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*Hanukkah Resources*

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## Summaries of *Hanukkah* Articles

### ***Hanukkah, the Real Story, and What We Can Learn About War, Imperialism, and Power***

***Judith Black***

In this article, the author posits that the *Hanukkah* story is a profound journey about power and violence, and how they touch and change even the most idealistic among us. She presents and applies themes of *Hanukkah* to your life, your students, your congregations, and your communities.

### ***Family Programming for Hanukkah: Learning Long-term Planning for Holidays***

***Cherie Koller Fox***

This article discusses *Hanukkah* from the perspective of families. What do they want to know to be able to celebrate *Hanukkah* at home? How can synagogue celebrations add to their repertoire? What are your goals for a family during the years they and their children are in your school? How do models and long-term planning help you achieve these educational goals? Many great examples of *Hanukkah* programs are shared.

### ***Using Philosophical Inquiry to Explore Questions of Truth and Meaning in the Hanukkah Narrative***

***Jen Glaser***

The article explores the concept of truth in general, and truth in relation to the story of *Hanukkah* in particular.

### ***Hanukkah: I Have a Dream!***

***Sam Glaser***

*Hanukkah* is the time to remember that the battle of the Maccabees must be fought in every generation. At this time, we feel a sense of victory, not only in the success of the Maccabees and the restoration of our Temple, but also in the continued triumph of good over evil in modern times.

### ***Hanukkah and Pirsumei D’Nisa***

***Shira Hammerman***

The article highlights the connection between the light of the *hanukiah* and the metaphoric light of Judaism that was preserved at the time of the Maccabees. It also explores the importance of *pirsumei di-nisa* (publicizing the *Hanukkah* miracle by the sharing of the *Hanukkah* lights with others), encourages students to appreciate their heritage, and empowers them to play active roles in sharing that heritage with others.

### ***Hanukkah Happenings: Stories and Minhagim***

***Cherie Karo-Schwartz***

There are thousands of different, beautiful, meaningful customs from around the Jewish world. You can use these in your celebrations in many ways to enrich and broaden your experience of the Holiday of Lights. The author also offers a *Hanukkah* story inspired by the *mitzvah* of a nine-year-old.

### ***The Mitzvah Menorah and the Rabbi Who Plays Santa Claus***

***Kevin Kleinman***

*Hanukkah* is not just about receiving; it’s an opportunity to teach the Jewish value of giving. This article discusses how to include *mitzvah* moments in the celebration of Jewish holidays, in your home, in your synagogue, and in your community. It offers best practices for bringing to life the values we teach about *Tikkun Olam*, making the world a better place.

## Teaching with Art in your Jewish Classroom

*Ann Koffsky*

The article discusses the unique ability that the arts have to spark creative imagination and deep reflection. and how to use art to teach Jewish ideas, values, and principles.

## Provocation cards

*Lisa Kritz*

Provocation cards designed to be used as prompts to aid discussion and professional inquiry can be used with many different age groups. They can also be seen as curriculum starters if you want to change up your regular *Hanukah* experience.

## A *Hanukah* Recipe & Story

*Lisa Kritz*

It is written in the *Apocrypha* that Judith offered an enemy general who intended to destroy her town great quantities of cheese and much wine. She then was able to behead him, thus sparing her town. The article presents a recipe for cheese coins, which represent both the cheese to honor Judith and the “gelt” that children often receive.

## Do You Believe in Miracles?

*Sandra Lilienthal*

We frequently speak about the Jewish miracles: the Exodus from Egypt, the splitting of the Sea of Reeds, the saving of the Jews from Haman, the oil that lasted eight days, the sun that didn't set, and many more! But what about today? What about us? Have we witnessed miracles? What IS a miracle according to our tradition? This article examines different sources from past and present to better understand the Jewish view of miracles and offers a definition of today's miracles.

## *Hanukah* Songs: Traditional and New

*Susan Shane-Linder and Lisa Baydush*

The authors offer a listing some favorite *Hanukah* songs that are successful with students and families, along with playlists and music resources.

## From the “December Dilemma” to the “December Delights”

*Karen McGinity*

The article offers a brief historical overview of what is commonly referred to as the “December Dilemma” and explains how it has been represented in American culture and interfaith life. It also offers educators who have interfaith families in their schools and congregations vital suggestions by considering whether syncretism, or blending, is a solution or a concern.

## Eight Tales for Eight Nights: *Hanukah* Is a Time for Telling Tales

*Peninnah Schram*

Each of the eight nights of *Hanukah* opens up opportunities to tell stories. However, in addition to the story of the festival itself, these eight nights are a time for families and friends to tell folktales connected to the themes of the holiday, as well as personal and family stories related to the holiday. The author also offers a bibliography of stories and books appropriate for *Hanukah*.

## The WOW! Project

*Jennifer Schwartzman*

*Hanukah* themes are our guide through a sample lesson about self-identity. This hands-on approach to embracing and exploring Jewish values through STEM/ STEAM activities makes learning fun, and encourages students and their families to see the world through Jewish eyes.

## **The Other *Hanukah* Story: A New, Old Flame**

***Shawn Shafner***

This year let's light a new *Hanukah* fire by reviving an old flame! The story of the Maccabees rededication of the Temple is not the only *Hanukah* story; there's another *Hanukah* miracle about buried holy fire and spontaneous combustion in the return from the Babylonian exile. The author suggests ways to use stories in service to audiences (and learners) wrestling with specific lessons, themes or concepts by innovating on the same old *Hanukah* curriculum with traditional texts, contemporary narratives, and creative curricula.

## **The *Hanukah* Files: How Do We Know What We Know?**

***Paul Solyn***

*Hanukah* isn't mentioned anywhere in the *Torah*, nor is it anywhere in the *Tanakh*, so how do we know about it and where do we learn how to celebrate it? Where do we begin when we can't start in Scripture? The author provides a selection of the non-canonical sources that does include *Hanukah*, plus rabbinic texts that deal with it.

## **Funny, You Don't Look Jewish: *Hanukah* and Jewish Identity**

***Nina Woldin***

How far would you go in publicly displaying your Jewish identity? Assimilation has many faces historically and personally for the Jewish people. The *Hanukah* story reveals these internal tensions that are very much alive today. This article presents ways to help teens explore times when Jews were forced to reveal their Judaism, and times when Jews freely identified publicly.

## **What the Story of *Hanukah* Means Today**

***Jonathan Wolf***

The events that we commemorate on the holiday of *Hanukah* involved not only a victorious guerrilla campaign against a ruling empire, but also dramatic, even violent, clashes between groups of fellow Jews. Who are the analogous camps of Hellenizers and Hasmoneans in our time? Would we reformers, modernizers, and pluralists arouse the wrath of Mattathias and sons? The author offers excerpts from the Book of Maccabees, rabbinic texts, and writings of modern scholars to consider how the historical rifts of *Hanukah* resonate for us today.

# The *Mitzvah Menorah* and The Rabbi Who Plays Santa Claus

Kevin Kleinman

In *Pirkei Avot*, Ben Azai famously says, “*Mitzvah goreret mitzvah* – One *mitzvah* leads to another *mitzvah*,” (*Pirkei Avot* 4:2). The idea that Ben Azai puts forth, in essence that we are obligated to pay good deeds forward, is a driving force behind many programs and initiatives in my Religious School. Our curriculum centers on the three pillars of Jewish life described as well in *Pirkei Avot* by Shimon the Righteous, “*Al shlosha devarim ha’olam omed* – The world stands on three things: on *Torah*, on prayer, and on acts of loving kindness...” (*Pirkei Avot* 1:2). I apply Judaism’s inherent values of pursuing social justice to our congregation’s celebration of Jewish holidays at every opportunity I can. This program idea for creating a *Mitzvah Menorah* during *Hanukah* exemplifies my approach to putting the values that we teach in the classroom into real life opportunities to make the communities in which we live better places, especially for our most vulnerable members. It can be easily replicated and adapted for your congregation or educational setting.

### The goals for the *Mitzvah Menorah* are two-fold:

1. To teach students that giving gifts is equal to, if not more important than, receiving them – reinforcing the Jewish values and texts stated above
2. To enable students and families to support the ongoing social justice work of your organization in an easy, fun, and creative way

### DESIGNING YOUR MITZVAH MENORAH:

A *Mitzvah Menorah* is a literally a series of nine collection bins put together in the shape of a *hanukiah*, a *Hanukah menorah*, with four bins placed on either side of an elevated *shamash* bin. Your *Mitzvah Menorah* can be decorated by students with blue and white streamers and appropriate signage to indicate what items are being collected for each bin and the name of the organization they will be going to. You either can collect items for nine different organizations and/or charities or you can collect nine specific items for the same organization. You can choose to identify which specific items you are collecting several ways.

I recommend speaking to your Social Action Committee to get a sense of who their ongoing partners are and what they need during the winter. For example, I am currently the Board Chair of a homeless shelter with whom our congregation works closely to collect needed items throughout the year. Every holiday season, they put out a list of items they are collecting, ranging from toiletries to specific toys for children living at the shelter. Our congregation also partners with several food pantries that similarly identify the exact items they need. The more specific you are in understanding the needs of your partner organizations, the more direct impact your collections will make in the lives of others. Another way you can determine which items you will collect in your *Mitzvah Menorah* is by asking the students of your Religious School. If they are already donating the *tzedekah* they collect in class to an animal shelter or an elder-care facility, you can reach out to those organizations and ask what they anticipate needing during the holiday season

Your *Mitzvah Menorah* should be prominently displayed in the main entrance of your building for maximum impact for collecting items as well as serving as a symbol of your commitment to *Tikkun Olam*.

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## ADVERTISING YOUR MITZVAH MENORAH:

Now that you have designed your *Mitzvah Menorah*, you will need to get the word out to your congregation about what you are collecting, where it will be going, and why you are doing it. I suggest that you decide in advance who you are asking to bring in which specific items. You can assign one “candle” to each grade in your Religious School and/or to various committees in your congregation. Or you can ask that people bring in items as they are so moved to do. You should make a nicely designed flyer with all the appropriate information to distribute to your entire congregation. The *Mitzvah Menorah* should receive front page coverage in your December newsletter as well as being publicized in your weekly emails in the weeks leading up your *Mitzvah Menorah* collections. In essence, take every opportunity to inform your entire community about your new initiative so that they can participate.

## COLLECTING ITEMS IN YOUR MITZVAH MENORAH:

I suggest assigning a point person in your organization to look after the *Mitzvah Menorah* during your collection period. If you are collecting large items, they will need to be put in bags

## DISTRIBUTING ITEMS COLLECTED IN YOUR MITZVAH MENORAH:

Once you have ended your collection, you now have another opportunity to engage families in the hands-on justice work that is your *Mitzvah Menorah*. You can ask for volunteers from your community to help deliver the items that you have collected to organizations you are supporting. You will need to assist them in making contact with the organizations to ensure that they know the items are coming at a specific time. By creating this opportunity for families, you will enable them to see the impact of your congregation’s work firsthand. Usually, staff from the organizations will offer to give the family a tour and/or speak to them about the impact that your donated items will have. They may be able to hand out the items to those the organization serves (volunteering at a food pantry if you are delivering food, handing presents to children if you are collecting Christmas gifts, etc.).

The first year I created the *Mitzvah Menorah*, we collected toys and wrapped them to be delivered to children at the Families Forward Philadelphia homeless shelter. I decided that since I was on the Board of the shelter and we had an

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or boxes and stored in a safe place until the collection is over. The bins may need to be re-organized after Religious School. You will want to make sure your maintenance team knows to leave the *Mitzvah Menorah* in the designated area, and, if they have to move it for some reason, kindly ask them to put it back together afterwards. You can take pictures during your collection to post on social media, reminding families to bring in items when they come to Religious School. You can even make the collection a competition between different grades or classes in your program. The idea is that you really want the students to feel ownership over this *mitzvah* project. One idea is to encourage students to ask their parents to buy them items for the *Mitzvah Menorah* as one of their own presents during *Hanukah*. They can make something during Religious School to hand their parents with this suggestion asking for the specific item they want to collect and information about where that item will go. This is truly an impactful way for students to demonstrate their understanding that giving to the underprivileged is a Jewish value.

upcoming Board meeting, I would deliver the items myself. As I received assistance taking the items from my car to the shelter, the director made a joke that I was Rabbi Santa Claus. This image has stuck in my mind as a metaphor for the power of the *Mitzvah Menorah*. The winter holiday season can often become laser focused on consumerism. Jewish children even come up with lists of presents they want from their parents and grandparents for *Hanukah*. Encouraging your students to dedicate one of their nights of receiving presents to collecting items for your *Mitzvah Menorah* is an opportunity to change the narrative of the modern day *Hanukah* experience in North America. It allows us the chance to teach the Jewish values of caring for our neighbors and those in our communities who have less than we do at a time of year that is hyper-focused on individual materialism. It is also a fun way to celebrate *Hanukah* with your community, engage your synagogue and community *Tikkun Olam* partners in the work of your Jewish education program, and make a direct impact in your local community.

# Eight Tales for Eight Nights: Hanukah is a Time for Telling Tales

Peninnah Schram

*This essay was published in Hanukah-TO-GO, Yeshiva University, 2012/5773 and was distributed by Peninnah Schram at NewCAJE Workshop - Summer 2018*

Whenever someone says “*Hanukah*,” a kaleidoscopic set of images and memories flashes through my mind – flickering colors of candles, a family menorah, lights, miracles, my mother’s *latkes*, a *dreidel*, *Hanukah gelt*, the Maccabees, Hannah, Judith, an elder gentleman named Mr. Gordon handing out shiny pennies – and, of course, stories and songs in honor of this festival.

The festival of *Hanukah*, which begins on the 25th day of *Kislev*, records the first struggle for religious freedom in human history in the year 175 B.C.E. The Maccabees fought bravely to keep the Jews from forsaking their religion for paganism. It was not so much a fight against the physical destruction of Jews as was the case against Haman at Purim. However, *Purim* and *Hanukah* both represent struggles against enemies who wanted to perpetuate anti-Semitism by trying to crush the Jews physically and spiritually. The stories of heroism and bravery against all odds are told and retold from generation to generation as part of an oral tradition. When these stories become part of the culture, they are written down and read and celebrated each year. Coupled with the miracle of the one recovered flask of oil to rededicate the Temple, the story of *Hanukah* is celebrated through rituals of lighting the menorah, telling stories and singing songs, and reciting prayers of thanksgiving – in addition to playing games of chance, often where the answer must be 44 (the total number of candles lit during the eight days of *Hanukah*). The most popular game is playing *dreidel*, where the four Hebrew letters, one on each of the four sides of the *dreidel*, stand for “*Nes gadol hayah sham*” (“A great miracle happened there”). Of course, *dreidels* from Israel have the letter “*peh*” instead of “*shin*” to mean “a great miracle happened here.”

Each of the eight nights of *Hanukah* opens up opportunities to tell stories. Naturally, the main story should be the story of *Hanukah* and what happened there/here so as to listen to how the small band of Jews could overtake a well-equipped army to win the fight. As it says in the *Haftarah* for the first *Shabbat* of *Hanukah*: “...Not by might, not by power, but by My spirit – said the Lord of Hosts” (*Zechariah* 4:6).

However, in addition to the story of the festival itself, these eight nights are a time for families and friends to tell folktales connected to the themes of the holiday – and of the Master of Miracles, Elijah the Prophet. (It is always a time to tell Elijah tales!)

At the end of this article, I have added a bibliography of stories and anthologies containing primarily folktales for this *Yom Tov*. Search and select stories that you enjoy that expand the themes and beauty of *Hanukah* – or perhaps tell stories you recall from earlier days.

In addition to folktales, this is a perfect time to tell personal and family stories related to *Hanukah*. There are several ways to recall and/or create the narratives of your own personal/family stories. However, as an example, I would like to share one of my personal/family *Hanukah* stories that I have titled “The Substitute *Shammash*.” This story is true and it also really happened.

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On the first night of *Hanukah*, my father would proudly and carefully take his *menorah* from the breakfront, place it on the table, and set the first candle in the right-hand holder. After my parents and I recited the blessings together and lit the first candle, my father then would set the lit *shammas* in its special holder, higher than the other holders.

When I got old enough to observe the details, I realized that the *shammas* holder was of a different shape and design than the rest of the holders. Rather than a squat cup, it was oblong in shape and it swung from side-to-side, held with a crooked S-shaped wire. One year I asked, "Pa, why is the *shammas* holder so different from the other candle holders?" My father laughed and responded, "Well, the original *shammas* cup had

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broken off years ago, and I replaced it with an empty bullet shell. Then I used a curtain hook to attach it to the *menorah*." I accepted that explanation and thought how ingenious my father was.

I loved that *menorah* and always watched the candles until they flickered out. My father had brought it with him when he came to America from Lithuania at the turn of the twentieth century (in 1906). At the time of these memories, the *menorah* was probably a half century old. It was a heavy metal *menorah* with eight metal cups to be filled with oil for lighting. I recall there had been tiny covers for each cup (but they had gotten lost along the years). The high metal back was impressive: two columns with vines wrapped around them on each side, topped with metal flames. On the very top, in the center, was a three-dimensional crown. In the middle of the back plate were two lions, one on each side of a seven-branched *menorah*, each lion holding onto it with one paw, and each looking up at it. To me, it seemed like a theatrical backdrop for the drama of the little flames. Oh, yes. At the top of the right-hand column, but just below the metal flame, was placed the *shammas* cup, which was now replaced by that long, deeper oblong metal piece and attached to the *menorah* with a bent piece of wire.

While we would watch the candles "dance," my father always told me the story of *Hanukah*. When all the candles had gone out, then we would go to the synagogue, where my father was the *Hazzan*, to celebrate *Hanukah* with the congregation. The women of the Ladies Auxiliary of the *shul* were all busy frying hundreds of *latkes* in the big kitchen and serving them to the families sitting at long tables. There was some kind of

entertainment by the children of the *Talmud Torah*, as well as my father singing cantorial and Yiddish songs in honor of *Hanukah*.

But what I waited for each year was when a man by the name of Mr. Harry Gordon would take his seat behind a certain small table, with shiny pennies piled up in front of him. The children all lined up in front of the table. He would greet each child by name and ask, "How old are you this year?" And then he would give each of us *Hanukah gelt* according to our age – five years old, five pennies; ten years old, ten pennies, and so on. I treasure that gift as I treasure this memory.

One *Hanukah*, when I was a college student, I wondered

about the substitute *shammas*. After lighting candles with my parents, I suddenly said, "Pa, it's absolutely perfect that this bullet casing be on a *menorah*. After all, when the Maccabees found the Temple desecrated and the *menorah* destroyed, they used spears to hold the cruses of oil so that they could rededicate the Temple. Doesn't it say in Isaiah that peace will come when we beat our swords into ploughshares? Maybe we should add, 'And our bullets into *menorahs*!'"

I now have inherited this *menorah*, the *menorah* I love, so filled with memories and lights. And when I light the *shammas* each year for the eight nights of *Hanukah*, it is also the *shammas* holder that holds a special meaning for me.

This is the story my children grew up hearing from me and it is part of our family lore and their legacy.

Stored memories are the key to holiday stories. We all have plenty of story-producing memories, once we retrieve them, activate them, and then keep them active by telling our stories. This series of questions and exercises will help you find and retrieve the stories of your past *Hanukahs* (and other holidays). Use all five senses to recall places, people, objects, and experiences so that you will have personal and family stories to tell this *Hanukah*.

## PLACES

Memory of a place brings with it memories of events. To retrieve the stories that happened in a particular location, we must mentally move back to that place and time. The setting acts as a hook that pulls the story from its hidden spaces. Stories are wound around the core of a place, and standing

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in the center allows you to look at the layer upon time-bound layer of events that occurred there. The following imaginative exercise will help put you back into the places of your past so that you can retrieve the stories living within them.

In your mind, recreate the first *Hanukah* you can recall – or a favorite *Hanukah* – and where it took place. Fill in every detail, including the *menorah*, where it stood while lit, who was present with you, what songs you sang, the gifts you received, what you wore, and so on.

## PEOPLE

Making characters come to life will bring success to your stories. Choose people in your life who were part of the *Hanukah* celebration and describe them, bringing them alive by including such details as mannerisms, clothing, topics of conversation, posture, hobbies, place at the table, facial expressions, and favorite phrases, jokes, songs, and quotes, especially at *Hanukah*. When you describe people, use nouns as well as adjectives to convey the essence of the characters. What roles did they play? Who was the family storyteller? To flesh out your descriptions, interview other people about these individuals.

## OBJECTS

You can help uncover stories by remembering any object(s) that you especially treasure, such as a photograph, a religious item (e.g., a *menorah*) or clothing. Did you ever have your own *menorah*? How did you obtain it? Was it a gift? If so, from whom, or did you make it in Religious School? Was it handed down from someone in the family? What was its significance for that person? What special gift was given to you at *Hanukah* that you treasure? What special or unusual gift did you give someone for *Hanukah*?

## SMELLS

Marcel Proust took advantage of the fact that the sense of smell often serves as a powerful springboard to memory. Some studies have concluded that smell is the most effective trigger of the most vivid memories. Think of smells that bring back memories of *Hanukah*: the aroma of baking *challah*, frying of *latkes* or fried dough (*soufganiyot*), the smell of the candles going out, and so on.

## EXPERIENCES

What was the happiest time you can remember during a *Hanukah*? The funniest episode at a *Hanukah* family gathering? The most poignant moment? The best gift you ever gave or received for *Hanukah*? A special visit or visitor? These questions may trigger recall of some high points – but they might also remind you of those tinier moments that are just as important in shaping lives and relationships – and creating or retrieving holiday memories.

All of our stories – stories of the holiday, personal and family stories, traditional folktales – have enriched the lives of all people and created in us a need to continue the tradition of “planting” stories in the minds and hearts of our next generation. Taking a storytelling approach to celebrating a *Yom Tov* makes our heritage and history vital because it gives it context with a rich pudding of plot and character that illustrates the celebration. When a generation can “experience” its ancestors’ history and feelings, share their ideas and sorrows, the lessons of their lives will live on. The *Torah* associates wisdom with the heart, not with the mind. So we must direct our stories to the heart, where truth and wisdom can be found by those who care to listen. There is always a time for telling stories, and there is always a story to fit the time. Storytelling not only reflects but perpetuates life. *L’chaim!*

## A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF STORIES AND BOOKS FOR HANUKAH TELLING

Compiled by Peninnah Schram

Adler, David. *The Kid’s Catalog of Hanukkah*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004.

Goldin, Barbara Diamond. *While the Candles Burn: Eight Stories for Hanukkah*. Illustrated by Elaine Greenstein. NY: Viking, 1996.

Eight stories that include original and traditional tellings on *Hanukah* themes. Tales range over many countries and centuries. An introduction to each story presents the source, themes, and customs of the holiday.

Goldin, Barbara Diamond. *Journeys with Elijah: Eight Tales of the Prophet*. Illustrated by Jerry Pinkney. NY: Gulliver/Harcourt, Brace, 1999.

Eight tales featuring Elijah in his many disguises, bringing hope and performing miracles as he travels to many countries.

Goldin, Barbara Diamond. *Ten Holiday Jewish Children’s Stories*. Illustrated by Jeffrey Allon. NY: Pitspopany Press, 2000.

Each of the ten stories highlights various meanings of the holidays. “Lost in the Woods” is the story for *Hanukah*.

Jaffe, Nina. *The Uninvited Guest and Other Jewish Holiday Tales*. Illustrated by Elivia Savadier. NY: Scholastic, Inc., 1993. Traditional folktales, a literary tale, and *midrashim* adapted for seven major Jewish holidays, and *Shabbat*, some in new settings, for younger readers. In addition, there is an introduction about the Jewish calendar, a glossary, and a bibliography.

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Jaffe, Nina. *In the Month of Kislev: A Story for Hanukkah*. Illustrated by Louise August. NY: Viking, 1992.

Kimmel, Eric A. *The Spotted Pony: A Collection of Hanukkah Stories*. Illustrated by Leonard Everett Fisher. NY: Holiday House, 1992.

Eight adapted tales for families featuring fools of Chelm, rabbis, King Solomon, and that clever trickster, Herschel of Ostropol. Sources are given.

Kimmel, Eric A., ed. *A Hanukkah Treasury*. Illustrated by Emily Lisker. NY: Henry Holt, 1998.

13 original and traditional folktales plus poems/songs for *Hanukkah*, including "The Legend of Judith."

Kimmel, Eric A. *The Jar of Fools: Eight Hanukkah Stories from Chelm*. Illustrated by Mordicai Gerstein. NY: Holiday House, 2000.

Krensky, Stephen. *Hanukkah at Valley Forge*. Illust. Greg Harlin. NY: Dutton, 2006.

Rush, Barbara. *The Jewish Year: Celebrating the Holidays*. NY: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 2001.

This book offers more than 35 literary excerpts, ranging from folktales to modern writing, for 17 Jewish holidays, plus folk customs, religious laws, and color art reproductions. Many storytellers are represented in this collection. The book includes two *Hanukah* tales: "A *Hanukah* Miracle" (folktale) and "The Fourth Candle" by Mara.

Schram, Peninnah and Steven M. Rosman. *Eight Tales for Eight Nights: Stories for Chanukah*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1990.

Eight stories, in addition to the ancient legend, which reflect the holiday themes and traditions of Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews. There are appendices of *Hanukah* music, notes on the story, and a chapter on retrieving family stories. Two family stories told by the authors are also included.

Schram, Peninnah. *Tales of Elijah the Prophet*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, an Imprint of Rowman & Littlefield, 1991. 36 stories of Elijah the Prophet, the master of miracles, gathered from various sources and centuries with a major introduction and endnotes and written in an oral style. The foreword is by folklorist Dov Noy.

Schram, Peninnah. *The Hanukah Blessing*. Illustrated by Jeffrey Allon. NY: URJ Press, 2000.

This Elijah the Prophet story includes many folktale motifs with an original plot. Elijah visits a certain poor family because of their special menorah and brings the family blessings. A recipe for a "Latke-Kugel" is included.

Schram, Peninnah. "A Melody in Israel" in *Jewish Stories of Love and Marriage: Folktales, Legends & Letters* (co-authored with Sandy Eisenberg Sasso).

This original *Hanukah* story includes folk motifs and historical elements.

Schwartz, Cherie Karo. *My Lucky Dreidel: Hanukkah Stories, Songs, Poems, Crafts, Recipes and Fun for Kids*. NY: Smithmark, 1994.

Schwartz, Howard. *The Day the Rabbi Disappeared: Jewish Holiday Tales of Magic*. Illustrated by Monique Passicot.

Phildadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003.

For each of the 12 holidays, there is a story featuring a magical feat by a wise rabbi for the benefit of the Jewish people. Sources given. The *Hanukah* story is "The Enchanted Menorah."

Singer, Isaac Bashevis. *Zlateh the Goat and Other Stories*.

Pictures by Maurice Sendak. NY: Harper & Row, 1966.

This book of seven stories includes three with *Hanukah* themes: "The Snow in Chelm," "Grandmother's Tale," "The Devil's Trick," and the title story "Zlateh the Goat."

## SPECIAL RESOURCE BOOK TO FIND JEWISH STORIES BY SUBJECT AND THEME

Elswit, Sharon Barcan. *The Jewish Story Finder: A Guide to 668 Tales Listing Subjects and Sources*, 2d ed. Foreword by Peninnah Schram. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2012.

This valuable resource is a guide to finding Jewish folktales to fit a theme or subject under eleven major categories, including the *Torah*, the *Talmud* and Their Study; Biblical Characters and Events; Trickster and Fools; and Tales for Festivals and Holidays. There are numerous tales that are summarized with variants given, along with complete citations and a list of connecting themes. Extensive bibliography, story title index, and subject index. Print Edition and also Ebook.

## THE JEWISH EDUCATOR

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**Peninnah Schram**, storyteller, teacher, author and recording artist, is Professor Emerita of Speech and Drama at Stern College of Yeshiva University. She is author of fourteen books of Jewish folktales, including *Jewish Stories One Generation Tells Another*, *The Apple Tree's Discovery* (co-authored with Rachayl Eckstein Davis), and most recently, *Jewish Stories of Love and Marriage: Folktales, Legends & Letters* (co-authored with Sandy Eisenberg Sasso). She has also recorded a CD, *The Minstrel and the Storyteller*, with singer/guitarist Gerard Edery. The anthology *Mitzvah Stories* (Reclaiming Judaism Press, 2011) was published in Peninnah's honor.

Peninnah is a recipient of the prestigious Covenant Award for Outstanding Jewish Educator (1995) awarded by The Covenant Foundation. She has been awarded the National Storytelling Network's 2003 Lifetime Achievement Award "for sustained and exemplary contributions to storytelling in America." She is the first recipient (2012) of the NewCAJE *Kavod Le'Morah* Prize for an outstanding educator who has made a lasting contribution to the field of Jewish Education.

# Hanukah, the Real Story, and What We Can Learn About War, Imperialism, and Power

Judith Black

**M**ost of us learned that this festival celebrates religious freedom, faith, oily foods, and, hopefully, keeps our children from bemoaning the lack of an evergreen tree in the living room during the coldest time of the year. However, if you read the whole story, it is a much deeper and more profound journey about power and violence, and how they touch and change even the most idealistic among us. It is this version that will lead students to contemplate the long-term ramifications of actions that feel justified, and movements that begin in righteousness, but end in oppression. By retelling the whole story, we are doing what Jews have done for millennia, learning from the book and our past.

In shaping the story, I looked at the ending first. The rule of the Hasmonean dynasty was defined by fratricide, forced conversions and circumcision, expansion of borders, and a general corruption that led to yearnings for a messianic age. How did a movement, grounded in the desire to preserve a covenantal relationship with God, end in such a dissipated way? By understanding what happened, we might be better prepared to negotiate the thorny terrain of religion and politics.

