



Dear Youth Directors, Youth chairs, and Youth Leaders,

Chanukah is one of the most looked forward holidays of the year. Between color war breakouts in school, trips, and the excitement of winter vacation just around the corner, this time of years is one filled with joy.

This week's Chanukah Nation edition of Parsha Nation will capture all those exciting emotions, while continuing our theme of *manhigut*, leadership. There is much to learn about leadership in the story of Chanukah. As youth leaders it is our job to educate the younger generation while pulling lessons and themes from our history.

Everyone loves an underdog. The story of the Maccabees is no exception. A 20 year battle to rid the land of Israel of the tyranny by the Greeks was no easy task. They were out gunned, and out maneuvered, but with faith in Hashem the Jews reclaimed the land of Israel. Expressing great gratitude and love for Hashem, the Maccabees rushed to the temple to immediately show the people of Israel that this period of bloodshed and darkness was over. By lighting the Menorah flame the Jewish people re-claimed their status in the world as an *Ohr Gadol*, a great light.

May this Chag bring much inspiration and light to our youth during these dark times. May the time you spend with your youth groups be filled with leadership, and trust, just as Judah the Maccabee had while leading the Jews into battle.

Chag Sameach and Shabbat Shalom!

NCYI Department of Synagogue Services
Youth@YoungIsrael.org

Copyright by National Council of Young Israel 2015 All Rights Reserved, No reproduction or copying of this work without permission of the National Council of Young Israel is permitted. Any copying of this work is a violation of U.S. Copyright law and Halacha.



Program Guide Breakdown

Theme- Each year our curriculum will focus on a theme. By centering the entire year around one overarching theme, our youth group participants will understand different characteristics and concepts that will help them achieve this lofty goal. This year's theme is Manhigut (leadership). Our goal is for our children to view themselves as leaders and to inspire them to play a leadership role every day.

Parsha Review- Each week group leaders will have the opportunity to roundup the parsha in two or three paragraphs. By giving over the parsha in a short and simple way, group participants will be able to grasp the parsha as a whole and to get them to think globally and conceptually.

Parsha Questions- No Shabbat morning group is complete without a list of parsha questions. These questions allow group participants the opportunity to win fun prizes while increasing their Torah knowledge. Questions vary from basic understanding of story line to challenging source-based material. The answers are provided as well.

Tefillah Treasure- Many youth directors have asked for help when it comes to teaching tefillah to children. This is a problem that not only shuls are dealing with. Schools, camps, and youth organizations are having trouble developing creative ideas to help children understand tefillah. Over the course of the year, this section will highlight one aspect of davening by providing both the Hebrew and English text, and one explanatory idea. The older the age group, the more we delve into the idea. This section is designed to help group participants follow the flow of tefillah while understanding what they are saying.

Group Activity- Now the fun begins! We start off with a GOAL. Each game has a purpose. The youth leaders should familiarize themselves with the goal before implementing the game.

Discussion Portion- After the game is over and the participants are settled down, the youth leaders should facilitate a discussion. The guidelines for this discussion are broken down into easy to use instructions. Youth leaders should review the discussion topics and goals before the start of morning groups.

Story- Each week we will include a story that addresses a modern day concern with lesson taken from that week's parsha.

Jewish Leader of the Week- In keeping with our theme of Manhigut, every week a different Jewish Leader from modern Jewish history will be highlighted. This will allow group participants to expand their knowledge of history and to learn how they can be a Jewish leader in today's society.

Teen Minyan Packet- This packet is filled with stories, riddles, points to ponder, and more.

Leader Tip- Each section has some great tips for leaders and how they should conduct that section.

Copyright by National Council of Young Israel 2015 All Rights Reserved, No reproduction or copying of this work without permission of the National Council of Young Israel is permitted. Any copying of this work is a violation of U.S. Copyright law and Halacha.



Shabbat Morning Groups Lesson Plan

Time Duration	Activity	Notes
5 min	Registration	Welcome parents and children in to the group room.
10-35 min	Davening	Depending on your group size and level.
5 min	Introduction to Yearly Theme (Manhigut)	Refer to Handout
5 min	Chanukah Review	Prep participants for parsha questions.
10 min	Chanukah Questions	Prizes and awards should also be given out if participants answer correctly
2 min	Understanding the Goal	Leaders should start prepping for Shabbat activity
30 min	Activities	Your choice of two games to play
10 min	Follow Up Discussion	Refer to materials
10 min	Chanukah Song	This is for younger groups only.
20 min	Free Game Play	Groups can break for free game play or continue their own programing.
5 min	Story	Assemble in a circle and have participants read sections of the story out loud.
5-10 min	Discussion	Refer to handout
4 min	Jewish Leader of the Week	Refer to handout
4 min	Tefillah Treasures	Refer to Handout
5 min	Parent Pick up/Dismissal	Parents pick up their children.
Total Time:	2 hours & 40 min of programing!	



CHANUKAH REVIEW

Alexander the Great, the conqueror of the world, was a good friend of the Jewish people. After he died, his Empire was split among his generals. Israel was added to the Empire of Antiochus III. When Antiochus became king of the Syrian-Greeks, he wanted the Jews to stop learning and following the Torah and instead follow the Greek ways. He defiled the Beit Hamikdash filling it with idols and pigs. He didn't allow the Jews to follow the commandments of Brit Milah, Rosh Chodesh, and Shabbat. Matityahu was the Kohen of the time and decided that enough was enough. He gathered all the people of Modi'in shouting, "*Mi La'Hashem Ay-li* (Whoever is for *Hashem*, let him come to me)," and led the people to rebellion. Only a small number of people responded at first but Matityahu's five sons (Yehudah, Eliezer, Shimon, Yochanan, and Yonatan) led the way. Matityahu passed on the leadership to his second son, Yehudah the Maccabee, who was a mighty warrior and a captivating leader. Many miracles happened during the war. Outnumbered a hundred to one, Yehudah and his men won many battles. The Jews came to join him and together they defeated the armies of Syria. Despite being so much smaller in number and power compared to the Greeks, the Maccabim came out on top. On the twenty fifth day of Kislev, they marched into Yerushalayim and immediately made their way to the Beit Hamikdash where they saw a sight that left them shocked and angered. Idols, filth, impurity were everywhere. They searched through the ruins looking for at least one flask of pure olive oil so that they could light the menorah they quickly put together. They finally found one small jug with enough oil for only one day. They poured it into the menorah and lit it. Miraculously it lasted for eight days long. Those eight miraculous days were chosen as the everlasting symbol to commemorate the miracle of Chanukah publicizing the miracles Hashem performed.

LEADER TIP: Costumes make everything more fun! Have a few group leaders come dressed as Maccabim and some dressed as Greeks!

CHANUKAH QUESTIONS

Questions

1. What is the date of Chanukah?
2. How many days do we celebrate Chanukah?
3. Who was the Greek ruler who tried to pull the Jews away from Judaism?
4. What did Antiochus not allow the Jewish people to do?
5. What were Matityahu HaKohen's five sons' names? Which one was the leader of the Maccabim?
6. What were the two miracles of Chanukah?
7. What did the Jewish people do to try and hide their Torah studying from the Greeks?
8. What do the letters on the dreidel stand for?
9. Why do we light Chanukah candles?
10. What are some popular foods we eat over Chanukah? Why?

