

MONTHLY HAKHEL GATHERING RESOURCES PACKAGE

Everything you need to host
your own hakhel gathering



GET TOGETHER. GET INSPIRED. MAKE IT REAL!



Chabad.ORG

Month of Kislev • December, 2015

INTRODUCTION

You probably heard that this is the *year of Hakhel*, the year when in Temple times, the Jews would all gather to hear the king read from the Torah. Though the Temple isn't standing now, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, of righteous memory, urged everyone to tap into the spiritual power of this year and join in Torah study through unity.

One of the ways to do this is by hosting monthly "Hakhel" gatherings, informal get togethers with friends or

family – at home or in the work place. By getting together and demonstrating the unity of the Jewish people you are actualizing the power of this "year of Hakhel."

To make it easier, we'll be sharing with you a monthly Hakhel package complete with everything you need to create a Hakhel experience for your friends or family, including a timely Torah thought and a Jewish story to share, Jewish themed activities and more.

A Hakhel gathering need not be an extravagant affair. It can be a simple gathering of two or more Jews who unite to inspire one another.

IN THIS MONTH'S PACKAGE

This month's package focuses on the holiday of Chanukah – a natural time for gatherings and parties, so this would be a great time to begin your Hakhel journey.

Here's a glimpse at what you can expect in this month's package:

- » A one-page learning sheet suitable for all ages. You can have one person read it, make copies for everyone, take turns: the options are numerous. Read the guide while the candles are burning and use the topics as a great springboard for further discussion.
- » Two **great Chanukah games**. Both games are family-friendly and come with easy-to-follow

directions. The first, in particular, is an entertaining blast for adults as well.

- » A **heartwarming Chanukah story** is also featured that you can share at your gathering.
- » Round out your evening with a **fascinating video clip** of a talk the Lubavitcher Rebbe, of righteous memory gave about Chanukah parties. Watch it together at: <http://www.chabad.org/3159993>

Of course, these are all suggestions. Make your Hakhel gathering uniquely yours by including any of the above or other creative variations of Torah study through Unity.

We look forward to sharing a new package with you next month!

Chabad.org and Merkos 302



READY TO HOST YOUR OWN HAKHEL GATHERINGS?

Sign up to host your own monthly Hakhel gatherings and get these packages and additional support material sent to you.

Sign up at: www.chabad.org/hakhel

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Delve into the story and lessons of Chanukah and let the lessons twirl into a rousing discussion.

The year is 3622 (138 BCE) and the Greeks have conquered the holy land of Israel. Not content to merely rule the Jewish populace, they declare war on their souls as well. Shabbat, circumcision, and Torah study are all forbidden. In their place, the Greeks try to push idol worship and athletics.

Some people take the bait, trading in their Jewish names for Greek ones and their Jewish traditions for foreign practices. But not everyone. Not Mattisyahu, his five sons and their small band of untrained soldiers. The Maccabees, as they are called, wage guerrilla attacks on Greek bases.

G-d was by their side, and after many bitter battles, the Greeks retreated and the Jewish victors returned to their Temple. The mighty Maccabees cleaned it and prepared to light the menorah. They found only one tiny, untouched jug of pure oil. The menorah was lit and miraculously, the tiny cruse lasted for eight days, enough time for messengers to travel to the olive groves to attain fresh oil.

Each year on Chanukah, we light the menorah for eight nights to publicize the great miracle of the oil. It lit up the Temple so many years ago and is an apt metaphor for the Jewish nation as well. Oil rises to the top when combined

with other substances. The Greeks, in their attempt to assimilate their Jewish subjects, tried to defile the oil, to make it no different than any other matter. It was fine to study Torah, they said, just mix it up with some science and philosophy. And don't take any of it too seriously, don't let it affect your actions or ethics.

The loyal Jews would have none of that. Torah, they declared, was studied because it is Hashem's Torah, and His will, not for personal stimulation or satisfaction.

In the end, the Jews rose to the top, victorious in battle as well as in creed.

We are commanded to add extra oil, to light an additional wick, each night of Chanukah. The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that this teaches us a lesson for the whole year. The good deeds we performed today are commendable, but additional good must be done tomorrow. It is not enough to rest on our laurels, however impressive they may be. Add an extra mitzvah, learn some more Torah, make each new day worthwhile. And in the Chanukah spirit, light up a fellow by doing him a good turn which will then light up the whole world.

► CHILDREN:

Played a solid game of dreidel this Chanukah? The four-sided top goes back a long way. Children in the time of the Maccabees used to study Torah deep in the forests and in caves. When Greek soldiers approached, they hid their forbidden scrolls and pulled out their dreidels for a quick game. Maybe try it in reverse this year: when you've finished playing, put your top to the side and pull out a Jewish text to study!