Jews, since the exile, had always lived under the yoke of the majority culture and nation in which they dwelt. They proved flexible in the political and economic arenas, paying their taxes, speaking the dominant language, wearing the popular garb, and were most often able to maintain their faith belief and rituals within their homes and communities. Such was the situation prior to 167 B.C.E. when the Land of Israel was under the rule of the Seleucid dynasty, which controlled the entire area of Syria. The Seleucids were Greek in style, language, and affect, but their political weight came from Rome. Egypt was their enemy to the South. During this period, Jews were welcomed into government and commerce and held positions previously unattainable. Many of them rose to positions of wealth and status and blended with the dominant culture. For a while, a Hellenized Jew, Jason, was the High Priest and maintained good relations with the Seleucid ruler, Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes was an ambitious ruler and wanted to dominate the Egyptians to his south. Upon the eve of his major attack on them, the powers that be, in Rome, told him not to go forward. Stymied, he was determined to now rule his own kingdom with an iron fist. Calling himself a deity, he proclaimed that he be worshipped as a god. It was then that a polarization occurred. Menachem, who took the Greek name Menelaus and was a fully Hellenized Jew, took over the role as High Priest and encouraged the Jewish community to completely acculturate themselves into the Greco-Roman world of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Others in the Jewish community wanted to join the Egyptians, who had promised them complete religious autonomy. Still others wanted to remain where they were, absolutely faithful to the traditional laws and rituals of their forebearers.

Think about this situation. What in our lifetimes echoes this scenario? Which opinion do you favor? Why?

It was at this point in 167 B.C.E. that Antiochus IV Epiphanes ordered that all Jewish houses of worship be transformed into pagan temples that acknowledged his and only his deity. The

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# THE JEWISH EDUCATOR

*Ner Tamids* were to be dashed to the ground and a statue of himself and incense installed for the prayer needs of his people. Apelles, an envoy of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, was sent throughout the nation to achieve this end. The choice for the Jewish population was to pray to this new god among them or have their heads severed from their bodies.

Now, please know that many Jews did as they were commanded. They paid deference to the transformed houses of worship and went about their business, practicing their faith within their homes and in their relationships. However, for some, this transition was an apostasy, and they refused to accept it. Such was the situation in the village of Modi'in. Apelles had done his work and commanded that the town's old priest, Mattathias, come and show his people how easy it was to pray to their new god. He was an Orthodox practitioner of the laws of his father, and the entire town waited to see what he would do. At the appointed day and time, Mattathias and his five sons, Yohannan, Simon, Judah,

shares the story of how war affected the warriors or what the rule of the Hasmoneans entailed after the Temple was re-sanctified.

This small band began a guerrilla war against the mightiest force on the planet. Initially, their goal was simply to rededicate the temples that had been taken, but, when they walked out of Modi'in, they rejected their priestly duties for those of warriors. Despite the care that Mattathias took to keep his sons and soldiers grounded in the Law, it was warriors that they became. Mattathias required that all religious Laws be strictly observed, and, when it came time to choose a new leader, his eye and heart fell on his middle son Judah. Judah had both the faith, strength, and the leadership skills to command the constantly growing band. It is told that he fasted and prayed all night before a battle and that his men followed his practice, recalling what they were fighting for. However, it was Jonathan who matured to manhood in the midst of war. It was Jonathan who grew up with the sword.

## By understanding what happened, we might be better prepared to negotiate the thorny terrain of religion and politics.

Eleazar, Jonathan, walked all too slowly through the streets of Modi'in. The people shrank in both fear and humiliation, as they walked into the defiled temple. Apelles called for the old man to show his people how easy it was to pray to their new god, and Mattathias approached the altar. Not a breath was taken as he lifted the burning incense into the air. "God forbid that I should deviate from the law of my fathers to the left or the right." He threw the incense to the ground and stomped on it with his foot. "I will never enter this place again until it is a holy temple unto our Lord." With that, he and his five sons stepped away from that pagan place and continued until they were swallowed by the hills of Judea where they started a holy war to reclaim every house of worship that had been tainted by the pagan intrusion of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

### THINKING ABOUT THE STORY

This is the part of the story that enables us to identify with courage and pride. This is the part that we always tell. How does this episode make you feel? How might it influence your own actions and thoughts?

Between this episode and the reclaiming of the Temple on the 25th day of *Kislev* with the miracle of the lights, added on many years later by Rabbis who saw the hazard of worshipping military might, little is explored. You might hear about the sacrifice of Hannah's seven sons or the courage of the widow Judith, who beheaded Holofernes, but no one ever

It was Jonathan who felt the power and strength that the sword and a mighty army of believers could provide. It was Jonathan who rose to leadership by the war's end.

Here is where we must imagine how war shapes a human's heart and mind.

Jonathan entered the hills as a boy, easily influenced and impressionable.

Mattathias: "Jonathan, Simon, go and see if any have stopped at the watering hole and determine if they have come to join us. Remember to watch secretly and carefully. If they say the *bracha* before drinking or eating the food we left, you may bring them back to camp."

Jonathan: "But, *Abba*, it's enough that they ran, that they want to join."

Mattathias: "Jonathan, no, it is not. We fight for the Law, and that must always come first."

As Jonathan grows to manhood, there is no time for study and the laws that guide a Jew's life. He is surrounded by war and, watching his brothers' leadership, desires to also show his courage and lead.

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Judah: "Jonathan, you are the fastest among us. Go under the cloak of night and spy on the camp of General Gorgias. I have heard that he has upwards of 7,000 horsemen, and possibly 40,000 foot soldiers. Slip as close as you safely can to their camp and try to determine which road they are clearing for their attack, and if they are readying. Hurry back. Our entire strategy depends on your information."

Jonathan: "I will not fail you."

Jonathan was swift and quiet, and it took him only an hour before he saw the camp fires of General Gorgias. He stole behind a boulder that a Roman sentry was leaning against and could have easily slipped past him, but instead he pulled his well-polished knife from his belt. His brothers had been keeping him behind the lines, but, now, now he would prove to them that he was as brave and adroit and as much a warrior as any of them. The sentry was looking at the star-filled sky when Jonathan grabbed him, one arm around his neck and the other burying his knife, up to its hilt, in his gut. As the man's life drained from him and he fell to the earth, Jonathan took from him a neckpiece with a coin. On the coin was the image of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. He held it up to the moon light and whispered "For the Law." Then he put it around his own neck.

This is but one episode that helps to establish how a boy might be shaped by war, but, when you read the story, you will find a dozen other events and turnings that call for this type of reflection. Questions you might pursue include:

- ◆ How much does your immediate world shape who you are and your world view?
- ◆ What was most important to Jonathan? Why?
- ◆ How do you think growing up in army camps and being surrounded by both death and military victories might affect a teenage boy?
- ◆ Where can you find child soldiers today? What happens to them as they age?
- ◆ Is there a way to preserve religious duties and beliefs while in armed combat?

When the Maccabees re-entered the Holy Temple on the 25th day of *Kislev*, with Jonathan as their leader, it was once again proclaimed a Jewish house of worship. This when we learn of the miracle of the lights, that a small pure cruse of oil burned beyond its one-day lifespan, burning for seven more. It's taught that each day honors seven *middot* or basic character traits — love, restraint, harmony, ambition, devotion, bonding, and receptiveness. The oil that lasted eight days instead of one, until more sanctified oil could be brought to the Temple, was a creation of the Rabbis and codified in the Babylonian *Talmud*. They understood the hazard of worshipping military might and wanted to infuse

our understanding of the Hasmonean War with a spiritual interpretation.

With the exception of Simon, a scholar who remained true to the Law, the other brothers permanently rejected their priestly status for political roles in their new nation. Under their rule:

- ◆ The borders of Judea were expanded on all sides, and all citizens were forced to convert to Judaism.
- ◆ Jewish law was adopted as the law of the land, and anyone found using Egyptian or Syrian weights and measures was punished.
- ◆ All indigenous pagan temples were destroyed, and citizens were "re-educated" in Judaism.
- ◆ Large houses of correction were created for those who would not or did not adopt the new faith.

The rule of the Hasmoneans was typified by treachery, corruption, fratricide, and assassination.

It lasted about 200 years and left people yearning for a Messianic age. Jesus of Nazareth was born at about this time.

We might be wise to remember the words of Zechariah:  
"Not by military might  
And not by political power  
But by my spirit  
Saith the Lord."

You might choose to have students break into small groups and think about these questions:

- ◆ Were there peaceful alternatives that could have been employed?
- ◆ If so, how might the results have been different?
- ◆ Is there any way to respond to and use violence that does not leave the perpetrator marked by it?
- ◆ Thinking about our world, where do you see violence simply escalating into more violence or inhuman treatment of opponents? Can you envision options? How could they be introduced and practiced?
- ◆ In your own life, where do you see violent behavior (for any reason) affecting your world? How might you change it?

As educators, there are many places you can take this story. It is historical, but it is also a deep exploration into what happens when you embrace the weapons of your oppressor. I hope you use it for growth, study, and ultimately, to promote peace.

For more information about the Revolt, see Rabbi Ken Spiro's article, "History Crash Course #29: Revolt of the Maccabees" at <http://www.aish.com/h/c/t/h/48942121.html>.

# TEACHING WITH ART IN YOUR JEWISH CLASSROOM

Ann Koffsky with Annabelle Sinoff

**H**ave you ever had to pick the color of the paint for a room in your house? Choose tiles for your bathroom? Design a handout or flier for your classroom? Do you take photos and post them on social media? You are an artist.

Hi, I'm Ann Koffsky and I have three jobs: I am the editor and art director at Behrman House, and I'm an artist myself. I'm also the editor of a new book, *Make, Create, Celebrate: Jewish Holidays through Art*, by the Jewish arts educator, Julie Wohl. I am very excited to lead this session titled "Teaching with Art in the Jewish Classroom."

Notice the session title says WITH art — this is not about how to make a *Kiddush* cup or "let's decorate a *challah* cover." Been there, done that.

This is about how we use art to teach Jewish ideas, values, and principles. And that's very different.

All the students in your classes are artists, too. They post, draw, write, share. That's art creation. Art is a part of us all.

### PART 1: SEE/THINK/WONDER

The first three words of the *Torah* are "*Beresheit bara Elohim*" — "In the beginning, God created." God is, first and foremost, the Creator. The fundamental nature of the Divine is to be creative.

Jewish tradition teaches that we are created *b'Tzelem Elohim* — in the image of the Divine. We too are artists, co-creators.

Now look at image 1. As you can see, there are 40,000-year-old cave paintings that show that the earliest humans were creative and painters.

Creativity is inherent in every one of us. It is a foundational aspect of what it means to be human and an essential pathway to connection with the Divine.

So, why not harness this in the Jewish classroom? Seems like a no-brainer.

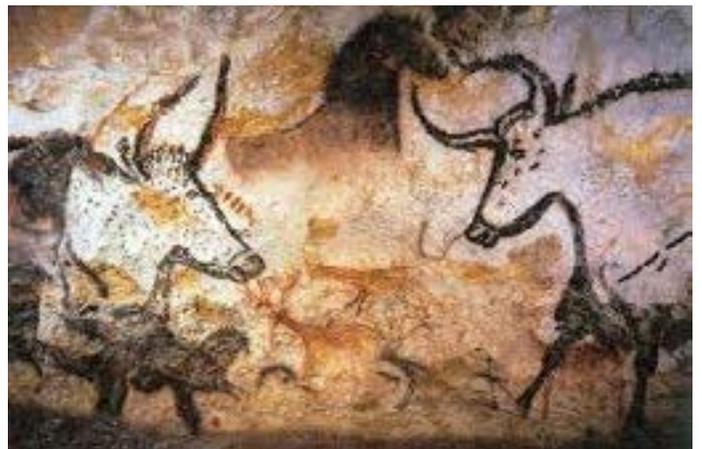


image 1

**Ann D. Koffsky** is the Art Director and a Senior Editor at Behrman House Publishers and Apples and Honey Press and the author/illustrator of more than 30 of her own books. Ann is the Editor of *Make, Create, Celebrate*, a Jewish holiday course that harnesses the arts. Previously, Ann was an adjunct professor of art at Stern College for Women.  
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**Annabelle Sinoff** is an honors student at Rutgers University and an Intern at Behrman House Publishers.

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image 2

When I say art, I mean that expansively: painting, drawing, drama, music, storytelling, poetry — all of it. Here, I am going to focus on the visual arts and how they apply to the Jewish classroom.

**Thinking routines have the capacity to activate student’s deep thinking by privileging their own ideas as a valuable source of information, getting them personally involved, and using questions to drive learning and uncover complexity.**

Let’s start by looking at image number 2. Think about what you see. What do you think might be happening?

Now let’s add a little bit of information about the image: It’s a self-portrait, made by Marc Chagall (1887–1985), the most famous Jewish artist of his time — possibly ever. It’s called “I and the Village” (1911) and is based on his home village in Russia.

Now that you know that information, what do you wonder? What questions to you have? Do you wonder if this is based on a real part of his village? Do you wonder why he’s green?

This model is based upon Harvard University’s Project Zero, a research-based organization that has developed a collection of thinking routines. What we did was the See/Think/Wonder Routine.

Elizabeth Diament, the Senior Educator at the National Gallery of Art and consultant for *Make, Create, Celebrate*, has

written that, “Thinking routines have the capacity to activate student’s **deep thinking** by privileging their own ideas as a valuable source of information, getting them **personally involved**, and using questions to drive learning and uncover complexity.” Deep learning and personal connection to Jewish subjects. This is pretty much our goal in religious classrooms, isn’t it?

We selected this Chagall piece to teach about *Rosh Hashanah* because *Rosh Hashanah* is a time of looking inwards and thinking about how to be our best selves. A self-portrait, such as Chagall’s, is a way to think about these values.

Another example of a painting we chose for the book is one for *Hanukah*. On page 1 of the handout that follows this article is a painting by Yoram Ranan. What do you see? What do you think? What do you wonder?

Here are some more questions you can explore using this painting:

- Do you see a *menorah*? How many *menorahs*? Is it one or many? Why would the artist want to show one? Why many?

- Do you see shadows? Light? From which direction is the light coming? Or is it coming from within? What does light have to do with *Hanukah*, both literally and symbolically?
- What colors do you see in the *menorah* painting? How would you describe them? Do the colors make you think of any feelings? Do those feelings connect to *Hanukah* in some way?

As you can see, we thought very carefully about what pieces to choose to include in *Make, Create Celebrate*, but you can find your own art and do the same thing. You can go to the websites of the Jewish Museum or the Metropolitan Museum of Art. And you can also use the art in your synagogue to do the See/Think/Wonder Routine. Try it, for example, with the *Aron Kodesh*, *Ner Tamid*, or a *mezuzah* case.

## PART 2: CREATING ART

And now we come to part two, making the art. You will need a partner for this activity. You get to do the same thing Chagall did and make your own self portrait. It doesn’t have to look

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like you. Chagall wasn't green, I am almost positive, so don't worry. This is an introspective, not realistic, piece. You can use colors and shapes. Non-recognizable objects are just fine.

First, let's look again at the Chagall piece and notice the composition and how Chagall organized the space. How did he arrange things? We have provided at the end of the article an already made 'X' that separates and labels the quadrants of Chagall's portrait.

Now, think about the colors. Colors can be emotional or symbolic. I don't know why he made himself green, but it must have meant something to him. So, how do you feel in your special place — do you feel purple?

Take ten minutes to work on your self-portrait, keeping in mind the composition and colors.

Now we have experienced making art and thinking about ourselves. As a teacher, at this point, you might talk to your students about how knowing who we are is important to who we can aspire to be next. Self-knowledge leads to our working on and becoming our best selves. We can't become better if we don't know who we are to begin with, and these self-portraits help us understand just a little more about ourselves.

If you want, you could also ask your students to do the quadrants differently. For example, who they were when they

were six, who they are now, who they hope to be in a year, who they hope to be in ten years.

### PART 3: REFLECTING ON ART

Now, the final step of creating a piece of art is reflecting on it. Turn to page 4 of the packet and make your statement. What was your intent? What did it mean to you?

Then trade both your packet and art with your partner and fill out the peer review section in their packet about their art. Trade back when you both have finished.

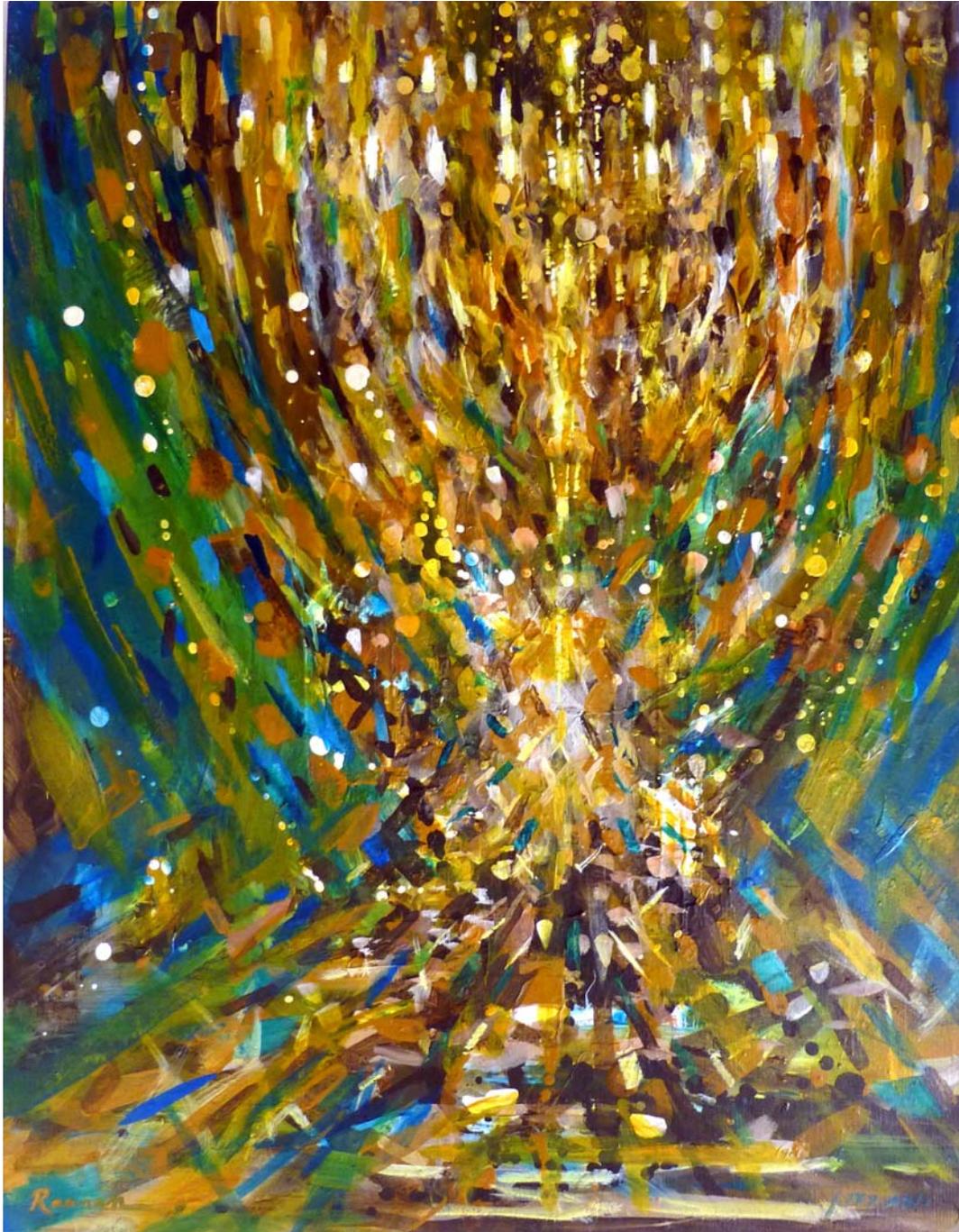
How did it feel to share your work? Did it make you feel nervous? Why? It is important to develop the muscle of getting out of our comfort zones and being resilient. For students to express themselves fully, we need to create a safe space in our classrooms, where the children feel comfortable sharing and exchanging ideas. Sharing art is a great way to practice that and exercise that muscle.

So now I'll turn it over to you. What ideas has this discussion sparked for you to bring into your own classroom? Maybe going for an art walk around your synagogue? Showing beautifully illustrated holy texts? Asking families to bring in treasured items?

And just a reminder: You are an artist and so are your students. Enjoy some art!

# Teaching with Art in the Jewish Classroom

By Ann D. Koffsky [ann@behrmanhouse.com](mailto:ann@behrmanhouse.com)



*Spreading the Light* by Yoram Ranan



Paintings on the walls of the Lascaux caves, from Upper Paleolithic times.





# FINAL REFLECTION

## My Artist Statement

This piece is titled: \_\_\_\_\_

This piece is about: \_\_\_\_\_

I particularly liked using these symbols: \_\_\_\_\_

because: \_\_\_\_\_

## Peer Review

Ask a friend to respond to your artwork.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I noticed: \_\_\_\_\_

I appreciated: \_\_\_\_\_

I learned: \_\_\_\_\_



Place you Live

*Animal or Person Meaningful to you*

*Self portrait*

What You Love to Do

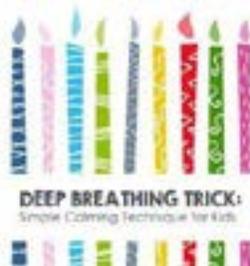


## The WOW! Project

Jennifer Tolman Schwartzman



*The WOW! Project has one very simple, steadfast goal: to make teachers, their students, and their students' families say – you guessed it – “WOW!” And it works!*



Our students are inherently learners different from those we might have found in our classrooms ten or even five years ago. They often are accustomed to a multi-tiered approach to subject matter, with topics intersecting a variety of genres and disciplines. They are proficient question-askers, anticipating the quick gratification of Google® or Siri®, and recognize the world far beyond their own reach, as seen on YouTube®. If our learners are evolving, so too can be our ways of challenging them and connecting Jewish themes to their own lives.

STEM provides an accessible launch pad for a new approach to learning; not only does it promote hands-on, interactive lessons, but it also offers an array of both literal and metaphorical connections not often associated with Judaic learning. A chemical reaction can illustrate our own reactions to *mitzvot*, an engineering activity can demonstrate Jewish values, a basic robotics project can serve as a blueprint for understanding *k'lal Yisrael*... the possibilities are numerous, varied, and a departure from our traditional lesson plans.

“Be the Light” is a favorite “WOW!” program, created at the suggestion of Hartford-area Jewish educators who hoped for a new way to highlight Hanukah concepts through the lens of personal identity. By engaging students in their own flashlight-making project, the theme of light comes to life, encouraging discussion, debate and, of course, a “WOW!” moment!

Sometimes, the smallest of lights can illuminate our way along a great journey. With *Hanukah* as our backdrop, tiny flashlights – and the experience of making them ourselves – lead our students through conversation, self-exploration, and connection with the past.

### HIGHLIGHTED VALUES

ברית	“brit”	partnership with God
אור לגויים	“or l’goyim”	a light for the nations
הודאה	“hoda’ah”	appreciation

### SUGGESTED MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- Large white and black paper/posterboard
- Dark and light (white) markers or chalk
- Pencils
- Adhesive backed foam sheets
- Non-adhesive foam pieces
- Scissors
- 3v lithium coin batteries
- 5mm LED lights
- Washi tape or colored masking tape
- Rulers

Jennifer Tolman Schwartzman is the WOW! Program Coordinator at the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford, developing innovative experiential education opportunities for local religious supplemental schools and day schools. Previously, she was camp director at the JCC of Atlanta and early childhood lead teacher and Judaic specialist. An Atlanta Jewish Teacher of the Year award recipient, she is a graduate of Boston University.  
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## LIGHT VS. DARK

For many of us, darkness and light feel distinctly different. We express ourselves differently during the day than at night. A cloudy, stormy weather forecast may impact us differently than one for sunshine. Walking into a brightly lit classroom may set an expectation different from walking into one with the lights off.

**Record your reactions to light and darkness on poster boards, a SMART Board or other medium.**

We often think of light as a source of comfort; we are more aware of our surroundings and less apprehensive. It is no wonder then that light can be a symbol of openness, awareness, and peace. Pop culture thrives on our tendencies to categorize light as “good!”

Judaism, too, acknowledges the distinction between light and dark and the value we inherently place on each.

### Exodus 10:21-23

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your arm toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness that may be felt. Moses stretched forth his hand toward the heaven and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days; they saw not one another, nor rose any from his place for three days; but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

ויאמר יהוה אלי־משה נטה ירך על־השמים ויהי חשך על־ארץ מצרים .  
ימש חשך

ויט משה את־ידו על־השמים ויהי חשך־אפלה בכל־ארץ מצרים שלשת ימים

לא־ראו איש את־אחיו ולא־קמו איש מתחתיו שלשת ימים ולכל־בני ישראל היה אור במושבתם

### Genesis 1:14

“Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; they shall serve as signs for the set times — the days and the years; and they serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth.” And it was so.

יהי מארת ברקיע השמים להבדיל בין היום ובין הלילה והיו לאתת ולמועדים ולימים ושנים

והיו למאורת ברקיע השמים להאיר על־הארץ ויהי־כן

### Shabbat 21b

The Sages taught (in *Megillat Ta’anit*): On the twenty-fifth of Kislev, the days of *Hanukah*, they are eight, not to eulogize on them and not to fast on them. When the Greeks entered the Temple they polluted all the oils in the Temple, and when the Hasmonean monarchy overcame and defeated them, they checked and they found but one cruse of oil that was set in place with the seal of the High Priest, but there was in it only [enough] to light a single day. A miracle was done with it, and they lit from it for eight days. The following year [the Sages] fixed those [days], making them holidays with recitation of hallel and special thanksgiving for praise and thanksgiving.

מאי חנוכה דתנו רבנן בכה בכסליו יומי חנוכה תמניא אינון דלא למספד בהון ודלא להתענות בהון שבשנכנסו יוונים להיכל תמא כל השמנים שבהיכל וכשגברה מלכות בית חשמונאי ונצחום בדקו ולא מצאו אלא פך אחד של שמן שהיה מונח בחותמו של כהן גדול ולא היה בו אלא להדליק יום אחד נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאום ימים טובים בהלל והודאה

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## *Mishneh Torah, Scroll of Esther and Hanukah 3:3*

Because of this, the sages of that same generation established that these eight days which begin on the twenty-fifth of *Kislev* [would be] days of joy and singing-praise, and would light lights on them in the evening at the entrances of their houses every night of the eight nights, to show and reveal the miracle. And these days are called *Hanukah* ...

וּמִפְנֵי זֶה הִתְקִינוּ חֻמְמִים שְׂבָאוֹתוֹ הַדּוֹר שִׁיְהִי שְׂמוֹנֶת הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּיךָ  
שְׂתַחֲלֶתְךָ כִּי הָיָה בְּכַסְלוֹ יְמֵי שְׂמֵחָה וְהָלַל וּמְדַלִּיקִין בְּהֵן הַנְּרוֹת בְּעָרֵב עַל  
פְּתָחֵי הַבָּתִּים בְּכָל לַיְלָה וְלַיְלָה מִשְׂמוֹנֶת הַלַּיְלוֹת לְהַרְאוֹת וּלְגַלוֹת הַנֶּס.  
יָמִים אֵלֶי הֵן הַנִּקְרָאִין חֻמְמֵי

How do our own reactions to light and dark relate to these texts? Lights are created to designate time and orient us with our relation to it, while a sweeping darkness – and the inability to connect with light – cast upon Egypt is a fearful image. *Hanukah*, both as a matter of history and tradition, connects to light.

In *Isaiah* (42:6, 49:6) our covenant with God is related to being “a light for the nations.” The connotations of light here are metaphorical, full of promise and responsibility.

## HANUKAH LIGHT

*Hanukah* often makes us think of *dreidels* and *latkes*, *sufganiyot*, and Maccabees. But what does it have to do with batteries and foam? See the “Create your own pocket flashlights” instructions below.

Two of our great Jewish leaders, Rabbi Shammai and Rabbi Hillel, had very different beliefs about how we should light the *Hanukiah*, the *Hanukah menorah*. (*Shabbat* 21b)

Shammai taught that on the first *Hanukah* night, eight candles should be lit, decreasing by one each subsequent night.

However, Hillel believed that one candle should be lit on the first night, with one additional light added each *Hanukah* night thereafter.

**Form a human *hanukiah*, with a student (and his/her pocket flashlight) representing each candle, with one held higher for the *shamash*. Try both Shammai’s and Hillel’s ideas.**

These two schools of thought speak to the essence of *Hanukah* in different ways. Shammai reflects more closely on what would have been the experience of our ancestors, witnessing the miracle in the Temple. As the small oil supply lasted throughout the eight nights, it would have decreased gradually.

Hillel appeals to a more symbolic interpretation. The significance we place on light and the feelings of positivity it evokes in us seem in tune with Hillel’s desire to see light increase, rather than decrease.

Our tradition did develop in the fashion of Rabbi Hillel; we increase the light shed by the *Hanukah menorah* each night. Our challenge is to increase metaphorical light as well. How do we continually increase positivity for ourselves and others?

## INNER LIGHT

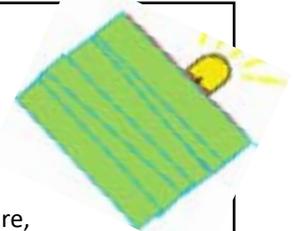
We have considered external light (that of *Hanukah* candles and lightbulbs) in both literal and symbolic ways so far. But what about light that is internal, that which we can feel, experience, and share emotionally? What about INNER light?

Each of us is a light source of our own! Our talents, interests, unique qualities, kind characteristics are our own inner lights. Just as turning on a lamp or standing in the sunshine can bring about feelings of comfort, strength or hope, so too can our inner lights illuminate goodness.

External lights are easy to share and increase, but it can be more complicated to do so with our inner lights. These light

### Create your own pocket flashlights:

- ◆ Measure 4 2-inch squares on adhesive-backed foam sheets and cut out the squares.
- ◆ In the middle of 2 of the squares, trace around a 3-volt lithium coin battery and cut out the circles.
- ◆ Remove the backing from the 2 squares with the cut-out circles. Stick them together. Push the battery into the hole.
- ◆ Slightly spread apart the leads of a 5mm LED bulb. Place it over one edge of the doubled foam square, so that the longer lead is on the positive (+) side of the battery. Neither lead should be touching the battery.
- ◆ Gently place one smaller, non-adhesive foam square over the battery on one side. Remove the backing from one adhesive-backed square and place on top. Push the edges of the square together to seal. Repeat on the other side.
- ◆ Wrap the flashlight with washi or colored masking tape.



