

The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators

INTERACTIVE *Hanukkah* COMPANION



Light up your Hanukkah!

Included in this holiday companion are eight *divrei torah* written by Pardes faculty, accompanied by interactive activities and discussion questions, crafted by the Pardes Center for Jewish Educators team, which draw on the content or illuminating idea in each *d'var torah*. These activities—with options for younger kids as well as teens and young adults—can be used by families, teachers or synagogue educators to create dynamic, educational and fun learning experiences for their children and students, all grounded in the themes of Hanukah.

Hanukah is a time when family and friends come together to celebrate and enjoy the Hanukah lights. Enrich your experience by trying one, or all, of these enlightening activities!

The interactive activities in this companion were crafted by PCJE team members Rachel Friedrichs, Penny Joel, Sefi Kraut, Aviva Lauer Golbert, Reuven Margrett, and Susan Yammer.

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Nechama Goldman Barash

Rabbanit Nechama Goldman Barash teaches Rabbinic text and contemporary halakha at Pardes. She is a Yoetzet Halakha and sought-after teacher in Jewish marital law and sexuality.



Hanukah falls in the middle of the winter. The eight-day celebration is reminiscent of the dedication of the Tabernacle (Lev. 8-9) and the Temple (I Kgs 8), as well as the Sukkot holiday, which is the only other eight-day holiday. Its unique ritual is the lighting of the menorah, a practice carried out daily in the Tabernacle and Temple. As such, on Hanukah every man, woman and child turns briefly into a priest and every home becomes a mini-sanctuary.

If we go back to the earliest sources about Hanukah, the impetus behind the holiday's enactment was to celebrate a military victory over the Greeks, to commemorate the rededication of the Temple and, most importantly, to acknowledge the salvation from spiritual annihilation. The popular story about the miracle with oil is an element presented later by the Talmud.

In truth, the structure of the holiday – eight days and the kindling of lights – was already in place beforehand. The power of light in the darkness is a theme that appears in two fascinating midrashic texts.

The first concerns God's creation of Adam at the end of the sixth day, followed by the first Shabbat. In Genesis Rabbah 11:2, the midrash suggests that to honor Shabbat, God prevented the sun from setting. Only at the end of Shabbat did it become dark for the first time. God shows Adam, who is terrified of the darkness, how to strike two flints together and make fire, thus lightening his darkness (a direct contrast to Greek mythology where man has to steal fire from the gods who are guarding it). God helps man find a way to light up the darkness of the night, which is an integral and cyclical part of the Creation.

In a second source, the *Talmud* presents two pagan holidays – *Kalanda* and *Saturna* – which take place just before and just after the winter solstice. It tells the story of Adam who,

as the days become shorter and shorter, begins to fear the world is coming to an end.

Talmud Bavli, Avoda Zara 8a

When Adam saw the days progressively getting gradually shorter, he said, "Woe is me, perhaps because I sinned, the world around me is becoming dark and returning to its primordial state of chaos and disorder?"... He began keeping an eight-day fast. But as he observed the winter solstice and noted the days progressively lengthening, he said, "This is the world's course," and he observed a festival for eight days.

לפי שראה אדם הראשון יום שמתמעט והולך אמר אוי לי שמא בשביל שסרחתי עולם חשור בעדי וחוזר לתוהו ובוהו וזו היא מיתה שנקנסה עלי מן השמים עמד וישב ח' ימים בתענית [ובתפלה] כיון שראה תקופת טבת וראה יום שמאריך והולך אמר מנהגו של עולם הוא הלך ועשה שמונה ימים טובים לשנה האחרת עשן לאלו ולאלו ימים טובים.

Adam's winter solstice festival is his recognition of God's greatness for creating the world the way He did.

To contrast the two sources: In the first, God reaches out to man, teaching him how to light up the darkness. In the second, man comes to recognize God in the cyclical movement of the shortening and lengthening of the days.

Taken together, we understand that the dark days of winter call on us to create light – internal and external – through prayer and ritual that will sustain us until the natural light returns for longer and longer periods of the day.

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS: INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES

Illuminating the Idea

How many Jewish mothers does it take to screw in a lightbulb?

None, because that's all right, they'll just sit in the dark.

It's a funny stereotype, but actually, we learn from our texts - both the story about God providing Adam with a proto-havdala candle and the one about Adam celebrating with light when he realizes that the natural cycle of the world and life includes darkness and light alike - that despite all the Jewish mother jokes, it is not our role as Jews to sit in the dark. It is our job to light up the darkness ourselves until it is naturally light again.

Activity for younger kids

Shine Some Light in the Darkness

In this arts and crafts activity, children make an invisible picture that can only be "lit up" with the help of a self-made flashlight.

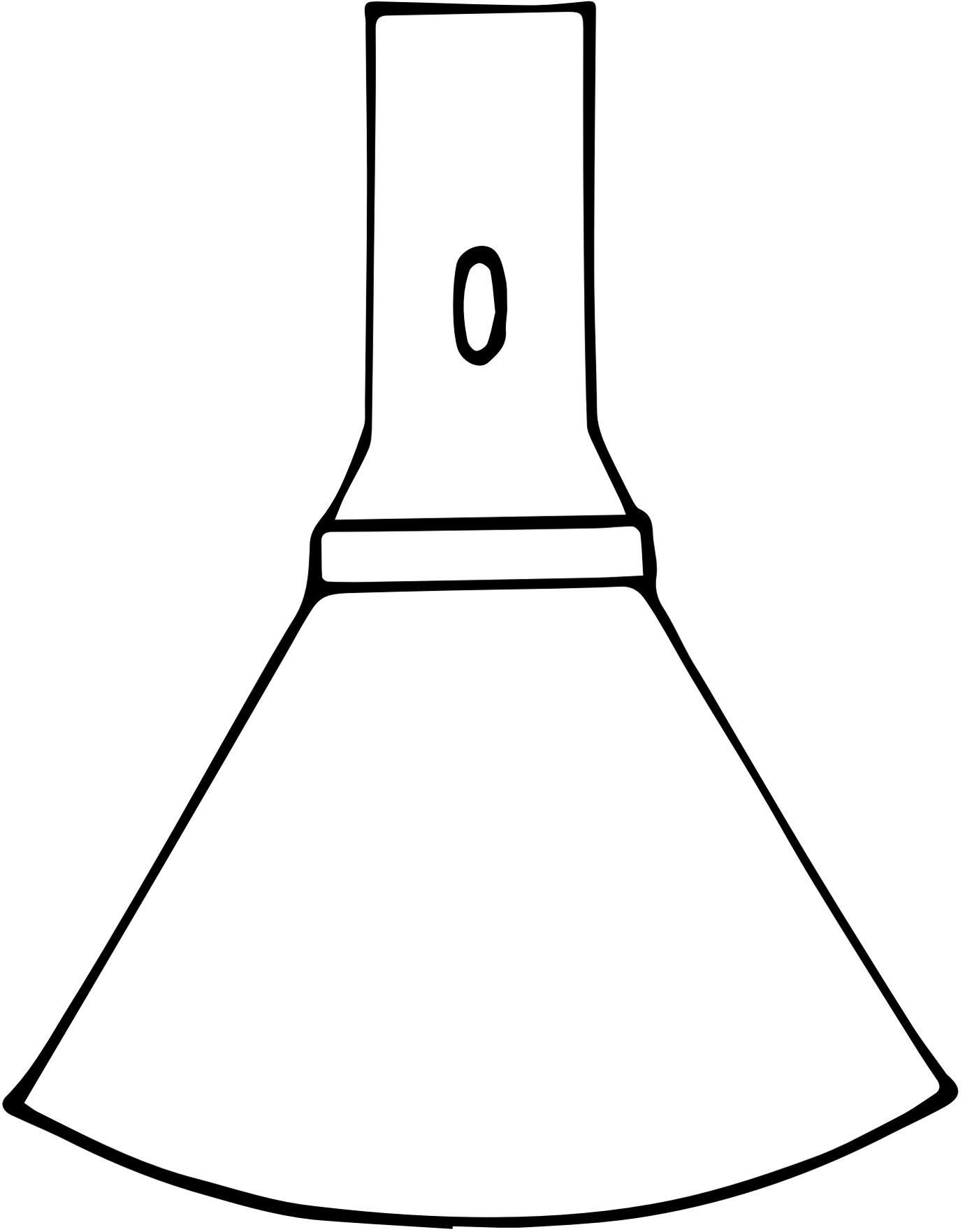
Materials Needed:

- Gallon-size Zip-lock bag
- Regular Sharpies in multiple colors
- One sheet of black construction paper
- Tape
- Flashlight template printed onto white cardstock (template on page 4)
- Scissors

Here's How You Do It:

1. Before you begin, print the flashlight template onto white cardstock. Cut out the flashlight. The handle of the flashlight can be colored in if desired, but leave the "light" at the top white.
2. Using Sharpies, have children draw a Hanukah-oriented picture on the Zip-lock bag - whatever strikes their fancy. This could be a Hanukiah, dreidel and latkes and sufganiot, the Maccabees, etc. (With older children, you might suggest they draw a more figurative version of something that 'brings light into the world,' like an act of kindness or an important idea.)
3. Next, place a piece of black construction paper inside the plastic bag so that the Hanukah drawings they've drawn can barely be seen.
4. Finally, have children insert the flashlight into the plastic bag. As they do so, its "light" will reveal the drawing that had been shrouded in "darkness"!
5. Watch a video demonstration of this activity [here](#).

 **Pardes**
Experiential Educators Program



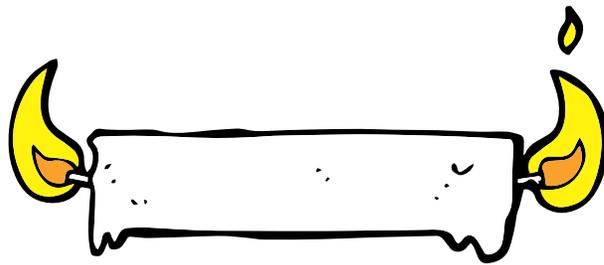
My Candle Burns

In this discussion-oriented activity, participants read a poem that can ignite talk about the ephemeral nature of lit candles and how our reactions to that ephemerality can make all the difference in the world.

Materials Needed:

- Copy of "[First Fig](#)" poem for each participant
- Discussion questions found below

*"My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night;
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—
It gives a lovely light!"*



Here's How You Do It:

1. Read together a short poem by the 20th-century American poet Edna St. Vincent Millay entitled "First Fig" (from a 1918 series called "Figs from Thistles").
2. Consider together the following discussion questions:
 - What might it mean for a candle to burn "at both ends"? How is that possible? If you don't take it literally, what might the poet mean by saying that?
 - If, like the poet, you know that something you have that is wonderful and useful - like light - won't last much longer, what would your natural response be? Frustration? Depression? Indifference? Joy?
 - What is the poet's response to the idea that her candle is nearly out? What do you think of her response?
 - Why do you think it is important that the poet is speaking both to her friends and her foes - her enemies? What does one normally share with their enemies?
3. Together, come up with one or more ways that you might emulate the response of the poet - that of appreciation for something wonderful, even as it is disappearing - in your own lives.

An Interactive
**SEDER
EXPERIENCE**



THE MIRACLE OF THE LIGHTS



Michael Hattin



Rabbi Michael Hattin teaches Tanakh and Halakha at Pardes and is the Beit Midrash Coordinator for the Pardes Center for Jewish Educators. He is the author of Passages: Text and Transformation in the Parasha and Joshua: The Challenge of the Promised Land.

Hanukkah commemorates the rededication of the holy Temple in 165 BCE. After the miraculous defeat of the tyrannical Syrian-Greeks who had defiled Jerusalem and outlawed the observance of Jewish rituals and Torah study, Judah the Maccabee and his outnumbered fighters triumphantly re-entered Jerusalem and cleansed the sanctuary from impurity. They commemorated their military victory over the oppressor by celebrating a festival of consecration, as the name “Hanukah” – from the root כ.נ.ח. or “dedication” – implies. This consecration included the restoration of the altar, the repair of the Temple structure and the ritual cleansing of its precincts.

The account of the bloody battles that brought victory and the story of the Temple’s rededication are told at length in the non-biblical Book of the Maccabees. But in the famous Talmudic passage that constitutes the most consequential reference to Hanukah in rabbinic literature (Talmud Bavli Shabbat 21b), it is the miracle of the menorah that is at the center of the drama.

Why did the ancient rabbis shift the focus of Hanukah from the military victory and the rededication of the Temple to the specific episode of the menorah, the small jar of pure oil and the miraculous interval of illumination? After all, Hanukah for us is all about lighting. We kindle our individual hanukiahs after the manner of the Temple menorah and we commemorate an eight-day festival because the lamps of the Temple menorah continued to burn.

Rambam tells us that the Hasmoneans not only prevailed against the oppressor, but also succeeded in restoring Jewish sovereignty for a period of “over 200 years” (Mishne Torah, Laws of Hanukah 3:1). While Rambam mentions this to highlight the miracle of the holiday, from the larger

perspective of Jewish history it tends to have the opposite effect. That is to say that the great triumph of Yehuda and his brothers was actually quite short-lived. When we “do the math,” we discover that the period of full sovereignty lasted for less than 80 years – it was not until 141 BCE that Simon, the last surviving Hasmonean brother, was crowned by the people as an independent monarch and in 63 BCE Pompei entered Jerusalem to formally impose Roman rule.

It therefore seems likely that the early rabbis deliberately emphasized the miracle of the menorah because they already realized what most of us could only appreciate in hindsight: military triumphs are short-lived, physical buildings do not stand forever and even political independence can be an ephemeral condition. These things only last until the ascent of the next tyrannical empire. But the light of the menorah – speaking to the ideas of the mind and to the matters of the soul, the purest of oils – reminding us of the Jews’ never-ending capacity for spiritual survival and regeneration, these things are eternal. The military victories of the Hasmoneans were soon forgotten, the Sanctuary and Jerusalem were razed to the ground and the Jewish people were scattered to the far ends of the earth. But the story of the pure oil and the lights that could not be extinguished lived on, carried by the Jewish people wherever they wandered.

Thus it is that Hanukah remains for us a festival of lights, a time to reflect on the matters of the spirit and on the Torah that continues to inspire and guide, even as the Jewish people continue their perilous journey through a human history ruled by tyrannies and governed by despots. As Zechariah the prophet proclaimed, in his vision of the pure Temple menorah that we read as the Haftarah of Shabbat Hanukah: “Not by power, nor by strength, but by My spirit says the Lord of Hosts.”

THE MIRACLE OF THE LIGHTS: INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES

Illuminating the Idea

In his article, Michael Hattin concludes, “Thus it is that Hanukah remains for us a festival of lights, a time to reflect on the matters of the spirit and on the Torah that continues to inspire and guide....”

How might we direct our *kavanah* (intention) to these “matters of the spirit” and “the Torah that continues to inspire” us when we light our Hanukiot this year? Perhaps by appreciating anew what the lights of Hanukah mean to us today and what it would be like if they went out!

Activity for all ages

This activity is about feeling good about being Jewish, lighting our own Jewish light, and seeing how to spread that light outside.

Don't Let The Lights Go Out!

Materials Needed:

- One candle per participant (It might be best to use a *yahrzeit* candle because it is safest. Since this activity involves real lit candles, small children should share a candle with an adult.)
- One “mitzvah card” for each participant or for one child/adult pair (A “mitzvah card” is a square piece of paper on which you have written the name of one mitzvah, and that you have preferably laminated for safety reasons. You can write the names of the mitzvot in English or Hebrew.) Some possible mitzvot are:
 - Brit Milah
 - Shabbat
 - Honoring parents
 - Keeping Shabbat
 - Celebrating Passover
 - Learning Torah
- Matches
- Words and music for the song, “[Light One Candle](#)” by, Peter, Paul and Mary

Note: This activity needs to be done in a room that can be darkened.