► ADULTS:

Just like we light the menorah in a visible spot on Chanukah, at a window or outside the home, so too must we all be lamplighters, lighting up the world's darkness. A chassid, the Rebbe says, is a lamplighter. His burning fire, his soul's desire to serve G-d, must be used to light up his friend's soul as well, ultimately bringing goodness and illumination to the entire world.





GET TOGETHER. GET INSPIRED. MAKE IT REAL!

Who doesn't like a good story? Read aloud to your family and friends, or take turns!

THE MIRACLE OF THE LONG CANDLES

Reb Pesachya from Kherson was a chassid of the Rebbe Rashab, the fifth rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch. For Sukkot, Reb Pesachya made the long journey to Rostov, to be with his Rebbe, Rabbi Shalom DovBer. The holiday was coming to a close and the Simchat Torah dancing was in full swing. During a lull in the vibrant twirling, the chassid banged on the table and called for his friends' attention.

"The Rebbe always says that he does not perform miracles—but I have a story to tell," declared the feisty man, already a few l'chaims into the evening.

"One summer, I merited to have a private audience with the Rebbe. It was hot, and winter's chill was far from my mind, but the Rebbe gave me some cryptic advice. 'You work in the forest, and sometimes you even need to spend a few days in a row deep in the forest. When Chanukah arrives, don't forget to bring candles with you. And make sure that they are big candles.'

"The advice seemed strange at the time, but as is its wont, Chanukah approached faster than I anticipated. That year, I was forced to spend the holiday in the forest, supervising the lumbermen. Recalling our Rebbe's words, I brought some large candles along.

"Late one night, deep in the woods, thieves came upon me. They took all my money and said they were going to kill me. I pleaded with them to spare my life, but they said they could not do so. 'You will certainly go to the police, the authorities,' they insisted. 'We will not be caught. We must kill you.'

"I begged and begged, but to no avail. At last, I made one final request. It is Chanukah, I said, and our tradition requires us to light candles each night. Out of their 'great compassion,' they permitted me to kindle my flames.

"As I was lighting the candles, a local landowner passed nearby and saw the lights. He came upon us swiftly and with the revolver he kept always at his side, he chased the robbers away and rescued me."

At the end of his story, Reb Pesachya turned to his fellow chassidim and demanded, "Is that not a miracle?!"

Said his Rebbe, the Rebbe Rashab: "Zogt a niggun!" "Someone start a song!"



The dreidel's met its match! Give these awesome family-friendly Chanukah games a whirl. Winner takes all!

2

GAME

IT'S CHANUKAH, RIGHT?

AGES



3-6, 7-12

PREP TIME



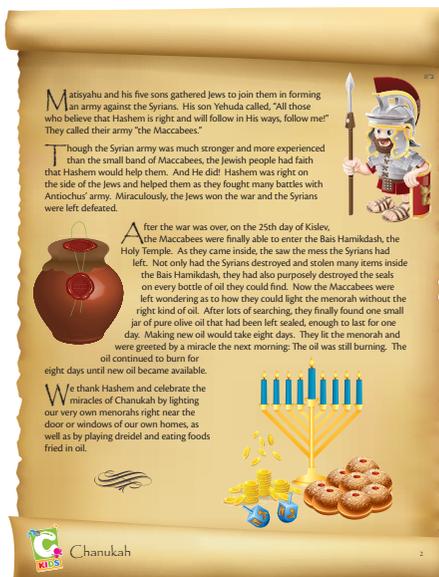
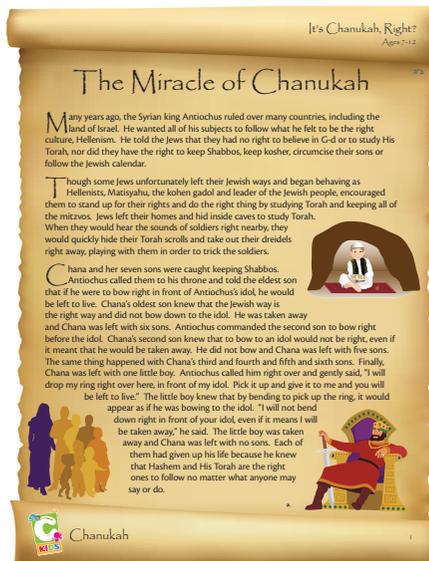
15 min

ACTIVITY TIME



15 min

In this Chanukah gift-swap game, hand out miniature wrapped gifts or one big one to the group. As the group leader reads the story aloud, players pass their gifts to the left or right depending on the story. When the story is over, whatever gift the child is holding is the prize that he takes home.