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sources grow and spread when we use them to positively impact others or influence the world around us.

**Ask students to write down with pencil their own "inner lights," their own unique or special characteristics, talents, interests or traits.**  
**With the lights off, ask them to read each other's papers, using their pocket flashlights.**  
**Encourage them to shine their lights, both facing the other students' papers, then from *behind* the other students' papers.**

**Challenge students to find ways to spread, share, and increase light, both at home and at school.**  
**What projects in your own community are ways to be "a light for the nations"?**

**What opportunities are there in your school for sharing personal talents or interests?**  
**What activities can help students illuminate their own family *Hanukah* celebrations?**

Often, the way we can best recognize each other's inner lights is by sharing our own. As with the students' papers and flashlights, we sometimes find that the most poignant way to experience another's inner light is by standing behind him/her in support.

## Family Programming for *Hanukkah*:

# Learning Long-term Planning for Holidays

Cherie Koller-Fox

### INTRODUCTION:

I'm sure there were always educators who brought parents into their schools for events and for holiday celebrations. I don't know how often that happened, but, in 1976, when I became the principal of the Harvard Hillel Children's School in Cambridge, MA (which later became a synagogue known as Eitz Chayim), I realized that this was a critically important aspect of Jewish education. This was not about bringing parents to school, this was more about understanding that without the parents as partners, our work in Jewish education was not going to be as successful.

Many Jewish observances are centered in the home and are connected to emotional memories that we have of sharing these experiences with our parents and grandparents and extended family. The people sending their children to HHCS for the most part did not have extended family in Boston. Often, one parent was not born Jewish — meaning conversion or not, there was another non-Jewish family vying for the emotional memories of my students.

The other thing that was striking about the parent body of the Harvard Hillel Children's School was their connection to Harvard and to other universities in the Boston area. Many of these parents were well-known, some even famous. A couple had won Nobel prizes in their fields and, still, their knowledge of Judaism was nowhere close to the level of their knowledge of almost anything else in their lives. They sent their children to a school associated with Hillel and not with a synagogue, but they wanted their children to get a Jewish education, and they wanted it to be excellent because they wanted everything their children did to be excellent. What became clear to me was, if the things the children were learning in school weren't important to their parents, they didn't have as great a chance to be important to their children.

Where to start?

The holidays and *Shabbat*, which I began to term "year-cycle," seemed like a likely place to start. I wanted the families to become familiar with the cycle of the Jewish year. I wanted them to look forward to the Jewish holidays the way they looked forward to the secular ones, like Halloween. As time went on, it became clear that there were things that they didn't have at home (like a *hanukkah* or a recipe for *latkes*) or information they didn't know (like how to play *dreidel*) that made the observance of these holidays difficult or impossible for them.

I decided to start filling in what these families lacked in repertoire and props. The first problem was they didn't know when the holidays occurred. The first project then had to be a calendar. It couldn't be just any calendar, because the most important thing about it was that it had to go home with them and find a place of honor in their home. How to do that?

They needed an emotional attachment to the calendar — so they would deem it worthy to hang in their homes. That is why I had them make the calendar as a family. Secondly, it had to be pretty and sturdy. No one wants to hang something in their kitchen that does not meet

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those criteria. We designed a pretty and sturdy calendar that was complicated enough to make sure that it required the attention of both the parents and their children. And, indeed, they were hung in every household. Step one.

## TOWARD A THEORY OF FAMILY EDUCATION

It took some years and some successes and failures to develop a theory of family education. This paper will attempt to describe that theory using *Hanukah* as an example. Everything that we are discussing here about *Hanukah* can be applied to every holiday.

In my theoretical construct of family education, there are three basic categories: year-cycle, lifecycle and *mitzvot*. This proved to be a clear way to organize programming. This paper will focus only on year-cycle and specifically *Hanukah*; however, I would like to define the other two categories. Lifecycle includes those events that we normally think of when we use this term — birth, *bar/t mitzvah*, wedding and death. When a family is going through these events and before, there are many opportunities for in-depth and meaningful family education. There are other lifecycle events that are worthy of paying attention to as well. One example

**In my theoretical construct of family education, there are three basic categories: year cycle, life cycle and *mitzvot*.**

is when the preparation and leading of the *seder* is passed on from one generation to the next. Another might be when a teen learns to drive or when the first child goes off to college. All these events provide opportunities for family education that are appreciated by the family. The third category is *mitzvot*. Any of the commandments that do not have to do with holidays, *Shabbat* or lifecycle belong in this category. *Tzedakah* (and, by extension, social action) is a good place to start in this area because most people are already doing the *mitzvah* and all you have to do is label it and give them a Jewish context. This contrasts with other commandments such as *kashrut* for those who do not observe it. Here you would have to educate, label, and also work toward people changing their behavior, which is a much harder challenge. Holidays, lifecycle, and *mitzvot* are the building blocks of on-going Jewish living and, as such, merit being the building blocks of family education.

## THE METHODOLOGY OF FAMILY EDUCATION

There is a quote from a book called *Education in Religion and Morals*, by George A. Coe, that was instrumental in my thinking about Family Education. It was originally published

in 1904, but the book has been reissued. In it, Coe defines the local church: “The local church is, among other things, a school of religion, of which the Sunday School is simply a department. There should be a definite plan for the child from infancy, to the close of adolescence. This implies finally the organization of the church and the family into an educational unity. Such a scheme calls for expert leadership.”

Coe sees the whole synagogue as a school of religion and not just the classes that happen for children on Sunday mornings and/or during the week. Our schools, like all schools, were designed to teach the skills that children will need to become adults in society. Making Judaism fun or meaningful or memorable was traditionally the role of the family. Besides the formal education, there must also be informal education and experiential education. What will happen to the child, Coe asks, from the day he is born until the day she graduates college? How will the family and the synagogue interact to ensure that the newly minted adult goes off as an educated Jew?

Coe is asking us to consider the greater questions: How often will the families get together for holidays and for *Shabbat*?

When and where will they build a *sukkah*? When will they make or buy a *menorah*? How will they become aware of *Tu b'Shevat* and who will make costumes for *Purim* and *matzah* balls for Passover? When someone in the family dies, who will be there to comfort them and who will rejoice with them at a *Bar Mitzvah* or wedding. When will they join their community in marching against hunger or demonstrating in front of ICE headquarters for immigration rights? Who will provide bail if they get arrested? Should they get arrested for social justice issues before they graduate? Such a complicated scheme calls for expert leadership both to design such complicated and wide-ranging educational experiences and to cultivate buy-in and partnership from the parents and extended family members.

The year-cycle is a start toward such a scheme, but it is far from the endpoint of this vision. For a cycle observance to have real significance, it must happen repeatedly over many years. These years represent the childhood memories of our students — as Coe says, “from infancy to the close of adolescence.”

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How many years do we have with each child and family? I see this as a simple math problem. Let's say that in the worst-case scenario, the family does not join our community until their oldest child is entering 3rd grade — typically the beginning of "Hebrew School."

Let's say, too, that the child drops out when he/she is 13 years old — post *Bar Mitzvah*. What if that child has just one sibling two years younger than they. How much time can we guarantee we will have with that family if they leave the community after the *Bar Mitzvah* of the younger son. The answer is seven years. If they have three children, you would have nine years with them, and if they come into the community in kindergarten and stay through the *Bar Mitzvah* of their youngest, we can up the number of contact years to 12. It is true that if you do your job well, this family will not drop out and end their Jewish education, but it's good for curricular purposes to have a number in mind to plan for, which is why I prefer to think in terms of seven-year-cycles. If we have seven years with a family, what can they learn? What can they learn to appreciate about Judaism and what can be our goals for them?

Because the scope of this paper is limited to family education, I cannot answer this question completely, but let's ask it differently. What can a family learn and come to appreciate in seven years about the Jewish holidays and about the specific example, *Hanukah*.

## THEMES

All holidays can be broken down into themes. A theme is a major concept or aspect of the holiday. For *Hanukah*, it might be the idea of dedication, or light or gift-giving. To begin thinking about the seven years you have with our model family, you want to identify seven or more themes of *Hanukah*. You will want to focus on one theme a year. (See the charts that accompany this paper).

Some schools may want to give one theme to each grade, but I don't recommend that. The poor parents with three children will find themselves sitting in the same rooms every couple of years doing the same program over and over. Since their learning is as important to me as their children's learning, I would suggest that you think of a theme as being the main idea that everyone in the school will learn during the weeks preceding *Hanukah* and during the family event you sponsor that year. If, for practical reasons of space or numbers, you cannot do that, then I would suggest you divide each theme into three parts and make sure that our model family focuses on three different aspects of it over the course of their years with you. For example, if you use a food of *Hanukah* theme,

one year it might be *latkes*, another *sufganiot* and the third, *bimuelos*, a Sephardic *Hanukah* fritter.

Once you list the themes of *Hanukah*, you might want to prioritize them or order them, but, in some ways, that doesn't matter since everyone will get them at some point in their years with you.

## MODELS

Now I can imagine you will gather your team and say, "what are we going to do for *Hanukah* this year?" I think this question can lead only to chaos, because you want to be deliberate about your choices as we discussed above. I suggest that once you decide on your theme, you then ask yourselves, what model should we use?

The advantage of models is that they are defined ways of organizing events. The major models I have used are workshops (a round-robin format), *Seder* (based on the idea of eating special foods and telling the story of the holiday in an orderly fashion), and a celebration (this is more of a party, but a party based on the traditional celebrations for the holiday.). There are many other models you can use: retreats, outdoor education, and parent-child study, to name but a few. Everyone is familiar with these types of models, and if you begin with a theme and then choose a model, it is relatively easy to put the pieces of the event together. For example, if I choose to do a workshop model for *Hanukah*, I would decide on several activities that take place in different locations in my building and ask people to move from one activity to another. Some of the activities might be with the whole family and some might be age-appropriate activities. If I have two hours for my event, I could have 30 minutes for each of three stations, and I would have time to get everyone together for refreshments at the end. Now I can focus on what three activities I want to design around the theme I have chosen.

I would try to vary the models I use during a given year. I wouldn't want to go to multiple events that were only workshop models. If I used a workshop model for *Hanukah* last year, I might consider using a celebration model this year. I might decide that a *Seder* model would never be my choice for a *Hanukah* event. I might also have a combination of models, such as a workshop followed by a celebration.

## REPERTOIRE

Now that I know my theme and model, it brings us to the very important notion of repertoire. I would define repertoire as a stock of skills or types of behavior that a person habitually uses. The type of home celebration that a family has is largely determined by their *Hanukah* repertoire. If they don't know

which way to put the *Hanukah* candles in the *menorah* or they stumble over the blessings, it will be difficult for them to celebrate at home. If they know the basics, but don't know any *Hanukah* songs or stories or games, then their celebration will be very, very short. If they don't have family recipes for *Hanukah* or they haven't learned about the Israeli custom of eating jelly donuts, their celebration might be very weak. What alternatives are there for giving presents every night? What activities could we do to make the evening special for our kids? All these things are in the category of repertoire. In seven years, our model family will know seven songs, seven recipes, seven stories, and seven of whatever else you teach them. In seven years, their *Hanukah* celebration will be much

their house for *Hanukah*. You might want to send home quality crafts to help them add to their collection of treasured items over the years. One example is "fake" stained glass panels with *Hanukah* themes that go up on the window or decorations to put around the house.

One of the customs connected to all the holidays that I've found difficult to teach is the custom of "*Hiddur Mitzvah*."

An article in *My Jewish Learning* states: "Beauty enhances the *mitzvot* by appealing to the senses. Beautiful sounds and agreeable fragrances, tastes, textures, colors, and artistry contribute to human enjoyment of religious acts, and

**No matter what the theme or model you use, you want to be sure and ask yourself, how am I adding to the repertoire of skills and knowledge and resources I am giving this family.**

deeper and richer than it was when they first came in your door, if you make sure to keep the topic of repertoire high on your list.

No matter what theme or model you use, you want to be sure to ask yourself, how am I adding to the repertoire of skills and knowledge and resources I am giving this family. How am I making sure that what I am teaching at school to the children gets home to the adults in a way that is usable for them? What kind of adult education am I incorporating into the program so that the adults will increase their own comfort level and repertoire.

Let's say that you teach children a song for *Hanukah*. Clearly, you would have to teach it more than once for them to learn it, but if the parents don't know which songs the children are learning, and if they don't learn those songs themselves, the family is not likely to sing them at home. You might want to send home a link to the music and words, so the family has access to the song until they feel comfortable with it. After seven years of teaching songs, you might want to make a CD or electronic download of all the songs they've learned for every family to have as part of their repertoire.

## PROPS

Even if under your tutelage every child knows the blessings over the candles and every parent has learned how to put the candles in the *menorah*, it won't matter if they don't own a *menorah*. Most Jewish families do own a *menorah*, but there are other props for *Hanukah* they might not own. They might not have a *dreidel* and the rules for playing multiple *dreidel* games. They might not know that it is a custom to decorate

beauty itself takes on a religious dimension. The principle of enhancing a *mitzvah* through aesthetics is called *Hiddur Mitzvah*."

Why this concept is so hard to teach, I don't know, but people don't immediately take to spending money to buy a beautiful, hand-made \$75.00 *hanukiah* when they can buy a tin one for \$2.00 or use one made of bolts that their child made. I suspect it has to do with how important the object is to them and whether they want their home filled with beautiful Jewish symbols and art. I think it's not necessarily the first thing that happens for a family.

In the meantime, I am happy to be able to send home family-made works of art that are usable and washable and beautiful. If you can't light the *hanukiah* or you can't wash the *kiddush* cup, it doesn't serve as a prop for home observance. All the crafts that I invest time and money in are meant to serve as props.

## FAMILY EDUCATION IS ADULT EDUCATION

One important aspect of the theory of family education is called "scaffolding." In the field of education, the term "scaffolding" refers to a process in which teachers model or demonstrate how to solve a problem and then step back, offering support as needed. Psychologist and instructional designer Jerome Bruner first used the term "scaffolding" in this context back in the 1960s. In Jewish family education, this term is used to mean that it is our role as educators to demonstrate how to celebrate *Hanukah* and then step back, offering support as needed.

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Scaffolding is a temporary platform that is used to elevate, offer support, and provide materials during a construction process. As Jewish educators, we are trying to offer support to adults and provide them with the materials they need to parent their Jewish children. Once, I was giving a workshop about family education, and I noticed, as the morning went on, that the audience was getting less and less receptive to what I had to say. Finally, after a break, they pushed one of their colleagues toward me and he shared their concern. “The parents,” they said, “are our enemies.” He elaborated on their points. “If the parents could come into the school or into the classroom, they would complain about what they saw. They might think it was too Jewish!” Another concern they had was ““The parents don’t care about their children’s Jewish education” they said. “If it was up to them, they wouldn’t have a Jewish education. We are the ones who care enough to make sure there is a next generation of Jews in America.”

This was a pretty typical position in the 1950s. Schools told parents that if they dropped their children off on Sunday and several times during the week, they would make the children Jewish and that would solve all contemporary problems such as intermarriage. But it turned out that intermarriage is a societal problem that can’t be solved by any school. Schools can teach children, and they can even inspire them, but Judaism is home-based by design.

I once had a woman tell me that her father was an atheist, and she didn’t know whether it would be more respectful to say *Kaddish* for him or not say *Kaddish* for him. Who our parents are and what they believe and what is important to them about Judaism is ultimately how a child will get his/her own Jewish identity. Studies have shown that the strongest Jewish identity is gained between the ages of birth and two years old. Parents can’t be our enemies. They must be our partners.

More than just partners, we have an obligation to the parents of our students. I’m sure there are lots of Jewish children whose parents decide not to send them to get a Jewish education and that there are some families who send their children to churches or ashrams. The parents in your school, even the least interested of them, have made a commitment of time and money, and they want their child to have a Jewish education. My insight has been that many of them want a Jewish education themselves, and almost all of them want to be Jewish parents to their own children.

That is where scaffolding comes in. Our job is to give them the tools and information, the repertoire and props they need, to be good Jewish parents and role models to their

own children. Unfortunately, many adults today did not get this information as children themselves or, if they did, they weren’t interested in it then. We must invest in the education of the parents and, in the end, family education must focus on them, while at the same time involving the children in meaningful activities with their parents.

When you invite a family to come to the synagogue for a dinner on *Hanukah*, ask them to bring their family *hanukiah*. At some point, you want to demonstrate to parents, or send home in writing, directions for the proper way to light a *hanukiah* and the proper way to say the blessings. Since it is their family *hanukiah*, lighting it with their children is more special and more memorable than lighting a large *menorah* in front of the synagogue can ever be. Ideally, having smaller gatherings in people’s homes can be even more poignant, because the children will feel that they are celebrating *Hanukah* in their own homes or in their friends’ homes. This type of home celebration requires making sure that there is a parent who knows the ritual and that the group knows how to plan a *Hanukah* party with the resources you have given them. That might take several meetings with the hosts or making sure you have a staff member or a knowledgeable parent at each event. This might be a model best done several years into your seven-year-cycle.

Two other points about the adult learners. All Jewish holidays have mature texts and history connected to them. *Hanukah* is no different. There is a much more complex story of *Hanukah* than the one normally taught to children. Adults can and should learn about the Maccabees and the period of Jewish history over which they reigned. Adults can and should learn the origins of the customs of *Hanukah* that have lots of interesting commentary associated with them. Adults can and should be exposed to the adult music and art and culinary traditions that have grown up around *Hanukah* in Jewish culture.

This can be done in several ways. Adult education classes can be organized for adults in the weeks leading up to a holiday. The holiday event itself almost always should include an adult-only education event. It is a mistake to assume that a family event implies that the children and adults will be together 100% of the time. It is sufficient for them to do some things together and still walk away from the event having learned something to deepen their own knowledge of the holiday. Over the seven years, care should be taken to teach the adults more and deeper things about *Hanukah*, in addition to skills that they need in order to know to celebrate it at home and with friends and family.

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## COLLABORATIVE PLANNING OF FAMILY EVENTS

Almost as a necessity at Congregation Eitz Chayim, we began using parent committees to plan family events. If your model is a synagogue rather than just a school, you can certainly use multi-generational planning committees. What is the advantage of planning with the stakeholders? For one thing, if you do, you will have a representative sample of what people in your community would find fun and interesting to do. Sometimes a committee can encourage you to go into areas of study that you might have been hesitating to do without their encouragement.

One *Hanukah*, I opened the first meeting of the committee with a study session about the holiday. All committees began this way. If they were going to plan an event, they needed to learn about it and see what piqued their interest. This committee was very interested in the idea that the Maccabees were zealots who opposed the assimilation of the Hellenizers. They wanted to plan a *Hanukah* event on the theme of assimilation. There are not many educators who would approach such a theme without great trepidation, but this committee led the way and, together, we produced an event that literally won an award for excellence from our local Bureau of Jewish Education.

The adults on the committees also come with many skills. We had one set of parents who were archeologists specializing in the Greek period. We were able to design an event around that with their help and the resources available to them. We had a mother who was an artist and designed a beautiful craft for *Hanukah* decoration. I had one teacher who was a physicist who taught the families about the physics of spinning the dreidel and about the probability of rolling *Gimmel* twice in a row. I've found that programmatically the events are much stronger when you bring the resources and skills of the parents to bear.

More than that, the parents took roles such as shopping for food or materials or preparing crafts or sewing them after they were done. We asked parents about the skills they had listed on their enrollment forms, and we designed our programs around them and with them and, of course, in the end, for them and for their families.

Every family was required to serve on one committee a year. You can organize this in a way that works for the numbers and sensibilities of your community, but I cannot emphasize enough how partnering with parents made everything so much better and richer.

And then there is the issue of ownership. Whose event is

it? Is it yours, the clergy's, the synagogue's? Or does the event belong to the members of the community? I know that people have different answers to that question, but I can tell you one interesting fact. If the members feel that the event belongs to them — meaning that they or their friends participated in planning and that they had some input in designing — attendance at the events is much higher because buy-in is higher.

## EVALUATION AND SELF-STUDY

Evaluation and self-studies are the ways to learn about what you are doing and improve upon it. You need to get feedback from the participants to know what worked and what didn't, what was meaningful to them and to their children and what wasn't.

The questionnaire you give should ask the questions to which you want to know the answers. For example, if you ask people if they enjoyed the *Hanukah* event, they will say yes or no, but you won't learn much from that answer. If you ask people what they liked about the event and what they didn't like about the event, you will learn more. I used these evaluations to understand perplexing questions. For example, we asked if they thought the workshop model event was well organized. Some people said it was the most organized event they had ever been to and other people said it was the most unorganized event they had ever been to. How could that be? So we asked people to elaborate the next time, and it turned out that, for some people, the round robin model was too stressful — especially for families with younger children who had to move strollers and diaper bags and children from location to location or people who don't like a few moments of confusion between activities. From then on, it was relatively easy for us to plan so that we offered some activities where people go from place to place, getting up and seeing their friends, and some accommodating those who preferred to stay in one room and have the various events come to them. After that change, everyone agreed that the events were well-organized.

Evaluations also can tell you if you are boring folks or challenging them. If you don't make the events something people are looking for, they simply will stop coming and stop bringing their children. It becomes critically important to check in with your people and see what they think about what you are doing. Sometimes, they offer great suggestions to improve things, and some suggestions even solved problems you did not know about until they told you.

## PROGRAMMING FOR HANUKAH

The first three addenda are charts that I used to keep track of

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what I was teaching over the seven years. After seven years, you can decide to go back to a theme or keep going with additional themes. With some exceptions, this is what we did, as you can see from the fact that the chart includes 15 years of programming. As long as people are learning about *Hanukah*, it doesn't matter to me how old they are when they learn a particular aspect of the holiday or in what order they learn it. Remember, too, there is a spiral curriculum in the school that teaches skills and information about *Hanukah*, some of it related to the theme of the year and some of it part of the normal holiday curriculum of the school.

I am including the charts that I have filled out and a blank version for you to fill out. If you see something else mentioned in a chart that you are interested in that I did not include, or you have a question about any aspect of family programming, please feel free to contact me at [shual@comcast.net](mailto:shual@comcast.net).

## ADDENDUM 4: SUMMARY OF MODELS

The form of an event should be related to its goals. For example, the goal might be to teach about an upcoming holiday, while, at other times, it is to actually celebrate that holiday. Sometimes the goal is to strengthen the whole community, and, at other times, it might be to create opportunities for small-group interaction. I have identified six main models: workshop, celebration, *seder*, retreat, parallel learning, and parent-child learning.

The advantage of using models in planning is that once you choose the model you are working with, you have only to fit the content to the form. Logistics are one of the crucial factors in the success of family education, and this process allows one to become a master of the logistics, which frees up time and energy, allowing the planning team to focus on the specific content. It also helps the community to learn to know what to expect at any given event, which makes it easier to attend and not be overwhelmed.

### Workshop

A workshop mode is used most often. It uses either a round-robin technique of crowd movement or a series of whole-group events, one after the other. These events rely on the arts and culture. Always send information home with the participants so they can replicate the activity, be it cooking, drama, dance, music, crafts, etc. Often, the events include the creation of props needed for home celebrations. Text study is built in to each event. Children and parents are together during parts of the event and separated during other parts to provide age-appropriate learning opportunities as well as chances for family fun. Learning to use this model includes

mastering skills such as crowd movement, time management, budget, staffing, resources, child development, adult development, design of cross-age learning, etc.

### *Seder*

The *seder* is one of the most powerful examples of curriculum development ever invented. It was intended to transmit both a story and the accompanying emotions from generation to generation, whether or not the "teacher" using the material is knowledgeable. Obviously, this model was created to teach the Passover story; however, we can use the model to teach a wide range of stories and customs. This model uses a question-and-answer format; presents material in a set order; and includes special features such as the use of symbolic foods, songs, historical reenactments, and ways to personalize and update the material. The planner must know how to organize a *seder* and how to ensure good attendance, how to personalize it, and how to make it new each year.

### Celebration

This model incorporates traditional Jewish values, customs, and traditions and uses them to throw a really great party. A celebration takes place on the day of the event you are celebrating, i.e., a *Hanukah* party on *Hanukah*. The emphasis is not on learning about the holiday or life-cycle event, but actually on participating in it. A celebration model also can be used as a commemoration or a service — it can be happy or sad. It is how we learn to participate in Jewish life in an authentic and inclusive way so that the whole family can actively participate fully and understand what is going on.

### Retreat

This is an event that takes place over several days, either at home or away in a camp or retreat setting. The goal is often community-building and a chance for strengthening personal relationships. It also gives participants an opportunity to learn a topic in depth, or to spend more leisurely time together or to experience *Shabbat* or a holiday together as a community.

### Parallel Learning

Children and parents learn similar material, but in age-appropriate settings and ways. They often are given the opportunity to interact with each other using the material they have learned. Parallel learning can be one-time on one theme or can be designed as courses or other learning opportunities across time. This method creates a common vocabulary between parent and child and helps the child reinforce what is learned in school at home.

### Parent-child learning

This model can either provide an equal playing field so that

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parents and children can discuss the same material or it can prepare the parents to be the teachers of their own children.

## Other models?

Yes, there are many possible models, but each community should pick 3-5 to use on a regular basis.

## ADDENDUM 5: CRITERIA OF MODELS:

Questions to ask when planning specific kinds of events

### Workshops (Round Robin events)

1. What are the elements of the holiday we wish to teach this year?
2. How can families participate together?
3. Which activities are important that parents and children do separately?
4. What skills do we want to impart this year?
5. What props do they need at home?
6. How can the arts (visual, music, drama, storytelling, dance) be used in this event?
7. What traditions (whether well-known or not) make the events feel authentically Jewish?
8. What appropriate *tzedakah* can be associated with this event?
9. What do you want the families to take home with following the event?

### Celebration

1. What is it that we are celebrating?
2. What traditional things must or should happen during this celebration?
3. What props are used for this celebration?
4. What theme do we want to emphasize this year?
5. What would really make this celebration fun for everyone?
6. What traditions (whether well-known or not) make the celebration feel authentically Jewish?
7. How can the children participate in the planning or execution of the event?
8. How can the parents participate in the planning or execution of the event?
9. What appropriate *tzedakah* can be associated with this event?
10. What do you want the families to take home with following the event?

### Seder

(A *seder* is a meal in which ritual foods are eaten in a particular order and a story is told. This event is based on the model of a Passover *seder*).

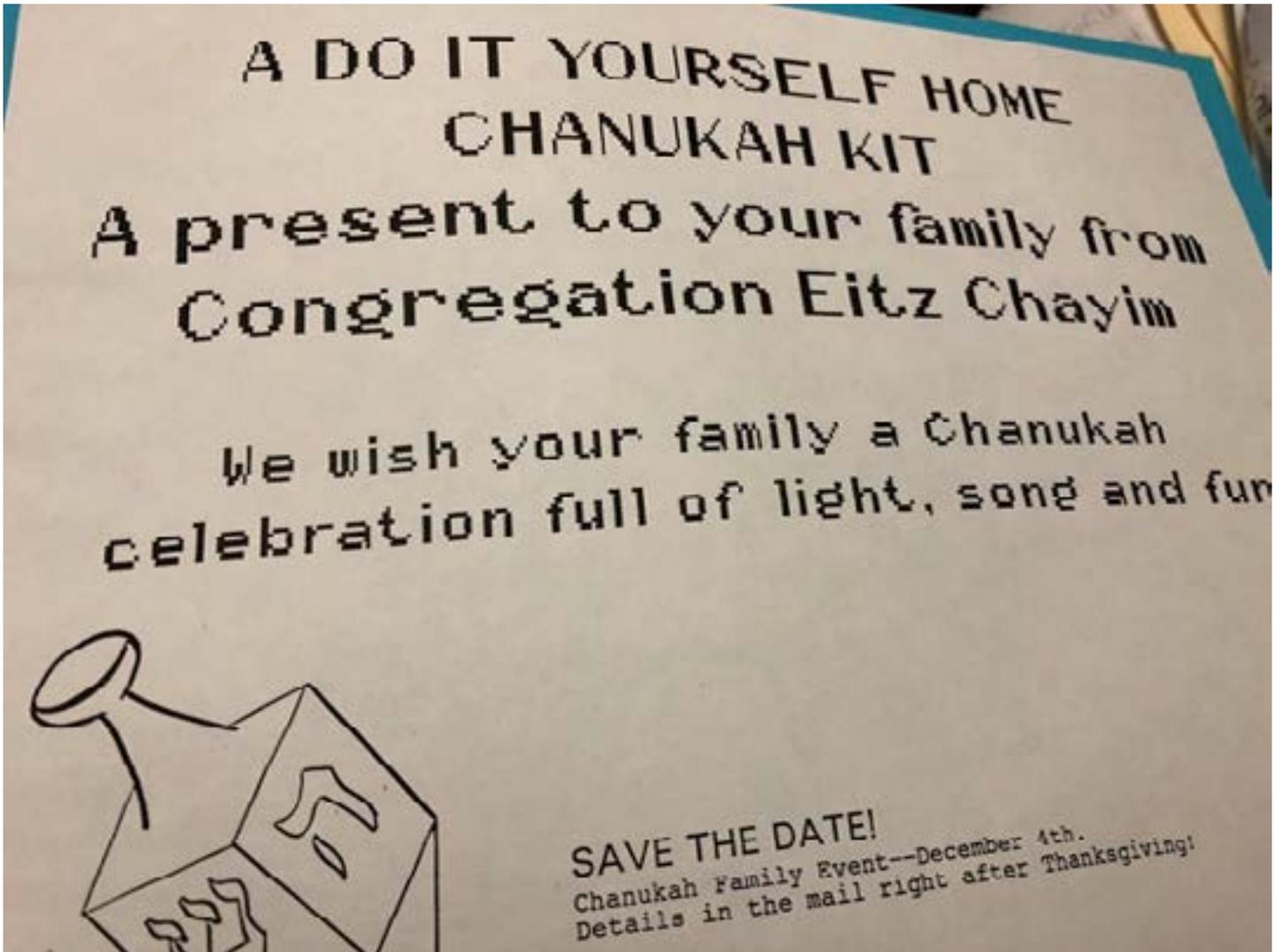
1. What are the questions you are going to ask in this *seder*?
2. Will there be objects on the table that lead to questioning by the attendees?