Answers

1. 25th of Kislev
2. 8
3. Antiochus
4. Learn and follow the ways of the Torah, specifically- Brit Milah, Rosh Chodesh, and Shabbat
5. Shimon, Yehudah, Eliezer, Yochanan, and Yonatan. Yehuda was the leader
6. The small and weaker Jewish army defeating the bigger and stronger Greek army. That the oil that was only supposed to last one day lasted for eight
7. They played dreidel
8. Nun, Gimel, Hey, Shin/Pey= Nes, Gadol, Haya Sham/Po
9. To publicize the miracles of Chanukah
10. Latkes, sufganiyot, and other oily foods in honor of the miracle of the oil

LEADER TIP: Give out dreidels and gelt as presents and a nice sufganiya as a grand prize!

CHANUKAH ACTIVITY

GOAL: To play some fun Chanukah themed games

ACTIVITY:

1. Rabbim Beyad Me'atim (many against few)- Split the group up into two uneven groups (ie. One with three kids and another with eight). Have both groups make human pyramids and see which group can make a pyramid faster. Obviously the smaller group should be able to do it quicker and thus the me'atim win above the rabbim!
2. Mi Lahashem Elai Red Light Green Light- have the kids stand in a line and one person be Yehuda/dit Hamakabee/bea who faces his back to them. They call out "Me La'Hashem Elai" and turns around, at which point the other kids run as fast as they can towards him/her but must freeze when s/he turns around. Anyone found not frozen at that point is out. Whoever reaches Yehuda first is the prized Macabee and wins the station game.
3. Pirsumei Nissah charades- write up cards that have various events that have occurred recently and hand them out to different kids who in turn act them out without the use of words and a limited amount of materials (ie. A shirt, a soccer ball, and a cup). See if the other kids can guess what it is and if pirsumei nissah has been successful.
4. Dreidel Dare- a game of dreidel, but the dreidel cannot be spun in a conventional way.
5. Macabee Maze- set up a maze on the floor with tape. The person must walk backward through the maze, using only a mirror as a guide. Label the end the Beit Hamikdash
4. Search for a jug of oil scavenger hunt!
5. Latke Flip Pan Heads- Split kids up into groups of 2-4. Have one of them stand a few feet apart from them facing the others. Have that person hold a pan on top of their head. The other 1-3 kids will have spatulas and a bunch of "cardboard latkes". What they must do is try to flip as many latkes into the frying pan as possible. The "pan head" must try and catch as many as possible. The team with the most latkes in their pan at the end of a given time wins!

DISCUSSION: The question then arises, since the oil was adequate for one night, only seven days were miraculous. Why, then, wasn't *Chanukah* made a seven day festival? Many answers have been given over the years. Here are a few:

- One extra day of celebration was proclaimed to commemorate the miracle of the military victory.
- The Syrian-Greeks did such a thorough job of defiling the *Beit Hamikdash*, that it was a miracle to find even that one jug of oil. So the first night's lighting, too, was miraculous.
- Knowing that it would take eight days to secure new oil, the *Maccabees* decided to ration the oil they found. They used only one eighth each night - yet that little bit of oil burned until dawn every single night.
- After pouring the oil into the cups of the *menorah*, the *Maccabees* saw to their amazement that the oil jug was still full. A miracle - even on the first day!
- After burning all night, the cups of the *menorah* were still full the next morning.
- On each night, the *Maccabees* made very thin wicks in order to conserve oil. Nevertheless, the *menorah* burned with bright and hearty flames just as if the wicks had been of normal size.

LEADER TIP: Everyone loves Chanukah songs! Sing as many as you can! Teach the kids your own favorites from when you were their age!

CHANUKAH STORY

The Holiday Card

A small Chanukah miracle for a lonely Jewish soldier in Iraq.

It was our first big celebration as a family since our son's bris, eight years earlier. Our daughter Aliza was becoming a Bat Mitzvah. We had a fun idea for how to celebrate it: We had been married years earlier on a boat in Manhattan, and since Aliza was born on our first anniversary, we thought we would do it again.

So we hired a boat and invited a small group of mostly relatives and classmates. In planning the food and the flowers and the music, there seemed to be something missing. We had the "bar," but where was the "mitzvah"? Aside from my daughter's Dvar Torah ("the speech"), what could we do to elevate this gathering from being just another birthday party?

Providentially, there was a request in our synagogue to pray for a local soldier who was being deployed to Iraq. The idea was born; let's have all the kids at our simcha (celebration) make Chanukah cards to send to Jewish soldiers overseas. Nothing earth-shattering, just a way to inject some meaning into the festivities.

The date arrived and our ship sailed. God granted us a picture perfect September day and when Aliza's carefully prepared speech blew overboard, she adlibbed admirably. The Chanukah cards were written and colored and decorated. A lovely time was had by all. And the next day, the cards were mailed out with heartfelt wishes and love to our Jewish brothers and sisters. End of story.

Or so we thought.

Six months later, when the bat mitzvah was a fond, distant memory, there was a knock on my door in the middle of the day. Bravely, I unlocked the door, even though I didn't recognize the voice on the other side. A pleasant twenty-something man greeted me:

"I'm Lt. Steinberg, and your daughter sent me a Chanukah card when I was in Iraq."

Well, you could've blown me over with a feather.

But wait -- it gets better.

Apparently our few dozen cards had been thrown in with the hundreds and thousands of cards sent to celebrate that other December holiday. The chaplain showed up one day at the army base with an enormous sack, filled to the brim with cards and letters. As he passed out handfuls of cards to the grateful troops, Lt. Steinberg was hanging back, feeling pretty left out and lonely.

Suddenly amidst the celebratory crowd, the company captain noticed our soldier. "Steinberg, why are you so quiet? How come you're not opening any cards?"

Oh brother, Steinberg thought, *don't they get it?* "Captain, I'm Jewish, remember?"

"C'mon, Steinberg, don't be a spoilsport. Take a card."

Steinberg tried to shrink himself into invisibility. But the captain wasn't having it. "Let's go, Steinberg. These people were nice enough to write to us. NOW TAKE A CARD!"

By now the captain had everyone's attention and Steinberg was getting pretty uncomfortable in the spotlight. *Quick*, he told himself, *just grab a Christmas card and you'll stop being the center of attention.*

Steinberg reached deep into the sack, pulled out a card and looked at it. To his complete and utter shock the return address said Wesley Hills, New York. Steinberg is from Wesley Hills.

Hands shaking, he tore it open and found a beautiful hand-made Chanukah card, signed by my daughter Aliza, the Bat Mitzvah girl herself. Steinberg was dumbfounded by the providence of it all. He broke out in a huge grin and proudly showed the card to the captain and the entire platoon. Everyone understood the small miracle they had just witnessed.

Standing there in my Wesley Hills home, with my mouth gaping open and tears in my eyes, I begged Steinberg to come back and retell the story when my children were home. Indeed, he returned the following week with a friend and a camera. For our family, it was an incredible inspiration to see so clearly the power of our "little" mitzvah.

But that's not the end of the story. Just this past September one of the chaplains I had contacted about sending those cards asked if I could help arrange kosher meals and snacks for troops in Afghanistan for the High Holidays and Sukkot. I organized some people in my community and we sent 144 kosher meals to Afghanistan. Aish HaTorah's Project Inspire got involved and sent dozens of personal cards and honey sticks for Rosh Hashanah and then chocolates for Chanukah to troops in Afghanistan, Iraq, Italy and Kuwait.

LEADER TIP: What light can you share this Chanukah? Spread the light by doing good things for others.

