

CHANUKAH 5779

Chanukah celebrates the Jewish victory over the Syrian-Greek regime of Antiochus. The Greeks attempted to Hellenize the Jews and abolish many Jewish practices. A small band of the devout, led by the Matityahu the Priest and his son Judah Maccabee, led a successful rebellion against them. When they recaptured the Temple and relit the Menorah, a jug of pure oil sufficient to burn one day miraculously burned for eight days.

In the 2nd century BCE, during the time of the Second Bet Hamikdash, the Syrian-Greek regime of Antiochus sought to Hellenize the Jews. Antiochus outlawed Brit Milah, Shabbat and Torah study — under penalty of death.

When the Greeks challenged the Jews to sacrifice a pig to a Greek god, a few courageous Jews took to the hills of Judea in open revolt. Led by Matityahu and later his son Judah the Maccabee, this small band of Jews led the fight against the Syrian-Greek army.

Antiochus sent thousands of well-armed troops to crush the rebellion, but after three years the Maccabees miraculously succeeded in driving the Syrian Greeks from their land.

Jewish fighters entered Jerusalem and found the Bet Hamikdash in ruins and full of idols. The Maccabees cleansed the Bet Hamikdash and re-dedicated it on the 25th of Kislev. When it was time to re-light the Menorah, they searched the entire Bet Hamikdash but found only one jar of pure olive oil bearing the seal of the High Priest. The Maccabees lit the Menorah anyway and were rewarded with a miracle: That small jar of oil burned for eight days, until a new supply of oil could be brought.

From then on, Jews have observed a holiday for eight days, in honour of this historic victory and the miracle of the oil.

Please choose the most appropriate song, game or discussions for your children. Unlike the weekly parsha material the Chanukah Spark has not been separated by age group.

Chanukah Songs: (Have a look on You Tube for the tunes.)

- **Sevion**

Sevion, sov, sov, sov
Chanukah hu- chag tov
Chanukah hu – chag tov
Sevion sov sov.

Sov na sov
Ko va cho
Nes gadol haya poh
Nes gadol haya poh
Sevion sov sov sov

- To the tune of *'Here we go round the mulberry bush'*
Now at last it's Chanukah, Chanukah, Chanukah
Now at last it's Chanukah
We are all so happy

This is the way we light the menorah
Light the menorah, light the menorah
This is the way we light the menorah,
On Chanukah.

Repeat with:

This is the way we make the latkes
This is the way we spin the dreidel
Ask the children to suggest further verses.

- **Ner Li**

Ner li, ner li, ner li dakik
Ba'Chanukah neri adlik
Ba'Chanukah neri ya'ir
Ba'Chanukah shirim ashir.

- **Nun for Nes** - to the tune of '*Doe a deer*' – Sound of Music.

Nun for Nes – a miracle
Gimmel, Gadol - means very great
Hay, Haya – it happened there
Shin , Sham – in Eretz Yisrael

We light candles one by one
We have lots and lots of fun
Chanukah has come
Here it is again.

- **I have a little dreidel**

I have a little dreidel
I made it out of clay
And when it's dry and ready
The dreidel I shall play.

It has a lovely body
With legs so short and thin
And when it is all tired
It drops and then I win

My dreidel's always playful
It loves to dance and spin
A happy game of dreidel
Come play now let's begin.

Chanukah games

- Dreidel!

Show the children that on each side of the dreidel there are the letters: Nun, Gimmel, Hay and Shin which represent the first letters of 'Nes Gadol Haya Sham,' meaning 'A great miracle happened there.'

Instructions for play. You will need some jelly beans, raisins or sweets. (Make sure to check the synagogue allergy requirements.)

- Divide the sweets into an equal quantity and sit in a circle.
- Each player starts by betting two sweets and then takes turns to spin the dreidel. Depending on the side it falls will decide on the action players take:
- If the dreidel lands on 'nun' the turn is forfeited and the next player spins.
- If the dreidel lands on 'gimmel' you win all the sweets in the pot and all the other players put two more sweets in again.
- If the dreidel lands on 'hay' you collect half the sweets in the pot – if it is an odd number take half plus one.
- If the dreidel lands on 'shin' put one sweet in the pot.
- When you have no sweets left you are out. When a player has acquired all the sweets they have won that round and the game starts over.