3. Are there symbolic foods to eat?
4. What is the story you are going to tell?
5. What are the songs you are going to sing and the prayers you might want to incorporate?
6. What traditional foods will you eat that are appropriate to this event?
7. What additions can you make that can relate to current events or ideas?
8. Are there messianic connections to be made here?
9. Are there connections to the land of Israel to be made here?
10. In what ways will you use the arts?
11. What will be included in the *Haggada* for this event?
12. Is the program family centered? Can it be recreated at home?
13. What has to be prepared in advance? (Either food or aspects of the program)
14. What is the order of this *seder* that you are writing?
15. What is an appropriate *tzedakah* associated with this event?

**Administrative Issues** that need to be thought through for every event:

- When should the event be held?
- Make an invitation and other forms of publicity.
- Work with a parent committee.
- Work with the staff including teachers, clergy, outside presenters.
- Purchase supplies/do xeroxing of needed materials.
- Budget for the event/how much do you want to spend per family?
- Raising money for the event.
- How do you want to use the space you have available for the event? Does it need to be moved to another venue?
- How will you insure people will attend?
- Publish a schedule of the day, maps of the space and timing so everyone knows where to go and when.
- Design a curriculum for this event.
- How much time will it take to plan and execute this event? Delegate responsibilities.
- Who has primary responsibility for this event? The school, the congregation, the parent body?
- Long-term design? How does this event fit into all other family events, and how does it impact the curriculum of the school or a sermon the rabbi gives or music the cantor or song leader teaches?

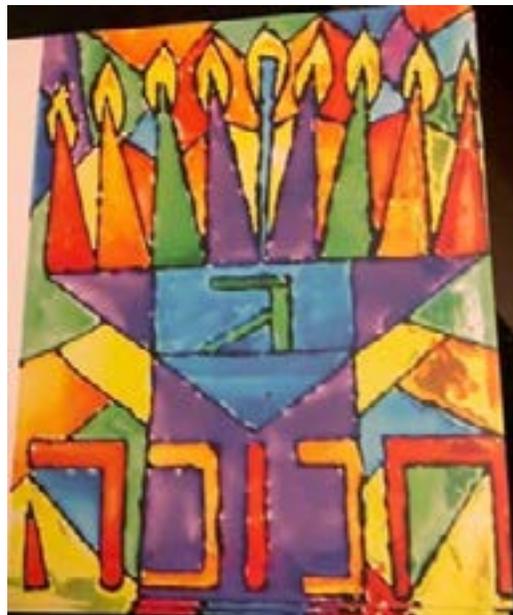
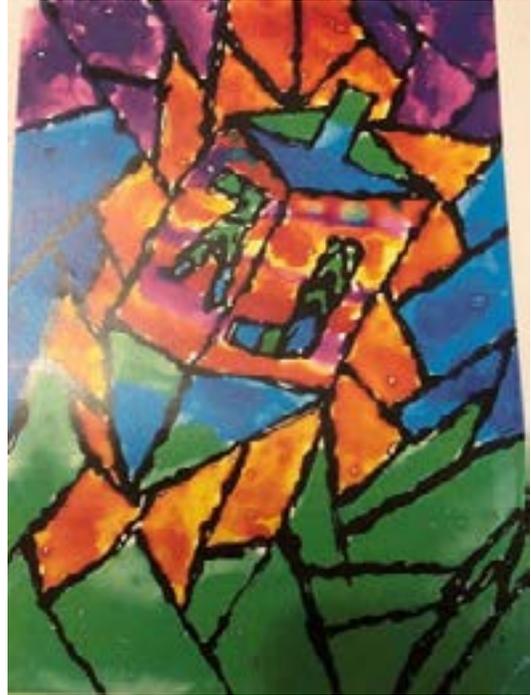
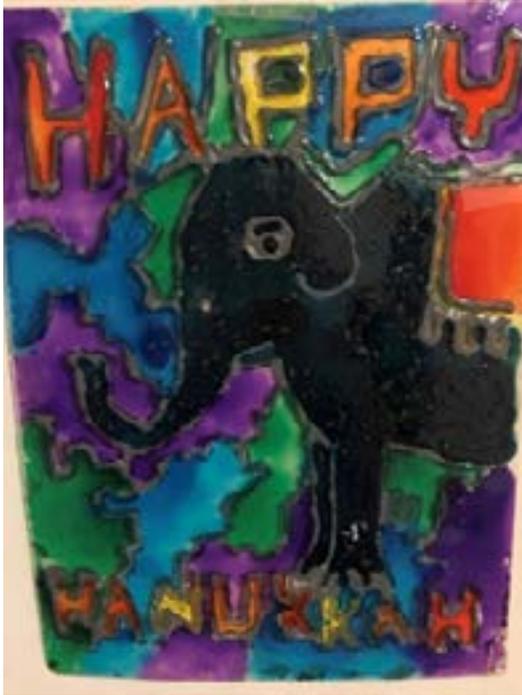
ADDENDUM 6:



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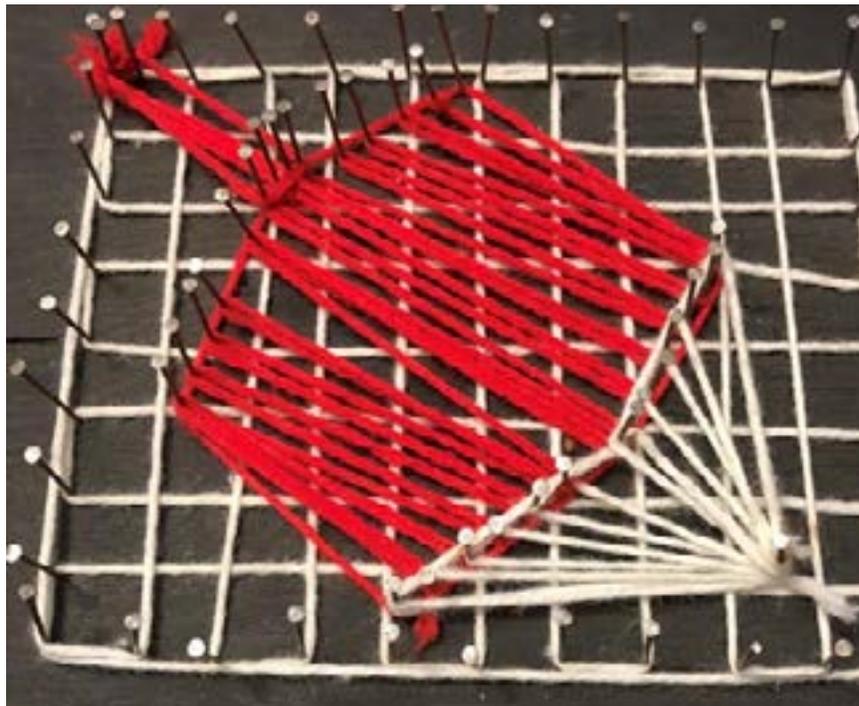
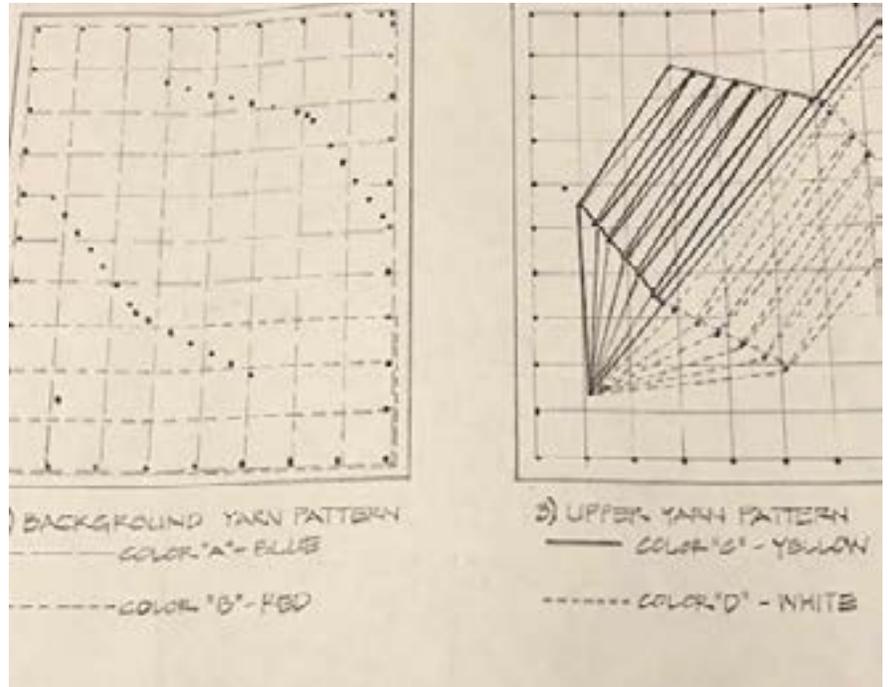
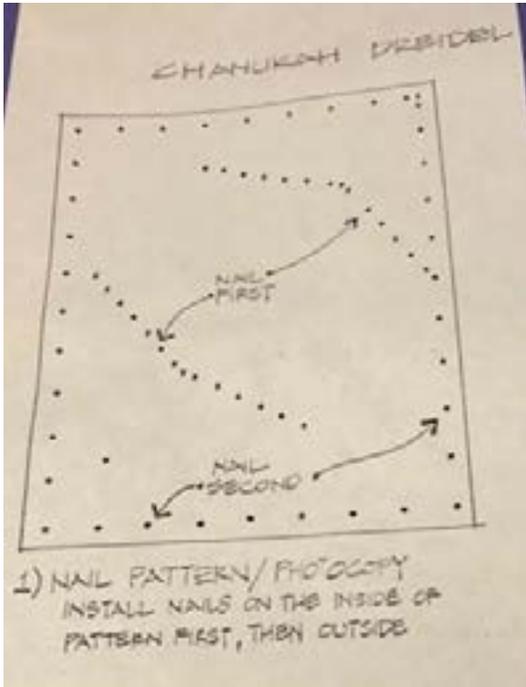
### ADDENDUM 7:

At your local craft store, visit the faux stained glass section. It uses clear plastic sheets as a base, a faux leading that's basically black dimensional paint in a squeeze bottle (you pipe it on like cake frosting), and clear acrylic paints to go between your leading lines. Pipe the designs with leading, wait for it to dry (less than an hour), and fill in the designs with the paint. You can reduce the expense by finding cheaper pieces of plastic.



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ADDENDUM 8: Credit: Sara Dolitsky



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ADDENDUM 9: Credit: Joe Fendel

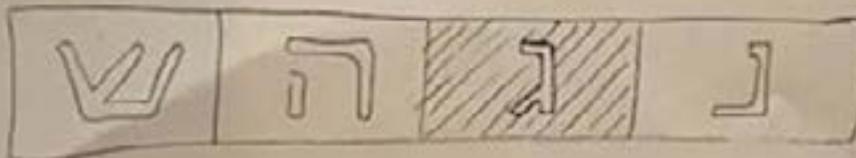


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ADDENDUM 10: Credit: Joe Fendel

THE CHANCE OF GETTING A "ג" ON ANY GIVEN SPIN OF A DREIDEL IS

$$\frac{1}{4} \text{ OR } 25\%$$



THE CHANCE OF GETTING TWO "ג"s IN A ROW AT ANY GIVEN TIME IS

$$\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{1}{4} = \frac{1}{16}$$

	ש	ה	ג	נ
נ	נשכ	נהכ	נגכ	ננכ
ג	גשג	גהג	גגג	גנג
ה	השה	ההה	הגה	הנה
ש	ששש	שהש	שגש	שנש

AS ONE CAN SEE, EXACTLY ONE OF THE SIXTEEN SQUARES ON THE LEFT HAS TWO "ג"s! SO WHAT'S THE CHANCE OF GETTING NO "ג"s IN TWO SPINS??

-DREIDEL STATISTICS © JOE FENDEL, 1998

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## ADDENDUM 11

**EVALUATION FORM**

*Please fill out in last activity*

1. Did the movement around the building go smoothly for your family today?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Suggestions \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Check the activity that the adults like best:

<input type="checkbox"/> ADULT ED Lecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Fun & Family Momento
<input type="checkbox"/> Archeology Lab	<input type="checkbox"/> Food & Music
<input type="checkbox"/> Giving & Gratitude	<input type="checkbox"/> Storyteller

3. Check the activity the children liked the best:

<input type="checkbox"/> Classes with teachers	<input type="checkbox"/> Fun & Family Momento
<input type="checkbox"/> Archeology lab	<input type="checkbox"/> Food & Music
<input type="checkbox"/> Giving & Gratitude	<input type="checkbox"/> Storyteller

4. Check all that apply:

- We learned some new information about Hanukah
- We enjoyed being with the community on the holiday
- We talked to people we already knew (not counting family)
- We talked to someone we hadn't known before
- We're glad we came

5. Please let us know how you would improve this event.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Provocation Cards

Lisa Kritz



The Moriah Plant

Lisa Kritz, a 40+ year veteran of Jewish Early Childhood Education, was the Director at Hertz Nursery School from 1988 to 2018. She co-founded Second Nature Design Consulting and has been involved with creating and maintaining outdoor classroom environments that include building Woodland Wilderness, an accredited Nature Explore Outdoor Classroom. Lisa holds a Bachelor of Education degree from University of Rhode Island and a certificate in ECE from Hebrew College. She is a founding member of the former Boston Judaic Accreditation certificate and of the Boston-Haifa Early Childhood Educators Partnership. Additionally, Lisa has taught outreach for Hebrew College Early Childhood Initiatives. [Lnkritz@aol.com](mailto:Lnkritz@aol.com)

וַעֲשִׂיתָ מִנְרֵת זָהָב טְהוֹר מִקֶּשֶׁה תַעֲשֶׂה הַמִּנְרֵה יָרְבֵה וְקָנֶה גְבִיעֵיהָ כַּפְתֻּרֶיהָ וּפְרָחֶיהָ מִמָּנֶה יְהִי׃  
וְשֵׁשֶׁה קָנִים יֵצְאוּ מִצְדֵּיהָ שְׁלֹשָׁה קָנֵי מִנְרֵה מִצְדֵּה הָאֶחָד וְשְׁלֹשָׁה קָנֵי מִנְרֵה מִצְדֵּה הַשֵּׁנִי׃  
וְשֵׁשֶׁה גְבָעִים מְשֻׁקָּדִים בְּקִנְיָה הָאֶחָד כַּפְתֹּר וּפְרָחַ וְשְׁלֹשָׁה גְבָעִים מְשֻׁקָּדִים בְּקִנְיָה הָאֶחָד כַּפְתֹּר וּפְרָח בָּן לְשֵׁשֶׁת הַקָּנִים הַיֵּצְאוּ מִן־הַמִּנְרֵה׃  
שְׁמוֹת׃ כ"ה, לֹא־לֵג

- <sup>31</sup> Make a lampstand of pure gold. Hammer out its base and shaft, and make its flower-like cups, buds and blossoms of one piece with them.
  - <sup>32</sup> Six branches are to extend from the sides of the lampstand—three on one side and three on the other.
  - <sup>33</sup> Three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms are to be on one branch, three on the next branch, and the same for all six branches extending from the lampstand.
- Exodus 25: 31-33

These provocation cards (cards designed to be used as a prompt to aid discussion and professional inquiry) were to be used during our session at NewCAJE 9 in 2018. A provocation can be used with many different age groups. They can also be seen as curriculum starters if you want to change up your regular *Hankkah* experience. I hope these help spirit a different conversation.

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## 1. MIRACLES

Define miracles

Can you name a miracle in your life?

Why do we need miracles?

## 2. GATES OF JERUSALEM

Link *tefilah/Shema* and the gates

Give or read book about the gates around Jerusalem

On which gates will you find a *mezuzah* now? Why?

Legend of the Six Day War and gates

Incorporate the second paragraph of *Shema* "on the doorposts of your homes and upon your gates".

The idea of this subject is to give an orientation to Jerusalem, entering the gates and going to the *Beit ha-Mikdash* to see what has happened. What does Jerusalem look like today?

Are the gates still there?

## 3. OLIVES AND OLIVE OIL

*Torah* text

Difference in a candle wicks, look at oil lamp, oil

Idea of making more holy oil

Symbol of the State of Israel: *menorah* and olive branch

Noah and the olive branch

Anna Ticho charcoal of the olive tree

Use charcoal dipped in olive oil to draw

## 4. LIGHT & DARK

How would you talk about the darkness this time of year (*Kislev*)?

How was light created in ancient times?

The *yare'ach*/moon: full moon as the night light

## 5. BRAVERY

Small army beats the big army

Determination

The journey from Modi'in to Jerusalem

## 6. HANUKIAH VS. THE MENORAH - Bezalel told to make the *menorah*

*Torah* text

*Moriah* plant

## 7. BRACHOT

What do the *Hanukah brachot* mean?

What other *brachot* do they sound like?

*Shehechayanu*....language of "new" being first. How does that feel?

## 8. POTATOES

Why do *latkes*/fried potatoes have a place in this story?

Legend of Hannah frying cheese for Antiochus' army.

## 9. DREIDEL

Make up story for why the *dreidel* is part of *Hanukah* story?

Comparing *dreidels*

## 10. RISK, TRUST

How we get to the number of days to celebrate/remember

Why do we have a *Hanukah/Beit ha-Mikdash* story?

How does a community share ideas, a plan of action?

Create in a "small" world (a Reggio concept) the *Beit ha-Mikdash*, Temple Mount.

Loose parts (a Reggio concept): *Hanukiot* and *menorah* building.

# The Other *Hanukkah* Story: A New, Old Flame

Shawn Shafner

### WHAT IS A STORY?

**S**tories are narrative structures that invite listeners/viewers/readers empathetically to experience the combined consequences of circumstance and action. As storytellers, we create whole worlds with our words. Truly, stories are powerful stuff, and each reflects and imparts its own perspective on the world. Stories do not tell themselves; we carry that grave responsibility. So when we have the opportunity to engage a specific audience in a specific time, what exactly is the story we want to tell? What is the world we want our listeners to experience, and why? How might we use stories in service to audiences (and learners) wrestling with specific lessons, themes or concepts?

Stories are not just “once upon a time,” however. Stories are the ways we see the world, whether we like it or not. The mind cannot resist the urge to create narrative structure out of our generally disjointed existence. To make the most of this framework, I encourage you to apply these same principles to any human experience with even a hint of “beginning, middle, and end,” including religious services, classroom learning, cooking a meal, and life itself.

### WHAT IS A HANUKAH STORY?

Does a *Hanukkah* story require Maccabees rebelling and rededicating the Temple? Must it have *latkes* or *dreidels*? Should it be about miracles and light?

Trick question. It can be all – or none – of the above!

Like any holiday, *Hanukkah* is rich with resonant themes, interesting characters, traditions that call upon shared history and memory, great intellectual and spiritual learning, and much more. *Hanukkah* stories come in all shapes and sizes and can help us weave a brilliant and dynamic tapestry around *Hanukkah*.

And, like all Jewish traditions, *Hanukkah* comes most alive in the interplay between what happened a long time ago and our own lives right here and right now. If we are focused only on the past, then the information is distant and irrelevant. If we are focused only on the present or future, then the experience is groundless and inauthentic. The key is in allowing these two to inform one another, and form a dialogue between the past and the present.

The real questions are:

- What themes, key questions or concepts do you want to explore via *Hanukkah* this year?
  - i.e., darkness to light, what are you willing to fight for?, small vs. mighty, assimilation
  - This theme will inform, influence, and imbue our telling of the *Hanukkah* story and our broader *Hanukkah* celebration
- What Biblical, traditional, contemporary or devised stories might offer alternative entry points for resonance, conversation, and meaning-making in your community?
  - These can be texts/songs/poems/artwork/videos/conversations/questions, etc.
  - They also should speak to the theme, complementing the *Hanukkah* story/celebration, complicating and enriching our understanding

Shawn Shafner is an artist, educator, and activist. Creator of The People's Own Organic Power Project, he has catalyzed conversation about sustainable sanitation from the top of New York City's largest wastewater treatment plant to the floor of the United Nations. Shawn has taught arts-integrated curricula, mindfulness, and sustainable living in New York City schools, institutions and community centers since 2004, including the Guggenheim Museum, JCC Manhattan, Storahelling/LabShul, Children's Museum of Manhattan and many more. [Shawn@thePOOPproject.org](mailto:Shawn@thePOOPproject.org)

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You might imagine that the theme is at the heart. The *Hanukah* story and its celebrations are the body – a specific body that changes every year. And the adorning texts are clothes, jewelry, and winter coats that help bring this idea to vivid, complicated life.

## THE OTHER HANUKAH STORY

Rabbi Jill Hammer and Shoshana Jedwab first shared this story with me, and we used it as the basis for a beautiful *Hanukah* ritual at JCC Manhattan. It's been an honor to share it with others ever since.

"It is also the festival of the kindling of the fire... For when our ancestors were being taken [into exile], the pious priests of that day took some of the fire on the altar and hid it safely in the hollow of an empty cistern, so that the place remained unknown to anyone. Many years later...Nehemiah was appointed by the king of Persia, and sent the descendants of the priests who had hidden the fire to get it. ..They could not find any fire but only muddy water. He ordered them to draw some water and bring it with them.

- Who are the characters? What characters might be present but are not mentioned in the story?
- Where does the story take place (setting)?
- What is the conflict and resolution?
- Why is this story being told? Who is the storyteller? Who is the audience?
- What do you think about it? Respond as yourself.

- Embody it.
  - Show with your face – how might this character be feeling right now?
  - Show with your whole body – how might your body express this character's status, circumstances, etc?
  - Add a gesture or movement.
  - Show characters in relation to one another, and/or with their surroundings. As a frozen image, this is called a "tableau."
  - Add movement, and you've got a scene.
  - Stage the story using as much of the original text as possible.
  - What might be lacking from the original? *Drash* it.

## What is the world we want our listeners to experience, and why? How might we use stories in service to audiences (and learners) wrestling with specific lessons, themes or concepts?

"When the offerings to be sacrificed had been put in place, Nehemiah ordered the priests to sprinkle the water on the wood and on the offerings that were laid upon it. ...The sun, which had been clouded over, came out and shone on it, and a great blaze was kindled."

*II Maccabees 1:19-22*

## WAYS TO PLAY

The *Hanukah* following Hurricane Sandy, I found myself working with a group of teens from Westchester. Over ten weeks, we studied a variety of *Hanukah* texts and formed our own 30-minute theater piece. Because of what they had experienced during the storm, our core theme was "From Darkness to Light." Along with the traditional *Hanukah* story, we wove in the story above, the midrashic tale of Adam on the first night, and the students' own experiences of surviving Hurricane Sandy.

I encourage you to try out your own "*Hanukah* Remix," whether as a theater play, a candle-lighting service, or a short story-sharing! Here are the some of the ways you might work with a text (Biblical, story, poem, song, artwork, etc.).

- Dissect it.

- *Drash* it.
  - Add sound – no words.
  - Improvise text.
    - Improvised freely, or prompted with questions. The actor can give voice to his or her own role, or others in the audience can provide the voice.
      - i.e., Priest, what did you think when you found the muddy water?
  - Improvise dialogue in a tableau or scene.
  - Write text.
    - Via timed free-write, i.e., take three minutes to write whatever comes to mind, without editing or censoring yourself, and without stopping until the time is up.
    - Via fill-in sentence, i.e., complete the sentence, "The hidden fire is important because..." OR "As the priest uncovered the empty cistern, he thought..."
    - Create dialogue or a scene, i.e., passing the paper back and forth between two students, write the scene where

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Nehemiah asks the priest to go find the fire.

- Imagine what happens before the story begins, or after it ends. Imagine what other characters might think about it – characters from the world of the story or contemporary characters that would offer a unique perspective.
- Respond creatively!
  - Write a poem or a song, paint a picture, create a dance, comic strip, etc.
  - Imagine a dream sequence or an alternate ending.
  - Use social media as prompts – tell this story via Instagram posts, 280-character tweets, a YouTube short, etc.
  - Blend it, layer it, splice it, and spice it! Use all resources at your disposal in service of the story you want to tell.
  - Have fun!

May your *Hanukah* be full of joy, light and ordinary miracles.

# Hanukah – A True Story Exploring Questions of Truth and Meaning In the Hanukah Narrative

Jen Glaser

### USING PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY TO EXPLORE QUESTION OF TRUTH AND MEANING IN THE HANUKAH NARRATIVE

*Hanukah is a complex holiday, carrying many messages. Its historical roots are documented in various sources, yet these sources convey different information and explain the rituals of the holiday in different ways. For many children, the story of Hanukah is interwoven with the “miracle of oil” through a narrative of the victory of the Maccabees over Antiochus’s army. By Middle School, many students are questioning what to make of this miracle and the “truth” of this historical narrative. Often, we, as educators, leave them to address this question of truth on their own. This lesson seeks to explore the question of truth head on. The focus here is not on the story of Hanukah itself (indeed, it presumes Middle School students know the basics of this story); rather, it offers a philosophical exploration of the concept of truth in a way that is accessible to Middle School youth. The aim of the lesson (or series of lessons) is to offer students a more sophisticated understanding of the notion of truth so that they may have more complex cognitive resources available to them through which to make meaning of this holiday.*

*The starting point of the lesson is an original story – “A True Story” – that was specifically written for this purpose. Interwoven in this story are several accounts of “what makes something true” and different kinds of truths (facts, essential nature, reasonable explanation, aspirational hopes, etc.). After reading this story and uncovering the different meanings of “truth” in it, students are asked to raise questions about truth that the story gets them thinking about. Several discussion guides then engage students in thinking about some of these questions around truth more deeply and what it would mean to understand Hanukah through these lenses. After this, two sets of resources offer students a link back to reflection on Hanukah. The first is a source sheet with several short accounts of the “story of Hanukah” as recorded in early and Rabbinic sources (and also an overview of the story for students, if you require it). The second is a resource sheet of modern interpretations of Hanukah as its truths inspire people today.*

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**T**hese lessons explore the concept of truth in general, and truth in relation to the story of *Hanukah* in particular. The session is designed for middle and high school students. The lessons are inquiry-based. Students will mostly be working in groups, then coming back to share and discuss further in a larger group together.

Earlier, we said that “philosophy begins in wonder” – that it involves puzzlement or being “pulled up short” by something unexpected. The “Miracle of Oil” and the multiple versions of the *Hanukah* story often mean our students are “pulled up short” – either by something that conflicts with what their everyday belief of what is possible (the miracle of oil) or by the conflicting accounts of the seemingly historical narrative itself (as recorded in the *Book of Maccabees*, in the *Talmud*, etc.).

The texts, discussion guides, and activity are appropriate for students from all backgrounds,

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as they approach the question of truth philosophically and are therefore not dependent on their level of Jewish knowledge or religious orientation. (They will engage with the topic from their existing points of view.) The resource sheets on the story of *Hanukah* and contemporary commentaries are varied, so you can choose which one you feel is most appropriate for your students.

All the resources are accessible through a page on the Engaging Texts website, and can be accessed through this link: <http://engagingtexts.com/2018/09/newcaje-session-on-Hanukah/>.

Resources posted on the site that you will need to access for your lesson(s) are:

- A short story called “A True Story” and discussion guides on “Truth and Meaning in *Hanukah*.”
- A source sheet on the narratives of *Hanukah* in early

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sources and some commentaries/reflections on the meaning of *Hanukah*.

- A final worksheet on “Where Do I stand: Truth and Meaning in *Hanukah*.”

Lesson plan(s)

[N.B: This is enough material to cover several lessons; you can do part or all of the activities below.]

1. Introduce the theme of “Truth.” In this lesson, we are going to be exploring the concept of truth and different kinds of truths. We will be doing this so that later we can think about the holiday of *Hanukah* together.
2. Read the short story “A True Story” together (download it from the link to classroom materials on the above webpage).
3. Divide the students into small groups. In the groups, they should
  - a. Read the story again, underlining or making a note of all the different ways the notion of truth comes up.
  - b. Go over it again, stopping to discuss each point in the story they have identified, asking themselves what questions about truth come up for them here. They should write down these questions.

4. Bring the groups together, share what the different small groups found in the story, and list on the board the questions they came up with.

5. Go over their questions and see if any of the questions focus on a common interest (e.g., two or more questions may have as their interest “what makes something true,” though the questions themselves might be articulated differently). Through discussing the connections, several general themes or interests around the nature of truth should emerge.

6. In light of the students’ interests and questions, choose one or more of the discussion guides and do it.

- a. Download the discussion guides.
- b. The way the discussion guides are constructed, the questions in each one build on the questions before them. The goal is not to get to the end as quickly as you can, but to think about each question and reflect on what this

question adds to the ideas being discussed. The first page of the discussion guide is for the teacher to orient him or herself to the larger themes around that each of the discussion guides is organized to explore.

- c. When students answer each question, make sure to take time to encourage them to explain what they mean as fully as they can. (For example, by asking them, once they have finished talking, “Can you say a little more about what you mean here?” or “Does anyone have a different point of view/opinion?”)
- d. Encourage students to ask each other follow-up questions. If they simply answer “yes” or “no,” this kind of encouragement should help lead them to share more of their thinking that lies behind their opinions and judgments.
7. Turn to some of the secondary sources – read and discuss them. You might also divide the students into pairs and give each pair a different source and then have them come together to share their source and what they think it means/says about *Hanukah* and how this might relate to their class discussion.)
8. Ask them what questions they now have about the

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*Hanukah* story (focusing on the question of truth). List them on the board or a flipchart – write the student’s name next to his or her question.

