

hanukkah

(there's only one way to spell christmas. we win.)



LIGHTING CANDLES

is often a heartwarming opportunity for reflection and inspiration. Combining candle lighting with these readings and stories will hopefully make your Hanukkah celebration even more meaningful. Some of them are specifically Jewish, but more are based on the universal values we all hold in our hearts. Try it this way: read about peace the first night and then add acceptance the second night and so on. By the eighth night, you will likely have memorized a lot of wisdom!

PEACE. The first Hanukkah candle of the year sparks a call for peace. Just as the world wasn't peaceful in the time of the Maccabees, it's still not peaceful today. **"WHEN THE POWER OF LOVE OVERCOMES THE LOVE OF POWER, THE WORLD WILL KNOW PEACE."** Let this candle be a spark for peace for me, my family and friends, and everyone on the earth. **JIMI HENDRIX**



ACCEPTANCE. The second Hanukkah candle sparks acceptance. Gaining acceptance of ourselves and others relieves aggravation and makes room for love. On this night, let's remember that **"Most people need acceptance a lot more than they need advice."** **BOB GOFF**



REPAIRING THE WORLD. The third Hanukkah candle sparks a desire to repair the world. There is so much to do, but what if each of us really considered it our responsibility? **"There once was a man who stood before God, his heart breaking from the pain and injustice in the world. 'Dear God,' he cried out, 'look at all the suffering and the anguish in your world! Why don't you send help?' God replied, 'I did. I sent you.'"** **RABBI DAVID WOLPE**



THE GOLDEN RULE. The fourth Hanukkah candle sparks treating people how we would want to be treated. **"Someone once asked the wise Rabbi Hillel to stand on one foot and quickly teach him the entire Torah! So, Rabbi Hillel stood on one foot and said, "That which is hateful to you, don't do to anyone else. All the rest is commentary."** Sometimes people call this the "Golden Rule." Whatever you want to call it, let's let the fourth candle remind us to treat others as we would want to be treated. **RABBI HILLEL**



COMPASSION. The fifth Hanukkah candle sparks compassion; compassion for ourselves, our friends, animals, even those we don't like that much. Being compassionate can change everything. **"You can either practice being right or practice being kind."** **ANNE LAMOTT**



DIVERSITY. The sixth candle sparks the importance of honoring how diverse our world is. **"No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin or his background or his religion [or sexual orientation]. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate they can learn to love, because love comes more naturally to the human heart."** **NELSON MANDELA**



FORGIVENESS. Forgiveness is not just for Yom Kippur. The seventh candle sparks forgiveness, which in some cases is wildly difficult to achieve but is always worth the effort. **"The first to apologize is the bravest. The first to forgive is the strongest. The first to forget is the happiest."** **UNKNOWN**



GRATITUDE. We are at the end of Hanukkah – the big finale! The final eighth candle sparks gratitude. **"Showing gratitude is one of the simplest yet most powerful things humans can do for each other."** **RANDY PAUSCH**



HERE'S THE SIMPLE RULEBOOK FOR LIGHTING THE CANDLES:

All three blessings are recited before lighting the candles.

The third blessing is only said on the first night.

New candles are added from right to left and lit from left to right, using the shamus, or "helper" candle. (This is the one that's usually set off from the others on the menorah, either in front, or off to one side.)

See Kick Ass Rule #3 and place your bets.

BLESSING OVER THE CANDLES

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam,
asher kidshanu bemitzvotav vitzivanu lehadlik neir shel Hanukkah.

Praised are you, God, spirit of the Universe,
who makes us holy through your commandments and commands us to light the Hanukkah candles.

BLESSING FOR HANUKKAH

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam,
she'asah nisim la'avoteinu, bayamim haheim baziman hazeh.

Praised are you, God, spirit of the Universe,
who performed miracles for our ancestors in their day at this season.