- **'Poh Vesham'- 'Here / there.'**

The dreidles in Israel don't have a the letter 'Shin' on them representing the word 'Sham' which means 'there' but they have the letter 'Pay' which represents the word 'Poh' meaning 'here'. The miracles of Chanukah happened in Israel!

To reinforce this message to the children, have the children stand in front of you and tell them to perform an action followed by either 'sham' or 'poh.' The children should follow the directions either directly in front of you or at the other end of the room. As the game progresses say the directions quickly and children who perform the actions in the wrong place are 'out' of the game!

Find the Oil

Hide images of bottles of oil (or any bottles) around the room.

Explain that in order for the menorah to be lit in the Bet Hamikdash only oil from a sealed bottle could be used. Only one bottle that was sealed could be found as the Greeks had smashed and opened all the other ones. This bottle only had enough oil for one day but it lasted for eight days!

Split the children into teams and ask them to search for the pictures. The team that find the most are the winners! You could further develop this game by having images of sealed bottles and non-sealed ones and only the sealed bottles that are found will win the team points.

- Ask the children to think about a time when they lost something and recall how they felt when they found it.

Discuss how the Jewish people might have felt when they found the oil and then realised it was only enough for one day.

- **Human Chanukia**

Explain that each night of Chanukah the Chanukia is set up, each night adding another candle from the right side of the Chanukiah, but we light from left to right. The new candle is always lit first.

Choose eight children and ask them to be a human Chanukiah. Give each one a piece of card with a number on. (The numbers 1-8.) Have one piece of paper that says 'shamash' and give it to one child. Line up eight chairs in a line and have one chair representing the 'shamash' either in the middle or slightly apart at the end of the line. When you call out a night the corresponding candles stand in row order and the shamash then lights them in the correct order. Alternate which child is the shamash.

If you have enough children make two teams and have them compete to see who can make the Chanukiah configuration and light it correctly, first. Practise which brachot to say, how to say them and the singing of Maoz Tsur. (To be found on page 209 of the Tribe Siddur for Children and Family.)

- **Puppet Show/Discussion questions**

Bring in puppets or pre-cut characters on sticks and present a puppet show telling the story of Chanukah.

- Ask the children to think about what it means to be brave. The Maccabees were brave and defended the Land of Israel. Ask the children how they can be brave when they are afraid.

- Ask the children to think about why we light the Chanukiah at night when it's dark. Remind them how a small flame can make a big difference in a dark room. A small act of goodness can make a big difference. Ask the children to think of ways that we can do one small thing to make someone happy.
- Create a cave in the room where you hold your service. Use fabric draped over chairs and tables. Invite the children to sit inside whilst you tell the story of Chanukah. Explain that this is how the Jewish children would study Torah under Greek rule. (Please make sure you do this in a safe way!)
- Maccabee interview: ask some children to come out to the front and act as Maccabees. The rest of the group can ask them questions about their experiences in the Chanukah story. For example, how did it feel for them to fight with so few men? What were their hopes for the future of the Jews and Israel?
- Ask the children who are their hero's and why? Divide the children into pairs or small groups and give each group a picture and a few sentences about a past or modern day Jewish hero such as Golda Meir, Hannah Senesh, Yosef, Miriam or Yoni Netanyahu. The children should read their piece to the group and discuss why they think they are heroes. What do they think motivated them to act the way they did and what challenges do you think they overcame? Link to the Maccabees. (See: Be yourself activity below for more on this topic.)

Be yourself!

The leader should say a statement and children should stand up if they agree or remain seated if they disagree. See examples of statements below.

* **Tip:** You will notice that some children stand up and then see their peers remain seated so they will quickly sit down or they stay seated but stand when they see their peers stand. You will also see that they are trying to persuade one another. You want this to happen a bit without it getting out of control so let them talk a little but then stop it. (Try to notice when people are copying the actions of their friends as you will need to refer to it later.)

Examples of Statements:

I think...

Chocolate is the best ice cream flavour.

Tottenham is the best football team.

Children below the age of 11 should not be allowed to eat sugary cereal.

Children below the age of 11 should not be allowed to watch TV on school nights.

Children below the age of 11 should not own mobile phones.