Here's How You Do It:

1. Each participant or each child/adult pair should have one candle and one mitzvah card next to or underneath the candle.
2. Begin with an introduction: “Hanukah is also called *Chag HaUrim*, the Festival of Lights. Does anyone know why? What do the lights of Hanukah symbolize or mean when we light them? We’re going to tell the story of Hanukah now and you’re going to help. First, let’s read what’s on your cards. (Go around and have each person read what’s on their card.) Who knows what these all are? Yes, they are all mitzvot.”
3. Give instructions: “Here’s the rule - as I tell the story, when I mention the mitzvah that is written on your card, I want you to gently blow out the candle that I will now light.”
4. Go around lighting the candles. Turn off the lights and just sit silently, enjoying the candlelight for a minute or two as the group settles down.

5. Tell the story (feel free to elaborate!): "In the beginning, Israel was filled with light and the people loved their lights.....(use your imagination). Then the Syrian-Greeks came and didn't like the lights, so they slowly made rules to snuff out the lights. Rules like..... it is forbidden to celebrate Shabbat, perform a brit milah, keep the holiday of Passover, etc...." Continue telling the story and mentioning the mitzvot that the Syrian-Greeks forbade until all but one of the candles has been extinguished and the room is almost completely dark (except for one remaining candle).
6. When there is one candle left you can say, "As darkness came to Israel, the people were cold and afraid. One man, Matityahu, knew that he must save the last light or all would be lost, so he stood in front of the last light and refused to let the Syrian-Greeks put it out." You can take the last light and hold it behind you. "Matityahu saved the light and helped bring back the lights to Israel."
7. Now, process the story and ask again:
 - What do the lights symbolize?
 - If the lights could speak what would they say?
 - What are WE saying when we light these lights?
8. If you want, end the activity by singing the song "Light One Candle."



"Light One Candle"

*Light one candle for the Maccabee children
Give thanks that their light didn't die!
Light one candle for the pain they endured
When their right to exist was denied!
Light one candle for the terrible sacrifice
Justice and freedom demand!
And light one candle for the wisdom to know
When the peacemaker's time is at hand!*

*Don't let the light go out!
It's lasted for so many years!
Don't let the light go out!
Let it shine through our love and our tears.*

*Light one candle for the strength we all need
To never become our own foe!
And light one candle for those who are suffering
Pain we learned so long ago!
Light one candle for all we believe in,
Let anger not tear us apart!
And light one candle to bind us together
With peace as the song in our heart!*

*Don't let the light go out!
It's lasted for so many years!
Don't let the light go out!
Let it shine through our love and our tears.*

*What is the memory that's valued so highly
That we keep it alive in that flame?
What's the commitment to those who have died
When we cry out they've not died in vain,
We have come this far, always believing
That justice will somehow prevail!
This is the burning. This is the promise,
This why we will not fail!*

*Don't let the light go out!
It's lasted for so many years!
Don't let the light go out!
Let it shine through our love and our tears.*

*Don't let the light go out!
Don't let the light go out!
Don't let the light go out!*



Leon Morris

Rabbi Leon A. Morris is the President of Pardes.



There is an unusual connection between the mitzvah of lighting Hanukkah candles and one's home. Almost any other mitzvah, such as building a *sukkah*, eating *matzah* and *maror* on Pesach and lighting Shabbat candles, can be performed wherever one happens to be. But for Hanukkah, our earliest sources describe the mitzvah as *ner ish u'veito* – a candle for a person and his or her house.

Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 21b

Our sages taught: The mitzvah of Hanukkah [candles entails lighting] a candle, for a man and his household...

תנו רבנן: מצות חנוכה נר איש וביתו.

It would appear that the home is inextricably connected to the lighting of Hanukkah candles.

The Rema (Rabbi Moshe Isserless, Poland, 16th century) and many other halakhic authorities wrote that an individual cannot fulfill his or her obligation through lighting the Hanukkah candles in the synagogue.

The Talmud cites an example of a famous rabbi who was traveling during Hanukkah, and who fulfilled the mitzvah of Hanukkah candles vicariously through his family who lit on his behalf in the family home.

Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 23a

Rabbi Zeira said: At first, when I was at my master's house, I partnered with my host by [giving] coins. After I married, I said, now I certainly don't need [to do so], for my wife is lighting for me in my house.

א"ר זירא מריש כי הוינא בי רב משתתפנא בפרטי בהדי אושפיזא בתר דנסיבי איתנא אמינא השתא ודאי לא צריכנא דקא מדליקי עלי בגו ביתאי.

Mishnah Brurah explains that if a person eats a meal at a friend or relative's house, he must light the Hanukkah candles in his home rather than that of the friend.

What's going on here?

Since Hanukkah is about rededicating the Temple in Jerusalem, we might have thought that the synagogue should be the main locus of lighting Hanukkah candles. The synagogue and the *beit midrash* (study hall) are described as a *mikdash me'at*, a miniature sanctuary, once the Temple was destroyed.

No, say our sources. Hanukkah is primarily a mitzvah integrally connected to one's home. *Ner ish u'veito* is much more than a geographic halakhic detail of where one is supposed to light; it is a philosophical assertion.

When confronting a monoculture that could not tolerate cultural and religious difference, the Jewish future would be maintained most effectively through the home. The miracle of the endurance of the Jewish people owes far more to the home than to the synagogue. It is undoubtedly our most important Jewish institution. What happens there, away from public view, is perhaps the most indicative of what kind of future awaits us.

At the same time, our homes cannot be closed off to the larger world. The very same page of the Talmud (Shabbat 21b) that ties the home to the lighting of Hanukkah candles explains the exact positioning of the *hanukiah*.

Our Sages taught: The Hanukkah candle - it is a mitzvah to place it at the door of his house, from the outside.

ת"ר נר חנוכה מצוה להניחה על פתח ביתו מבחוץ.

Our homes are places of intimacy and security. They are drivers of values and identity. But they must not cut us off from the larger world. Our homes, suggest the Hanukkah candles, are in dialogue with the world. Our homes and families have something to say to the world, and the world outside has something vital to say to us. "*Al petach beito mi'bachutz* – at the door of our home from the outside" presents us with the task of finding that perfect balance between inside and out. That may very well be the larger goal and message of Hanukkah.

illuminating the Idea

Where is the best place to light Hanukah candles? In shul? In the local shopping mall? On top of your car? Nope. None of them. They should be lit at home. Does that make lighting a private affair? Not at all, as the best place to light them is by the front door, or in a window, so that the miracles that the candles represent shine out to the world.

The candles teach us that our roots are in our home - so we know where we come from and not forget our traditions and responsibilities. But they also remind us that we are citizens of the world with a role to play: each one of us is a candle who must make the world a brighter and better place.

How do we stay true to our roots and our home, and not get lost in the world outside? To put it another way - how do we make sure the world does not blow out our candle?

Activity for younger kids

These activities are about feeling good about being Jewish, lighting our own Jewish light, and seeing how to spread that light outside.

My Eight Lights of Being Jewish

Materials Needed:

- Eight candles for each child
- Eight colored strips of paper to stick on those candles

Here's How You Do It:

1. Give each child eight strips of paper.
2. Have children write down one thing they like about being Jewish on each of their eight strips.
3. Stick those strips onto candles (do not light them - ever!).
4. When the regular candles have all gone out, you can place the children's special candles in the menorah so they can be viewed until the next night (remember - don't light them!).
5. Every day add one more candle!



The Real Hanukah Gelt

Materials Needed:

- Purchase and keep those little stringy bags that Hanukah gelt/chocolate coins come in. One for each child.