JEWISH LEADER OF THE WEEK



Yehudit

A Jewish woman named Yehudit has become a very important part of the story of Chanukah. A Greek commander led his army to take down a revolt that was starting in Yerushalayim. The Greek army camped around the walls of the city and began a strong siege. Even though Yerushalayim was a very strong and united city, the persistent siege by a stronger army began to take a toll on the people of Yerushalayim. A widow named Yehudit left the city and requested to talk with the commander. Her plan was to try and get him to like her and then kill him. Her plan was successful. The commander gave a feast in honor of Yehudit and he became very drunk. That night the commander and Yehudit went back to his private tent where he fell into a deep sleep. While he was asleep Yehudit took his sword and killed him. Yehudit then brought the commander's head back to Yerushalayim where it was hung on the city walls for everyone to see. The Jews were inspired by the daring heroism of Yehudit, and the Greek forces fled. It was a key turning point in the Jewish revolt against the Greeks.

LEADER TIP: Drink an extra cup of milk in honor of Yehudit! An extra chocolate bar works too 😊

TEFILLAH TREASURES

Chanukah Tefillot

After lighting the first candle while the others are being lit, the tefillah of Hanerot Hallalu is said. It affirms that we light these candles in memory of the miracles Hashem performed for the Jewish people in the Chanukah story. It ends by saying that throughout the eight days of Chanukah, the lights are holy - and we should only use them as an expression of gratitude and praise to Hashem for his miracles.

Maoz Tzur is the universal song of Chanukah. It goes through years of persecution - Egypt, Babylon, Haman, the Syrian-Greeks, the nineteen centuries since the Second Beit Hamikdash was destroyed and praises Hashem for redeeming Bnei Yisrael after each of them. A song of hope, it gives the Jews the courage to face the future and emphasizes the desire to return of the Beit Hamikdash and the coming of Moshiach.

Al Hanissim is a tefillah that is added on Chanukah to Birkat Hamazon and Shmoneh Esrei. It starts by saying thank you to Hashem for the miracles of Chanukah. Al Hanissim doesn't talk about the miracle of the oil, but rather more about the miracle of the war. Al Hanissim focuses on both the physical and spiritual victories of the small group of Jews over the Syrian-Greek enemies, and the role of Hashem in the history of the Jews protecting us every step of the way. Al Hanissim talks about the miracles that happened "bayamim hahem bazman hazeh, (in those days, at this time)." Some say that it only refers to the miracles Hashem performed for our ancestors; others say that it also hints to the countless hidden miracles that Hashem does for us every day.

LEADER TIP: Almost everyone sings the same tune for Maoz Tzur, Hanerot Hallalu on the other hand is a different story. See how many Hanerot Hallalu tunes you have in your group!



CHANUKAH REVIEW

Alexander the Great, the conqueror of the world, was a good friend of the Jewish people. After he died, his Empire was split among his generals. Israel was added to the Empire of Antiochus III. When Antiochus became king of the Syrian-Greeks, he wanted the Jews to stop learning and following the Torah and instead follow the Greek ways. He defiled the Beit Hamikdash filling it with idols and pigs. He didn't allow the Jews to follow the commandments of Brit Milah, Rosh Chodesh, and Shabbat. Matityahu was the Kohen of the time and decided that enough was enough. He gathered all the people of Modi'in shouting, "*Mi La'Hashem Ay-li (Whoever is for Hashem, let him come to me),*" and led the people to rebellion. Only a small number of people responded at first but Matityahu's five sons (Yehudah, Eliezer, Shimon, Yochanan, and Yonatan) led the way. Matityahu passed on the leadership to his second son, Yehudah the Maccabee, who was a mighty warrior and a captivating leader. Many miracles happened during the war. Outnumbered a hundred to one, Yehudah and his men won many battles. The Jews came to join him and together they defeated the armies of Syria. Despite being so much smaller in number and power compared to the Greeks, the Maccabim came out on top. On the twenty fifth day of Kislev, they marched into Yerushalayim and immediately made their way to the Beit Hamikdash where they saw a sight that left them shocked and angered. Idols, filth, impurity were everywhere. They searched through the ruins looking for at least one flask of pure olive oil so that they could light the menorah they quickly put together. They finally found one small jug with enough oil for only one day. They poured it into the menorah and lit it. Miraculously it lasted for eight days long. Those eight miraculous days were chosen as the everlasting symbol to commemorate the miracle of Chanukah publicizing the miracles Hashem performed.

LEADER TIP: Costumes make everything more fun! Have a few group leaders come dressed as Maccabim and some dressed as Greeks!

CHANUKAH QUESTIONS

Questions

11. What is the date of Chanukah?
12. How many days do we celebrate Chanukah?
13. Who was the Greek ruler who tried to pull the Jews away from Judaism?
14. What did Antiochus not allow the Jewish people to do?
15. What were Matityahu HaKohen's five sons' names? Which one was the leader of the Maccabim?
16. What were the two miracles of Chanukah?
17. What did the Jewish people do to try and hide their Torah studying from the Greeks?
18. What do the letters on the dreidel stand for?
19. What special addition do we add in our davening and benching over Chanukah?
20. What brachot and special tefillot do we say when we light Chanukah candles?
21. At least how long do the candles have to burn for?
22. When should we light the candles?
23. Why do we light Chanukah candles?
24. What is the debate about lighting candles between Hillel and Shamai about? Who do we follow?
25. What are some popular foods we eat over Chanukah? Why?

Answers

11. 25th of Kislev
12. 8
13. Antiochus
14. Learn and follow the ways of the Torah, specifically- Brit Milah, Rosh Chodesh, and Shabbat
15. Shimon, Yehudah, Eliezer, Yochanan, and Yonatan. Yehuda was the leader
16. The small and weaker Jewish army defeating the bigger and stronger Greek army. That the oil that was only supposed to last one day lasted for eight
17. They played dreidel
18. Nun, Gimel, Hey, Shin/Pey= Nes, Gadol, Haya Sham/Po
19. Al Hanisim
20. Lehadlik ner shel Chanukah, She'asa nisim, (shehechyanu on the first night), HaNerot Halalu, and Maoz Tzur
21. Half hour
22. Nightfall
23. To publicize the miracles of Chanukah
24. Whether we start with 8 candles and subtract one each night (Shamai) or we start with 1 candle and add one each night (Hillel). We follow Hillel.
25. Latkes, sufganiyot, and other oily foods in honor of the miracle of the oil

LEADER TIP: Give out dreidels and gelt as presents and a nice sufganiya as a grand prize!

CHANUKAH ACTIVITY

GOAL: To teach about the Gevura of the Maccabim, as well as about the story of Chanukah.

ACTIVITY: “Gevurat HaMaccabim”

Though the Chanukah story is well known, here is a little background just in case:

During the time when the Greeks controlled Israel, Jews began hellenizing, or trying to become more like the Greeks. Many adopted Greek names, stopped keeping Shabbat and Kashrut, and idol worship was taking place in the Beit HaMikdash. In the year 169 BCE, Antiochus decreed that anyone caught observing Shabbat, Chagim and receiving a Brit Mila would be punished by death. Nevertheless, many of the Jews, especially in private, continued to believe in Hashem. Jews who were known as Metyavnim, (were sitting on the fence between being a Jew and a Greek) often told the palace of those Jews who were not following the orders of Antiochus. Soon after, Mattityahu and his sons led a rebellion whose purpose was to fight the Greeks and rid them from Israel and to teach the non-observant Jews a lesson. Eventually the rebellion became a full fledged war against the Greeks, and after many clashes, the few defeated the many. The Chashmonaim reclaimed and purified Yerushalayim, and smashed the image of the Greek god Zeus, thus returning the holy city back to its original splendor and glory.