9. Summation: Where do I now stand? Truths and meanings in *Hanukah*. This is a summative activity that asks the students to go beyond talk and assess where they stand on some of the key ideas that will have been explored. Use the “Truth and meaning in *Hanukah*” quadrant handout (download the handout from the website cited earlier).

a. Each student should now fill in aspects of *Hanukah* that, for him/her, sit within each quadrant (instructions are on the handout).

b. Break into groups of 3-4 to share quadrants with each other.

c. Take one question and explore what it would mean to put it at various points on the page with the class before they start – as an example so you are confident they know what to do with the exercise.

10. If there is the opportunity, do the activity that has students explore for homework the opinion of other people in their community. Print and display their results in the classroom. This activity is written up in the discussion guides.



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Hanukah#/media/File:Jerusalem\\_Hannukah\\_021210.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Hanukah#/media/File:Jerusalem_Hannukah_021210.jpg)

## A Hanukkah Recipe & Story

Lisa Kritz

Recipe and story from "The Jewish Holiday Cookbook" by Gloria Kaufer Greene

**A** Hanukkah culinary custom is partaking of cheese and all sorts of dairy dishes in honor of the brave Jewish heroine, Judith. It is written in the *Apocrypha* that the beautiful widow Judith arranged to dine with an enemy general who intended to destroy her town. During the meal, she fed him great quantities of cheese and then encouraged him to drink much wine to quench his subsequent thirst. As soon as he drunkenly fell asleep, Judith beheaded him. When his soldiers found out that their general had been slain, they fled in fear, and the town and its people were spared. Judith's valor is said to have inspired Judah the Maccabee and his followers.

Below is the recipe for cheese coins. The coins represent both the cheese to honor Judith and the "gelt" that children often receive. An easy, fun recipe for all ages! Yummy, too!

### Cheese Coins:

Makes 48 slices per log and 96 coins total

### Ingredients

8 ounces fine-grated sharp cheddar (2 packed cups; do not use reduced fat or nonfat)  
1/2 cup butter, softened  
1 cup flour  
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce  
2 tablespoons instant minced onions  
Pinch cayenne pepper, optional  
About 1/2 cup sesame seeds

### Instructions

1. In a medium bowl, combine all ingredients except the sesame seeds. Mix well with your hands or an electric mixer until a dough forms.

Divide the dough in half and shape each half into a log that is 1 inch in diameter and about 12 inches long. Roll the logs in sesame seeds to completely coat the outside. Wrap each log tightly in plastic wrap; chill several hours or overnight. (The logs can be frozen; thaw in the refrigerator before using.)

2. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Carefully slice each log crosswise into 1/4-inch-thick slices. Place the slices, cut side down, on parchment-lined baking pans and bake 10 to 12 minutes or until lightly browned and firm.

3. Let wafers cool slightly. Use a spatula to carefully remove the wafers to wire racks to cool completely. Store in airtight containers to keep them crunchy.

### Nutritional Information

Per coin: 70 calories, 3 percent calories from fat, 2 grams total fat, 8 grams saturated fat, 1 milligram cholesterol, 1 gram carbohydrates, 0.1 grams total fiber, 0.1 gram total sugars, 1 gram net carbs, 2 grams protein, 33 milligrams sodium.

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# The Hanukah Files: How Do We Know What We Know?

Paul Solyn

**T**he *Torah* tells us absolutely nothing about the Festival of Lights. It sets out when to celebrate *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, *Sukkot*, *Pesach*, and *Shavuot*, and how to celebrate them (although our modern forms of celebration come from later sources). It even tells us about *Shemini Atzeret*. But not a word about the *Hanukah* festival.

Of course, the *Torah* doesn't mention *Purim*, either, but we learn about *Purim* from the *Book of Esther*. There's nothing anywhere in the *Tanakh* about the *Hanukah* festival.

*Hanukah* derives from events in our history. So do *Tisha b'Av*, *Yom Hashoah*, *Yom Ha-Azmaut*, and *Yom Yerushalayim*, but *Hanukah* predates them.

Nevertheless, we all know how to celebrate *Hanukah*, as we see in the story "The Fourth Candle," which takes for granted various of our practices that are probably familiar. Some of the things we know:

- We celebrate *Hanukah*.
- It starts on the 25th of *Kislev*.
- We celebrate for eight nights.
- We light a *hanukiah*.
- We add one light for each night.
- We place the *hanukiah* in a window.
- This is to "proclaim the miracle."
- We insert candles into the *hanukiah* from right to left and light them from left to right. (We can't deduce from the story that some *hanukiot* burn oil.)

The sources for both the historical events of *Hanukah* and the celebration come from the first and second centuries C.E., more than 200 years after the events themselves. The first and second books of *Maccabees* are probably the most widely known. They are included in Catholic and Orthodox Christian Bibles, while most Protestant Bibles either place them in an intermediate section called the *Apocrypha* or omit them altogether. Scholars believe that the *Second Book of Maccabees*, represented in source A, may be of earlier composition than what is called the *First Book*. Both were apparently written in Hebrew, but survive only in Greek translation.

Source A refers to events brought on by the succession of Antiochus IV to the rule of the Seleucid Empire. The Seleucid Empire was one of the successors to the empire of Alexander the Great, which broke into three regional, competing empires. Source B refers to rivalry among them: a Seleucid attack on Egypt necessarily passed through the Land of Israel.

Source B describes a process of Hellenization ("Greekification") that was a genuine source of conflict in the society of Israel because of practices prohibited in Jewish religion, but both this and source C approach it from an anti-assimilationist position that makes sense in our society as well: Many of us also tend to admire non-Jewish customs and adopt some of them, while others of us rail against them. The extreme Hellenization described in source C

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was uncharacteristic of the Greek empire, and it is tempting to see it as a desperation move after the failure of other, possibly more moderate, attempts to bring Israel into line.

Source D, from a contemporary scholar, suggests that the revolt should be seen as a civil war between “orthodox and reformist parties” in Israel, the sort of civil unrest that might have prompted the extreme of source C. Source E, also contemporary, describes the growing influence of Greek culture in Israel and the social divisions that surrounded citizens’ sympathy for it.

Source E also introduces the concept of the Greek *polis*: a city with a certain level of education and culture, centering on the gymnasium. It also alludes to an economic rationale rather than only a social and religious one. Some scholars hold that there was also a division over economic interests that has parallels in the contemporary United States (the 99% vs. the 1%, the Occupy movement, populism in politics). In this line of thought, the prosperous merchant class wanted to make Jerusalem into a Greek-style *polis*, a city-state, because of potential trade advantages, while farmers and artisans who

not three) that the *Torah* replaces with *Shemini Atzeret*, an additional day of assembly at the end of *Sukkot*.

Source H is from Josephus, who was from an upper-class Jerusalem family. He had been captured by the Romans, defected and served as translator for Titus during the siege of Jerusalem, after which he settled in Rome and became a Roman citizen. Until the 19th century, his works were all but banned in Jewish circles because he was considered a convert and traitor, but modern scholarship gives them some credit as history. While the first and second books of Maccabees are known only because of their Greek translation, Josephus wrote in Greek.

Both *II Maccabees* and *Josephus* tell us that the first *Hanukah* was celebrated for eight days. *II Maccabees* connects this to the *Sukkot* festival, while Josephus relates it only to the people’s joy.

Something is conspicuous, to our eyes, by its absence: the miracle of the oil. It appears not to have been known in the first century C.E.

## The sources for both the historical events of *Hanukah* and the celebration come from the first and second centuries C.E., more than 200 years after the events themselves.

had less reason to expect that they would benefit opposed it. Making Jerusalem seem more Greek in culture might have appealed to those who wanted to make it part of the imperial economy. (This also has contemporary parallels.)

Source F is part of the background, but it also conveys the eagerness of some of the Hellenizers and the strange idea of “uncircumcision.”

Source G describes the successful rebellion against the Seleucids and states that the recapture and cleansing of the Temple was celebrated for eight days “with a gladness like a Feast of Tabernacles,” explaining that they had been unable to celebrate *Sukkot* in its season and enjoining the Jews of Egypt to celebrate in the same way.

An anthropologist might theorize that, if *Sukkot* was a harvest festival, *Hanukah* might have been treated as a harvest festival as well. And what is the very last crop to be harvested in the Middle East? Olives, pressed for oil! It is even thinkable that there was originally a winter harvest festival (in a climate with four seasons one would expect four seasonal festivals,

Source I, from a 20th-century scholar, raises questions about why the *Hanukah* festival was celebrated for eight days. The dedication of the first Temple in the reign of Solomon was celebrated for seven; so were the dedication of the second Temple after the return from Babylon and the dedication of the *mishkan* in the wilderness. Earlier commentators concluded that in the time of the Maccabees it took eight days to clean and repair the Temple — a simple matter of historical fact, if true. *Pesikta Rabbati*, from approximately the period of the *Gemara* but originating in the Land of Israel, not Babylonia, attributes the lighting of eight lights to their finding eight spears in the Temple and using them as lampstands.

Source J, also from *Josephus*, gives an explanation for calling *Hanukah* the Festival of Lights. Josephus appears to know nothing about the story of the spears in *Pesikta Rabbati*.

Source K attributes the eight-day duration of *Hanukah* to the purification of the Temple in the reign of King Hezekiah. Zeitlin cites *II Chronicles*, which describes a double eight-day process, that is, sixteen days. Source L describes a seven-day feast of dedication in the reign of Solomon, but ending on the eighth day.

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Source M is from *Megillat Antiochus*, composed at least a century and perhaps several centuries after *I* and *II Maccabees* and after *Josephus*. It seems to have been written in Aramaic, although we also know it from a Hebrew version, probably in the Land of Israel. Some pre-modern sages, including Saadia Gaon, believe it to be the work of the Hasmonean priests themselves, as did Rabbi Moses Gaster, the *Hacham* of the Spanish and Portuguese congregation in London in the 19th century. Later scholars are not so sure, and Louis Ginzberg considered it spurious, except for some quotations from *I Maccabees*. If it is authentic, it may be the oldest mention of the miracle of the oil.

Source N is from what is considered a medieval addition to *Megillat Taanit*. The original parts of *Megillat Taanit* are conventionally attributed to the students of Hillel and Shammai, writing in Aramaic early in the first century C.E. If this section were authentic, it would be the first mention of the miracle of the oil, but, since it is thought to be from a later date, it probably draws on other sources.

Source O, from *Tractate Shabbat* in the Babylonian *Talmud*, is likely the direct source for other references to the miracle of the oil. If so, it is later than the sources that don't mention the oil, and it comes from Babylonia, not from the Land of Israel. (There is no *Tractate Hanukah* in the *Mishnah*.)

Source P, from a contemporary source, restates an oft-asked question about why there are eight days of celebration: if there was enough oil for one day, only the subsequent seven days were miraculous. The reference for this, *Bais Yosef*, is Rabbi Yosef Karo's commentary on the *Arba'ah Turim*, a medieval law code that he eventually expanded into the *Shulchan Aruch*.

Source Q, the second blessing for lighting the *Hanukah* lights, is familiar. In itself it answers the *Bais Yosef* question, because it refers to miracles, not a singular miracle.

And Source R is Karo's complete answer to the question, but it is not the one we expect. He first states that the Maccabees divided the one cruse of oil into eight parts, each of which burned for an entire night. Then he gives an explanation having to do with *B'rit Milah*. Finally he comes to the explanation that is most obvious to the modern mind—that the first night celebrates the miracle of restoring the Temple, after which seven nights commemorate the miracle of the oil.

Source S, contemporary, asks why, if *Hanukah* is an eight-day festival in the Land of Israel, it is not a nine-day festival in the Diaspora (for those who celebrate additional days).

Rabbi Brenner states that (a) there is no fear of violating a prohibition on work, because there are no restrictions on work during *Hanukah*, and (b) it is Rabbinic, not Biblical, so there is no need to be strict.

Source T, also from *Tractate Shabbat*, gives a basis for placing the *hanukiah* outside the house or in a window where it can be seen from outside, unless it is unsafe to do so.

Source U addresses a question pertinent to oil-burning *hanukiot*: what to do if there is unburned oil in the lamp at the end of the evening. This is pertinent today, because several disastrous home fires have occurred when an oil-burning *hanukiah* was left burning after the occupants of the home went to bed.

Source V is a 20th-century statement of something that comes easily to the contemporary mind: that the lighting of lights for *Hanukah* shows either that it grew as a festival of lights, perhaps especially after the rededication of the Temple had faded from memory, or that it incorporated a pagan festival of lights at the time of the winter solstice. This has further resonance in our own time when *Hanukah* is often treated as a "Jewish Christmas," imitating a festival of lights that might also have been built on a pagan solstice celebration.

In teaching about *Hanukah*, the elephant in the room is the miracle of the oil. I try never to teach a young student anything that a teacher at a higher level would want to "unteach." While it is neither practical nor desirable to burden students below the advanced level with all of traditional and/or modern scholarship, we need a way to deal with this (likely fabricated) miracle.

Not teaching it at all is probably not an option. Imagine what would happen if a first-grade teacher did not teach it. Parents would be furious; children who know it would disrupt the class and teach it to the others.

Rabbi Sheryl Lewart z"l gave this suggestion: teach it as history up to the point of "they rededicated the Temple and everyone celebrated for eight days." Then continue: "Every year after that, all the Jews celebrated for eight days. After a long time, no one remembered why they celebrated for eight days, so they asked their rabbis. And their rabbis told them this story" (the miracle of the oil).

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## THE HANUKAH FILES:

### HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT WE KNOW?

#### Sources

A. <sup>7</sup>When Seleucus died and Antiochus who was called Epiphanes succeeded to the kingdom, Jason the brother of Onias obtained the high priesthood by corruption, <sup>8</sup> promising the king at an interview three hundred and sixty talents of silver and, from another source of revenue, eighty talents. <sup>9</sup> In addition to this he promised to pay one hundred and fifty more if permission were given to establish by his authority a gymnasium and a body of youth for it, and to enroll the men of Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch. <sup>10</sup> When the king assented and Jason came to office, he at once shifted his countrymen over to the Greek way of life. <sup>11</sup> He set aside the existing royal concessions to the Jews, secured through John the father of Eupolemus, who went on the mission to establish friendship and alliance with the Romans; and he destroyed the lawful ways of living and introduced new customs contrary to the law. <sup>12</sup> For with alacrity he founded a gymnasium right under the citadel, and he induced the noblest of the young men to wear the Greek hat. <sup>13</sup> There was such an extreme of Hellenization and increase in the adoption of foreign ways because of the surpassing wickedness of Jason, who was ungodly and no high priest, <sup>14</sup> that the priests were no longer intent upon their service at the altar. Despising the sanctuary and neglecting the sacrifices, they hastened to take part in the unlawful proceedings in the wrestling arena after the call to the discus, <sup>15</sup> disdainful of the honors prized by their fathers and putting the highest value upon Greek forms of prestige. <sup>16</sup> For this reason heavy disaster overtook them, and those whose ways of living they admired and wished to imitate completely became their enemies and punished them. <sup>17</sup> For it is no light thing to show irreverence to the divine laws — a fact which later events will make clear.

*II Maccabees*

B. <sup>16</sup>When Antiochus saw that his kingdom was established, he determined to become king of the land of Egypt, that he might reign over both kingdoms. <sup>17</sup> So he invaded Egypt with a strong force, with chariots and elephants and cavalry and with a large fleet. <sup>18</sup> He engaged Ptolemy king of Egypt in battle, and Ptolemy turned and fled before him, and many were wounded and fell. <sup>19</sup> And they captured the fortified cities in the land of Egypt, and he plundered the land of Egypt. <sup>20</sup> After subduing Egypt, Antiochus returned in the one hundred and forty-third year. He went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force. <sup>21</sup> He arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils. <sup>22</sup> He took also the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink

offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off. <sup>23</sup> He took the silver and the gold, and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasures which he found. <sup>24</sup> Taking them all, he departed to his own land.

*I Maccabees*

C. <sup>41</sup> Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, <sup>42</sup> and that each should give up his customs. <sup>43</sup> All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the Sabbath. <sup>44</sup> And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, <sup>45</sup> to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane Sabbaths and feasts, <sup>46</sup> to defile the sanctuary and the priests, <sup>47</sup> to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and unclean animals, <sup>48</sup> and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, <sup>49</sup> so that they should forget the law and change all the ordinances. <sup>50</sup> “And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die.” <sup>51</sup> In such words he wrote to his whole kingdom. And he appointed inspectors over all the people and commanded the cities of Judah to offer sacrifice, city by city. <sup>52</sup> Many of the people, every one who forsook the law, joined them, and they did evil in the land; <sup>53</sup> they drove Israel into hiding in every place of refuge they had. <sup>54</sup> Now on the fifteenth day of *Kislev*, in the one hundred and forty-fifth year, they erected a desolating sacrilege upon the altar of burnt offering. They also built altars in the surrounding cities of Judah, <sup>55</sup> and burned incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets. <sup>56</sup> The books of the law which they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire. <sup>57</sup> Where the book of the covenant was found in the possession of any one, or if any one adhered to the law, the decree of the king condemned him to death. <sup>58</sup> They kept using violence against Israel, against those found month after month in the cities. <sup>59</sup> And on the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar which was upon the altar of burnt offering. <sup>60</sup> According to the decree, they put to death the women who had their children circumcised, <sup>61</sup> and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers’ necks. <sup>62</sup> But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. <sup>63</sup> They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die. <sup>64</sup> And very great wrath came upon Israel.

*I Maccabees*

D. Modern scholarship on the other hand considers the Maccabean revolt less as an uprising against foreign

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oppression than as a civil war between the orthodox and reformist parties in the Jewish camp.

Joseph P. Schultz (1981)

E. In the century after Alexander, Jerusalem's relative isolation — far from the coast and without direct access to major trade routes — meant that the city and its inhabitants were initially not much affected by Hellenism. The Ptolemies in Egypt who ruled over the Land of Israel mostly left the community alone save for the 20 talents of silver that was due each year. Moreover, since Jerusalem was just a provincial city and not a *polis*, it had no gymnasium. Inevitably and progressively, though, Jerusalem became more and more familiar with the Greek world so that by the end of the third century B.C.E., some Jews began to acquire a rudimentary Greek education and give their children Greek names. This was the time of Joseph Tobiad, who as chief tax collector for the Ptolemies has the distinction of being the first Jewish banker.

The main Jewish factions that developed were roughly based on the degree to which Hellenism was embraced. The first group — called Antiochene Jews because Antioch was the Seleucid capital in Syria — represented those who wholly embraced Hellenism and the economic, social, and cultural opportunities it presented. This was a small, yet influential minority, even including some High Priests. A middle group of landowners, merchants, and craftsmen coalesced around the *kohanim* (priests) who themselves were attracted to Greek ideals, and in some cases had Greek names, but were deeply committed to *Torah* law, especially regarding the proper observance of Temple ritual. The rest of the people, particularly the lower classes, were steadfastly opposed to Hellenism and became even more scrupulous regarding *Torah* observance.

Dr. Jill Katz (2014)

F. At that time there were some evil-doers in Israel who tried to win popularity for a policy of integration with the surrounding nations. It was because the Jews had kept themselves aloof for so long, they claimed, that so many hardships had befallen them. They acquired a following and applied to Antiochus, who authorized them to introduce the Greek way of life. They built a Greek gymnasium in Jerusalem and even had themselves uncircumcised.

*I Maccabees*

G. Now Maccabeaus and his followers, under the leadership of the Lord, recaptured the Temple and the city, and pulled down the altars erected by the aliens in the marketplace.... Now it so happened that the cleansing of the sanctuary took place on the very day on which it had been profaned by

aliens, on the twenty-fifth day of the same month, which is *Kislev*. And they celebrated it for eight days with gladness like a Feast of Tabernacles, remembering how, not long before, during the Feast of Tabernacles they had been wandering like wild beasts in the mountains and the caves [and were unable to celebrate it]. So bearing wands wreathed with leaves and fair boughs and palms, they offered hymns of praise to Him who had prospered the cleaning of His own place.... To the brethren, the Jews in Egypt... see that you keep the days of the Feast [like] Tabernacles in the month *Kislev*.... Whereas we are now about to celebrate the purification of the Temple in the month of *Kislev*, on the twenty-fifth day, we deem it our duty to inform you, that you too may keep the Feast [like] Tabernacles.

*II Maccabees*

H. And so Judah together with his fellow citizens celebrated the restoration of sacrifices in the Temple for eight days, omitting no form of pleasure, but feasting them on costly and splendid sacrifices, and while honoring God with songs of praise and the playing of harps, at the same time delighted them. So much pleasure did they find in the renewal of their customs, and in unexpectedly obtaining the right to have their own service after so long a time, that they made a law that their descendants should celebrate the restoration of the Temple service for eight days.

Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* (1st century C.E.)

I. The scholars were confronted with the problem as to why the Maccabeans instituted the festival for eight days: "And they kept the dedication of the altar eight days," while the dedication of the Temple in the time of Solomon, as well as in the time of Ezra, last seven days. Why did the Maccabeans ordain to keep eight days? This question was likewise raised by the author of the scholia to the *Megillat Ta'anit*: "Why is it that the *Hanukah* which Moses celebrated in the wilderness was seven days... and the *Hanukah* of Solomon's time was seven days, while the festival of *Hanukah* was eight days?"

The answer given by the scholia is that the Hasmoneans on coming to the Temple built the altar, prepared it and the sacred vessels for the service, and were occupied thereby eight days. Thus, the reason why the festival of *Hanukah* is eight days is because it took the Hasmoneans eight days to prepare the Temple for sacrifice. In other rabbinical literature, the same question is asked as to why the lights are kindled on *Hanukah*. The answer is that "When the sons of the High Priest Hasmonoi defeated the Greeks on entering the sanctuary, they found eight spears of iron and they fixed them so that they could light the lamps on them" (*Pesikta Rabbati*).

Solomon Zeitlin (1938)

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J. Now Judah celebrated the festival of the restoration of the sacrifices of the Temple for eight days... they were so very glad at the revival of their customs, when, after a long time of intermission, they unexpectedly had regained the freedom of their worship, that they made it a law for their posterity, that they should keep a festival on account of the restoration of their temple-worship for eight days. And from that time to this we celebrate this festival and call it Lights. I suppose the reason was because this liberty beyond our hopes appeared to us; and that thence was the name given to that festival.

*Josephus*

K. For [the Hasmoneans] the precedent was the purification of the Temple in the time of King Hezekiah. King Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, had defiled the Temple. After his death, his son Hezekiah purified the Temple and sanctified it for eight days, as we are told by the author of *II Chronicles*: "And the priests went in unto the inner part of the house of the Lord, to cleanse it, and the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad to the brook Kidron. Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify, and on the eight day of the month they came to the porch of the Lord; and they sanctified the house of the Lord in eight days; and on the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end."

*Zeitlin*

L. <sup>65</sup>So Solomon held the feast at that time, and all Israel with him, a great assembly, from Lebo-hamath to the Brook of Egypt, before the Lord our God, seven days. <sup>66</sup> On the eighth day he sent the people away, and they blessed the king and went to their homes joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had shown to David his servant and to Israel his people.

*I Kings 8*

M....After this, the sons of Israel went up to the Temple and rebuilt its gates and purified the Temple from the dead bodies and from the defilement. And they sought after pure olive oil to light the lamps therewith, but could not find any, except one bowl that was sealed with the signet ring of the High Priest from the days of Samuel the prophet and they knew that it was pure. There was in it [enough oil] to light [the lamps therewith] for one day, but the God of heaven whose name dwells there put therein his blessing and they were able to light from it eight days. Therefore, the sons of Hashmonai made this covenant and took upon themselves a solemn vow, they and the sons of Israel, all of them, to publish amongst the sons of Israel, [to the end] that they might observe these eight days of joy and honour, as the days of the feasts written in [the book of] the Law; [even] to light in them so as to make known to those who come after them that their God wrought

for them salvation from heaven. In them, it is not permitted to mourn, neither to decree a fast [on those days], and anyone who has a vow to perform, let him perform it.

*Megillat Antiochus* (2nd–5th century C.E.)

N. When the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oils that were there. When the House of the Hasmoneans prevailed and won a victory over them, they searched and found only one cruse [of oil] with the seal of the high priest that was not defiled. It had only [enough oil] to burn for one day. A miracle happened, and there was a light from it for eight days. In the following year they established eight festival days.

Medieval addition to *Megillat Taanit*

O. What is *Hanukah*, and why are lights kindled on *Hanukah*? The Sages taught in *Megillat Ta'anit*: On the twenty-fifth of *Kislev*, the days of *Hanukah* are eight. One may not eulogize on them and one may not fast on them. What is the reason? When the Greeks entered the Sanctuary they defiled all the oils that were in the Sanctuary by touching them. And when the Hasmonean monarchy overcame them and emerged victorious over them, they searched and found only one cruse of oil that was placed with the seal of the High Priest, undisturbed by the Greeks. And there was sufficient oil there to light the candelabrum for only one day. A miracle occurred and they lit the candelabrum from it eight days. The next year the Sages instituted those days and made them holidays with recitation of *hallel* and special thanksgiving in prayer and blessings.

*B.T. Shabbat 21b*

P. Everybody is aware of the *Bais Yosef's* question on *Hanukah* concerning the amount of days of celebration. We light the *Menorah* on *Hanukah* as a result of the miracle of the oil that lasted for eight days so that the Jews were able to make new pure oil. The *Gemara* in *Shabbos* teaches us that there was enough oil to last for one day but it lasted for eight days. The *Bais Yosef's* question, based on this premise, is asking why we celebrate for eight days if the miracle was only for seven days.

R' Berach Steinfeld

Q. Praised are You, *Adoshem* our God, Who performed miracles for our ancestors in those days at this season.

R. Although the miracle (of *Hanukah*) lasted only seven days, as the first day there was oil to light with (we still celebrate the first day) because the Jews divided the oil into eight portions (and lit one portion each day). [Accordingly, each portion should have lasted up to two hours, yet each lasted all night]. This resulted in a miracle occurring on the first day as

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well. (*Beit Yosef*). This is, however, an alternative explanation: Since the Greeks forbade them from performing the *Mitzvah* of *Berit Millah*, (which ideally occurs on the eighth day of the baby's life) we celebrate eight days of *Hanukah* (Shiltei HaGiborim's notes on *Mordechai* 456, 2nd column). And there is yet another explanation: The first day of *Hanukah* celebrates the fact that we were able to elevate the Temple (the *Beit Hamikdash*) after the evil Antiochus nullified its purity by bringing idols and other impure objects into the *Beit Hamikdash* [Shiltei HaGiborim as well].

*Arukh ha-Shulchan, Orach Chayim, 670*

S. On the other hand, we can ask why *Hanukah* is not celebrated for nine days in the Diaspora, with an extra day added on, as it is for Passover, *Sukkot* and *Shavuot*. After all, outside the land of Israel most festivals have an extra day due to the principle of *Sefika Deyoma*: Prior to the permanent fixing of the calendar, there was an element of uncertainty regarding the exact start of a *Yom Tov* (festival). The reason an additional day is added to those holidays is out of fear that if the adjacent-additional day was indeed the *Yom Tov* but was treated as a regular weekday, it would lead to many infractions. However in the case of *Hanukah*, there are no work restrictions so there is no need for an extra day of precaution. As *Hanukah* is not biblically but rabbinically ordained, we are not stringent.

R' Zev Brenner

T. The Sages taught in a *baraita*: It is a *mitzvah* to place the *Hanukah* lamp at the entrance to one's house on the outside, so that all can see it. If he lived upstairs, he places it at the window adjacent to the public domain. And in a time of danger, when the gentiles issued decrees to prohibit kindling lights, he places it on the table and that is sufficient to fulfill his obligation.

*B.T. Shabbat 21b*

U. If a *Hanukah* lamp has oil left over in it after the first day, one adds more oil to the lamp and lights it on the second day. If oil is left over after the second day, one adds more oil to the lamp and lights it on the third day; and so one for the successive days. But if on the eighth day some oil is still left, one makes a fire of the oil and burns it by itself. Why so? Because the oil was set aside for a religious purpose, hence it is forbidden to make use of it [for any other purpose].

*Pesikta Rabbati 3.1*

(7th century C.E., incorporating earlier writings)

V. ... we must assume that either *Hanukah* was developed in later days as a festival of Lights and not of dedication, or Josephus had in mind the origin of *Hanukah* as, in reality, a pagan holiday celebrating the solstice.

Zeitlin

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All of the traditional sources are readily available online, many at Sefaria.org.

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# Hanukah: I Have a Dream!

Sam Glaser

For eight nights, starting with the twenty-fifth of the month of *Kislev*, the Jewish people celebrate the victory of the Maccabees, a brave troop of warriors that vanquished the mighty Syrian-Greeks back in 165 B.C.E. As winter sweeps the Northern Hemisphere and the days grow shorter, we commemorate this military miracle by lighting the *Hanukah* candles, increasing the glow of spirituality in the world and saluting those who keep the dream of freedom alive. Interestingly, the *Torah* portions we read at this time of the year also highlight dreamers — we learn about the visions of our patriarch Yaakov and his son Yosef, followed by Pharaoh's butler and baker and then Pharaoh himself. The resounding theme of the power of dreams offers us hope amidst darkness, echoing the prophet Zechariah's motto, "not by might but by spirit" shall we all live in peace. Every single flame on each *hanukiah* (*Hanukah menorah*) is a small victory, a reminder of the triumph of good over evil throughout history. This chapter recalls those dreamers, from biblical times to the present, who were committed to the transformation of a barbaric world into one of liberty and justice for all.

Yaakov and Yosef's dreams signify points of profound transformation in their respective lives. Yaakov's first dream is the famous ladder stretching to heaven, revealing the inner workings of God's glorious angelic realms. His second dream, twenty years later, is of spotted and speckled sheep, in other words, the "stock market." Lavan, Yaakov's father-in-law, has nearly derailed Yaakov's mission of serving as the progenitor of the eternal force that would become the Jewish people. Yaakov's transformation crystallizes when he realizes it's time to extricate himself from material concerns and return to the Holy Land. He wrestles with an angel and receives the name Yisrael (which means "to struggle with God"), demonstrating he has regained his mission of leadership and engagement with his Creator.

