



THE UHI BULLETIN

The Weekly Newsletter of United Hebrew Institute, Kingston, Pennsylvania, USA

MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL



Rabbi Raphael Nemetsky

.With Chanukah beginning this evening, it is worthwhile to analyze why this holiday is so popular, and popular it is. Chanukah is the second most celebrated holiday after the Passover seder. Yet this Holiday does not come with much ritual besides the lighting of the Menorah. One could also argue that it is a rather long holiday at eight days and perhaps that should diminish its festiveness.

The foods that we eat on Chanukah are not required. There is a custom of eating foods that are prepared with oil to remember the miracle of the Temple when oil for one night lasted eight. However, because the holiday celebrates a spiritual victory rather than a physical one, the celebration should be one of contemplation and spirituality not of ingestion. (More on this later.) By contrast, Purim celebrates a physical victory over Haman's plot to kill the Jews and therefore we have a rabbinic commandment to rejoice with a Purim feast.

One could suggest two possible mundane reasons for Chanukah's universal appeal. First, there are Chanukah presents, sometimes distributed each night after lighting the Menorah. Moment of truth: There is no source for giving Chanukah presents. There is a tradition for giving Chanukah gelt (Yiddish: money) in order to have some coins for playing dreidle.

Perhaps the "custom" of Chanukah presents originated with people who were compelled to not have their children feel left out while Christians received X-mas presents. This brings me to a second possible theory for Chanukah's widespread attraction. Perhaps Jews have an urge to compete with the Christian holidays.

I would venture to guess that these two theories do not suffice to explain the attraction that Jews maintain year in and year out with this holiday. First, the gifts theory would not explain the observance of those who do not give gifts, including many adults. Second, Chanukah is celebrated even by people who do not need to keep up with their Christian neighbors. Sephardic Jews, even in Muslim countries, have a strong tradition for celebration.

Granted, the entire discussion above is not scientific by any means, but I still feel that a rational explanation for the phenomenon of general commemoration is in order. Perhaps it is because Chanukah shares with Passover a very fundamental aspect. It may very well be that both these holidays have become ingrained within us both

these holidays have become ingrained within us both spiritually and psychologically because they strongly resonate with our very identity as Jews.

Passover marks the occasion when we became a nation, a free nation to serve G-d. Freedom of the oppressed is a very Jewish value. Jews have been the historical underdog and we very much empathize with the plight of those who have been wronged. The Torah is filled with commandments concerning the way in which we must treat the orphan and the widow, the slave and the pauper. These people who are most vulnerable are singled out by the Torah for special kindness and consideration. In addition, throughout our exile, we craved the freedom to practice Judaism, but were mostly denied that right.

Thus Passover celebrates some of the very values that distinguish us as Jews. In the same vein, Chanukah is a commemoration of when we were able to return to the traditional practice of all things Jewish. As the name Chanukah implies, the Chashmonaim (Hasmoneans) rededicated not only the Temple, but also renewed the Jewish people in their service to G-d.

When we light the menorah we are supposed to remember the valiant battles that Yehudah Maccabee and his loyal followers fought against the Syrian Greeks. More importantly, we are supposed to remember **why** they fought. They did not fight for religious freedom. They fought against a culture foreign to Judaism. They wanted the Jews to practice pure Judaism without the adulteration of Hellenism.

While we are certainly fortunate to live in this great and welcoming country and celebrate its national holidays, our Jewish occasions stand apart so that they remain uniquely and purely Jewish. The message we need to impart to our children as we light the menorah is that we have a proud heritage of worshipping G-d and that we are fortunate that we are the chosen people of G-d.

After that message has been emphasized and made clear to the adults and children, let each family celebrate in a manner it sees fit.

Shabbat Shalom and Happy Chanukah,
Rabbi Raphael J. Nemetsky



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Dec. 15 Chanukah Skate Party**
- Dec. 18 Chanukah Presentation 3Y - 4Y**
- Dec. 22 Siddur Presentation Grade 1**
- Dec. 24—Jan. 1 Midwinter Break**

Porosity of Rocks Carole Panunzio, Teacher

It may seem strange to you that a seemingly solid object such as a rock layer can have water held in pores and actually be considered porous; however, in reality the structure of some rocks is similar to that of a sponge.

In order to better understand porosity, the eighth grade students recently performed a lab activity to calculate the porosity of a sponge. Porosity is defined as the ratio of the volume of air space in an object to the total volume of the object.