Here's How You Do It:

1. Every night after candle lighting, have each child place tzedakah in their Hanukah gelt bag (you can give them simple household tasks to complete to earn money).
2. On the first night, have a discussion about the role of Jews spreading the light and how the Hanukah candles represent this. They should choose which organization the tzedakah will go to. You can also ask: In what other ways can we spread the light?

Activity for teens & young adults

What's Your Donut Jam?

This activity gets participants to decorate a donut in the way that represents: *How this time of year makes you feel about being Jewish*. With Xmas falling out during Hanukah it can be a complicated time to feel Jewish. This activity gets young people to explore and share their feelings in a **non-judgemental** way.

Materials Needed:

- Donuts (one each)
- Donut decorations could include: icing sugar, icing tubes, multiple types of sprinkles, birthday candles, blank toothpick flags



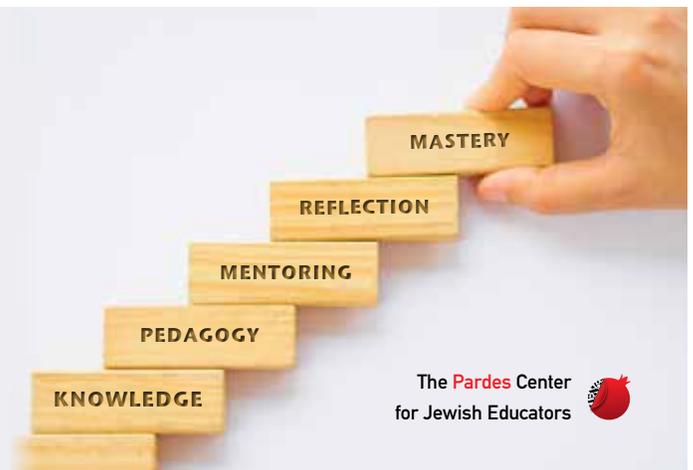
Here's How You Do It:

1. Give each person a donut, and ten minutes to create their donut masterpiece that addresses the theme: *How this time of year makes you feel about being Jewish*. Each person goes around and shares what their donut represents.
2. Eat the donuts!
3. While eating the donuts you can have the following conversation:

Leon's article highlights a tension as to where we symbolically place our menorah. If we place it all the way outside the house, we potentially lose our Jewish roots and heritage. If we keep our menorah guarded and locked inside our house then we won't interact with the world around us. Leon suggests that the best place is by the entrance/window of our house as that is where we are both grounded and can interact with the world. Based on this explanation: *Where would you place your menorah?* In a locked room? Way outside? By the window? Somewhere in between? Somewhere else altogether? Remember: there are no right answers.

Building Teacher Excellence!

Jewish Studies
In-Service Teacher Training Program



The Pardes Center
for Jewish Educators





David I. Bernstein

Dr. David I. Bernstein is the Dean of Pardes. He teaches modern Jewish history and contemporary Israel.

This is a writing exercise based on some of the themes of the upcoming holiday of Hanukkah.

We can celebrate Hanukkah by lighting candles and saying the *Al-Hanisim* prayer, by eating latkes or donuts or by playing dreidel. We can have fun and enjoy the chag. This certainly is important. But we can also add another dimension to the Jewish holidays. We can use the themes of Hanukkah to re-examine ourselves, our lives and see where we are headed.

Hanukkah is often taught as the war of the few against the many; the Jews fighting for religious freedom and independence from the Seleucids. While there are elements of truth to this, it was at least as much a civil war among the different factions of Jews as it was a war of independence.

That internal struggle was characterized by sharply different views on how Jews should relate to Hellenistic culture, then the dominant culture in Mediterranean society. Many favored adopting the “zeitgeist,” the spirit of the times. Some Jews went as far as including idol worship; others rejected any openness to Greek culture. And of course, many Jews found themselves somewhere between these two extreme points of view.

One of the major issues of Hanukkah then, is the question of balance between Judaism and Hellenism in ancient times, and today, between Judaism and Western culture.

We are going to do some self-assessment on a couple of Hanukkah-related issues. In some cases, it will mean trying to be honest about yourself, which is very hard, as many of us know.

1. In terms of Jewish and general studies:
 How many years of secular education do you have?
 How many years of intensive Jewish education?
 How many books have you read this year?
 How many of these were Jewish books?
 What should be the ideal balance between Jewish and general studies?
 Include percentages/qualitative words, in some way, rank importance.



2. Does your own education reflect this? If so, write about how. If not, write about the ways in which it does not.

3. Culture is not only classroom or beit midrash learning. For each of the following cultural categories, evaluate whether you fit your ideal model, or in what ways you fall short: the music I listen to, television / movies, time on the Internet.

4. Another aspect of the conflict between the more Hellenized Jews and the more traditional Jews is the question of interpersonal relations. Ask yourself, how do I relate to other Jews with beliefs and practices different than my own?

5. Rabbi Abraham Isaac haCohen Kook, the first chief rabbi in the Land of Israel wrote that if the Second Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed because of hatred for no reason (שנאת חינום), the redemption will come when Jews practice “love for no reason” (אהבת חינום).

- How can I avoid conflict for those whom I know personally who differ from me in their Jewish practice, and whose views and practices I disagree with?
- How can I increase my “*ahavat Yisrael*” toward all Jews who believe/practice differently than me, that I don’t even know, but that are just stereotypes to me?

Summary: We have looked at two issues confronting us from the Hanukkah story – the relationship between Jewish learning and secular culture and how to deal with other Jews whose lifestyle we do not agree with. Whether consciously or not, you have been confronting these issues in one way or another for many years. By thinking more and talking more about these issues around Hanukkah time, we can hopefully make our Hanukkah more meaningful, and hope that it can bring about positive change in us, which is, after all, one of the main things that being a Jew is all about – the constant striving to improve ourselves.

HANUKAH WORKSHOP: INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES

Illuminating the Idea

The story of Hanukkah gives us many celebratory elements - like candle lighting, eating latkes and donuts, and playing dreidel. But the story of Hanukkah also includes the Jewish civil war and the tension between Jewish values and Hellenistic values, and highlights how those impacted the relationships between Jews. As such, Hanukkah is a great time for us to think about this tension.

Activity for younger kids

Let's Build a Community

This activity explores what kids think should be in a Jewish community and which elements will make their community specifically Jewish. This can be adjusted for different age groups.

Materials Needed:

- Building materials, such as:
 - legos
 - blocks
 - cardboard boxes
- Art supplies such as:
 - construction paper
 - tape
 - stickers
 - markers

Here's How You Do It:

1. Have kids build a Jewish community out of lego (or any other building materials) in order to help them think about what might be found in a Jewish community. Depending on the age of the kids, you can start by brainstorming with them and asking them what makes up their Jewish community. For younger children, you might make a series of cards or a list with pictures and names of things that one would find in a Jewish community to give them ideas of where to start (see cards below).
2. Once they build their community, ask the kids for a "tour" of the community and an explanation for why they made the decisions they made.
3. For older children, ask how they reached their conclusions and challenge them on their answers.



Synagogue

(for 10-11 year olds you can include denomination-specific synagogues)

Kosher butcher

Supermarket

Public school

Jewish day school

Hebrew school

Parks

Restaurants

Kosher restaurants

Daycare center

Jewish senior citizens center

Hospital

Activity for teens & young adults

Agree or Disagree

In this activity, participants grapple with Jewish identity, and consider where their Jewish and secular worlds overlap and where they may conflict. Additionally, this is a good opportunity to discuss how to have a conversation with someone you don't agree with.

Materials Needed:

- Jewish identity statements (below)

Here's How You Do It:

1. Divide the room into two sides - one side is the "agree" side and the other is the "disagree" side.
2. One at a time, read out the Jewish identity statements (found below), and ask participants to decide whether they agree or disagree with what was said. Have them show whether they agree or disagree by going to the appropriate side of the room. (Alternatively, you can present "agree" and "disagree" as poles at the end of a spectrum, and the participants can stand anywhere on the spectrum they want.)
3. Once they pick sides, ask for volunteers to explain their perspective. You can also give participants a chance to ask each other questions and to move where they are standing if they are swayed by another person's opinion.