Yosef's dreams reveal he is a self-absorbed teen, all too focused on his external beauty and preferential treatment. He has been spoiled by the attention (and colorful clothing) lavished upon him by his doting father. Yosef dreams he is being bowed down to, and then enthusiastically shares the visions with those who might do the bowing. The stage is set for fratricide at the hands of his jealous brothers. They throw him into a pit and sell him into slavery in Egypt where he faces hard labor, carnal temptation, and lengthy imprisonment. Yosef's profound transformation from narcissist to altruist is described in one easily missed scene when he notices the forlorn expressions of a few of his fellow prisoners.

Chances are no one was jumping for joy in Pharaoh's dungeons. In spite of the degree of degradation, Yosef is sensitive enough to perceive a change in the demeanor of Pharaoh's recently imprisoned butler and baker. When he comes to their aid by interpreting their dreams, Yosef sets the forces of redemption in motion. Then Pharaoh has his pair of nightmares, and the butler recalls the young man who eloquently interpreted his own dream. Yosef is referred for the gig and, the next instant, he is running the country. Yaakov recaptures the mantle of the ephemeral during his exile, and Yosef perfects altruism in his. These events form the unique spiritual DNA of our nascent nation and ensure its eventual Exodus and success in subsequent journeys. Moreover, we are reassured of the efficacy of the secret weapon in our arsenal, the power of dreams.

In concert, I typically introduce my "Unbreakable Soul" song by asking the audience a question: "Everyone knows from the Passover story that God redeemed the Jewish people

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from slavery with great miracles. But why would our loving God also orchestrate the events to send the Jews into slavery in the first place?" What aspect of enduring torture, bondage, and infanticide was necessary in the molding of this diminutive, eternal people?

Jewish survival requires toughness and fortitude, an indefatigable resolve to stick together and stand up for truth and freedom. We share the quality of actively looking out for those less fortunate. As we were once enslaved, the concept of bondage is so odious we rally against injustice inflicted on any nation. *Hanukah* further refines the Passover message of freedom, emphasizing that enslavement can also be spiritual. Our endurance is predicated upon our ability to learn God's word, to remain separate, to worship as we choose. The Greeks prohibited the three things they perceived crucial to maintaining our covenantal claim: observing the Sabbath,

enemies. Enlightened citizens of the civilized world grasp the eternal lesson: those who bless Israel are blessed, and those who curse Israel are cursed. The enemies of the Jewish people are the enemies of freedom. We can look back on the great issues of history and find Jews standing on the side of peace and truth. During *Hanukah*, we feel a sense of victory, not only in the success of the Maccabees and the restoration of our Temple, but also in the continued triumph of good over evil in modern times.

### THE THEMES OF KISLEV

The powerful themes of *Kislev* are also loudly echoing in my personal life.

Winter is typically the busiest quarter in my career. It is not unusual for me to visit a dizzying thirty or so cities in this span, offering performances, workshops, and *Shabbatons*

**God has dispersed us to the four corners of the earth to function as a global, spiritual tsunami-warning system....while we're sojourning in far-flung places, we are gathering "holy sparks" of *kedushah* scattered among the nations.**

commemorating *Rosh Hodesh*, and circumcision. Of course, these fundamental *mitzvot* are not optional for sustained Joy of Judaism, and the Maccabees were compelled to take up arms. As we see in our current exile, the loss of enthusiasm for these Jewish non-negotiables can destroy the Jewish spark just as readily as the threat of physical annihilation.

Jews are humankind's canary-in-the-coal-mine. The rise of anti-Semitism is the first warning of the nefarious plots of tyrannical regimes. To quote anti-Nazi pastor Martin Niemöller, "First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out, because I was not a Socialist...then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out, because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me — and there was no one left to speak for me." God has dispersed us to the four corners of the earth to function as a global, spiritual tsunami-warning system. On a positive note, while we're sojourning in far-flung places, we are gathering "holy sparks" of *kedushah* scattered among the nations. Ideally, we survive intact and simultaneously uplift our Gentile neighbors with our example of loving-kindness and Godly connection. *Hanukah* is the week we become especially aware of this delicate give-and-take with our host culture.

I'm inspired by organizations of Righteous Gentiles like CUFI (Christians United for Israel) that are acting as modern day Maccabees by taking a stand to protect Israel from her

for the full array of denominations and age groups. One of the highlights of a recent *Hanukah* tour was a week in the Southern U.S. where I visited Baton Rouge, New Orleans, Birmingham, Nashville, and Chattanooga. This eight-day journey in the welcoming realm of Southern hospitality reassured my faith in humanity. It also gave me an insider's glimpse into this racially charged region where one still sees Confederate flags aloft.

The musical, mystical melting pot of New Orleans has always captured my imagination. Each night, after my own concerts, I wandered Frenchmen Street to audition the auditory expressions of local bands and didn't hear a bad player in the bunch. New Orleans is a place where music lovers gather from all corners of the earth to dine on its unique cuisine and ingest its inimitable sounds. I can't eat the gumbo, but I make up for it with nights feasting on the rich musical smorgasbord. And yet, not everything is so joie-ful. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina revealed a deeply scarred city divided on racial lines. Shortly after the disaster, I had the privilege of performing for the tens of thousands of refugees who were living in immense storage warehouses in Texas; nearly all of those who had to rely on the massive public rescue effort were African-American. Clearly the upper class had resources and were already back in business — the Lower Ninth Ward, not so much.

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One interesting New Orleans connection I discovered: Famed jazz trumpeter Louis Armstrong's job as a young man was hauling junk for my Karnofsky relatives. They gave him his very first instrument, a cornet, and the rest is history. The great Satchmo wore a Star of David pendant for the rest of his life as a tribute to this Jewish family, my *mishpacha*, that offered love and guidance and taught him "how to live with real life and determination."

Then I arrived in Birmingham to find a city still grappling with the stain of segregation. It's apropos that the Museum of Civil Rights is located in this town that was so notoriously divided throughout the sixties. After a jubilant concert for my ski buddy Rabbi Jonathan Miller's congregation, Temple Emanu-El, I wandered the downtown area with some local friends, where we saw many disoriented homeless men wandering the streets. As unwise as it might have been to break out my wallet, I couldn't help but offer a few bucks to whoever asked. Needless to say, I was very popular. We strolled by several unofficially segregated African-American clubs and then arrived at a sparkling new concert venue with a standing-room-only crowd enjoying a Pink Floyd-style band called Washed Out. Here the white youth of the city swayed in unison to the slow grooves enhanced by a tantalizing light show. Old habits die hard in Alabama, and it's not just the senior country club set that reminisces about the glory days: while relaxing in a local coffee emporium, I learned from students how the University of Alabama's popular Greek system remains entirely segregated.

Dr. Martin Luther King worked tirelessly in Birmingham by the side of local organizer Fred Shuttlesworth to rally the African-American community in non-violent protest. My family resonated strongly with the urgency of Dr. King's mission and appreciated his eloquence and bravery. In fact, my parents named their third son John Martin Glaser in memory of this powerful leader (Yes, that's Yom Tov's given name). Growing up in Brentwood, CA, we were surrounded by neighbors with all the snobbery and WASP-y attitudes typical in pricey suburbs. Thankfully, our folks raised us to be comfortable with all strata of society and intolerant of intolerance. I remember feeling fearful of leaders like Malcolm X, but wishing I could hug Dr. King who "looked forward to the time when blacks and whites would sit down at the table of brotherhood."

On my last day in Birmingham, I ventured with my local guides to the impressive Museum of Civil Rights. It is tactfully situated adjacent to the 16th Street Baptist Church that had been bombed at the height of the tension in the sixties. The design reminded me of L.A.'s Museum of Tolerance in its clever use of multimedia to tell the story and create a sense

of catharsis. We wound through the maze of exhibits, gaining an understanding of the difficulties the region faced when transitioning from a reliance on slave labor after the Civil War. Blacks were freed from the shackles of slavery, but faced a resentful and pugilistic society that spared no expense to keep them in the underclass. This stain on our nation's past seems unthinkable today, and yet this imposed segregation happened within my lifetime. Finally, with Dr. King's successful efforts, the tables turned on the supremacists, and the antics of the racist mayor and governor were exposed to a nation no longer able to stand idly by.

We proceeded inexorably into a darkened chamber where the singular visual was a large screen with Dr. King delivering the "I Have a Dream" speech during the March On Washington. I was moved to tears by the reverend's biblically-inspired preaching. This event was clearly a modern-day Maccabee moment. I am so proud our Jewish leaders stood by Dr. King's side during this campaign and I feel that Jewish efforts deserve more prominent mention in the museum's displays. Hopefully, our continued quest to uphold civil rights will be noted in the eyes of young African-Americans when they investigate this painful chapter in U.S. history. As Jews celebrating *Hanukah* that week, we were especially sensitive to injustices depicted and felt proud to stand with all races to ensure equal treatment in the eyes of the law.

As I prepare to gorge myself on generous helpings of my mother's *latkes*, I'd like to conclude by offering thanks to my parents for creating the paradigm of openness to all peoples for their four boys to emulate. They gave us the freedom and courage to explore the world with a sense of wonder and the discipline never to be "quitters." They raised us colorblind and ensured that we had contact with all races and religions. The highest-ranking executives in my father's garment company were Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Irish. Straight and gay. This was totally normal for us brothers; we treated them like beloved aunts and uncles. We chose friends without regard to economic standing, sexual preference, or age. Poor, rich, young, old, all were welcome in our household. I'm also grateful for the wide variety of musical influences in our environment. In our home and car stereos, and around the piano, we enjoyed the full spectrum of music including jazz, Latin, Motown, rock, soul, classical, and gospel. Our family road trips were accompanied by the best of R&B, our *seders* concluded with Negro spirituals.

*Hanukah* is the time to remember that the battle of the Maccabees must be fought in every generation. Like Yaakov and Yosef, whose stories illuminate this season, we must reclaim our connection with our people, but not at the

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expense of our connection with all humanity. Shira and I are doing our utmost to teach our own children to continue the work of my parents and grandparents, to fight for a distinct Jewish identity while making this world a better place for all nations. Let us realize Dr. Martin Luther King's dream of a "day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old folk song, "Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, we are free at last."

# Do You Believe in Miracles?

Sandra Lilienthal

In 2016, I was honored to give an ELI Talk about miracles. It was taped in December, close to *Hanukah*, the holiday we typically associate with miracles. What led me to spend some time thinking about miracles was the fact that there were some Biblical stories that always elicited from me the same questions: why did God not show up for me? I wanted to see miracles like the Biblical ones – the Hollywood kind of miracle. I thought about my ancestors who had been slaves in Egypt for over 200 years. They were overworked, whipped, with sweat in their eyes, mixed with tears of suffering. But then they cried out to God, and God heard them! With an outstretched arm, God took my ancestors out of bondage. And just as they breathed with relief, they reached the Sea, felt the splashing of the waves on their faces. But they also heard Pharaoh's army behind them. They felt the thumping of the Egyptian horses in their bodies. It seemed as if death was certain. But right there and then, God made a miracle, and the sea split! Had we lived in those days, we would be as certain as they were that God was there, and that God made miracles happen.

But I was not there. And loud miracles were not happening to my generation. How many times in my life did I want God to show up and rescue me? Why did God not open seas for me, bring me to freedom when I felt enslaved, send me nourishment when I needed it? I had asked myself why God presented the Children of Israel with so many open miracles in the *Torah*, while we today were left "in the dark" when it came to miracles.

Why was God not making miracles happen? Was I – were we – unworthy of miracles? Did miracles still happen? Was God still around? In searching for answers to these questions, I came across a famous piece of *Gemarah*, in which a group of rabbis are arguing about the purity or impurity of an oven. These rabbis seemed to care about this a lot. On one side, there was Rabbi Eliezer. He's a very knowledgeable rabbi. He knows he is right – but the other rabbis don't really agree with him. Rabbi Eliezer gets so frustrated! So Rabbi Eliezer says to the others, "I'm going to prove it to you. If I'm right, the tree is going to get up and move over there." And the tree MOVES. Wow! Pretty amazing, right? Now the other rabbis are going to agree! But no, they don't. They still don't see it Rabbi Eliezer's way. Rabbi Eliezer says, "I'm so right, I'm going to get this water to flow in the reverse direction." It does. And he continues: "I'm so right that the walls of this building are going to fall in." They do. But his colleagues remain unconvinced. "Eliezer! That's not how it works!" they say.

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Rabbi Eliezer has one last card to play. Call on God Himself to come down and tell everyone else that Rabbi Eliezer has the right understanding of the Law. A voice comes down from Heaven to intervene in his defense. And it says: "*Ma lachem etzel Rabbi Eliezer? She-halachah k'moto, be-chol makom.*" "מה לכם אצל ר"א שהלכה כמותו בכ"מ" Basically: "What is your problem with this guy?! The Law is always as he says it is!"

The other rabbis respond and say, "Hey God – remember you told us, in Your *Torah*, that the *Torah* is not in Heaven anymore? That it is in our hands? That we need to want to get involved with it, study it, understand it in our ways? We are doing that which you told us to do – get involved with You, find ourselves in Your teachings, find our connection with You."

There are many lessons to be learned from this story. One of them, I think, is that there has been a change – that it is not just about calling for God and God makes miracles happen. It is

about finding God, not necessarily in the loud miracles, but in quiet ones: you have to look to God's creations, to the world around you, to the relationships and opportunities to engage that God has set in front of you.

Does this then mean that God has weakened His relationship to us? I don't think so. I think we are talking about a more mature relationship. After all, a long time has passed since the days we were becoming a people.

I came up with an analogy that I think explains why we no longer see open miracles such as those of Biblical times. Comparing our relationship to God to that of children and parents, I proposed that as we grow and mature, there is a natural physical distancing between parent and child.

When we were newborns, every time we opened our eyes, in all likelihood the first thing we would see was a parent's face. That face would be there when we ate, were being bathed or dressed, when we woke up and when we went to sleep. It was always right there – you could not miss it.

But as we became toddlers and started learning how to walk,

**It is about finding God, not necessarily in the loud miracles, but in quiet ones: you have to look to God's creations, to the world around you, to the relationships and opportunities to engage that God has set in front of you.**

our parents were not in front of us. They were at our side, holding our hand, allowing us to take our first few steps. We could feel their hand in ours. But in order to see their face, we would have to turn our head a little.

And then we learned how to run and were able to get away from our parents! Now they were not in front of us, nor at our side, holding our hand. They were behind us, ready to jump in and pick us up if necessary.

As teenagers, the last thing we wanted in life was to have parents anywhere close to us. Not in front of us, at our side, or even behind us. But we knew they were there, ready to help, even if many times we did not want a relationship with them.

As adults, things changed even more. Now, our parents were no longer living with us. For some, they could still be reached by phone. For others, the parents had already departed

this world, and we were unable to see them or to speak with them. Yet this does not mean there was an emotional distancing. It is simply a different kind of relationship. And now, in order to feel their presence, we had to actively access their teachings. We need to want to feel their presence. It is in our hands to do so.

The same, I propose, happens with miracles in our lives. When we were babies, they were all in our face. But as we matured, we needed to actually make an effort to see them.

We know that Rabbi Eliezer was right. But he still wanted a relationship with God that operated on the basis of loud miracles. Rabbi Eliezer believed that the voice of God can be heard when trees move or a water current changes direction. God is no longer going to act as the parent who reaches out an arm to pick us up out of our troubles. We are now adults, who need to find the connection with God in different ways. Thankfully, one of Rabbi Eliezer's students, Rabbi Akiva, who inspired thousands – who inspires all of us — offered us a new model: miracles can be found everywhere. Even in the crown of a letter in a word of a *Torah* scroll. Miracles are in the details of our lives. In the interactions we have. In the

people whom the Holy One, Blessed Be He, put right in front of us in our darkest hours.

Some would say that miracles never really happened, though. The Ten Plagues? Science can explain them. The splitting of the sea? Low tides – totally explainable by science. God on Mount Sinai? Manna falling from the sky? Elisha reviving a dead child? All of this can be explained by science and/or psychology. The miracles spoken about in rabbinic literature? Science can explain some; others can simply be made up by the rabbis to teach us lessons.

In later times, Luzatto and Hirsch agreed that more important than the actual fact, was the lesson it taught. Nachmanides believed that miracles happened all the time. And Maimonides defined a miracle as something with a strong significance that science cannot explain (that meant that something that is considered a miracle today might not be considered a miracle tomorrow...).

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In modern times, Rosenzweig, Buber, and Heschel believed that miracles were planned by God at the time of creation, while Kaplan said that miracles do not exist, but the miracle stories help us shape the way we think about God.

A miracle, today, in my understanding, is that spark of connection between me and God. It may not be loud, Hollywood might not be interested in it, but it is there! God makes His presence known to me. The Baal Shem Tov once said that the world is full of miracles, but man takes his little hand and covers his eyes and sees nothing. Judaism suggests that we take our hands from our eyes and pay attention to what happens around us, tangibly perceiving that these miracles are ways of strengthening our connection to God. If I choose to do so, every day I can recognize a personal, accessible, miraculous force in my life; I can find connection, wonder, something that is much bigger than I am.

We have an opportunity to see the miraculous – to see God – everywhere we look. We don't need to wait for God to come down in the middle of thunder and lightning to believe in miracles. We can see the miraculous every day, many times a day. Notice sunrise and sunset, the flower blooming in your front yard, your breath as it rushes from excitement and grows quiet with contentment, a medical breakthrough or recovery, a technological advance that changes lives, the birth of a child. We are given a choice: we can move through life without ever noticing a miracle, or we can choose to actively look for them. I ask God daily to bless me with the ability to find the hidden, to see the miracles, to sense His presence – that in and of itself is a real miracle.

# Funny, You Don't Look Jewish: Hanukah and Jewish Identity

Nina Woldin

Assimilation has many faces historically and personally for the Jewish people. We're all familiar with the "December Dilemma," the competition between winter holidays. In our consumer-based society, Christmas (America's premiere season for gift-giving) begins to dominate the media in late October. *Hanukah's* proximity on the calendar to Christmas has put pressure on Diaspora Jews to elevate the importance of *Hanukah* as a way of maintaining Jewish identity during the Christmas-dominated holiday season.

But wait – this is what *Hanukah* is about anyway – maintaining Jewish identity. During the time of the Maccabees, there was a struggle taking place around the issue of cultural influence. The Seleucids were actively persecuting Jews, forcing them to give up their traditions and beliefs. And if that wasn't enough, within the Jewish community, the Hellenists were all for adopting Greek ways.

The *Hanukah* story reveals the internal tensions surrounding this topic that are still very much alive today. For most teens, "fitting in" is important. The question of whether to display their Jewish identity, and "how Jewish" they appear, is one that many consider daily. Exploring times when Jews were forced to conceal their Judaism and times when Jews freely identified publicly can spark important discussion that will help students grapple with this issue and find support from their peers and their teachers in the Jewish classroom.

In a session at the 2018 NewCAJE conference, participants engaged in activities and discussion to help examine and define their individual Jewish identity in a very personal way. They examined some big questions that are meaningful to teens, who are becoming independent and forging their own unique Jewish identities:

- How comfortable am I with being visibly Jewish?
- How much of the values and customs of the host culture should Jewish people adopt?
- How does living in an oppressive vs. accepting culture affect assimilation?
- What are our choices? Does knowing the challenges Jewish people faced throughout history to stay Jewish affect my own personal identity?
- What are the risks one takes by being "visibly Jewish"? What are the rewards?

The method used to do this was the method used by the *Chai Mitzvah* curriculum: using text as a basis of meaningful and relevant discussion. Text, in this setting, can be anything we read and analyze, from traditional written text to videos to visual art. The goal is for students, by the end of the session, to identify and express their ideas about their own Jewish identities more clearly than before, having explored them in depth from various historical perspectives.

### TEXT: JEW OR NOT JEW?

We began with a game, 'Jew or Not Jew?', which encouraged participants to explore the following question, "What does a Jewish person look like?" Each participant was supplied paper and a pen. They were shown a series of 15 photographs (see image on following page) and asked to write JEWISH or NOT JEWISH for each one. After they made their assessments, we discussed the photos, discovered who was featured in each one, and talked about why the participants made the choices they did.

**Nina Woldin**, Director of Special Projects, Family, and Teen education for *Chai Mitzvah*, has been working in Jewish education for more than three decades creating student materials and programs in print, online, and video. Nina worked in the Israel Advocacy and Education Department of Jewish National Fund, and her online Jewish education resource center, [Yourpage.org](http://Yourpage.org), became part of JNF's website in 2003.  
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# Funny, You Don't Look Jewish: *Hanukkah and Jewish Identity*

*NewCAJE July 29 – August 1, 2018*

Answers to game:

1. *Chassid* (works for Google)
2. Israeli soldiers
3. John Ulmschneider, Firefighter (not Jewish)
4. Angela Buchdahl (Rabbi, Central Synagogue NY)
5. *Chalutzim*
6. Black student from University of Texas (not Jewish)
7. Daniel Mendoza, undefeated boxer of late 18th century (Jewish)
8. Henry (Jewish boy, no ethnic looks)
9. Israeli Ethiopian immigrants
10. Arab-Jewish woman
11. Asian man (not Jewish)
12. Stephanie Schriok (Emily's list - resource for women in politics, not Jewish)
13. Woman with tattoos (Jewish)
14. Jewish looking teen boy (Shutterstock photo)
15. Marc Spitz (Jewish Olympic swimmer)

### CONVERSATION:

**What clues did you use when guessing "Jewish or Not Jewish?"**

- Physical characteristics: nose, curly hair (Jews of last generation often had plastic surgery to change ethnic looks, also straightened hair) Of course, not all Jews have these features. The Jewish population is also diverse. (See Y-Love's video, "This is Unity." Link is supplied in "additional resources" at the end of this article.)
- Occupation: Jews were known as bookish, not athletic. There have been many exceptions to this – Daniel Mendoza, *Chalutzim*, IDF, Marc Spitz
- What are some other things that might identify a person as Jewish? Jewish jewelry, *kippah* (and in more Orthodox communities, *sheitel*), modest clothing, Chassidic garb.

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The conversation then turned to:

## What makes a person Jewish?

- Belief in God?
- Observing Jewish practices?
- Identifying as a Jew?
- Being born of a Jewish mother/father?

The bullet points above are items to think about, but there are no definitive right or wrong answers to these questions, as different streams of Judaism have different ideas about them.

## Exploring times when Jews were forced to conceal their Judaism and times when Jews freely identified publicly can spark important discussion that will help students grapple with (the issue of fitting in) and find support from their peers and their teachers in the Jewish classroom.

A natural follow-up, and a very important aspect of the conversation, is applying these thoughts to ourselves, as individuals.

### What is your Jewish visibility comfort zone?

How do you feel about the items mentioned above, and other items that separate Jewish people from surrounding culture:

- Names (in past generations changed to fit in, to be accepted in higher education, or to be hired in certain professions)
- Keeping dietary laws, holidays, *Shabbat*
- Identifying publicly as Jewish

As the session participants were from different communities and different generations, there were disparate ideas expressed, but it was clear that the topic was individually very meaningful to all. Everyone had a personal story to share.

### TEXT: *Bayamim ha-hem ba-zman ha-zeh: Oppressive vs, Accepting Culture, Then and Now*

The next part of the session involved a quick review of the *Hanukah* story, and an interesting note of irony from Aish.com, followed by an examination of whether persecution or assimilation is potentially more harmful to the health of a Jewish community.

### QUICK REVIEW:

The Maccabees fought for Jewish beliefs and traditions against both outside forces and forces within the community. After three years of battle with the outside forces they won and were able to clean and rededicate the Temple in Jerusalem. That is why we celebrate *Hanukah*, which means “dedication.”

Perhaps the greatest irony of the legacy of the Maccabees is what is named after them today: The *Maccabiah* Games. (the Jewish Olympic Games, started in 1932 and held every four years in Israel). There is virtually no cultural institution that more typifies ancient Greek culture than their athletic competitions. That the Maccabees, who gave their lives to save Judaism from Greek influence, should have Greek-style sporting events named after them is the most ironic of endings to this story.

### CONVERSATION – ASSIMILATION AND PERSECUTION – VOTE WITH YOUR FEET:

Both assimilation and government persecution were at play during the time of the Maccabees. Which do you think has the potential to be more harmful to the Jewish community?

Participants were directed to **vote with their feet**: If one believed government persecution is more harmful, they were directed to stand next to the right wall. If one believed assimilation is more harmful, they were directed to stand next to the left wall. If one believed that it is both, in varying degrees, they were directed to find a place between the two walls that expressed their views.

Vote with your feet...

We then explored the question in more depth, with activities that focused on persecution, and then assimilation.

### PERSECUTION:

Throughout history there have been constraints on Jewish people:

- Where we live – excluded from neighborhoods (ghettos)
- Excluded from certain professions, clubs and schools
- Laws outlawed certain professions or limited Jewish citizenship
- We were required to wear a mark or badge

To make this more personal, participants engaged in a role-play:

Props were provided: *kippot*, head scarves, Jewish badges (“Jude” star).

In small groups, they were asked to take on the roles of

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Diaspora Jews from different times and places in history when Jews were oppressed, for example:

- Jerusalem during the time of the Maccabees
- Spain during the Inquisition
- Europe in 1939

The educators in the workshop were knowledgeable about these time periods, but high school students might need additional resources, which are listed at the end of this article.

They explored the following:

How do you think we should handle persecution? These choices were discussed:

- Blend in as much as possible and don't make waves
- Fight to have laws changed legally
- Observe in secret
- Be defiant
- "None of the above... move away to a safer country!"

## ASSIMILATION:

There have also been times when Jewish people have willingly adopted values and customs of the host culture by:

- Not wearing distinguishing clothing such as *kippot*
- Not keeping dietary laws
- Adjusting calendars to fit secular calendar
- Adopting the styles of the host culture – tattoos and piercings, less modest clothing
- Discarding *Shabbat*

Napoleon had a plan to destroy the Jewish community in France through assimilation. In 1807, he convened the "Grand *Sanhedrin*," a group of Jewish leaders. He chose the name hoping that the Jewish community would give them the same authority that the original *Sanhedrin* had. He put a series of questions to them, hoping that their answers would help intermarriages be recognized, and that Jews would be allowed to practice all professions and live in all parts of the country. He believed that this plan would destroy Jewish communities in France. While he didn't succeed in completely destroying the French Jewish community, assimilation did gain traction during this time.

Participants were shown the questions posed to the "Grand

*Sanhedrin*" and asked to answer them the way they thought the "Grand *Sanhedrin*" did. (Please see attached PDF with both questions and answers.)

After discovering the answers given by the French "Grand *Sanhedrin*," participants were asked to reevaluate their original assessments of whether persecution or assimilation has the potential to be more harmful to the Jewish community. In this particular session, most participants felt that assimilation had more potential to destroy the Jewish community.

In the culminating discussion, participants shared their feelings about their own Jewish identities in light of the challenges Jewish people have faced throughout history to stay Jewish, and their choices as Diaspora Jews in the global society of the 21st century.

Through this *Hanukah* session, you can provide your teen students with an opportunity to examine and grow their individual Jewish identities that are rich, deep, and meaningful.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

1. Y-Love This is Unity:

<https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-Lkry-SF01&hsimp=yhs-SF01&hspart=Lkry&p=Y+Love+this+is+unit+y#id=1&vid=78e123d7a45974aba4be1e5a81df8658&action=click>

2. Napoleon's *Sanhedrin*: <https://www.jewishhistory.org/napoleons-sanhedrin/>

3. Basic Background about the Spanish Inquisition: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-inquisition>

4. Anti-Jewish Laws in Germany, pre-WWII: <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005681>

## **Hanukah and Piršumei di-Niřa**

Shira Hammerman

### RATIONALE

**T**his unit highlights the connection between the light of the *hanukiah* and the metaphoric light of Judaism that was preserved at the time of the Maccabees. In doing so, it explores the importance of *piršumei di-niřa* (publicizing the *Hanukah* miracle by the sharing of the *Hanukah* lights with others), encourages students to appreciate their heritage, and empowers them to play active roles in sharing that heritage with others. As one of the most beloved and widely celebrated holidays among Jewish children, *Hanukah* provides a perfect opportunity for cultivating a positive feeling toward Jewish tradition and for engaging students in the preservation of Judaism.

### LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Through study of “*Ha-nerot ha-Lalu*,” a traditional *Hanukah* song, students are introduced to the miracles, wonders, rescues, and wars that occurred at the time of the Maccabees. To better understand these events, students read and reenact the story of the Maccabees, reflect upon why this story is celebrated, express thanks for the continual preservation of Judaism through the actions of the Maccabees and others, study texts that encourage them to share their *Hanukah* lights with others, and experience how doing so transforms them into “modern Maccabees.” In the process, they become experts in how to set up and light the *hanukiah* and prepare for a candle-lighting *hagigah*, where they have the opportunity to share *Hanukah* traditions with family and friends.

### CORE CONCEPTS

The *Hanukah* lights direct us to be thankful for all that God and our ancestors have done to ensure that the Jewish people and traditions continue from generation to generation; the lights also remind us that we have a role to play in preserving Judaism.

### ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

Judaism has continued from generation to generation because of the active roles that God and our ancestors have played in its perpetuation. I, too, can play an active role in preserving the Jewish people and traditions; one way that I can accomplish this is by inspiring others to share and pass traditions on in Judaism.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What can I learn from the *Hanukah* lights? What role can I play in the preservation of my people and traditions?

### UNIT FRAMEWORK AND CORE CONCEPTS

#### ***Lesson 1: What Do We Share with Others, and Why?***

We ensure that our traditions, experiences, and stories continue by sharing artifacts of our lives with others.

#### ***Lesson 2: “Ha-nerot ha-lalu”: Why Light These Candles?***

Our *Hanukah* celebration includes many elements that have been passed down to us from the time of the Maccabees. The *hanukiah* is a variation of the *menorah* that was lit daily in the Temple, and its lights remind us of the miracles, wonders, rescues, and wars that occurred at the time of the Maccabees.

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## **Lesson 3: Birkhot Hanukah: Words of Thanks**

The *Hanukah* candles remind us to show thanks and praise to God for helping to preserve Judaism at the time of the Maccabees. One way that we recognize God is by saying *brakhot* before lighting the *hanukiah*.

