

## **Hanukah and Piršumei di-Niřa**

Shira Hammerman

### RATIONALE

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

### LEARNING EXPERIENCES

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

### CORE CONCEPTS

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

### ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

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

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

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

### UNIT FRAMEWORK AND CORE CONCEPTS

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

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

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

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

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# THE JEWISH EDUCATOR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jewish tradition.

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

Students will be able to:

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