Jewish identity statements:

- The best Jewish food is the matzah ball.
- All Jewish children should go to Jewish day school.
- Halloween is just as important to me as Purim.
- The most important part of being Jewish is being an active part of my Jewish community.
- It is better for American Jews to enlist in the US army than the Israeli army.
- There should be one type of synagogue that all Jews belong/go to.
- All Jews should live in Israel.
- It would be great if there was a Jewish president of the United States.



HANUKAH & THE RHETORIC OF RABBINIC AUTHORITY



Leah Rosenthal



Leah Rosenthal has been a master Talmud teacher at Pardes for over 20 years and a pioneer of women's Talmud study in Jerusalem high schools.

Hanukah and Purim are the two major additions to the Jewish calendar instituted during the classic Rabbinic period. This fact constitutes the background for a brief Talmudic conversation that focuses on the broad question of the theological underpinnings of Rabbinic authority.

Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 23a

What blessing is said [over the lighting of Hanukah candles]?

This: ... who sanctified us by His commandments and commanded us to kindle the light of Hanukah.

And where did He command us?

R. Avia said: [It follows] from, "Thou shalt not turn aside [from the rulings which they shall instruct thee]." [Deuteronomy 17:11]

R. Nehemiah said: "Ask thy father, and he will tell thee; Thine elders, and they will say to thee." [Deuteronomy 32:7]

מאי מברך?
מברך: אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של חנוכה
והיכן צונו?
רב אויא אמר מ"לא תסור." (דברים יז, יא)
רב נחמיה אמר "שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך."
(דברים לב, ז)

The Talmud, in a wonderfully naive way, halts the conversation regarding the observance of the ritual of candle lighting on Hanukah and wonders about the appropriateness of describing this ritual as God's commandment, as stated

explicitly in the words of the blessing. Surely, this ritual is unquestionably Rabbinic in origin. In response, two answers are presented, each an attempt to clarify the divine nature of Rabbinic ordinances.

The two answers provided in the text are intriguing in their different approaches. The first, R. Avia's answer, cites a verse often associated with the notion of Rabbinic authority. The context of this verse is harsh. The Biblical passage in which this verse appears speaks of institutionalized authority-priests and magistrates who constitute a "Supreme Court" with far-reaching legal powers. The tone is threatening. One must obey and act in accordance with the rulings and verdicts delivered, under threat of death. Obedience is achieved through strict and powerful institutions that represent truth, order and justice within the community.

The second answer is dramatically different. R. Nehemiah offers a verse taken from the song of *Haazinu*. The verse speaks of family relationships – fathers and elders – not formal, communal institutions. The context of this verse speaks of the importance of memory and the significance of the past. In this perspective, authority and the divine nature of tradition flow from the meaning that is created when older generations transmit their stories and wisdom to younger ones. Commitment to tradition stems from the depth of identity that is experienced by the individual. It is a response to a search, a quest for meaning initiated by the seeker, not an obligation imposed upon the individual by the communal institutions that govern.

The festival of Hanukah offers us the opportunity to consider the structures and rhetoric of our Jewish heritage and traditions. As we gather in our homes and communities to celebrate, let us also consider and reconsider the contexts of our traditions and the nature of the bond that exists between us.

HANUKAH & THE RHETORIC OF RABBINIC AUTHORITY: INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES

Illuminating the Idea

The Rabbis, who established Hanukah as an annual Jewish celebration long after the Torah was given, reflect on how they come to have the authority to mandate that all Jews perform certain rituals for the holiday (for example: lighting candles with a blessing). This seemingly technical rabbinic discussion about Rabbinic authority is actually a deeper conversation about how as Jews we adapt, then adopt and share new traditions and practices. Leah Rosenthal writes that according to R' Nehemia's position in the Talmudic discussion, "Authority and the divine nature of tradition flow from the meaning that is created when older generations transmit their stories and wisdom to the younger ones."

Activity for younger kids

Chains of Tradition

In this activity, by creating a three-linked paper chain, kids will consider which traditions have been shared with them by their families and will identify traditions that they would like to pass on to future generations.

Materials Needed:

- Optional: [Article on Beta Israel Jews](#) who never had the tradition of celebrating Hanukah
- Pieces of colored paper cut into strips wide enough to be drawn on
- Coloring/writing supplies

Here's How You Do It:

1. Start with a discussion reminding kids that part of the reason (according to Rabbi Nechemia, at least) we light Hanukah candles (more than 2000 years after the story of Hanukah took place!) is because this is a practice that has been passed down from generation to generation, from older members in a family to the younger members of the family. Ask participants if there are other Jewish practices, traditions or customs which they perform at home that they like. [You could decide to limit this discussion and activity to exclusively Hanukah-related traditions and customs or keep it broad.] Questions to consider:
 - Who taught you this tradition?
 - Why do you like it?
 - Do you know if other Jews also practice this or is it something special you do in your family?
 - Do you practice this tradition/custom exactly like your grandparents or does it look a little different now?
2. Pass out the paper strips and coloring materials. Kids can start by making two of the three links in their chain.
 - Link one should have a picture or a symbolic representation of the tradition they learned from a member in their family.
 - Link two should have a picture or a symbolic representation of the tradition how they celebrate it today (this may or may not be identical to the first link).
3. Now ask them to think about a Jewish tradition or practice [again, this could be limited to Hanukah or be broader] that they think it would be important to teach to the *next* generation. Is it the same tradition or would they choose something else to teach their kids? Or perhaps they would create a *new* tradition to

teach their kids and grandkids.

4. It's time to make the third link in the chain.
 - Using the remaining strips of paper and coloring materials, kids should draw a picture or symbolic representation of the tradition they just discussed that they would like to pass on.
5. Lastly, consider asking kids to explain what they included on their 'chains of tradition':
 - Are the traditions/customs they drew the same or different on each link of the chain? Why?
 - How would they feel if their chains got broken, and there was no one to pass on these traditions to the next generation?
 - Why do some traditions change?
6. Consider linking all the chains together to create a decoration that can be displayed.

Activity for teens & young adults

Standing Debate on Tradition vs. Innovation

An overlooked 'quirk' in Jewish history is that the Beta Israel Jewish community in Ethiopia formed before the story of Hanukah even took place (let alone became ritualized), which means for 2,000 years these Jews never practiced any of Hanukah's rituals. Leah Rosenthal claims that, "Authority and the divine nature of tradition flow from the meaning that is created when older generations transmit their stories and wisdom to the younger ones. Commitment to tradition stems from the depth of identity that is experienced by the individual... [it is] not an obligation imposed upon the individual by the communal institutions that govern." In light of this, have participants discuss the unique predicament that the Beta Israel community face: keep the practices of their forefathers (and not celebrate Hanukah) or seek and adopt new traditions from the wider community around them. This debate can be a mirror for tensions we might feel today, such as when and how should we adopt the practices of the community around us, and when should we stay true to our own family's traditions?

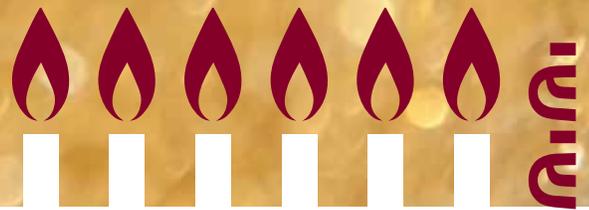
Materials Needed:

- Short article on [Beta Israel Jews](#) who never had the tradition of celebrating Hanukah

Here's How You Do It:

1. Introduce the ideas about the authoritative power of traditions being sought out by children from their forefathers and elders from Leah Rosenthal's d'var torah.
2. Read the short article (or the first half) about the Beta Israel community and their unique relationship to the holiday of Hanukah.
3. Designate a spot for a large imaginary 1-10 scale (one side of the room is 1 and the other side is 10) and ask participants to stand on the spot on the scale which corresponds to how strongly they agree or disagree with the following statement (1 = strongly disagree; standing in the middle at 5 = not sure/could see both sides of the argument; 10 = strongly agree): **The Beta Israel Jews should celebrate Hanukah today with all its rituals and customs.** Have participants explain why they chose the spot on the scale that they chose.
4. Shift gears to a Hanukah tradition North American Jews practice today - giving presents; a tradition which developed because of the custom of non-Jews to give Christmas presents. Keeping the imaginary scale 'in place' and keeping in mind all the things discussed previously about tradition, give participants another prompt and ask them to stand in the spot on the scale that reflects their opinion (1 = strongly disagree; standing in the middle at 5 = not sure/could see both sides of the argument; 10 = strongly agree): **Giving Hanukah presents is a tradition of my forefathers and is therefore a tradition worth keeping.** Have participants explain why they chose the spot on the scale that they chose.

