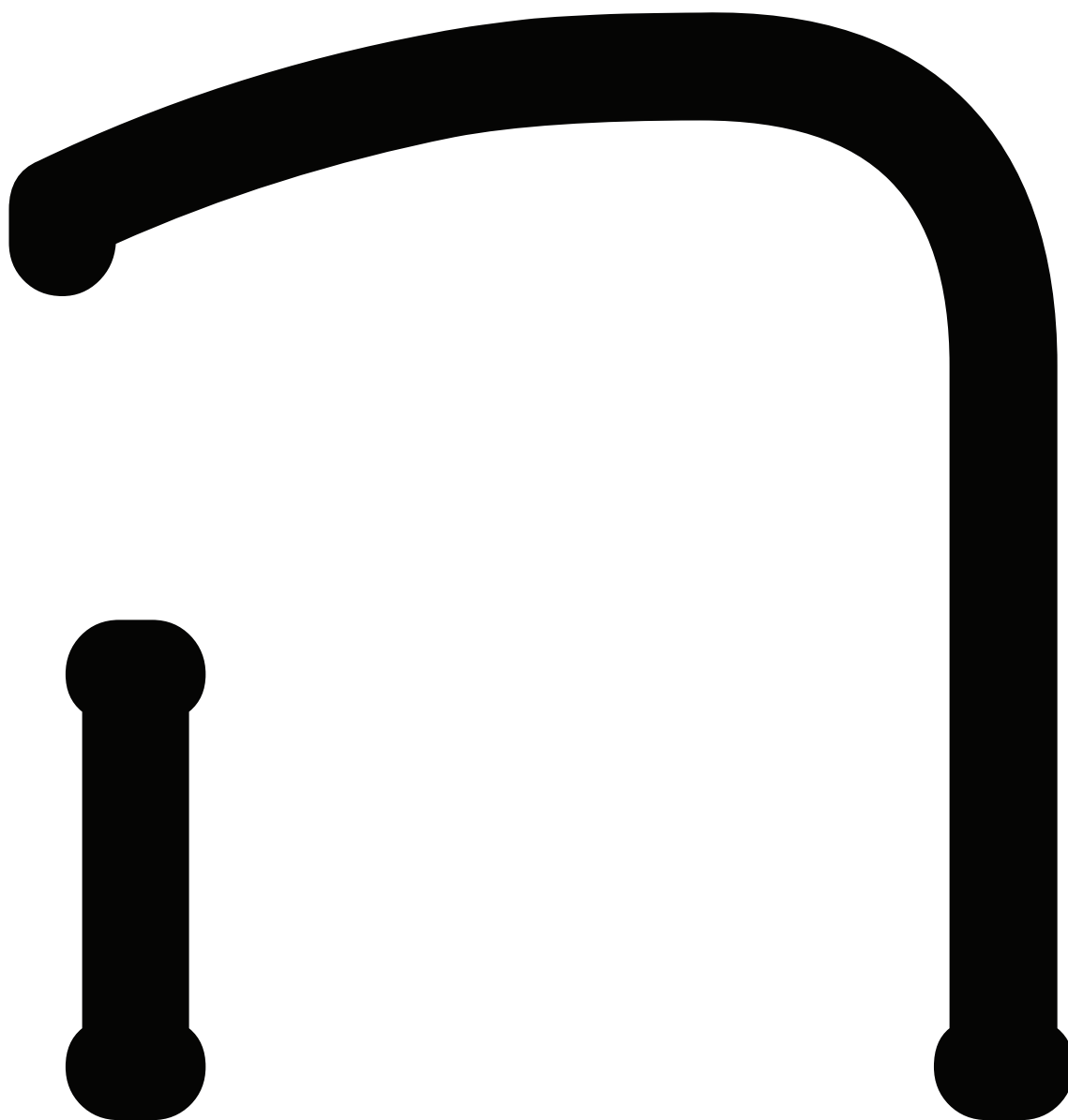
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