

Kislev

Chanukah: Miriam's Treasure

The activity is constructed as an escape room based on the fictional story of a girl who lived about 2,200 years ago, at the time of the Chanukah miracle. The girl tells about the hardships that the Jews experienced during that period, up to the Maccabee's victory over the Greeks. The escape-room format presents students with a competitive challenge that depends on understanding the story and acting quickly.

Goals

- > Familiarity with the Chanukah story
- > Familiarity with essential questions related to the holiday that are also relevant today

Ages



Level 2
Grades 4–6



Level 1
Can be adapted for Grades 1–3

Preparation

Print out the tasks presented in the game (Supplements 1–5).

The students will need a pen or pencil with which to write.

Background for the Teacher

The Story of Chanukah

On the holiday of Chanukah, we celebrate **the victory of the Maccabees** (the Hasmoneans, lead by Judah Maccabee) over the Greeks and **the miracle of the little jug of oil**. According to accounts in the Book of Maccabees and other sources, in the year 167 BCE, Antiochus IV, king of the Seleucid Empire, enacted decrees against the Jewish religion in the Land of Israel, which was under his control. He also controlled the Temple and had a statue of the Greek god Zeus brought into the Temple. Following these decrees, a revolt broke out among the Jews, which eventually led to the establishment of an independent Jewish kingdom in the Land of Israel. The Maccabees even retook the Temple from the Greeks. They purified it, removing the altars to pagan gods, and prepared it for the service of G-d. They even lit a menorah that they prepared to replace the one that had been there, which the Greeks stole. For eight days, they celebrated the rededication of the Temple and its return to the Jewish people, who could now once again use it to worship G-d. To remember the miracle of the victory of the few over the many, the Maccabees established a holiday to be celebrated for eight days every year – the holiday of Chanukah.

In the Babylonian Talmud, which was written hundreds of years after the revolt, we find the first mention of an additional miracle that is celebrated on Chanukah, [the miracle of the little jug of oil](#). According to the description

in Tractate Shabbat, the rebels had only one little jar of pure olive oil that they could use to light the menorah. Even though the amount of oil in the jug was enough for only one day, a miracle happened and the oil lasted for eight days. To commemorate this miracle, on Chanukah, we light candles in a chanukiyah for eight days.

Activity



Explanation and Introduction

The activity can be done on a computer or printed out. (Printable versions of the tasks can be found in the supplements.)

Miriam's Diary – An Interactive Escape Room



The game is constructed as an escape room, led by **Miriam's diary**. Miriam is a girl who lived during the time of the Maccabees. The students will pass through five digital stations, read excerpts of the diary together, and complete tasks. At the end of their work, they will be able to open Miriam's treasure chest. You can have the students work in pairs or small groups.

The stations have a uniform structure. Each station has:

- > A page from Miriam's diary, to be read together with the students
- > Discussion questions (question-mark icon)
- > A task, which you can distribute to the students on paper or answer together on a screen, on the page after the diary entry

After the students complete each task, save the final answer, which will be a number. At the end of the activity, when all of the numbers for all of the tasks are arranged in order, they will form the code you need to open the treasure chest.

>>Note: It's a good idea to write down the results for each task on the board or on a separate sheet of paper.

The Game

Open the link for the game and read the introductory section of the diary together with the students. Then, read the instructions together. Make sure that the students understand the content: the period we are talking about, 167 BCE, that is, 2200 years ago; the situation in the Land of Israel, which was under the control of Greeks, where Antiochus had outlawed the practice of the Jewish religion; etc. From there, proceed from station to station using the arrow key. You can also reach the stations from the homepage.

Station 1: The Greeks in the Land of Israel

- > **Diary:** Miriam describes the problems associated with the Greek conquest of the Land of Israel many years before she was born.

- > **Discussion Questions:** Do you think that it is important to preserve who we are, our customs, our traditions, and our identity? Explain your views.
- > **Task:** Hand out copies of Task 1: Fix the Greek Jug or project it on a screen.
- > **The Code:** The students will find the number of the missing piece (Piece No. 2). Number for the code: 2.

Station 2: Harsh Decrees

- > **Diary:** Miriam describes the decrees of Antiochus Epiphanes, which prohibited Jews from observing the laws of the Torah.
- > **Discussion Questions:** How do you feel and what do you do during difficult times? How do you deal with those situations?
- > **Task:** Hand out copies of Task 2 (multiple-choice questions about the material that was presented) or project it on a screen.
- > **The Code:** The students will add up the numbers of the correct answers: A-4, B-2, C-1, D-2. The number for the code is 9.

Station 3: The Hasmoneans Go to War

- > **Diary:** Miriam tells about the Hasmoneans' (Maccabees') rebellion against the Greeks.
- > **Song and Discussion Questions:** The song "[Mi Yimalel](#)" and questions: What heroes of the Jewish nation do you know about? What are some characteristics of a hero, not counting physical strength? When do you feel like a hero? What did you accomplish?
- > **Task:** Hand out copies of Task 3: Spot the Differences or project it on a screen.
- > **The Code:** The students will find the number of differences. Number for the code: 9.