Game 1: Running Bases

Choose two kids to be the two infielders. All other kids should be divided between two bases on either side of the room. Make the bases away from the wall so that kids don't run into the walls... The goal is to run back and forth between the two bases. Anyone tagged while not touching a base is out. Everyone must run at least every three throws. The two fielders throw the ball back and forth and try to tag anyone moving from base to base. Play for a bit, a few rounds, but make sure to change the fielders often.

Game 2: Celebrate

This game won't last very long, but it'll help to illustrate the same point as Running Bases. Have all the kids stand in a circle. Choose one kid to go into the middle and say something that s/he thinks is cause for celebration. Everyone who also enjoys that thing (ie. Getting 100% on a test, eating ice cream, having pizza at your favorite

restaurant....) has to go into the middle and celebrate. When the group leader says so, everyone must return to his or her spots, and the person initially in the middle tries to get someone's spot. Whoever remains has to give the next cause of celebration.

DISCUSSION: So, how are these two games related? Most likely in running bases, the game proceeded as a few people would run a lot and others would eventually follow their lead. In Celebrate as well, people probably were very reluctant to go and celebrate in the middle. But when other people start doing it, they will follow their lead. Similarly, the Maccabim began their revolt without much help. Very few people joined them, and they were incredibly outnumbered. However, after winning a few battles, other Jews joined the rebellion. As the Maccabim had more victories and captured more weapons, even more people joined, and eventually they were able to defeat the Greeks entirely. It is often the hardest thing to be the first person to do something, to lead the way and not know if people will follow you or not. You need a certain amount of bravery to do so, which clearly the Maccabim had. The root of Chanukah was that the Chashmonaim needed to convince the other Jews to support Judaism and not to join the Greeks. Once you begin, others will join you. Which is exactly what happened in Chanukah. Be that leader and lead by example!

LEADER TIP: Everyone loves Chanukah songs! Sing as many as you can! Teach the kids your own favorites from when you were their age!

CHANUKAH STORY

The Holiday Card

A small Chanukah miracle for a lonely Jewish soldier in Iraq.

It was our first big celebration as a family since our son's bris, eight years earlier. Our daughter Aliza was becoming a Bat Mitzvah. We had a fun idea for how to celebrate it: We had been married years earlier on a boat in Manhattan, and since Aliza was born on our first anniversary, we thought we would do it again.

So we hired a boat and invited a small group of mostly relatives and classmates. In planning the food and the flowers and the music, there seemed to be something missing. We had the "bar," but where was the "mitzvah"? Aside from my daughter's Dvar Torah ("the speech"), what could we do to elevate this gathering from being just another birthday party?

Providentially, there was a request in our synagogue to pray for a local soldier who was being deployed to Iraq. The idea was born; let's have all the kids at our simcha (celebration) make Chanukah cards to send to Jewish soldiers overseas. Nothing earth-shattering, just a way to inject some meaning into the festivities.

The date arrived and our ship sailed. God granted us a picture perfect September day and when Aliza's carefully prepared speech blew overboard, she adlibbed admirably. The Chanukah cards were written and colored and decorated. A lovely time was had by all. And the next day, the cards were mailed out with heartfelt wishes and love to our Jewish brothers and sisters. End of story.

Or so we thought.

Six months later, when the bat mitzvah was a fond, distant memory, there was a knock on my door in the middle of the day. Bravely, I unlocked the door, even though I didn't recognize the voice on the other side. A pleasant twenty-something man greeted me:

"I'm Lt. Steinberg, and your daughter sent me a Chanukah card when I was in Iraq."

Well, you could've blown me over with a feather.

But wait -- it gets better.

Apparently our few dozen cards had been thrown in with the hundreds and thousands of cards sent to celebrate that other December holiday. The chaplain showed up one day at the army base with an enormous sack, filled to the brim with cards and letters. As he passed out handfuls of cards to the grateful troops, Lt. Steinberg was hanging back, feeling pretty left out and lonely.

Suddenly amidst the celebratory crowd, the company captain noticed our soldier. "Steinberg, why are you so quiet? How come you're not opening any cards?"

Oh brother, Steinberg thought, *don't they get it?* "Captain, I'm Jewish, remember?"

"C'mon, Steinberg, don't be a spoilsport. Take a card."

Steinberg tried to shrink himself into invisibility. But the captain wasn't having it. "Let's go, Steinberg. These people were nice enough to write to us. NOW TAKE A CARD!"

By now the captain had everyone's attention and Steinberg was getting pretty uncomfortable in the spotlight. *Quick*, he told himself, *just grab a Christmas card and you'll stop being the center of attention.*

Steinberg reached deep into the sack, pulled out a card and looked at it. To his complete and utter shock the return address said Wesley Hills, New York. Steinberg is from Wesley Hills.

Hands shaking, he tore it open and found a beautiful hand-made Chanukah card, signed by my daughter Aliza, the Bat Mitzvah girl herself. Steinberg was dumbfounded by the providence of it all. He broke out in a huge grin and proudly showed the card to the captain and the entire platoon. Everyone understood the small miracle they had just witnessed.

Standing there in my Wesley Hills home, with my mouth gaping open and tears in my eyes, I begged Steinberg to come back and retell the story when my children were home. Indeed, he returned the following week with a friend and a camera. For our family, it was an incredible inspiration to see so clearly the power of our "little" mitzvah.

But that's not the end of the story. Just this past September one of the chaplains I had contacted about sending those cards asked if I could help arrange kosher meals and snacks for troops in Afghanistan for the High Holidays and Sukkot. I organized some people in my community and we sent 144 kosher meals to Afghanistan. Aish HaTorah's Project Inspire got involved and sent dozens of personal cards and honey sticks for Rosh Hashanah and then chocolates for Chanukah to troops in Afghanistan, Iraq, Italy and Kuwait.

LEADER TIP: What light can you share this Chanukah? Spread the light by doing good things for others.

JEWISH LEADER OF THE WEEK

Yehudit



A Jewish woman named Yehudit has become a very important part of the story of Chanukah. A Greek commander led his army to take down a revolt that was starting in Yerushalayim. The Greek army camped around the walls of the city and began a strong siege. Even though Yerushalayim was a very strong and united city, the persistent siege by a stronger army began to take a toll on the people of Yerushalayim. A widow named Yehudit left the city and requested to talk with the commander. Her plan was to try and get him to like her and then kill him. Her plan was successful. The commander gave a feast in honor of Yehudit and he became very drunk. That night the commander and Yehudit went back to his private tent where he fell into a deep sleep. While he was asleep Yehudit took his sword and killed him. Yehudit then brought the commander's head back to Yerushalayim where it was hung on the city walls for everyone to see. The Jews were inspired by the daring heroism of Yehudit, and the Greek forces fled. It was a key turning point in the Jewish revolt against the Greeks. Therefore, Yehudit's courageous deed is viewed as part of the miracle of Chanukah. There is also a custom to eat fried foods like Latkes and jelly-filled doughnuts on Chanukah. Women have special value during Chanukah, for the miracle began because of the courage of Yehudit.

LEADER TIP: Drink an extra cup of milk in honor of Yehudit! An extra chocolate bar works too 😊

TEFILLAH TREASURES

Chanukah Tefillot

After lighting the first candle while the others are being lit, the tefillah of Hanerot Hallalu is said. It affirms that we light these candles in memory of the miracles Hashem performed for the Jewish people in the Chanukah story. It ends by saying that throughout the eight days of Chanukah, the lights are holy - and we should only use them as an expression of gratitude and praise to Hashem for his miracles.