BETWEEN CIVIL WAR & NONVIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS



Daniel Roth



Rabbi Dr. Daniel Roth was the former Director of the Pardes Center for Judaism and Conflict Resolution. He has been teaching advanced rabbinics, Bible, conflict resolution and other subjects at Pardes for over 15 years

The story of Hanukah and the Maccabees is well known. The Greeks banned circumcision, observance of the Sabbath and festivals and the study of Torah (Maccabees I, 1:41-64). Jews were forced to choose between “flight or fight.” Mattathias and his sons, who became known as the Maccabees, chose to form a rebel army and fight for their lives, beliefs and unique identity (Maccabees I, 2). Hanukah – The 25th of Kislev – marked the day the Maccabees purified the Temple and in essence “won” their war.

However, what if instead of engaging in what was to become an extremely bloody and prolonged civil war (roughly 25 years with hundreds of thousands if not millions dead), they chose to accomplish their goals – canceling the discriminatory decrees – through nonviolent demonstrations? Sounds crazy? The following story, also preserved in Talmudic sources, may change your mind:

Talmud Bavli, Rosh Hashana 19a

“On the 28th [of Adar] came glad tidings to the Jews that they should not abandon the practice of the Law.”

For the Roman Government had issued a decree that they should not study the Torah and that they should not circumcise their sons and that they should profane the Sabbath. What did Judah b. Shammu’a and his colleagues do?

They went and consulted a certain Roman noblewoman whom all the Roman notables used to visit. She said to them: “Come and demonstrate at nighttime.” [Rashi: “Demonstrate:” Scream out in the marketplaces and in the streets in order that the [Roman] ministers should hear and have compassion upon you].

They went and demonstrated at night, saying, “In heaven’s name, are we not your brothers, are we not the sons of one father? Why are we different from every nation and tongue that you issue such decrees upon us?” The decrees were thereupon canceled.

And that day was declared a festive day.”

בעשרים ותמיניא ביה אתת בשורתא טבתא ליהודאי דלא יעידון מאורייתא שגזרה המלכות גזרה שלא יעסקו בתורה ושלא ימולו את בנייהם ושיחללו שבתות מה עשה יהודה בן שמוע וחביריו הלכו ונטלו עצה ממטרוניתא אחת שכל גדולי רומי מצויין אצלה אמרה להם בואו והפגינו בלילה הלכו והפגינו בלילה אמרו אי שמים לא אחיכם אנחנו ולא בני אב אחד אנחנו ולא בני אם אחת אנחנו מה נשתנינו מכל אומה ולשון שאתם גוזרין עלינו גזירות קשות וביטלום ואותו היום עשאוהו יום טוב.

Historians disagree over the historicity of this legend. But, putting that aside, the legend presents an important case-study of transforming a potentially violent situation, similar to that of the Maccabees, into a nonviolent one, through the medium of nonviolent demonstration.

This raises the intriguing historical question of whether the Maccabees could have achieved their goals through nonviolent demonstrations instead of a bloody war. Were there any “third siders,” such as the Roman noblewoman who was well connected and trusted by both Jewish and Roman factions who could assist in de-escalating the situation?

Most importantly, this legend and the story of the Maccabees raise some critical questions for us today. How do we respond when a harsh and discriminatory decree by a government is made against our identity group or others with whom we identify? Who are the trusted “third-siders” to whom we can turn to help in deescalating the situation? When and how can nonviolent demonstrations succeed in canceling such decrees? How do we respond when they cannot?

I pray that through discussing and even arguing over these difficult questions we should merit to light the diverse candles that symbolize nonviolent “disagreements for the sake of Heaven” this Hanukah, and not, God forbid, the violent torches of war and violence.

BETWEEN CIVIL WAR & NONVIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS: INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES

Illuminating the Idea

In the time of the Second Temple, the Greeks forbade the Jews from performing circumcisions, observing Shabbat and holidays, and studying Torah. In order to defend their Jewish identity and practice, the Maccabees formed a rebel army and led the Jews in a long and bloody battle against the Greeks. As Daniel wrote: "Hanukah - the 25th of Kislev - marked the day the Maccabees purified the Temple and in essence 'won' their war."

The Talmud (Rosh Hashana 19a) reports that the Roman government made similar decrees against the Jews later in Jewish history. The Jewish leaders visited a well-respected Roman noblewoman and asked her advice about what they should do. She advised that the Jews take to the streets to protest the unfair treatment of the Roman government. Following her suggestion, the Jews publicly demonstrated at night, saying that it was unfair to single out their nation with discriminatory decrees. As a result of the demonstration, the Romans canceled the unjust decrees and the Jews declared it a festive day.

We have here two examples in history in which Jews were being discriminated against. However, they responded to the discrimination very differently in each situation. The contrast in historical responses raises challenging and relevant questions, such as when and how can nonviolent demonstrations succeed in overturning government injustice? How do we respond when they cannot?

Activity for younger kids

I Have a Dream

In this reflective arts and crafts activity, kids design posters that represent their dreams for a better world.

Materials Needed:

- large paper or poster board for each kid
- markers/crayons/colored pencils
- tape

Here's How You Do It:

1. Explain to kids that there used to be unjust laws in America that discriminated against black people. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. used **nonviolent** methods to fight against those unfair laws.
 - On August 28, 1963, Dr. King delivered a speech in Washington, DC, in front of thousands of people. This became known as his "I Have a Dream" speech. He spoke about his dream that the world would one day be a better and more fair place in which people would not be judged by the color of their skin but by whether or not they were good and kind human beings.
 - Optional: Show video of ["I Have a Dream" speech by MLK](#) or kids [reciting the "I Have a Dream" speech](#).
 - Discuss: Hanukah is a time when we imagine a world filled with more light and goodness. What does a better world look like in YOUR dreams?
2. Give each kid a large piece of poster board.
3. They should write the words "I Have a Dream..." at the top of their paper.

4. Kids should draw (or write) at least three ways in which they imagine the world a better or more just place than it is now.
5. Hang up the posters in the room where you light the Hanukah candles. You may want to reference the posters before or after lighting the candles on the other nights of Hanukah.

Activity for teens & young adults

Another Kind of Resistance

This activity is part of a lesson plan from [Facing History and Ourselves](#). The goal is for participants to consider different responses to injustice and the merits of nonviolent resistance. It is meant to generate critical thinking and discussion. [Note: You do not need to include all of these steps; mix and match based on your 'audience.']