Station 4: What Did They Find in the Temple?

- > **Diary:** Miriam talks about the Maccabees' retaking the Temple, its purification, and the lighting of the menorah.
- > **Discussion Questions:** In your own words, explain what a miracle is. Tell about something that happened to you or to somebody else that you believe to be a miracle.
- > **Task:** Hand out copies of Task 4: Maze or project it on a screen.
- > **The Code:** The students will determine which path leads to the little jug of oil. The number for that path is the number for the code. Number for the code: 2.

Station 5: The Holiday of Chanukah

- > **Diary:** Miriam tells about Chanukah, the holiday that was established following the Maccabees' victory, and the custom of lighting candles.
- > **Source and Discussion Questions:** "When a person lights one candle from another, the second candle burns, while the light of the first is not diminished" (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 13:20). What is the literal meaning of this sentence? What does it teach us about our lives and our relationships with our friends? Every single person carries a light inside of them, a good quality that brings happiness to other people. What light do you carry? Share one of your good qualities. Alternatively, the teacher can ask each student to talk about the light in someone else.
- > **Task:** Hand out copies of Task 5: Find the Hidden Dreidels or project it on a screen.
- > **The Code:** The students will count up the number of dreidels hidden in the picture (14) and then add together the digits of that answer ($1 + 4 = 5$). Number for the code: 5.



The Treasure Chest

Enter the code to open the treasure chest. The code will be 29925.

Together with the students, read the saying that appears at the bottom of the picture, "A little bit of light pushes away a lot of darkness" (Rabbenu Bachya, *Chovot HaLevavot*). Explain that Chanukah is also called the Festival of Lights, since we light candles each day of the holiday.

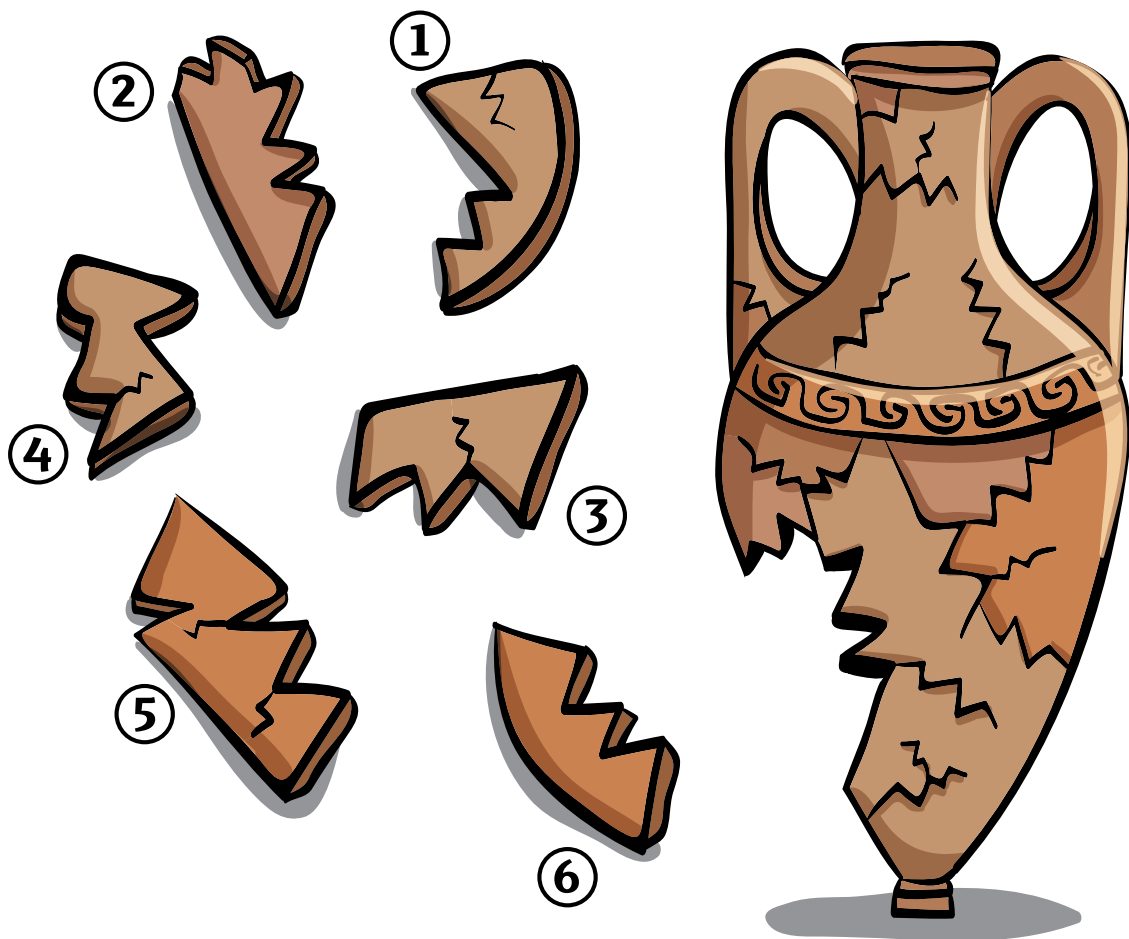


If you have time, discuss the meaning of this saying:

- > Is it true that a little light pushes away a lot of darkness? Explain how that happens.
- > What do you think we can learn from this saying?