Maoz Tzur is the universal song of Chanukah. It goes through years of persecution - Egypt, Babylon, Haman, the Syrian-Greeks, the nineteen centuries since the Second Beit Hamikdash was destroyed and praises Hashem for redeeming Bnei Yisrael after each of them. A song of hope, it gives the Jews the courage to face the future and emphasizes the desire to return of the Beit Hamikdash and the coming of Moshiach.

Al Hanissim is a tefillah that is added on Chanukah to Birkat Hamazon and Shmoneh Esrei. It starts by saying thank you to Hashem for the miracles of Chanukah. Al Hanissim doesn't talk about the miracle of the oil, but rather more about the miracle of the war. Al Hanissim focuses on both the physical and spiritual victories of the small group of Jews over the Syrian-Greek enemies, and the role of Hashem in the history of the Jews protecting us every step of the way. Al Hanissim talks about the miracles that happened "bayamim hahem bazman hazeh, (in those days, at this time)." Some say that it only refers to the miracles Hashem performed for our ancestors; others say that it also hints to the countless hidden miracles that Hashem does for us every day.

LEADER TIP: Almost everyone sings the same tune for Maoz Tzur, Hanerot Hallalu on the other hand is a different story. See how many Hanerot Hallalu tunes you have in your group!



CHANUKAH REVIEW

Alexander the Great, the conqueror of the world, was a good friend of the Jewish people. After he died, his Empire was split among his generals. Israel was added to the Empire of Antiochus III. When Antiochus became king of the Syrian-Greeks, he wanted the Jews to stop learning and following the Torah and instead follow the Greek ways. He defiled the Beit Hamikdash filling it with idols and pigs. He didn't allow the Jews to follow the commandments of Brit Milah, Rosh Chodesh, and Shabbat. Matityahu was the Kohen of the time and decided that enough was enough. He gathered all the people of Modi'in shouting, "*Mi La'Hashem Ay-li* (Whoever is for *Hashem*, let him come to me)," and led the people to rebellion. Only a small number of people responded at first but Matityahu's five sons (Yehudah, Eliezer, Shimon, Yochanan, and Yonatan) led the way. Matityahu passed on the leadership to his second son, Yehudah the Maccabee, who was a mighty warrior and a captivating leader. Many miracles happened during the war. Outnumbered a hundred to one, Yehudah and his men won many battles. The Jews came to join him and together they defeated the armies of Syria. Despite being so much smaller in number and power compared to the Greeks, the Maccabim came out on top. On the twenty fifth day of Kislev, they marched into Yerushalayim and immediately made their way to the Beit Hamikdash where they saw a sight that left them shocked and angered. Idols, filth, impurity were everywhere. They searched through the ruins looking for at least one flask of pure olive oil so that they could light the menorah they quickly put together. They finally found one small jug with enough oil for only one day. They poured it into the menorah and lit it. Miraculously it lasted for eight days long. Those eight miraculous days were chosen as the everlasting symbol to commemorate the miracle of Chanukah publicizing the miracles Hashem performed.

LEADER TIP: Costumes make everything more fun! Have a few group leaders come dressed as Maccabim and some dressed as Greeks!

Copyright by National Council of Young Israel 2015 All Rights Reserved, No reproduction or copying of this work without permission of the National Council of Young Israel is permitted. Any copying of this work is a violation of U.S. Copyright law and Halacha.

CHANUKAH QUESTIONS

Questions

1. Which miracle do we celebrate with the lighting of candles?
2. How did they know that the oil found was uncontaminated?
3. Who led the battle against the Hellenites?
4. During which of the "four exiles" did the miracle of Chanukah take place?
5. Name two non-halachic customs connected with Chanukah.
6. How many blessings are made before lighting candles?
7. Why do we light the extra candle known as the "*shamash*"?
8. What is added to our regular prayers at least three times a day?
9. What is the special reading of the Torah each day?
10. Is it obligatory to eat a meal like on Purim?
11. When do we have occasion to use three Sifrei Torah on Chanukah?
12. What three *mitzvot* did the Hellenites decree against?
13. What damage did the Hellenites do to the Beit Hamikdash?
14. What two military advantages did the Hellenite army have over the Jews?
15. Is it permissible to do work on Chanukah?
16. Why is there no Mussaf prayer on Chanukah except for Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh?
17. How does the name Chanukah indicate the date when this holiday begins?
18. What special prayer do we add to the morning services?
19. What did the Jews do after victory that explains the name Chanukah?
20. Which regular prayers in the morning service do we omit on Chanukah?

Answers

1. The oil for lighting the menorah in the Beit Hamikdash after the victory over the Hellenites was only enough for one day and it miraculously lasted for eight days until a new supply of pure oil was available. (Rambam, Laws of Chanukah 1:1)
2. Its container had the seal of the *kohen gadol*. (*Mesechta Shabbat* 21b)
3. Matityahu, the *kohen gadol* and his sons. (Rambam, Laws of Chanukah 1:1, and the "*Al Hanissim*" prayer in the Siddur)
4. The third exile under Hellenite oppression during the era of the second Beit Hamikdash. (Rambam, Laws of Chanukah 1:1)
5. Eating either donuts or potato pancakes made with oil and playing with the *sivivon* (dreidel).
6. Three blessings the first night and two the other nights. (Rambam, Laws of Chanukah 1:4)

7. Since it is forbidden to benefit from the light of the candles we light an extra one so that if we do benefit it will be from that one called the *shamash* because it is sometimes used to serve as the lighting agent. (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 673:1)
8. The prayer "*Al Hanissim*" (Ibid. 682:1)
9. The gifts of the *nesi'im* (heads of the twelve tribes at the inauguration of the Sanctuary as recorded in *Bamidbar* 7:1-8). (Ibid. 684:1)
10. No. But if the meal is accompanied by songs of praise to Heaven it is considered a *seudat mitzvah*. (Ibid. 670:2)
11. When Rosh Chodesh Tevet is on Shabbat and we read selections for Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh and Chanukah. (Ibid. 684:3)
12. Shabbat, circumcision and Rosh Chodesh. (*Midrash*)
13. They made breaks in the walls and contaminated the sacred items. (Rambam, Laws of Chanukah 1:1)
14. They were stronger and more numerous. ("*Al Hanissim*" Prayer)
15. It is permissible to work but women have a custom of refraining from work for the first half hour that the candles are burning. (*Mishna Berurah* 670:1)
16. Because there were no additional sacrifices in the Beit Hamikdash during Chanukah. (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 682:2)
17. If we break up the word into two parts — *Chanu*, and the letters *chaf* and *hei*, we read that they rested from the war on the 25th day of the month.
18. Hallel (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 683:1)
19. They rededicated the altar in the Beit Hamikdash, which the Hellenites had defiled. ("Chanukah" means inauguration.)
20. Tachanun and Psalm 20 before *Uva Letzion*. (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 683:1)

LEADER TIP: Give out dreidels and gelt as presents and a nice sufganiya as a grand prize!

CHANUKAH ACTIVITY

GOAL: For the kids to talk about the idea of miracles and how they could be happening everyday.

ACTIVITY: "There can be Miracles?"

Introduction:

Ask the kids what is a miracle. Do you believe in miracles? Has a miracle ever happened to you? If so, let them share their experience.

Game:

Split the kids into five groups. Every group must make a skit that will show a miracle from the Tanach. (Give them the source sheet as well as help them out if they need)

The five miracles are:

1. The burning bush
2. The ten plagues
3. Kriyat yam suf
4. Man in the desert
5. David and Goliath

After ten minutes, each group should present its skit, and the other kids should guess the miracle. One kid from the group that presented will read from the source.