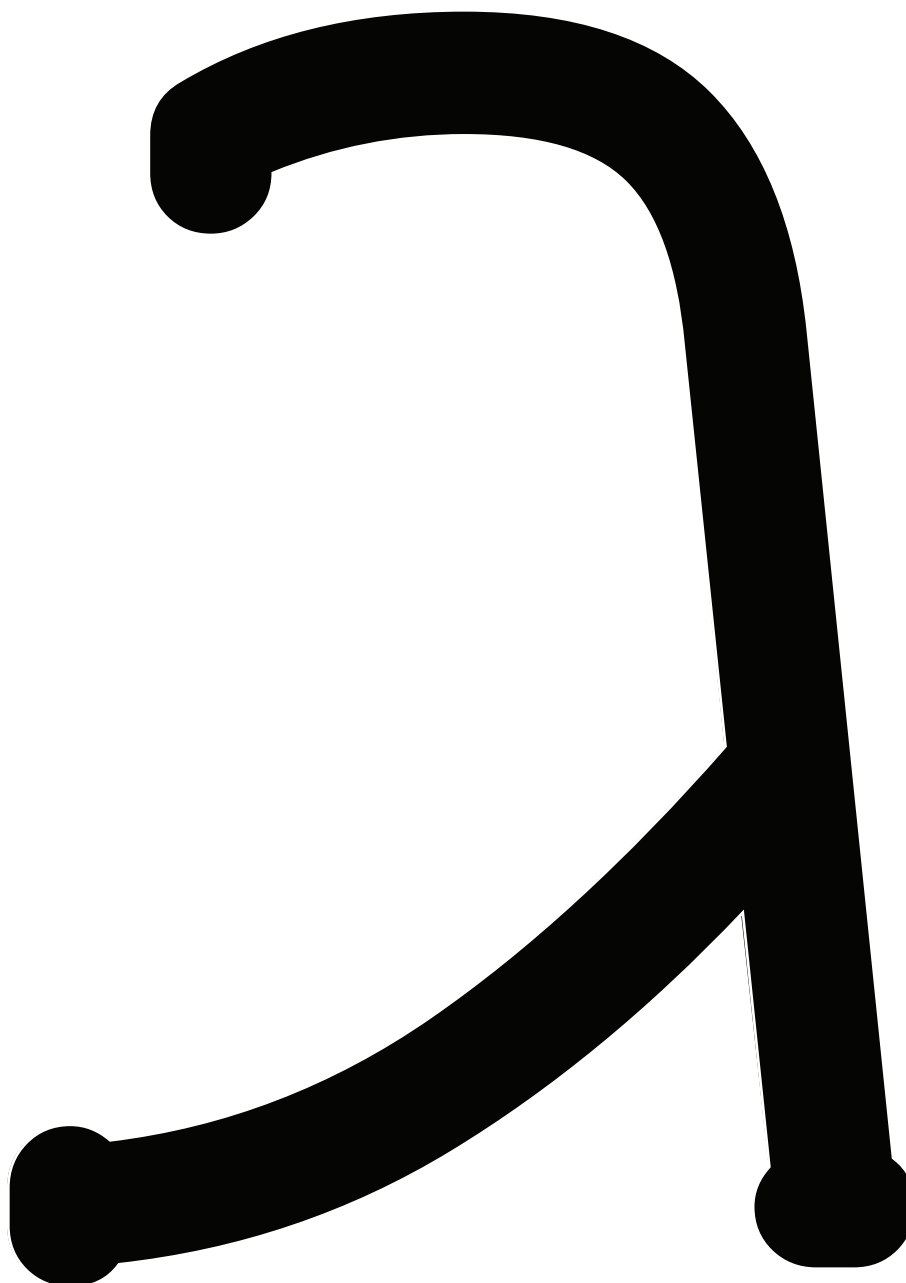
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