The students began by calculating the volume of the sponge using the formula $V=l \times w \times h$. By carefully computing, they discovered the sponge volume to be 324.65 cubic centimeters. They then saturated the sponge with water, squeezed the absorbed water into a graduated cylinder, and measured the exact amount of water that was held in the pores of the sponge. The volume of the water held by the sponge measured 228 cubic centimeters. By measuring the volume of water that the sponge held and dividing it by the total volume of the sponge and multiplying the answer by 100, the students calculated the porosity expressed as a percentage. In this particular experiment, the porosity of the synthetic sponge was 70.23%.

Upon completion of this activity, the students realized that the sponge used was very porous. They also better understood the nature of the porous rock layers in the earth and why they are so important to the water table and our water supply.



REMINDER



UHI will once again participate
in Chai Lifeline.

Please bring new unwrapped, toys which will be
presented to children who are seriously ill.

Kindergarten Does "Ha'bet U'Shema" Geveret Pernikoff, Teacher

Everyone knows about Show and Tell. Well, in our kindergarten class, we do "Ha'bet U'Shema." Every so often a topic of special interest comes up that needs more involvement. Take, for instance, the topic of Shabbat. There are the laws and customs. There are the foods and the clothes. There are the toys and games that we play on Shabbat. So... we spend one afternoon bringing things from home to school and showing and telling our friends what we have and what we do on Shabbat. Zahava Griver brought her pretty Shabbat dress and shoes to show and tell everyone. Esther Brownstein brought her very own silver candlestick that she lights every Friday night by herself. (Mommy helps.) Miriam Laya and Kochava Kranson brought their family's beautiful Challa tray. Yosef Schwartz brought a family Siddur. Mordechai Good drew a beautiful picture on our blackboard of a Torah that we read at Shabbat Services. Yes, we love to have "Ha'bet U'Shema." We are all looking forward to this week. It will be time for "Ha'bet U'Shema" about Chanuka. Imagine how many menorahs and dreidels will be brought to our room. How about a frying pan to fry latkes? Can't wait to see and hear.



Second Grades Visit to Kingston Firehouse
Karen Traver, Teacher

UHI's second grade students attended a fire safety program at the Kingston Fire Station on Wyoming Avenue. The program, presented by Paul Klecha, incorporated a mobile fire safety "house" to teach fire safety and prevention. In addition to learning many fire safety and prevention tips, students practiced the best way to leave a smoke-filled building. A fog machine, used to simulate smoke, gave students the opportunity to "stay low" and learn how to crawl backwards down stairs.

Students were asked what they learned from the program. Saraea Kaplan and Jacob Sarnevitz weren't able to attend; however, they were given treat bags with informative and fun items so they were able to comment as well.

Here are the students' responses when completing the sentence, "I liked..."

Adina Bell: "...when we crawled out because of the smoke."

Geula Brownstein: "...when Adina crawled out and said, 'Ow, ow, ow.'"

Nadav Griver: "...the fake smoke."

Saraea Kaplan: "...the tattoo from the treat bag."

Coby Kornfeld: "...when the alarm went off. It was so loud!"

Harrison Levi: "...when we crawled down the stairs."

Olivia Roth: "...the couch in the bedroom."

Jacob Sarnevitz: "...the bracelet. The bracelet is cool because it glows in the dark."

Samuel Schwartz: "...the fire house with the smoke."

Dovid Seewald: "...when I crawled out because of the smoke."

Natalie Zarad: "...when we went out the tiny door."

Many students liked the fake spaghetti. The fireman showed how dangerous it can be to leave a pot on the stove with the handle sticking out. Someone walking by can knock over the pot and get burned.

When asked to give some tips the students learned about fire safety and prevention, they responded:

Jonathan Rutta: "Never touch a candle when it's lit."

Adina: "Never leave a pot on a stove when you're gone."

Saraea: "If your house catches on fire, don't stay in it. Call the fireman and use your neighbor's phone." Note: Don't leave your meeting spot to call until your parents know you made it outside.

Coby: "Don't play with matches."

Natalie: "Always turn off the oven when you leave the house."

We are really grateful to Paul Klecha and the Kingston Fire Department for inviting us to their important presentation. The fire safety and prevention program was both educational and fun.



18,455 POINTS
Let's keep it going.

Music at UHI
Maureen Salley, Teacher

"Music is really fun," according to fourth grader Haley Rudofker, "and we should start the recorder soon." We are busy in music class doing our theory papers that give the students practice in reading notes and rhythms. Of course, we are reviewing Chanukah songs we learned last year as well as studying new ones. The children practice accompanying themselves on instruments as they sing. At the end of class, I let the children dance to the music of famous composers with their puppet friends.