The burning bush: Shmot 3

"ומשה, הנה רעה את-צאן יתרו חתנו--כהן מדן; וינהג את-הצאן אחר המדבר, ויבא אל-הר האלהים הרבה. **ג,ב** וירא מלאך יהוה אליו, בלבת-אש--מתוך הסנה; וירא, והנה הסנה בער באש, והסנה, איננו אכל. **ג,ג** ויאמר משה--אסרה-נא ואראה, את-המראה הגדל הנה: מדוע, לא-יבער הסנה. **ג,ד** וירא יהוה, כי סר לראות; ויקרא אליו אלהים מתוך הסנה, ויאמר משה משה--ויאמר הנני. **ג,ה** ויאמר, אל-תקרב הלא; של-נעליך, מעל רגליך--כי המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו, אדמת-קדש הוא. **ג,ו** ויאמר, אנכי אלהי אביך, אלהי אברהם אלהי יצחק, ואלהי יעקב; ויסתר משה, פניו, כי ירא, מהביט אל-האלהים"

1 Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the farthest end of the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God, unto Horeb. **2** And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. **3** And Moses said: 'I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.' **4** And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said: 'Moses, Moses.' And he said: 'Here am I.' **5** And He said: 'Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' **6** Moreover He said: 'I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

The ten plagues- Shmot 7

"ויאמר יהוה אל-משה, אמר אל-אחרון קח מטף ונטה-ךך על-מימי מצרים על-נהרותם על-אריהם ועל-אגמיהם ועל-כל-מקנה מימיהם--ויהיו-דם; ויהיה דם בכל-ארץ מצרים, ובעצים ובאבנים. **ז,ב** ויעשו-כן משה ואהרן כאשר צוה יהוה, וירם במטה ונד את-המים אשר בנאר, לעיני פרעה, ולעיני עבדיו; ויהפכו כל-המים אשר-בנאר, לדם. **ז,כא** והדגה אשר-בנאר מתה, ויבאש הנאר, ולא-יכלו מצרים, לשתות מים מן-הנאר"

19 And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Say unto Aaron: Take thy rod, and stretch out thy hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their ponds of water, that they may become blood; and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.' **20** And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. **21** And the fish that were in the river died; and the river became foul, and the Egyptians could not drink water from the river; and the blood was throughout all the land of Egypt.

Kriyat Yam Suf- Shmot 14

"וַיֹּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת-יָדוֹ, עַל-הַיָּם, וַיּוֹלֶךְ יְהוָה אֶת-הַיָּם בְּרוּחַ קָדִים עֲזָה כָּל-הַלַּיְלָה, וַיִּשָּׂם אֶת-הַיָּם לְחִרְבָּה; וַיִּפְקְעוּ, הַמַּיִם. **יז, כב** וַיָּבֵאוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם, בַּיַּבֶּשֶׁה; וְהַמַּיִם לָקֵם חוֹמָה, מִיַּמִּינָם וּמִשְׂמָאלָם. **יז, כג** וַיִּרְדְּפוּ מִצְרַיִם, וַיָּבֵאוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם--כָּל סוּס פָּרָעָה, רֶכְבּוֹ וּפָרָשָׁיו: אֶל-תּוֹךְ, הַיָּם. **יז, כד** וַיְהִי, בְּאַשְׁמֶרֶת הַבֹּקֶר, וַיִּשְׁקַף יְהוָה אֶל-מַחֲנֵה מִצְרַיִם, בַּעֲמֹד אֵשׁ וָעָנָן; וַיַּהֲרֵם, אֶת מַחֲנֵה מִצְרַיִם. **יז, כה** וַיֹּסֶר, אֶת אִפְוֵ מַרְכָּבֹתָיו, וַיִּנְהַגְהוּ, בְּכַבְדֹּת; וַיֹּאמֶר מִצְרַיִם, אֲנוֹסָה מִפְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל--כִּי יְהוָה, נִלְחָם לָקֵם בְּמִצְרַיִם הַדֵּם, בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם"

21 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. **22** And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. **23** And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. **24** And it came to pass in the morning watch, that the LORD looked forth upon the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of cloud, and discomfited the host of the Egyptians. **25** And He took off their chariot wheels, and made them to drive heavily; so that the Egyptians said: 'Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

Man in the desert- Bamidbar- 11

וְלִקְטוּ וַיִּטְחְנוּ בְרַחֲמֵים, אוֹ דָכוּ בַמְדֻכָּה, וּבִשְׁלוֹ בַפְּרוּר, וַעֲשׂוּ אֹתוֹ עֲגוֹת; וַהֲיָה טַעְמוֹ, "אֶל-הַמָּן עֵינַיִנו. **יא, ז** וְהָמָן גַּד הוּא; וְעֵינֵנו, כְּעֵין הַבְּדֵלָח. **יא, ח** שָׁטוּ הַעַם כְּטַעַם לֶשֶׁד הַשָּׁמֶן. **יא, ט** וַיִּבְרְדַת הַטַּל עַל-הַמַּחֲנֵה, לַיְלָה, יָרַד הַמָּן, עָלָיו."

6 but now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all; we have nought save this manna to look to.'-- **7** Now the manna was like coriander seed, and the appearance thereof as the appearance of bdellium. **8** The people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in mortars, and seethed it in pots, and made cakes of it; and the taste of it was as the taste of a cake baked with oil. **9** And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.

David and Goliath- Shmuel 17

"וַהֲיָה כִּי-קָם הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי, וַיִּלָּךְ וַיִּקְרַב לְקִרְאֵת דָּוִד; וַיִּמְהַר דָּוִד, וַיָּרֵץ הַמַּעְרָבָה לְקִרְאֵת הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי. **מט** וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד אֶת-יָדוֹ אֶל-הַכְּלִי, וַיִּקַּח מִשָּׁם אֶבֶן וַיִּקְלַע, וַיַּךְ אֶת-הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי, אֶל-מִצְחוֹ; וַתִּטְבַּע הָאֶבֶן בְּמִצְחוֹ, וַיִּפֹּל עַל-פְּנָיו אֶרְצָה. **נ** וַיִּחַזַּק דָּוִד מִן-הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי בַקֶּלַע וּבָאֶבֶן, וַיַּךְ אֶת-הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי וַיִּמְתְּהוּ; וַתִּרְב, אִין בְּיַד-דָּוִד. **נא** וַיָּרֵץ דָּוִד וַיַּעֲמֵד אֶל-הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי וַיִּקַּח אֶת-חַרְבּוֹ וַיִּשְׁלֹפֶה מִתַּעֲרָה, וַיִּמְתְּתֵהוּ, וַיִּכְרַת-בָּהּ, אֶת-רֹאשׁוֹ; וַיִּרְאוּ הַפְּלִשְׁתִּים כִּי-מַת גְּבוּרָם, וַיִּנְסוּ. **נב** וַיִּקְמוּ אֲנָשֵׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּהוּדָה וַיִּרְעוּ, וַיִּרְדְּפוּ אֶת-הַפְּלִשְׁתִּים, עַד-בּוֹאֵף גַּיָּא, וְעַד שְׁעָרֵי עֶקְרוֹן; וַיִּפְלוּ חֲלָלֵי פְלִשְׁתִּים, בְּדָרַף שְׁעָרֵים, וְעַד-גַּת, וְעַד-עֶקְרוֹן. **נג** וַיָּשָׁבוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, מִדָּלַק אַחֲרֵי פְלִשְׁתִּים; וַיִּשְׂפוּ, אֶת-מַחֲנֵיהֶם. **נד** וַיִּקַּח דָּוִד אֶת-רֹאשׁ הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי, וַיָּבֵאֵהוּ יְרוּשָׁלַם; וְאֶת-כְּלָיו, שָׁם בְּאֵהָלוֹ."