What you will need

- ♦ Small gifts for each child or a big gift for the group (chocolate coin, dreidel, bouncy ball, etc.)
- ♦ Envelopes or bags to wrap gifts (if played on Shabbos, don't use tape)
- ♦ Chanukah Right-Left story, junior  and regular  versions (provided)

Preparation

- ▶ Prepare and wrap the gifts. (Suggestion: orientaltrading.com has great inexpensive Chanukah items.)
- ▶ Set aside the provided Chanukah Right-Left stories.

How to Play

1. Have the players form a circle, standing or sitting.
2. Hand each player a gift (or if playing with one gift, hand to one player to start).
3. Read aloud the story slowly and clearly. The players pass the present(s) along, to the right or left depending on the wording in the story. For example if in the story it says "Yehudis left right away," then the players pass the present(s) to the left and then to the right.
4. The game ends when the story is finished. The players get to keep whichever gifts they are holding in their hands when the story ends. (Or, if playing with one gift, the player holding the gift gets to open it and then share the contents with all of the other players.)



1

GAME

MENORAH HOP

AGES



3-6

PREP TIME



15 min

ACTIVITY TIME



15 min

In this game, the children will enjoy spinning a dreidel, then hopping, skipping, or jumping over the Chanukah candles to light the menorah.



What you will need

- ▶ Nine large paper Chanukah candles (provided)
- ▶ One dreidel
- ▶ Tape (optional)

Preparation

- ▶ Set aside the materials you will need.
- ▶ Tape the candles to the floor before Shabbos (optional).

Setup

- ▶ On each paper candle, fold the flap (indicated "fold here") so that you will not see the image of the flame.

- ▶ Lay the nine paper candles down on the floor next to each other about five inches apart, and with the tallest candle in the middle, forming a Chanukah menorah on the floor.

? How to Play

1. Have the players stand in a line.
2. The first player in line gets to spin the dreidel.

ROUND 1 IF A PLAYER LANDS ON A:

- ★ **Nun:** The player jumps across the menorah, only jumping on every other candle.
- ★ **Gimmel:** The player hops across the menorah, hopping onto each candle.
- ★ **Hei:** The player skips across the menorah, making sure to walk only in between the candles. The player cannot touch any of the candles.
- ★ **Shin:** The player jumps across the menorah while skipping over the first and last candle, but jumping onto the other six candles.
- ★ **Double Shin:** If a player lands on shin two turns in a row, the player is blindfolded and then has to jump across the candles, jumping onto each of the eight candles. The other players direct the blindfolded player verbally as he jumps across the candles.

3. If a player crosses the menorah in the correct way, the player gets to choose a candle to "light" on the menorah by picking up the paper flap from one of the paper candles on the floor.
4. When all of the candles are lit, the round is over.
5. Play the game again using the Round Two game rules.

ROUND 2 IF A PLAYER LANDS ON A:

- ★ **Shin:** The player spins across the menorah.
- ★ **Gimmel:** The player tiptoes across the menorah.
- ★ **Hei:** The player leapfrogs across the menorah.
- ★ **Shin:** The player runs or dances across the menorah.



5

FOOD ART

DELICIOUS DREIDELS

AGES



3-6, 7-12

PREP TIME



15 min

ACTIVITY TIME



15 min

FOR YOUR WEEKDAY CHANUKAH PARTY

Make delicious dreidels using marshmallows, chocolate chips, and pretzels for a fun Chanukah treat that can really spin!



What you will need

- ◆ Extra thin pretzel sticks (like B&B brand)
- ◆ Eight ounces melted semisweet chocolate chips
- ◆ Two ounces melted white chocolate
- ◆ Pan
- ◆ Parchment paper
- ◆ Resealable bag
- ◆ Bowl
- ◆ Regular or mini-marshmallows

Preparation

- ▶ Buy and set aside the food items and other items you will need.
- ▶ Melt dark and white chocolate separately in a microwave or double boiler.
- ▶ Place the dark chocolate in a bowl.
- ▶ Fill a resealable plastic bag with melted white chocolate.
- ▶ Line a pan with parchment paper.

? How to Make

1. Dip the flat side of a chocolate chip in the melted chocolate and press onto a marshmallow. Transfer to a parchment-lined baking sheet. Repeat to make the rest of the dreidels.
2. Refrigerate the dreidels or let sit for 10 minutes.
3. Cut a small slit on the top of each marshmallow and insert one thin pretzel stick. Dip dreidels in semisweet chocolate and return to baking sheet. Refrigerate or let sit for about 15 minutes.
4. Cut a tiny opening in a corner of the plastic bag with melted white chocolate, and pipe Hebrew letters onto all four sides of each dreidel.
5. Refrigerate or let sit for at least five minutes before serving.