Supplement 1

Station 1: The Greeks in the Land of Israel



Supplement 2

Station 2: Harsh Decrees

Question A: What place did the Greeks control?

1. The House of Study
2. The Great Synagogue
3. The Knesset
4. The Temple

Question B: Which of the following rules did Antiochus Epiphanes **not** make?

1. No observing the Jewish holidays
2. No lighting bonfires
3. No keeping kosher
4. No studying Torah

Question C: Decrees are:

1. Rules that are made for people whether they want them or not
2. Rules that citizens vote on
3. Rules and laws for driving on the highway
4. Rules and laws made by the Knesset

Question D: What was the name of the Greek king who imposed the harsh decrees on the Jews?

1. Antiochus the Great
2. Antiochus Epiphanes
3. Nebuchadnezer Epiphanes
4. Antiochus Melitus

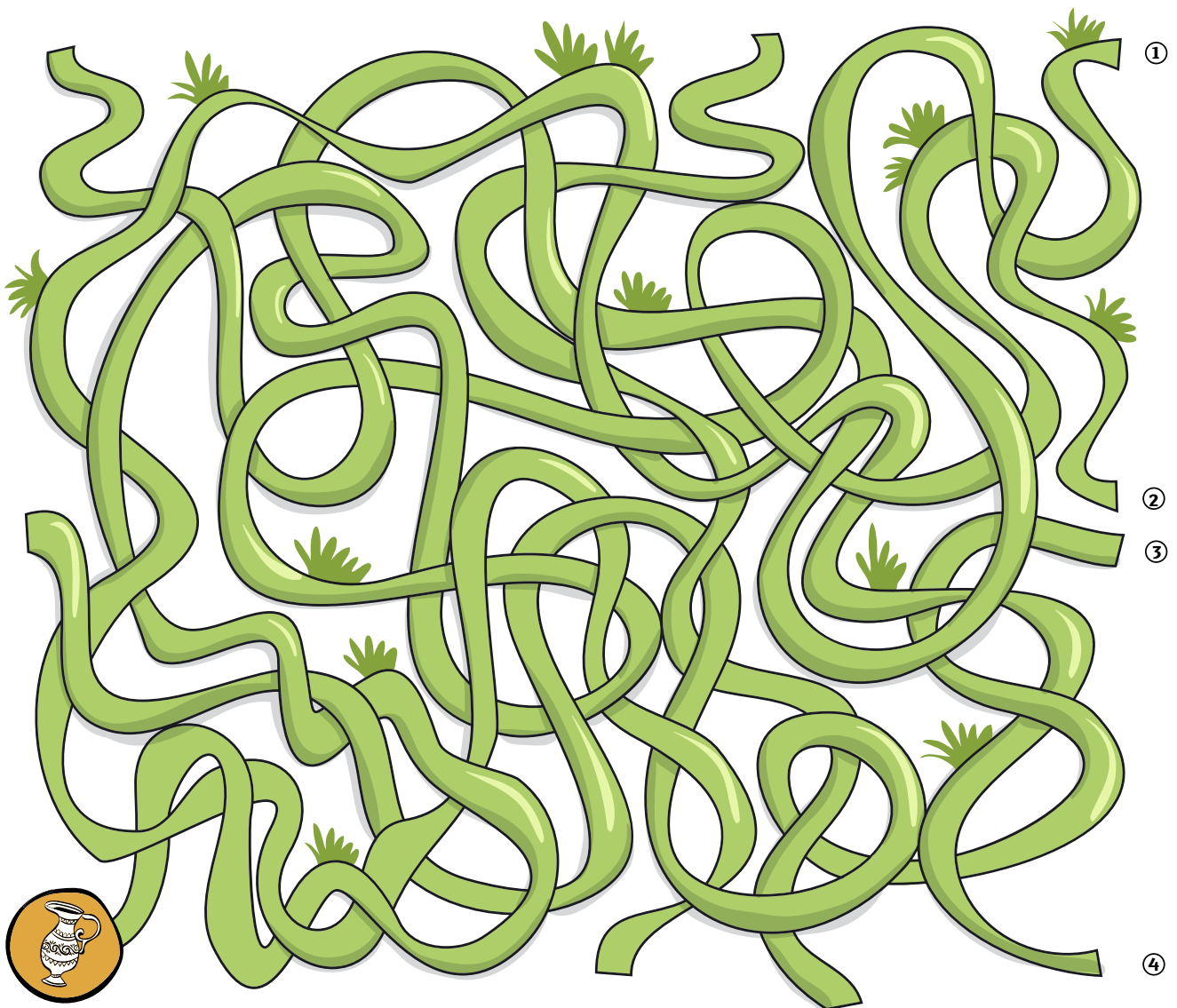
Supplement 3

Station 3: The Hasmoneans Go to War



Supplement 4

Station 4: What Did They Find in the Temple?



Supplement 5

Station 5: The Holiday of Chanukah