THE SHEHECHEYANU PRAYER OF CELEBRATION

Traditionally, the Shehecheyanu, which is the prayer thanking God for bringing us to this moment, is recited only the first night. But I love the sentiment of the prayer, so recite it each night if you wish.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam,
shecheyanu, v'kiyemanu, v'higianu lazman hazeh.

Praised are you, God, spirit of the Universe,
who keeps us alive, sustains us, and brings us to this moment.



THE OILY MIRACLE OF HANUKKAH

Director's Note: You can either read this skit free-form by going around the table and having everyone take turns, or you can assign parts, or you can just have two people take turns reading... whatever makes your Hanukkah kick-ass! If you're going big, then you'll want to include the following props: A jug (empty milk gallon works fine), a mop, a bucket and cleaning supplies and a plastic sword. Have fun!

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

MACCABEE 1 (17 lines)

WIFE 1 (15 lines)

MACCABEE 2 (12 lines)

WIFE 2 (11 lines)

SEYMOUR, a pig (9 lines)

NARRATOR (7 lines)

NARRATOR: The setting is the Second Temple in Jerusalem, 160 B.C.E. The Maccabees have just retaken Judea after defeating the mighty armies of Antiochus IV.

MACCABEE 1: Well, we did it! We Maccabees beat back the evil Antiochus! We stood up to his armies, and poof! They were gone.

WIFE 1: "Poof?" It took eight years.

MACCABEE 1: Don't start with me. I've been at war for years. I'm tired. I'm hungry. And my sciatica is acting up something fierce.

MACCABEE 2: I'm just glad we can finally get back into the Temple. Praying in a dirty tent all these years has been just awful. Let me just get this door open. **(Opens door to Temple.)** Oy vey!

WIFE 2: What is it? Did the Greeks put up those tacky Zeus statues of theirs? Or that homewrecker Aphrodite?

MACCABEE 2: No, this is much worse! Look!

EVERYONE: OH NO!

WIFE 1: This looks like that time we left the kids alone for the weekend!

MACCABEE 1: They ruined our temple! The benches are broken! The walls are cracked! And look, is that a red wine stain on the carpet? That's never going to come out.

WIFE 2: What a pig-sty!

SEYMOUR: I beg your pardon?

[All four humans scream.]

MACCABEE 1: It's a pig! A pig can't be here in our temple! Pigs aren't kosher!

WIFE 1: The pig is talking! And you're worried that he's not kosher?!

WIFE 2: It's a demon! Quick, slay him with your sword.

NARRATOR: The Maccabees wield their swords and lunge toward Seymour.

SEYMOUR: I'm pretty sure that's not necessary.

MACCABEE 2: Stop talking! You're not supposed to talk, pig!

SEYMOUR: Actually, the name's "Seymour." And so what if I'm not supposed to talk? I'm not supposed to be lying on the altar of a Jewish temple, either. But the Greeks brought me here to sacrifice me.

WIFE 1: So why are you still alive?

SEYMOUR: How do I know? I'm a pig. But I assume they ran out of time before fleeing Judea. In any case, here I am, alive and well.

MACCABEE 1: Well, I'm very glad they didn't kill you...

WIFE 1: You're making friends with a pig now?

MACCABEE 1: Quiet, I'm having a conversation here. So listen, pig... uh, Seymour... we just really need you to leave now.

SEYMOUR: That's fine, I'm going. Now that the Greeks have left, and you guys are back in charge, I don't have to fear for my life. I mean, it's not like any of you are going to eat me. Oh, and one more thing – you're almost out of oil. Ta ta. **(He exits.)**

MACCABEE 2: I sure hope that pig was wrong about the oil. Because we've got to keep the eternal light burning at all times to show our devotion to God. Every temple has one.

WIFE 2: Let me check the storage room. There's usually plenty of oil in there.

NARRATOR: Wife 2 goes into the storage room and comes out holding a small oil jug.

WIFE 2: The pig didn't lie. This is it... just enough to keep the fire lit for about a day.