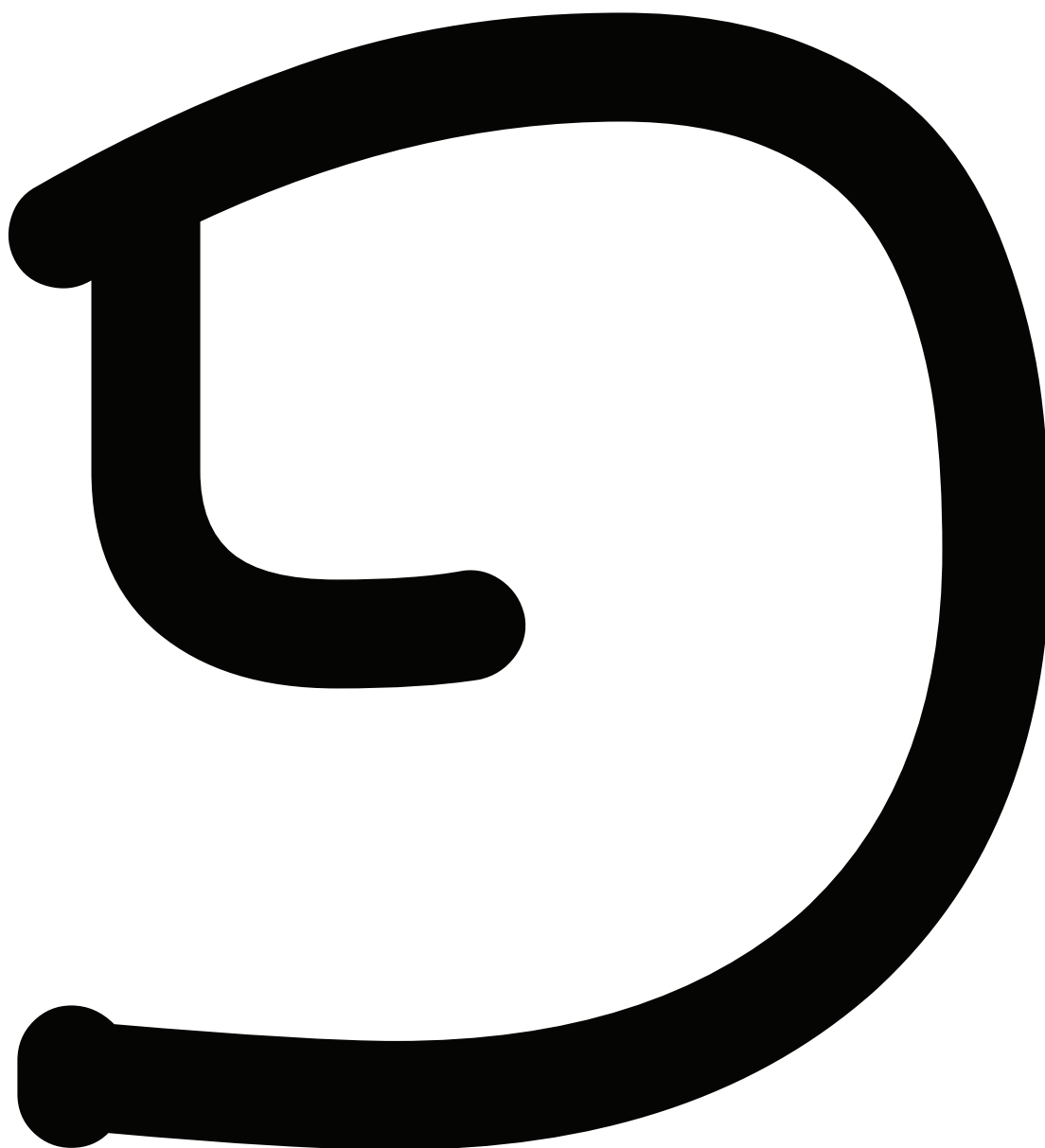
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