Materials Needed:

- index cards
- pens

Here's How You Do It:

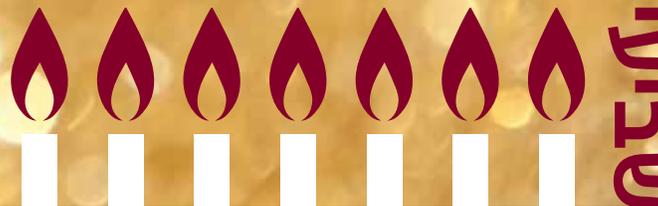
1. Ask participants to identify an example of injustice - something that is unfair, wrong, or violent. This could be something that they have experienced or it might be something they heard about on the news or studied in history.
2. Ask participants to write down on index cards how people have responded to this injustice or could respond to it. What was done or is being done to confront the unjust situation?
3. Finally, ask them to consider what the ultimate goal of these responses may have been - in other words, what might people have been trying to achieve through these actions? (Encourage the participants to think broadly and creatively about injustices, responses and goals. Examples of injustices can range from the personal, such as being teased at school, to the international. Responses to injustice can range from violent acts, such as war or physical fighting, to acts of nonviolence such as sit-ins, marches or dialogue. Goals can range from trying to change behavior to changing laws.
4. Next, ask a transition question: What if individuals and groups only responded to injustice through **nonviolent means**? What might that look like? What goals might that achieve?
5. Show participants the following two quotes from civil rights leaders about the [strategy of nonviolence](#):

"Nonviolence is a powerful and just weapon, which cuts without wounding and ennobles the man who wields it. It is a sword that heals." (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

"Why use nonviolence? The most practical reason is that we're trying to create a more just society. You cannot do it if you exaggerate animosities. Martin King used to say, 'If you use the law "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," then you end up with everybody blind and toothless,' which is right. So from a practical point of view, you don't want to blow up Nashville downtown, you simply want to open it up so that everybody has a chance to participate in it as people, fully, without any kind of reservations caused by creed, color, class, sex, anything else." (Reverend James Lawson, Southern Christian Leadership Conference)

6. Discuss: Based on these quotes, why did these civil rights leaders advocate for nonviolent resistance to racial discrimination?
7. Is violent resistance ever a justifiable or appropriate strategy for fighting discrimination?

SHINING A LIGHT ON OUR HABITS



Yaffa Epstein



Rabba Yaffa Epstein formerly served as the Director of Education, North America for the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies. She has taught Talmud, Jewish law and Liturgy at Pardes for over a decade.

The Talmud in the midst of its conversation regarding lighting Hanukah and Shabbat lights quotes a puzzling statement:

Talmud Bavli, Shababt 23a

Rav Hunah said: One who regularly lights a candle will merit to have children who are Torah scholars.

One who is meticulous in performing the mitzvah of mezuzah merits a beautiful house on which to affix his mezuzah.

One who is meticulous in performing the mitzvah of ritual fringes merits a beautiful garment.

One who is meticulous in performing the mitzvah of kiddush of the day merits to fill jugs of wine.

אמר רב הונא:

הרגיל בנר הויין ליה בנים תלמידי חכמים
הזהיר במזוזה זוכה לדירה נאה
הזהיר בציצית זוכה לטלית נאה
הזהיר בקידוש היום וממלא גרבי יין.

The lighting of which particular “candle” is rewarded by children who are Torah scholars? Rashi comments that the candle referred to here is that of Shabbat and Hanukah. Other manuscripts specify Hanukah lights alone. But still the question remains, what is the link between lighting candles and studious children?

While there are several answers offered in the commentaries, the answer offered by Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Rotenberg-Alter, the First Rebbe of the Hasidic Dynasty of Ger, is remarkable. He asks us to pay close attention to the language of Rav Hunah in the Gemara. While with the other mitzvot, the word used to describe the mitzvah-action in question is *Hazahir* – one who is meticulous – the phrase used for lighting Hanukah lights is *Haragil* – one who regularly lights. In other words,

this is a regular, constant behavior for a person; it is a habit. To translate it into terms that work in 2017, it is like a person who regularly turns on a light when they walk into a room.

However, the Alter Rebbe continues, and explains there is a hidden explanation in Rav Hunah’s words. He says that it is the job of the lighter *ההרגל אל ההארה והתחדשות* – to bring light and renewal to the habitual. There is something specific in lighting the Hanukah lights that has the potential to bring newness and freshness to an act that can at times feel so constant, and habitual.

The Sfat Emet, Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter, the grandson of the Alter Rebbe, continues his grandfather’s line of thinking and explains that this is why one may light Hanukah lights *עד שתכלה רגל מן השוק* – until people have left the market place. However, he reads this as *עד שתכלה הרגל* – until regularity has stopped. Again, the job of Hanukah is to shake us up from our regular routines and to make us think about our behavior.

But what is it about Hanukah that actually contains this potential and how does this connect to children? I’d like to suggest that if we look carefully, we can understand that the holiday of Hanukah is inherently connected to the word *chinuch* – education. They both come from the same root – ח.נ.כ. In the Torah, this word – חנוכה, חנוך – is used to connote a beginning or a dedication. The dedication of the Temple, the education of children, these things are about new beginnings and fresh starts. They are also about commitment and steadfastness to one’s practice.

So in essence, what Hanukah is asking of us is to make a serious commitment. To form real habits that are steeped in Jewish tradition, but not to allow these habits to become dull, routine or meaningless. The real work of Hanukah is to continue to infuse our commitments with light and with new potential. And so, this Hanukah, as we kindle our lights, may we bring our full selves, and commit to bring more light and more consciousness to bear on our behavior.

Illuminating the Idea

Hanukah is a time for education **and** dedication. As Yaffa points out, the Hebrew root of Hanukah/חנוכה is .נ.כ.ח, which is used both for the words education and dedication. A common dictionary definition for 'education' is something like: *The process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university.* **But the Jewish idea is something very different.**

Yes, Jews should be knowledgeable, but they should also be dedicating their lives to a higher purpose. We should be using the knowledge we acquire to make the world a better place. We should be teaching knowledge so that our students will become better people because of it. Education is a **means**, and not an **end**.

Sometimes we forget what education, and life, are all about. Just like at the time of Hanukah, when the victorious Jews rededicated the Temple, so too Hanukah today reminds us to **rededicate** ourselves to learning and growing with a higher goal in mind.

Activity for younger kids

Time to Take Aim

This fun activity gets young people thinking about their relationship to light and its symbolism.

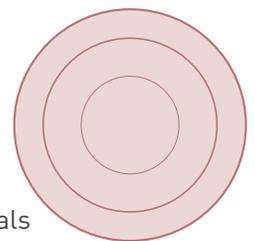
Materials Needed:

- As big a paper as you can find for the target, plus two more smaller sheets of paper (one target per kid)
- Paper for making paper airplanes (one airplane per kid)

Here's How You Do It:

The purpose of this activity is to get kids thinking about what their goals in life are. Using the language of 'What would you like your life to be like when you are older?' could be helpful.

1. Make a target board for each kid with three circles or more, one inside the other.
2. On the concentric circles of their target board, have kids draw a picture or fill out their goals about what they would like their life to be like in the future. (As a parent/educator it may be interesting for you to note if anything Jewish appears there!)
3. Then, have kids make their favorite paper airplanes.
4. Next, they should throw their paper airplanes at their targets and see how close they get. It can be a competition with a few rounds, in which kids get points for hitting their targets.
5. Debrief. You can ask:
 - Did you hit your paper targets? Why not?
 - What would help you reach your own personal goals?
 - What things might get in the way?
 - Do you think your goals might change as you get older?
 - Does being Jewish affect the goals that you have?



Game of Life Jenga

Goals focus on what our life is about and the decisions we make. What are we dedicating our lives to? Just like during the time of Hanukkah, when the Maccabees and their followers decided to dedicate their lives to serving God, they then knew they had to fight the Syrian-Greek oppressors. This game explores how we direct and dedicate our own lives and what challenges may stand in the way.