WIFE 1: That will never be enough! The eternal light will go out! This is just terrible!!

MACCABEE 1: Can't we just make more oil?

WIFE 2: Excuse me? Do you know how long it takes to make oil? Eight days.

MACCABEE 1 & MACCABEE 2: (in unison) Eight days?!

WIFE 1: What, you think olives grow on trees?

MACCABEE 1: Don't they?

WIFE 1: Well, yeah, but first you have to pick the olives, and then you have to press the olives, and then the oil needs to sit before it will keep a flame burning. It's an eight-day process. What can I tell you?

MACCABEE 2: What are we going to do?

WIFE 2: Don't fret too much. You've been at war for eight years. I don't want you should worry yourself over olive oil.

WIFE 1: That's right. Let's go home and try to get some sleep. At least we have enough oil for the flames to burn through the night.

MACCABEE 1: OK. Tomorrow we can come back and clean up this mess.

NARRATOR: The next morning they all come back to the temple with mops and buckets.

MACCABEE 1: I'm not looking forward to this. I can't remember the last time I had to clean up such a mess.

WIFE 1: Yeah, that's because you've never cleaned a thing in your life. Look... the eternal light. It's still burning!

MACCABEE 2: That's weird. It's been over eight hours since we were here. Shouldn't the oil have burned out by now?

WIFE 2: Hey, don't look a gift horse in the mouth.

SEYMOUR: (Popping his head up from behind the altar.) I'm not a horse. I'm a pig.

MACCABEE 1: Seymour! What are you doing back here?

SEYMOUR: It was so cold out last night, and I could see through the windows that the flame was still burning, and it looked kind of cozy, so I figured I'd bunk down here.

MACCABEE 1: Well, you've got to go. And for good this time!

SEYMOUR: (Exiting) Yeah, I'm going, I'm going.

WIFE 1: That's some persistent pig. All right, I'll start on the floors. You all take the walls and the benches.

NARRATOR: Four days later, at sunset everyone is still cleaning the temple.

MACCABEE 2: I don't get it. It's been five nights, and that eternal light is still burning.

MACCABEE 1: You sure you didn't add any oil to it?

WIFE 1: And where would I get this oil from? I told you it takes eight days. So it'll be three more days before we have any new oil. That's basic math, genius.

WIFE 2: What if the eternal light is... haunted?

MACCABEE 2: We just had a talking pig in here, and you're scared of an eternal light?

WIFE 2: Well, how is it doing this? How is the oil not running out? Is it magic? Is it a spell? Is it a curse?

NARRATOR: BOOM! [claps hands loudly]

WIFE 1: Well, I think we just got our answer.

MACCABEE 1: This isn't magic. And it's not haunted. It's God. God is keeping the oil burning for us until we can make more of it. It's a miracle!

MACCABEE 2: So if he can keep the oil burning for eight nights, why can't he clean up this mess himself?

WIFE 2: Because we can do that ourselves. What we can't do is keep one night's worth of oil burning for eight nights.

MACCABEE 2: Well, it's only been five nights. Talk to me three days from now, and then I'll tell you whether it's a miracle or not.

NARRATOR: Three days later everyone comes back to the temple.

MACCABEE 2: You were right! It is a miracle!

WIFE 2: See? I told you.

MACCABEE 1: God kept the oil burning for eight nights, just like he led us to victory over the Greeks.

WIFE 1: And he let us clean up this temple and make it holy again.

MACCABEE 1: You know what we should do? Let's have a big celebration tonight... and then every year at this time.

WIFE 1: Yes! And I'll make potato latkes and jelly donuts with the extra oil! And we can eat chocolate coins and not worry if we gain a few pounds!

SEYMOUR: **(Peaks behind the temple door.)** Sounds great! Am I invited?

ALL IN UNISON: Everyone's invited! Happy Hanukkah!