48 And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hastened, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. **49** And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slung it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead; and the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell upon his face to the earth. **50** So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David. **51** And David ran, and stood over the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw that their mighty man was dead, they fled. **52** And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines, until thou comest to Gai, and to the gates of Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to Shaaraim, even unto Gath, and unto Ekron. **53** And the children of Israel returned from chasing after the Philistines, and they spoiled their camp. **54** And David took the head of the philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armour in his tent.

After everyone presents, teach all the kids the song "There Can Be Miracles" (from the Prince of Egypt)

Many night's we've prayed
With no proof anyone could hear
In our hearts a hopeful song
We barely understood,
Now we are not afraid
Although we know there's much to fear
We were moving mountains
long before we knew we could

There can be miracles
When you believe
Though hope is frail
It's hard to kill
Who knows what miracles
You can achieve
When you believe

Somehow you will
You will when you believe

In this time of fear
When prayer so often proved in vain
Hope seemed like the summer birds
Too swiftly flown away
Yet now I'm standing here
With heart so full I can't explain
Seeking faith and speaking words
I never thought I'd say

There can be miracles
When you believe
All hope is frail
Its hard to kill
Who knows what miracles
You can achieve
When you believe
Somehow you will
You will when you believe

A-shir-ra la-do-shem, ki ga-oh ga-oh
A-shir-ra la-do-shem ki ga-oh ga-oh
Mi-cha-mo-cha ba-elim Hashem
Mi-ka-mo-cha ne-dar-ba-ko-desh
Na-chi-tah v'-chas-d'-cha am zu ga-al-ta
Na-chi-tah v'-chas-d'-cha am zu ga-al-ta
A-shi-ra, a-shi-ra, A-shi-ra.....

There can be miracles
When you believe
Though hope is frail
Its hard to kill
Who knows what miracles
You can achieve
When you believe
Somehow you will
Now you will
You will when you believe.....
You will when you believe

DISCUSSION: Do you think it's good that there are miracles in the world? Do you think that it makes people put less effort, because they just rely on miracles? Why when people talk about miracles they refer to huge things? Maybe it could be a small everyday occurrence. So how it is connected to Chanukah? In Chanukah the Chashmonaim won the Greeks although they were the weak and with less people. The victory was a huge miracle! We learned that miracles happen everyday, all around us, and maybe we just need to pay closer attention to these miracles, and not just think about the large miracles of the Tanach. Maybe we all need to appreciate the small things a little bit more.

LEADER TIP: Everyone loves Chanukah songs! Sing as many as you can!
Teach the kids your own favorites from when you were their age!

CHANUKAH STORY

The Holiday Card

A small Chanukah miracle for a lonely Jewish soldier in Iraq.

It was our first big celebration as a family since our son's bris, eight years earlier. Our daughter Aliza was becoming a Bat Mitzvah. We had a fun idea for how to celebrate it: We had been married years earlier on a boat in Manhattan, and since Aliza was born on our first anniversary, we thought we would do it again.

So we hired a boat and invited a small group of mostly relatives and classmates. In planning the food and the flowers and the music, there seemed to be something missing. We had the "bar," but where was the "mitzvah"? Aside from my daughter's Dvar Torah ("the speech"), what could we do to elevate this gathering from being just another birthday party?

Providentially, there was a request in our synagogue to pray for a local soldier who was being deployed to Iraq. The idea was born; let's have all the kids at our simcha (celebration) make Chanukah cards to send to Jewish soldiers overseas. Nothing earth-shattering, just a way to inject some meaning into the festivities.

The date arrived and our ship sailed. God granted us a picture perfect September day and when Aliza's carefully prepared speech blew overboard, she adlibbed admirably. The Chanukah cards were written and colored and decorated. A lovely time was had by all. And the next day, the cards were mailed out with heartfelt wishes and love to our Jewish brothers and sisters. End of story.

Or so we thought.

Six months later, when the bat mitzvah was a fond, distant memory, there was a knock on my door in the middle of the day. Bravely, I unlocked the door, even though I didn't recognize the voice on the other side. A pleasant twenty-something man greeted me:

"I'm Lt. Steinberg, and your daughter sent me a Chanukah card when I was in Iraq."

Well, you could've blown me over with a feather.

But wait -- it gets better.

Apparently our few dozen cards had been thrown in with the hundreds and thousands of cards sent to celebrate that other December holiday. The chaplain showed up one day at the army base with an enormous sack, filled to the brim with cards and letters. As he passed out handfuls of cards to the grateful troops, Lt. Steinberg was hanging back, feeling pretty left out and lonely.

Suddenly amidst the celebratory crowd, the company captain noticed our soldier. "Steinberg, why are you so quiet? How come you're not opening any cards?"

Oh brother, Steinberg thought, *don't they get it?* "Captain, I'm Jewish, remember?"

"C'mon, Steinberg, don't be a spoilsport. Take a card."

Steinberg tried to shrink himself into invisibility. But the captain wasn't having it. "Let's go, Steinberg. These people were nice enough to write to us. NOW TAKE A CARD!"

By now the captain had everyone's attention and Steinberg was getting pretty uncomfortable in the spotlight. *Quick*, he told himself, *just grab a Christmas card and you'll stop being the center of attention.*

Steinberg reached deep into the sack, pulled out a card and looked at it. To his complete and utter shock the return address said Wesley Hills, New York. Steinberg is from Wesley Hills.

Hands shaking, he tore it open and found a beautiful hand-made Chanukah card, signed by my daughter Aliza, the Bat Mitzvah girl herself. Steinberg was dumbfounded by the providence of it all. He broke out in a huge grin and proudly showed the card to the captain and the entire platoon. Everyone understood the small miracle they had just witnessed.

Standing there in my Wesley Hills home, with my mouth gaping open and tears in my eyes, I begged Steinberg to come back and retell the story when my children were home. Indeed, he returned the following week with a friend and a camera. For our family, it was an incredible inspiration to see so clearly the power of our "little" mitzvah.

But that's not the end of the story. Just this past September one of the chaplains I had contacted about sending those cards asked if I could help arrange kosher meals and snacks for troops in Afghanistan for the High Holidays and Sukkot. I organized some people in my community and we sent 144 kosher meals to Afghanistan. Aish HaTorah's Project Inspire got involved and sent dozens of personal cards and honey sticks for Rosh Hashanah and then chocolates for Chanukah to troops in Afghanistan, Iraq, Italy and Kuwait.

LEADER TIP: What light can you share this Chanukah?
Spread the light by doing good things for others.

JEWISH LEADER OF THE WEEK



Yehudit

A Jewish woman named Yehudit has become a very important part of the story of Chanukah. A Greek commander led his army to take down a revolt that was starting in Yerushalayim. The Greek army camped around the walls of the city and began a strong siege. Even though Yerushalayim was a very strong and united city, the persistent siege by a stronger army began to take a toll on the people of Yerushalayim. A widow named Yehudit left the city and requested to talk with the commander. Her plan was to try and get him to like her and then kill him. Her plan was successful. The commander gave a feast in honor of Yehudit and he became very drunk. That night the commander and Yehudit went back to his private tent where he fell into a deep sleep. While he was asleep Yehudit took his sword and killed him. Yehudit then brought the commander's head back to Yerushalayim where it was hung on the city walls for everyone to see. The Jews were inspired by the daring heroism of Yehudit, and the Greek forces fled. It was a key turning point in the Jewish revolt against the Greeks. There is a custom to eat dairy products on Chanukah to commemorate the miracle that was produced through Yehudit, the daughter of Yochanan the Kohen Gadol. Even though this happened before Chanukah, the memory of this act of courage gave the Chashmonaim the strength and bravery needed to rebel against the Greeks. Therefore, Yehudit's courageous deed is viewed as part of the miracle of Chanukah. There is also a custom to eat fried foods like Latkes and jelly-filled doughnuts on Chanukah. Women have special value during Chanukah, for the miracle began because of the courage of Yehudit.