## **Lesson 4: How Do We Share and Pass on Nes Hanukah? (may require two class periods)**

On *Hanukah*, one way we play a role in sharing and passing Jewish traditions on is by lighting our *hanukiot* where others will see them.

- ◆ Students will illustrate ways in which a modern individual might emulate the Maccabees.
- ◆ Students will write a journal about their ability to be modern Maccabees who help to preserve Jewish tradition.
- ◆ The guidelines that Jewish texts set for lighting the *hanukiah* are intended to increase the number of people who see the lights of the *hanukiah*, in order to share the holiday with others.
- ◆ Students will identify a place in the synagogue that meets Maimonides' guidelines for where and when to light the *hanukiah*.
- ◆ Lighting the *hanukiah* is a time for sharing and preserving

**As one of the most beloved and widely celebrated holidays among Jewish children, *Hanukah* provides a perfect opportunity for cultivating a positive feeling toward Jewish tradition and for engaging students in the preservation of Judaism.**

## **Lesson 5: Planning Our Hagigat Hanukah!**

**(two sessions, including one at candle-lighting time)**

As modern Maccabees, we play a role in sharing and passing on many Jewish customs and traditions that relate to *Hanukah* and other aspects of life.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES**

#### **Learning Objective Performance Outcome.**

- ◆ Students will demonstrate knowledge that on *Hanukah*, we light the *hanukiah* to celebrate the preservation of Judaism at the time of the Maccabees.
- ◆ Students will describe the connection between the *hanukiah* and the *menorah* that was lit in the Temple.
- ◆ Students will retell the story of the Maccabees with a focus on the miracles, wonders, rescues, and wars that took place.
- ◆ We say *Birkhot Hanukah* to express praise and thanks to God for helping to preserve Judaism through the events of *Hanukah*.
- ◆ Students will articulate their own understanding of the role that God played in preserving Judaism through the events of *Hanukah*.
- ◆ We admire the Maccabees for the active role that they played in preserving Judaism.

Jewish tradition.

- ◆ Students will plan a *hagigat Hanukah*, where they will share *Hanukah* traditions with their families.
- ◆ Students will create *hanukiot* that encapsulate what they and their families would like to preserve about Judaism.
- ◆ Students will participate in a project that provides *hanukiot* and candles to those who may not otherwise be able to partake in this tradition.
- ◆ Students will express feelings of appreciation for Jewish tradition. Students will write haiku poems that describe what they appreciate about Judaism, and what they say and do to show that appreciation.

Students will be able to:

- ◆ Demonstrate the proper way to set up and light *Hanukah* candles.
- ◆ Recite and explain the *brakhot* that are said over the lighting of the *hanukiah*.
- ◆ Sing and explain "*Ha-nerot ha-lalu*."
- ◆ Retell the story of the Maccabees.
- ◆ Explain the concept of *pirsumei di-nisa* – publicizing the story of *Hanukah*.

## Hanukah Songs: Traditional and New

Susan Shane-Linder and Lisa Baydush

**H**anukah is months away, but there's no time like today to start expanding your holiday repertoire. From traditional oldies but goodies to newer songs by contemporary artists, there's much more to Hanukah than "Oh Hanukah" and "I Have a Little Dreidel!" The *Complete Hanukah Songbook*, published by Transcontinental Music Publications, is a good starting point to delve into the holiday spirit. In addition, there are many resources for finding music online, such as Jewish Learning Matters, Oy Songs, YouTube, and iTunes.

Creating a Hanukah repertoire for the K-5th grade classroom involves striking a balance between old and new. It's important to continue to teach the traditional songs of the past, while also infusing exciting new melodies into the mix. While traditional songs (such as *Maoz Tzur* and *Al ha-Nisim*) connect our students to our communal past and to Jewish people around the world, newer songs (such as *Light One Candle* and *We Kindle the Lights*) offer interpretation of the holiday and relevance in modern times.

Here are some favorite Hanukah songs that are successful with our students and families (see list below). We have created Spotify and YouTube playlists so that you can listen to and learn these songs, which were taught at our NewCAJE 9 workshop. Next to each title is a code to let you know if the song is on YouTube (YT) or Spotify (Sp), as well as if it is included in *The Complete Hanukah Songbook* (CCS). If a song has not been recorded professionally, we have provided information on where to find the sheet music or audio. We encourage you to continue to seek out new Hanukah music on your Jewish music journey, and we are happy to be a resource at any time!

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**Lisa Baydush** is a Jewish music educator, song leader, and composer from the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. An early childhood music specialist at Washington Hebrew Congregation's Julia Bindeman Suburban Center and Congregation B'nai Tzedek, Lisa also leads experiential *Tot Shabbat* services at both synagogue and holiday services as well as programs at a variety of congregations and schools.  
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### SONGS:

1. "A Great Miracle Happened There." by Ellen Allard (sheet music at [www.EllenAllard.com](http://www.EllenAllard.com))
2. "Al ha-Nisim Hanukah Liturgy," music by Dov Frimer (YT; Sp; CCS)
3. "Cha Cha Hanukah," by the Shirettes (audio at <https://store.cdbaby.com/cd/shirettes2#>)
4. "Hanukah (Chag Yafeh)," folk tune, lyrics by L. Kipnis (YT; Sp; CCS)
5. "Hanukah Catch," by Stephen Richards (YT; Sp; CCS)
6. "Hanukah Lights," by The Ba'al Shem Tones, Helene and Michael Kates (YT)
7. "Hanukah's Here," by Lisa Baydush (audio at <http://bit.ly/HanukahsHere>)
8. "The Hanukiah (How Many Candles?)," by Jackie Cytrynbaum (Sp)
9. "Hanukah Blessings" (YT; Sp; CCS)
10. "Hanukah in Santa Monica," by Tom Lehrer (YT; Sp)
11. "In the Window (My Candles)," by Judith K. Eisenstein (YT; Sp; CCS)
12. "I Have a Little Dreidel," by S.E. Goldfarb and S.S. Grossman (YT; Sp; CCS)
13. "Judah Maccabee," by Joe Black (YT; Sp; CCS)
14. "Judah Maccabee the Hammer," by Ellen Allard (YT; Sp)
15. "Kindle a Candle," by Dan Crow (YT; Sp)
16. "The Latke Song," by Debbie Friedman (YT; Sp; CCS)
17. "Light Eight Candles," by Lisa Baydush (Shir Synergy) (YT; Sp)
18. "Light One Candle," by Peter Yarrow (YT; Sp; CCS)
19. "Light the Menorah," by Debbie Friedman (YT; Sp)
20. "Lots of Latkes (English folk tune)," arranged by Cantor Allen Lieder (YT; Sp; CCS)
21. "Maccabees," by Sam Glaser (YT)
22. "Maoz Tzur (Rock of Ages)," traditional, English by G.

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- Gottheil, Music arranged by A.W. Binder (YT; Sp; CCS)
23. "Mi Y'malel (Who Can Retell?)," folk tune arranged by Eric Werner, English by Judith K. Eisenstein (YT; Sp; CCS)
  24. "Nes Gadol Haya Sham," by Debbie Friedman (YT; Sp)
  25. "Not By Might," by Debbie Friedman (YT; Sp; CCS)
  26. "Nun Gimel Hay Shin," by Debbie Friedman (YT)
  27. "O Hanukah O Hanukah," traditional (YT; Sp; CCS)
  28. "Sufganiot," by Ellen Allard (YT; Sp)
  29. "S'vivon music," by Wolli Kaelter, lyrics by M. Kipnis, English by S. Gewirtz (YT; Sp; CCS)
  30. "We Kindle the Lights," by Ellen Allard (sheet music at [www.EllenAllard.com](http://www.EllenAllard.com))
  31. "We Light the Lights," by Sam Glaser (YT)
  32. "Yodlelay Do Potato," by Ellen Allard (YT; Sp; CCS)

## RESOURCES:

Spotify playlist: <http://bit.ly/NewCAJEHanukah>  
YouTube playlist: <http://bit.ly/HanukahSongs>  
Downloadable playlists, props, curriculum: [www.LisaBaydush.com](http://www.LisaBaydush.com)

## EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES:

[www.JewishLearningMatters.com](http://www.JewishLearningMatters.com)

## NOTATED AND RECORDED MUSIC:

[www.oysongs.com](http://www.oysongs.com)

## RECOMMENDED HANUKAH ALBUMS:

*Celebrate Hanukah* – various artists  
*Hanukah: A Singing Celebration* – Cindy Paley  
*Hanukah at Home* – Fred Sokolow  
*Hanukah Collection, The* – Six13  
*Drew's Famous Presents Kids Happy Hanukah* – The Hit Crew  
*Eight Days of Hanukah* – Doda Mollie  
*Hanukah Sing-Along for Kids* – Brentwood Kids  
*Hanukah Songs* – Don Cooper  
*Hanukah Songs of Light and Hope* – Deborah Katchko Gray  
*Hanukah Swings* – Kenny Ellis  
*It Was a Miracle* – Andi Joseph  
*It's Hanukah Time* – Julie Silver  
*Light These Lights* – Debbie Friedman  
*Maccabeats Hanukah, A* – Maccabeats  
*Magic of Hanukah, The* – Paul Zim  
*Miracles and Wonders* – Debbie Friedman  
*Rockin' Hanukah Revue* – Sam Glaser  
*Shine Little Candles* – Rachel Buchman  
*ShirLaLa Hanukah!* – Shira Kline

# What the Story of *Hanukah* Means Today

Jonathan Wolf

**T**he narrative of *Hanukah* that most of us grew up with is basically a dishonest, ahistorical, and terribly incomplete one. The events we commemorate on the holiday were NOT simply the victory of a guerrilla band of faithful Jews against an occupying pagan empire. And they were certainly not at all a triumph for religious freedom and tolerance.

As portrayed in the *Book of Maccabees* in the *Apocrypha*, the *Hanukah* story is, as much as those characteristics, the account of a violent rebellion against assimilationist, unfaithful, irreligious Jews and Jewish leadership by a family group and subcommunity of nonpluralistic, arrogant, armed dissidents. It was a blood-soaked Civil War, with many Jewish victims and casualties.

### FIRST MACCABEES

Consider the account in *First Maccabees*:

(Chapter 1, verse 11:) In those days there arose out of Israel a group of lawless men, who misled many of their people. "Let us enter into a treaty with the pagans around us," they proposed. "for ever since we separated ourselves from them, many misfortunes have come upon us....(v. 13) They went to the king, and he gave them the authority to introduce the customs of the pagans. They built a stadium in Jerusalem, in the pagan style. They removed the marks of their circumcisions, and rejected the Holy Covenant. They intermarried with the pagans, and turned to evil ways...(v. 20) In the year [170 BCE], Antiochus turned back and marched against Israel and Jerusalem with a strong force. In his arrogance, he entered into the Temple....(v. 24) [H]e carried away [all of the holy vessels from the Temple] to his own country. He had massacred many people and gloated over all he had done. (v. 37) They shed innocent blood round the Temple, they defiled the Sanctuary....(v. 41) Then the king issued a decree throughout his kingdom that they should all become one people and abandon their own laws and religions.... (v. 43) And many in Israel agreed to this form of worship, sacrificing to idols and profaning the Sabbath....(v. 54) On the twenty-fifth of *Kislev* in the year [167 BCE], he erected a dreadful desecration upon the altar...(v. 56) The Scrolls of the Law which they found, they tore to shreds and they burnt. Anyone discovered in possession of a Book of the Covenant, or fulfilling the Law, was put to death....(v. 60) [T]hey put to death the women who had circumcised their children. Their infants, their families, and those who had circumcised them, they hanged by the neck....

(Chapter 2) In those days Mattathias, son of Johanan, son of Simeon, a priest of the family of Joarib, moved from Jerusalem and settled in Modi'in. (v. 6) When Mattathias saw the blasphemous things that were done in Judah and Jerusalem, he said: (v. 12) Behold, our Temple and our beauty and our glory have been laid waste....(v. 20) Yet will I and my sons and brothers walk in the covenant of our fathers....(v. 23) When he ceased speaking these words, a Jew stepped forward, in full view of all, to sacrifice on the pagan altar in Modi'in, in keeping with the king's decree....With righteous anger, [Mattathias] rushed forward and slew him on the altar. (v. 27) "Follow me!", he shouted through the town. (v. 44) And Mattathias and his friends went about the country and tore down pagan altars. And circumcised by force as many of the uncircumcised children as they found in Israel's borders....(v. 47) So they rescued the Law from the hands of the pagans....

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(Chapter 3, verse 20. Judah Maccabee said:) “They are coming against us, full of violence and lawlessness, to destroy us, our wives, and our children...(v. 21) But we are fighting for our lives and our Law. God himself will crush them before us. You have no need to fear them.” When he finished speaking, Judah launched a sudden attack, and Seron and his army were crushed...(v. 25) It was then that the fear and dread of Judah and his brothers began to spread among the pagans around them. (v. 43) And they purified the Temple...(v. 48) They rebuilt the Sanctuary and the interior of the Temple and consecrated the courts...(v. 56) They celebrated the dedication of the altar for eight days...(v. 58) Then Judah, his brothers, and the whole congregation of Israel decreed that the days of the dedication [*Hanukah*] of the altar should be observed with joy and gladness at the same time each year, for eight days, beginning on the twenty-fifth of Kislev.<sup>1</sup>

## ONE GROUP’S VIEWPOINT

So when we recount and revel in the victories of Mattathias and his followers, what and whom are we really celebrating? And in the panorama of Jewish life today, who are the equivalents of the accommodating Hellenizers, and who are the noble, pure Hasmoneans?

One group of contemporary Jews is certain that they know the answer. They represent a portion of the membership,

**The narrative of *Hanukah* that most of us grew up with is basically a dishonest, ahistorical, and terribly incomplete one.**

leadership, and rabbinate of politically right-wing Zionist Modern Orthodox synagogues in the United States. They are to the right even of Israel’s current prime minister. In Israel, this demographic includes extremist settlers and their supporters. These Jews follow the *Jewish Press* and settlers’ websites and radio stations, as well as ardently partisan publications in Israel.

I strongly believe that they profoundly misread Jewish tradition and values, Jewish and Israeli history, and basic morality. But I think their claims need to be confronted and refuted. They present, in some ways, the most coherent and consistent contemporary interpretation of the *Hanukah* experience, even though their version is stilted and narrow and mean.

One of their heroes is the late Meir Kahane (Brooklyn-born Orthodox rabbi and inveterate rabble-rouser. After making Aliyah, elected to Knesset. Founder of the Jewish Defense League and of the Kach party). Throughout his life and public

career, he railed against modern Hellenists and “Gentilizers,” those Jews who would bow to the seductive, evil intellectual temptations of the debased non-Jewish world. In a typical article he wrote in *The Jewish Press* for *Hanukah* 1982, entitled “Hellenism, 5743,” Kahane wrote: “[T]he struggle of our time that pits Peace Now and the overwhelming majority of liberals and Reform and Conservative leaders and intellectuals from the universities against the policies of the government of Israel (led by Menahem Begin) is exactly the struggle of some 2500 years ago of the Hellenists against the Maccabees, the war of Jews who sought to corrupt authentic Judaism with foreign, gentilized concepts against those Jewish Jews who sought to purify not only Temple but people from the swine of impure ideology.”<sup>2</sup> Kahane saw himself as a modern Mattathias and his supporters as the current-day Hasmoneans. (Recall that the original name of his Jewish Defense League was The Maccabees.)

Even after Kahane was assassinated by terrorist El Sayyid Nosair in 1990, his ideas continued to live on. Twenty-one years after that “Hellenism” article, Prof. Steven Plaut of Haifa University wrote an almost identical piece, also in *The Jewish Press*, for *Hanukah* 2003 (5764), entitled, “*Hanukah* Among the Hellenists.” He declared: “[T]he Jewish holiday that is the most relevant to the current...chapter in Jewish history is *Hanukah*...[I]t is the saga of the heroic struggle of

Jewish survivalists against the assimilationists and self-hating Hellenists of the second century BCE. *Hanukah* is less a story about the battle against the Greeks than it is about the battle against...those who hated themselves for being Jews and sought to be “progressive” and “modern”...Israel’s cultural/ educational elite and its chattering classes are now largely dominated by those motivated by the desire for their country to commit national suicide.....Like the Hellenized Jews [at the time of *Hanukah*], they are convinced that traditionalist Jews are reactionary and primitive, and that the greatest national priority should be renunciation of Jewish peculiarity.....The message of the contemporary Hellenists is unambiguous: Those who wish to purify the Temple, who wish to evict the barbarians from Jerusalem, are the enemies of peace.”<sup>3</sup> And, again in *The Jewish Press*, thirty years after Kahane’s “Hellenism” piece, Roy Neuberger wrote a front-page article in the *Hanukah* 2012 (5773) issue entitled, “The Maccabees’ Response to ‘World Opinion,’” which continued the theme of holy and pure Jews besieged by benighted, secularized Jews and a hostile world. “[*Hanukah*] commemorates the intense

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*emunah* (faith) and *bitachon* (trust) of a tiny band of *kohanim* who defied all rules of statistical probability, prudence, and world opinion. These *kohanim* trained themselves to become totally oblivious to the 'logic' by which the rest of the world conducts its existence.... If we want to survive the coming cataclysmic events, we would do well to remember the epic words of Rabbi (Yechezkel) Levenstein zt"l, legendary *mashgiach* (spiritual supervisor) of the Mirrer *Yeshiva*: 'In the final war before the coming of the *Mashiach*, all the Jews who fear Hashem will survive' (emphasis in original). The implication is that only the Jews who fear Hashem will survive.... Rabbi Levenstein amplified this with the words, 'Hashem will say to them: 'All those who are removed from the secular, worldly culture, you are Mine...'''.<sup>4</sup>

Do these militant religious Jews of today, haters of Gentiles and their philosophies, racists and advocates of, and hair-trigger instigators of, violence, speak for our tradition?

## THE CLASSIC EXPOSITION

The classic exposition of the rabbis of the *Talmud's* understanding of the meaning of *Hanukah* appears in the Babylonian *Talmud*, Tractate *Shabbat* 21b. "Mai Hanukah?: What is *Hanukah*? Our Rabbis taught: On the 25th of Kislev [begin] eight days in which we do not eulogize the dead nor fast, [to commemorate the fact that] the Greeks entered into the Sanctuary and defiled all the oils in the Sanctuary, and that when Hasmonean dynasty overcame them and were victorious over them, they searched and found only one cruse of oil which bore the stamp of the High Priest and it was enough to burn for only a single day. But a miracle occurred with that [single cruse of oil], and it burned for eight days. The following year, they established and created days of holiday and praise [*Hallel* psalms] and thanksgiving." The Talmudic rabbis portray the *Hanukah* miracle as solely one of faith and of purification of the Temple, mentioning in passing the underdog military victory and saying nothing about Greek beliefs or Jews who adopted them.

The prayer *Al HaNissim*, inserted into the *Amidah* and the *Birkat ha-Mazon* during *Hanukah*, also portrays the improbable battlefield success and the rededication of the Temple as Divine miracles and as God's intercession to rescue the righteous Jews, but makes no mention of internal warfare or of a sectarian triumph.

A very different outlook from that of *The Jewish Press* ("our God-fearing Jews will crush your debased ones") is provided by Milton Steinberg (1903-1950. Conservative rabbi, longtime senior rabbi of Park Avenue Synagogue, author of *Basic Judaism* and of the novel about Talmudic times, *As a Driven*

*Leaf*) in his article, "Judaism and Hellenism," republished in 1957. He writes:

"[T]he culture of the Jew and the culture of the Greek were in continuous contact [in the ancient world].... [T]he two groups that wrestled with each other in Palestine in the 2nd century BCE...were the bearers and protagonists of distinct cultures, of different systems of living.... The Maccabees... were fighting for freedom, for the faith and traditions of their fathers.... [T]hey fought also for certain concepts indispensable to adequate human living, which in the ancient world they alone possessed and which became the common possession of mankind at large....

"Alexander [the Great] brought [to the areas of his conquests] the whole wealth of that civilization which had grown up in Hellas[:] the epics of Homer...poetry...drama...the artistic standards [of] the Acropolis...philosophy.... Within a short time, the entire Orient was Hellenized...peoples of diverse stocks learned to speak Greek...and to think like Greeks.... The cultural life of the Hellenized Orient was...brilliant. There was no field of human endeavor in which this age did not excel[:] architectural genius...sculptors...scientific research... geometry....The museum of Alexandria, with its zoological and botanical gardens....and the library of Alexandria, with its vast collection of books...the biographies of Plutarch...history... geography...[U]ntil the dawn of the modern era no other society has created literary masterpieces in such variety and profusion...a magnificent world, startlingly like our own.

"The Jew...could not but be affected by this dazzling culture. The upper strata of Jewish society in Palestine were Hellenized...completely....But as a whole, Palestinian Jewry stood unyielding in the face of all the seductions of Hellenism. And when Antiochus IV attempted to force the Greek way of life upon the Hebrews, the Maccabees rose in rebellion.

"[T]he objection of the Jew to this Greek world...sprang from [the conviction that] there were in Greek life certain deep and fundamental voids...and there was in the Jewish tradition a body of religious and moral values for which the Maccabees fought.

"In the first place, the Greek world had no living religion.... The pagan... worshiped blind chance as the dominant power behind the world....[That world] maintained a system of state-endowed temples housing gods in whom no one really believed, [and] taught religions from which all vitality had fled....[The Jew] possessed one thing which the pagans did not have....a faith which told him that the universe was not a matter of blind chance...that his life was...an integral and infinitely significant part of a universal drama....

“[There was also] a profound difference in morals between the two worlds. One of the ancient rabbis [declared that] ‘Three distinctive characteristics are to be found among Jews. They are merciful, they are chaste, and they are charitable. [*Rahmanim, bayshanim, gomlei hasadim*].’ In this epigram are to be detected moral distinctions between Greek and Jewish society which the ancient Jew perceived.

“The Jew almost alone in the ancient world had a sense of the dignity of the life of every human being, of infinite moral

**“We today confront a new version of the struggle between ‘loyalists’ to *Torah* and *Mitzvot*, of varied denominational titles (emphasis added), and ‘liberationists’ whose casting off of the yoke of *Torah* is a painful sight to see....”**

significance. For that reason he was taught to detest all forms of human exploitation....In contrast, the Greek world was entirely without a sense of reverence for the sanctity of life. The Hellenistic social structure was built upon a brutal slavery.... [T]he slave economy of the Graeco-Roman world was very little disturbed by moral protest...[and included] the amphitheater where human beings were done to death for the amusement of bloodthirsty mobs.... Greek society was founded upon violence....

“Almost alone, too, the Jew had standards of chastity... that avoided sensual bestiality without being ascetic...[and featured] a difference in the tone of family life and in the position of women. The normal Jewish world revered the marital state, and insisted on its spiritual significance...[in contrast to] the Hellenistic family in which the wife served to breed children and from which the cultured Greek [man] fled to find his social outlets....

“And last of all, the Jew was unique in his recognition of the virtue of charity.... [T]here is rarely to be discerned in Greek thought any vestige of compassion for the human underdog.... It was inevitable that this world would fall into decay, that it would collapse into barbarism, that it would be conquered eventually by a religion born of Judaism, which supplied a rationale that made life significant and which conveyed standards of mercy, chastity, and compassion”<sup>5</sup>

### ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

Another perspective on how Jewish tradition has understood the rifts between Jews at the time of *Hanukah* comes from Saul J. Berman (former senior rabbi of Congregation

Beth Israel in Berkeley, CA; of Young Israel of Brookline, MA; and of Lincoln Square Synagogue in NYC; in addition to being a professor at Stern College of Yeshiva University and at Columbia Law School and author of many articles in the *Encyclopedia Judaica* on elements in Jewish law). On *Hanukah* 1989 (5750). He wrote:

“During the struggle against the Syrian-Greeks to restore Jewish autonomy and to regain Jewish control over the Temple in Jerusalem, there was a parallel struggle within the Jewish community between those who remained true to

*Torah* and its values, against those who adopted Hellenistic values and attempted to supplant *Mitzvot* with a foreign culture.

“This struggle between ‘loyalists’ and ‘liberationists’ echoes the perception of the Sages that at the time of the Exodus, the Jewish people were joined by an ‘*erev rav*,’ a mixed multitude of peoples who really lacked loyalty to God and were, therefore, constantly fomenting rebellions against Moshe and against the *Torah*. On the one hand, the most reasonable response to the *erev rav* should have been separation. They were, after all, not even descendants of Abraham and Sarah; why not just send them back to Egypt? Yet God and Moshe not only tolerated them, but continued to struggle to integrate them fully into the Jewish people.

“Likewise, the Hellenists were not ejected from the corpus of the Jewish people, for all the trouble they caused to the ‘loyalists.’ *Indeed, our celebration of Hanukah preserves no symbol of the victory of the Maccabees over the Jewish Hellenists* (emphasis added) — only of the victory of the entire Jewish people over the external enemy.

“There was a price that the Jewish people paid for the integration of the *erev rav* and for the non-exclusion of the Hellenists. But apparently our ancestors in their wisdom understood it to be God’s intent that we pay that price rather than sever a limb from the body of the Jewish people.

“We today confront a new version of the struggle between ‘loyalists’ to *Torah* and *Mitzvot*, of varied denominational titles (emphasis added), and ‘liberationists’ whose casting

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off of the yoke of *Torah* is a painful sight to see....There are, unfortunately, many voices now calling for total separation.... Yet *Hanukah* must instruct us that separation is not an appropriate Jewish response. Rather, we should be prepared to pay even a steep price to continue to work together to preserve the wholeness of the Jewish people....<sup>6</sup>

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver (1893-1963. Reform Rabbi, champion of labor unions, leading Zionist, Rabbi of The Temple in Cleveland for 46 years), in his book, *Where Judaism Differed: An Inquiry into the Distinctiveness of Judaism* (1956), devotes separate chapters to crucial concepts that he believed Judaism introduced into the world and that represent its unique contributions. These include opposition to such beliefs as 'That men need to be saved,' 'That men should not enjoy life', 'That men are not equal', 'That men are not free', 'That men should not resist evil', and 'That death is better than life.' (Blessedly, our rhetoric and thinking since some of these pieces were authored over sixty years ago has evolved to more explicitly recognize and include the more than half of humanity who are not "Men.")<sup>7</sup>

Former Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom Jonathan Sacks, in his book, *The Great Partnership*, offers his view of the contrast between Greek and Jewish beliefs. "The West owes its development to two cultures, ancient Greece and ancient Israel, the heritages respectively of Athens and Jerusalem.... [F]irst-century Greek and Hebrew were not just different languages. They represented antithetical civilisations, unlike [each other] in their most basic understanding of reality.... Greek philosophy and science...was a predominantly left-brain culture, the Israel of the prophets a right-brain one. At precisely the time Greek came to be written left-to-right and Athens became a literate rather than an oral culture, it became the birthplace of science and philosophy.... The first and most obvious [difference between the Hebrew and Greek elements within what became Christianity] is *universality* (emphasis in original). Judaism is a principled and unusual combination of universality and particularity.... The God of Israel is the God of all humanity, but the religion of Israel is not, and is not intended to be, the religion of all humanity. You do not have to be part of the Sinai covenant, or even the covenant of Abraham, to reach heaven and achieve salvation. Pauline Christianity rejected this.... [This] is the legacy of Plato, who utterly devalued particulars in favor of the universal. The second [major difference] is dualism. To a far greater extent than Judaism, Christianity after Paul develops a series of dualisms: between body and soul, the physical and the spiritual, Earth and heaven, this life and the next, with the emphasis on the second of each pair."<sup>8</sup>

So we have seen several different expositions of the philosophical contrasts between the worldview of Jewish tradition and that of the surrounding Hellenistic world: what it was that the Maccabees were violently rebelling against. The simplistically persuasive idea that super-observant and ultra-militant Jews today are identical to the Maccabees is ultimately unpersuasive and deceptive. As Rabbi Berman points out, the *Talmud* and *siddur* do not record *Hanukah* as an apocalyptic victory of pure Jews over *treif* ones, but of the entire Jewish people over our enemies and over those who would destroy the *Torah* and the Jewish nation. We divide and splinter that people at our peril. If we needed any further confirmation that the harsh, politically-right religious advocates who deem that everyone who holds different religious and political views are Hellenists and enemies of *Torah* are misguided and overzealous, we can observe that many of them are currently huge admirers of Donald Trump. From my perspective, this president embodies everything vulgar, faithless, and unprincipled that they claim to ferociously oppose. Like the many Evangelicals who remain bafflingly loyal to Trump, these spiritual grandchildren of Kahane seem ready to jettison the moral consistency and elevation that they claim is the center of their worldview when those values prove inconvenient to their political positioning.

As campaigners for pluralism, diversity, dialogue, alternative thinking, communal reform, learning from each other, and Jewish unity, members of the NewCAJE family can stand together to reject the notion that *Hanukah* teaches us extremism, forced uniformity, intolerance, and arrogance. What Judaism then and now provides us is inspiration, strength, determination, responsibility, and love for all fellow Jews.

Almost at the end of the *haftarah* that the Rabbis established for *Shabbat Hanukah* appear the resonant words: "And [the angel] answered and said to me, 'This is the word of *Adonai* to Zerubavel: Not by might, and not by power, but by My spirit, says *Adonai*.'" Jews must sometimes defend ourselves in a harsh world. But salvation and redemption will ultimately come not by strife or hatred, but through listening to and attempting to act upon the spirit of God.