[End]



JUDITH AND THE SALTY CHEESE

Director's Note: You can either read this skit free-form by going around the table and having everyone take turns, or you can assign parts, or you can just have two people take turns reading ... whatever makes your Hanukkah kick-ass! If you're going big, then you'll want to include the following props: Salty cheese, a bottle of wine (Manischewitz is best) a wine glass and a plastic sword. Have fun!

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

MACCABEE (19 lines)

BAKER (19 lines)

JUDITH (A beautiful Jewish widow) (10 lines)

JUDITH'S MAID (7 lines)

HOLOFERNES (An Assyrian general) (8 lines)

NARRATOR (8 lines)

NARRATOR: The setting is a battle during the Maccabee uprising against the Assyrian occupation of Judea, circa 168 B.C.E. Scene 1 takes place in the town of Bethulia, near Jerusalem.

MACCABEE: Hey there. I'm a Maccabee.

BAKER: Oh, wow. That's my favorite cookie. Kind of a specialty of mine!

MACCABEE: No – not a macaroon – a Maccabee. Anyway, I'm here to tell you a cool Hanukkah story you may never have heard before – the story of Judith and the Salty Cheese.

BAKER: I'd rather hear a story about macaroons.

MACCABEE: Shush. You'll like this story. So, around 168 B.C.E...

BAKER: Whoah – "B.C.E.?" What is that, some sort of boy band?

MACCABEE: No – it means "Before the Common Era." Just think of it as the year 3593, because that's what it was on the Jewish calendar. Anyway, during this time, the Jews were fighting to retake the land of Judea after it had been invaded by the Assyrians.

BAKER: The Syrians invaded our land?

MACCABEE: Not the Syrians – the *Assyrians*.

BAKER: What's an Assyrian?

MACCABEE: The Assyrians lived in what is now northern Iraq, which used to be ruled by the Greeks.

BAKER: This is getting very confusing. Were we fighting the Assyrians, the Iraqis, or the Greeks?

MACCABEE: That's not important right now! The point is, it was a seriously tough battle. There were only a few hundred Maccabees fighting thousands of Assyrians. And to make matters worse, the Assyrians had the meanest, toughest general we ever saw. His name was Holofernes.

BAKER: His name was what?

MACCABEE: Holofernes!

BAKER: That's like the worst name ever. It sounds like a potted plant. Maybe that's why he was so mean?

MACCABEE: Maybe. Anyway, his mission was to defeat the Jews. And it was working, too. Holofernes had cut off their food and water supply, and they were quickly running out of everything.

BAKER: Even macaroons?

MACCABEE: ENOUGH WITH THE MACAROONS! THERE ARE NO MACAROONS IN THIS STORY!

BAKER: Oh, OK. Sorry.

MACCABEE: All right, I'll add some macaroons at the end if you'll just let me get through this part.

BAKER: Deal.

MACCABEE: OK. Luckily for us, there was a beautiful Jewish woman named Judith. She was a widow who was tired of seeing her people oppressed by the Assyrians. So she hatched a plan.

JUDITH: I have hatched a plan! I shall go to see Holofernes, along with some salty cheese, a bottle of wine, and my trusty maid.

MAID: I'm the maid.

BAKER: Wait – why does Judith have a maid?

MACCABEE: Everyone had a maid in those days.

BAKER: But I mean like, if her people were oppressed and didn't even have enough food and water, how did she have wine and cheese? And for that matter, how could she afford a maid?

MAID: Excellent question.

MACCABEE: Quiet! Judith, I'm sorry. Please continue.

JUDITH: Thank you. I shall go with this salty cheese, some wine, and my trusty maid [**shoots BAKER a look**] who continues to work for me even though I can't pay her right now. I may wind up dead, but I've got to try to save my people. But first, I need to put on some foxy clothes. Maid, fetch me that red backless Valentino and the black Manolo sling backs.

MAID: These are her clothes. And yet she can't afford to pay me.

NARRATOR: Judith and Maid exit.