Materials Needed:

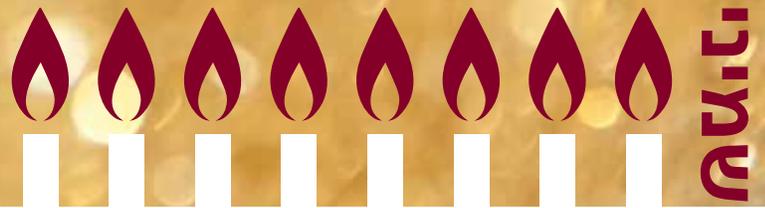
- Jenga block building type game
- fine markers, including at least one red marker

Here's How You Do It:

1. Split the blocks into piles according to the number of players, plus one (i.e., if there are three players, split the blocks into four piles).
2. Everyone takes a pile (one pile is left out for now).
3. Together everyone writes down, on one side of each of their blocks, things that they think are important to have in their life 20 years from now (for example: health, money, happiness, kids, parents, independence, knowledge of..., etc. They can also include Jewish practices they would like to have in their home (for example: Shabbat, Hanukah, etc.). It is okay if there are duplicates. Use any colored marker except for red.
4. The spare pile will become 'distraction blocks.' Discuss, and in red marker, write down on the sides of these blocks those things that may distract a person from achieving the things they want.
5. Now play Jenga! When a person takes a brick they have to say how they relate to that particular goal in life, and say how important it is to them on a scale of 1-10, with a quick explanation.
6. Distraction Block Rules - choose one:
 - No one is allowed to touch the 'distraction blocks' - they must remain in place.
 - Once a player touches a 'distraction block' they have to close their eyes while placing it on top (they can use their hands to feel).
7. Debrief questions:
 - Aside from playing this game - how often do you think about your big-picture goals?
 - How many active decisions do you make towards reaching those goals? (Or are you on a treadmill just heading there?)
 - Where did your goals come from? Parents, friend, society, media, religious influences?
 - Which distractions are the hardest to overcome, and what could be some tactics for overcoming them?
 - Other than Hanukah, as described by Yaffa, what might be other times we can step back and evaluate how dedicated we are to our life's mission?



FIRE: BURNING OR ILLUMINATING?



Alex Israel



Rabbi Alex Israel teaches Bible and is the Director of the Pardes Community Education Program and Summer Program. He recently published his book I Kings – Torn in Two.

In Mishnaic times, there were two traditions of how to light the Hanukah candles:

Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 21b

Beit Shammai say: On the first day one kindles eight lights and, from there on, gradually decreases the number of lights until, on the last day of Hanukah, one light is kindled. And Beit Hillel say: On the first day one kindles one light, and from there on, gradually increases the number of lights until, on the last day, eight lights are kindled.

ת"ר מצות חנוכה ... ב"ש אומרים יום ראשון מדליק שמנה מכאן ואילך פוחת והולך וב"ה אומרים יום ראשון מדליק אחת מכאן ואילך מוסיף והולך.

Beit Shammai's opinion is to light eight candles on the first night and descend to a single candle. Beit Hillel, the tradition we follow, starts with a single candle and increases daily to eight on the final day.

What is the basis of this dispute? Rav S.Y Zevin (20th Cent) explains it in the following manner: Do we perceive fire as something that illuminates or as something that burns and consumes?

Fire gives light. Hanukah comes when the days are short and dark, and a single candle dispels much darkness. Torah too is compared to light (Prov 6:23), as is the human soul: "the light of God is the soul of Man." (Prov 20:27) The ideals we hold dear as humans and Jews have the power to illuminate, inspire and give meaning to our personal lives and

our national ethos, to brighten and show the way to creating a better world.

But fire also has the capacity to burn and destroy. From this angle, fire represents the social mandate to fight against and expunge forces of evil, corruption, violence and harmfulness. In a personal sense, sometimes we have areas of our personal lives that are so toxic they too need to be eradicated.

And here, Beit Shammai and Hillel disagree. Beit Hillel argue that when one generates more light, when we increase the goodness in the world, hate and ugliness are forced into retreat. Each day, as another candle is added, a momentum of increasing light is created that dispels the darkness. But Beit Shammai disagree. We cannot just rely on the positive to fight the negative. One cannot raise oneself, one cannot move forward in society, until one expunges the harmful, the pain and the violence that surround and suppress goodness. Fire burns the evil around us so that by the end of Hanukah, wickedness is consumed. As evil dies down, so do the flames that consume it, and as such, the eight candles are reduced to a single flame. Then, true goodness can emerge.

Hanukah marks the battle between Judaism and Hellenism, a struggle that threatened the very survival of Judaism. When we are confronted by threats to our vision of truth, do we fight and battle the forces that endanger our future, or do we build, expand and bolster the values we hold dear so that their positive energy overwhelms the negative forces that confront us.

Light or burn? Interesting!

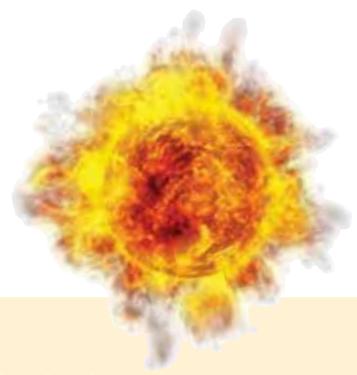
We follow Beit Hillel. Do you agree?

**HANUKAH, PESACH & PURIM
WALK INTO A BAR...**
PARDES CENTER FOR JEWISH EDUCATORS



FIRE: BURNING OR ILLUMINATING?

INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES



illuminating the Idea

Fire has two properties. It can either brighten people's lives by lighting up, warming, and illuminating; or it can destroy by burning or blinding. When we look at a flame, do we think about it positively or do we think about it negatively?

Most people enjoy looking at the Hanukiah. In fact, it is a mitzvah to look at the Hanukah candles and recall the miracles that happened at this time so many years ago. One miracle we think about focuses on the military battle of a small, ill-equipped group of Jews defeating the more powerful Greek army. As war is generally considered destructive, this could align with Beit Shammai's fire-as-destructive view. The other miracle is that one day's worth of oil for lighting up the Menorah in the Temple lasted for eight days. This fits with Beit Hillel's view of fire-as-positive.

So when we look at the Hanukah lights, do we focus on the destruction of our enemies, or on the illumination of the Temple for eight days?

Activity for younger kids

A Little Bit of Light

This fun activity gets young people thinking about their relationship to light and its symbolism.

Materials Needed:

- Flashlights - one for each kid
- Eight bags of Hanukah gelt (chocolate coins)

Here's How You Do It:

1. Hide the eight bags of chocolate coins.
2. After lighting the Hanukiah, you can read the mishnah about Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai in Alex's Dvar Torah.
3. Next, turn on the flashlights and place them by the Hanukiah. They are meant to symbolically represent the lights of Hanukah.
4. Have each kid grab one of the flashlights and search for the Hanukah gelt.
5. Optional: Once a kid finds a bag of gelt, they should wait until everyone else has found one (so one person does not get all the bags).
6. Debrief. You can ask:
 - If you did not have any light, how hard would it have been to find the hidden coins?
 - Would more flashlights/light have helped you more? Why?
 - What do you think of when you see the Hanukah lights?
 - What helps 'light' up your day?

Counting Your Fortune

In the argument between Beit Hillel (who proposed increasing candles) and Beit Shammai (who proposed decreasing candles), we follow the opinion of Beit Hillel by lighting one candle on the first night of Hanukkah and then increasing by one each successive night. According to Alex's Dvar Torah, this view represents the **positive** quality of light. This means that given the choice between seeing the negative elements and the positive elements, we choose the positive.

Materials Needed:

- Same as above

Here's How You Do It:

1. Play the flashlight game as above, but when a person finds their bag they should sit down. They should not open their bag of coins yet.
2. Wait until everyone finds their bag of coins.
3. Explain the Dvar Torah in your own words (you can use the summaries on this page, or create a summary of your own), and say that we are going to do an exercise to increase positivity and gratitude in our lives.
4. Go around the circle with each person taking out one coin from their bag, and saying one thing they are thankful for. They then put the coin aside.
5. Keep going around the circle until all the coins are out of the bags.
6. Optional: If this is a family or group that knows each other well, each person can give a coin to another person while sharing a positive quality that that person has.
7. Discuss:
 - Was this activity easy or hard for you? Why?
 - What do you think is the bigger miracle - the defeat of the Greek army, or the oil lasting eight days?
 - Why do you think we follow Beit Hillel?





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