LEADER TIP: Drink an extra cup of milk in honor of Yehudit! An extra chocolate bar works too 😊

TEFILLAH TREASURES

Chanukah Tefillot

After lighting the first candle while the others are being lit, the tefillah of Hanerot Hallalu is said. It affirms that we light these candles in memory of the miracles Hashem performed for the Jewish people in the Chanukah story. It ends by saying that throughout the eight days of Chanukah, the lights are holy - and we should only use them as an expression of gratitude and praise to Hashem for his miracles.

Maoz Tzur is the universal song of Chanukah. It goes through years of persecution - Egypt, Babylon, Haman, the Syrian-Greeks, the nineteen centuries since the Second Beit Hamikdash was destroyed and praises Hashem for redeeming Bnei Yisrael after each of them. A song of hope, it gives the Jews the courage to face the future and emphasizes the desire to return of the Beit Hamikdash and the coming of Moshiach.

Al Hanissim is a tefillah that is added on Chanukah to Birkat Hamazon and Shmoneh Esrei. It starts by saying thank you to Hashem for the miracles of Chanukah. Al Hanissim doesn't talk about the miracle of the oil, but rather more about the miracle of the war. Al Hanissim focuses on both the physical and spiritual victories of the small group of Jews over the Syrian-Greek enemies, and the role of Hashem in the history of the Jews protecting us every step of the way. Al Hanissim talks about the miracles that happened "bayamim hahem bazman hazeh, (in those days, at this time)." Some say that it only refers to the miracles Hashem performed for our ancestors; others say that it also hints to the countless hidden miracles that Hashem does for us every day.

LEADER TIP: Almost everyone sings the same tune for Maoz Tzur, Hanerot Hallalu on the other hand is a different story. See how many Hanerot Hallalu tunes you have in your group!



This Week in Jewish History

25th of Kislev

The Chanukah Story

Alexander the Great, the conqueror of the world, was a good friend of the Jewish people. After he died, his Empire was split among his generals. Israel was added to the Empire of Antiochus III. When Antiochus became king of the Syrian-Greeks, he wanted the Jews to stop learning and following the Torah and instead follow the Greek ways. He defiled the Beit Hamikdash filling it with idols and pigs. He didn't allow the Jews to follow the commandments of Brit Milah, Rosh Chodesh, and Shabbat. Matityahu was the Kohen of the time and decided that enough was enough. He gathered all the people of Modi'in shouting, "Mi La'Hashem Ay-li (Whoever is for Hashem, let him come to me)," and led the people to rebellion. Only a small number of people responded at first but Matityahu's five sons (Yehudah, Eliezer, Shimon, Yochanan, and Yonatan) led the way. Matityahu passed on the leadership to his second son, Yehudah the Maccabee, who was a mighty warrior and a

captivating leader. Many miracles

happened during the war. Outnumbered a hundred to one, Yehudah and his men won many battles. The Jews came to join him and together they defeated the armies of Syria. Despite being so much smaller in number and power compared to the Greeks, the Maccabim came out on top. On the twenty fifth day of Kislev, they marched into Yerushalayim and immediately made their way to the Beit Hamikdash where they saw a sight that left them shocked and angered. Idols, filth, impurity were everywhere. They searched through the ruins looking for at least one flask of pure olive oil so that they could light the menorah they quickly put together. They finally found one small jug with enough oil for only



one day. They poured it into the menorah and lit it.



Miraculously it lasted for eight days long. Those eight miraculous days were chosen as the everlasting symbol to commemorate the miracle of Chanukah publicizing the miracles Hashem performed.



FIND...

- Antiochus
- Matityahu
- Yehudah
- Maccabim
- Miracle
- Olive Oil
- Al Hanisim
- Maoz Tzur

TRIVIA QUESTION OF THE WEEK

ON BACK OF WHICH ISRAELI COIN IS A PICTURE OF THE MENORAH?

Email your answers to YOUTH@YOUNGISRAEL.ORG along with your **NAME** and **AGE** for a chance to win **AWESOME PRIZES!** Each correct answer will enter your name into a raffle that will happen once a month. Behatzlacha!

THIS JUST IN!

- **Cats can't taste sweets.**
- **Some wild turkeys run up to 25 miles an hour.**
- **Only male turkeys gobble, female turkeys click.**
- **An inch of rain is equal to 10 inches of snow.**
- **Chionophobia is the fear of snow**

For more info please feel free to contact us at
Youth@youngisrael.org

Chanukah Points to Ponder...

- The word for candles, **NER**, Nun-Reish, stands for Nefesh (soul) and Ruach (spirit). The numerical value of **NER** is 250 which equals the 248 limbs dedicated to the 248 positive action Mitzvos plus Ahava-Love and Yira- fear.
- Torah is light as we mentioned earlier. Light continues to expel darkness at 186,000 miles per second forever. It never tires. Light is forever! So too the Torah we have learned is a ray of eternity that never ceases. (Maharal)
- In the Talmud's account of Chanukah it is recorded that the Greeks contaminated all the oil in the sanctuary. After the victory of the holy Jewish army it says that they searched and only found one jar of oil that still had the seal of Kohen Gadol. If they contaminated all the oil then how did they find a jar? There is an indestructible jar in the heart of our people that can never be sullied or compromised. From that point of purity everyone and everything can be rebuilt. It requires, however an honest search to find it. (Sefat Emet)
- Eight is not just another single step after seven. Seven is the stuff of this world which was completed in seven days. It's no mistake the letters for the word – Shemona - 8 is the same as the letters for Neshama-soul which has the same letters for Mishneh - which is the building block of the Oral Torah. The eight floats like oil over nature - Teva (literally - sink).The word oil, Shemen uses these letters too. Eight is beyond. Once we hit eight we keep on “going up in holiness and not going down” (Shabbat 21B) Chanukah never ends! It only begins! On Chanukah we all strive for the world of **8 - the symbol of infinity!**

E	L	C	A	R	I	M	R	Z	I	B	O
T	U	M	B	H	A	D	U	H	E	Y	R
O	J	O	I	I	S	R	B	J	Z	Z	E
Y	P	M	G	S	G	W	S	M	S	D	O
M	C	V	L	V	I	R	Y	C	S	S	L
P	Q	I	N	J	U	N	P	P	V	V	I
J	R	U	Z	T	Z	O	A	M	E	U	V
K	Y	A	N	T	I	O	C	H	U	S	E
K	G	C	F	U	M	V	F	X	L	N	O
S	C	T	J	K	A	O	T	R	K	A	I
M	A	C	C	A	B	I	M	W	B	L	L
U	F	M	A	T	I	T	Y	A	H	U	M

Since 1981



BRYCE CANYON, UTAH

ACHVA

EAST - WEST - ALASKA/HAWAII - ISRAEL

Once-in-a-lifetime Summer Tours

for Modern Orthodox High School Students

www.youngisrael.org/achva

or call 212-929-1525 ext. 181

***Amazing Summer Programs for post-8th to post-11th graders starting at \$3,650 up to \$9,250.
For itineraries, dates and prices, see our web site. Experience matters: our 34th year! Sign up
online today!***