BAKER: Wait – why is Judith putting on foxy clothes to take on an evil general? How is that going to... oh, I see where this is going.

NARRATOR: Judith and the Maid enter the Assyrian camp.

JUDITH: Yooo hooo... Holofernes!

HOLOFERNES: Who dares enter my camp? I shall smite you and make you rue the day you... [**spotting Judith**]... whoah. Well, hello. You're mighty foxy. Who are you?

JUDITH: Hi, I'm Judith. And you're mighty handsome yourself... for an evil general who wants to starve my people to death, that is.

HOLOFERNES: Wow! Thanks! How about if you hang out here while I figure out how I'm going to kill every last one of those Jewish Maccabees?

JUDITH: That sounds perfect. But you know what? You look a little tired and hungry. Why don't you come to my tent and rest while my maid whips you up a little snack?

HOLOFERNES: Your maid? **[Spots Maid.]** Oh, hey. I didn't even notice you were here.

MAID: Story of my life.

HOLOFERNES: OK, well, I guess I could use a nosh.

NARRATOR: Holofernes and Judith go into her tent.

JUDITH: Maid, give the general some of my delicious cheese.

MAID: Yes, your majesty.

NARRATOR: Maid hands Holofernes a big piece of white cheese.

HOLOFERNES: Wow. This is delicious. Hey, this cheese is making me so thirsty.

JUDITH: Maid, give the general some of my delicious red wine.

HOLOFERNES: Oh, I really shouldn't drink before going into battle.

JUDITH: Oh, don't worry. I'm sure your army is going to be victorious. They've got you to lead them, and you're such a big, strong hunk of man.

MAID: I gotta admit, she's pretty good at this.

HOLOFERNES: I guess you're right. All right, pour me some of that wine. **[makes gulping sounds]** Wooh – that's really sweet. But it goes down well with the salty cheese.

NARRATOR: Maid pours him another glass of wine, which he guzzles down and as he eats another big chunk of cheese.

HOLOFERNES: Yeah, that's delicious. **[Hiccup.]** Oh, man. I'm getting really sleepy.

JUDITH: Then why don't you just lie down for a minute?

HOLOFERNES: Well... all right – just for a little while. Don't let me sleep more than 45 minutes, OK? Cuz I really gotta go kill some Jewzzzzzzzzzz...

NARRATOR: Holofernes falls asleep and begins to snore loudly. Judith then grabs his sword from his belt.

JUDITH: Sweet dreams, sleepyhead. And speaking of your head... HA-YA!

NARRATOR: Judith wields the sword and chops Holofernes's head off.

MAID: HOLY CRAP! YOU JUST CHOPPED HIS HEAD OFF! I did NOT see that coming!

BAKER: Me neither! This story is crazy!

MACCABEE: And you won't believe what happened next. Judith took Holofernes's head and hung it outside the tent for all the Assyrians to see. Once they saw their general had been slaughtered, and by a woman, they completely freaked out! And the Maccabees got a second wind when they saw what a champ Judith was, and they kicked some Assyrian ass!

BAKER: And THEN they all ate macaroons?

MACCABEE: [Sighs.] Yeah, then they all ate macaroons to celebrate. And because of Judith and her incredible bravery, in addition to the latkes and jelly donuts that we eat on Hanukkah, we also eat salty cheese.

BAKER: Like Feta?

MACCABEE: Sure, like Feta.

BAKER: I have another question.

MACCABEE: Of course you do.

BAKER: Actually, two. Why do we spell "Hanukkah" so many different ways, and why is it that we remember the Maccabees, who were super-fit and strong like you, by eating heavy fried food and cheese?

MACCABEE: Those, my friend, are very good questions that even I can't answer. Now I'm really hungry, so when I count to three, all listeners and actors wish each other Happy Hanukkah with feeling! One... two... three!

EVERYONE: HAPPY HANUKKAH!

**HAPPY
HANUKKAH**