*This article is dedicated to the memory of my father, Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf, ha-Rav Aharon Yaakov ben Moshe v'Netta, who passed away during Hanukah ten years ago. I am organizing gatherings in his honor this December, in NYC, on his yahrzeit (the second day of Hanukah), and in Chicago later in December. Everyone is welcome! His life was devoted to*

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*teaching Torah, uniting Jew to teaching Torah, uniting Jews, and building a just world. He taught at many national and local CAJE conferences (sometimes in partnership with his son (me). He was the national chairperson of Breira when JDL hooligans invaded their national conference and assaulted the participants, and, in the 1980s, he engaged in a well-attended debate against Meir Kahane at a public school in Chicago. (He arranged the finances so that Kahane had to write a check, covering Dad's speaking fee, made out to Americans for Peace Now. A full video of the debate was uploaded onto YouTube in 2015(!) and can be viewed there.) When I addressed a lengthy hostile question to Kahane following his drasha at the Flatbush Minyan in 1981, I was more confrontational and detailed than my father had chosen to be. The blustering rabbi couldn't muster much of a reply at the time, but, in the following week's Jewish Press column, he excoriated me and the entire minyan as misguided fools. A badge of honor.*

## ENDNOTES

1. *The Apocrypha*, translated by Edgar J. Goodspeed. Jewish Publication Society of America, 1959, pp. 18-51.
2. Meir Kahane, "Hellenism, 5743." *The Jewish Press*, December 3, 1982, p. 44.
3. Steven Plaut, "Hanukah Among the Hellenists," *The Jewish Press*, Hanukah issue, December, 2003.
4. Roy S. Neuberger, "The Maccabees' Response to 'World Opinion,'" *The Jewish Press*, December 7, 2012, p. 1.
5. Milton Steinberg, "Judaism and Hellenism", reprinted in *Hanukah: The Feast of Lights*, edited by Emily Solis-Cohen. Jewish Publication Society of America, 1957, pp. 5-6
6. Saul J. Berman, Hanukah column in *Echod: The Lincoln Square Synagogue Bulletin*, December, 1989, p. 1.
7. Abba Hillel Silver, "Where Judaism Differed. The MacMillan Company," 1956, chapters X to XVI.
8. Jonathan Sacks, "The Great Partnership: Science, Religion, and the Search for Meaning." Schocken Books, 2011.

# Hanukah Happenings: Minhagim and Stories

Cherie Karo Schwartz

**H**anukah is a de-LIGHT-ful holiday filled with history, hope, and the possibility of new celebrations each year. There are new stories, customs, foods, and songs. Here is a harvest of worldwide *minhagim* and other ways to celebrate, making, as Rav Kook said, "...the old new and the new holy." These can be used for yourself, students, family, intergenerational families, synagogue, and community.

### HANUKAH GUIDED MEDITATION:

Find a comfortable centering position:

- ◆ Gently let the dark come to your eyes as you softly close them.
- ◆ See this darkness, appreciate the feelings that come with the dark.
- ◆ Now, if you look closely into the dark, can you see the tiny point of light?
- ◆ Move closer to the light, and let the light come closer to you.
- ◆ With your best *kavannah*, allow the tiny light in the darkness to grow.
- ◆ Feel the warmth, the serenity, the security of this little flame.
- ◆ Now, draw the light into yourself, into your heart.
- ◆ Take this light, this *nekudah*, and let the light radiate out in the world.
- ◆ This is your heartlight.
- ◆ Now, keeping the memory of the light, let the light return to your eyes as you slowly open them.

### HANUKIAH KAVANOT:

Each of the lights in the *hanukiah* can be named. Each year, at my huge *Hanukah* party, I think of a different way to name the candles. Here are some ideas:

- ◆ For people who bring us light.
- ◆ For people who are not still alive, but whose light stays with us.
- ◆ For themes of Hanukah, like peace, hope, family, community, overcoming, etc.
- ◆ For ideas that help us out of the darkness and into the light

### HANUKAH STORIES:

Have people take a while to remember and then share:

- ◆ A story about something that happened during *Hanukah* one year.
- ◆ One of the especially meaningful presents that they either gave or received.
- ◆ A special food remembered from a previous *Hanukah*.

### HANUKAH TRADITIONS

*Hanukah* is a holiday that filled with light and miracles and traditions. Yet, for most people in America, the traditions and customs (*minhagim*) are overwhelmingly Ashkenazi in origin, with perhaps the addition of some foods from Israel. There is so much more that you can teach in the classroom that can enhance, educate, and entertain, bringing a wider sense of *Klal Israel*. Following are some of my favorites, along with ideas of how to implement them in classrooms and homes.

### QUESTIONING:

(questions and riddles are important aspects of *Hanukah* celebration)

The Jews of Syria traditionally made kibbe for *Hanukah*. What is the connection?

*USE:* First, explain what kibbe is: Syrian (and Mid-Eastern) meatballs made in a special way:

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bulgar wheat on the outside, an outer layer of beef, an inside layer of beef mixed with nutmeg and other exotic spices, and a center layer of pine nuts. You can show with your hands the layers and the fact of the pine nuts in the center. See if they can guess why this food is served on *Hanukah*.

**ANSWER:** The pine nuts are like the Maccabees hiding in the caves!

## **MINHAGIM IN STORIES:**

There is a tale from the Israel Folktale Archives from Egypt (given by Flora Cohen) about a widow with many children, who cannot even afford money for basics, let alone special foods for *Hanukah*. After telling her children to clean the house, she goes to the river to wash the pots and pans, meets a traveling stranger, an old man who wishes to spend *Hanukah* with her family, and, of course, she invites him to

**There are thousands of different, beautiful, meaningful customs from around the Jewish world. You can use these in your celebrations in many ways to enrich and broaden your experience of the Holiday of Lights.**

come to her home, then realizes that she has nothing, and is greatly saddened. As she turns to give directions to her home, he vanishes. When she arrives home with clean pans, her children say that her new friend has come and has brought everything they will need for *Hanukah*. He never shows up. They have all that they need not only for themselves, but also for all around them, and, on the last night, she tells her children that they were visited by Elijah.

Enhance the story by these *minhagim*:

- ◆ Add in the custom of making a *hanukiah* out of eggshells (times were dangerous, and it may not have been safe to have a *hanukiah*. Eggshells can easily be smashed).
- ◆ They needed flour for the pancakes they make in Egypt for *Hanukah*. (Potatoes were not available there generally, and, if they were, they were very expensive!)
- ◆ The *hanukiah* was lit in the morning (more of a miracle to be able to see the light during the day!)

You can use this idea to enhance the multi-cultural experience of *Hanukah* and to bring in culinary, safety, and historical aspects of the observance of the holiday.

## **CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

You can increase the awareness of *Klal Israel* through experiencing different Jewish cultures, perhaps one for each

day of *Hanukah*. And, you can then have students create their own new celebrations, take on another country's *minhagim*, or use traditions from their family.

## **HANUKAH TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLD**

compiled by Cherie Karo Schwartz @1993, 2018

There are thousands of different, beautiful, meaningful customs from around the Jewish world. You can use these in your celebrations in many ways to enrich and broaden your experience of the Holiday of Lights.

### **PART 1: ISRAEL**

- ◆ Torch is lit in Modi'in for relay to Jerusalem.
- ◆ *Hanukiah* is lit at the Wall (*Kotel*).
- ◆ Throughout the country: Maccabiah Games.
- ◆ Old Jerusalem: school children go through neighborhoods gathering foods for three feasts:

teachers, the poor, and themselves.

- ◆ Plays, lectures, concerts all over Israel.
- ◆ *Kibbutzim*: contest for most creative *hanukiah*.
- ◆ Hebron women's celebration: women eat cheese and tell stories.
- ◆ Torch lit in Israel travels to U.S. on El Al airplane and is used to light *hanukiah* in New York.

### **PART 2: EASTERN EUROPE**

- ◆ Children gathered around father who gives children coins, and children visit other relatives for cheer and coins (some used for charity).
- ◆ *Dreidels* were made of wood, clay, or metal.
- ◆ Potato *latkes* favorite *Hanukah* food.
- ◆ Teachers were given coins.
- ◆ Poland: Hassidic Jews would care for the sick, elderly, the poor, and also students.
- ◆ Collections made of food, clothing, and firewood.
- ◆ Women did not work on first and last day of *Hanukah*.
- ◆ Fathers of brides gave future sons-in-law gifts.
- ◆ Games and riddles important part of holiday.

### **PART 3: OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES**

- ◆ Spain: couscous eaten by women on sixth day (new moon).
- ◆ Italy: people rode in gondolas and sang *Hanukah* songs.
- ◆ Germany: wicks from the *hanukiot* flames were gathered

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and used to start a bonfire, and people would dance all around the fire.

- ♦ Turkey: children went to houses of rich people and traded them *latkes* for money.
- ♦ Greece: women and girls asked forgiveness of each other; on the seventh night, women made *loukoumades* (honeyed doughnut balls), saying that that is the food the Maccabees ate.

## PART 4: YEMEN

- ♦ Firecrackers set off in the streets to make more light.
- ♦ Each child was given one coin each day.
- ♦ Children used coins to buy sweet red liquid to make special *Hanukah* drink with peaches.
- ♦ Children roasted and sold hot potatoes.
- ♦ People ate "*zelebies*" (funnel cakes) made from flour, water, honey, and oil.
- ♦ Children went around collecting wicks from *Hanukiah* oil lamps and bring them to *Mori* (rabbi/healer) who made remedy from the leftover oil (can bring miracle cures?).
- ♦ Aden: children wore blue clothes on Hanukah because blue is the color of the sky, and miracles come from heaven.
- ♦ When a man married, he took his *hanukiah* to his new home with his wife for their own celebration.

## PART 5: OTHER EXOTIC COUNTRIES

- ♦ Tunisia: *hanukiah* hung on door opposite *mezuzah* (double blessing).
- ♦ North Africa: on the seventh night, women and girls went to synagogue, and, for the only night in the year, they could take out the *Torah* scrolls.
- ♦ Egypt: candles lit each morning in the synagogue (more of a miracle to have light in the day).
- ♦ Mid-East: *hanukiot* sometimes made out of eggshells to hold the oil.
- ♦ Morocco: two doves leading to candles on *hanukiah*.
- ♦ Syria: two *shammashes* (safe haven for expelled Spanish Jews), *hamsa* candle to protect, *kibbeh* balls eaten (like hidden Maccabee soldiers).
- ♦ Persia: on last night, father brought trays of fruit, nuts, and grains; children filled pockets for school.
- ♦ India: *hanukiot* hung on wall; son takes with him when he marries.
- ♦ Bokhara: cakes baked with coins inside as gift to teachers.

## HANUKAH STORIES

Among the myriad *Hanukah* stories, here are two I wrote, plus an entire book on *Hanukah*.

1. *My Lucky Dreidel. Hanukah Stories, Songs, Poems, Crafts, Recipes and Fun for Kids* (©1994; text copyright Cherie Karo Schwartz 1994. Magnolia Editions (division of Smithmark).

The book is out of print, but there are still copies available on Amazon and other sites, and in many libraries (it sold out at over 25,000 copies).

2. From my third book: *Circle Spinning. Jewish Turning and Returning Tales*:

-“And Then There Was Light,” an original and *Hanukah* adaptation of a folktale from Tzfat and also told as “on the Merit of the Jewish Coachman in the Lodz Ghetto,” from Barbara Rush and Eliezer Marcus’ book, *Seventy and One Tales for the Jewish Year*.

3. “My *Hanukah* Story” in *New Mitzvah Stories for the Whole Family*. Published by Reclaiming Judaism Press ©2014. My story in the book, “Here’s to Healing!”, is ©2014 by Cherie Karo Schwartz.

I include it here for your *Hanukah* enjoyment:

### “HERE’S TO HEALING!”

*Story by Cherie Karo Schwartz,  
inspired by a mitzvah deed by Ariella Nadav, age 9*

Once upon a time, not too long ago and not too far away, there was a young girl named Ariella who loved to give gifts to people. She had a particularly kind heart, and, unlike many of the girls her age, she especially liked helping people. Her parents *kvelled* (were very proud of her) when they saw how she loved to give, but they also had to watch out so that she didn’t give everything away!

One day, Ariella’s *Ima* (Hebrew for Mother) took her to a crafts fair in the neighborhood. The people were making money for groups that help people. They stopped at one booth, and *Ima* cried out, “Look, Ariella! A sock monkey just like the one I had when I was your age!” She picked it up and hugged it. A nice lady named Dotty came over, smiled at *Ima* hugging the monkey, and said, “I make these sock monkeys, just like I made them for my daughters when they were young. Now I sell them to raise money to help people with arthritis. And sewing helps my arthritic hands feel better, too.”

“Well, we just have to buy this monkey, Ariella,” said *Ima*. “Dotty, thank you! This is one wonderful monkey, and he will do good for many other people.”

Dotty thanked them, and then asked, “What are you going to name him?”

Ariella thought for a minute, and then her face lit up. “I know! I’ll call him *Mazel*, because I know he will bring me luck.”

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Ariella loved her new monkey. It was made from socks! It had long beige arms and legs, a red stocking hat, red bows on his hands and feet, and even a red tushie!

A few days later, Ariella's best friend Steve got sick. Ariella went to visit him at home, and she brought *Mazel* with her. After all, *Ima* had said he would be good for lots of people. Steve's eyes lit up when he saw *Mazel*, and he looked so happy that even his Mom was smiling. Ariella knew just what to do.

"*Mazel* really, really likes you. I can tell. Here, Steve. You keep *Mazel*, OK?" Ariella went home beaming, knowing that *Mazel* would bring her friend happiness and hope.

When her *Abba* (Hebrew for Father) asked where *Mazel* was, Ariella just smiled and said he was with Steve.

And guess what?

A week later, Steve came to Ariella's house, and he was all better. He had some cookies that his Mom had made, and he also had *Mazel*! "Did *Mazel* come to visit?" asked Ariella.

"No, silly. *Mazel* knows his own home. He came back to you."

"But I gave him to you!" said Ariella.

"Look," said Steve. "You gave me *Mazel* so I could get better. Now that I am feeling great, I'm giving him back to you so that you can give him to other people who need cheering up or are sick. Maybe his luck and his bright red smile will help them, too!"

Ariella and Steve laughed and played games all afternoon.

The next month, one of Ariella's grown-up friends was in the hospital. *Abba* and Ariella went to visit her, and guess who came along? *Mazel*! Ariella held up *Mazel* monkey for Shayna to see. "*Mazel* is here to cheer you up. I gave him to my friend Steve when he was sick, and, when he got well, he gave him back to me. He said that *Mazel* could go to someone else who would need him... for a while...."

Ariella looked up with her bright blue eyes and into Shayna's smiling face. Then, Shayna finished the sentence:

"So he can keep me company... for a while. And when I am all better, then *Mazel* can go back to you, right?"

"Right!" smiled Ariella.

And that is just what happened. Shayna got all better and

*Mazel* came home again.

*Mazel* monkey was gaining quite a reputation! And everywhere he went with Ariella, he just made people feel better.

Then one day, Ariella got a letter from her pen pal in Israel, Jan. Jan wrote that she had had an accident. She fell out of a tree and broke her leg! Ariella remembered the big tree in her friend's yard. The two of them had climbed high up in the branches when Ariella and her family visited Israel last year. Ariella and Jan were so happy to have the chance to meet after being pen pals for so many months. They had shared almost every day together, laughing and playing. And now her friend was hurt and home from school and away from the rest of her friends!

"Oh, I feel so sad about Jan. And I am not even there to keep her company. Israel is so far away! I know how much my arm hurt when I broke it, and it was in a cast. And this is her whole leg. She can't even move very much. What can I do to help?"

Well, it did not take Ariella long to know what to do. She got down a big box, wrapped *Mazel* in a pretty blanket, placed him carefully in the box, and then talked to him to calm him down. He looked a little afraid, even though he was still smiling his red smile. "Don't be afraid, *Mazel*. You are going on your biggest trip ever. And you will get to meet my super good friend Jan. She has a broken leg, and she needs a close friend right there beside her. I can't go all the way to Israel now, but you can go for me! Give Jan big hugs, lots of love, and maybe she will get better so much faster with you there to take care of her. Be a good friend for her, and bring her good luck, please."

Then, Ariella took *Mazel* into the living room to *Abba*.

"*Abba*, we need to send *Mazel* to Israel to Jan. Can you help me put the address on the box and get it to the Post Office?"

Ariella's father picked her up on his lap and gave her a huge hug. "Ariella, this is a very wonderful thing that you want to do for your friend Jan. But Israel is very far away, and Jan will be in her leg cast for a long time. She may not be able to send him back to you. Are you sure you want to chance that?"

Ariella's bright blue eyes got misty. "But *Abba*, I don't want her to ever send him back. *Mazel* will be in Israel! I'll bet he will want to stay there and be Jan's friend. It's OK. I will really, really miss him, but I understand. He will be happy there, and Jan will love him."

So, off they went to the Post Office, and off went *Mazel*

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monkey half way around the world to help make someone else feel better.

The days went by. Ariella had so many stuffed animals: bears and doggies and a zebra and kitties and a hippo and so many more stuffed friends. But it just wasn't quite the same.

Then one day, just before *Hanukah*, *Ima* was looking at a catalogue, and there was a picture of a sock monkey! It was a kit that people could put together. What a grand idea! She talked with *Abba*, and he agreed, so they ordered it. The next week, when *Ima* came back from school with Ariella, there was a package addressed to Ariella sitting on the front porch.

"Whatever could that be?" asked *Ima*, with a sparkle in her eye. That night, after they lit the *Hanukah* candles together and said the blessings, Ariella opened the box, and there inside was the sock monkey kit.

"*Todah rabba* (Hebrew for thank you); oh, thank you, *Ima* and *Abba*! It's another *Mazel*! Wow! What a perfect present. Thank you!"

So, for the next few days, *Ima* and Ariella sewed the new *Mazel* together. This sock monkey had the same beige long legs and arms; the same red smile, red hat, red bows; and even the same red tushie!

As they put the last bow on the sock monkey, *Abba* asked, "What are you going to name the new member of our family?"

Ariella thought for a moment, and then knew the perfect name. "She will be *Mazel Tov*, because she will do so many good, lucky things for people, just like her brother *Mazel*."

And everyone laughed together, knowing that she was right.

During *Hanukah*, Ariella got a box all the way from Israel. It was from her pen pal Jan! Was it her *Mazel*?

Ariella opened the box and read the card first.

"*Shalom* to my wonderful friend Ariella and her family,

"Happy *Hanukah*! This is a time of miracles, and I want to tell you that *Mazel* has been a miracle for me. I am now all better, and my leg cast is off. I am so happy to be able to walk, and soon I will be able to run again. I will be much more careful in trees, too. Your friend *Mazel* really loves Israel. He has now seen more of it, because he has kept his job! I remembered what you had said about him traveling around. So, when one of my friends is sick or sad or hurt, he goes to stay with them until they are better, and then he comes back to me again.

"Then I got an idea. My *Ima* and I made some things for him to wear. It is not clothes, but special things depending on where he is going and what has happened. Each thing has a rubber band to hold it on *Mazel's* leg or arm or head or tummy. We made crutches, a bandaid, an ace bandage, a thermometer, a cast, an eye patch, a hot water bottle, and a hanky for colds or tears. Everyone loves the little ornaments! So, we made an extra set for you so you can put the right one on your sock monkey *Mazel Tov* when you send her out to help heal someone. Enjoy these little presents in the best of health for you and your friends. We send love from us here in Israel to you and your family.

"*Shalom*, Jan."

And that is the story of *Mazel* and *Mazel Tov*, the miracle monkeys, and the joy and healing that they bring to Ariella's friends... and to you!

# From the “Decembear Dilemma” To the “December Delights”

Keren McGinity

**T**his article will provide a brief historical overview of what is commonly referred to as the “December Dilemma” and explain how it has been represented in American culture and Interfaith life. It will trace how the meaning has changed over time, from the first Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center to the invention of the faux “*Chismukkah*” holiday.

What is the “December Dilemma” and where did it come from? Is syncretism, or blending, a solution or a concern? How can couples turn the dilemma into delights? How can Jewish educators teach the Interfaith families in their schools and congregations how to turn the dilemma into delights?

One interpretation of the “December Dilemma” is how it plays out in the public arena. There has long been a debate about whether holiday displays on public property blur the separation of Church and State alluded to in the First Amendment of the Constitution. I say “alluded to” because the First Amendment doesn’t actually include that wording. It states: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” It was actually President Thomas Jefferson who interpreted the First Amendment and coined the phrase “a wall of separation between Church and State” in a letter he wrote in 1802. This “December Dilemma” has been acted out in towns and cities across the country over the years, making its way all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1984 and 1989. The results of the Supreme Court decisions were that the *menorah* and the crèche or nativity scene could be displayed, provided that they were adjacent to secular symbols, and that the funding for such displays derived from private sources. However, the controversy continued because both Jewish and Christian Americans believed that the court’s ruling minimized the importance of what for many are actually religious symbols during the holidays by rendering them secular.

The co-existence of Christmas and *Hanukah* displays, such as the national *menorah* and national Christmas tree in front of the White House, are a relatively recent phenomenon by historical standards. The first tree at Rockefeller Center in New York City was placed only in 1931; it was a small, unadorned tree, put there by construction workers. Forty-two years later, in 1974 in Philadelphia, a Chabad rabbi initiated the lighting of a *menorah* in public, rather than in the privacy of a family home, synagogue or community center. Today, the tree at Rockefeller Center stands nearly 80 feet tall and is adorned by some 30,000 lights. Likewise, there are *menorahs* in many public spaces, from town squares and State Houses to shopping malls.

The White House has had Christmas trees in it since the 19th century — and when the Obamas lived in it, there were more than 50 Christmas trees — whereas the recognition of *Hanukah* by American presidents is a more recent occurrence. In 1979, President Jimmy Carter was the first to publicly light a *menorah* outside in Lafayette Park. In 1982, President Ronald Reagan referred to the *menorah* lit in Lafayette Park as the “National *Menorah*” — thereby putting it on equal standing with the lighting of the national Christmas tree. In 1989, George H. W. Bush received a *menorah* from the Synagogue Council of America, and

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it was the first one to be displayed at the White House. Bill Clinton held a small *menorah*-lighting ceremony in the Oval Office in 1993 with Jewish students. And, in 2001, George W. Bush was the first president to host a *Hanukah* party in the White House at which he lit the *menorah*. President Obama continued the new tradition of hosting a *Hanukah* party. During President Obama's second term, Rabbi Angela Buchdahl made an observation: "I would say that our founding fathers...inspired to build a country that was truly a place of religious freedom and equal opportunity for all.... But I have to predict that they could not imagine that in 2014 that there would be a female Asian-American rabbi lighting the *menorah* at the White House for an African-American president."

However, public holiday displays are still a contentious issue, with one in five Americans saying that there should be no religious displays on government property at all (Pew Research Center, December 2014). The ongoing debate about whether store staff should wish customers "Merry Christmas"

marriage rates skyrocketed to 58 percent among Jews who married in 2000 or later.

The "December Dilemma" phrase signifies the manifold tensions and decision-making that intermarried couples face regarding reconciling different faiths at a particular time of the year and the related negotiations. Everything from how to decorate the house, whether to celebrate both *Hanukah* and Christmas, one or neither, is subject to discussion. How strongly one partner feels about his or her own faith often determines whether the couple celebrates in a way that honors both religious traditions or focuses primarily on one of them. Also, it's very important to realize that "interfaith" can be a misnomer. In some cases, faith/faithless is more accurate, such as in Jewish families in which one partner or parent is not Jewish, but does not actively practice another religion.

Strife over *Hanukah* and Christmas had caught public attention even before it had a name. The December 1982

### The "December Dilemma" phrase signifies the manifold tensions and decision-making that intermarried couples face regarding reconciling different faiths at a particular time of the year and the related negotiations.

or "Happy Holidays" is another manifestation of the public "December Dilemma."

#### TENSION AND DECISION-MAKING

The "December Dilemma" also has a personal side — which you probably know or perhaps you wouldn't be here! It, too, has a history. The 1980s and 1990s represented a period of unprecedented media coverage about a phenomenon that came to be commonly referred to as the "December Dilemma." The term itself seems to have been first conceived by Rachel and the late Paul Cowan, a Jewish man and a Unitarian-turned-Jew-by-choice woman, who, in 1987, co-authored the advice book *Mixed Blessings: Overcoming the Stumbling Blocks in an Interfaith Marriage*. The popularization of the phrase coincided with, or perhaps was the product of, the increase of interfaith marriages over time in the United States, first among Christians of different denominations and then between Christians and Jews. Between 1930 and 1960, marriages between Catholics and Protestants became more widespread, while marriage between Jews and Christians remained less common. Before 1970, only 17 percent of Jews intermarried. Over the past nearly fifty years, interfaith

issue of "Ladies' Home Journal," for example, had a feature-length article about the "common clashes and strengths" of interfaith couples that began and concluded with how Jewish-Christian couples navigated the winter holidays. But once the phrase was coined, press coverage increased with annual December headlines such as: "Whose Holiday Is It, Anyway?" (Glamour, 1988), "Of Latkes and Lights" (Newton Graphic, 1992), "Interfaith Families Face 'December Dilemma'" (USA Today, 1996), and "Living on a Prayer" (Boston Magazine, 2000). By the dawn of the millennium, one could anticipate seeing as many articles in December about how Jewish-Gentile couples negotiated holidays as one might see *menorahs* in the windows and wreaths on the doors.

#### THE REASONS BEHIND THE CATCHPHRASE

There are, I believe, at least two primary reasons that the "December Dilemma" is such an enduring catchphrase. The first has to do with Jews' ongoing insecurity as a minority population in a predominantly Christian country. Christmas is an annual reminder to intermarried Jews, indeed to all Jews, that American culture is overwhelmingly Christian, with 9 out of 10 Americans celebrating Christmas. "On no

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other day during the year,” as one historian wrote, did they “so deeply feel the clash between the country they love and the faith they cherish.” For most intermarried Jews, the clash is threefold: between them and the people they love, the country they called home, and the faith they cherish or the culture they feel compelled to preserve.

For Christian partners, even those who express a lack of affinity for their religions, the cultural divide between spouses grows wider during this time of year. While their Jewish spouses may more acutely feel their minority status, Christian spouses sometimes struggle to retain what, for them, is sometimes the one remaining connection to childhood memories connecting them with their family of origin: namely Christmas.

In my research on Jews, gender, and intermarriage, I found that the issue of whether or not couples have a Christmas tree was an integral part of their “December Dilemma” experience. In one case, having a Christmas tree was the only thing a husband wanted that had remotely religious connotations, but his wife refused to have a tree in their home. Aware that her refusal caused him sadness, she explained why she could not bear the thought of having a tree: “[B]ecause I think there is nothing that so much identifies a Jew as one’s feelings about Christmas.” Boiling just beneath the surface was her rejection of the view that Christmas was an “American holiday,” an intense sentiment many Jews express. A *Newsweek* author once opined: “When is a tree not a tree? When you’re Jewish and your [spouse] wants a Christmas tree in your living room.” Although arguably a secular symbol for many Christians, psychologically, the Christmas tree was not a benign presence when it brought to mind two thousand years of persecution and stirred fears of annihilation. The annual proliferation of advertising and material consumption proclaiming Christmas “America’s Greatest Holiday” also made it impossible to ignore. That said, many interfaith couples have Christmas trees.

The second reason for the saliency of the “December Dilemma” catchphrase is the question of how children will be raised. *Newsweek’s* cover in 1997 paid the “December Dilemma” close attention, asking “Whose Faith for the Kids?” On a side note, how children will be raised is extremely significant demographically speaking for the American Jewish community because intermarriage outpaces Jewish fertility and child rearing. Depending on the decision couples make about their child’s religious upbringing and identity influences how they will navigate the holidays, whether they will purchase an “elf on a shelf” or a “*mensch* on a bench,” and whose faith will be the primary one for the family. For

interfaith parents raising a child in their partner’s religion but not their own, December can be a stressful, sad, even painful time as it involves personal sacrifices. It can also be a joyous time of learning, sharing, and honoring.

Fueling the personal dilemma, American consumerism has generated a venerable bonanza for marketing professionals and savvy entrepreneurs, creating product and program competition. As interfaith marriages have increased, *Hanukah’s* significance has sometimes been over-emphasized to counterbalance the commercialization of Christmas. A new pop-up bar in Washington, D.C., that claims not to be competing with the decadent Christmas-themed pop-up bar a few blocks away advertises: “From December 1st through New Year’s Eve of the year 5778 (that’s now, for all of you gentiles out there), the Manischewitz shall flow, the *dreidels* shall spin, *latkes* shall be eaten. Guests can expect a winter wonderland of awe-inspiring decorations created for the 132nd most important holiday of the Jewish calendar, *Hanukah*.” (*Forward*, 12/7/17). The growth in *Hanukah* merchandising and Jewish events in public spaces has meant that interfaith families have even more decisions to make about how to handle the holidays, including who will bring what, where. It has also created a whole new interfaith card industry. “Oy to the World!”

Part of what is inherently difficult about the dilemma is that it implies that both Jewish and Christian holidays must be celebrated simultaneously, that is to be combined. This faulty premise is fodder for all kinds of syncretistic ideas. From “*Blintzes for Blitzen*” and “*Chrismukkah*” to all kinds of other mash-ups including the somewhat notorious *Hanukah* Bush. Aside from combining theologically different celebrations, syncretism diminishes what is special about each of them.

## CELEBRATING THE DIFFERENCES

As interfaith marriages have become more common, interfaith families strive to make compromises in order to keep the peace in their homes, and with extended family members. It has become increasingly important for couples and families to figure out how to honor both Jewish and Christian traditions in their own right rather than blend them. In other words: to celebrate rather than diminish differences. Does, for example, celebrating *Hanukah* at home and Christmas at the grandparents’ house make the most sense and will it satisfy everyone’s holiday wishes?

Even when holidays literally overlap on the calendar, by recognizing the distinctiveness about holidays and traditions, interfaith couples can create authentic celebrations, converting a “December Dilemma” into “December Delights” in their own unique ways. Acknowledging the sanctity of

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Christmas and the historical reality and meaning of *Hanukah* about a military victory in defense of religious freedom fosters a family culture of mutual respect, enabling interfaith families to alleviate the pressure of trying to create a nonsensical holiday that encompasses both. By preserving what is uniquely Jewish or uniquely Christian about holidays, interfaith marriages are opportunities for partners to learn about their own and each other's traditions, and to teach their children about them. Children of interfaith marriages can celebrate a parent's holiday as a way of honoring that parent, yet identify with and be educated about the other parent's religion and culture.

To conclude, there is no one cookie-cutter correct way for interfaith couples to navigate holidays, other than to do so respectfully and with lots of love.