It's all right to borrow something without permission.

People must report cheating they see on a test.

Everyone must work to pick up litter.

Kids should be friends only with people of whom their parents approve.

It's important to support Israel with our words and deeds at all times.

Discuss:

- Were you ever the only one standing? What did it feel like?
- Were you ever the only one sitting? What did it feel like?
- Were there times when you felt pressure to stand?
- Were there times when you would have stood but felt embarrassed to do so?
- What character trait does it take to be the only one standing or the only one seated?
- What would you be prepared to stand up for even if others around you were acting differently?

Summing up:

- Q: Who were the Maccabees fighting?
A: The Syrian Greeks.)
- Q: Why?
A: Not for land but for the right to practise their religion. When Alexander the Great started to rule over Judea he allowed the Jews to learn Torah and keep the mitzvot but when Antiochus took over he was much tougher and forbade this. He tried to force the Jewish people to give up

their customs, values, identity and religion. The Maccabees knew that this was too much to give away and they stood up and fought for what they believed in.

Q: How many Maccabees were there?

A: A handful. Eventually they had a small guerrilla army but it was miniscule compared to the huge Greek army who used elephants as tanks and had the latest weapons. It was the Maccabees belief in their cause that gave them the courage to become leaders and fight. The fight took three years but in the end they won. One important message from Chanukah is that a person should not be afraid to be himself. The message of the Maccabees has helped us hold on to our identity until today. Always be true to yourself and stand up for what you believe is right.

Chanukah Quiz

- **Tip:** There have been many requests for quiz questions. Please find some below and in addition use the information in the summary of the Chanukah story above to help you too. Make sure if you do decide to have a quiz that it's inclusive and fair. Think through carefully before your service to decide if a quiz is a suitable activity for the dynamics of your group.
1. What is the Hebrew date of Chanukah? (25th Kislev)
 2. When do we light the Chanukiah? (Preferably at nightfall but it can be lit later.)
 3. Where do we place the Chanukiah? (To best publicise the mitzvah, the Chanukiah is ideally placed outside the doorway of your house on the left side when entering. In Israel many people light outside in special glass boxes. If this is not practical the Chanukiah should be lit by a window facing the public thoroughfare. Someone who

- lives on an upper floor should light up by a window if possible.)
4. How many brachot do we say before lighting the Chanukiah on the first night? (3)
 5. How many do we say on the other nights? (2)
 6. For how long should the Chanukah lights burn? (30 mins after nightfall.)
 7. On Erev Shabbat what do we light first, the Shabbat candles or the Chanukah lights? (Chanukah.)
 8. For how long must the Chanukah lights burn on Friday night? (The candles need to last from 18 mins before sundown all the way to 30 mins into night. The candles should therefore be bigger on a Friday so that they burn for longer.)
 9. How many lights were there on the Menorah in the Bet Hamikdash? (7)
 10. What do the letters on the sevivon stand for? (Nes Gadol Haya Sham/Poh – A great miracle happened there/here. See above for more info!)
 11. At which time in Jewish history did the Chanukah story take place? (In the era of the Second Bet Hamikdash, soon after it had been built.)
 12. What does the term 'Hidur Mitzvah' mean and what connection does this have with the kindling of the Chanukah lights? (It means to make a mitzvah as beautiful as possible. We should try to have a beautiful Chanukiah and perform the mitzvah in as beautiful a way as possible. For example, with olive oil and cotton wicks.)
 13. Give at least one reason why this festival is called Chanukah. Chanukah means 'dedication'. On the 15th of Kislev the *mizbeach* (altar) was rededicated after having been defiled by the Syrian Greeks. OR: 'Chanu' means 'they rested' and 'ka' in Hebrew is 25 = they rested on the 25th. On the 25th of Kislev the Maccabees rested from their battles.

14. What is the purpose of the Shamash light? (We use the shamash to light all the other candles and we keep it alight, but slightly set apart from the other candles as we are forbidden to use the lights of the Chanukiah for any other purpose other than viewing. Any benefit we do get therefore comes from the Shamash.)
15. Name two customs of Chanukah. (Oily foods, dreidel..)
16. What extra paragraph is added to the amidah prayer and grace after meals? (Al Hanisim.)